

Part One

Chapter One

A lot of men would have questioned my manliness if they knew that I was paying attention to anything other than the amazing view I had stumbled upon in the library, two very sexy women, their state of undress matching their great beauty, their limbs tangled in a beautiful tango. But in my defense, two glowing, floating sentences, invisible everyone except me, was an excellent reason for my distraction.

[Successful Voyeur Activity: +100 Experience]

[Achievement: Patience. Wait two decades before gaining first experience point. +500 Experience, +10 Wisdom]

Of course, it was difficult to understand its total magnitude without knowing my particular background. Not when more than ninety percent of the population had the ability to gain discrete experience points which then turned into sudden boosts of power, greatly increasing their capabilities, while the remaining few had to do it the hard way, studying tirelessly to enhance their abilities. Melius, these people had been called, increasing their skills and abilities through the points they have collected through killing monsters.

Nobody knew why something like that was possible. Some claimed it was a gift from gods, others theorized it was somehow linked to endless hordes of monsters that turned otherwise beautiful planes into blackened seas of death, interrupted only by occasional town or city. Some fringe religions even claimed that it was somehow linked to Demon Kings, and every single Melius was cursed by the demons -not a popular theory considering the only reason that people were still alive against the monsters was the Melia, especially the elite warriors that had been lucky enough to have a high enough level cap. Everyone had a different level cap, with no way of learning it before hitting to a point, causing a Melius unable to register an experience point gain.

That level cap neatly tied into my status as a disabled Melius. Or my supposed status, invalidated by the floating letters in front of me.

As the firstborn of a noble family, I was tested when I was five, revealing that, unsurprisingly, I was a Melius. It wasn't entirely impossible for a noble family to have an Invalid child, but it was

not expected by default. But things had taken an unexpected turn when I killed a small monster that had been captured by our family hunters, only to receive no experience. It caused a huge commotion. Repeated tries, or experiments with different monsters, changed nothing. No matter the creature, no matter the circumstances, I never gained a single experience point.

Experts, after making my father spend endless riches, deduced that I was the most unlucky Melius ever, born with a level cap of 1, meaning I would never learn a Skill, or earn a Stat Point. I was supposed to live my life as nothing. No skill points, no stats above one, no skills, and certainly no hope...

My father used his influence to record me as an Invalid, meaning I was supposed to belong to that particular unlucky minority that was supposed to improve themselves through endless practice. Still better than being a cursed Melius that never leveled up. Less damaging to family reputation, at least.

But those two glowing sentences changed everything.

Everything.

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Considering that my whole life had been turned sideways just a moment ago, even with my suddenly increased mental prowess, the shocked gasp that escaped my mouth was excusable. Unfortunately, it alerted the two beautiful ladies that had been sharing an intimate kiss to my presence. Their heads raised, and I managed to recognize them, far faster than any other time I was able to recognize anyone. Cornelia, of the House Antony, and Marianne, of the House Louis, two of the most popular women that currently graced the halls of the Silver Tower, the premier learning institute of the Empire. Two strong, deadly women with strong lineages, which made their panic completely understandable.

“Who is there,” called Cornelia, her voice sharp in anger, the uncrowned queen of the school, a famed fire mage with a temper to match. I couldn’t help but record every single detail as she hurriedly wrapped her arms around her breasts, though they were not sufficient to hide them from the view, a decent portion spilling out of her arms. Marianne was different, her face colored with panic, and her arms were enough -if barely- to cover her more modest assets. And just like that, another sentence appeared in my field of view.

[Achievement: Double Trouble. See two pairs of chest at the same time. +100 Experience, + 1 Perception]

At that point, the most logical thing would be to escape silently, trusting to the endless shelves of books to hide my figure. But I didn't do that, because I had been already noticed before I could take action, courtesy of my abominably low intelligence stat, which governed the flexibility of thought. By the time I realized I was supposed to be moving, I was already pinned down by Cornelia's gaze, her green eyes flickering darkly, suggesting that she was already preparing a spell.

Again, I was slow to react while they fixed their clothes before cornering me. But for the first time in my life, I was annoyed by it. Because only now, I really understood the difference between the others and me, which I lacked the wisdom to appreciate. The stained glass that prevented my perception was suddenly broken, giving me the first taste of clarity.

It was too bad that it was the clarity of death.

"I'm going to kill you, you twerp," Cornelia whispered in a tone that made me shiver, the flame that flickering in her hands making her even more intimidating. "When I'm done with you, no one would even find your bones-" she added before her words had been interrupted by a desperate shout.

It was my shout, I absentmindedly realized it was me that was shouting, even as the pain threatened to bury the momentary clarity I had. From the corner of my eye, I could see my health-bar diving dangerously close to zero. It was already blinking red.

Luckily, her companion grabbed Cornelia's hand before my health dipped below zero. "Stop, it's the Mule!" she called, reminding me my nickname, which, for the first time in my life, caused anger to spark in my heart, because for the first time, I understood what it meant. "Don't kill him. It's not like he'll remember anything."

"Damnation!" Cornelia called as she took a step back in shock. Without her hand, I collapsed on the ground, and I could see my health bar draining even further. "Do something!" she called.

I saw Marianne's hand glowing blue before a coolness spread through my body, breaking my concentration. It didn't prevent from the darkness covering my view though. The last thing I had seen was three glowing sentences, promising that everything was going to be different.

[Achievement: Survive the Fury. Narrowly escape death as a direct consequence of being caught while peeking. +500 Experience, +1 Endurance]

[!Level up]

[Achievement: Patient Leveler. Wait for two decades before leveling up. +5 to all stats]

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Waking up was a weird experience. Despite the persistent pain on my cheek, I felt like I was reborn, that I was walking unencumbered for the first time after wading through the mud for the first time. I would have thought that I was in a dream, but even in my dreams, my thoughts flowed with a clarity that I had never experienced before.

I was in uncharted territory. The closest I had been to this when my mother had pitied me, and cast status enhancement spells on me, which raised all of my stats by five for a glorious minute before disappearing forever, leaving me a fleeting memory of heaven that never left me.

Still, I couldn't help but tremble with fear as I brought my status window, afraid that the clarity will dispel like a puff of cloud the moment I bring my status window, that damnable screen that was filled with ones, reminding me that I was cursed. But this time, the view was different.

[Level: 2 Experience: 1200 / 3000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 6

Precision: 6 Perception: 7

Agility: 6 Manipulation: 6

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 6

Endurance: 7 Wisdom: 16

HP: 59 / 62 Mana: 82 / 82]

I couldn't help but feel excited as I examined the scores in front of me. In less than a minute, the curse that ruined my life was dispelled, I was free. Free to life. Free to grow.

At that moment, I was thankful to my Wisdom stat, because I had no doubt that, without a significant score on it, I would be shooting my lungs about my curse being broken, that I could be something more than that damnable Invalid Mule, capable of something else than collecting discarded books while lacking the intelligence to even sort them correctly.

But my newly enhanced Wisdom stopped me, my mind sorting a lifetime of barely-remembered knowledge in a revolutionary manner. I barely remembered the details years

after, but parts of a discussion between two experts, considering the probability that I could gain experience with anything other than monster kills had been considered, but ultimately dismissed. Not much, but enough to convince me that keeping my shut might be the better idea.

Only then, I remembered to glance around, checking where I was. I was afraid that I had been in the medical ward, which would mean I would be examined before leaving. It would have been impossible to hide all the changes that my body had gone through. With my stats upgraded, a night's sleep was enough to put some muscles to my twig arms, and add some color to my pasty skin.

Luckily, I was in my room, which was a small room in the depths of the castle, in an abandoned wing, barely bigger than a wardrobe, a dirty, ruined cot only furniture in there. Only after my revolutionary mental shift, I could truly process how insulting it was to live in there, but I still welcomed it. After, it kept me out of view.

I couldn't help but wonder just how much of my life had been spent as being kept out of view. My childhood had passed locked in a room, various experts my only companions, then my father arranged me a 'job' as a librarian assistant. Not a bad job for a supposedly Abnormal child. Of course, now, I was realizing that it wasn't my father's mercy that drove him to arrange it. Any job in Silver Tower was prestigious enough to prevent too many questions. and more importantly, with four hundred miles between the Silver Tower Complex and my family estate, too far away for any news reach back to my family's social circle.

But to me, it had been a cruel exile, forever stuck in Level 1 between the best and the brightest students of the Empire and the Free Cities, my life filled with meaningless menial work, broken only by one of the students decided to prank me due to boredom. Though, the latter didn't happen much, because there was no great pride found in tricking the 'Mule', a nickname referring my endless menial tasks and my slowness of mind.

"No more," I murmured, unable to prevent excitement from slipping to my tone. I was finally awake, and ready to take what the world owed me for twenty years of humiliation!

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Of course, before making the world pay for my humiliation, I needed to validate the reason for my experience gain. With my improved deduction capabilities, it wasn't hard to theorize that the sexuality of the situation had been a major part of it, but I needed to test the exact conditions to

But before that, I needed to select my skills. Excitement burst in my heart as I realized, for the first time in my life, selecting a skill was an option. I called for skills tab, and met with an empty list, three lines of writing below it breaking the pattern.

[Select one of the following skills: Basic Subterfuge, Basic Resistance, Basic Concealment]

Again, quite different than what was supposed to be normal, combat filled option list, but I welcomed the change. While it was tempting to have the ability to beat up the assholes that humiliated me for years, I needed to keep my changes as hidden as possible, meaning my selection was between concealment and subterfuge.

[Basic Subterfuge (0/25)]

It wasn't an easy choice, but I went with basic subterfuge, because I needed to hide the changes I was going through, and the ability to trick others would prove invaluable. Acting was critical for my survival.

I have never heard a skill that didn't focus on combat and similar activities, but since none of the experts were able to identify my problem during my youth, it wasn't too wild to believe my condition was unique. And needed to keep that hidden since I had no intention of spending another ten years of my life under the examination of so-called experts.

I donned by librarian assistant robe, which conveniently covered my whole body loosely. It even had a hood to cover my face. Then, I took a deep breath, trying to suppress a sudden excitement that thumped into my heart. For the first time in my life, I felt alive, doing something other than obediently following other people's direct orders, like I was nothing more than a wound-up toy.

The moment I stepped in the corridor was different. I smelled the mold and the dust that covered the corridor, my increased stats allowing me to process just how disgusting those smells were, but even then, it made me only happier, like a recently-recovered blind person enjoying the sight of a dumpster.

A desire to let out a laugh filled my chest, different than all the times that I had been trying to copy the others when they laughed, usually me as the butt of the joke. I suppressed that particular desire, not wanting to alert anyone to the sudden change of my status, though I had a feeling that if it wasn't for my ridiculous increase in the wisdom stat, I would have missed that particular detail under the rush of excitement.

I started to come across other people closer I got to the library. I had passed just a few people

when another line of fiery letters appeared on my sight.

[Subterfuge +1]

Excellent, I thought, surprised, but definitely not dissatisfied, with the increase speed of the skill. I remembered hearing that real-life situations were much better to enable skill progress, a swing against a deadly monster was more valuable than a thousand swings in the courtyard. And apparently, the likely consequences of getting noticed was enough to qualify my situation as dangerous.

Missing such an amazing opportunity would be definitely wasteful, so I decided to get 'lost' during my walk towards the library. For anyone else, getting lost while walking towards the location of employment of last two years would be incredulous, but for my past self with all one stats and no skills, it was something that happened in a startling frequency.

I spent almost an hour wandering in the corridors, which helped my subterfuge skill to reach the rank of ten, but unfortunately, that number stayed the same for the last five minutes, suggesting that I needed more dangerous situations to test it. Or maybe, I added a moment later, it required more interactive situations.

The sensation of a hand, wrapping tightly around my biceps, pulled me from my thoughts. I turned towards my assailant, only to meet with the face of a servant that I occasionally saw in the halls. "Lost again," he murmured, but didn't wait for an answer before starting to drag me towards the library. "Fucking nobles," he murmured. "Every single one is a parasite, even the Invalid ones, wasting food while they should be given to monsters."

I quirked my eyebrow as I listened to the rumblings of the servant, curious to see that my supposed shared status as an Invalid not quelling his anger. Maybe because my past self's capabilities were abysmal even in Invalid standards. He was careful to hide his mumbling whenever another student or servant closed in, but apparently, I didn't count. I might have ignored it, but maintaining my silence added another five points to my subterfuge skill. Tempted, I pressed the skills button as the servant deposited me at the entrance, checking my full status.

Things were finally looking up for me...

[Level: 2 Experience: 1200 / 3000

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Endurance: 7 Wisdom: 16

HP: 59 / 62 Mana: 82 / 82]

SKILLS

[Basic Subterfuge (15/25)]

Chapter Two

Stepping inside the library once again was an interesting experience. For the last three years, I have spent almost all of my awake time in here, the the library of the Silver Tower. But for the first time, I had the ability to soak in its impressive sight, to understand the significance of the mass that was here. Endless lines of shelves, each filled with thick, leather-bound tomes, representing the biggest repository of information known to mankind.

And it wasn't just magical knowledge that it contained. It supposedly kept at least a copy of each book in existence, representing humanity's collective wisdom. Ironically, only my own spark of wisdom allowed me to fully comprehend the treasures that I had been carrying for the last three years. With my abysmal stats, previously stuck to one, I failed to realize the importance of it, though even if I did, not like I would have been able to benefit. With an intelligence score of 1, learning how to tie my shoes was a miracle. Recognizing the individual letters, I was able to learn only after years of private lessons.

But, having a better understanding of everything wasn't always positive. For example, I also realized the true importance of the Silver Library. The state of our world had made it a necessity. When losing towns and villages to the monster hordes wasn't worthy of anything other than marketplace gossip, ensuring the safety of information was good thinking.

Luckily, protected by the walls of the biggest magical school in the world, I didn't have a reason to worry about the dangers of the wild, at least not in the short term.

I took a deep breath before walking forward towards the main desk, while trying to copy my unbalanced shambling, thanking the deities that I had the chance to select subterfuge as my first skill. It was the only edge I had to keep my new status under wraps until I could understand the limits and the impacts. The first years of my life were filled with experiments, and I had no intention to restart them. The experience had been harrowing enough for my idiot past, and I had no intention to risk it once again.

When I arrived at my destination, I was happy to note that the head librarian was away. The head librarian was a sharp woman in her forties, a battlefield veteran to the boot, and I wasn't sure that my new acting skills would be enough to avoid her sharp attention. Even with my spotty recollection, I could remember her as a dangerous woman, and it was impossible to guess how she would react if she noticed my expanded capabilities.

One of her senior assistants manning the main desk instead. A shortish, brown-haired guy that I failed to remember. Luckily it was just expected of me. I stood in front of him silently until I

caught his attention.

“What are you waiting for, you log, go collect the discarded books,” he murmured in annoyance, not bothering to give me anything other than a glance, which suited me just fine. Until I could maximize my subterfuge skills, the fewer interactions I had with people, the better. Well, fewer interactions, discounting the one unique context that gave me my first experience points. I still wasn’t completely sure that was the only way I could gain experience, but that was one experiment I had no complications to run.

I grabbed the nearest empty cart and drove it towards the back of the library, to a section where the discarded copies of the less valuable books held, well-away from the majority of students and other employees. And while I hoped that I would come across a scene similar to one that gave me the first taste of power, I also knew that it wasn’t very likely, especially in the middle of the day, when the library was in its most crowded.

I was searching for a small alcove where I could read undisturbed, discovering more about my new status. Luckily, working for years in the library, netted me a few spots where I could hide to read a book or two. And I knew that no one would be looking for me thanks to my reputation.

Reading a book with my enhanced stats was an unbelievable experience. Previously, each letter was a puzzle that I struggle to decipher, and any sentence longer than eight words might as well be a mountain in terms of the challenge it represented. Now, words jumped from the page, sentences forming easily digestible sections that I could decipher with a glance. Truly a magical experience.

I had used my obscure location and newly enhanced reading skills, trying to discover more about my new condition and my power levels. Apparently, I managed to luck myself into a set of respectable stats. From what I have read, it seemed that the stat increase could be only driven by Achievements, and everyone had their own unique set of achievements, meaning stat increase was inherently driven by luck.

Moreover, my stats, with a minimum of six for each, was below average compared to the general population, but still workable in terms of usual standards, while my wisdom score was quite a bit above average. It seemed that a score of five was what an Abnormal had on average, and ten was what they could reach ultimately. And while there was no limit for the Melius, most didn’t surpass the twenties, meaning sixteen for Wisdom was quite respectable.

“Finally something going right in my fucking life,” I murmured when I realized that. After twenty years of torture, I was long due for some good news. That didn’t mean that I wouldn’t

focus on enhancing my stats, but the real priority was my Level, which would unlock more skills. Yes, it was possible to learn things without skill, but only through extended practice that would take weeks and months, something skills that not only shortened significantly, but also allowed to break limits that would otherwise limit those.

With my newfound attraction towards reading, I barely realized the passage of time until the library became too dark to read. Only then I realized that it was pushing close to the sunset, and the section I was currently in wasn't important enough to have a lot of lamps, and using one of those risked to give my position. With a sigh, I grabbed my cart, pulled several books from the shelves to give the impression that I had been working, and slowly drove back towards the main desk. It was for the best if I didn't disappear completely from the view of my coworker. The less attention I got, the better.

I had been planning to drop the books on the usual desk, letting the others sort the stuff, but a sharp hiss derailed me from my plans. I barely kept myself from turning towards the source, recognizing her from the last night. Marianne of the Blue, the most accomplished student of healing arts in the Silver Tower. Her focus on the gentler side of the magic was the only reason I was still alive. If it wasn't for her last-minute intervention, I would have ended up dead due to my pitiful amount of HP at that point in time. And most importantly, she was part of the reason I unlocked the first lock on the road to true power.

Still, just because she saved my life and unlocked true potential didn't mean that she would get away without a consequence for her involvement in my near-death experience. After everything that happened to me, I wasn't feeling particularly generous. But my current position wasn't conducive for that particular payback, so I continued my trek. Common sense told me to take a turn towards the more crowded parts of the library.

Instead, I took a left turn, taking a path leading to another rarely-visited part of the library. If it had been Cornelia who was behind me, I wouldn't dare to take such a risk, but considering Marianne was the one who saved my life, risks were more manageable.

Her footsteps following me after my turn made me certain that our encounter was not accidental. Still, dashing away was not an option. I needed to make sure about my status, and she was an excellent target for it. So, I continued walking, acting like I wasn't hearing her footsteps. My old self definitely wouldn't have noticed, after all.

Only when Marianne was directly behind me when I decided to stop. But she failed to notice my sudden movement in time, and collided with my back before she could react. It wasn't exactly what I had in mind, but the line of writing in front of me went a long way to mollify that

mistake.

[+10 Experience]

I was rather certain that the experience wasn't about the accident itself, as they weren't exactly rare in my history. No, I had a feeling that the sudden gain was about the pair of firm globes, pressing against my back rather distinctively. She really had an amazing chest.

The best thing to do would be pulling back, and act stupid until Marianne could walk away. But I needed to validate my assumptions about experience gain. Luckily, there was no one around, leaving me free to act creatively. I have turned back rapidly, so that before she could react, I was face to face with my stalker. She opened her mouth in shock, trying to pull back, but I was quicker. I faked yelping in panic as I waved my arms, and my hands accidentally ended up on her chest! Such misfortune!

[+50 Experience]

I had been expecting her to pull back rather rapidly, but I hadn't been expecting her feet to tangle into her robe, destroying her balance. She started falling back, and panic rose in my heart. Even in my idiot state -mostly due to sheer experience- I had known about the dangers of head-first falling. I tried to grab her as quick as I could, not wanting to injure one of the most important students of the school.

Since my hands were already there, grabbing her robe was purely reflex.

Her robe was probably made from magically-enhanced silk or similar material, strong enough to resist the sudden pull. But the same couldn't be said for the fancy lace ties on the front. I watched with a detached fascination as the front of her robe ripped, giving me a glimpse of what was underneath. A lacy corset that gently wrapped her curves, ending low enough to create a rather impressive cleavage.

[+50 Experience]

The smart thing to do was to gently help her stand up while marking the experiment as a success. After all, the experience I had gained was nothing to scoff at, considering the others had to risk their lives in the wilderness against the monsters to make the similar gains, where the smallest mistake might result in death. And, in a school filled with female students and servants, I would no doubt have other opportunities.

But riding in the exaltation of another experience burst, I was more willing to take risks. So,

when her arms reached towards the front of her robe in a blind panic, trying to cover her body, I decided to push for more. "Sorry," I murmured in panic as I let go of her robe, leaning to my recently-maximized subterfuge skill to make it seem like I was an idiot, panicking against what had just happened.

Thanks to the angle of her body, she started falling once more. And, her hands were too far away to reach back to soften her fall. "Help, you idiot," she yelled in panic. Who I was to disregard the heartfelt cry of a beautiful maiden -guessing- asking for my help. So, my right hand darted towards her chest, and grabbed the edge of her corset.

She let out a gasp as the corset cut into her back due to sudden spot, but I really welcomed the next noise. A certain ripping sound, proving that her corset was weaker than her robe. This time, I reacted before she could react, leaning forward to wrap my hand around her waist. I was quick enough to prevent her from falling, but wasn't quick enough to save her corset. As a result, the ripped remains of her corset was in my right hand while I lowered her on the ground with my left.

[+100 Experience]

[Achievement: Manufactured Mishap. Proactively create an accident that ends up in a visual feast. +200 Experience, +1 Manipulation]

I didn't exactly know why a smile popped into my face. My guess was it was a close call between another stat increase, and the amazing sight in front of my eyes. The outrage grew in her face as she opened her mouth to cry, but a sudden comprehension stopped her. She must have realized that a cry would pull the others to our location, increasing the number of people who had captured the amazing sight of her voluptuous breasts.

I spent a second to commit the amazing view of her curvy body on my memory while trying to guess just what portion I could cover by my hand. At most half, I was guessing.

Another inspiration struck at that moment. Did I have to keep that question on a theoretical level?

For a moment, I was shocked by my own decision. I was tangled in a very interesting situation with Marianne, with her clothes destroyed by the earlier situation I had engineered. With my left arm trapped under her, I was the perfect excuse, so I pushed a silly expression to my face, and started falling forward with an exaggerated movement. Her panic was positively delicious.

I let my knee to hit first, receiving a sudden spike of pain thanks to the stone floor. Then, when I

tried to put my right hand on the ground, it accidentally ended up on her chest, my fingers sinking deep into her chest. It was a miracle I managed to keep myself from laughing against her shocked expression.

[+200 Experience]

I didn't blame her when she pushed my right arm away with a strength that was boosted by her panic, but that move left me without support once again, and I started falling towards her once more, her panic growing stronger as our faces got closer. She tried to reach to my chest before the contact, but she was too slow, which made me guess that Agility wasn't one of her best stats. But her stat distribution wasn't as important as my lips pressing against hers.

[+400 Experience]

The experience boost was almost as welcome as the sensation I got from her beautiful lips, though I didn't have much to savor the sensation, as I felt two hands on my chest, followed by a rather painful push on my chest, too strong to be just physical.

[HP 52/62]

It wasn't too deadly thanks to my recent power boost, but just a day ago, it would have pushed me near death. So, once again I relied on my subterfuge skill, gasping pathetically like I was on the edge of the underworld. "Oh for god's sake," she exclaimed, her panic tinged with exasperation as she stood up. A second later, she was leaning towards me, her hands glowing blue as a healing spell spread through my body. Meanwhile, I was enjoying the spectacular view of her breasts, hanging freely.

[HP 62/62]

[+100 Experience]

[Achievement: False Flag. Garner the sympathy of a woman you recently angered. +500 Experience, +2 Charisma]

"Pain, gone," I murmured, trying to sound surprised.

"Idiot," she murmured in exasperation as she stood up. She glanced to her corset for a moment before giving it up as a lost cause, and focused on closing her robe despite its ripped state. I continued lying on the ground in fake pain, enjoying the accidental flashes as she tried to fix her robe. A minute later, she sighed in desperation and murmured a small chant, and her robe

repaired itself. Not enough to pass a detailed examination, cluing me that it wasn't one of the areas she was strong in. She sent one last glare towards me, she stuffed the remains of her corset into her robe and dashed away, leaving me alone.

I just lay on the ground, amused by the fact that she didn't have the time to mention why she was following me in the first place. I wondered whether I would be able to set up a similar accident the next time.

I spent the next hour after my encounter with Marianne to cart books around, trying to be visible while acting like my usual bumbling self. I was very aware of the fragility of my position, and the less attention I had on my actions, the better. After the earlier risk I had taken, it was only prudent.

But there was one important detail that was tickling my mind.

[Experience 2810/3000]

Just a dash more experience points, and I would have another level. And while patience was a virtue, after spending twenty years of my life in a static condition, stuck in a rut, waiting for another day sounded like torture. Which was why I kept my eyes open, looking for another opportunity to gain some experience points.

Of course, that wasn't all I had done. Seeing Marianne's spell raised another ambition in me, casting magic. So, as I walked around the library, I had been also doing my best to pull my mana to the surface. I wasn't expecting to start coughing fireballs and spitting tornados without a corresponding skill, but simpler things should be a possibility. So whenever there was no one around, I reached for my mana, trying to do something.

Probably thanks to my extremely high wisdom stat, and an overall respectable level of my other mental aspects, after a couple of hours of dedicated practice, I was able to create a weak telekinesis effect. From what I had read, such an achievement would have taken weeks for the others, but also it was usually done by children who were yet to reach their puberty, so, whether it was a success was arguable.

The effect was stronger than I was expecting, enough to throw away a book violently, but on the negative side, I had learned that fact because of my limited control, actually slamming a book

to a wall, hard enough to destroy it. Luckily, there was no one around to see it.

Still, however weak and unwieldy, I had access to magic, and it would doubtlessly come useful. That spell devoured a significant portion of my remaining mana, but I didn't let it bother me. The benefits were too important to ignore.

That opportunity came soon after, in the form of a student with a distinctive pale blond hair, cut in shoulder-length student, sitting alone in a concealed desk, her attention firmly on the book in front of her. Helga, I recognized her. Disjointed memories of other students insulting and bullying her came soon after, because she was not only a foreigner, but also she belonged to a merchant family, and not a particularly rich one either. The only reason she was able to gain admission to Silver Tower was because of her prodigious talent, passing many of the noble students.

Of course, that fact hadn't been noted with good humor by the other students, who weren't very happy about being shown-off by a foreign commoner. And, to her unluckiness, her strength lied more on the research and other academic topics than combat, preventing her from responding effectively to her bullies. The other thing I remembered was she never treated me badly, though she had been dismissive enough.

If I was a nice man, I would have let her, a fellow bullying victim who had been suffering like I had been, to study in peace. Unfortunately for her, I was not a nice person.

I stood far away, making sure to put two large bookshelves between us, enough to catch a glimpse of her while making sure I wouldn't be observed. It wasn't ideal, considering my telekinesis ability was highly sensitive to distance, but keeping hidden was more important than accurate spellcasting in my situation.

My heartbeat picked up speed, only partially about the danger I was in. The rest was the anticipation about what I would find. Helga was a beautiful girl, but her body was a total mystery due to her habit of wearing loose clothing. Most students had thought that it was because she was quite fat, expressed by their regular insults. But there was a voice inside suggesting me that it might not be as accurate. And I couldn't wait to see if it was true...

A deep breath later, I used my nascent arcane abilities to reach towards her, trying to focus on the top button that was holding her robe in place. With that, I hit my first snag, namely her aura, interfering with my spell. The books had warned me about that, but I had been hoping that her lack of alertness would blunt its effects enough to give me a movement area. Unfortunately, that didn't work as much as I had hoped, or maybe my magical power was worse

than I had been hoping for, or maybe, due to constant bullying, she had a stronger resistance active subconsciously.

Regardless of the reason, it was a barrier that I needed to overcome, so I focused on my spell, putting extra power behind it. And it worked... In a fashion...

My aim was to unlatch a few of her buttons, which I succeed. What I wasn't planning for was the violent speed of my success, only parting her robe violently, making her buttons fly around, but also managed to achieve a similar effect on the blouse she was wearing underneath, though this time, only up to halfway.

Still, it was enough to reveal the corset she was wearing underneath, confirming my suspicions. The body she was hiding underneath was truly beautiful, enough to send my heart overdrive. Though my elation wasn't only about that.

[+50 Experience]

[Achievement: Malfunctioning Magic. Use an uncontrolled magic spell for your personal benefit. +200 Experience, +1 Precision]

[Level Up!]

I wasn't expecting her to react as quickly as she did, though. Her first reflex was to crouch behind the table while her eyes roamed the room rapidly. Trying to use the situation to my advantage before I retreated, I tried to push her once more, but this time, my spell fizzled long before it even neared her body. Either she was even stronger than I had been expecting, or I vastly overestimated my fledging strength.

Regardless of the situation, it was the time to pull back. The last thing before I pulled back from my vantage point was her buttons, attaching them back to her robe with a bare wave of her hand, showing just how much I still needed to improve.

I was driving my cart in my usual idiot disguise when I heard rapid footsteps closing to my direction, making me panic slightly. I knew that she hadn't seen me, meaning she probably felt the direction the spell was coming from. Yet another complication to take care in my future actions.

I couldn't help but feel intimidated when she suddenly appeared in front of me, her expression bleak. "Have you seen anyone here," she barked, and I raised a trembling finger towards distance while using my recently maximized basic acting skills to a maximum degree. Luckily,

she didn't have a reason to suspect me, and followed my direction with anger sharp on her face.

I let out a relaxed sigh before smiling. I had just gained another level! And from the skill selection, the decision was almost trivial to pick Basic Arcana Magic. For most, it was a tool that was underused due to its limited combat applications, but in my situation, it was too useful to miss...

[Level: 3 Experience: 3010 / 6000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 8

Precision: 7 Perception: 7

Agility: 6 Manipulation: 7

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 6

Endurance: 7 Wisdom: 16

HP: 96 / 96 Mana: 20 / 135]

SKILLS

[Basic Subterfuge (25/25)]

Basic Arcana [1/25]

SPELLS AND ABILITIES

[

Minor Telekinesis

]

Chapter Three

After my encounter with Helga, I decided to sneak out of the library and go directly to my room. The close-call I had with Helga spooked me, so I decided walking away was a more prudent choice for the moment. Though, I made sure to sneak one of the beginner books on the arcane magic with me. My near discovery with Helga showed me that wisdom stat wasn't an all-around cure for all kind of information, and I actually needed more information to prevent another half-assed plan exploding on me.

While my existence as I grew up had been a horrible, lonely existence, it also came with certain advantages, such as the absolute absence of any kind of friendship, meaning no one bothered to look for my presence when I decided to skip the dining hall. Going to the library was a risk, but I only took it because people were too used to my presence to really pay attention. I wasn't willing to risk my acting skills against the sharp eyes of all kind of soldiers, especially if someone decided to bully me in the dining hall, which happened far more than I would have liked to admit.

Walking around carelessly was one thing, but trying to trick everyone in a crowded hall was a different thing while they watched my reaction.

The danger was compounded by the fact that the room was not filled with the students with the magical focus like it was in the library. According to what I had read, the students with a magic specialty rarely bothered to pick sensory skills, relying on spells to enhance them under the combat situations. I wasn't willing to take the same risk for the students on leadership or ranger track, not before I could enhance my Subterfuge skill to a reliable degree.

The next few hours were split between reading on magic and trying to enhance my arcana skill, only to increase it by a measly one point. The culprit was easy to discover, the lack of risk. Unfortunately, without some arcana ability, improving my spells was a slow-yielding chore, destroying my plans. I sighed, and decided to focus on the theoretical side while leaving the skill enhancement for tomorrow.

At least, that was my initial decision. But when I found myself twisting and turning in my uncomfortable bed, unable to catch a wink of sleep, I decided to revise that plan. I wasn't able to sleep, because I couldn't prevent myself from mentally calling my status screen, a part of it burning in an annoying light.

Basic Arcana [2/25]

It shouldn't be a real problem, as after spending years without gaining a level, or even thinking it was possible, I had gained two levels in rapid succession, a speed that was unheard of, even for the first few levels. That should have been satisfactory enough to let me sleep.

But it wasn't, not when a part of my heart shouted me to leverage the situation before it got lost just as quick, ignoring the pleadings of my brain. I yearned to maximize my arcana skill with the same speed I had improved my subterfuge skill.

In the end, I failed to resist the temptation, like a man lost in a desert, gorging himself with water despite knowing the dangers of his greedy approach. Sometimes, the temptation was impossible to resist.

A sigh escaped my mouth as I stood up, my mind already on how to explain if I get caught during the process. The library was open at night, but it rarely had any students, therefore only a couple assistants worked each night, in rotation. Mine was last night, so I needed an excuse.

A brief search around the clutter gave me the perfect excuse, a parchment, written by the Head Librarian, ordering me to sort out the history section. It must be from the first few weeks, when they were still hopeful that I would be able to learn about being a librarian. For anyone else, it wouldn't have worked, but for once, my reputation worked to my benefit. It would be very believable for old me to find an expired order, only to follow it without realizing it.

With my problem solved, I quickly donned my librarian robe, and stepped on the corridor with purpose.

The first observer I had was a servant, carrying a tray filled with food. The smell tickled my nose, and my stomach chose me to remind that I had yet to eat anything with a loud gurgle. "Perfect, the mule is starving," the servant murmured sarcastically as he tried to pass me.

After my stat boosts, giving me a new perspective about everything that had been happening in my life, I found myself with a short temper against my bullies. And finally, I had a chance to push back. Not explicitly, which admittedly removed some fun of the situation, but a telekinetic push, delivered with a negligent wave of my hand, was sufficient revenge for now.

It wasn't a particularly strong push, nor it was well-controlled, but the second part worked for my benefit, unbalancing his tray, making it tumble off his hands. A string of angry curses left his mouth, quite a few targeting my supposed curse spreading around, but he was too busy trying to salvage to late-night dinner he had been carrying to stop me, and I continued my journey; a smile on my face because suddenly, I had another skill point in my skill.

[+1 Arcana]

When I arrived at the library, he wasn't the only servant that was cursing the supposed bad luck I had brought. Some of them tripped, while the others lost the hold on the items they were carrying. Any student would have been reported to Headmaster, who had little patience for the pranks on the staff, but one benefit of my reputation was I was suspicion-proof. It was an asshole move, I would admit, but the resulting increase in my arcane skill was well-worth it. And after all the mocking and humiliation that came from the staff during my tenure, I wasn't feeling particularly merciful.

For me, the next hour I spent in the library turned out to be very useful. I have started testing my abilities on two boys from rival houses, working tables that was not exactly close to each other. I started it with a subtle telekinetic prob while making sure I was standing just in front of the other boy, so when my target turned towards me, he was quick to dismiss me in favor of blaming his rival.

It was even easier when he retaliated, his magical signature conveniently hiding my own small prod. It didn't take long for the boys to start a prank war, unaware that both of their assaults had some additions from a third party, and in the end, they broke into a fistfight in the middle of the library, each loudly blaming the other for starting it. I retreated, a smirk on my lips, and seven more points on my arcana skills. Targeting people with actual magical capabilities was making my magical skill increase even faster, I realized.

At that point, I was planning to call it an early night. I walked towards the depths of the library, searching for some interesting books that I could borrow that wouldn't raise any alarm. To do that, I moved much deeper into the library, until an unfamiliar sensation stopped me.

I stopped, trying to expand my magical senses until I could grasp the reason for that sudden sensation. A minute of focus later, a shimmering barrier appeared in front of me as I attuned my senses, giving me an impression of a tripwire. A simple alarm ward, I reasoned, combining my readings with the impressions generated by my skill, all filtered through my wisdom and intelligence. The question was, who was responsible.

Destroying the ward was not an option without alerting its owner, and I didn't even know where to start to for partial dismantling. The smart thing would be to turn back, not risk angering whomever that had put the barrier.

And I would have done that, if it wasn't for a moan that was strangely familiar, one that made remember a very special moment in my life, one I managed to place it rather easily. Cornelia.

“That naughty minx,” I murmured in surprise, though this time, I had enough presence of mind to keep my voice low. The last thing I needed was to be burned once again. But the lure of gaining more experience, as well as feasting on her beauty, was too tempting to miss, and I wouldn’t say no to seeing Marianne’s amazing body as well, hopefully accompanying Cornelia once again.

First, I moved back and forth, looking for an easy vantage point, but it turned out to be fruitless. Then, I turned my attention to the translucent ward that barred my way, taking note of its spherical shape, and comparing it with the size and the shape of the library. Thanks to the endless days I had traversed the library, doing backbreaking physical work, I had managed to memorize the library with great accuracy, and my wisdom allowed me to recall that map without an error.

Combining those two facts, I realized that I could bypass the ward from this side as long as I kept close to the wall on the other side. I walked, keeping my attention on the ward to avoid an accidental trigger. And as a happy note, it increased my arcana skill by two, probably factoring in the fact that I would be risking death if I got noticed by Cornelia.

[Basic Arcana 10/25]

After a short search, I managed to find a nice and snug vantage point that gave me a direct view of Cornelia and Marianne, proving that they hadn’t paid the same attention to the rear of their position. After a brief search, I managed to find a gap between the books that gave me an almost unrestricted view of her bodies.

And what a view it was. Trusting the effectiveness of their ward, the girls didn’t see a problem partially undressing, their robes bunched around their waist, their breasts only concealed by each other’s hands, and occasionally, their lips. It wasn’t a surprise that I quickly built up a raging erection, and this time, I had enough time and opportunity to address it.

[+100 Experience]

I pulled my shaft from my pants rather urgently, the desire burning inside me as it did never before. Maybe it was an effect of my level-up system, or maybe it was because of my increased stats, allowing me to feel my emotions in an intensity that I never felt before, or maybe even it was my physical stats, finally enhancing my body to a point that I would feel such needs. Whatever it was, it was less important than the amazing view as Cornelia’s face disappeared in the embrace of Marianne’s bountiful bosom, triggering her silent cries.

Too silent, I absentmindedly noted as my fingers started dancing on my shaft. Apparently, they remembered to put a silencing charm after Cornelia's errant moan. More power me, as safer they felt in their position, less attention they would pay to their environment. I pumped my shaft mercilessly, the unfamiliar sensation filling my body with a rapid speed...

Beset with an unfamiliar sensation, it took less than a minute for me to reach a climax, a sensation of pleasure filling my body. I managed to keep myself from moaning in pleasure, if only because of the memory of Cornelia's burning hand, digging into my skin.

[+200 Experience]

[Achievement: Obscured Ogler. Stay hidden and unnoticed while triggering a situation of self-inflicted ecstasy. +300 Experience, +1 Perception]

[Achievement: Speedy Shooter. Take less than a minute to reach a climax under self-care. +100 Experience, +1 Endurance]

I took a few deep breaths, enjoying not only the pleasure of the aftermath, but also the power spreading through my body, sharpening my perception and toughening my body. If that was the way everyone felt when they increased in power, I could easily see why they thought the Abnormals were cursed, or why they pitied the people with low-level cap.

But sociological impacts of the leveling was easy to ignore when I watched as Cornelia pushed Marianne against a desk, hiking up her robe with a great hurry. A pull later, Marianne's panties fell down, giving me a glimpse of the treasure between her legs before Cornelia dived down there.

[+200 Experience]

I was happy with receiving another experience burst, clearly linked to their change of position. So, the safest strategy would be to wait until they finished, and maybe polish another one if my manhood managed to recover before they finished. But once again, the temptation for more skills and the increased experience was impossible to resist.

I took a deep breath, bringing my whole focus to create a small telekinetic point, and I extended it as far as I could. The power I put on it was the smallest I could manage, and I was betting everything on the fact that both girls were too distracted to notice what I was doing. That was what had happened with Helga, after all, failing to notice my manipulations until I lost control of the spell and ripped off her clothes.

And my favorite gals were lost in pleasure, which was what I was banking on. With that in mind, I pushed my small probe on Marianne's naked breasts, gently squeezing her nipple, which made her to open her mouth to let out another silent cry, but her eyes stayed closed, meaning she wasn't suspicious. Maybe she didn't realize it wasn't Cornelia's hand but a spell, or maybe she just assumed Cornelia was responsible for it. They definitely seemed kinky enough to use magic for things like that.

[+100 Experience]

[+1 Arcana]

The approval of my internal system was definitely appreciated, as well as the sudden burst of magical knowledge, slightly increasing the finesse I could wield my magic. I squeezed once more, but this time, without a corresponding experience burst. Maybe variety was needed, I thought as I slowly transformed the shape of my mental construct to something similar to a hand, cupping her breast in a way that was more attention-grabbing than a simple, fleeting squeeze.

[+100 Experience]

I saw Marianne's mouth opening, and while I couldn't hear what she said, the way her mouth moved was suspiciously close to the word more. Happy that my little addition was appreciated, I let my magical probe to explore her body more freely, the expression of ecstasy on Marianne's face intensifying with each passing moment.

Meanwhile, my body had managed to recover, my shaft back to full mast. My hand was back to pumping, though without the utter novelty of the sensation, it took longer for me to reach the climax. Not that it was a bit problematic, as not only there was an amazing view that I enjoyed in front of me, but also I was gaining quite a bit of experience and skill points from the experience. Seeing Marianne shuddering with a climax triggered me for a second time, but also I managed to earn more than five hundred experience and several points of arcana skill.

[Achievement: Hidden Helper. Be a gentleman and help a lady reach ecstasy without taking the credit! +500 Experience, +1 Manipulation]

It seemed that the system had a sense of humor. Still, that was unimportant compared to the fact that I was near another level up. I prayed all the gods that Cornelia wasn't selfless enough to leave after bringing her partner to climax.

My prayers were answered when Cornelia stood up and dropped her robe on the ground,

revealing that she hadn't been wearing anything underneath. Apparently, she came prepared for her midnight tryst. Once again, I prepared my telekinetic hand, ready to subject Cornelia the same treatment Marianne had been subject to, but something changed my mind.

In particular, the position Marianne had taken.

Instead of crouching like Cornelia did, Marianne chose to bend from her waist as she brought her lips to Cornelia's nether lips. But the thing that took my attention was the way her robe stayed bunched around her waist, leaving her bottom bare, and facing towards me.

I wasn't sure I would dare to take the opportunity if it was Cornelia in the position, but Marianne had shown that she was both slower to react, and more merciful. Still, I was really careful as I brought my probe to her glistening slit, and gently twisting her clit.

[+200 Experience]

The result was spectacular. Marianne's body rocked with pleasure, and Cornelia's body followed it a moment later. Apparently, the joy of the moment made Marianne more active, something Cornelia was clearly enjoyed.

I kept the pressure the same until I watched Cornelia's hands to grab Marianne's hair, pulling her tighter into her embrace. At that point, I was reasonably sure that Marianne had other problems than the exact shape of her pleasure, and added a small buzzing to my probe, still teasing her clit.

The result was spectacular, as Marianne raised her head for a moment, her silent cries creating a unique erotic view. Luckily, before Cornelia started to get suspicious, Marianne lowered her head and resumed her task, leaving me free to magically explore her most magical spot.

I was tempted to transform my probe into a cylindrical shape before exploring her insides, but one thing held me back. As a noble lady, she was probably virgin, meaning that would create a huge web to untangle, and I didn't want to give her a reason to rip my head off if I get caught.

But it was a restriction that allowed me a lot of range. Once again I brought my probe on Marianne's breasts, this time in a more spread-out tingling sensation, leveraging the expanded capabilities of my skill boost. I thought I saw Marianne trembling a bit, but it was a subtle thing, and it might also be about Cornelia's hands meeting with her hair in a sharp tug.

[+100 Experience]

With the system's approval of my achievement, I continued my activities, letting the probe to spread over her body while wishing that it was my hands that danced freely on her soft skin. But at least, I had remote access to her body, which was a good substitute until I could have access to the real one.

A few minutes later, without a warning, Marianne collapsed onto her knees, trembling with obvious pleasure.

[+500 Experience]

I would have liked to hang around more, to push even more, but when I saw a questioning expression on Cornelia's face, I decided that retreat was a part of the valor. I didn't know whether her questions would allow her to discover my outside assistance, but I wasn't willing to stay around to discover that. Cornelia's first reaction had left a memorable impression.

I called my status window as I walked back to the more crowded areas of the library. I had earned more than enough from my endeavor. Not only I had completely developed my arcana abilities, but also gained enough experience for an almost full level.

All was well...

[Level: 3 Experience: 5810 / 6000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 8

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 6 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 6

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 16

HP: 99 / 99 Mana: 110 / 141]

SKILLS

[Basic Subterfuge (25/25)

Basic Arcana [22/25]]

Chapter Four

I woke up with the first rays of sunrise, feeling a ravenous hunger, which constituted a big problem. Not only there was still a couple hour until the dining hall started to serve, but also I would still run the risk of being noticed by one of the students with a well-developed observation if I waited for the dinner.

The simplest way to counter that was to visit the kitchen, hoping that one of the servants would take pity and feed me, but that carried its own complications. It wasn't just the students just bullied me. Servants were happy to join when they realized there would be no consequence as long as they kept it non-physical, giving them a metaphorical way to hit back to the aristocracy that oppressed them for all their life. So, going to the kitchen meant that there would be a lot of leers and insults, and I didn't want to suffer them more than necessary. I had suffered a fair share of them until now, and didn't want more when I was finally strong enough to not to take their shit anymore.

Then a sudden realization hit me. Why not put my subterfuge skills into the job? It shouldn't be too hard to act like a different student, especially since it had been rare for someone to look at my face beforehand. With my expanded capabilities, tricking a bunch of servants them shouldn't be too hard. I turned to my wardrobe -a pitiful collection of damaged and dirty clothing, as servants long stopped helping me with my chores unless forced otherwise. Luckily, there was a group of students that dressed like that due to their daily activities, combined with their relatively lower status.

I wasn't limited to the clothes in my wardrobe, of course. Arcane spells allowed a wide range of tricks, some of which I managed to decipher already. Which meant that not only could magically-repair my clothes to create a decent approximation of a ranger uniform, but also I could have a different hair and eye color, with a distinctive illusion of a wound on my chin.

Thirty minutes later, I was walking towards the kitchen in a completely new identity, dressed as a poor approximation of ranger, with a forged note in my hand with a copied signature from one of the other documents. It wasn't a perfect disguise, and I wouldn't dare to use it under the sunshine even against the servants, but I was hoping that relative darkness of the corridors would assist me in my plot.

I arrived at the kitchen, only to find it bustling with a great cacophony of activity as the servants prepared for the breakfast. I glanced around, trying to identify the best target to reach. And then I noticed a man that was barking orders to the others around him, but dressed in the same

way. I was betting for a small-time servant trying to prove himself to be management quality.

I walked towards him with determined steps, once in my life, not hunched forward like I was trying to disappear. "Master Ranger asks for some additional supplies for today's expedition," I said as I pushed the list towards him. He looked at it, his expression panicking slightly.

After a moment's silence, he stood straighter, and started spitting orders to the people around him. "You, bring me two packs of dried meat, and someone brings me three packs of dried fruits." Then, he pointed at another man, who looked less than enthusiastic about being ordered. "You bring me four dozen travel bread..."

He must have been more successful in his ambitions than I had first thought, because it took just two minutes for them to prepare me a burlap filled with everything I asked for. "Excellent," I said, trying to copy gruff but to the point voice of a ranger.

"No problem, milord, is there anything else I could do for you," he asked, his voice smarmy enough to raise my hackles. I shrugged, then started walking towards the door with rapid steps. The reason, I could see the head chef walking towards us with a stormy expression, clearly unhappy with the intrusion to his domain, compounded by the fact that I talked one of his subordinates rather than him. I made no motion of noticing him, but quickened my steps enough that when he arrived my previous position, I was about to leave the kitchens. From the corner of my eyes, I could see he started talking with the man, clearly admonishing him for giving supplies without asking him, then I turned, leaving the kitchen behind.

After a hurried dash, I was back in my room, letting out a relaxed sigh as the door closed behind me. That was close, and the fact that the head chef noticed me was a good sign that my Subterfuge skills were not high enough to avoid detection. I needed to improve it further in the earliest chance. Luckily, I was about to gain another level, and hopefully, it would allow me to do so.

And on the plus side, I had enough food to last me for at least a week. Even two, if I eat conservatively. Dried meat and hard bread wasn't exactly a feast, but it sustained me while allowing me to stay away from the view. I nibbled some food while dispelling the spells over me, my hair color turning back to its natural brown.

I focused on reading a book on basic arcana spells that I had swiped from the library for the next hour, but soon, it was time to work once more. I was quick to prepare and leave my room, wanting to go there as early as possible. I didn't know whether the Head Librarian was back, but if she was, I want to be in the library earlier than her. The less reason she had to watch me, the

better...

I was one of the earliest workers in the library. I just grabbed a cart without talking with anyone and drove it towards the less-visited part of the library. After a few minutes, then the assistant of the Head Librarian took the main desk, cluing me on the fact that the Head Librarian was still away.

My morning passed in a predictable routine, occasionally walk around like I was working while spending most of my time hidden between two shelves, reading as much as I could. I had a lot to learn...

Of course, I kept my eyes open for any opportunities that would net me some experience. I needed barely less than two hundred experience points, and then I would unlock a new level. Unfortunately, the night arrived without an opportunity. There was no Marianne following me, giving me easy opportunities to sneak a grope, nor I could see Helga with her busty beauty, hidden in the depths of the library, allowing me to use magic without being noticed by the others.

I was preparing to leave when my luck had turned. I saw Cornelia stepping through the entrance, her efforts to make herself look inconspicuous making her even more noticeable, at least to me. Thanks to my earlier observations, I knew exactly how to read her signs of arousal. She looked around for a while, carefully watching her surroundings, making me afraid that I would be noticed if I continued to examine her. Another late-night encounter, I thought with a smirk, excited with the prospect of another level-up.

Luckily, I didn't have to watch her, not when I knew where she would be in a few minutes. I disappeared behind the shelves before alerting her to my position. And since I was there early, I had enough time to move the stuff around, creating a superior observation point where I could actually sit while enjoying the show.

Several minutes later, Cornelia had walked into the exact same spot she had been the last night, murmuring a careful spell while she drew several quick symbols on the table with her finger, and leaving a shiny aftermath. I was impressed. It wasn't exactly trivial to create a ward, even a simple one like hers, without a specially-prepared anchor.

But it seemed that the preparations for the night were just the beginning. Cornelia reached to her bag, and pulled out a ribbon from her bag. I looked at it curiously, as it looked like silk, not the cheapest material to find after most of the production areas had been destroyed by monster attacks, especially one that painted bright red. Then she pulled a small riding crop,

curiously, in bright red as well. Fitting to her flame queen theme, but I was starting to get a suspicion for their purpose, which got stronger and stronger as she pulled more items from her bag. I couldn't help but feel curious, however, as Marianne didn't give me the impression that she would be enjoying stuff like that.

Though it didn't take long for my curiosity to turn into total shock. The reason, who had just walked into the opening. Like yesterday, a familiar blonde figure stepped to my field of vision. But it wasn't the same blonde that I had seen with Cornelia.

It was Helga.

It was a miracle that I managed to keep myself from gasping. Not seeing Marianne here had been quite a shock, as from what I had been gathering from their talks, I was willing to bet that those two loved each other enough to risk total disgrace. But despite that, Cornelia had been clearly waiting for Helga, if her lack of surprise was any indicator.

Cornelia didn't say anything, just reached for her robe, and pulled it off with a smooth motion, revealing a leather corset underneath, stylized like leather armor with, but with a lot of strategic absences to highlight her sexiness. Of course, again in bright red. She was really playing to her moniker as the Crimson Queen.

[+50 Experience]

[Achievement: Prepared Peeper. Observe a tantalizing view from a prepared position. +200 Experience, +1 Wisdom]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Advanced Subterfuge, Basic Speech, Basic Concealment]

I was tempted to choose speech or concealment, as both of them had the potential to be really useful for my needs, but in the end, I had to go with the subterfuge. I didn't trust myself to avoid the Head Librarian's attention otherwise. And as the morning showed, subterfuge unlocked some interesting options, by acting like the others. I chose the subterfuge, and then turned my attention back to the action, curious about the exact details of the surprising situation in front of me.

"Good evening," Helga said, which just increased my curiosity about the situation. Not because of her words, but the tone she used, sharp and cold, suggesting that she wasn't really happy about her situation. The situation was getting more and more curious. Though hearing what she

had said had been a welcome surprise. Apparently, I was close enough to stay inside the silencing field Cornelia had set up.

“Take care of your tone,” Cornelia countered sharply, followed by a dark smirk. “Unless you want a session to remember.” A moment later, she raised her hand, and a tendril of electricity flickered between her fingers.

Helga looked like she wanted to answer, but chose to do the smart thing, and ducked her head, avoiding Cornelia’s gaze. I approved, as I knew from firsthand that how quick was Cornelia to escalate into uncontrolled violence. At least, in the current condition, it seemed to be limited to controlled violence.

“We’re going to go with the usual rules tonight,” Cornelia said with a smirk. She took a step towards Helga, and caressed her cheek with the riding crop with a contrasting gentleness. “Last for ten minutes, and you earn a whole gold piece,” she said. A gold piece was nothing for a noble, but for a peasant, it represented more money than they could imagine. For a merchant family like Helga's, it wasn’t an amount to ignore, but certainly, it wasn’t enough to justify her indignity, unless her family business was in truly dire straits.

Helga just nodded, and reached for the buttons of her robe, her fingers moving in a familiar rapidness. A moment later, she pushed her robe on the ground, revealing that, underneath, she was garbed in her birthday suit.

[+100 Experience]

I licked my lips as I drank the sight of her body, even more spectacular than what I could glimpse after my magical malfunction. Her breasts were large enough that my palms would fail to cover them, but firm despite their weight. Her stomach was smooth, but I could glimpse muscles underneath that suggested a fitness surprising for a mage. There was an unkempt bush between her legs that hid quite a bit of the detail, but her legs, toned and firm, was enough reward to ignore that fact for now.

“Where were we,” Cornelia said as she gently dragged her crop on her breasts after a small break where she enjoyed the sight in front of her. “Yes, we were talking about the rules. Last twenty minutes, and you earn another scroll,” she added. From the way Helga’s eyes shined, I could understand that it was an important one, probably a hidden source from Cornelia’s family library. “And if you can last for a full thirty minutes without admitting defeat, I’ll teach you a spell. Clear?”

Helga nodded, trying and failing to hide her fear. Cornelia giggled amusedly. "It's amusing to think that you will be able to last that long. Good luck. Today, you just need to say, Mistress, this pathetic slave is at her limit, please have mercy, to make me stop." Helga's chin stiffened in a way that suggested she was squeezing her teeth painfully, but she still nodded. "Repeat it, just to make sure you can remember it," she added.

"Mistress," Helga managed to spat out from her thinned lips, her hands squeezed enough to become completely white. "This pathetic slave is at her limit, please have mercy."

"Good work," Cornelia said, patting her head in a completely patronizing manner. "Now, stand here, eagle pose."

Helga just followed her directions, seemingly understanding her fate. When she was in her position, Cornelia waved her hands, and a few whispers later, the ribbons she had prepared wrapped themselves around Helga's arms and legs, immobilizing her like a particularly delicious doe fallen into a huntress' trap. Meanwhile, Cornelia reached for her bag and pulled an hourglass, and placed it on the table to measure the time.

"Let's start with something easy," Cornelia said, and her naked hand landed on Helga's hip, the sharp voice echoing in the opening, showing the confidence Cornelia had on her silencing spell. Helga just stayed silent, looking at Cornelia. From the angle I had, I wasn't able to see her expression, but from the way Helga blanched, it didn't seem to be particularly friendly.

[+50 Experience]

With that done, Cornelia took a step forward, her ass danced beautifully, covered only by a thong, once again, crimson. I pulled my shaft free, slowly playing with myself as I watched. For the next few minutes, I have done nothing but watch while Cornelia's hands landed on Helga's body, again and again, marking her pale body with several pink patches, though it only made her sexier. Occasional insults also accompanied her slaps, mainly insulting Helga's lowborn status, mixed in with occasional financial insult. Helga's expression was just as delicious, a mixture of defiance and fear. Though it was a pity that I wasn't the source of that expression.

"Ten minutes," Cornelia said with an amused stretch, marking the end of the first section, of which I have earned another five hundred experience points. Not bad, but watching without contribution didn't seem to net that much. "You have earned one huge gold coin for your success."

While Helga took a series to deep breaths to control herself, Cornelia walked back to the table,

and restarted the flow of sand by turning the hourglass. But when Cornelia grabbed her riding crop instead of raising her naked hand. When that landed on her skin harshly, a pained gasp escaped Helga's mouth for the first time. I suddenly had a suspicion whether she would be able to last another ten minutes. It would be a pity if I earned just a thousand from such an amazing opportunity. But that meant I needed to take action. But how to do it without being noticed.

Then, it clicked to me. It didn't have to stay unnoticed. Helga was already suffering under Cornelia's assault, and from what I had understood from their interaction, Helga didn't have right to ask about what Cornelia was doing, nor she seemed to have any intention of doing so.

So, I conjured another magical appendage, this time formed similar to Cornelia's crop, and waited until Cornelia's whip started to soar through the air. I timed it perfectly, and it landed on Helga's skin the moment after Cornelia's did, triggering a loud cry off her.

[+100 Experience]

Despite the approval of the system, I had neglected to repeat the action the next time, checking them to see whether it created any alarm. Cornelia slammed the whip on her skin once more with her usual joy, though this time, Helga managed to keep her mouth closed. And since I managed to avoid the detection of both parties, there was nothing to prevent from repeating the same action.

[+ 10 Experience]

While the lackluster gain was a bit annoying, it seemed to fit the pattern. Repeating the same action had a much lower impact, which probably linked to risk factor. But small wasn't the same with unimportant, as since I gained it with each repeat, it amounted to quite a bit of experience, especially when combined with the bonuses I received whenever Cornelia decided to do something different, such as biting Helga's breast without a warning, enough to leave a mark that would last for a few days, which netted me another nifty hundred experience points.

Helga's proud expression as she tried to hide the effect of pain to a limited effect had a unique sexiness to it. I could easily see why Cornelia was enjoying the treatment, which could be easily read on her face as she stepped back, enjoying her achievement, unaware that she owed some of her success to my intervention.

I decided to spice things up a bit, so when her crop landed on Helga's breast, I created a mirror image of it, landing on the other one, for the first time, extracting a loud cry from Helga. I should have tried to pace myself, but the moment caught me in its grip as well, and I started to

escalate my involvement.

With my new approach, I had another seven hundred experience halfway the second part, and the achievement was enough to make Cornelia start dripping. However, there was one rather big problem. Helga's expression was getting more and more worn out. I needed to find a way to enhance her resistance if I wanted to get the full benefit of this amazing opportunity.

It would be a pity to cut short such an amazing moment...

[Level: 4 Experience: 7520 / 10000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 8

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 6 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 6

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 132 / 132 Mana: 150 / 188]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (25/50)

Basic Arcana [22/25]]

Chapter Five

It was a pity that I didn't know any healing spell, as it would be the simplest way to enhance Helga's resistance. Unfortunately, that wasn't an option, and considering the disastrous results when I first attempted telekinesis, using her as a target for my first spell didn't make much sense. I needed an alternative.

While I was busy trying to come up with a better way, Cornelia's crop landed on Helga's skin once more, this time directly on her nipple, and Helga let out a cry, even louder and needier than the previous times. I even saw her lips opening like she was about to say something, and considering the situation didn't exactly lean for casual discussion, I feared that it was a sign of her crumbling resistance.

Cornelia must have reached the same conclusion, because the next time her crop touched Helga's body, it was a soft caress rather than another blow. "Pity," she murmured in excitement as she drew a small circle around Helga's breast. "Today, you seem to be even weaker than the usual. Even your failing family would be ashamed of you, a pathetic mage, an outcast, and now, even failing at whoring."

A hiss escaped Helga's mouth against the insult, her dazed glare sharpening. For a moment, I steeled myself, expecting Helga to use a spell to blast Cornelia back. And I wasn't the only one that thought it, as Cornelia took a hurried step backward, and a shimmering disk appeared in front of her.

"Scared much, princess," Helga whispered with abject amusement, stretching each word like they were covered with honey and berries.

For a moment, Cornelia said nothing, the way her fingers tightened around the whip to turn them white the only indicator of her anger. She stood motionless as the shield slowly dissolved.

Helga's pride and satisfaction dissolved with the shield, realizing the enormity of the mistake she had just committed, but the determination was back on her face soon after. I was impressed. Her lips stayed shut, preventing herself from muttering not only the safety phrase, but even a word of mercy that would blunt Cornelia's anger. It was a mistake in my view, as Cornelia didn't look like she was in complete control, and it had taken much less provocation for her to try burning me to a crisp. And for Helga, there was no Marianne to blunt her anger.

My sudden pity towards Helga mixed into my desire to extend the situation as much as possible. So much that I instinctively reached for my nascent arcana abilities while Cornelia's whip

sheared the air, the loudest to date. A shimmering barrier appeared over Helga's skin, both less intense and smaller than the one Cornelia conjured. But its feebleness only worked for my benefit, as it was quietly destroyed the moment Cornelia's whip connected with it, allowing it to contact with Helga's skin.

[+3 Arcana]

[+100 Experience]

Both the increase of my arcana skill and figuring out a new spell was welcome changes, but the benefits of my reflexive action weren't limited to enhancing my magical capabilities. Destroying the shield bled a significant part of Cornelia's hit, and added to the fact that I hadn't been enhancing her blows anymore, Helga just let out a pained gasp rather than an unrestrained cry. Helga looked surprised, but only for a moment, quietly shifting back to determination once more as Cornelia raised her whip for a repeat.

Ten times Cornelia's whip sheared through the air unrestrained, tinged with anger, sometimes on her back, sometimes on her chest, and ten times I managed to conjure a barrier to reduce the damage. But despite that, Helga's lips parted like she was about to say something. Cornelia stopped, and Helga whispered. "Time's up," she said, followed by the last piece of sand in Cornelia's hourglass.

[Achievement: Cloaked Conjurer. Help a lady to resist enmity via magic without revealing yourself. +400 Experience, +2 Intelligence]

[+500 Experience]

Cornelia stopped, but her nakedness allowed me to see her arm trembling badly, like she was conflicted whether to just continue, ignoring her loss of control. Anger scoured her mind. She took a deep breath. I could see that it intensified her anger, but it wasn't the only impact it had. It also transformed her anger from a boiling hot rage to a simmering desire. "That's enough for tonight," she tersely spat, and turned her back, her glee and enjoyment suddenly absent. "I'm not in the mood anymore."

With a flash of wisdom, I understood that she did that, not because she enjoyed delivering pain - at least, not only that- but the sense of control it gave her. And her out of control reaction to Helga's little taunt destroyed the impression she had just built up. To make things worse, Helga successfully resisted Cornelia's out-of-control response, removing the only factor of enjoyment she might have taken from the situation.

Helga slackened in the grasp of the ribbons that kept her upright, relaxing as she realized that she had managed to survive the consequences of arrogance. Cornelia said nothing as she pulled her robe on, then silently put everything in her bag other than the ribbons that kept Helga immobile. She looked at Helga, then her robe, obviously considering whether it would be too petty to take it, tasking Helga to find a way to return to her room naked.

In the end, Cornelia placed a parchment on the table, and put a piece of gold over it to pin it in place. A wave of her hand, and the ribbons flew towards her bag, depriving Helga of her support, who just collapsed on the floor. Another wave dispelled the wards, and Cornelia started to walk away.

“Same time next week?” Helga asked, but the glee on her face was too obvious for it to be just a question. She was clearly gloating her victory, however small. I approved the sentiment, even though it was a shortsighted move in terms of the long view.

Cornelia gave no indication that she heard of it, and disappeared amongst the shelves. Helga just lay on the floor, ignoring the possibility of a surprise guest.

I was struck with a sudden inclination. Would I let Helga go, or somehow push the situation for my benefit? What would be the risk of the situation?

But as she continued to lay on the ground, breathing, her marred but beautiful body in a complete display, her curves covered with an attractive sheen, there was only one decision I could take.

I needed a strategy to approach. There was a lot of things I could do. The simplest thing to do was to stumble at her while she was still naked, but there was little benefit for that. I would see her naked, which didn't add anything to the situation, and while watching her trying to fix her clothes in panic would have been amusing, she might also react violently to my presence, and despite my level and high skills, I had no illusion where my combat capabilities lie. It would take only a moment for her to eviscerate me.

I tried to come up with an alternative approach as I sneaked towards the other side of the library. Regardless of the context, I couldn't have let her think that I had a chance to peek on her in her vulnerable state. But it still left the context of approach. Stumbling at her location after she finished dressing, and using her distress to help her would be the most logical choice. Unfortunately, my idiot persona worked against me on this context. A week ago, I wouldn't have noticed it no matter how obvious, doing otherwise would cause her to pay attention to me, which was a recipe to disaster.

Then again, being myself wasn't the only option, right?

I smirked at my sudden flash of insight. After all, I was still wearing the same pants and shirt I had in the morning, while I convinced the kitchen staff that I was a student at the ranger section. And while it was rare to see the students that didn't focus on magical disciplines in the library, it wasn't impossible. In a hidden corner, I quickly removed my robe, and a couple spells later, I had reddish hair, green eyes, and a distinctive scar on my chin.

But the real change came from the way I positioned my body. Gone was the slouched shoulders, replaced by the subtle grace of a ranger driven by unnatural grace of their unique balance. My physical stats weren't high enough for that, but luckily, subterfuge was enough to cover the rest.

When I walked back towards Helga's location, I made sure to create enough commotion by slamming the books close. Not only it alerted her, but also it gave me an excuse for why I was in this section. I hoped that the sudden fire she had against Cornelia wasn't a temporary reaction, because my whole approach relied on her engaging my presence with a similar fire.

Even with the forewarning, when I saw Helga, she was barely closing the last button of her robe. She looked at me with fearful eyes, understandable considering her vulnerable state, and her lack of friendly acquaintance. "Hello," I said, doing my best to put a moment's tremble in my voice to betray nervousness, while a nervous smile flickered on my lips, both completely artificial. By showing vulnerability, I hoped to reduce her fear. I didn't want her to retreat instantly.

"Can I help you?" she said, but her tone wasn't the same terse one that she used against other magic students.

"Actually, yes," I said, trying to sound genuine. "I was looking for a book on the basics of the arcana magic, but I'm a bit lost."

"Magic?" she said, surprised. "You're a student of magical arts?"

"Ranger, actually" I answered. "But I was trying to find some stuff on arcana magic. I'm considering relative merits of having a more diverse skill set, if I get lucky enough to unlock a magical skill," I followed, giving her a reason for my presence.

"I see," she murmured.

"You could just call me an idiot," I said as I took a step towards her, small enough to not to be threatening. "You don't have to mince your words."

“No,” she said with a blush. “I didn’t mean it like that. It’s an unconventional idea, though. Most people prefer to focus on one side of the skill tree to maximize the impact.”

“Really?” I said, trying to sound earnest. “I would have thought the advantages from the extended utility will be beneficial enough that at least some people are willing to focus on a more balanced approach.” While I listened to her, I pulled a chair while keeping my eyes on her.

She threw a hesitant glance towards the chair, clearly wanting to dash away, but also caught flatfooted by the fact that someone was interacting with her without clear antagonism and insults. But then, her exhaustion won, and she pulled a chair for herself as well. “Partially,” she said, starting her explanation. “But it has more drawbacks. Not only it would prevent you from mastering the critical skills for your main job, therefore reducing effectiveness, but you would also have to focus on the stats that don’t benefit your usual tasks.”

“But stats are acquired more or less randomly.”

“That’s true, unless you’re one of the noble houses with hundreds of years of recorded achievements list to speed up your growth,” she said, a trace of bitterness slipping through her voice. A deserved one, considering she had been humiliating herself to get just a glimpse of that information. “But more time you spent on your activities, more chance you would have gaining another stat point. You really don’t want to have invested in magic unless you have at least seven in intelligence or wisdom, for example.”

“So, I wasn’t wrong, you’re calling me an idiot,” I snapped.

“No-” she said, shocked, but I cut her off.

“Relax,” I said, with a sudden snicker while erasing any hint of anger from my face. “I’m just joking around. You mages should be even more repressed than the gossip suggests if you missed that.” I said.

“Something like that,” she said dismissively, which was understandable. The constant bullying campaign stemming from institutionalized classist behavior wasn’t the best conversation grease. “I’m sorry, but I need to run. But it was nice meeting you,” she said, standing up.

“Did we meet? I don’t even know your name,” I said, and she blushed.

“Helga,” she said curtly.

“Orlin,” I answered, and her face alighted in shock.

“You’re not from the Empire as well,” she said, surprised.

“Technically, I’m, but not in any practical purpose,” I said, quickly creating a background for myself. “I’m from one of the migrating tribes that are tasked to destroy the monster buildups in the northern plains to prevent another incursion like Seven Month Carnage.”

“Then, why are you here?” she asked.

“I was a part of the envoy that had been sent, and since the old geezers would take a few weeks to finish, I managed to get permission to join a few classes in the meanwhile, as a gesture of goodwill.”

“You’re not a student,” she asked, trying to hide her obvious disappointment. I barely held back a smirk. It was clear that she managed to develop a small crush in a matter of minutes, which wasn’t a surprise. Not only I had a decently muscular body thanks to my high and well-rounded physical stats, but my charisma and manipulation was nothing to scoff at either, and their impact was further impacted by my advanced subterfuge skill. My positive approach, something she lacked due to her outcast status, managed to put the final nail in her coffin.

“Unfortunately,” I explained. “My family could never afford the cost of the Silver Halls, and it’s practically impossible to get the scholarship as a ranger, especially if you’re not one of the cronies of these so-called noble houses.” She looked downcast, and I chose that moment to sink the dagger. “I know it’s a bit forward, but would you mind hanging together in the library while I’m here,” I said. After a pause, I added with an exaggerated panic. “To have more discussions about the magic, of course,” I quickly added, like I was trying to cover for a slip of tongue.

“That would be nice,” she said, a genuine smile appearing on her face for the first time. I felt like an asshole, kicking a wounded kitten, but in the end, I didn’t have the option to hold back. And considering the sacrifices she was willing to make for more power, I had a feeling that she would have understood even if I spoke her openly. “I need to go,” she murmured as she stood up.

“Are you okay,” I said. “You seem to be having pain while trying to stand up.”

“It’s nothing,” she spat out in a way that would have alerted me that she had a secret if I hadn’t already known. “Just a little accident while trying to reach for a book.”

“That’s what happens when you ignore your physical stats,” I countered, which put a smile on her face once more. “Do you need any assistance. I could help you to walk back to your room,” I offered.

“You better not,” she said. “It’s better if we avoid attention. The students here have a group mentality, and wouldn’t appreciate me talking with a ranger, especially in the library.”

“I understand,” I said with a wink. “That would be our little secret.” I stood up as well, and before she could start moving, grabbed her hand and placed a soft kiss on her knuckles. “It was a pleasure to meet you, milady. I can’t wait for our next meeting.”

She said nothing as she dashed away, but the sudden blush on her face suggested that she enjoyed the attention. I smiled, not only I had managed to make a hot girl develop a crush, but I had also earned a nifty reward in the process.

[+5 Subterfuge]

[+ 300 Experience]

[Achievement: Charmed Cutie. Impress a girl with your charming words until she develops a crush. +200 Experience, +2 Charisma]

[Achievement: False Flag. Seduce a girl under a fake identity. +400 Experience, +1 Charisma, +2 Manipulation]

I continued to sit on my seat after Helga’s departure, enjoying the sudden burst of warmth on my body as my stats earned a significant jump. I couldn’t help but smile at the state of my stats, half of them already ten or above, and the rest not far behind. From all I had read, it seemed to be a spectacular achievement. Gods were really rewarding me for all my suffering.

I let myself let out a relaxed sigh. Even if the worst happened and I got capped at level five, I would have enough power to go back to my family and earn my post. Five levels were not much, pretty much disgrace level for a noble, but with those stats, I would be able to perform well above my level would suggest. I wouldn’t be a powerhouse by any stretch, and I certainly wouldn’t be able to take my post as the head of the family, but I would be able to live a decent life.

But for some reason, that thought filled me with disgust. No, after everything I had suffered behind the closed doors, I didn’t want to return there for a mediocre life. I either returned to take everything under my control, or I didn’t return at all. Finally tasting the power and freedom, I had no intention of restricting myself. And leaving the Silver Tower behind would mean sacrificing the only chance I had to discover the reason for my situation secretly.

With a renewed enthusiasm, I changed back to my robe, once again disguising myself as the

useless assistant. After tasting the ease I could interact with someone without the weight of my history, the robe felt heavier. With a sigh, I pulled my cart from its hidden location, and returned to the main area, spending the next half hour working, trying to be seen around, while looking for another opportunity. This time, I tried to interact with the people as much as possible without being too obvious, trying to raise my subterfuge skill further, unfortunately, that didn't work. Apparently, it was already high enough that passive observation was no longer an effective tool.

I was halfway to my room when I saw my next inspiration. Two maids, carrying a bunch of stuff towards the ladies' room. "Could I dare to do that," I murmured, shocked by the insanity of my own plan. It was supposed to be a difficult thing, but with my basic magic skill maxed, combined with my high manipulation and subterfuge skill, it might be just possible, especially since the maid uniforms were loose enough to hide the features of my body.

The first task was to acquire a uniform. In my room, I donned my worst clothes, and with a few illusion spells later, I was indistinguishable from one of the manual helpers. In effect, I was invisible as I walked towards the laundry room with a basket in hand, filled with scraps. From there, I carefully swiped a maid uniform without being seen, and ten minutes later, I was back in my room, trying to illusion long hair that still looked realistic when I shook my head.

[+1 Subterfuge]

It took me another hour to fix my clothing enough to look convincing as a woman, a task that I would have failed miserably without the constant insights provided by my skill, on how to stand, how to move, how to avoid the glares of men, and another hundred small topics.

And with my disguise in place, there was only one destination to maximize the benefits...

The luck still seemed to follow me, as I saw an older woman, either in her fifties or sixties, struggling to carry a bucket of steaming hot water. More importantly, she had a specially-colored collar on her neck, denoting that she was a private servant belonging to a house. I counted myself lucky, because those colors belonged to House Louis, the house of my dear savior Marianne.

"Do you need any help," I asked, but only after walking closer to her, using the tone as another tool to conceal my tone.

"Yes," she said, as she placed the bucket of water on the floor. She looked at me in appreciation as she breathed hard. "One of the other maids was supposed to help me, but I have no idea

where that airhead is. Probably frolicking with that servant that was sending her looks all day long. Youngsters, no respects or sense these days..." she said. I just nodded, ignoring her burst, and lifted the bucket.

She started walking, and I followed, until I was in front of a door that was marked with a huge Coat of Arms, a shield with a huge kraken, marking the House Louis' seafaring past. "Why are you carrying water, I thought that the student rooms had hot water from the taps."

"Yes, but this is boiled with special herbs and oils to create a relaxing effect, and it is supposed to increase the speed of healing. Perfect after a difficult day. But it smells horrible while boiling, so it needs to be done in a storage room."

"Sounds a bit wasteful," I said as I poured the water on the bath, which was still only half-filled.

[+1 Subterfuge]

"Nobles," the maid whispered resolutely before returning to normal volume. When she started walking back, I just followed her. I was disappointed to see that Marianne wasn't already in the bath, but still, the interaction while I faked being a woman was enough to increase my subterfuge, which was better than nothing. So, I listened to her chatter, occasionally nodding, allowing me to learn more about the various noble houses and their relationship. She was under the impression that she was sharing idle gossip, I was able to make some interesting conclusions.

"Thank you, youngster. You deserved a copper for your help," she said as she patted my shoulder as I dumped the last bucket into the bath, filling the room with a thick cloud of steam. "I can handle the rest, though the moisture is going to kill my knees."

"I can help if you want," I said before I could fully consider the risks, tempted with the possibilities.

"Really," she gasped in appreciation. "And here I was thinking that all youngsters cared was avoiding work and flirting with lowlife boys. It's amazing to see that there are still some that respect the older people like they supposed to." She smiled happily. "What's your name?"

"Selina," I answered, giving the first name that came into my mind.

"Mine is Griselda," she answered. "Have you served a noble lady in the bath before?"

"I did, but if you quickly explain your lady's preferences, just to make sure I follow them."

“Will you be able to remember them all?” she asked, suspicious.

“I have a good memory,” I said. She looked disbelieving, but went through a long list of things to do and things to avoid, which took a better part of ten minutes, which I recounted back without error, courtesy of my enhanced mental stats.

“Impressive,” she said with a nod. “You can find a towel to change behind that screen. Change quickly. I will bring Lady Marianne in a few minutes, and you can help her undress.” She took a step forward before suddenly turning back. “And, don’t forget. Only one glass of wine for Lady Marianne. She doesn’t handle her alcohol well.” With that, she left, leaving me behind with a mixture of fear and anticipation...

[Subterfuge +3]

[Level: 4 Experience: 8620 / 10000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 11

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 6 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 132 / 132 Mana: 180 / 216]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (34/50)

Basic Arcana [25/25]]

Chapter Six

The extent of the situation I had committed myself in occurred to me as the servant left the room. Walking around in disguise was one thing, and even working in tandem with other servants was not a huge challenge, but helping a girl in the bath was an incomparable risk, especially since I couldn't just beat a hasty retreat if I got discovered. Marianne was predominantly a healer, but still, she was strong enough to defeat me easily.

"Concentrate," I murmured to myself, slapping myself on the cheek for the good measure. I could have escaped by dashing out while muttering some kind of excuse, but that would mean missing out on the experience, which had the potential to be even more than watching Cornelia and Helga together. I needed power, and I needed it as quick as possible.

The decision made, I dashed towards the corner that held the towels. I needed to change into an appropriate attire before Marianne's arrival, it would be a disaster if she caught me naked. I dressed faster than I ever did in my life, and soon I was wrapped with two layers of towels, with some scraps strategically pushed to my chest, and another towel even tighter around my waist to prevent an accident. Then, just for a good measure, I applied another layer of magical disguise on my face.

But a look at the mirror told me that my disguise wasn't convincing enough without a long, flowing skirt to hide my features. I needed something to obscure the view.

A glance around the room gave me the answer. A set of heated stones, with a bucket of water next to it. I quickly dashed there, and poured a cup of water on the stones, turning them into a hot cloud of steam. But I hit another snag when I poured the second cup, barely wisps coming out of the stones. They weren't hot enough!

I didn't have enough time to heat them through the traditional manner, so I reached for my magical abilities. I drew as much as mana I could handle, and tried to shove it into the stone while trying to keep the concept of hotness in mind. Another flicker of steam left the stone, but that was it. The second and the third repeats ended up the same, leaving me gasping in a sudden sense of exhaustion, with more than a third of my mana spent, the curse of lacking the appropriate skill.

[-70 Mana]

Luckily, slowly heating up a stone was the simplest task that could be done through fire magic, and I had already read to have a conceptual understanding of it. After spending another third of

my mana, the room was filled with a thick layer of steam.

And not a moment too early, as I just finished dumping the last cup of water and moved to the location I was supposed to wait for Marianne, the door opened, and a figure that was starting to get more and more familiar with each passing day stepped in the room. She said nothing, didn't even look at me other than a passing glance, and walked towards the seat. She was wearing a simple dress that left her arms naked, again blue.

I smiled at another lucky turn. In the traditional noble approach, Marianne paid no attention to a servant, just moved in her usual manner, and expected to be served. And as long as I continue to serve her, there would be no issue.

She stood next to the wardrobe that held her stuff, and waited. Following my instructions, I walked behind her, and started untying the strings behind her clothes. The strings were tied in a complicated knot, but following the earlier directions, I managed to untie them without an issue. She raised her arms, and I pulled the dress off.

Only for my eyes to meet with her naked back, supported by a glimpse of her beautiful breasts due to my superior position. She turned enough to send a glance at me, and I turned immediately to properly fold and hang her dress, therefore avoiding her taking an extended glare to my face.

[+2 Subterfuge]

My mistake didn't merit more than a second of interest. When I turned back, she was already walking towards the bath, her naked ass swaying attractively with each step, the thick layer of mist making the situation even more attractive. I moved forward to fulfill the next set of instructions, so that I was already next to the bath when she arrived. I presented my hand, and she grabbed it as she slowly lowered herself in the bath, bubbly water hiding her spectacular body from the view.

[+100 Experience]

I was doing my best to act natural while following the instructions, trying to avoid her attention as much as possible. I pulled the wine bottle from the icy bucket that was resting, and filled her glass with it, then filled a second glass with the cold water from the pitcher.

Then, I chose to deviate from the instruction. The old maid had expressly underlined that the water glass should be placed closer to her lady than the wine glass, as she had a tendency to reach the nearest glass while distracted by the warmth of the bath, which was why I placed the

wine glass in the spot instead. Drunker she got, less attentive she would become.

Still, I kept my breath in as she reached for it. Luckily, she neither commented nor tried to look at me as she sipped the glass. When she placed the glass back in its place, she rose in the tub, enough to give another glimpse of her breasts. She sank back into the water after putting it in place, but as a side effect, my towel was starting to get really uncomfortable.

Next few minutes passed in silence, where she rested under the embrace of the water, her eyes shut, occasionally reaching for the glass for another sip. And since she was keeping her eyes wide shut, I saw no risk in tweaking the situation a bit, topping up her glass whenever she placed it back on, making her think that she was still in the first glass.

[Achievement: Intentional Impairment. Engineer a situation sneakily with alcohol to reduce the risk of a situation. +400 Experience, +1 Intelligence. +1 Agility]

“Wash me,” she after several minutes of silence, a moment after the achievement appeared in my field of vision, the slight slurring on her voice aligned with the conclusion of the system.

I was ready, a soft bath glove on my right hand when she raised her right arm, and gently started to caress her skin. My attention was fully on her body, but for a change, for business purposes rather than trying to enjoy her nakedness. My enhanced capabilities were helpful in reading her micro-expressions, ensuring that, when I finished rubbing her arm, I had a solid idea about the optimal pressure and strength I need to put behind my touches.

And it worked even better than I had been hoping for, when I finished her second arm and moved to her shoulders, her moans had a suspiciously lively quality that reminded me the unique moment I had the pleasure of watching in the library. The fact that I had been constantly refilling her glass wasn't a surprise as well, though with my both hands occupied, I started using my telekinesis to do that. It was difficult to do without using my hands to guide the spell, but I managed to do it successfully.

[+200 Experience]

“Are you feeling alright, milady,” I whispered, intentionally breaking another direction the old maid had given me. Never address her without being addressed first. She just hummed in satisfaction, and I smirked, happy with the level of mellowness she achieved. I could move onto the next stage of my plan.

My hand started to follow a wider route as it went back and forth on her shoulder, first covering her collarbone with the soft texture of the bubbles from high-quality soap. With each repeat,

the range widened, until I was caressing the edges of her breasts, but that caused her to stiffen slightly. It was an unconscious reaction, as her eyes were still closed, and she was still moaning calmly, but I chose to take it as a warning.

“Do you want me to rub your feet, milady,” I asked as my hands returned to the safer territories. “I am educated in various techniques to increase your relaxation.” No words left her mouth, but her murmur was a clear indication of her approval.

“Do you want me to place a hot towel on your face, milady,” I added. “It’s treated with the herbs, and it will increase the effectiveness of the massage.”

I realized that I started to tread in dangerous waters when she opened one eye and looked at me. I brought the full extent of the capabilities of my subterfuge skill to give the impression of a young and demure maid, trying to make her mistress happy. It must have been successful, because she nodded instead of blasting me with a combat spell, which would be the inevitable end if she had suspected of my disguise. She might be the calmer and merciful one of the pair, but I would be the first to admit that the situation had warranted it.

I grabbed a towel, and gently pushed a sliver of energy to make it warmer, being extremely careful, both not to alert her, and not to burn the towel with my amateurish fire magic. Once I made sure that it was warm enough, I sprinkled it with some of the perfumed water that was placed next to the bath, and placed it over her eyes.

I moved on the other end of the bath and pushed my hands into the water, and gently pulled her foot out of the water. I sat on the floor with my feet gathered under me, preventing any possibility of an accidental reveal, and pulled her foot on my lap before pressing both thumbs on her soles, and started...

But the moan that escaped her mouth surprised me, though, from her expression, I wasn’t the only one that was surprised. Her hand twitched towards the towel as she blushed, but she chose to reach for the wine instead of pulling off the towel, obscuring her expression.

It was interesting that she tried to hide her reaction from a ‘maid’, though it was likely because there was no hiding the source of her moan. But if she wanted to act like it never happened, I was happy to comply. I restarted the massage, and she just lay on her back, enjoying the massage, but this time, she kept her grip around the glass of wine.

That provided an interesting challenge, continuously delivering the massage while using my telekinetic ability smooth enough to slowly refill the glass without making her notice the

unbalance. I actually had to create a magical platform, allowing the wine to slide silently without causing a splash, and she continued drinking.

The pleasure combined with the alcohol-induced haze had some more interesting effects on her. A moan escaped her mouth as I continued to rub her foot, barely loud enough to be heard. Her hand rose once more, but this time with a more purposeful manner. I felt alarmed when I felt the sudden rush of magic, but relaxed when it took the now-familiar form of silencing field. Though, without an anchor, the ward displayed limited effectiveness, something I had noticed when I heard her next moan, only partially muffled.

Moreover, it was amusing that she thought it would be effective, because even if her voice had been masked completely, there was no hiding her facial expression, shouting her enjoyment as effectively as her moans. I turned my attention from her body, my hands continuing their jobs in autopilot.

It didn't take long for her body to add another dimension to her displays of arousal. Her back arched nicely, which made her breasts peek through the bubbles, the view spectacular. Her enjoyment was a reward in itself, though I couldn't say that I didn't appreciate the bonus that came as a result.

[+300 Experience]

I chose that moment to finally switch from one foot to another. The moment I noticed Marianne reaching for her towel, I lowered my eyes, but continued to watch her from the corner of my eye, noticing that she was examining my face before sighing. She clearly thought that I hadn't noticed her rather enthusiastic enjoyment of my massage. I was willing to bet that the only reason she thought that was my supposed identity as a servant, which, in her mind, was stupid enough to miss the implications. Or at least, she was willing to believe that in her confused state.

I restarted the massage, and she put the towel over her eyes once again, and her back arching immediately after, once again treating me with the amazing view of her breasts. Her moans came soon after, each louder than the previous one. But the fact that she started trembling with a manner that cannot be mistaken for anything else, I was truly surprised. I certainly wasn't expecting her to be that sensitive in her feet.

From her total loss of control as the orgasm danced on her body, I was willing to believe that she wasn't aware of that particular nugget as well. Which made sense if her experience came from Cornelia. She was too meek to instigate such a thing in her own, and Cornelia distinctly

lacked the personality to do something as subservient as paying attention to her feet.

It was convenient that Marianne was busy trying to catch her breath, because I had another thing that deserved my attention.

[+300 Experience]

[Achievement: Magnificent Massage. Trigger a rather unique rush of pleasure through a safe-spot massage. +500 Experience, +1 Precision. +1 Perception]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Basic Fire Magic, Basic Speech, Basic Concealment]

Earning yet another level was an amazing feeling. It was a pity that I couldn't talk to anyone about it, as I probably broke the school record by gaining four levels in less than four days.

While patting my own back was enjoyable, I had more important concerns to address, such as which skill to choose. Common sense recommended Fire Magic, the most destructive school of magic, always in favor in combat applications -which was a lot considering the monster-filled state of the world- but direct assault didn't have any value in my current situation. No, I needed something to reinforce my approach, which was already paying amazing dividends, like Speech.

And luckily, I was in a perfect position to test my newly acquired skill, with a target most receptive, her mind addled with pleasure. "Milady, could you raise your leg a bit more, so I can move onto your calves," I said.

She didn't even pause before raising her leg. Unfortunately, it didn't give me a sudden burst of improvement. Probably because she was far too gone to actually consider the implications of something like that. Still, while the loss of opportunity to enhance my skills was a letdown, her explicit permission to her body was more than enough as compensation.

[+200 Experience]

[+1 Subterfuge]

I slowly started to massage her calves, stretching the moment to enjoy the sight of her breasts, but that proved to be a mistake. Her sensitivity there turned out to be much less than her feet, and even worse, drunk with my own achievement, I was late to notice that detail. "That's enough," she called as she pulled off the towel from her face.

“But, mistress-” I started, another mistake as she instantly cut me off.

“Don’t talk back to me, peasant,” she said sharply, her anger flaring in an instant, excessive even for a noble. She was trying to compensate for her earlier loss of control, though even discounting her situation, her anger was as threatening as a mouse. She stood up, uncaring of her nakedness, her whole body glistening with droplets, begging me to push her down and teach her about the subtleties of disrespect. Soon...

She stepped out of the bath, stopping only lean down and pick the water glass, and since her back was turned at me while she did that, giving me an amazing view of her most intimate spots. I crossed my legs, because, at that moment, even the emergency towel I had used started to fail.

[+100 Experience]

Then she walked towards the small pit with a drain to remove excess water, with several buckets already filled with warm water waiting for her. I dashed faster than her, and when she arrived, I was already there, doing my best to give the impression of a meek servant, scared due to her display of anger.

[+1 Subterfuge]

It seemed to have worked, as her expression turned her usual dismissive one, though she wasn’t good enough to hide the expression of relief from my eyes, clearly happy that her enjoyment from a servant’s hands went unremarked.

With her crisis of anger resolved, the rest of the activities flowed without another notable event. She opened her arms, and I wrapped a fluffy towel around her body, which, unfortunately, cut the amazing view I had been enjoying, then I accompanied her to her bedroom, where the old maid was waiting for us, jumping up her feet the moment she heard the door opening. I let her take from there, not wanting to get away from the concealing presence of the steam, afraid to reveal a certain very important detail about my anatomy.

The moment the door was closed, I dashed towards the dressing area, and put the disguise around as quick as I could manage. Which proved to be a good decision, as before I could disappear, the door opened once more, and the old maid entered the room, walking towards me with purposeful steps.

“Didn’t I tell you that she was to have only a glass of wine,” she said sharply, though I could see that her anger lacked passion, almost monotone.

"I'm sorry," I said, putting a slight hitch to my voice, indicating distress. "But the mistress asked me to, and I couldn't..." I said, letting my words to trail out.

[+1 Speech]

"It's okay," she said exasperatedly after examining me for a while, mercy clear on her eyes. "But be more careful the next time," she added.

"The next time?" I said, this time, my surprise completely honest.

"Yes, the next time," the old maid said with a slight nod. "My mistress indicated that your service was adequate, and she wants you as her bath attendant," she said.

I froze. Luckily, it was a natural reaction for my current personality as well, which gave me a couple of seconds to examine the opportunity. The safest thing to do was to inform her that it was my last day at the university, and I was being transferred back to the family estates of the family I had been serving.

But what was safety against the continuous access to Marianne's sweet nakedness...

"That would do," I said, quickly come up with a lie. "I'm usually free in the evenings, so as long as I got an early warning, I should be arranged. Though that's the only thing I can do, as I have my charge to attend."

"You already have a mistress," she said, suspicious. "But you are not wearing house colors."

"There's a reason for that," I quickly explained. "I'm a servant of house Gaius."

"Gaius?" she repeated in confusion. "There is no current student from House Gaius," she murmured in confusion before her face lighted with realization. "Unless you're serving the Mule," she said, her pity towards me mixing with a clear dismissal.

That dismissal towards my real identity might have made me angry if she wasn't the enabler for the amazing time I had just spent. "Yes, though mostly I work undercover to do the things he supposed to."

"Why?" she asked.

"It's the only way the school would allow him to keep employ," I said. "The house is far enough to be isolated from the casual rumors, and the fact that their heir is working in the Silver Tower despite his Abnormal status allowing them a modicum of pride."

[+2 Speech]

“It’s a pity,” she said, but not caring about the intricacies of my situation. “But it’s your lucky turn, because if you keep the mistress happy, I’m sure that she would eventually make you a part of her household. You certainly kept her satisfied tonight.”

I barely kept myself from cackling against her eerily accurate statement about what happened behind the closed doors. “Whatever the mistress pleases,” I said, playing the part of the dutiful servant.

“Good, then where I could find you,” she asked.

“I usually bustle all around the place during the day, and I have a small room outside of the walls,” I quickly explained, trying to find a reason for my indiscoverable state during the day. “But you can pass a note to young master when he was in the library, and he would pass it to me. He is a sweetheart on things like that.”

[+2 Speech]

“Okay,” she murmured after a moment of confusion, making me glad that I had picked the speech as my new area of expertise. I doubted that the web of bullshit I weaved would have stuck otherwise. “But always make sure to check with him at sunset. The mistress prefers to have her baths in the evening, you can’t miss any of them.”

[Achievement. Unintended Uniform. Find a job that brings unique side benefits under a fake identity without aiming to. +2 Charisma. +300 Experience]

“Thank you for the opportunity,” I said as I bowed, though it was to hide my thirsty smile.

“Good, now, drain the bath and scrub the floors before leaving,” she said, before turning back and leaving. I didn’t complain, because it gave me an excuse to train the flexibility of my telekinesis, not to mention

I was going to have so much fun at my new job...

[Level: 5 Experience: 10920 / 15000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 12

Precision: 8 Perception: 9

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 175 / 175 Mana: 130 / 280]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (40/50)

Basic Arcana [25/25]

Basic Speech 5/25]

Chapter Seven

I was back in the library, doing my mind-numbingly boring menial tasks. I couldn't say I disliked the opportunity though, as it gave me the excuse to think about more important things, such as the close calls I had experienced the previous day. During those events, I had stretched my abilities to the limit, both magical and mundane, risking everything, though the reward I received was above my expectations as well, giving me a job with an amazing perk, continuous access to Marianne's naked curves...

For that reason, I had picked a few books on anatomy and medicine, trying to get some hints on how to improve my massage technique. While it was tempting to get a few skills on the topic. My performance was satisfactory, but there was no harm in enhancing it further.

But the situation with Marianne wasn't my only noteworthy achievement, I thought as I glanced towards the table where Helga was sitting, her eyes turning towards the corridor with an unexpected frequency. Apparently, I had managed to impress her quite a bit, or more accurately, our mysterious ranger did. She was even sitting on a table close to the corridor rather than skulking in a hidden one to avoid any student that might be struck with the idea of bullying her.

It was interesting just how much a crush affected her usual behavior. I would have expected her to act more jaded, but it seemed that the continuous isolation left her hungry for positive interactions, however fleeting. It would be a pity if she missed meeting with the one that she had been waiting for didn't appear, I decided. And I had walked around enough that I could disappear for a couple of hours without raising suspicion.

So, the Mule disappeared behind the shelves, and after careful layering of several soft illusions, Ranger Orlin stepped in his place, with his reddish hair, strikingly-wounded face, and easygoing charm.

I started walking around the shelves, looking like I was looking for a book, while drove closer and closer to Helga's position. I wanted her to think that she noticed me first. It was a small leverage, but that kind of small things had a tendency to compound if managed carefully.

I had been expecting her to notice me after a couple of minutes, after I had came closer to her, but I saw her standing up in seconds after my appearance, showing that she was paying even more attention to her surroundings than I had been expecting, or maybe she had a better observation skill. "Orlin," she called, barely able to hide the enthusiasm in her tone.

“Helga,” I said in response, letting a smile bloom, which widened hers even further. I closed in, and then, bent my knees slightly, and opened my hands in expectation, though I was careful to angle my body correctly, so it followed the traditions of Northern Lands which she belonged rather than the Empire.

Her blush was positively cute as she put her hand on my palm, which only intensified when I brought it to my face and pressed my lips on her second knuckle, rather than fourth, a subtle indication of interest according to tradition. My research on Northern traditions turned out to be quite useful.

“So, what are you doing in the library this early,” I said. “Weren’t you supposed to be in a class?”

“I don’t have any today,” she said, with a slight bitterness. She either had one, but dropped because of the constant bullying, or failed to take a class she wanted to because of the professor not giving her a seat if her tone was any indicator.

Regardless of the reason, I needed to pull her away from the negativity. “It’s my fortune, then,” I said, accompanied by the most attractive smirk I could manage, bringing all my charisma to the forefront. “Because it gave me the opportunity to spend some more time with a radiant beauty like you, and a genius too.”

I had a feeling that without my charisma to boost my stats, the only thing that cheesy line would earn was a hasty escape, or a slap if she was in a particularly bad mood. Instead, she sputtered a struck answer as her breathing quickened. “Thanks,” she barely managed to bring out.

“Excellent,” I said. “You wouldn’t mind helping me look some books on Arcane Magic, do you?” I said, and before she could say anything, held her hand and started walking, dragging her with me. Funny enough, she was about to resist it until she realized I was moving deeper into the library, towards the areas that lacked any student. Usually, a girl would resist being pulled into such an area, but her desire to avoid her bullies were stronger than her common sense.

For the next few minutes, we have walked between the shelves, or more accurately, I dragged her with me while she tried to process casual yet intimate contact we were sharing. As we walked, I started to ask her questions about the various books, which slowly evolved into a discussion about the fundamentals of magical theory.

With the discussion back on the areas where she shows a stronger aptitude, she was quick to shed her crippling shyness. Her blush still remained, so did occasional stammer, but she was

actively contributing to the discussion, explaining the fundamentals of magic. She kept the discussion at the absolute basics, not knowing I had Arcana skill, but even then, there were occasional comments and interpretations that was novel for me.

As we talked, I realized the ruse that could benefit me in more ways than one. After picking a few books, I led her towards a desk, and deliberately sit on the corner of the desk, leading her to do same to create a more casual and intimate environment than the distant chairs would create.

Then, slowly, I started to make seemingly unintentional slips in the discussion, not enough to reveal the full extent of my wisdom, but enough to suggest that I had already taken Arcana skill and achieved quite a bit progress without maximizing the basic version.

But even then, I had to push the envelope quite a bit for her to notice that fact. "You're not trying to decide whether to take the Arcana skill," she said with a shocked manner. "You already have it."

"Guilty as charged," I said with a smirk. "You're even smarter than I had assumed, catching me this quickly," I added, as flattery never hurt, especially when backed with a healthy dose of manipulation and some speech.

"I guess so," she murmured before her gaze sharpening. "But why did you lie?"

"It was supposed to be a secret, as my people have rather strict ideas on daring to learn magical skills when you're not from one of the noble bloodlines, claiming to be cursed otherwise. It will cost me a lot if they realize that I had dared to take one."

[+1 Speech]

Her expression softened as she was caught by the similarity between her struggle and my fake one. "I understand," she said. "But you owe me one for that omission," she added in a way that was supposed to be whimsical excitement but came across choppy and shaky. She was really bad at flirting.

Luckily for her, I wasn't. "Of course," I said before leaning forward, and continuing with a whisper as the distance between my lips and her ear dwindled dangerously. "Whatever you wish for, milady." When I pulled back, her face was bright red. "Are you okay?" I asked cluelessly, putting my hand gently on her cheek. "You look like you have a fever."

"Just a little cold," she answered, jumping at the provided opening with both feet. "Anyway,

since you already have some background, I can help you study magic.”

“Really?” I said with enthusiasm I didn’t need to fake. “You would do that for me? Smart, beautiful, and kind! You’re godsend!” I said as I hugged her.

“It’s nothing,” she tried to stammer, overwhelmed by my response.

“Believe me, it’s not,” I said, squeezing her harder, which had the added benefit of familiarizing her with my muscles while I enjoyed the pressure of her breasts on my chest. She really had a spectacular body.

[+1 Speech]

[+20 Experience]

But after letting her go, I pushed a serious expression on my face. “But we need to keep it secret. It would hurt me a lot if got away that I had been studying magic. I managed to disappear today only by claiming I was going for a hunt.”

“That’s okay,” she said. “We can meet here and I will help you.”

“Thank you,” I said, caressing her cheek gently. Another rather forward action, even by the relatively lax standards of the Northern lands, but she only smiled at the closeness.

“So, what can you do,” she asked.

“Only this two,” I said, and quickly showed my telekinesis and my shield, but I made sure to cast them in a lower capability, much noisier than I could manage, though I didn’t skimp on the general finesse and strength.

“Not bad,” she said. “But you need to be more careful while balancing the energy matrix of the spell...” she added, launching a lengthy explanation, impressively detailed, and actually effective enough to bring my understanding of the subject to a higher level.

“Really, tell me more,” I said after she finished, and meanwhile, put my hand on her knee in an absentminded manner. She blushed, but didn’t ask me to pull it away, instead started another lesson on fundamentals of magic.

The next hour passed in a serious academic mood, broken occasionally by my casual touches, exploring the safer spots of her body, her knees, shoulders, back, and very rarely, lower parts of her thighs. She started to react with less panic after each touch, but her quickening breath was

enough to assuage my fears about the effectiveness of my strategy. And while I had some close-calls, my newly enhanced speech capabilities managed to bridge the gap.

[+2 Subterfuge]

[+3 Speech]

But like everything beautiful, it also had some limits. While it was fun to spend time with her, some distance would only intensify her feelings. “Thank you very much,” I said as once again I placed my hand on her thigh. “But I need to return. I still need to visit the forest and hunt something. It would be suspicious if I return from the hunt empty-handed.”

“You’re right,” she answered, though reluctant.

“Don’t worry,” I said with a chuckle. “We can meet tomorrow in here as well. The same place, and at the same time?”

“That would be wonderful,” she murmured.

“See you then,” I said and leaned to kiss her cheek, though, at the last second, I felt a bit more mischievous. I feinted like I was going left while reaching her right, and she turned to her left panickedly, presenting her lips to my reach for the perfect accidental kiss while trying to avoid the same.

[+100 Experience]

[Achievement: Plotted Peck. Carefully engineer an accidental romantic kiss, fit for ballads. +300 Experience, +1 Precision. +1 Manipulation]

I kept the kiss lingering for a moment, then pulled back, leaving Helga in dazed confusion, though a smile was pushing on her face. “I’m so sorry,” I said with an exaggerated panic. “I would have never done something like that with you if it wasn’t a complete accident,” I added, stressing the word never.

“Why?” she said with a sudden sharpness. “Is there something wrong with me?” she added, her good mood instantly evaporating at my sudden vehemence, so much that she didn’t pay any attention to the fact that she had just let a near-stranger kiss her.

“Of course not,” I said, suddenly abandoning my exaggerated denial in favor of a husky tone while I took a step forward, closing the distance once more. “You are a beautiful woman, and

you deserve a kiss better than the ridiculous touch that we just shared...” I leaned forward while she failed to keep in line with the sudden reversal. “Like this,” I whispered before my hand slid into her hair, and our lips touched.

This time, it wasn't a passive, fleeting kiss. No, I brought my full range of the capabilities out while my hands landed on her back, trying to read her reaction. Luckily, she was too shocked to hide her reaction, allowing me to quickly correct the various aspects of my reaction.

And my lips weren't the only source of pleasure for her. My hands on her back, dancing in the patterns, using the pressure points and sensitive spots taught by my research on massage points. I could feel her body trembling as she struggled not to melt, a losing battle she nevertheless tried to fight.

Soon, her lips joined the dance, but in a small, fleeting manner. They opened and closed, trying to follow my rhythm, but always at least one step behind, failing to bring the appropriate result. I was tempted to push her down, sprawled on the desk, to test how much it would take to overwhelm her crush.

Unfortunately, that had a big risk of exploding to my face, so I pulled back, a smirk on my face. “It was much better, right?” I said as I gently caressed her chin while leaning forward like I was about to kiss her for the third time.

“Yes,” she murmured, her lips parting slightly in preparation for our kiss, but this time, I changed direction at the last second, and in a twisted reflection of the kiss, placed a soft, lingering one on her cheek. “See you tomorrow,” I said before I left, leaving a confused girl in my wake.

[+400 Experience]

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Orion's job was over after I left Helga behind, so I shelved him in a trip to the depths of the library, the Mule coming out once more.

I picked my cart, piled with books, and started walking around. During my passage, I realized that Helga was absent, probably too overwhelmed with what had happened, choosing to disappear back to her room instead of trying to study.

With my favorite target absent, I started walking around the library, occasionally using telekinesis or another spell to mess with the students or the other workers, enthusiastic about experimenting with my newfound talents. It was incredible just how much I improved in during an hour of training.

Nothing short of a small miracle considering my arcana skill was currently maxed out. It made me understand how Helga managed to get a spot in the magical section of the school despite her foreigner and commoner status. Another sign that just how wasteful that kind of approaches could be.

More importantly, it made me change my intentions towards her. Initially, she was just a convenient target to enhance my power, but the fact that she could help me that much in less than an hour meant that she was an untapped treasure. I needed to find a way to acquire her long term, and not just as Orion the Ranger, but with my real identity.

It was a long term objective, as I had no intention to reveal anything to someone else before I was strong enough to defend myself, or sleek enough to avoid any adverse attention. I needed to keep a low profile as long as I could manage.

Unfortunately, as much as I wished it to be, I hadn't had the option of concealing myself passively while scavenging for opportunities. While the future opportunities of Marianne and Helga were more than enough for my prospects, there was something I needed to address to maintain my tenuous hold on them. Or more accurately, someone.

Cornelia.

She had a strong hold over both Marianne and Helga, which meant that no matter how elaborate my plan, how strong my hold, I couldn't predict when she would interject and break my plans. I had no information on her, not even why she was risking to have her dalliances in the library rather than in her room. Was it just a fetishistic preference, or did it have a more important reason?

But luckily, I had recently come up with a way to learn it.

When I saw Cornelia entering the library, I took it as a sign to get away. Following her to see whether she would bring me another opportunity to earn some experience, but the lack of information was too dangerous in my case. I needed to learn what makes Cornelia tick.

I sneaked out of the library an hour before the supposed end of my shift, and after a brief stop at my room, I was once again wearing my maid costume, and started walking in the wing

where it held the rooms for the female students. Though, this time, I made sure to apply a different face. With a few extra lines on the face, graying hair, and a slouched walk, I was replicating the sight of a forty years old maid perfectly.

This time, I had more confidence in my walk, not only I had a better command of the layout, but also my skills in speech and subterfuge were sufficiently high, enough to dismiss the suspicion of any maid. Most of them were Abnormals, and the rest, I doubted that any of them had enough in their stats to penetrate my improved disguise.

I started looking around to find someone to help me. A minute later, I succeed, in the form of a young maid skulking in the shadows, trying to avoid work. I had a feeling that she wasn't very bright, trying to hide in such an obvious location, though it worked well for my intentions. "Greetings, youngster," I called her, who flinched when she realized that her scheme had failed. "Do you have a minute or two to answer my questions?"

"Of course," she said with relaxation when she realized I wasn't planning to order her to do some kind of menial work. "How can I help you, honored elder," she said.

"My lady is about to join the halls of this esteemed institution, and they asked me to come early to pick her room and everything. So, I wanted to learn about how everything operates. Would it be a bother for a smart young girl to guide her elder."

[+1 Subterfuge]

Excited to find flattery rather than admonishment she had been expecting, she was quick to launch a detailed explanation about how everything worked. Funny enough, half of the information she provided was inaccurate, conflicting with itself, forcing me to keep a mental tally of everything and crosscheck the results. Still, after fifteen minutes, I had managed to learn quite a bit about how they operated, including a lot of casual secrets about the maids.

"And how about the students," I gently prodded. "After all, I need to pick a nice room for my ward, and neighbors are important."

"I don't know, we're not supposed to talk about the nobles..." she murmured, but when I twirled my fingers and a silver coin appeared between them, her tune changed. "But on the other hand, your mission is also important. It's hard to decide." The amount of silver in my hand doubled. Her hand moved in an eerie quickness, her greed overcoming her limits.

[+2 Speech]

“Now, the first thing to know...” she started, and I listened...

[Level: 5 Experience: 11740 / 15000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 12

Precision: 9 Perception: 9

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 11

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 180 / 180 Mana: 240 / 285]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (43/50)

Basic Arcana [25/25]

Basic Speech 12/25]

Chapter Eight

My undercover interrogation session with the young maid had worked even better than I had expected to. Not only I had managed to learn a lot about the way the servants operated, which would make my disguises even more convincing, but also I had managed to gather quite a few interesting nuggets of information about the students. Some casual, like the fact that Cornelia having two maids serving her, one younger one that handled the menial tasks, and an old matron that mostly sat around, raining orders to other servants.

Some were more interesting. Like the fact that she had, during a midnight walk -which she had been dallying with another servant or a guard if her sudden blush was any indicator- had seen Cornelia and the old maid fighting, or more accurately Cornelia shouting aggressively while the old matron ignoring her in an obvious dismissive attitude. A weird balance of power, but the implications I wasn't able to guess without more information.

Luckily, my undercover interrogation also gave me the tools to investigate the reasons for it. The maid was more than happy to inform me that the younger maid was having some friendly walks with one of the guards, and she even saw her disappear with him a few minutes ago.

So, after leaving my unwitting informant behind, I searched for a corner, and after a few more illusions, I was dressed in the colors of House Antony, with my general looks and hair colors the same with the younger maid. Unfortunately, I hadn't seen her, neither I had enough finesse to copy a face without fault even if I did, but I kept my head down as I walked towards Cornelia's rooms, willing to bet that no one would pay too much attention to me.

A minute later, I was at the door. A magical probe revealed that it was warded, but it wasn't a particularly strong one, relying on the fact that no one would dare to enter the room of such an important house without an invitation. Even better, it had an intentionally weak part, to allow someone carrying a keystone to enter without triggering the alarm.

A bad assumption, as I quietly expanded my magical reach, and copied the necessary pattern, which staggered the ward just enough for me to open the door and sneak inside. When I pulled my energy back, the protective veil was back on, a touch weaker than it was supposed to be, but I was willing to bet that Cornelia wouldn't take notice of such a small change.

I threw a glance around the room. Cornelia's room was better than Marianne's in both size and furnishing, which only highlighted the relative difference of power between them. House Louis was just a minor one, while House Antony was a major one, and seemingly with a corresponding enjoyment of unnecessary opulence. And it was just the first room, with a few

seats, just to greet visitors.

While I would have liked to enjoy the comforts it provided, I didn't know when someone, either Cornelia or one of the maids, would return, so I initiated my search. Predictably, the first room, open for all visitors, didn't have anything interesting, so I moved onto the next room, which was another sitting room, but in a more private setting. I didn't spend too much time there either. I was tempted to swipe one of the candlesticks, made from pure silver, expensive enough to address a lot of my monetary needs, but that would be too suspicious. They were all stamped with the house crest.

But the real treasure was the bedroom, which laid behind another ward, this time stronger, more intricate. And unlike the previous one, it didn't have an intentional weak point to allow the keystone-bearers to pass without raising an alarm. As a result, it was much more difficult to bypass without triggering. Conveniently, there was no one around, which gave me enough time to slip through it before raising an alarm, only because it was a simple design, not constructed to resist against another magic user, lacking any kind of trap that might create a backlash in case of a careless touch.

After a deep breath, I mentally reached for the strings of magic that held the ward together, carefully unfolding them, occasionally building temporary arcane holds to maintain its structural integrity, my palms sweaty with stress. It took twenty minutes, and more than two-thirds of my mana pool, to create a safe passage that would allow me to pass.

Another difficult choice awaited me. I either turned back and left, wasting the effort I had put in there, or slip inside, hoping that I would be able to unravel the same thing easier while leaving. And I had just a few seconds to decide it.

In the end, I took the step forward. I needed to have a better grasp of Cornelia, lest she upended everything I worked for without even knowing. I dismissed my temporary magical scaffolding bit by bit, letting the ward fall back its previous state, providing full coverage for the room.

"Finally," I murmured as I looked around Cornelia's bedroom. I would have liked to be surprised by the richness of the furnishings -rare wood, gold platings, and paintings I didn't recognize but looked very expensive-, but after seeing the rest of her rooms, I couldn't say that I was impressed.

I tried to apply one of the tricks I had learned from Helga, gathered my magic and then let it spread like a bubble, trying to find something worthwhile. Unfortunately, it failed spectacularly,

not because it wasn't able to find anything, but because there were too many magical items in the room. And I was afraid to put anything more than the absolute minimum behind it in fear of triggering the ward, making things even more difficult.

In the end, I decided to write it off as a loss, and observed the room, relying on the more primitive approach of using my own eyes. The first thing I noticed was her desk, with several books, and expensive-looking parchments furled open, all covered with several active runes, denoting their high value. It wasn't exactly cheap to produce parchments strong enough to hold active runes, and they were used for valuable things.

Moreover, I recognized some of the books, as they belonged to the private wing of the library, where it held the ones with actual precious knowledge, but the access to it was highly regulated. I was surprised that she had been allowed to remove them from the library. Apparently, being a part of an important family had even bigger benefits than I first assumed.

The other books, I failed to recognize, but since their spines were marked with the crest of House Antony, it wasn't a huge deductive leap to accurately guess their sources. I wondered whether this information was what Helga was looking for, remembering the scroll exchange that went between them. I was tempted to steal one of them, but that would alert Cornelia about the uninvited guest in her room, and I didn't want to jeopardize my access. And while copying would be a nice compromise, there were too many targets, especially since I didn't know what Helga was looking for.

With that path shelved, I started going around the room, carefully opening her drawers, hoping to find a secret that would give me some kind of advantage on her. Maybe a letter, or if I'm incredibly lucky, a personal diary. Unfortunately, with each drawer I pulled open, my hopes dwindled. Maybe sneaking into her room wasn't as well thought out as I had first envisioned. It certainly didn't bring the treasures I had been hoping for.

The next drawer I had opened turned out to be holding her underwear, some of them in a particularly spicy variety. I snorted as I pocketed one of the particularly interesting ones, black, more lace than fabric, and see-through. Not that I had any plans of actively using them, but having them was enough. At least, I could console myself by claiming it wasn't completely worthless!

[Achievement: Thief of Treasures. Risk your life to acquire a treasure worthy of everything. +500 Experience. +2 Agility]

I couldn't help but let out a snort. Who would have guessed that the system had a sense of

humor, which threw a lot of questions about its source, especially curious since none of the books that I had read had mentioned something like that. So, it was either a secret, or something unique to my case. Still, the resulting boost was no means unwelcome, as I could feel my body starting to move with an unfamiliar lightness, my balance significantly better.

And funny enough, I couldn't even say the reward was excessive, as a mistake would bring the wrath of Cornelia to my head, a woman that almost killed me because I stumbled on her in a compromising position while she was in public. There was no telling what she would do if she caught me in her room, sneaking around, looking for her secrets...

I tested the system by trying to steal a few more things, but it turned out to be a one-off thing. I would still try it in a different room, but that was for a different time.

I was reaching for another drawer, indistinguishable from the rest, when I felt a flicker of magic. I instantly pulled back, and probed it with magical senses instead. "Pits of hell," I murmured as I examined the results. I had finally found the drawer I had been looking for, which would have been good news if it wasn't for the wards around it. At least three interlocking ones, managing to erase almost all magical presence while conveniently making the trick I had pulled on the door impossible. The wards had keyholes, for the lack of a better term, but different from the main entrance, the locks were designed with magic in mind. It wasn't enough to have the correct keystone, they also required the correct pattern to be known. Even if it was possible to unravel them without the stones, which I wasn't sure, it would require a much higher skill than I currently had.

But I didn't have enough time to lament that fact, because the ward around the room suddenly started fluctuating. Simultaneously, I felt the door opening. I did the only thing I could, opened the door of the nearest wardrobe, and sneaked inside, closing the door the moment the other one started to open.

The sheer magnitude of my luckiness hit me with the full weight of a rabid dragon. It was a close call, and without the burst of agility I had experienced, I doubted that I would have been successfully sneaking my way into the wardrobe and close it behind me without making a discernible sound.

The safe thing was to close the door and ensure my concealment. Still, there was the question of the identity of the intruder, so I kept the door ajar, once again ignoring the requirements of common sense.

The intruder turned out to be an old woman, dressed in as the other servants, stepped into the

room, marked with the colors of House Antony. A curious development, a maid breaking into the privacy of her mistress. Combined with the gossips about their fights, it created an even more interesting picture.

But I was more interested in the way she was moving. For once, she had a straight, confident gait as she walked, something that would fit better to a minor noble rather than a servant, especially one that was currently invading the privacy of her mistress. Even if she didn't know about Cornelia's impending arrival, the way she systemically went through the same drawers I had gone through, but she went through its contents with impudence, uncaring of the mess she left in her wake.

I felt excited as she neared the warded drawer that had stymied me quite a bit. She wouldn't have been able to open it, of course, but the reaction to her attempt might have given me some clues.

Before that could happen, the sound of door slamming reached my ear, followed by a set of hurried steps. When the bedroom opened in the same aggressive manner, I wasn't surprised when it revealed Cornelia, her face contorted with anger.

I couldn't help but admire the maid when she turned towards Cornelia, in a shocking display of calmness. I doubted that I would be able to stay as calm, especially when facing Cornelia, even angrier than the night that almost ended with my death. "Can I help you, mistress Cornelia," she said calmly, but even more interestingly, I managed to catch a hint of amusement on her tone, which made me even more curious.

"What are you doing in my room," Cornelia said, the words leaving her mouth in a slow, methodical rhythm, one might trick a passerby to think that she was calmer, but I could sense the oppressive waves of magic that was rolling off her with each word. It also had the added benefit of showing me the gulf of power between us.

"I'm going through the periodical cleaning of your room as I'm ordered, milady," she said, still calm.

"Fuck your orders," Cornelia said, slamming her hand on the door. When she pulled back, there was a scorch mark on the door. "Didn't I tell you that you will stay away from my room, you old shrew."

"Be careful, milady. Such displays are not befitting the presumptive heiress of your esteemed house," she told haughtily.

“Don’t patronize me, you old crone, I ordered you to get out of my room,” Cornelia said, but still unmoved.

“And should I remind you that the orders from the Lord of the House always take the precedence, and he ordered me to keep your rooms in good order.”

“Not the lord, but the regent,” Cornelia said as she took a step forward, her hand covered in flames. “Don’t dare to call that bastard the lord of the house in front of me again, you pathetic bat!”

The last thing I expected was for the maid to look even smugger, tinged with satisfaction. She said nothing as Cornelia closed in, and stood in front of her. I didn’t know exactly why the maid was goading Cornelia, but it was clear that it was somehow linked to inheritance, otherwise, there wouldn’t be that much needling on the correct form of the titles.

Cornelia managed to suppress her anger before physically harming the maid, which weirdly enough, made her look disappointed. “I would leave if you desire so, milady,” the maid said as she walked out. “But you need to be more careful to keep your room in order if you are determined to reject my help. We wouldn’t want to be known that the heiress of our glorious House is a slob, would we?” With that, she left the room, leaving the door open.

Cornelia closed with a wave of her hand, magically slamming it shut. The silencing ward came up just a moment later, and then a shimmering shield appeared in the middle of the room, absorbing the bolts of fire she started to throw, each accompanied by a furious cry.

I would have liked to say that I watched her display of anger calmly, but that would be a lie. All it would take for her to check her wardrobe, and I would be dead... A fear that stayed close to the surface during the several long minutes that Cornelia rained flames on the surface, proving that her nickname, Queen of Flames, was not just an empty boast.

Luckily, neither anger nor mana was boundless, even for Cornelia. After a while, she dispelled the shield, and sat on her bed, breathing heavily, occasionally muttering, too quiet for me to hear, but from her expression, I guessed that they were curses. But even that didn’t last long. She moved to open the warded drawer, the one that I wasn’t even able to start trying.

She pressed her ring on the center, then flared her magic in a weird, unbalanced way, which was likely a pattern to complete the physical part of the key. It seemed that she took the security of that particular drawer very seriously. After the drawer was open, she carefully pulled a stack of paper, either letters or legal documents, and quickly counted them. All must

be there, as she was considerably calmer as she put them back on and reengaged the defensive wards.

She returned to her bed, and her back was turned as she reached for the strings that held her robe together. I lamented the fact that I was missing an amazing view. When she finished unfastening it, she pushed it off her shoulders, and it fell on the ground, and my annoyance evaporated with it as I examined her beautiful figure, drabbed in a sexy corset and equally sexy panties.

[+100 Experience]

Still, the burst of experience I received wasn't the only interesting about it. Even from my restricted angle, it was obvious that her corset wasn't correctly placed, with half of its strings untied. Apparently, Cornelia's annoyance wasn't just at the presumption of her maid, but also for her timing, cutting her fun-time prematurely. With Marianne, I guessed, based on the fact that she was wearing something softly sexy rather than danger-and-domination themed one she had been wearing while her extended encounter with Helga.

I had been expecting her to fix her underwear before wearing her robe once more, which was why I was pleasantly surprised when, after a brief struggle with its thin straps, her corset followed the same path with her robe, and ended up on the floor, giving me the full view of her naked back.

[+100 Experience]

It was the first time I had the pleasure of examining her body without distraction. Tall, lithe, yet curvy where it counted, under the shimmering light of her room, she looked like a masterpiece, like a sword wrapped with a scabbard inlaid with rubies, sharp, beautiful, but with a potential to turn deadly in any moment. Though, the threat only made my boner harder as I watched her to remove her panties.

[+100 Experience]

I had been cautiously hoping that the next thing she had in mind was to have a nice shower, though a part of me treating that cautious part like a traitor. While missing out on the show would leave me with blue balls, it would also make things significantly easier.

But it turned out that my twisted yet beautiful luck was working overtime, as she chose to throw herself on her bed, with a perfect angle to give me an excellent view of the treasure between her legs, a rather tantalizing view even before her fingers joined the battle, and started

caressing her folds in a surprising urgency, like she was using the rush of pleasure to counter her stress. A good strategy, and it was certainly working out for me.

[+200 Experience]

And what kind of man I would be if I didn't use such a beautiful opportunity to its full extent. I pulled my shaft out while trying to make no sound, and started caressing it. Gently, as I was afraid of the possibility of alerting her if I used a more frantic pace, but luckily, the beautiful sight in front of me left no need for such assistance. The adrenaline from the fear of getting caught was just the sprinkles on top.

Under these factors, it wasn't a surprise when I arrived at the finish line before Cornelia despite her head-start, leaving my mark on the interior of her wardrobe. Soon, Cornelia shuddered for a moment, marking the completion of her objective, but it was a short one, consisting just a shudder or two before she stood up, and walked out of her room after picking a towel, probably for a relaxing bath.

[+300 Experience]

And she didn't bother reestablishing the complicated ward on the door, putting an extremely simple one in place instead, just enough to prevent her maid from going around. After listening for a minute, making sure that there was no one in the living room to notice my retreat, I escaped from the room, letting out a relaxed breath only after I managed to find a corner, and transform into a generic servant with no house colors.

Still, all included, I couldn't say that I was dissatisfied with the results. Even with the exhaustion from my almost depleted mana and the stress from several close calls, my expedition resulted in a generous bundle of information, with a few secrets included.

Now, I just needed to find a way to use them...

[Level: 5 Experience: 13040 / 15000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 12

Precision: 9 Perception: 9

Agility: 9 Manipulation: 11

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 190 / 190 Mana: 45 / 285]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (43/50)

Basic Arcana [25/25]

Basic Speech 12/25]

Chapter Nine

After leaving Cornelia's room, I used the first opportunity I had to change into my other, more permanent, maid identity. I would have preferred to change back into my own identity, as walking around in a dress wasn't something I particularly enjoyed, but it would be hard to explain why the 'Mule' was walking around in the section for the elite portion of the female students.

It turned out to be a prudent choice, as I was distracted by a familiar voice. "Selina," she called, though I would be able to recognize her even if I hadn't been able to recognize her voice. Only one person knew the name of this fake identity.

"Madame Griselda," I said as I turned, curtsying respectfully, a motion which she waved off.

"So lucky," she murmured. "I was just trying to find you, but neither you nor your employer was around."

"He's probably lost," I answered. With the contempt she had in her voice while mentioning my real identity, I didn't think she would have any trouble believing that particular lie. I wasn't really angry at her though, how could I be, when she gave me such an amazing gift the last time. "So, why were you looking for me?"

"Mistress has arrived from the library early, and asking for a bath, and sent me to find you" she explained. "I know that it's a bit sudden, but if you don't have any other task-" she continued until I cut her off.

"I will be delighted," I answered, giving the first true answer of the night to her. I didn't think that I would have been able to contain my excitement if it wasn't for my well-developed subterfuge skill. I had a feeling that Marianne's sudden arrival had been linked to Cornelia's disappearance, cutting their private time short. "I have already completed all my other tasks."

"Excellent. Let's go and prepare the bath."

I didn't exactly welcome her presence in that phase, not with the additional preparations I needed to complete. "I already know everything other than how to prepare that herbal water. Let's go prepare that, and I can handle everything else."

"Such a reliable youngster," she said happily. "The bath water is already boiling in the same room."

“Then there is nothing preventing you from getting a couple of hours of rest, is there? Actually, why don’t you just take the night off? I can attend her for the rest of the night.”

[+1 Speech]

“You would do that for me?” she said happily. “Still...”

The fight between her desire for an early night and her sense of responsibility was obvious. I had a feeling that, without any external involvement, the latter would come out victorious. Luckily, nothing was preventing me from being that external force. “Don’t you trust me?” I added, doing my best to sound fragile, even managing to push a tear from the side of my eyes. Her suddenly growing eyes implied success before she managed to speak.

[+1 Speech]

“Of course I trust you,” she answered in hurry. I softened my expression. “Mistress is very satisfied with your service as well,” she continued in a more leisure pace, unaware of the type of satisfaction her mistress had experienced.

“Excellent,” I answered. “Why don’t you go and rest, so that you’ll be able to attend her, fresh as a daisy.”

She had left, but only after giving me a detailed breakdown of Marianne’s nightly ritual, which I memorized in just one repeat, making her relax even more about relying on me about her charge. When she left, I went to the preparation room, where a huge cauldron was filled with hot, simmering water. I filled two buckets, carrying them with a near-dashing pace, wanting to finish the preparations before Marianne lost her patience and decided to resolve her need in a solitary manner.

Several minutes and three rounds of buckets later, I was in Marianne’s bathroom, once again dressed in my towels, the room filled with steam for good measure. After one last check to make sure everything in place, I stepped out, and knocked on the door of her bedroom. “The bath is ready, my lady,” I called, doing my best to sound tricky.

She said nothing, just let out a dissatisfied grunt to notify she had heard me. I dashed back to the bathroom, just in case she decided to call me in her bedroom. An interesting proposition for sure, but I wasn’t ready to be seen by her without the protective curtain of the steam to blunt the edges. My disguise was good, but not that good.

When Marianne walked into the room, wearing a loose dressing-gown, barely held together by

a sash, I could read a few emotions on her lovely face. The first was the annoyance. The reason didn't take long to confirm. "The next time, I expect you to wait in front of my door," she said with a sharp tone, with all the entitlement of a noblewoman used to get everything she demanded from the lower classes.

"Of course, mistress," I answered, raising my voice to hide my desire to laugh out loud, because it wasn't only anger I could hear in her tone. There was a strain hidden underneath, one that reminded me of the early stages of her encounter with Cornelia, before the redhead cut loose and satisfied her needs. A task that fell under my purview after my 'accidental' success during her last bath.

And the strain of her voice wasn't the only indicator. With a pull, she got rid of her loosely tied sash, giving me a glimpse of her voluptuous body. Even better, the limited view thanks to the steam cloud hung between us, the view had gained an exotic quality, the resulting beauty enough to strain the capabilities of the towel wrapped around my waist that secured my secret.

[+50 Experience]

When she started walking, her gown flowed behind her, adding to the mystique, but after a shrug of her shoulders, the gown fell on the ground, leaving her in her birthday suit as she covered the rest of the distance with the bath.

[+100 Experience]

Showing off my amazing maid skills, I was already at the edge of the bath before her arrival, my arm raised to help her. She grabbed my hand as her feet touched the bubbles that covered the surface of the water, and helped her to lower herself, no matter how much it hurt to hide that spectacular body in the concealing embrace of the water.

I wore the bathing glove on my right hand with some soap while she soaked in the water. She reached for her wine glass, already filled with a generous amount, and took a sip that noticeably changed the amount inside.

I planned to let her wait a few minutes as she sipped some more wine, mellowing her further in collaboration with the gentle caress of the hot water, but she changed my mind when she sent a glance to my way, biting her lips at the last second to prevent herself from saying something. Likely asking me to start quicker, I presumed. As a humble servant, who I was to disappoint?

I gently grabbed her right arm, the one that wasn't currently occupied with the wine glass, and started rubbing with my gloved hand, while the naked one supported from below. At first, the

delivery was restricted to the glove, but soon, the fingers of my naked hand joined the dance, slowly going back and forth in a rhythmic pattern to support the massage.

Even more, when I reached higher parts of her arm, I positioned my left hand carefully, resulting in the back of my hand, resting 'accidentally' on her breast. She flinched a bit on my touch and turned to me, but I kept my eyes on her arm, not giving the slightest indication that I had noticed her gaze. A while later, she took another sip and returned her position, her eyes closed to enjoy the massage, implicitly accepting my touch.

[+100 Experience]

Satisfied with the result, I continued to dally on the upper part of her arm, while continuing to rub her breasts gently, not just for pleasure but also to make her get used to my touch. However, only after shifting into her other arm, I had realized that, in the excitement of the moment, I failed to attend a rather important task, sneakily refilling her wine glass. When I turned towards her, the wine glass was already empty, resting on the side.

"Another glass, mistress," I asked, hoping to fix the issue, but I just received a shook of her head in return. A pity, as her tipsiness would have increased the ease of my task. But a moment later, I shrugged, as the challenge would make the eventual result only tastier.

With that decision in mind, I have subjected her other arm the same stretched out treatment while she enjoyed the gentle embrace of the water, ignoring the signs of her impatience. There was a certain pleasure in watching her as she struggled not to order me to hurry up, not wanting to risk what she thought as successful concealment of her intentions. It was interesting just how easy for her to convince her to the obviousness of the servant class...

[+1 Subterfuge]

Still, internalized class discrimination in the society wasn't the topic I needed to focus right now, not when I had a unique access to such a voluptuous beauty, especially when she occasionally bristled in the water, which raised her breasts above the protective cloud the bubbles, tempting me to dismiss the caution and sink my fingers into their beautiful expanse. But I held back, focusing on slowly eroding her resistance through pleasure.

[+200 Experience]

After another extended treatment of her shoulders, I moved onto her back. On there, I decided to mix things up a bit by applying some of the knowledge I had gained from medical books. After a cursory pass with the glove, I have removed the bath glove from my hand, and pressed

my thumbs on both sides of her neck, on the first knot of her spine, and started dragging them down, my other fingers caressing her back to enhance the sensation.

Thanks to my stats, it wasn't exactly difficult to read her body language to fine-tune the pressure and the pattern of the caress I was applying on her back. I dragged my fingers down in a glacial pace, enjoying the softness of her skin while earning a moan of her. With the confirmation that I was on the right track, I focused on her back for a while, until she was straining to keep her moans inside.

I put back the bath glove before moving back to her shoulders, but this time, focusing on the front side while my hands dipped dangerously close to the curves of her breasts. No reaction from her. In the second pass, I made sure the caress the edge, the exact move that had alerted her the previous time despite her tipsiness, but this time, it went without a reaction as well. She had been mellowed enough.

It was the time to give her a full-frontal treatment, I decided as my gloved hand sank into the water, and made a pass over her breast. It was a neutral, clinical pass, easy to defend in case it angered her, but once again, it went unmentioned, with no reaction from her side, her eyes closed. When I made another pass, this time with more pressure, she reacted by a subtle pressing of her lips, but contrary to the last time, it only invigorated to go further, recognizing the sign of a held-back moan.

I continued caressing her breasts exclusively with my gloved hand, just in case of an adverse reaction, couldn't help but feel amazed at the benefits of a well-constructed identity.

[+1 Subterfuge]

[+300 Experience]

As the seconds stacked tall enough to create a pile of minutes, I decided it was the time to push further. Perhaps it was ill-advised, but the glove I was wearing was limiting the sensations, giving me just a taste, making me long for more. My left hand started listening to the orders of my brain as it slowly sunk into the water, and sank into her breast.

[+250 Experience]

The feeling I was getting was heavenly, but there was still one important issue, namely, why a maid was holding her breast for such a long time. I decided to go with a simple explanation, and used my grip to raise her breast, my gloved hand washing the underside of it. Her breasts, despite their largeness, was firm and shapely enough to not to need such a treatment, but she

must have been more lost in the pleasures of the flesh, because a moan, a rather throaty one, was the only reaction from her.

I let out a relaxed breath at her reaction. It was one thing to know the implicit reason for my presence, and another to get implicit permission to push even further. My naked fingers started dancing on her breasts, paying lip-service to the excuse of creating the reach, while the gloved hand hungrily danced on the bottom of her breasts.

I decided to leave another layer of caution behind and positioned my hand directly above my hand. Her nipple, hardened with arousal, started to press on my palm, tempting me to twist it toyingly. Unfortunately, that was out of the question, so I limited myself to gently increase the pressure of my palm, adding a touch of friction to the balance. Something she enjoyed, if the sudden arching of her back was any indicator.

[+300 Experience]

But even as she started showing increased signs of arousals, her eyes stayed firmly closed, probably not wanting to be distracted from the heated daydream that was playing in her mind. Why not spice things up more, I thought as a sudden inspiration struck me. Yes, both of my hands were currently busy, not to mention using my other appendage was completely out of question, but luckily, magic was always ready to provide an answer.

It was difficult, trying to use magic this close to another accomplished student, but her rather distracted state helped me a lot, and the lessons I learned from Helga was enough to bridge the gap. I took a deep breath before slowly shaping up my mana into telekinetic force, creating an almost unnoticeable disturbance on the depths of water, just an inch away from where her legs met each other. The water started twirling as an orb, which delivered an invisible message to her most sensitive spots.

Almost, but not quite, evidenced by the increased frequency of moans, not to mention they were a touch louder as well. It was a moan that begged for a final climax.

[+500 Experience]

She was on the edge of an orgasm, and it would take a hard push into the soft flesh of her breasts, or a quickening of the small water trick I was using. And since she was already on the edge, plagued with an unmet orgasm, giving her the release she was seeking would be the nice thing to do.

Naturally, I slowed down.

It was amusing to watch her expression after I dispelled the water trick. A moment's confusion found itself between layers of pleasure as she tried to understand the reason for the sudden loss of pleasure. And I chose that exact moment to move down even further to her stomach. Even with her eyes closed, I could read her internal argument from her expression, considering ordering me to go back to my previous post.

I could easily imagine that order leaving Cornelia's lips, but Marianne was not as forward, even to a servant that was supposed to follow her orders. But it was convenient for me, because it gave me the excuse to dally around her stomach, my arm occasionally rubbing against her nipple under the guise of an accident, keeping her arousal up, but not to a point where she would find the climax she was seeking.

[+500 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Advanced Arcana, Basic Fire Magic, Basic Politics]

While another level was always welcome, I couldn't help but feel intrigued by the skill selection. The magical ones were quite clear, but politics was an interesting one. I hadn't seen anything remotely close in all the books I had read in the library. On the other hand, it didn't mean much, as I was still limited to the public parts of the library, which meant that anything remotely controversial wouldn't have a place there. And I could imagine a skill like politics hidden in the depths of the library, accessible only for the most influential noble families. Considering the interesting ways I had managed to use subterfuge, I could only begin to guess the potential for the political one.

I was tempted to choose it as my new skill, but at this point, I could ill-afford to take the risk of it turning out useless. In my circumstances, there was little application for it. I chose to improve my Arcana skill instead, wanting to maximize the benefit from my sessions with Helga. And frankly, arcana magic had too many applications for me to actually ignore.

With that resolved, I barely held back a laugh when I pulled back, only to create a panicked expression on her face. "It's time for your legs, milady," I said preemptively, reminding her that we were still halfway in.

[+3 Speech]

It was nice for the system to acknowledge the trick I pulled with a double-increase of my speech skill. I walked with deliberate slowness, and when I took my new spot, her leg was already up,

waiting for my attention.

Since her eyes closed, there was nothing preventing me from smirking darkly as I put my thumbs on the soles of her feet, and started rubbing both of them at the same time. Her reaction was divine. Her back arched once more, in an angle sharp enough to raise her body outside the confines of the pool, enough to give me a glimpse of her most sacred place, making me thankful that I had used a second towel to prevent a view that would have exposed the ruse.

[+200 Experience]

The amazing view she presented tempted me to give her the release she had been looking for, but not enough to break my commitment to the drawn-out route. The minutes passed as I massaged her feet first, then slowly climbing up to her calves, followed by her thighs. I enjoyed the experience, but it was a tense enjoyment, as the situation forced me to stretch my newly expanded abilities to its limits to keep her in that sweet spot, grabbed the tight embrace of pleasure, making it hard for her to think, but never enough to allow her to reach the climax, keeping her on the edge.

The shape of her face as I pulled back was simply masterful, an interesting mixture of shock and disappointment trying to worm itself to her pleasure-addled expression.

[Achievement: Measured Massage. Deliver an extended treatment carefully balanced along the edge without toppling at either side. +300 Experience, +1 Precision, +1 Manipulation, +1 Perception]

[+300 Experience]

“Please stand up, mistress,” I asked, but despite the subservient meaning, the tone was anything but so. My voice was laced with the best-implied command I could manage, stretching my speech and manipulation to the limit. It worked for a while, as she stood up, and with my help, stepped out of the bath. I grabbed her hand, and led her towards the showering area to rinse her off.

She started to recover after the shower, though she was still tense with her unmet orgasm. She opened her mouth as I closed in once more, holding a fluffy towel in my hands. “You still look tense, mistress,” I said, keeping my eyes away from her face as appropriate. Of course, that had nothing to do with the amazing view I had as I slowly dried her body. “Maybe a massage would be helpful,” I added as I wrapped the towel around her torso.

[+1 Speech]

[+200 Experience]

“A good idea,” she answered calmly and started walking, but her blush betrayed her nervousness. I stayed a step behind her, watching her hips sway with each step. The view was amazing, because I had intentionally picked a small towel for her, barely covering her generous hips, giving me an amazing view.

[+100 Experience]

There were unexpected perks to being a servant.

[Level: 6 Experience: 16140 / 21000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 12

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 9 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 6 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 234 / 234 Mana: 280 / 354]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (45/50)

Advanced Arcana [25/50]

Basic Speech 18/25]

Chapter Ten

Walking behind Marianne was a pleasure, especially when she was dressed only in a short towel, a tempting sway on her hips, enhanced further by her unmet desire. Of course, it wasn't comparable to the view that followed once she stood next to her bed, and let the towel fall on the floor. The amazing view of her behind filled my vision, supported by a glimpse of her glistening nether lips as she crawled on the bed, lying prone.

[+100 Experience]

Her lack of concern for a maid's presence was definitely useful, enough to make her take a revealing and vulnerable position without the slightest concern. As much as I would have liked to keep her beautiful breasts in my field of vision constantly, I wasn't ready to be on her sight without the comfortable steam cover.

My eyes devoured the contours of her body as I closed the distance, enthusiastically noting the details of her body now that she was bereft of the protection provided by the cloud of steam. When I stood above her, just inches away, I was tempted to examine her curves for hours, but her tenseness was obvious even for the naked eye. It wasn't the best time to take a risk, I decided and started working.

And it wasn't like my work was a chore, I noted as my hands landed on her back, going back and forth along her spine, repeating the earlier trick from the bath, this time without a restriction. Her reaction was instant, in the form of a small moan, one that she suffocated halfway, but enough to confirm her intention.

[+200 Experience]

I watched as her eyes flickered open. Her neck turned, allowing her gaze to meet my face, but it didn't take long for them to close once more as I continued my obvious act, trusting my disguise to hold despite the unfavorable visibility, betting on the fact that her distraction shone brighter than the lights of the room.

[+1 Subterfuge]

I continued my task of slowly caressing her back, but I couldn't help but feel self-conscious about the possibility of an accidental discovery, which was a real possibility under the bright lights of the room. I had managed to slip successfully once, but it wasn't a reason to retake that risk, especially when I was going to push the situation much further. "Milady, would you like me

to dim the lights a bit, a darker room would be more relaxing,” I suggested, making sure that my voice trembled with a sufficient dose of fear, as it was appropriate for a commoner maid to feel insecure when daring to notify their betters about their opinion without prompting, no matter how simple or sensible.

[+1 Speech]

I relaxed even more when she waved her hand without even opening her eyes, and the lights in the room dimmed considerably. Only a candle left in the room, flickering just a few feet away, filling the room with moving shadows to give a mystic feeling, allowing me to cut loose.

Though, it was also annoying a bit, because her careless display of magic in an area that wasn't her primary focus drove my deficiencies to the surface. I knew that I shouldn't feel impatient. It had been just a few days since I had unlocked the secrets of my power, and feeling disappointed just because I was yet to overcome the people with years of opportunity to improve theirs was misguided at best. I needed at least another week to do that!

And it wasn't like I was restricted to direct confrontation to hit back, evidenced by the fact that I was in her most private room, caressing her naked body. Of course, it would have been if I didn't have to hide behind the identity of a female maid, but one couldn't have everything. Not yet, at least.

The darkness served more than just assisting my disguise, as her moans were considerably more frequent when my hands started dancing over her body once more. The darkness helped to enhance her sensations, yet another useful detail about her body which would allow me to play her like a string instrument.

[+200 Experience]

With the unexpected assistance of the darkness, it didn't take long for her pleasure to rise to the earlier point, just a notch before the climax. I was watching that particular way she was biting her lips, so I chose that moment to slow my treatment once more. My hands danced up and down on her back for minutes, each second making her tenseness tighter and tighter, to a point that if I wasn't disguised as a servant, she would be begging for my mercy.

I chose that moment to move down on her body, caressing her plump cheeks with a fleeting touch. In another circumstance, I could imagine her exploding in anger for my daring to touch such a private location, but the extensions in her long-awaited meetings were enough to sway her on that point. I kept the pacing, betting on that her shyness overcoming her impatience.

But I could see that it was a losing battle from the ways her hips rose, her legs parting slightly to give an unrestricted view of her most intimate place, which was dripping arousal. Adding to her almost constant moans, I could see that her resistance was about to collapse soon, one way or another...

[+500 Experience]

The easiest thing to do would be to increase the pressure on the small of her back slightly, triggering her arousal. It should be enough, both the pleasure I had received, and the increase in my experience. Not only I gained another level, but I had also made significant headway for the next one. It should be enough.

But it wasn't. I opened my mouth, with the sudden realization that I would probably die because of my this newfound greed, if not today, quite soon. I also knew that I might not find another opportunity to ask that particular question if I missed this amazing opportunity, because she wouldn't be caught in surprise by her own reaction.

"Milady," I murmured, making my voice trembling even more than the previous time. "I would like to ask a question, but I'm afraid if it might be a bit too presumptuous." She grunted in reply, too far gone in the pleasure to answer, and I continued. "My previous lady was from the Northern Plains, and she had educated me in the various massage techniques to help her cope with stress..."

"What kind of stress?" she said, the possibility I was implying enough to make her raise her head.

I continued, acting like I hadn't already noticed her understanding. "I didn't mention it to other servants, afraid that they would find it shameful. They don't exactly fit with the Empire's traditions."

"I see," Marianne murmured. "Did your mistress feel stressed a lot when her husband was away," she asked as she put her head back on the bed.

"Not particularly, no," I answered. "On the contrary, she needed it more whenever the master was back home. For some reason, she never needed it when the master was away. She was usually busy leading the defense of the area, discussing with the commander of the guard for hours in her private chambers," I added, acting as clueless as I could do while implying that my supposed mistress was cheating her husband while he was away. When Marianne said nothing, I was afraid that I had pushed my idiot act too far.

[+1 Speech]

The system warned me just as Marianne opened her mouth, informing me of my success. “I see, you may try,” she murmured, with a hint of excitement coloring her tone. Then, her tone shifted to threatening. “But if you tell it to a living soul about it, I’ll make sure no one finds your body.”

“Of course, mistress,” I said, displaying a good mixture of fear and obedience. Even with everything, I doubted that I could have convinced her if it wasn’t for her unmet desire.

[+1 Speech]

“Excellent, you may start. But no word to anyone else,” she said. Luckily, her face was buried in her pillow, so she missed the sudden hunger in my face.

“As you wish, mistress,” I said as I dragged my hands to her inner thighs, parting her legs wide, enough to give me the full view of her nether lips, ready for my attention. I gently rested my thumbs on the edge, where her lips began, and dragged down, making her shiver helplessly. Just a bit closer to the inside, and she would have exploded rather spectacularly, an ending I carefully avoided. Now that I had unrestricted access to her body, I wanted her tenser than a catapult about to go off before she reached the ending she deeply desired in an explosive manner.

I repeated my last movement, caressing the edge of her lips, taking the exact same route to remove any doubt that it was just accidental. And now that she had a clear idea what the massage included, I pulled back, and focused on her inner thighs, rubbing back and forth, some of them bringing me closer, while others dragged my fingers away from her wetness.

[+300 Experience]

It was a beautiful experience to watch her ass starting to rise in anticipation whenever my hands dragged closer to her bottom. She started trembling with each repeat, tempting me to push forward as a desire to watch her trembles from a point-blank range coiled around my heart.

But watching her squirm was even more enjoyable as I focused on her inner thighs, listening to her gasp in arousal whenever my hand closed enough to dance on the edges of her wetness, each louder than the other.

Ultimately, I decided to reward her, just because I pitied her, of course. It absolutely had no

relation to the way the towel around my waist started to get too tight, the desire swelling high enough to drown my patience mercilessly. I waited until her hips rose, which gave me good access to her nether lips. I brought my thumbs over them, but not on the lateral edges. No, one of them landed on the edge of her clit, ready to draw circles around, while the other took a position at her entrance.

She stiffened just a moment before my thumbs started their dance, anticipating the rush of pleasure she would receive. But the severity of her action was nothing compared to when I drew several circles in rapid succession, finally pushing her to the other end of the arousal. A moan left her mouth, stronger than any other that had left her mouth, and she started trembling beautifully, dimness of the room giving an otherworldly feeling to it.

[+600 Experience]

It was too tempting to resist. I took a step back and broke my legs a bit, enough to reveal my shaft, beating it as quick as I could without making noise while enjoying the beautiful view in front of me.

While it looked like she would continue laying without moving for a while, I needed an excuse in case she decided to surprise me. Just standing on her foot was not enough. With that in mind, I put my right hand on the sole of her feet, caressing gently.

It was an amusing twist of fate when she turned to face me a minute later, I was at the edge of my own climax. "It was a decent massage," she murmured, her voice decidedly mellow.

I didn't want to get away without reaching my own climax, so once again, my wits dominated any sense of self-preservation. "Do you want to stop it early, mistress," I said with a clueless voice while wrapped the towel around my waist once more, a decidedly painful experience considering the erect state of my manhood.

"It wasn't all of it?" she asked, astonished.

"Of course not, mistress," I answered. It might not be the smartest thing to do, but I already started it, so there was no point in cutting it short. "The full course takes more than an hour, but in the end, the mistress usually ended up really relaxed."

"An hour, you say," Marianne murmured, intrigued. "And you say your mistress looked even more relaxed than I am?"

"Usually, she was too exhausted to even lift an arm, mistress," I explained. "Sometimes too

exhausted even to dress before sleeping.” When I noticed the shine in her eyes, I knew that I was successful. The notification that appeared in my field of vision was a nice confirmation nevertheless.

[+1 Speech]

“We still have time,” Marianne murmured, in a disinterested tone so fake that I wouldn’t have believed even back in my idiot days. “Why don’t you show me the full range of your massage technique.”

“It’s a bit harder than the previous portion, though, mistress. I just want to warn you about that.”

Marianne chuckled. “Don’t worry about it, I’m no slouch in endurance. I can take your strength.” It would have been a rather accurate brag if I were an Abnormal like she assumed rather than a Melius with a strength of six, which, combined with my leveraged position, would mean that I could do whatever I could do, and she was helpless unless she relied on her magic.

But it wasn’t the right time to educate her on that fact. “Could you please move to the side a bit, milady?” I asked. “I need to climb on the bed for the next part.”

Another questioning glare found my way, but as usual, only to meet with the mask of a stupid but well-meaning maid. A satisfied expression was on her face when she buried in the pillow once more, suggesting her belief of total control over the situation. An amusing illusion that I, unfortunately, had to sustain.

For now, at least.

Still, as I climbed over her bed, my knees pressing on the soft surface at both sides of her naked body, that sacrifice hurt considerably less than any other situation. Wordlessly, I pressed my elbows to her back and started rubbing her back, optimizing the pressure based on her reaction while leveraging everything I had read about the human anatomy.

Already riding the pleasure of her previous climax, it didn’t take long for her to fall under the sway of my follow-up treatment. I waited until she started purring like a lost kitten that found its way next to a roaring fireplace. Then, I lowered my arms until my forearms were resting on her back, increasing the treatment area. And if, during that, my fingers caressed the edges of her rather generously-sized breasts, it must have been a total accident, no matter how many times it repeated.

[+400 Experience]

When her hips started to rise once more, it was time to push further. After a brief yet effective treatment of her neck and shoulders, I moved down, until her plumb bottom lay underneath my grasp. It was either now, or never, I decided as I pulled the towel away from my waist, and quickly constructed an illusion of towel instead. It wouldn't have past the simplest muster under the normal circumstances, but a combination of the darkness and her distracted state should allow it to slip unnoticed even if she turned.

[+1 Arcana]

With that completed, one of my hands busied itself treating my shaft, while the other focused on the plumpness, leveraging the excuse of the massage to acquaintance myself with the elasticity of her skin, occasionally traveling down to visit her nether lips, enjoying her ever-intensifying wetness. Soon, I started spending more time between her sopping wetness than her plump bottom, increasing her moans as a result.

[+400 Experience]

Treating myself to pleasure while a sexy blonde moaned with pleasure underneath was sufficient, until one point when it wasn't. The longer she lay with her face buried in the pillow, determine to focus on the pleasure, the more I felt invincible, like I could get away with anything. And of course, like every rational human would, I decided to put that feeling to test.

And the test case was obvious. I lowered my shaft lower until it was snugly squeezed between her cheeks. I watched her carefully while continuing to deliver the same treatment, trying to see if she would react in an explosive manner. She failed to notice any difference.

The next step was starting to move, but I knew that it was a rather dangerous push in the current situation. So, I brought my index and middle finger to her entrance, probing it in the excuse of a massage, slowly at first, but picking up speed every second she failed to show an adverse reaction. Soon, the first digits of my fingers disappeared inside, much to her jubilation, followed by a string of gasps.

When I was sure that she was sufficiently distracted, I started moving my hips, her shapely bottom providing enough friction to make it pleasurable. It didn't take long for her moans to increase even further, enjoying the presence of my shaft squeezed between her asscheeks, even if she was on the black about the exact source of the pleasure.

When her moans quickened, so did my treatment, both my fingers and my shaft, increasing her

pleasure even further. I was on the edge just as she was, too far gone to gather the patience to keep her just a step behind her climax. She started trembling as another orgasm hit her, even stronger than the previous one.

The rocking of her body proved to be the last thing I needed. A climax of my own hit me with full force, and I started spraying my seed on her back, too distracted to take note of the risks. Luckily, she was even further gone, and didn't let a whimper of protest as her back covered with a very generous amount of my seed. With eight points of endurance, my body was capable of releasing a surprising amount.

[+1000 Experience]

[Achievement: Mischievous Massage. Sneakily leave a generous gift at the end of the treatment +500 Experience, +1 Speed, +1 Agility]

I didn't have enough time to clean her body before she noticed, I realized, unless I somehow increased the time it took to recover her from. I quickly started spreading it on her back, hoping that when she asked, I could claim it to be a With that, for the first time, I let my fingers cut free on her nether lips, bringing the extent of the capability that was possible with ten points of manipulation and eight points of precision, while using the full extent of my wisdom to read her reaction.

The results were even more explosive than I hoped in my wildest dreams. Already sensitive from her last climax, her moans picked up instantly, and she started showing signs of an impending orgasm. I pushed my fingers as deep as her barrier allowed, even drunk in pleasure, not willing to take that particular step.

But luckily, I had an alternative to test. The moment I finished spreading my cum on her back and her ass, I used my cum-covered fingers to probe her puckered hole. Unfortunately, there, I first my first snag. "Not there," she managed to murmur. "Stop."

"As you wish, milady," I said, and reluctantly pulled my finger out of her puckered hole. But in her slit, I stayed for several more beats, until she started rocking under the influence of another climax.

[+500 Experience]

As much as I wanted to turn her over and continue the same treatment on her sensitive breasts, I was not in a position to ignore a direct order without a consequence, especially when I had already pushed the boundaries that much. Instead, I looked for something to cover the sharp

smell of cum, and saw several bottles of fragrance on her table. I levitated one of them and used a few drops to suppress the smell before she could lift her head.

When she gathered enough energy to turn, I was already on the side of her bed, my head lowered, stretching my acting capabilities to the limit to give the impression of a dutiful servant. "Do you want me to attend you for a quick shower, milady," I said, keeping my voice perfectly even, like what had just happened was completely ordinary. And a small miracle happened, and she bought my act of cluelessness.

[+1 Subterfuge]

"No, just help me to dress. I want to rest," she murmured before burying her head on the pillow. When I came with her nightie, she barely had the strength to lift herself from the bed, and slipped her nightie on, uncaring of the nakedness she presented, which wasn't that unreasonable considering everything that happened. The sight of her bountiful breasts still gave me some experience, though, which was always welcome.

[+50 Experience]

"You can leave now," she said as she threw herself on the bed once more. This time, I followed her command, as even though she looked like she was about to fall asleep before I could leave the room, actually dallying around until she could was too risky. I had done enough for the night, though it was unfortunate that I wasn't able to gain another level.

It wasn't like I lacked the assistance to help me level up.

[Level: 6 Experience: 20890 / 21000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 12

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 10 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 246 / 246 Mana: 280 / 354]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (47/50)

Advanced Arcana [26/50]

Basic Speech 22/25]

Chapter Eleven

I was feeling cheerful as I returned to the library the next morning. Why wouldn't I, after an amazing experience in Marianne's room, I returned to my room for a long and relaxing sleep. My mood only improved when I saw that the Head Librarian was still away. With my improved subterfuge skill, I no longer feared to be outed. If my disguise was good enough to fake being a woman while attending another in the bath, faking the act of my idiot past wouldn't be a problem, no matter the observer.

Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for the various shenanigans that were going on. I couldn't imagine Cornelia taking the risk of using the library as her forbidden-love den. I definitely wouldn't dare to walk around in a ranger disguise in the library while she was here, meaning not only I would lose my voyeurism opportunities, but also I would lose my excuse to talk with Helga.

Then, I saw her walking towards the depths of the library, and I was familiar with her mannerisms enough to catch a certain excitement in her steps. Today, I decided to join her early, because I had a lot of gaps in my arcana skill to fill. I wanted to see the speed of improvement with a dedicated teacher. And, spending time with her as much as possible before the Head Librarian returned was a prudent idea.

I walked around several minutes, being 'accidentally' visible until one of the assistants ordered me to dust all the books on the back of the library. A clear attempt to make me keep away from the crowd, as all library books, including the relatively unimportant ones in the main section, were enchanted against basic challenges like dust and moisture. It fit my disguise not to question that order. Luckily, I had no intention of doing so in any case.

The Mule disappeared in the depths of the library, and a minute later, Orlin the Ranger walked out...

Since I already knew the general direction she went, it took only a few minutes for me to find Helga. Once again, she was dressed in her thick robes, making me curse the dressing habits of the students of magic, preferring thick, shapeless robes over anything else, just because it was the tradition.

Luckily, I remembered how her body looked, so there was nothing preventing me to imagine the way her body stretched as she tried to reach for the top shelf, trying to get a book. Distracted by her task, she didn't notice my presence. With the help of my agility, sneaking to her was quite easy.

I kept my silence until I was close enough to hug her, leaned to her ear, and whispered. “Do you need any help, beautiful.”

The result was spectacular. Startled by my presence, she turned in her adrenaline boosted speed, a fist-sized ball of lightning already gathered in her palm, ready to be released. Impressive conjuration speed, I noted, though the same couldn’t be said for her speed in aiming. Before she could release the spell, I wrapped my hand around her forearm, and changed her aim. “Orlin?” she whispered in surprise as her lightning hit the ceiling, and discharged harmlessly against the ward.

“Hello, beautiful,” I said even as I placed one of my hands on the small of her back, the other, which was around her forearm, moving up until our fingers were gently intertwined.

For a moment, she was frozen, dumbfounded. The reason was hard to pinpoint, as it might be because of the passionate kiss that marked the end of our last encounter, it might be my enhanced charisma affecting her, or it might be our closeness, enough to restart our kiss by just leaning forward.

Then, her eyes grew in panic as she realized how close she had been to turn me into a charred mess. “I’m sorry Orlin!” she exclaimed, loud enough to make me pull back for a moment. “I almost attacked you! Please forgive me.”

“There is nothing to forgive,” I answered as I reestablished our closeness. “But if you’re feeling bad, I have a rather good idea for an apology.”

Her mouth opened reflexively before her brain could engage to catch the insinuation in my voice. But for me, the shiny pinkness of her lips was much more interesting than anything else she might say at the moment. So, I leaned forward, cutting her words short in a rather enjoyable manner for both of us.

[+50 Experience]

I wasn’t surprised when she froze as our lips touched. Regardless, I continued to treat her lips with a soft, lingering kiss, my arm around her waist tightening enough to make our bodies touch, just enough to feel the rapid rise of her heartbeat. I didn’t want to scare her off, so I tried to act in a measured manner while my lips danced over hers, trying to coax a reaction.

I hadn’t had to wait for long for the said reaction. First, her lips started to move in an attempt to match the rhythm of the mine. I let her succeed for a moment before picking up speed. She followed my lead without a delay, soon, our lips were following the invisible music of a heated

dance.

[+100 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Advanced Speech, Basic Biomancy, Basic Lovemaking]

Leveling up couldn't come in a better moment, considering the situations I gained experience. At least, right now, I was in a situation where I could continue in autopilot while trying to decide which skill to pick next. I couldn't say the same for the skill selection. Speech was an obvious option which helped me a lot, but under the circumstances, it was sufficient, and biomancy was something I hadn't given the slightest thought. The only thing I knew was it was an inferior version of healing magic, allowing the users to affect the other lifeforms in return.

At that moment, lovemaking seemed like an obvious choice, but funnily enough, it was the way Helga wrapped her arms around my neck to pull me deeper into the kiss that discouraged me from it. Reactions of both Marianne and Helga showed that my advanced stats already gave a sufficient edge to me on the topic, and considering the incredible jump with the other skills, I feared that sex would lose its excitement.

With an impulsive decision, I skipped speech as well, roughly for the same reasons, and picked biomancy, despite knowing very little about it. What was life without a little risk, after all?

Then, I felt Helga's tongue pushing against my lips, bringing me fully back to the moment. I parted my lips, allowing her tongue to slip inside my mouth, rewarding her for the initiative. While her tongue ravaged my mouth, I decided to shelve the considerations for my new skills for a later moment. The present called for my undivided attention.

I tightened my grip around her waist, smashing her chest against mine, enjoying the firmness of her chest against my muscles. Simultaneously, I finally counter-attacked her presence in my mouth. The battle stayed balanced for a moment before she retreated, which turned into a total rout. I followed, restarting the skirmish, but this time in her mouth.

When she pulled back to take a breath, I chose to bring my lips down, sucking her neck in a way that turned her attempts to take a breath into a sharp gasp. When her arms around my body tightened further, I decided to take it as an invitation to push further. My lips stayed on her skin as I moved down on the length of her neck, leaving lingering kisses, each earning its own moan.

[+300 Experience]

Unfortunately, I felt her stiffen when I slid my hands downward. It was a small, unconscious move, but I decided to take it as a sign to pull back. It was better to leave her wanting rather than forcing her to draw a line. “Long time no see, beautiful,” I said with a satisfied smirk after pulling back.

“We just talked yesterday,” she managed to whisper, blushing, though I didn’t think that it was about the question itself. More likely, it was about our continued closeness, our bodies pressing tight, her back against the shelf, and my arm still firmly around to prevent her escape.

“It was a long night,” I said with a crooked smile, which increased her blush even further. I leaned forward slightly, but thanks to the distance between us, it brought me to a prime location to restart our kiss. Her lips parted open reflexively, but instead of continuing the kiss, I reached up and pulled the book she was trying to get when I arrived. When I passed it, a confused expression popped on her face before she remembered her objective when it was broken by my surprise appearance.

“Thanks,” she murmured.

“Always a pleasure,” I said as finally let her go, but our fingers were still intertwined as we walked to the large table, already loaded by the books. I only let her hand go to pull a chair for her, earning a shy smile as a reward. For myself, I chose to sit next to her rather than sitting across her, opening the book on arcana that I picked up on the way. “You don’t mind if I study next to you, or ask some questions when I get stuck, right?”

The answer came in an instant, with noticeable urgency. “Of course not. You can ask whatever you want!”

“You’re as kind as you’re pretty,” I answered, squeezing her hand just for emphasis. She stammered a response impossible to decipher. Thankfully, the underlying sentiment was easier to decipher.

It was an excellent opportunity to employ the tricks I learned from my latest adventure with Marianne, though in a much-reduced dosage. I started reading my book while letting my hand fall on her leg in an accidental manner. I didn’t expect her to believe that of course, but from the way her smile competed with her blush to catch up, it was clear that she had no intention of calling me off on that, which was enough.

I let a few minutes to pass, through which I kept my hand intentionally immobile, letting her get used to our casual contact. It was sufficiently effective, as she was able to turn her attention on

the book she was reading, but she had to backtrack several times, suggesting that she had trouble staying focused on what she was reading.

Several minutes later, I squeezed her leg the moment I started speaking. “I don’t understand how to balance the structure on three runes. Wouldn’t it cause a continuous conflict that ultimately breaks the effect?” I asked, despite knowing its answer. I had three reasons for it.

The first was to maintain the impression that I just had a few points on arcana. The second was her habits of teaching. Starved to contact due to the discrimination she experienced, she was more than happy to launch deep discussions on the topic, which came with some great insights. It would be much more effective if I had the option to actually hold a debate on the more complicated parts, but still, it was much better than anything else than I could do alone.

The third reason was even simpler, making her get more and more used to having extended contact. In the second minute of her explanation, I started squeezing her leg softly. On fourth, my hand started moving up and down, but sticking around her knee. Around the ten-minute mark, when she finally finished her explanation, my ‘absentminded’ caresses ended up in her thigh. But the results of that moment was spectacular.

[+100 Experience]

[+3 Arcana]

I was about to return to my book when I was stuck with a sudden inspiration. “By the way, what do you know about biomancy,” I asked her, hoping to get a couple more questions in advance.

“It’s an amazing skill, totally underrated by the research community!” she said with sudden jubilation. “They are willing to dismiss all the possibilities it represents just because it’s less effective on healing.”

I wasn’t expecting such an enthusiastic reaction from her. “Do you have any focus on that?” I asked.

“I wish,” she answered with a sigh. “Unfortunately, I’m having trouble leveling up enough to get the necessary steps for my status,” she mentioned absentmindedly. It took quite a bit of willpower to keep myself from asking her exact situation on her levels, which was a rather dangerous social blunder. Even the amount she admitted was a bit much. Even though she looked too excited to notice, I wasn’t willing to push her more on the subject.

“Why is that?” I asked, which triggered another very long explanation on the various potential

applications of biomancy on the transformation of non-human material, for a range of purposes from healing to combat support. It was hard for me to keep up even with my skill points, which was rapidly increasing as her explanation continued, and my rather impressive stats. I even kept my hand in place during her explanation not to distract her, because her explanations were working wonders.

As she went through her explanation, I couldn't help but theorize about her skill configuration. For a moment, I entertained the probability that she lied to me about not using any biomancy, but I discarded that quickly. She wasn't good at lying enough to slip that past me. She probably had a generic skill relating to the theory, assisting her to generate a more accurate understanding.

In the end, she talked another thirty minutes on biomancy, occasionally slipping back to wider issues on magic, but the results were worth the loss of time. Towards the end, after making sure that nothing would distract her from her academic zeal, my hand continued its journey on her leg.

[+100 Experience]

[+2 Arcana]

[+7 Biomancy]

"How it is possible," I said after she finished her explanation, which left her blushed and short of breath.

"What?" she asked.

"For a girl to be this beautiful and smart," I answered, watching in amusement as the blush spread to her face once more. She opened her mouth, but unlike the academic explanation, her words were not spilling out in a great hurry. Instead, they were shuffling inside her mouth, fighting not to be the first one to leave the confines of her lips, still puffy from our earlier kiss.

"You're just adorable," I said as I slipped my fingers through her hair, moving through a smooth caress, then transitioning to her shoulder from the tips. While I was doing that, she was leaning forward, so all it took was a gentle pull to restart our kiss.

This time, she didn't hesitate even for a moment, the vigor of her lips overcoming even mine. If that wasn't a sign to push further, I didn't know what it was. Since my hand was already on her shoulder, it only took a quick journey to slip down to her chest, gently cupping her breasts,

fighting the temptation to fully sink into the soft flesh of her breasts.

But then, her arms found my neck once more, her hold tight enough to hurt. As far as signals went, I couldn't imagine a more direct one without moving into a more vulgar territory. I would have hated to disappoint such a beautiful woman. A moan escaped her mouth as my fingers sank deeper into her breasts, loud enough to alert passerby's, but luckily, my lips were in a prime position to suppress that moan, turning it into a delicious vibration instead.

Meanwhile, my other hand had nothing to do. Idleness was a shameful quality, so I put it on her hips, sinking softly to her skin. I half-expected her to flinch, remembering the painful state of her bottom after Cornelia's treatment, but she either healed up quickly enough, or she managed to get the help of one of the healers, because she didn't react my hand adversely. I squeezed her ass even harder, forcing another moan off her lips, which I suppressed just as quick.

[+500 Experience]

Trying to push further was an attractive idea, but also quite risky. Yes, we were in an unfrequented area of the library, but unfrequented didn't guarantee complete seclusion. I trusted my abilities to give me an advance warning enough to erase the signs of a kiss, I couldn't guarantee the same if we were in a deeper state of undress. With great reluctance I pulled away from her sweet lips, leaving her panting.

She kept our gaze connected for a moment before the situation sank into her mind. Her eyes slid away as the redness of her face intensified even further, to a point that made me worried that she might faint. The difference between the girl that subjected herself to not-so-tender mercies of Cornelia without a hint of shame, and the one that was about to faint just because a sweet kiss was unbelievable.

I couldn't help but feel bad a bit, but not too much, because unlike the others, I didn't lie to her too badly. I just acted like a stranger, albeit a dark and mysterious one from a far-off land that would disappear in a few days. It might not be much, but it was enough to relax my conscience.

"I don't understand how the energy transference affects the construction of a dual-superstructure for a ward," I added, raising one of the points that were bugging me from the last part of our discussion. It was far more complicated for a ranger restricted to basic arcana and one digit wisdom to even understand its implications, but I bet on the fact she would welcome a distraction to focus anything other than our most-recent kiss.

She didn't surprise me, and launched another detailed explanation that I felt trouble following even with my current state. But the rapid increase in my skills were worth it, but I couldn't help but think it was unnatural. Her insights were incredible, but not enough to level me up that quickly.

Then it struck me. Technically, I was still in danger. Not only I was acting like a different person, but also I was misrepresenting the danger I was in. The System must be able to detect it somehow, which raised more questions about its origins. Maybe the temples were right, and each Melius had a divine messenger on their shoulder, rewarding them for the challenges they met. Though if that was true, mine seemed to be an especially perverted one.

With a sexy blonde in front of me, metaphysical questions weren't the best target to spend my time on, I realized when she asked me a question. Thankfully, I was good enough in multitasking to catch the question, and promptly answered in a level of detail sufficient for my supposed knowledge. The discussion continued in the same vein for a couple more hours, with her showing off the depths of her knowledge, and with me rewarding her with lingering kisses, and enthusiastic gropes which occasionally slipped under her robe. The rewards of the session was amazing.

[+2000 Experience]

[+14 Arcana]

[+9 Biomancy]

[Speech +2]

[Subterfuge +1]

While I wanted to continue the session for more, I couldn't risk one of the kinder assistants to start worrying about my disappearance and start searching. "Getting the attention of such a beautiful teacher has been an amazing experience, but I need to go before the rest of the group starts wondering where I disappeared."

"So soon," she answered.

"It has been more than three hours," I answered.

"But there is no clock around," she asked. "And you don't have a window large enough to see the sun."

I had a feeling that it was just a convenient excuse to distract herself from disappointment rather than a genuine question, but I still answered. I pointed at the small ray of light, spreading from a small window at the top. "The change of the angle from rays of light is enough," I answered. "On the wild, you learn how to pay attention to a lot of things."

Without a warning, I leaned forward and captured her lips in another lingering kiss, with my hands joining the fray soon after. Her reaction was even more heated than the last time, signaling that I might even get lucky if I played my cards right. Unfortunately, I was out of time, so I pulled back soon after, leaving her panting with arousal.

[+200 Experience]

I walked away without saying anything, then, just before disappearing amongst the shelves, I turned back, and whispered. "See you tomorrow, beautiful." Then, I disappeared, trying to suppress the disappointment from leaving such a beautiful girl behind to go and arrange books...

[Level: 7 Experience: 24240 / 28000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 12

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 10 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 287 / 287 Mana: 360 / 413]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (48/50)

Advanced Arcana [45/50]

Basic Speech 24/25

Basic Biomancy 16/25]

Chapter Twelve

I was walking in the library, once again dressed in my least favorite disguise, made worse by the fact that technically, it was my real identity, trying to look busy. I had been expecting to have a casual walk around the library while waiting for the workday to end, hoping that Marianne would call her new 'maid' for another massage session, or failing that, deciding to have another encounter with Cornelia in the library. But my plans went awry in an unwelcome manner when the assistant of the head librarian burst into the opening, and started raining orders with great urgency.

"What's going on," asked one of the others, unhappy with the sudden intrusion.

"I tell you what's going on," he shouted. "I learned that she is coming back tomorrow." No one asked who he was referring, the underlining terror in his voice could only refer to one person. The head librarian, one of the most famous war heroes of the Empire, and the undisputed ruler of the library, was coming back. And everyone knew that they would be on the hook if there was even one thing that was out of order in the library.

It wasn't hard to slip away in the chaos, as no one would remember to look for me as they burst into a flurry of activity, some for cleaning the floors, the others to make sure the books were in the correct order. It wasn't hard to understand why. The head librarian had no mercy when it came to any disruption in her domain, and if something was out of place, the staff would be on the hook for it.

But even as I faded away, I had to fight against disappointment. Because with her arrival, not only I would have to throw away my ranger identity, afraid of being caught, but also Cornelia would no doubt stop her library adventures. Arrogant she was, but not enough to intrude into the head librarian's domain, especially in such a vulgar manner. Even her family couldn't have saved her from the consequences.

An important detail started to worm itself into my mind. I needed to talk with Helga before I shelved my ranger identity for good. While silently disappearing would have no cost to me, it didn't sit right to me to leave Helga waiting desperately for Orlin to appear. I owed her enough to explain it to her.

This time, I was careful to pick and even more secluded corner to put on my disguise, in case one of the frenzied library workers dropped in. I even put a simple proximity ward as a safety measure. While doing that, I couldn't help but wonder just how easily I could control the mana flow to form a ward, not even needing to use an anchor. Another evidence of just how

important the skills were. Without them, I doubted I could replicate that feat without months of dedicated study, and even then, it was in doubt.

The same applied to the magical parts of my disguise. Just a moment's concentration was enough to put the spell on, something I was sure that even a master of arcana couldn't replicate easily, because the magical ability was just a part of creating magical disguises. Shaping them was a significant part of the challenge, and thankfully, my subterfuge skill was ready to assist me in that area.

But just as I was about to put the last touches in my illusionary disguise, an exhausted look, I remembered arcana wasn't my only magical skill anymore. I carefully gathered my mana, just a dash of it, and spread it into my body, to look like I was exhausted.

[HP -20]

A pained yelp escaped my mouth as I lost control of the spell. Apparently, experimenting with an unfamiliar spell while targeting myself was unwise. Who could have guessed?

While it was tempting to play around to get it right, I was rather short on time, so once again, I went back to my illusion skills to give the impression that I was slightly exhausted, then dashed towards the last location I had seen Helga.

Luckily, she was still at the last place I had left her, a book open in front of her. She didn't look like she was paying attention though, the dreamy look on her face suggested her mind was on something other than the dusty tome open in front of her. From her rather persistent blush, and her shy smile, I could make an accurate guess about her dreams.

Unfortunately, I needed to break her from her happy daydreams. I walked into the opening. Helga looked up, distracted by my sudden intrusion. When she saw me, she smiled at first, then noticed my haphazard state. "Orlin, is something wrong?"

"Yeah," I answered as I walked near her, but didn't bother sitting next to her. "I have just talked with the caravan master. We're going to leave early morning, tomorrow."

Helga said nothing, but her hand, clamping onto mine, tight enough to actually hurt despite the obvious difference in strength and endurance, conveyed her desperate sadness more than words could. I sat on the seat next to her, allowing her to process the situation. At least, I owed her that much. There was no hiding the tears that were slipping from her eyes. "So soon," she murmured minutes later, a whisper so low that it required me to stretch my enhanced hearing to the maximum to catch a glimpse of it.

I gently caressed her hair and pulled her to my chest, which made spill her tears even faster. I could understand where she was coming from. Like me, she was alone for years in the Silver Tower, but unlike my previous state, she had an understanding of what that loneliness meant.

“Unfortunately, things end,” I murmured. “Being nomads give us a different understanding of relationships. In our tribe, we don’t measure the relationships based on its longevity, because we never know whether we would survive enough to meet again. We believe everything is valued by the impact it created, feelings it awakened, and memories that remained. And what we have a beautiful one.”

[+1 Speech]

My words only made her cry harder, but it wasn’t a bad thing. Instead, I let her continue to cry as she got louder and louder, trying to process the shock. It was the most emotional I saw her being, which told me that my actions might have larger impacts than I might have thought. It wasn’t enough to change anything in my master strategy, but maybe some little tweaks were necessary.

My self-inspection didn’t survive for long. She started kissing me without a warning, pulling my attention back to the present in a memorable manner. This time, I followed her rhythm, my arms gently wrapped around her neck. She deserved that much consideration. The kiss stretched for a long while, conveying everything she wanted to say but couldn’t find the words for.

[+200 Experience]

[Achievement: Sensual Sendoff. A beautiful, emotional kiss that conveys feeling after an emotional farewell talk. +300 Experience, +2 Charisma]

When she pulled away from the kiss and jumped up on her feet, I thought that she had been overwhelmed with emotions and wanted to get away. And when she started walking away, it seemed that my assumption was correct. At that moment, I decided to let her go, allowing her to process the departure however she wished. The least I could do after the bastardy I had subjected her to.

But two steps later, I realized that she was still holding my hand, trying to pull me along. In a rare development, I was stuck in place, surprised by the sudden development. “Come on, let’s walk,” she said as she tugged her hand once more, a sudden determination on her face overcoming sadness in her tear-streaked face.

“Where,” I couldn’t help but ask.

“A hidden place, to make a memory both of us would remember fondly forever, one that would burn bright in our memories,” she said. That clued me what was about to happen, and I followed her. It didn’t take long for me to recognize the path we were taking. Ironically, to the same location Cornelia had subjected her to the bondage.

While we walked, I could feel her casting several spells, each targeting her own face. When she next turned to me, at the same opening I watched her resist Cornelia’s crop to get scraps of information as a reward, her face was clean, tear tracks and redness gone, replaced by a soft make-up. A utilitarian application of magic, I took note in amusement for a moment, before she clamped on my lips once more, this time with a lot of tongue, promising passion and desire...

When she pulled back for a moment, I didn’t think that she had changed her mind, because I could feel her gathering magic in the familiar shape of a proximity ward, which she established in a speed that would surpass mine, but not with a great margin, which gave me confidence that I was finally showing some decent improvement in my magical abilities.

But constructing wards weren’t the only thing she was doing. She used one of her hands to create shapes into the air in temporary anchors, while the other danced over the buttons of her robe, determined to free her body from its restrictive cover. As a gentleman, I did the kind thing and followed her lead, my cloak and shirt meeting with the floor at the same time with her robe.

She licked her lips with lust as she examined my chest, its tanned looks a part of the illusion I had set up, but the muscles were all real, another gift of my enhanced stats. I waited until she completed the second ward, ensuring not a wisp of sound would escape its confines. Meanwhile, I carefully examined the hidden spots which I used earlier to great benefit, ensuring that they were empty.

When the construction of the ward finished, she jumped at me with a palpable desire, throwing her shirt away, revealing a utilitarian corset underneath. Her body deserved something sexier, but I didn’t make it a problem. After all, it wasn’t going to stay on for long.

She hit my body with great speed, but I was ready, and it didn’t even shake me. Her legs wrapped around my waist to keep her afloat while her lips met with mine with a desire that surpassed even her previous kiss. Her grip around my waist was tight enough to keep her in place without slipping, and her arms were around my neck for further support, but nevertheless, I placed my hands on her bottom.

Purely to help her, of course. What ulterior motive could I have in putting my hands into her plump bottom? And if my hands had slipped under her skirt while doing that, I could guarantee that it was an accident.

But as our tongues battled for supremacy, one of my hands decided to get a solo adventure. It climbed upward until it found the strings that kept her corset together, and pulled them open one by one, in a sensuous pace that contrasted greatly with her frantic kisses, every little caress on a recently freed section of her back increasing her pace further, something I was happy to match.

Her corset stayed in place even after it was completely untied, pinned in place between our pressing bodies. Something I wanted to find a solution. In the end, I decided to stick with the basics, and slipped my hand into her short hair, and pulled her head back. A moan escaped her mouth as she pulled back, and her corset slid away, finally revealing her beautiful breasts on my reach.

[+500 Experience]

I decided to do what the situation begged me to do, and buried my face in her bosom, generous in size and nakedness, enjoying the warmth of her skin most intimately. That close, I could hear her heartbeat, but frankly, I found the prospect of testing the softness of her breasts more interesting, especially after seeing their gravity-defying achievement to stay up. My hands were busy, but my lips were still available for the test, so I clamped around her breast, extracting a moan of her. A cry left her mouth when my teeth joined the test, but it didn't exactly convey unhappiness.

"They are amazing," I murmured in astonishment as I pulled back for a moment. My compliment worked wonders on her face, her arousal pushing away the last scraps of hesitance.

Even as I captured her lips once more, I took a step towards the nearest shelf, and pushed her until her back pressed tightly against it, just enough to allow her to loosen the grip of her legs without losing the position.

But then, I realized one thing, that I needed to break off the kiss to ask her to loosen her legs, so that I could remove her skirt. Luckily, there was an easier way. I grabbed the zipper, and pulled it down, and when it reached the bottom, I continued pulling, but created a small ethereal blade, a trick that had been taught by the same busty blonde that was currently coiled around me, and cut rest of the distance.

Her skirt fell on the floor, followed by her panties just a moment later. She must have hated it, because the next second, she took revenge, grabbing a hold of my pants, and melting both it and my underwear in a superior display of magic. Something I could do, but not based on the capability I revealed to her. She pulled back, a smug smile on her lips, finding a rather amusing amount of pride in her achievement.

Though her smugness melted into a panic when I shifted her a bit, aligning my shaft to her entrance. "Are you sure?" I asked her, giving her the choice, something she deserved to have under the circumstances. It didn't take long for her to construct her determination from the uneven stones of panic.

No answer left her mouth, but then again, it wasn't really necessary, not when she restarted our kiss while choosing to lower herself, my shaft sliding into her wetness, I couldn't help but moan in pleasure, as it was a sensation I had never tasted before. She lowered herself until her barrier prevented the passage, which then I destroyed with a sharp push.

She was mine!

[+2500 Experience]

[Achievement: Salacious Study. Take the virginity of a sexy bookworm in the second biggest library of the world. +1000 Experience, +4 Intelligence]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Basic Observation, Advanced Biomancy, Basic Melee]

Normally, the impressive gains of the system would have garnered significant amount attention from me, especially the skill selection, not to mention the library of the Silver Tower being the second biggest library was a very intriguing detail with a lot of implications, it was supposed to be the biggest one. But there was a limit to my patience, and having a sexy bookworm on my lap, determinedly pushing herself even deeper onto my shaft, giving me a tour of her untouched territory definitely registered as one. My attention wavering, I blindly picked the last skill on the list, and then turned my attention to more important topics.

Such as, giving my favorite blonde the best experience of her life. Carefully reading her expression, I helped her to raise herself back up, her walls, unfamiliar to a foreign presence, trying to squeeze me to death, but only managing to make the experience even more pleasurable. Our kiss oscillated between sensual sweetness and burning passion rapidly enough to give me a whiplash, but it made the moment even more special.

I pulled back to get a better view of her expression, which was a delicious mixture of pain and arousal as she wrapped her arms tighter around my neck, trying to push herself even deeper in her determination, trying to devour my shaft. I decided to help her a bit, and pushed my hips upward in a sharp motion, forcing myself deeper despite her tightness.

A pained yelp escaped her mouth, but there was no hiding the fact that she enjoyed the sensation immensely. And since her back was still against the shelf enough to provide extra support, there was no point in keeping my hands on her hips, while they could be assigned for more fruitful tasks. I grabbed her breasts, and squeezed them mercilessly. From everything I had seen, it wasn't unfair to say that her tastes fell on the rougher side. Whether it was about her personality, or it was an effect of her deal with Cornelia, I didn't know. Nor I had time to ponder, because the next notification the system gave me.

[+150 Experience] 25% experience penalty due to level equality with the target

That was unfortunate, I thought, using the full extent of my willpower to not to mutter those words loudly, as that way, ridiculous misunderstandings lay. The fact that I had limits on the experience gain was unwelcome, though made sense. Otherwise, there was nothing preventing me from being locked into a room with any random woman, and quite a bit of food and water, to infinitely grind level.

But once again, I shelved the thought, focusing on the delicate art of pleasure, my sole target being the sexiness wrapped around my presence. I rocked back and forth inside her, each push loosening her further, allowing me to slide deeper and deeper. Soon, she pushed her weight against the shelf, enjoying my presence with her eyes closed. I used the opportunity to enjoy her curvy body, covered by a thin sheen of sweat, her heartbeat strong enough to make her chest ripple...

She was beautiful.

I shifted my hands back to her hips, this time, not to keep her up, but to align her perfectly before attempting a total invasion. She moaned painfully even as her eyes jerked open, but her only response to connect for another kiss, our tongues battling once more. Even when the frequency of my pushes increased, she kept the kiss connected, though the twirls of her tongue getting more and more desperate. It wasn't hard to recognize the signals of an impending orgasm.

When she clamped around me without a warning, my only reaction was to wrap my arm around her waist. Once again I walked while carrying her around my waist, but this time, each

step moved my girth inside her, which, combined with her arousal, making her cry so loudly that I feared about whether the silencing ward would be able to hold her presence.

[+750 Experience] 25% Penalty!

I actually stopped for a moment to check the ward, but her magical abilities proved strong enough to match her sexiness, so I continued my walk, each step creating another explosion of pleasure for her. Then, I sat on the table, with her still on my lap, giving her the control of the situation.

I was surprised when she started jumping up and down on my lap with a reckless abandon, surprising me with her display of initiative. For some reason, I was expecting her to be more hesitant when the situation was left to her control, but I was no way dissatisfied. Her hips moved faster with each repeat, like she was testing her rapidly expanding limits, and the sound of flesh hitting flesh filled the opening.

In her hurry, it didn't take long for her to start trembling with another climax, her eyes clouded with pleasure. Once again I wrapped my arms around her waist, this time pushing her on the table, pushing into her frantically, as I could feel my own climax closing in.

I impaled her again and again, watching her pleasure-filled face, subtly changing with each repeat, while her walls wrapped me snugly. It was truly heaven. It was a pity that I hadn't had any more time with her, that I needed to disappear after today. And even for this session, it was obvious that she was drowning under the effects of the unfamiliar pleasure. Another orgasm, I thought that she might handle, but anymore, and I wasn't sure that she could return back to her room, which would create a scandal that neither of us could handle.

With that in mind, I didn't resist the sensation to explode when she tightened with a third orgasm, though I managed to pull out, spraying her spectacular breasts with my seed, not wanting to leave her filled with my seed. With an endurance of eight, I wasn't willing to bet on chance of not impregnating her.

[+1500 Experience] 25% Penalty!

I sat on the chair, trying to catch my breath as I watched her trembling in pleasure, fighting against unconsciousness, while I fought against the temptation of sliding inside her once more.

She managed to push herself to a sitting position, and captured my lips in one last, lingering kiss, one surprisingly somber considering what had just happened. "Go," she murmured. "I want to stay inside your memory like this, in all my exhausted glory."

“As you wish, beautiful,” I said, and stood up, but before leaving, captured her lips for one last lingering kiss, promising that I would remember her. I knew that it wasn’t honest, but at least, she would have the special memory of our first time for an eternity... I pulled my shirt on, and created the illusion of a pant before leaving the opening. “Goodbye,” I whispered, then disappeared in the depths of the library...

[Level: 8 Experience: 31140 / 36000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 10 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 308 / 328 Mana: 460 / 520]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (48/50)

Advanced Arcana [45/50]

Basic Speech 25/25

Basic Biomancy 16/25

Basic Melee 0/25]

Chapter Thirteen

It has been a week since the Head Librarian arrived. A week since I discarded my ranger identity, cutting away the most satisfying interaction that was available for me. A week since her indomitable presence destroyed any opportunity for a carnal encounter in the library for horny students, destroying my voyeur activities as well. While in the library, I stayed in my Mule personality all day, afraid of awakening the suspicion of her steely eyes.

I still didn't know if Cornelia had managed to find another location for the encounter. I tried to find out, using subtle inquiries while dressed as a maid, but until to date, I wasn't able to find any solid evidence. Even Marianne didn't call me, or more accurately, her faithful but dim maid Selena, for another bath, cutting that path as well. Meanwhile, Helga was always in the library, throwing herself on her studies with an enhanced fervor, trying to fight sadness through overworking. Luckily, with the Head Librarian in place, nobody dared to mess with Helga, afraid of getting the attention of Iron Lady.

The only benefit was I was able to maximize every skill I had, other than melee, which I picked accidentally during the middle of tasting Helga for the first time. I even made great strides in using my biomancy abilities, giving me the ability to heal myself, albeit slowly and with a significant mana cost, and making changes on my body and my face, enhancing my subterfuge capabilities even further.

I wasn't able to increase my stats in any way though, which didn't surprise me. There was no way that such an obvious thing hadn't been tried before, and it would have created a big event if it actually worked like that.

But these weren't the only thing I had done. For the first time since I had gained my powers, I strayed outside, scouting the surrounding areas of the Silver Halls, fighter and ranger part of the school. There was a large forest in that area, specifically for training purposes, consistently under high-level patrols to ensure that no dangerous monster lived there. It was even separated into several sections, each for a different level of capability.

For a week, I watched as the usage patterns, which hours were the busiest, how people gained admission, which parts people were allowed solo, and many other small details. Luckily, I had a lot of disguises for that. Thanks to all the improvements in my magical capabilities, I no longer needed a secluded area and several minutes to create a workable disguise. A second in a concealed area gave was enough for me to layer the illusions into an unbreakable structure that would pass the muster for any reasonable assessment.

Though scouting wasn't the only thing I had done. I also managed to sneak into the storage room disguised as a servant, an unimportant one that held the broken equipment, too damaged to be worth the effort of repair. But I had an excess of mana, and after a few tries, I was in possession of a cheap set of well-maintained equipment. A chain mail complete with its helmet, a longsword, and to complete the set, a buckler.

I even managed to steal a used permission form before it was burned by the guards, allowing me to forge a fake one, giving me admission to the safest part of the forest, with the added exception that I was to be allowed there during both day and night. Very rarely there was anyone in the forest during the night, as with the limited vision greatly increased the risk of an ambush from one of the monsters. And during the night, there was no guarantee that a stronger monster hadn't infested the forest.

Under the right circumstances, even a class one monster could kill someone that it was supposedly harmless against. I hoped that my high perception, supported by a proximity ward, would be enough to offset the disadvantages. After all, going there during the day, a time where it was crawling with students hoping to farm a few more experience points to get another level, was not an option. I couldn't afford the risk of getting caught.

I walked into my room, and a servant, carrying a large sack left the room. Another stop in a dark corner, and a young warrior continued his way, a sword on his belt, a buckler on his arm, his shining sword and his proud look all shouting a green warrior with little experience. A common view, as many minor houses had spent minor fortunes to get them in the Silver Halls, who then walked around like they were at the king of the world until they angered someone strong, teaching the difference between the pretenders and the real deal.

For my current purposes, unlikeable and easily forgettable worked just fine. Just to enhance the impression, I even used by biomancy to temporarily reduce my height a couple of inches, loose clothes hiding my muscles, weakening the personality I reflected even more.

At the entrance of the forest, I passed the permission to the guard wordlessly, distinctly turning my nose up to them, following the finest noble tradition, and then walked into the forest. I walked into the shadowy part of the forest, without a light source with me, hoping that two moons shining in the sky, one full, the other half, making it bright enough for me to see around, though not as much as without the crimson light of the third one.

I maintained my pompous walk until there were several trees between me and them, cutting off the path, then dropped my pompous walk, replaced by a soft prowl, the sword in hand, but also ready to send a blast of pure magic if things get dicey. Just to keep things extra safe, I

established a proximity ward around, preventing sneak attacks.

My luck seemed to be working, because the first monster that I met was a dire rabbit, a class zero creature that was two feet tall and four feet long, relying on its agility and stealth to do the job, as it lacked any other quality. One of the best targets for leveling for the weaker people, as especially during the day, on an open field, it was one of the easiest threats to handle. Its teeth, longer than three inches, was a big threat, but it was just a bad matchup against me. It jumped at me from behind, but I was much faster, and pushed my sword to its throat halfway.

[+1 Melee]

Realistically, I wasn't expecting any experience, but I wouldn't be sad if something had changed and I received some. Not that I really needed it, as even if everything had been normal, even a class one creature would have given me a couple of points of experience at best at my current level, and a for class zero one like a dire rabbit, even one experience was unlikely. That was how classification worked. If a creature killed gives a hundred experience to a level five slayer, it was categorized as class five, and if a level seven received a hundred experience, it was classified as class seven.

But it was extremely hard to push through higher levels, because not only more experience was needed to advance higher levels, but also the monsters got stronger faster than their class might indicate at first glance. A level three warrior could kill a class three creature without a low chance of dangerous injury under equal circumstances, but it was reverse for a class ten. The monster would win nine out of ten fair battles, most without a considerable damage.

That was one of the reasons nobles were almost only ones that were able to push through level ten, and only the major noble families had the resources to push their members over twenty without excessive risks, supporting their hunt with a small army, though only if they were lucky enough to have members with a level cap over twenty. It wasn't unheard that a noble family to collapse in a generation, because lady luck decided to give them a generation limited to single digits. No matter the support structure, it was hard to maintain a strong estate by a bunch of level sevens.

I was distracted by another dire rabbit assault, which was a bit surprising, because they weren't really smart, they usually avoided people with bloodied swords. Still, it took just a slash to destroy it. I might be just a beginner in sword fighting, but I had ten points in both agility and precision, meaning a class one creature was nothing more than an excuse to practice my technique.

Encouraged by the effectiveness, I started moving deeper and deeper into the forest, killing dozens of dire rabbits, but didn't bother picking anything off them, because they were effectively worthless, even their meat was horrible, only consumed by peasants in times of hardship. There were a lot of those rabbits and they bred quickly, which was the only reason of their continuing survival. Their females gave birth each week, with their litter reaching full size in a few weeks. With that numbers, it wasn't hard to imagine them actually invading the world without other monsters hunting them for sustenance.

As I moved deeper into the forest, I had to fight a few dire foxes, class two monsters quite a bit more dangerous than dire rabbits. For once, they had teeth long and sharp enough to kill a low level warrior if caught unprepared, but also they had a rudimentary understanding of tactics, using foliage and other physical objects to sneak before covering the last dash. Unfortunately, the proximity ward turned their effort into a waste, and they fell to a swing or two. That rhythm, I maintained for almost an hour, with a rather decent return in terms of skill.

[+7 Melee]

Just as it happened with my magical skills, it was impressive just how a few skill points changed everything about the way I fought. My swings flew sharper, my stances more balanced, my timing more precise.

I was planning to extend my expedition, but then a rather impressive figure passed nearby, quite a bit over six feet, and carrying a sword even taller, its enchantment thick enough to be felt. But not even for a moment, I had though it was a man. She wore a shirt instead of armor, and even though it was a loose, shapeless shirt, it failed to hide her rather impressive bosom.

But she swung her great sword with an amazing expertise, suggesting that she was either had a very high level, or was lucky enough to get a specialized combat skill. Melee allowed its user to master a lot of weapons, but sword mastery was obviously superior in terms of effect at the same skill point. There was no exact calculation on it, but approximately, expert melee provided the same benefits as advanced sword mastery, meaning that it wasn't very preferable. Luckily, while I picked melee accidentally, it fit to my situation much better.

I needed to sit on my place, but I couldn't help but feel intrigued as she cut through the small and medium sized creatures, not even stopping for a breath. But then she disappeared between the trees, and I decided to return. While following a sexy warrior strong enough to kick ass was a tempting idea, she was noisy enough to get the attention of the others, and the last thing I needed was someone trying to talk to me in this disguise.

I left the forest, and after another break, I was once again a servant carrying a huge sack. When I arrived back to my room, I was planning to dress back to my unloved library assistant identity, but a note slipped under the door, from Marianne's maid, asking Selene's help to prepare another bath.

"It was about time," I murmured with excitement as I quickly dressed into my female disguise. I was starting to worry that I had pushed Marianne too much during our last session. I found the old maid in the storage room, boiling the herbal water, and after a quick talk, once again I sent her for an early night, promising to tend Marianne for the rest of the night.

I had some very interesting ideas on how to tend her.

After two repeats, preparing the bath required no thought, especially since the completely mastered arcana and subterfuge increased my capabilities much more. I even had a reasonably convinced that my illusionary disguise would hold naked unless she started to get handy. As while I could hide my manhood from her eyes, but illusions didn't work on touch. But I wasn't worried about that, as I doubted Marianne would have any concerns on somehow making a servant to feel good. It was all about her pleasure, well to her knowledge, at least.

I walked to her bedroom after finishing the preparations in the bath, only to find her sitting on the bed, wearing just a dressing gown, loose enough to reveal that it was the only piece of clothing on her. A book was in her hand, but I was familiar with her expression enough to recognize she wasn't paying attention to it. Combined with the restless tapping of her feet, it suggested some interesting things. "The bath is ready, mistress."

[+60 Experience]

The notification I just received was very good news. Not because it gave me a lot of bonus, but it told me that Marianne was higher level than Helga, meaning I would still receive complete reward for my efforts.

"About time," she said, quite a bit louder than necessary, but surprisingly, it wasn't an angry exclamation, which would be the emotion I would have expected to see in a spoiled noble girl bored while waiting. But then she started to walk quite bit faster than the usual, uncaring of the way the front of her dressing gown sliding open even further, it gave me a better idea about the reason for her touchiness.

It seemed that Cornelia failed to find an alternative location for their private encounters.

Excellent, I thought as she opened her arms, and I freed her body from her robe, leaving her in

her birthday suit, and she walked towards the bath with the same hurry she displayed earlier. I followed her in the same pace, so when she sank into the bubbly water, I was in my usual place behind her, with the bath glove in my hand.

Her arousal was palpable, begging for me to mess with her like the previous time, making her suffer under a slow tease. But that would be too easy. After our last encounter I had gained a new skill, and I couldn't wait to test it on her.

Under normal circumstances, trying to use a biomancy spell on her would be a horrible idea. She was famous for her prowess with healing magic, which made her uniquely qualified to detect my manipulations on her body, however weak they were. But unfortunately for her, two facts worked against her. She didn't expect any magic from a poor maid, doing her best to help her mistress; and more importantly, arousal had a tendency to make her distracted. After all, she managed to miss how I had been pleasuring myself in her rather plump bottom the last time.

With decision made, my attention back on my job. After the progress of the last time, I didn't spend much time on washing her arms or her neck, and quickly moved onto her shoulders, rubbing them with wide back and forth moves that allowed me plenty of contact with her breasts, touching them just the way she liked, something I had ample opportunities to learn.

[+300 Experience]

And her moans suggested that she enjoyed my 'accidental' touches quite a bit. I continued in the same vein, each move allowing me to move deeper and deeper onto her chest, her moans getting louder and louder. It was clear that she stopped trying to hold her moans back, which made sense after the way our last encounter ended. Why should she feel self-conscious about a few little moans after I had finger-banged her into multiple orgasms.

But her obvious arousal gave me the opportunity to test my expanded magical abilities. Carefully, I have molded some mana, and cast a spell on her to increase her sensitiveness, a spell that I invented by reversing the working principals of a painkiller spell. The intelligence boost from my latest achievement worked wonders, allowing me to successfully apply the tricks I had learned from Helga.

No matter how measured, I was still taking a significant risk, so when instead of an angry shout, another moan left Marianne's mouth, I realized that my spell had successfully affected my target. Powered by the realization, I let the glove to slip away from my hand, and started caressing her breasts with both hands, throwing away the pretense of helping her to bathe.

“Yes, squeeze them harder!” Marianne murmured with a great fervor, signaling her enjoyment of the choice. Encouraged by her response, I sank my fingers in the depths of her breasts, increasing the enjoyment we both received from the situation. I couldn’t help but smirk as my fingers sank deeper and deeper into her large globes, finally fulfilling one of my dreams.

[+1000 Experience]

I certainly hadn’t been expecting her to start shuddering with a surprise orgasm. I either miscalculated the effects of the spell, or her breasts were even more sensitive than my wildest hopes. Regardless of the reason, it was a positive surprise, so I moved to the other side of the bath while she trembled silently, enjoying the aftershocks of her orgasm.

It wasn’t a spectacular orgasm when compared to the others she experienced after the extended edge play she had enjoyed -and suffered- the last time, so her recovery didn’t take long. But when she opened her eyes, I was already rubbing her feet dutifully.

“You’re really good at this,” she commented even as she leaned back, after everything, uncaring that it revealed the white skin of her breasts, marred red by my enthusiastic massage.

“Thank you, mistress,” I said in a fake obedience, my eyes on the ground, which also helped to hide my smirk. A good thing, as my smirk conveyed an unmistakable sense of dark satisfaction which would have jolted her out of her dazed state. “My previous mistress was really diligent on baths and massages, and she taught me well.”

“She should be proud, you have magic hands,” Marianne said, unaware of the literal truth she had stumbled upon. I continued her massage, and soon, her moans started to increase.

“Thank you mistress,” I repeated. “You honor this little servant with your kind words.”

“Nonsense,” she said, followed by another moan. “It’s nothing less than you deserve. Actually, I’m going to tell Griselda to give you a silver coin, for your discretion and your exemplar services.”

Once again, I thanked her with the appropriate glee of a servant who just managed to get a small fortune. But I found her referring to my discretion interesting. It seemed that after that fateful massage, she spooked enough to check the maid gossip network. I was lucky that she didn’t went any deeper, because it would have revealed the non-existence of a maid named Selene, forcing me to throw away yet another identity. Not a huge deal on the larger scheme of the things, unless the worst somehow happened and she managed to trace it back to me, but still inconvenient.

Luckily, it wasn't a concern for now, not that it meant that she would escape the punishment she just earned. She managed to worry me, even if just for a moment, and there should be a cost attached to it...

"Should I continue, mistress," I murmured. "Or would you like to receive another massage. Maybe we can even move into the second phase."

That managed to jolt her out of her relaxed state. "The second phase?" she murmured in shock. "You're telling me that the previous one wasn't the complete massage."

"No mistress, I had to cut it short because you were feeling exhausted. But I can show the rest of it as well if you're in the mood."

She chose to stand in the bath in lieu of an answer, then stepped out of the bath while I dashed out, towel ready. She opened her arms, fully displaying her nakedness while I dried herself quickly. She didn't even bother to wrap the towel around herself, and started to walk towards her room, completely naked, the dance of her hips spectacular.

[+400 Experience]

It was going to be fun...

[Level: 8 Experience: 32900 / 36000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 10 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 17

HP: 328 / 328 Mana: 510 / 520]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Basic Speech 25/25

Basic Biomancy 25/25

Basic Melee 8/25]

Chapter Fourteen

I couldn't help but feel infected by Marianne's excitement on the way to her bathroom. She didn't say anything, but also, she didn't need to. The spring on her steps, the way her walk quickened, and occasional fleeting glances she sent back like she was trying to make sure that I was following her were enough. The way her body swayed with sexy energy despite her hurry, driven unconsciously by her arousal, was just another piece of evidence I welcomed, and an erotic marvel to watch. Something the system agreed wholeheartedly.

[+200 Experience]

As she stood next to her bed, she waved her hand, and extinguished all the lights in the room, except a small ball of flickering light, filling the room with shadows and mysteries. The view was no less heavenly as she stretched her body on her bed, her damp skin shimmering under the flickering lights, once again straining the cover of the towel. But thanks to the lesson with Helga and my week-long training, my illusion abilities were at another level.

I loosened the second towel that kept my boner in check, putting an illusion to hide the resulting tent. Marianne was too distracted to notice the usage of magic around her, so she busied herself in sinking her face on the pillow, leaving her naked body under my hands.

But she chose to speak before I could climb onto her bed. "There are some massage oils on the small table next to the mirror," she informed. I didn't say anything, not that she expected me to. After all, one of the traits of a good servant was to understand the desires of their mistress without excessive questions.

And I know exactly what she desired, but it was unfortunate that it wasn't yet the time to give her that. After picking up the oil bottles, I sent them a small wave of magic, using my biomancy to get a better understanding of their qualities. It was one of the disregarded benefits of biomancy, to analyze and manipulate the material produced by plants and animals, even long after their extraction. Most nobles found such things inferior. Why shouldn't they, when they could just hire a commoner alchemist to do the same things for a few pieces of silver instead.

Of course, by doing so, they surrendered the ability to manipulate these materials at will, an ability I had every intention of abusing. It took just a few seconds for me to analyze them and learn of their effects, and another few seconds to increase some aspects of it, such as the subtle sensation of heat they produced, or the additional sensitivity they created on any skin they were applied.

Marianne had no idea what she was about to experience.

I climbed on her bed, the small bottles next to me, carefully placed on the bed with their tops firmly shut. One of them, I picked, dousing my hands with a generous dab. Then, I put my hands on the softness of her back, moving along her spine in a tortuously slow pace. For the first ten minutes, she was subjected to relatively conservative treatment, enough to make her moan occasionally as she once again started journeying the road towards the climax, but I hadn't done during the previous massage. And considering she just had one in the bath, I didn't need my enhanced perception to know that she was slightly disappointed.

And disappointing such a beautiful lay wasn't the gentlemanly thing to do, I decided to pick up the pace. The movement of my hands quickened, subjecting her to alternating pressure, and before my hands even started to explore the sides of her breasts, her moans rose both in volume and in frequency.

But I had too much to do to enjoy that small achievement. I changed position, so that I was sitting on her calves rather than her thighs, which gave me the access I needed. But I didn't dive into my target instantly, instead, I focused on her thighs, which devoured my fingers in their thick sexiness. I treated the vast expanse with large circles, slowly moving onto her inner thighs, each repeat driving me closer to her nether lips, which was shining bright with her arousal.

But this time, I had no intention of giving her an easy escape. My fingers danced on her entrance, only occasionally straying into the areas that gave her a jolt of pleasure, but as usual, never enough to push her through the barrier. Watching her squirm in a helpless pleasure was too amusing to miss. My fingers occasionally strayed into the confines of her slit, which earned a rather loud moan from her as well.

[+800 Experience]

From a technical perspective, the best thing to do was to keep the position for a length of time until she started to lose her coherence, but it came with one huge drawback. It required me to resist the temptation of her arousal-stained nether lips, begging me to test her obliviousness in an escalating manner, which might or might not include a certain throbbing part of my body.

"If you may turn around, mistress," I said with the usual inflectionless voice of my fake personality. She followed it in an instant, giving me a view of her face, wrapped with her soft blonde hair, her lips formed a pout to allow her to breathe easier, which had quickened to remove the heat she was under. Unfortunately, there was only one way to remove that heat, and she wasn't going to receive it for a while.

I folded a towel for her face, covering her eyes, which she actually unfolded further, covering most of her face with it, clearly hoping to use it to hide the effects of arousal from her body. Which was pretty ineffective, as her body was an open book to read. Still, it helped me to act in more freedom. But it wasn't the only thing I had in mind to provide myself with that freedom of movement. While I covered her breasts with oil, I also constructed a small ward that I invented myself over her face.

It was a simple thing, a very weak ward, once triggered, that would block the light for just a second. I invented it, not because it was a hard design that required my particular genius to create, but because it was almost completely useless. But, under the unique conditions I was in, it would block her sight for a second in the case that she removed her towel, allowing me to put things into order, avoiding a crisis.

With that done, I started subjecting her chest the same treatment her back received, but in a more torturous manner. First, I started on her sides, then slowly focused on her stomach, once again with large circles that allowed me to caress the edge of her breasts. When it was time to move onto her breasts, she was already squirming helplessly under the effects of an orgasm that was denied for long.

The strength of her wiggling only intensified as I focused on her oil-covered breasts, their already-high sensitivity enhanced even further. I stayed extra-careful, as I learned my lesson about her increased sensitivity on there. I acted slowly, every little caress causing her to squirm more. With each second, I started to take more liberty in playing with her breasts. Pushing them together, sinking my fingers deep into them, even twisting her nipples on occasion.

[+1000 Experience]

But I didn't stay there. Wanting to leverage her utter distraction further, I leaned forward to fulfill a desire that was filling my heart since the first night I had been bathed with that beautiful image. I leaned forward, and captured her nipple between my teeth. Softly at first, but seeing that she didn't react negatively, I decided to push even further. My tongue joined the fray, wrapping around her nipple, my lips working overtime, and if her moans were any indicator, I wasn't the only one that was enjoying the change in the circumstances.

I decided to reward her enthusiastic acceptance, and placed my knee between her thighs, close enough to rub her nether lips. The blunt treatment was exactly what was needed to push her even closer to the climax without actually letting her arrive there. Once again, the jump in her moans signaled that it was working excellently.

There was a limit I could resist the allure of her breasts. While covering them with bite marks would have been satisfying, but one of the things that would push her out of her haze, so the option was out. But she was still half-gone under the effect of her denied orgasm, I decided that it was the time to be adventurous once more. Since I had long removed the second towel to constrain my erection, I only needed to pull my towel to the side for the grand reveal. A small treatment which ensured that my shaft was covered with the same slippery, arousal enhancing liquid, I slid it between her breasts, then squeezed them to enhance the situation even further.

Honestly, I was expecting just a moment's pleasure from that risky move. In my mind, the unfamiliar effect of the move would jolt Marianne from the pleasure-filled haze she was deliciously suffering under, which would force me to use the second of darkness provided by the ward for frantic hiding.

Surprisingly, it didn't work like that. Instead of pulling the towel on her face in confusion, trying to see the source of the unfamiliar sensation, she continued to lay motionless, the slight increase in the volume of her cries the only difference. Encouraged by the opportunity, I started sliding in the prison created by these heavenly mounds of flesh, each push bringing me closer to a climax of my own.

Under those circumstances, managing the level of her pleasure, under those circumstances, were extremely difficult. Too much pleasure, and she might climax, ruining all the effort I put in to push her towards a climax. Any less, and her haze would disperse enough for her to wonder about the nature of the weird cylindrical object trying to wear down a path in the pristine valley between her breasts.

Previously pristine valley, if I were to be accurate, as the sensation from the situation, assisted by the effect of the massage oil that was having on me, was enough to push me towards a climax of my own. I pulled at the last second, spraying her breasts with my seed, but once again, it went unnoticed, probably dismissed as another dab of massage oil. Well, who was I to disappoint? I started spreading that on her breasts while continuing my not-so-kind massage.

[+1500 Experience]

[Achievement: Precariously Painted Peaks. Manage to cover a world-class set of mounds with special paint, without getting noticed. +500 Experience, +2 Agility]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Basic Stealth, Advanced Biomancy, Basic Ranged]

This time, I wasn't as distracted as my last level-up, so I had enough time to consider the choice. And while both stealth and ranged combat sounded like decent options, the applications of biomancy, even at the basic level, was too interesting to not to further that area further.

With that done, I once again focused on the busty beauty that was lying in front of me, waiting for an orgasm that was still far away. "It's time to turn your back, mistress," I said, as I had spent quite a bit of time with her beautiful breasts. Once again, it was time to focus on other areas. Even as I said that I dispelled the darkness ward, which surprisingly went unused. I couldn't help but think about all the other implications it had.

It was amusing to see an expression of begging in her eyes as she pulled the towel away, but even more amusing was the conflict she felt, keeping her mouth closed, feeling unable to ask me to work a bit quicker. With a grumbling expression, she once again lay on her back, her bottom slightly up, indicating that she was ready for much more.

Unfortunately, I had to disappoint her. Instead of pushing her hard, I put my hands on the small of her back, caressing her body softly. Her moans didn't take to rose, tainted by a pang of hunger I intended to let continue. I didn't stay in the more secure areas forever, of course. Soon, my fingers were dancing between her lower cheeks, even caressing her puckered hole a bit. That temptation, I managed to resist; for tonight at least.

It didn't take my fingers to drift down to her entrance, probing it softly for a moment before moving upwards to her clitoris, creating a few soft circles which tempted her with the promise of the finish line, a promise that turned out to be empty when I chose to slow down just as she was speeding up.

"Are you enjoying the massage, mistress," I murmured. "It's not to harsh for you, right?"

"No," she murmured in a muffled voice. "Actually, I wouldn't mind if you were a bit harsher," she said.

"As you wish, mistress," I said, and even as I said that, I pushed two of my fingers into her slit, while used my other hand to subject her bottom to a harsh, but pleasurable treatment. Her moans picked up speed, but I stayed limited. She started gasping soon after, stiffening under the anticipation for a final, but once again, it was false hope, as I chose that exact moment to slow down the treatment she was receiving.

"Faster," she murmured a few more minutes later, but there was a desperation in her tone that I decided to take it as a warning. I risked her wrath if I decided to extend that edge play for

more. This time, I didn't bother to answer with words, just changed the pacing of my fingers from a gentle rub to a frantic push, her warm juices squeaking nicely. Under the sudden change of pacing, her climax took seconds to achieve.

[+1000 Experience]

However, that was just the beginning of what I termed as the second phase. My fingers stayed inside her, slamming in mercilessly despite her rising frustration. But meanwhile, my other hand started traveling up once more, until it slid under her body and grabbed her breasts.

The resulting moan would be enough to bring a dead man back to life. Considering that, it shouldn't be a surprise that my shaft jumped back to full hardness the instant my ears communicated that sound to my brain. I squeezed her breasts harder, enough to leave my mark, knowing that she could easily heal herself after the treatment. Soon, she was at the edge of arousal once more.

I decided that it was the perfect time to experiment on my biomancy skill. Not only she was far too gone to notice the effects, but also I needed to improve it more. And what riskier situation than using that skill on a master of healing herself. I molded the mana carefully, in complete contrast to the frantic dance of my fingers, creating a temporary, but a complicated spell. I waited to a moment her moans were particularly loud, then let the magic spread onto her body.

[+3 Biomancy]

And from there on, there was only one way of testing whether the spell worked. I discarded the last bit of constraint that was keeping my fingers in control, subjecting her body the most intensive assault my enhanced body could sustain, my perception giving a real-time breakdown of her responses, while my precision and manipulation providing me with the best way to leverage these openings.

[+800 Experience]

Her moans rose to a point I hadn't heard before, filled with pleasure and desperation, getting louder with each passing second. But, she didn't climax, prevented by the nifty spell I managed to sneak in.

For a moment, I lamented the fact that I didn't have the chance to pull back and watch her from afar, as she needed my constant attention to keep her in that hyper-sensitive state. Still, I couldn't say that it was a big sacrifice, not when my fingers danced in her ever-flowing arousal,

while the others sinking deep into her breasts freely without a word of protest.

She might be a bit slow to understand she was being played, but she was smart enough to realize there was something wrong with her state. "What's going on," she managed to slur in her dazed state. "I feel like I'm about to explode." Luckily, it seemed that she was too distracted to muster the concentration for a magical assessment, which would put me in a rather dangerous situation.

"It's the effect of the second phase, milady," I explained, while my hands still continued their tasks without skipping a beat. "It takes a while to end, but the effects are worth it." Then, in a sudden hit of insight, I decided to change the play a bit. "But if you want, I can move onto the third phase. It's a bit harsher in the application, but should work in a few minutes."

"Do it," she exclaimed, not for the first time, committing to a mistake under the effects of her arousal. Unfortunately for her, I had no intention to let it slip in a moment of mercy. With two fingers still inside her entrance, blasting mercilessly, my thumb found her puckered hole, and still slippery with massage oil, it didn't take too much effort to slip inside.

"What are you-" she started, which soon turned into a helpless cry as I pushed more of my thumb into her hole, exploring another part of my discovery.

"The third phase, mistress," I said even as I sped up the treatment even more. But I needed to push even more if I were to prevent her from raising an argument against it. For that, I made a quick change in plans, and pulled my hand from her breasts, and leaned down until my head was between her legs, my tongue out.

"You-" she started, but whatever she was about to say, died before she could utter a second word when my tongue found her slit, covered with her juices, and started beating it mercilessly. In her aroused state, her reactions were an open book, allowing me to optimize my approach pretty quickly. "Please-" she attempted once more, which collapsed soon after.

"The third phase is working amazing, mistress," I said, pulling back for a moment before returning my attempts to get a full comprehension of her taste. "And if I may say, your taste is delicious." That was a rather extreme thing to say, but I was also aware that I had pushed my disguise more than it could bear. It was time for my maid to disappear.

The third time she tried to open her mouth, I was even quicker to prevent. A second finger slipped into her asshole, which turned her attempt to a pained cry, as it was a rather untimely attempt from my part. But the pain was quickly drowned by pleasure if her reaction was any

indicator.

I lost the track of time as I let myself under the control of my instincts, drilling her both holes at the same time, one with my tongue, one with my fingers, which soon turned into four, introducing her into anal play with a rather harsh lesson. I was distracted when a sudden explosion of a delicious aroma filled my tongue while she started to shudder so hard that, I would have thought that she was having a stroke if it wasn't for my medical knowledge.

[Achievement: Magnificent Massage. Bring a sexy lady to the land of unconsciousness with your skillful fingers. +500 Experience, +2 Endurance]

[+2500 Experience]

The climax caught me with surprise, as I was expecting the spell to hold. I pulled back, and examined her body, covered with sweat, rocking, but it was nothing compared to her face, her haughty expression replaced by a pleasure-filled one that would compete against the best courtesans.

Still, there was the mystery of how she managed to climax. At first, I thought that the spell broke because I somehow constructed it wrong, but an examination showed that her pleasure reached to such a point that the spell failed to keep all of it back. And, since it was the last encounter maid Selena was going to have with her, what was the harm of having one last joke. I destroyed the spell, which flooded her system with a fresh dose of pleasure, enough to trigger another orgasm before even the first one subsided.

As she started rocking, edging unconsciousness, I leaned forward and whispered into her ear even as I grabbed her hair rather harshly. "I hope you enjoyed the third phase, mistress." She tried to answer, but it was at that moment the unconsciousness overcame her, and she collapsed.

As I threw one last glance to her blemished body, I couldn't help but pity losing my access. Unfortunately, I pushed my luck as much as I could. I quickly dressed and left, leaving her naked body sprawled on her bed, used and exhausted.

[+1000 Experience]

I needed to find her maid, and explain about my 'sudden transfer', while also conveying her mistress' strict orders about being left alone tomorrow in her room, with no one to enter.

I wanted Marianne to wake up used and exhausted, enough time to process what had

happened. And I couldn't wait to see what she would do without a target to exact revenge...

[Level: 9 Experience: 42400 / 45000

Strength: 6 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 17

HP: 405 / 405 Mana: 570 / 585]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [28/50]

Basic Speech 25/25

Basic Melee 8/25]

Chapter Fifteen

As I left Marianne's maid behind, still dressed as Selena, after explaining to her that there had been an emergency decision taken by the house, calling me back to their estate, something she didn't enjoy hearing. Regardless, I walked away, but my blood still flowing quickly in my veins. I needed some physical exercise to throw away the excess energy if I were to catch any sleep. Unfortunately, I didn't have any convenient target for my favorite physical activity, now that the library was out of commission for that purpose.

Luckily I had an alternative, though an inferior one. Physical combat. I stopped by my room and picked up a sword, though this time, I didn't bother dressing in a fake warrior costume with all the armor, instead choosing a hooded cloak that would hide my identity as I sneaked into the forest. During my earlier visit, I have seen that the security there wasn't exactly I would call alert, especially after the nightfall, where most students were smart enough to avoid the time that favored the monsters. They were still patrols around, of course, but they were aimed to prevent monsters from entering, not students from leaving.

For me, the increased risk was an acceptable trade-off for reduced oversight. I was starting to get chafed by all those fake identities as I got stronger. Not enough to fore-swear their usage, but I could feel the temptation to be actually known, rather than acting as a scavenger. But before revealing myself fully, I needed to make sure my combat skills were appropriately in place.

Once again, I sneaked into the weakest forest, one that was filled with class zero dire rabbits, and class one dire foxes, intent on cutting another path through them, getting more skill points while simultaneously exhausting myself enough to be able to sleep. For more than half an hour, I continued, chasing and killing monsters, mostly by my sword, but also relying on my magic on occasion, trying to integrate some quick blasting spells to my combat routine, or curing occasional wound I received. It was tempted to drain my mana by casting life-spells on the creatures, earning a huge boost in my biomancy skill, but I still kept most of my mana pool untouched just in case. After all, I didn't have anyone to support me if things went sideways.

[+9 Melee]

[+2 Biomancy]

During that journey, my concentration was only broken when I saw the same warrior girl I had seen before, once again cutting a swathe through a pile of monsters, each blow felling at least two dire rabbits.

For a moment, I just stood there, appreciating the view. Standing straight, she was tall enough to tower over me by several inches, and the great sword she carried just added the majesty she displayed. Her raven black hair shone under the moonlight, each swing making them flew with the wind. Her muscles, while showed, wasn't large enough to detract from her sexiness, and they shone with a sweat thick enough to signify that she had been fighting here since I had last seen her hours ago.

It was an interesting situation, not because she was able to down those weak monsters in one blow, as it was an achievement anyone could replicate, but because these rabbits were still attacking in a rush, which would have meant that she had to have some kind of magical effect driving them to attack. An interesting solution, considering that each kill resulted in one or two experience. A truly torturous way of leveling up. Also, it was dangerous, even in such a well-vetted area, because it wasn't unheard of for perimeter wards to fail, and a stronger monster to slip in. And while a dire rabbit was manageable even when driven into a frenzy by magic, the same couldn't be said for an elemental bear or something more dangerous.

But still, I doubted that she was swinging her sword non-stop for the hours I was away. For once, even for a Melius with endurance focus, swinging that sword for hours was no small feat. But maintaining a proper mindset for the battle was even more difficult. And if one's focus faltered in the dark, even the weakest monster could be deadly.

My assessment was correct, it turned out, when I felt the dispersion of a magical field, and the rabbits froze for a moment, taking an account of their situation before dashing away in panic. She pressed her sword on the ground, leaning on it as she battled for her breath.

It would be a lie if I claimed that I wasn't tempted to stray into the blood-soaked opening and try to strike a conversation, but in the end, I decided otherwise. Even with my speech skill and charisma, approaching an alone lady exhausted in battle in the middle of a deserted forest was an unnecessary challenge, especially when I didn't even need to train my speech.

With that decision, I turned my back, and went deeper into the forest, which was easier than I had been expecting because of the small depopulation caused by the nameless battle maiden.

After a minute of walking, I received the best confirmation I could about the accuracy of not spending all of my mana. I was cleaving another rabbit, an innocent creature if I discounted its teeth, strong enough to dent steel, its eyes, glowing with an eerie red, and its thirst for human blood; when I felt a warning flash from my proximity ward going off in a way, buzzing with a strength I never felt before.

The same moment, I heard a soft noise, one that might be easily mistaken for the breeze. If it wasn't for the proximity ward, I might have fallen for it even with my wisdom and perception stats. But with the warning, I decided to listen to my instincts and threw myself to the side while hastily constructing a shield, the strongest I could manage in less than a second.

[-50 Mana]

[-30 HP]

It turned out to be a good decision, because a black paw appeared from nowhere, mid-swing, barely slowed down by the barrier as it swung close to my face. A cold sweat spread to my body when a part of my brain decided to assess just how close I had been to an early demise. Sometimes, high intelligence and wisdom carried its own side effects.

I constructed another shield as I rolled on the ground, this time strong enough to hold back the follow-up attack, and observed the enemy in front of me that almost killed me. A curse escaped my mouth when I noticed my enemy, while it attacked my shield ineffectively.

[-50 Mana]

A shadow wolf!

I had no idea why a fucking class eleven creature was on the premises, nor I had time to speculate. I needed all of my attention to survive. I felt the time slow down as adrenaline was pumped into my veins. I tried to remember everything I could remember about them.

They were nocturnal hunters, and had a reputation for killing the whole parties who dared to camp in the deeper parts of the forests. They were pretty rare, as they were territorial enough to not to allow another shadow creature in their domain. They were fast, strong, but all above, stealthy.

Funny enough, the last part gave me confidence. I wouldn't say that the shadow wolf was weak for its class. Its reputation as a party killer was well earned, hunting the stragglers one by one in the night, then melting back to shadows before the rest of the party could respond.

Luckily, I was well-equipped enough to deal with it thanks to my unique set of skills. I had high enough perception to catch its sneak attacks with the help of my proximity ward, and my agility was high enough to allow me to avoid its lightning-fast dashes. While I would have preferred to have a higher speed, my precision was enough to allow a successful counter-attack. And most importantly, I could cast defensive spells instantly, without trying to coordinate with a mage.

Fuck every book that claimed multi-classing was a bad idea. I was alive because of it.

It attacked the shield that separated us, but once again, failed to penetrate through the barrier. It proved it smarts when, instead of trying to break through the shield by brute force, it turned into a dark cloud, mixing into the darkness, effectively becoming invisible.

My grip on my sword tightened even as I molded some mana to my left hand, ready to go off. My perception was doing overtime while I waited for its assault. Just like before, it came in a flash. Unlike the last time, I was ready, coiled like a spring, and the moment I received the warning from my proximity ward, my sword flashed, meeting its paw halfway.

The creature pushed me back even as it roared, and the screech of the metal reached my ears. Who could have guessed that the damaged sword I had stolen from a garbage can wouldn't have lasted against a semi-legendary creature! But the sword was just a distraction, only there to delay it while I brought my hand under its chin, and sent a bolt of eldritch energy to the soft spot under its chin, putting as much as energy I could manage in a spell.

[-165 Mana]

It proved fast enough to prevent it from stabbing to its brain, but it wasn't a complete waste. When it pulled back, a part of its face was absent, and along with an eye. Most of its chin was gone as well, removing the threat of a bite attack along. However, it looked pissed, something that was confirmed a moment later when a furious roar reached my ear.

And against its fury, I had a broken sword and a mana pool half empty. Trying to repeat the same tactic was tempting, but I wasn't willing to bet against its adaptability. So instead of trying to sneak, it chose to rush in a furious assault. I rolled away at the last second, but it wasn't without a cost. I carried a mark of its fury on my left shoulder, deep enough to be deadly if left untreated for a while. Still, I was alive, which was much more important than the alternatives.

[-220 HP]

I could barely able to stand up when it came with the same furious rush. I sent another bolt of energy, but it just dodged, giving me a second to put another barrier around me. It collided with it, but failed to break through it, which made it roar once more.

The scene repeated a couple of times, while I tried to come up with a spell it wouldn't be able to avoid while doing the sufficient damage, but came blank. There was a reason most preferred elemental magic for pure combat purposes. Even my melee abilities were useless with my broken sword, with a reach barely longer than a bread knife, and a blunter tip.

I was just contemplating a range of suicidal tactics to increase my chance of survival by a sliver when I heard a shout. "Catch." Both I and the wolf turned towards the sound, and we saw the same female warrior I had observed earlier, but her presence took the back seat against a more important detail. Her greatsword, traveling towards us while turning like a wheel.

The wolf dodged away easily, but I had a more interesting plan, and less suicidal than the others I could think of. I dispelled the barrier, and took a soft step forward, stretching my abilities to the limit as the sword passed the same space I was occupying just a second ago. My hand flashed, making me thankful for my precision, which, combined with my melee, allowed me to catch the sword midway.

I let its momentum force me to turn, but I directed towards the same area the wolf was trying to land. It realized the danger it was in, and tried to shift back to its shadow state, but it was too late. I swung the sword in a great cleave, aiming its legs...

The result was spectacular. I was expecting it to wound one of its legs, deep enough to hurt its mobility if I was lucky enough. I certainly wasn't expecting it to cut through its legs like a knife through the butter, effectively immobilizing it. The sword had some serious enchantment on it, I realized, enough to make it a true treasure.

[+6 Melee]

It collapsed on the ground, helpless, but it was silent like it understood the fate it awaited him, and accepted. It was an alpha, and was willing to accept its fate with honor. One last chop would have ended it.

I didn't want to be the one to deliver that swing, however. While I was dealing with the creature, the surprise guest of the night closed in the distance, and looking at the creature with awed eyes. "A shadow wolf," she murmured in fascination.

"A rather interesting surprise, don't you think, milady," I said, feeling jovial now that the danger had passed. Then, without a word, I twisted the sword so that I was holding the tip, while the hilt was facing hers. "Thanks for the sword. It is magnificent."

"It is amazing, isn't it," she said with a sudden display of joy. "It's the miracle that carried our house name for seven generations, and now it's my turn," she added, this time with a sense of challenge, like she expected me to push back. She probably received rather skeptical comments on a woman having such a lofty goal, I realized. She relaxed when I nodded respectfully rather than making an issue. "Wouldn't you like to finish it before giving it back," she continued,

gesturing towards my own broken sword. "Yours doesn't seem to be up to the task."

"It certainly isn't," I added. "But rather than taking it myself, I would like to gift that kill for the gallant damsel who chose to save this knight in distress."

She giggled at my comment before turning a serious expression. "Are you serious?" she asked. I suddenly had a feeling that, if I tried to do that with a weaker creature, I would receive a rather angry retort about her not needing handouts, but a class eleven creature wasn't something to be dismissed by pride. I could easily imagine certain nobles paying hundreds of golds for the privilege of delivering the killing blow, thus getting the experience. Of course, for me, the sacrifice was meaningless, considering that I would earn no experience from the deed.

"Like a heart attack," I said. "It's nothing less than a magnificent lady like you, beautiful and courageous deserves." She tried to look angry, which gave me another insight into her personality. Under normal circumstances, the same words would probably result in a beating. Luckily, the situation was rather far away from the land of normalcy.

"If you insist," she said as she took the sword. "But I insist that you get its carcass. Otherwise, it would be too much." I nodded, and she swung her sword with great expertise, lobbing the head of the creature with a wide swing. She looked at the empty space in front of her, no doubt watching the notification that appeared in front of her with fascination. But she wasn't the only one that

[Achievement: Deadly Dowry. Leverage a deadly catch that brought you to the brink of the death to catch the attention of a dangerously sexy lady. +1000 Experience, +3 Strength]

The achievement had been a nice bonus, not that I needed assistance in deciphering her suspiciously curious glances towards my way. I ignored her for a moment, and used my biomancy to heal myself, at this level, it was still very ineffective for it, but I could stop the bleeding at least.

[+1 Biomancy]

[-100 Mana]

[+15 HP]

But stepping the bleeding wasn't the only reason I used the spell. She still didn't know who I was, and the situation was as favorable as it could get to reveal a part of myself, and getting an ally, which had the potential to turn into ally with benefits if everything went well.

“I wouldn’t have expected a mage skilled enough to take a shadow wolf in single combat. I thought your ilk chose to hide behind proud soldier for protection rather than risking their precious hide.”

“You would find out that I’m a rather unusual mage, in more ways than one,” I said even as I let my hood to fall down, giving her an unrestricted view of my face. She might be the first one that saw it for a while, because I had started to use an illusion to hide it while I went around in Mule identity. I had to do it, because fourteen points of charisma were rather attention-grabbing.

“It seems so,” she said, unaware that the night wasn’t enough to hide her blush from my eyes. “But I feel curious just how much.”

“I would like to explain it, but I fear that the commission might bring some guards here, and I have some reasons to hide my prowess, the general distaste for mages who actually decide to fight instead of hiding behind the others only one of it,” I said, once again glad for my speech skill. I would have focused seducing her, but I expected guards to appear any second, and more I could carve off this monster, the better.

“Interesting,” she murmured, her eyes alight with interest, in more ways than one. The situation was basically a cheat code for seduction, I had to admit. A handsome, mysterious warrior of a great aptitude, cloaked in dark, suggesting a greater mystery was too tempting to deny for a brave warrior like her. “Maybe we could meet tomorrow night and you can explain those mysteries better.”

“Agreed. It’s a date,” I said, followed by a wink to reveal that the word choice was intentional.

She blushed. “Good,” she murmured. “By the way, my name is Aviada,” she said.

“A magnificent name for a magnificent name,” I said, enjoying her intensifying blush. “And I’m Caesar,” I answered, using my birth name for the first time in a long while. It tasted weird in my tongue, but for the first time in my life, it felt right, that I was finally strong enough to fulfill the implications of the name, which belonged to the biggest hero my city had ever produced.

“An ambitious name for a mysterious stranger,” she said before disappearing behind the trees. After a brief pause where I repaired my sword, I started skinning my trophy. The more I could get before the guards arrived and I had to disappear, the better.

After half an hour of tense skinning, and cutting, where I managed to extract every valuable part of the wolf, I had realized that there were no guards coming, which was curious. I didn’t

expect them to respond instantly, but even if the wards somehow failed to warn them, they should have heard the battle, or at least, felt the magic I had used. The blast that took half of the monster's face was not really sneaky, both visually and magically.

But still, no guard came, and I burned the worthless remains of the wolf -relatively worthless, as they could easily be sold to several golds, but I currently lacked the opportunity to do so, and it might be hard to explain how the Mule suddenly came across a shadow wolf spleen or intestine. But the head, I took along with the skin, bones, and some highly-magical parts like its claws, my biomancy once again coming useful in processing them for storage.

But burning and processing those took the rest of my mana, and when I returned to my room, I was completely exhausted. But despite my exhaustion, the sleep proved elusive. A part of it was my sudden brush with death. Just a moment's delay, and I would have died. Still, the sudden appearance of the monster, and the guards' suspicious absence was more important. Something told me that things were planned, and while I could be the target, my instincts told me otherwise.

It seemed like I had a mystery to solve if I wanted to keep my new paramour alive...

[Level: 9 Experience: 43400 / 45000

Strength: 9 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 10

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 12

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 17

HP: 187 / 450 Mana: 15 / 585]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [31/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Basic Melee [23/25]]

Chapter Sixteen

I woke up with the first rays of the sun, which was insufficient as rest, as while I recovered the mana I spent during my rest, I had to spend almost all of it recovering several hit points. It was tempting to sleep a few more hours to recover some more, until my library shift started, but another information-gathering task awaited me.

[+4 Biomancy]

[-400 Mana]

[+113 HP]

Once again in my servant disguise, this time as a stable-helper, I slipped to the warrior section of the area, and worked there for a couple of hours. With my latest radical jump in strength, the work was rather easy even in my exhausted state, something I had appreciated a lot.

More importantly, I had managed to collect a bit information about my mystery helper. It turned out, it was easy to make idle servants gossip about a sexy woman over six feet tall and an aggressive demeanor. Unfortunately, due to traditional roles expecting a noble lady not to dirty her hands with such nonsense, exacerbated by the said aggressive demeanor, there was a fair bit of resentment towards her, which meant that there was a lot of inaccurate and plain vicious gossip about her, and even for me, separating them was a difficult task.

Some claimed that she killed all of her brothers, while others claimed she hunted the men stupid enough to get near her for sport, while simultaneously claiming that she was a whore that had routine intercourse in the monsters in the forest, and a lot of other ridiculous claims. The only consistent thing was she was a part of a small house with a glorious past, and she decided to take the path of the warrior after the untimely death of her brothers to raise her house reputation, rather than doing what was expected of her and find a decent match, while focusing on the magical arts.

The other undisputed fact was that her sword was a treasure onto itself. That, I had no trouble believing, because that monster of a sword had cut through a class eleven monster with just a cleave, with only a modest strength of six to support it. Yes, shadow wolves weren't known for their defense, but only because of their scarier abilities.

So, when I stood on the line, listening as the head librarian stood ahead of us, my mind was still on the task of separating useful information from garbage, when I noticed a slight limp in her

steps. It was a simple thing, barely noticeable even with my perception, but it was enough to pull my attention.

I started to watch her body language with my full attention, which was hard due to a rather thick robe she was wearing, but thanks to the wide variety of experience I had with loose-style female robes -both wearing them for disguise and peeling them off from sexy ladies- I was able to catch a limp on her steps, which she was trying to hide.

That made me look even deeper, which allowed me to catch the other signs of a wound she was trying to hide. Curious, because she had a reputation for a highly-accomplished mage. I didn't know whether she had any healing abilities, but it shouldn't be hard to find a decent healer, which would keep it secret for her even if she wanted to keep it hidden. Which meant that it was either something recent, something she couldn't ask any help for, or something that couldn't be cured by a regular healer.

Another mystery. It was a pity that this one, I couldn't have risked trying to solve it.

But there had been an unexpected side effect of my careful examination. It forced me to register all of her qualities, such as the rather lovely structure of her face, disrupted only by the tight way she gathered her lovely chestnut hair in a tight bun, stretching her skin to an unpleasant sharpness. Her lips, forcibly thinned to hide the fact that they were thick enough to be pouty. Her beautiful brown eyes, hidden behind a pair of edgy, intimidating glasses.

And just like that, something clicked in me. I had been tricked by her demeanor and the mode of dress, registering her as an old lady past her prime, something her reputation as a war hero only reinforced. But now that I was examining her, I could see that she was a beautiful woman in her early thirties, using every little trick available to her to look stern rather than cute.

[Achievement: Crack in Character. A new patch created by noticing an interesting detail. +100 Experience, +1 Perception]

Of course, that didn't change the fact that she was a very accomplished mage, with a level close to thirty based on the stories on her achievements, and with a personality pricklier than a dire porcupine, which made trying to reach her a dangerous proposition. Still, I had a feeling that it wouldn't keep my back if the situation presented itself.

But that was something for the future. When she finished giving the tasks of the day, I once again slipped towards the less-visited parts of the library, busying myself with books of combat magic. The last night's encounter proved to me that I was under-equipped in terms of combat

spells, and desperately needed a variety over pure blasts and shields.

After finishing my work, I was expecting to return to my room for a quick rest. Some of my mana had been replenished thanks to my leisure working pace in the library, but I wanted to sleep until it was the time to meet with Aviada to top it as much as I could manage. I wanted to be prepared for another surprise like the wolf.

My surprises were yet to be over, however, when I noticed a familiar figure following me in a way that she thought as stealthily. Marianne, my favorite massage customer. She had a hood over her face, and a cloak around her body, but it was a terrible disguise. Her curly blonde hair peeked through, and there was no cloth in the world, enchanted or otherwise, that could hide her delicious curves.

I was tempted to change my path towards a more crowded part, just to watch her trying to dodge the suspicious gazes of the passerby, but I had a feeling that Marianne wouldn't be able to weather too many of those glares before skunking away, and I was curious about what she wanted to talk about.

Instead, I took a turn towards a more deserted area that held the unused beddings and other types of inventory, giving her a chance to close in. I watched from the corner of my eyes as she closed in, but she lost her confidence in the last second. A ridiculous lack of courage, as thanks to experience modifier, I knew for a fact that she was stronger than level ten, but she still failed to close into an abnormal. Yes, she was a healer, but it didn't justify it.

I had to get lost, walking even deeper into the unused parts of the tower, for her to gather enough courage to confront me. And even then, it took a few minutes for her to take the decision to dwindle the distance. "Stop," she finally called as her steps quickened, and I turned towards her, the blank look of the Mule on my face.

In her hurry, her hood had fallen back, revealing her face, her pinkish color signaling the stress she was feeling. She took a deep breath, trying to gather her composure before starting to speak. "You'll call your maid back to here!" she ordered.

"What?" I answered, adding a thick tone of surprise that suggested I failed to comprehend her question.

It was fun to watch her lose her wind against the unexpected wall of stupidity. She stilled for a second, restarting her thought process, and repeated, this time, much slower. "Your maid, Selena. Write home, and call her back."

“Why?” I said, but this time, I didn’t bother to sound like the Mule. I have dipped my head down, letting the shadows of the corner to hide my expression, and while she was distracted by the question, dispelled most of the subtle disguise that was hiding the effects of my charisma increase.

“Because I order you to do,” she answered, like it was obvious.

“Really,” I said while raising my head once more, but this time, there was no illusion that hid my expression. She flinched, stunned by the sudden change of the situation. “So, I have to bother writing back to home and angering my stepmother, just because you’re feeling horny,” I added, the smirk on my face widening with every single word that departed my lips.

“W-what,” she stammered, missing the irony of mirroring my earlier phrase.

“Come on, Marianne,” I said, taking a step towards her. Trying to process the new situation she found herself in, she struggled to process my words, but she took a step back nevertheless. “Isn’t Cornelia enough to fulfill your needs that you needed to bother my poor maid.”

It would be a lie if I said that I didn’t enjoy the expression of shock that spread onto her face when I mentioned her secret paramour. Her face turned chalk-white as she realized that her most important secret was known by someone that was much-less Mule-like than she had assumed.

Her shock soon turned into panic, and her hand jumped up, a ball of fire crackling in her palm, reminding me my closest brush with the death, even closer than the fight against the shadow wolf. But this time, I wasn’t a weakling barely strong enough to hurt a fly. My hand moved in a flash and pushed her wrist up, sending her attack haywire. “Rude,” I murmured.

Her reaction was rather immediate. I felt a sudden shift of mana, indicating that she was preparing for a huge attack. I could have shielded myself, but that would reveal my magical aptitude as well, something I wanted to keep hidden as much as possible. Instead, I pulled my dagger, and pressed under her chin, sharp enough to remind its presence without actually drawing blood. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

Just like that, the pressure from her assault dispersed, and I pulled the knife away. She was trembling badly, but I wasn’t feeling charitable after her attempt to erase me from the face of the planet. She leaned against the wall, and took a few deep breaths, trying to calm herself. From her reaction, I could see that she was even more removed from the danger than I had assumed, even when considering her specialization as a healer.

“Are you well enough to talk, or should I try to find a seat for myself while waiting for you?” I said, not so charitably warning her.

“But... You... Mule... How is it possible,” she murmured, with long breaks between the sentences, trying to process the fact that the idiotic but harmless worker she had seen around had such a dangerous secret in reality.

“For reasons that would take too long to explain, I had to arrange being sent here to avoid assassination, and that idiot persona was a part of my disguise, because it was useful. You can’t believe the secrets you find when people think you’re stupid enough to mix up and down.” I stopped for a second, my smile gaining a dark quality. “Or in second thought, you know exactly what kind of secrets that might be found, don’t you, sweetie,” I added, caressing her cheek softly just to reiterate the situation.

“Why are you telling me this?” she asked, clearly confused.

“Because you can’t tell anyone,” I said, but even as I said that, I realized it sounded like something a third-rate villain might say before killing his victim, so I quickly amended. “Because the things I know about you are much more dangerous, so you would be an idiot to reveal that. I would just lose my cover, which, for reasons that would stay hidden for now, starting to outlive its usefulness. How would your family react if they knew your unholy relationship with a woman from a rival family?”

My lengthy explanation was enough to push the situation for her. “What do you want?” she asked in surrender.

“Don’t be down, sweetie, I don’t need anything from you,” I said, which made her react incredulously. “Don’t be too shocked, while there is quite a few I could force from you, I’m not in a habit of blackmailing helpless damsels.” Which was a bald-faced lie, as I had no complications about using the said blackmail to my benefit, but the way she reacted to the situation revealed that she was even easier to manipulate than I had first assumed. Why should I have an angry servant while I could have a devoted one instead?

“So, you want nothing,” she reiterated, relief overcoming her surprise.

“Well, I wouldn’t say no if you occasionally drop by for a quick chat. Boredom is the biggest problem in wearing the disguise of an idiot. And with my loyal maid gone, I don’t have anyone to talk to. Before she departed, we were talking for hours, where she told me about her day.”

“She tells you about her day,” Marianne said, her panic invading her voice once more.

“Yes,” I said, stretching the word like it was a particularly delicious piece of food. I let my gaze fall down, devouring her body. “She told me everything, including the rather interesting adventures she had during her latest job assisting a rather curious noble lady.” I made a show of zipping my mouth, signaling that it will stay a secret.

“Thanks,” she murmured, but her voice was more stressed than relaxed. I understood where she was coming from. My commitment to stay silent wasn’t worth much with her information being worth so little. At least, that was what I had made it look like by revealing it in my own choice.

“Of course, I shouldn’t have to say it, that it needs to be a two-sided act, even including Cornelia. If you choose to talk to her about anything about me, I might find myself explaining some of your adventures without her.” I stopped for a moment, then continued with a teasing manner. “But it shouldn’t worry you. Luckily, she is even-tempered enough to handle it, right?”

That, despite the tenseness of the situation, managed to earn a snort from her. It wasn’t a perfect joke, but delivered by the supernaturally good timing and tone, enhanced by my speech skill, it worked wonders. It was an interesting tone, timing, and pacing of the words had even more important than the meaning they hold.

“So, what now,” she said, calmed after her short laughter.

“Nothing much, you’ll stop searching for Selena, as she had to leave for another task for the family, and I don’t want anyone to start asking about her linked to me. There was a reason she didn’t wear her family’s allegiance openly. On that topic, even among the servants, you need to be more careful who to trust. You’re lucky that I don’t have any ulterior motives towards you,” I said, probably uttering the most bald-faced lie that had ever left my lips.

“I understand,” she said in a slight annoyance for being patronized, which was my intention. Slight annoyance was much easier to manage than fear of one’s safety.

“Excellent. Try to drop by occasionally, as it will get without Selena’s company,” I said and started walking away. But just before disappearing around the corner, and facing at her, who was watching me with confusion, still trying to process the sudden change in the situation. “And, feel free to drop by if you want to receive a massage from Selena’s master, satisfaction guaranteed.”

[Achievement: Foxy Flirting. Twist dangerous and threatening situation into not-so-innocent flirting. +200 Experience, +2 Manipulation]

It was amusing to watch her dash away with panic, so much that I was tempted to follow her, applying a more direct method of seduction. Unfortunately, I still needed rest for tonight's meeting, in case that shadow wolf wasn't the only thing that was planned by the shadow planner.

I wasn't willing to believe that a shadow wolf accidentally sneaked into the level one forest the same night the guards decided to be suspiciously absent.

When I went back to my room, I chose to take a small nap, ignoring the temptation to start playing with the trophy bones I had picked. Even without spending it frivolously, I would be around three-quarter mark after another nap. I didn't even spend it to fully recover my HP, why should I waste it for a few pieces of bone.

I left my room about an hour before the promised meeting time, once again dressed as a servant. My first stop was the armory, and I managed to steal a sword and a dagger without much difficulty, dismissing the fact that their absence would cause some headache for the quartermaster. Their count was, unlike the ones marked garbage, was limited. They weren't masterpieces in any stretch of the word, and they didn't have a scrap a magic of their creation, but they were quite a bit more reliable than the one I had picked from the garbage, even after the magical treatment.

After that, I stayed in my servant guise while walking towards the female warrior section, waiting for Aviada to appear. Not because I wanted to talk to her, but because I wanted to see if her passage would trigger a spy.

A few minutes later, Aviada appeared at the entrance, and started walking towards the forest. I didn't have to wait for long, as one of the servants disappeared suspiciously the moment he had seen her, and a moment later, I felt a flare of magic. Even around the warrior halls, it wasn't that uncommon enough to be noteworthy, but not enough to make the servant's disappearance just a coincidence.

With the conspiracy targeting my new friend confirmed, I quickened my steps towards the forest, just in case the planner in the shadow decided to act quicker than I feared. Aviada was too interesting to lose quickly.

[Level: 9 Experience: 43700 / 45000

Strength: 9 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 14

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 17

HP: 370 / 450 Mana: 535 / 612]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [35/50]

Basic Speech 25/25

Basic Melee 23/25]

Chapter Seventeen

I wasn't too far behind Aviada in entering the forest, but while she decided to stand as a part of the house, I had sneaked around the perimeter, sneaking through the ward rather easily. It wasn't a weak ward, but the fact that it was mostly geared to contain monsters made my work much easier.

After a pause where I removed my servant disguise and changed into my hooded cloak, I dashed towards the opening where we promised to meet, killing occasional dire rabbits and foxes with a swing of my sword. Melee fighting might not be as effective as magic in killing strong monsters, but it was much more efficient when targeting the weaker ones. Also, it allowed me to maximize my melee skill.

[+2 Melee]

Thanks to my quick pace, I stepped into the opening soon after Aviada, but as I stepped in, I couldn't help but do a double-take. The subtle, but extremely effective change in her attire had caught me surprised. She was still wearing the cloak she had been when she left her room, but it was unclasped, revealing what she had been wearing underneath.

As the last night, she chose to wear a simple shirt rather than armor, but the shirt didn't have the same cut. It was tighter, still easy to move in but enough to add a hint of sexiness, something that was further enhanced by the small dip in the chest area. It wasn't a particularly deep cleavage, but with her chest size, it hadn't had to be to look sexy. And the fact that she was carrying her bloodied sword with an obvious mastery just enhanced the impression.

"How are you this fine evening, my noble savior," I said, going with a classical noble opening, but with just enough derision to indicate it was a joke.

"Rather well, mysterious warrior," she said, the subtle pressure on the word of mysterious hinting that, unlike last night, she expected some explanation.

I gave a mock bow, which made her chuckle. Then, when I started walking towards her, suddenly, I felt several triggers in my proximity ward, in the familiar presence of rabbits. The same motion I pulled my sword, I killed the closest one. Another swing killed one more.

The reason for the sudden assault would have been obvious even if I couldn't feel the presence of the lure spell. But more interesting, now that I was near her, I could feel that it wasn't her that cast it, but the sword, making it even more precious than my initial assumption.

A glance at her showed that she was busy watching me even as she killed her share of monsters. What she was expecting to see was obvious, so I decided to give it rather than pointlessly extending the situation. With a wave of my hand, I created ten different arcana bolts, each flying towards the target without missing, and killing them. An impressive-looking spell that required great magical expertise. Unfortunately, it didn't do much damage, even struggling with class one creatures with stronger damage. On the plus side, it was cheap.

[-5 Mana]

"Impressive," she said even as I stopped feeling the effects of the lure spell. "It's rare to see a mage that decides to learn the way of the sword, and even rarer to find one that could wield it half-decent, which makes you a curiosity," she continued as she closed in.

I might have taken insult to her arrogant way of talking, but the hint of interest underneath her tone went a long way to soothe my pride. "I aim to please," I said with another exaggerated bow, but she continued watching me without a hint of humor. "Let's just say that for reasons too long to explain, I had to fake being an Abnormal since I was a child. A drawback to it that I lacked the resources to guide my development, and being a master of both blade and magic seemed too attractive. When I finally managed to arrange to come to Silver Tower, it was too late to turn back, so I leaned in my unique situation further."

"Does it work," she asked curiously.

"That's a loaded question. The utility it gives is certainly useful, but it comes with a rather big trade-off in maximum power. But all around, it works well for my lonesome road."

"I understand," she said with a nod, which didn't surprise me. After all, I had constructed the story based on the information I was able to gather this morning. The story was structured in a way that would get her sympathies, showing both self-sufficiency and courage while plagued by the kind of structural problems she experienced in her life. Even better, it true enough to sustain any examination she could bring to bear.

For a moment, the silence stretched, then she said. "It must be disappointing, unable to live up to your promise," she said. "Even with such a specialization, you were able to kill a shadow wolf alone. I can't imagine how strong you would have been otherwise."

"I find it's for to best not to focus too much on what might have happened if the dice of fate rolled differently. I am here, and I'm strong enough to defend myself and mine. The only annoyance is the role I had to take as a stupid library worker, but I'm used to it, at least. Also, I

can't say that I was able to kill a shadow wolf by myself. Your help was decisive."

"Nonsense," she said, waving the compliment away. "I have seen the state of it when I arrived. It was just a matter of time before you killed it. And more importantly, you managed to avoid its ambush in the darkness, alone, at a time that you have no reason to expect such a danger. I doubt that there is a handful of the students that would manage such a feat in the school. I don't doubt that there are even some teachers that would have fallen to it."

I just nodded in appreciation. What she said was correct, though it was more about the match-up between my skill set and the strength of the monster. I certainly wouldn't expect to survive against a more well-rounded monster in that caliber - not yet at least. "But that still leaves the question about who was responsible for its presence."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"It's already unlikely for a shadow wolf to sneak through the wards around the school unless it was tempted by something." She glanced towards her sword, but I cut her off. "No, the lure your sword has is not loud enough to be felt outside of the wards. But if I wasn't closer, using magic, I have no doubt you would be its target," I added, subtly reminding her that my presence saved her life, as some hidden appreciation wouldn't hurt.

"But if it wasn't my sword, what was it?" she asked.

"That's the question," I said. "But the fact that it managed to sneak in without raising any alarm while guards were absent is definitely suspicious. Until we can find better evidence, it's better to assume that it was a conspiracy aiming one of us, and try to stick into the crowds as much as possible."

"But that's not possible," she answered. "I have my reasons, but I can't afford to slow down my leveling!"

I could feel the strength of her determination as she spoke. Luckily, I had no intention of actually dissuading her. "Well, if you're determined in that, maybe we could work together. It would be safer." I could see she was dissatisfied with it, so I quickly moved to placate her. "I have no problems with you getting the lion's share of the rabbits and other critters. I don't really need the experience from them," I added, reinforcing her impression that I had a very high level, which made any possible benefit from the rabbits even less important.

"That might actually work," she murmured, looking thoughtful. Then, a smirk spread onto her face, adding a teasing quality to her face. "Of course, I need to make sure you're good enough

to keep up,” she added.

Despite knowing just how ill-advised it was, I decided to answer her challenge by pulling out my sword. “To the first blood?” I asked.

“That works,” she answered, but even as the answer left her lips, her sword was cutting the air with great speed. Unfortunately for her, I could see her readying for that surprise strike before she could even move, and leaned back slightly, enough to make the sword miss me in a hair’s breadth.

That show of courage worked wonders in enhancing the hint of respect in her eyes. It was not without a reason. Only through the absolute confidence in my agility and perception, I was able to take that risk, because I had seen just how effective her sword had been on a class eleven monster. A mistake might cost me my life, but once again, I found such a risk was easy to take to impress such an unusual, yet impressive, specimen of femininity.

She attacked once more, but this time, I parried. She looked dissatisfied by the path I took, but that was replaced by surprise when I changed the trajectory of my sword at the last moment, and rather than meeting the edge, pushed away on the blunt side. Or more accurately, tried to push as I found out that she was a great deal stronger than me. It was around fifteen, if I were to guess.

If her smirk was any indicator, she was aware of the gulf between our strength, and had no complications to leverage that. Instead of letting her sword fly away, she kept them in contact, changing the angle to rub the edges together. I took a step back, but not before she took a huge chunk out of my sword.

Intending to spice up the fight a bit, I raised my hand, about to send a few arcane bolts to her, to see how she would react, but the sight of sudden disappointment stopped me. Clearly, she was hoping for a martial only fight. Since impressing her was much more important than winning, I used the mana I had molded for a repair spell, dragging my finger along the edge of my sword to fix the edge, and reinforcing it a bit for the good measure. Just like that, the smile was back on her face.

[-10 Mana]

“Handy,” she said cheekily before rushed towards me once more, this time much faster, showing that her strength wasn’t the only physical stat she had been focusing for. Her agility and speed weren’t anything to scoff either, though they were not at the level of her physical

strength.

Once again I pulled back. I was afraid of meeting her strength and superior technique, supported by her more than decent agility. Her better reach made the situation even worse. My enhanced melee helped, but only a little. The only thing that allowed me to put a decent resistance was my mental abilities, particularly the manipulation, tricking her with a number of feints, preventing her from fully focusing on the assault.

But even then, the duel continued only because she wasn't applying her maximum capacity. It was obvious that she was more than capable of taking the victory in a purely-physical contest. But at least, I was giving enough to make it fun for her.

A minute passed with attacks and ripostes. I could see the beginnings of boredom on her face as she got a hang of my fighting style, and I chose that moment to push her sword with a display of agility I kept hidden, and stepped inside her guard. She could have killed me easily in that position, but wounding me slightly was out of option.

My sword slashed for once before I pulled back. "Just a bit more," I said, but while saying that, a flirting smile was on my face. The reason, the large gash I had left on her shirt, revealing a delicious view of her flat stomach.

[+20 Experience]

For a moment, her expression was blank as she gazed at me, making me afraid that I had pushed the situation too much. But even then, I kept my smile steadily, and bringing all the charm that could be sustained by fourteen charisma. Luckily, it was enough, and a blush spread on her face, followed by a flirting smile that somehow managed to look intimidating at the same time. She charged with a skill that she hadn't displayed before, and soon, I had a matching cut on my shirt.

"Just a bit more," she said, mirroring my phrase, and from there, the game was afoot. For the next few minutes, the duel continued with a renewed sense. It took a minute for my shirt to fall in tatters, leaving my upper body, and my brand-new muscles, in the display, but it wasn't entirely one-sided. I had managed to leave chip away her shirt enough to leave the task of covering her breasts to her chest bindings, which was, from what I could see, quite tight.

[+180 Experience]

[Achievement: Ferocious Flirting. Flirt through a combat situation risky enough to cause death in a mistaken move. +500 Experience, +2 Strength]

A smirk boomed on my face as I felt a renewed power filled my muscles, and I started pushing her more aggressively. My strength was still far from hers, but fresh two points were enough to enhance my strategic options significantly, especially since she wasn't expecting it. When I parried her next assault, I made sure to put enough strength behind my blow to make her sword veer out of my way, leaving me free to cut into

To her credit, she recovered quickly, but not fast enough to prevent me from leaving a vertical slash on her chest bindings. I wasn't able to cut it completely, but it loosened enough for her glorious breasts to show their full potential, while also giving me a good view of her tanned breasts.

[+200 Experience]

Her surprise lasted only for a second before she assaulted with a renewed vigor, revealing that just how much she had been underplaying her ability. Her blade swung with a skill that she hadn't displayed before, and my sword flew away from my hand without the slightest resistance.

She smirked as she brought the sword to my neck, creating a very small nick, but it hurt quite a bit despite its size, another indicator of the rather impressive value of her sword. Her chest puffed with the pride of her victory, which, under other circumstances, might have annoyed me quite a bit, but since my attention was more focused on the great view created by her move, I let the situation slide. She was aware of my gaze, and quite satisfied by it.

[-5 HP]

[+150 Experience]

"That wasn't terrible," I said with a challenging smirk. "But how about a more even fight, no weapons," I added, which made her courage waver for a moment, but my speech skill wasn't only useful for the situations I could talk. A quirk of my eyebrow gave the impression of an unintentional noting of her reluctance for a challenge that she wasn't holding an overwhelming advantage.

I wasn't surprised when she pushed her sword into the ground with a renewed challenge on her face. "Let's do it," she murmured. I couldn't help but smirk as I lunged forward, feinting an assault before pulling out at the last moment. She managed to react at the last second, but with significantly less skill than what she had for the sword fight, suggesting that she had picked a more specialized combat skill rather than picking melee.

Another assault later, took a hold of her arm, but only for a moment, because I didn't want to give her an opportunity to grab me. I didn't want to convert the situation where she could bear her full strength. But while I was pulling back, I kept a hold of her shirt, which, thanks to all the cuts over it, came off with a ripping sound, leaving her chest-bindings as her only protection.

Her arms rose to her chest in reflex, but a moment later, she let them fall, choosing to lunge towards me instead of trying to secure her modesty. The adrenaline was working even better than I could have hoped for, loosening any inhibition she might feel.

[+100 Experience]

With another level so close to attain, once again, I was tempted to push my luck. During the next attack, I managed to twist after grabbing her arm, and took a position behind her, forcing her arm behind as well. A yelp escaped her mouth, but it was cut short when I pushed my shaft onto her tight ass, stripping the pretense of the situation.

[+200 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Basic Stealth, Advanced Melee, Advanced Speech]

I quickly selected melee before shifting my attention back to the situation. She was frozen, so I decided to introduce some movement to the situation, and started the dance of my hips. "Do you surrender?" I asked.

"Never," came the answer, but she was unable to hide a rather obvious sense of desire from her tone. I could feel that a rather fun event was about to happen.

Naturally, the involvement of the conspirators chose that exact moment to come to the surface, in the form of a trickling in the proximity ward I had set up. "Duck," I called her even as I raised my hand, glowing with a bright purple as a bunch of elemental hyenas burst into the opening, ready to attack.

I sent the bolt to them, disrupting their formation even as Aviada rolled for her sword. But despite the danger, I saw the opportunity to boost my experience. I 'accidentally' hooked my finger to her already-damaged chest bindings, and her momentum did the rest, leaving her half-naked, her breasts dangling under the effect of the sudden momentum change.

[+150 Experience] 25% Penalty due to level equality!

I couldn't exactly say that I was happy learning her level, as, from the way she fought, I had been willing to bet that she was stronger, but she probably just had a higher-than-average stat distribution, supported by a bunch of over-specialized skills. At least, the angry glare she sent me was promisingly playful as she took a defensive position.

Watching the way the moonlight danced over her tanned skin was a promising idea, but unfortunately, I had more immediate concerns, such as, the pack of elemental hyenas that was ready to pounce.

[Level: 10 Experience: 45200 / 55000

Strength: 11 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 14

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 17

HP: 380 / 500 Mana: 550 / 680]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [35/50]

Advanced Melee 25/50

Basic Speech 25/25]

Chapter Eighteen

Things were about to get heated, but not in a way I might have preferred, I thought as I shielded myself and Aviada from a burst of fire, courtesy of the pack of elemental hyenas surrounding us.

[-20 Mana]

Taken alone, elemental hyenas weren't exactly a challenge for my level. Compared to other class six creatures, they neither had the strength or the endurance to justify their rather high experience gain. As their name indicated, they had the ability to use elemental magic, but not in a level that would be truly staggering, even for someone around level five or six unless they had really terrible stats.

The problem was their unique ability to link their casting power to create much stronger effects. So, larger the pack, more devastating their attacks became. The only thing that kept them from becoming a threat against the towns and cities was the fact that only very rarely a pack had more than a dozen members.

Luckily, it wasn't one of those rare times, as I doubted that I would have been able to resist a fireball from a full pack, especially with the relative combat-weakness of arcana magic. Seven hyenas weren't trivial by any stretch of the word, but it wasn't too hard to handle as well for a level ten tag team, especially when one of them was equipped with a spectacular enchanted sword, while the other had an average stat score over ten.

And the earlier arcana bolt I had sent worked in my benefit as well, distracting three of the hyenas enough to prevent them from joining the spell, hence the ease I could block their assault. But I could sense they are gathering their magical power for another spell.

While they were doing that, I leveraged the proximity ward in place to get an instant sense of their formation. The three I had assaulted with the arcana bolt had pulled back towards the leader of the pack, which was easy to detect because the gathering mana was centering on it. Luckily for us, their pulling back had left their formation unbalanced, with two of them far enough from the rest.

"Attack left, I'll distract the others," I ordered Aviada, as sharp and commanding as I could manage. We had the advantage, and I wanted to keep it. She said nothing as she charged forward, while I sent a wave of concussive force towards the main pack of the hyenas, forcing most of them to jump away.

[-50 Mana]

Their spell fizzled. Without the contribution from the rest, the leader's assault only managed to create a weak bolt of fire, which I pushed away negligently. Under normal circumstances, my strategy would be a horrible one for a level ten mage, wasting a huge chunk of mana for a temporary benefit. But I had two advantages that changed the situation. First was my mana pool, which was significantly higher than any other level ten thanks to my high stats.

The second was Aviada, who already managed to slay two hyenas caught flatfooted by her assault. I watched her from the corner of my eyes, my attention split between the supernatural grace she displayed while destroying those monsters, and the way her sexy body coiled in the process.

[+75 Experience] 25% Penalty!

The leader of the hyenas noticed the threat our approach represented as well, and responded with a bolt of lightning. Aviada charged the larger pack, ignoring the threat it posed, trusting me to handle it. I had no problems creating another shield, dispersing it.

[-25 Mana]

The rest of the battle collapsed rather easily. Hyenas, even the elemental variety was rather cowardly, and seeing half of them dying without inflicting the slightest damage was enough to destroy their resolve. They tried to rush away, but I chose to cast another spell, binding them in place. Another wasteful spell, as it only held them in place for a moment, but it was enough for Aviada to finish them all but one.

[-50 Mana]

The last one, realizing the danger Aviada was posing, decided to attack the seemingly weaker target, and dashed for me with great speed. Not fast enough that I couldn't nail it with an arcana bolt, but I was aware the disdain Aviada had for magic, or more acutely, mages that did nothing but staying behind while raining spells, so I used telekinesis to grab my discarded sword instead. With my strength and its momentum, the last hyena hadn't had a chance of survival, cleaved into two with a calculated swing. Unnecessarily brutal, but I had a feeling Aviada would appreciate it.

[+1 Melee]

"That was fun," Aviada murmured as she pressed the tip of her bloodied sword on the ground,

noting the cleaved presence of the last hyena. She stood like that for a moment, giving me the full view of her breasts, the view enhanced further by her breathing, then she brought her arm over her chest, a smirk on her face.

“Watching you dispatch them was a true pleasure,” I said, letting my eyes dip down her chest pointedly. I had a good enough handle on her personality to know that trying to hide my gaze would earn no respect from her. And letting her take the experience of seven moderately-high class creatures without a word didn’t hurt either.

She said nothing, but her seductive smile was answer enough. She walked towards her clothes, dispatched on the ground, and passed them to me. “Could you fix them for me,” she said. I did so without complaint, considering I was the one responsible for it. Of course, if I had the choice, I would have preferred her to stay like that, but it was the second assault, and it added some urgency to our situation.

While I fixed it, she once again stabbed her sword to the ground and turned her back to me. But, rather than asking the bindings back, she raised her arms. As a gentleman, I had to help her, of course, so I started to wrap the bindings around her chest once more. If my hands touched the soft skin of her breasts, it was completely accidental!

[+150 Experience] 25% Penalty!

She turned back to me, and after the slight delay while she put her shirt back on, we were ready to talk. I could see that she had a serious expression on her face. “It confirms that yesterday’s assault was not an accident,” she said.

“Yes,” I answered, but my tone wasn’t as somber as her, which made her look confused. “It’s not as bad as I feared,” I continued. “It proves that whoever was involved, they don’t have the ability to pick the exact creature they let in. The likeliest possibility is that they weakened the wards on the outer walls, and bribed a few guards to look the other way.”

“How do you know that?” she asked.

“Would you have sent a pack of hyenas to fulfill a task which a shadow wolf failed?” I asked, and she just nodded. “I think the best thing to do for me to disappear, while you find a teacher or guard captain you trust, and tell them that you met with some extra-strong creatures in the training forest. That would force them to update the wards, which would make a repeat of the situation impossible.”

“And the conspiracy?”

“It’s best if we don’t mention it,” I explained. “We still don’t have any evidence, and it’s for the best if you don’t make an enemy of the guards. Them looking away is bad, but we don’t want them to get directly involved in the conspiracy as well.”

It was a testament of the trust I had managed to generate in such a short amount of time that she just nodded in acceptance. Clearly, she had a distaste towards more concealed forms of doing business, and was more than happy to leave me on control. For a few minutes, I carefully went over all the things she needed to mention and avoid, handling the conspiracy far too important to prioritize flirting at that point.

“So,” she murmured, sounding no less disappointed than I was. “That’s it for tonight, I presume,” she said.

“Unfortunately,” I answered. “And it’s best if we don’t meet here tomorrow, as there is no doubt that there will be a lot of guards around tomorrow.” She looked downcast, but I was quick to console. “But don’t worry, I’ll make sure that you’ll get a note about our next meeting. Until then, goodbye,” I added.

I leaned close, and put a gentle kiss on her cheek. The unexpected closeness made her blush. “See you around, milady,” I said before walking away, feeling her gaze over me as I disappeared amongst the shadowy foliage.

The next day, I was wandering around aimlessly in the library, trying to penetrate the mystery around the mysterious assaults against my newest possible paramour, but I managed to hit a barrier.

I had been hoping that the servant from the last night who worked as the lookout would give me a clue on the identity of the instigators. Unfortunately, when I went in the morning, I learned that he had been found murdered at the spot of the breach, and the official statement claimed that he was a hidden mage that was responsible for opening the breach, who died when the first wave of creature had passed.

I didn’t believe a word of it, of course. It was clear that the instigators and the guards in their employ -either bribed or a part of the scheme- covered the situation by sacrificing him. It was a masterful stroke, I decided, successfully shifting the blame while plugging a potential information leak. Too bad that it made my investigation significantly harder.

Luckily, I saw a familiar face entering the library, promising to alleviate the mindless drudgery I

had been experiencing. I saw Marianne browsing between the shelves, moving deeper as her face was scrunched with focus as she looked for a particular topic. And to make it even more fun, she was in the deeper parts of the library, not exactly as obscure as the location of her adventures with Cornelia, but hidden enough for a little chat.

I sneaked close until I was sufficiently close. "May I help you?" I asked, making no attempt to hide my voice.

She flinched as she rapidly turned, the way she stumbled suggesting that agility was not one of the stats she managed to increase. "You!" she said with a sharp tone, but luckily, she had enough presence of mind not to shout.

"Long time no see," I said with a cheerful manner even as I let the full impact of my charisma to the surface. "Is there anything I can do to help, like assisting you to find the book you're looking for?"

"Not likely," she said but when I looked at with an amusing questioning.

"Really," I said. "Honey, I'm sorting those shelves for the last several years. Don't you think there is a slight possibility that I might know where to find a few obscure books?"

"Maybe you do," she murmured, avoiding my gaze. I listened to her calmly as she rattled the names of several books in rapid succession.

"I'll be back in a minute, wait for me here," I said, and jumped back to the library. The books she asked for were quite obscure, but luckily, she was looking at them at the correct section, so it didn't take long for me to assemble them. When I walked in front of the same shelf a few minutes more, I had several books in my hands, and she was sitting a chair, looking uncomfortable. I was glad to see she hadn't used the opportunity to get away. Misguided pride was always useful. "Everything you asked for, honey," I said as I placed the books in front of her.

I could see that she wasn't entirely happy about her pet name, but also, she wasn't in a position to antagonize me over it. She chose silence as she opened the first book, and started browsing, a not-so-subtle message, trying to indicate her busyness, likely hoping that I would just go away.

I had no intention of letting the opportunity slip away. Instead, I turned back, making a show of reorganizing the shelves. My back was turned, but it wasn't hard to conjure a small mirror in an obscure place, angled correctly, allowing me to watch her while keeping her oblivious.

The way her eyes darted between me and the small corridor between the shelves that led

towards the more crowded areas of the library, assessing the merits of staying versus beating a hasty retreat. Her desire lay on the latter, but her pride didn't allow her to take the former. Though the role of her underdeveloped sense of danger couldn't be overstated, not knowing even in a relatively open location, things I could do.

But first, I needed a way to ensure my ploy wouldn't be destroyed by someone dropping by. It took all of my concentration to establish a weak proximity ward, barely more than a tripwire. I could have established something stronger, but it might have alerted Marianne. Or even worse, the head librarian might have noticed it despite the distance between us. Discovering the existence of her hidden femininity didn't mean that she suddenly became any less threatening.

With that complete, I turned away from the shelves, and towards Marianne, who was looking the books in front of her with a deep concentration, so obviously fake that I would have known she had been watching me regardless. I didn't call her on that, as her ploy forced her to stay silent as I walked towards her.

The fact that she didn't flinch when I put my hands on her shoulder was yet another evidence of her awareness. She tried to stand up, but with the strength difference between us so great, I was able to prevent that instantly. She could have used the magic of course, which I couldn't have prevented without escalating into a battle, but it seemed that she was equally reluctant to take that step as well.

"What are you doing," she asked even as I started to squeeze her shoulders in a complex pattern.

"Giving you a massage," I said in such a natural, matter-of-fact tone that it surprised her into inactivity. "Without Selena, you're looking really tense, so I decided to help you a bit." It wasn't even a lie. She was much tenser than the last time, likely the combined effect of a sudden lack of massages, her inability to get some quality time with Cornelia, all compounded by my knowledge of her secrets.

I leveraged the full effect of my increased stats and everything I had learned during the sessions I was disguised as Selena to the maximum effect. Subjected to that, I wasn't surprised when the first thing that left her mouth was a helpless whimper. "That's enough," she said, but that would have been more effective if it wasn't interrupted by a moan when I destroyed a particularly tense knot on her shoulders.

"Are you sure," I asked even as I continued the systemic destruction of the knots on her back, each earning another moan.

She stayed silent for a moment as she mulled on the answer. Well, not exactly silent, as occasional gasps and moans still escaped her lips. More accurately, no answer left her mouth while she considered her answer, each passing second swaying her decision a bit more. "A bit more wouldn't hurt," she whispered in a defeat, one easy to digest if her quickening gasps was any indicator.

[+100 Experience]

After her explicit approval, I decided to move onto the next stage. I gently pushed her forward, my hands wandering along her spine, a journey ending on the small of her back. I was tempted to dip deeper, treating myself for another dose of her spectacular bottom, but I kept myself back. No need to push her too much in our first encounter -from her perspective.

But being restricted to her back and shoulders didn't mean that I was helpless. As her tenseness slowly decreased, the nature of my touches changed from clinical to sensual, something that she elected not to comment, too distracted by her pleasure.

[+200 Experience]

The speed of her change was over my expectations, making me consider the relative merits of pushing for more, but a warning from my proximity ward invalidated that option without reaching the decision. Luckily, our uninvited visitor wasn't walking towards us, meaning, I was able to take my tame pulling back, waiting until she was just at the edge of another loud moan before pulling back.

"Much better, right?" I said with a proud look on my face.

She opened her mouth, but stopped just as the first word was forming on her lips. I was willing to bet my ability to gain experience that she was about to order me to continue before realizing the position such a request would put her under. Instead, she nodded wordlessly, and turned back to the book that was still open in front of her.

My attention was already on the shelves when another student walked into the same part we were in, and I walked away, distant enough to hide from Marianne while still keeping tabs on her. I watched as she sent a message through magic, an expensive spell, which cost quite a bit of mana even in short distances, therefore used only in emergencies. They were almost impossible to track. Luckily, I had a good idea about the identity of the recipient.

[Level: 10 Experience: 45725 / 55000

Strength: 11 Charisma: 14

Precision: 10 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 14

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 17

HP: 500 / 500 Mana: 670 / 680]

SKILLS

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [37/50]

Advanced Melee [26/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Chapter Nineteen

After seeing Marianne sending that message, I made sure to stay around close enough to notice when she was leaving, but far enough to avoid being noticed, not wanting to discourage her from visiting her good friend Cornelia. It was good that I did, because only a minute later she stood up and moved for the door at a speed that could almost be described as dashing, proving the effectiveness of my massage tricks.

I followed her of course, only stopping a moment to disguise myself as a non-descriptive servant on the way, my mind on the ways of breaking them quickly. A servant accidentally coming across them was an option, but not a good one, considering Cornelia's response when I stumbled on them. That night, the only thing that saved me was their belief in my inability to speak about it. So, it wasn't my preferred way of interdiction.

That track of thought turned out to be useless when Marianne took a direction towards the outside, rather than the storage rooms like I was expecting to. Instead, she took a path that would directly lead to the training forests.

The same place that was out of commission due to elemental hyena incident.

I continued to follow her from a distance, but this time, not because I was needed to break the ploy, but to watch her reaction when she was being turned away.

Soon, she arrived at the forest, only to find several guards around the perimeter, some already having arguments with the entitled students that weren't very familiar with the concept of rejection. Marianne was no different in that aspect, of course, but her non-confrontational attitude prevented her from making a spectacular mess.

Frustrated, she turned back, only to meet with Cornelia at the halfway. Another heated discussion started, mostly in whispers which I was too far away to hear, but their body language was easy to read. Cornelia, always as fiery as her hair color, wasn't happy about being denied, and Marianne was doing her best to calm her down, but succeeding, she was not.

Feeling adventurous, I decided to use their distraction to slip a spell on Marianne, one that would increase her arousal markedly, but hopefully not to a point that would make her check for external influences, which would make a great experience. After all, the situation she was in was already arousing.

[+1 Biomancy]

[-14 Mana]

Marianne wasn't able to prevent Cornelia to walk towards the guards. It was a loud, annoying, and ultimately, fruitless argument, and in the end, Cornelia was so annoyed that she even tried to grab Marianne to drag her along. Marianne pulled back, with enough presence of mind to realize the questions that would arise if she was seen like that.

She followed Cornelia, but her earlier enthusiasm was absent, clearly would prefer to write-off the night instead of staying alone with Cornelia. Not surprising, considering Cornelia's explosive anger and her sadistic tendencies.

I decided to do the gentlemanly thing and help Marianne. I stopped following them, instead, changed my disguise from a servant to a maid. My destination: Cornelia's rooms.

The idea was simple. With her obvious internal political battle and the existence of secrets she was eager to hide, it was the best way to remove her out of the equation, not just for the day, but for a foreseeable future, making her too afraid to wander away, afraid of losing her secrets.

The presence of maids was so common that sneaking into her room didn't take any effort. The first ward at the entrance was stronger and the more intricate than the last time, but considering the monumental increase in my arcana skills, it didn't take a moment to pass it. The second ward that blocked the entrance for her private room suffered the same fate.

In her angry state, I had a feeling that Cornelia would settle for a sub-par location to hide, therefore risking not only her presence but also Marianne's in the school. Everyone knew things like that happened behind the closed doors, but exposed publicly allowed everyone to target the victims sanctimoniously.

I didn't want to lose Marianne, not when I managed to train her perfectly.

Still, being in her room without the obligation to erase my track was a huge benefit, so I went through her library, stealing several precious books and scrolls that belonged to her family, focusing on the topics that Helga was interested in. One benefit of spending years in the library, I had the ability to instantly appraise the value of any written item. I didn't bother with money or other valuables. There were easier ways to acquire them.

After that, I molded a generous amount of mana, some as a shield, some to form a kind of magical lockpick. The latter, I didn't bother to form carefully. The wards on Cornelia's box was still too strong, and even if they weren't, my aim was to make her cautious enough to force her to stay in her room, not to send her to a crusade across the school, searching for her treasured

secrets.

In a manner of speaking, I showed the lockpick into the intricate web of wards that protected Cornelia's most important secrets, then dashed away even as a flare of alarm rose, a magical push that alerted Cornelia that her secrets might not be a secret anymore.

[Achievement: False Flag. Engineer a heist to block a rival from having fun. +500 Experience, +1 Manipulation, +1 Precision]

A strong rush of flame rose towards me, but my shield was already in place, diverting it long enough for me to get out. I dashed away, ignoring the panicked shouts of the maids, slipping to the first side corridor that wouldn't have anyone around, changing into a servant.

I changed my disguise four times until I could walk into my room, slipping the sack with the books underneath my bed. From outside, I could hear the commission going on. I needed to be careful with the disguises for a foreseeable future, I noted. But it was a worthy sacrifice. Not only I pushed Cornelia out of the equation for a while, but I also had the perfect bait for Helga.

Considering the indignity she suffered from Cornelia's hands just to get a peek to those secrets, I had a feeling that a fun reward awaited me...

But I didn't have much time to spend imagining that, as I needed to go back to the library. Unlike the past, Marianne knew a part of my secret, and there was a chance that she would get suspicious if I wasn't around when she returned. Yet another change of clothes later, I went back to the library, to do the same mind-numbingly boring tasks.

Unlike my expectations, Marianne didn't return to the library. But it was okay, because she wasn't the only blonde with something going on. Helga was in the library, in her usual position, in a forgotten but defensible corner of the library, with several thick tomes open in front of her.

I could see a hint of depression on her face, which was understandable due to the 'disappearance' of her ranger friend, unaware that he was closer than she might think. A pity that revealing the truth wasn't an option.

But that didn't mean that I couldn't distract her in a different manner. A little mystery would go a long way to give her something other to do than pining after an imaginary person. First, I passed near her with my cart, close enough to see which books she was reading. With my intelligence and my knowledge about her ultimate research objectives, it wasn't really difficult to guess which book she might want to pick next.

I prepared three identical notes, all with a subtle spell that would trigger a few seconds after touching, and slipped them inside the three books she was most likely to pick next. A neat trick to impress and unbalance her at the same time. It was a simple note.

'Helga,

If you're interested in having a better deal than what you currently have with Cornelia to support your research, come to the storage room six fifteen minutes after midnight.

This is a one-time offer that will disappear if you reject, or mention it to anyone else.

Sincerely,

A mysterious helper.'

With the notes discreetly slid inside the books, I pulled away to maintain the distance, waiting for her to take the bait. Her fast-reading shortened wait quite a bit. Several minutes later, she stood up, and picked one of the books I predicted. Her reaction when the note slipped out of the box was comical. I had to struggle to keep myself from laughing, which would have revealed my hiding spot between the shelves.

The sudden flash of energy that devoured the note hadn't exactly made her any calmer about the situation. She looked around, trying to see someone around, but I was hidden well enough to avoid detection. She looked around for a few times, trying to find the culprit. Failing that, she walked away, her dilemma visible on her face.

I watched her walk away, curious what she would choose tonight...

For the encounter with Helga, I picked a different set of clothes, predominantly black and gray, with a high collar that functioned as a mask when I lowered my head, its ability to hide my identity enhanced further with a hood. It wasn't the best way of walking around without being noticed, but my aim was to sell the story of concealment rather than actually hiding myself.

I arrived at the target location almost an hour before, subtly setting up several wards to dissuade any servant from walking in. I kept the wards as straightforward as possible. Helga would be quite alert, so, trying to slip an inventive ward that would affect her mood was an unnecessary risk.

Not that I needed it. Not only I knew one of her deepest secrets, but also the thing that forced her to that was in my possession. The deck was sufficiently stacked to my side, making further magical assistance a bonus I could dismiss. So, after making sure that we were going to stay alone in the storage room, I pulled back into the shadows, waiting for her arrival. While waiting, I practiced a bit to find the perfect voice I should use.

The door opened right on time, but before anyone entered the room, a subtle wave of magic spread through the entrance. A simple identification spell, trying -and failing- to be subtle. "No magic," I called even as I reached and disrupted the spell, with more power than necessary to highlight the fact that I could afford to do so. After all, not only I had a higher level than her - knowledge courtesy of the system- but also I had a very high and balanced mental score, making my mana abnormally large for someone at my level.

[-30 Mana]

No answer came. If it wasn't for the wards, informing me that there was only one interloper, I might have beat a hasty retreat. Moreover, I was sufficiently familiar with her methodical but slow spellcasting enough to make sure that I had the correct visitor. Not that she had the option to convince someone else to assist her. She had enough trouble meeting with people that wouldn't stab her in an opportune moment.

Despite everything, there was a silent pride on her shoulders as she walked into the middle of the room, the robe tightly wrapped around her. "Who are you, and what do you want?" she asked with a mostly-stable voice, trying and failing to hide the inflictions underneath it.

"My identity is unimportant for the moment," I said with a throaty voice, one that suggested darkness, but also a mystery. "And on what I want, you have that backward. I have something you want." With that, I kicked the scroll I had prepared for her, based on the same excerpts from the books I had stolen from Cornelia earlier the day.

She didn't immediately reach for it, which was a plus, showing her caution. Moreover, she hadn't immediately used magic, showing her obedience by following my earlier directive. "You can test the scroll," I allowed, not wanting to escalate the situation unnecessarily before I could establish a more reasonable basis than being a formless voice in the dark.

She was careful as she slowly prodded the scroll with arcana energies, methodically exploring to see if there was any trap, but ultimately, she spent far less time than she could, correctly deducing that if I wanted to harm her such a direct manner, I would have used something much more direct. Her eyes grew in shock as she slowly unfurled the scroll, taking an account of the

content inside. "How..." she murmured.

"I have my ways," I answered, even as I stepped out of the shadows. I could see her stance stiffening, but it was the only outward expression she had given.

"I'm assuming it's not for free," she said in resignation, which was a lesson she knew well. Nothing was for free in these halls. I nodded. "What's the price for it?"

"I want you," I answered even as I let a crooked smile spread to my face, bringing the full impact of my charisma to the surface. But even that wasn't enough for a bitter expression to spread to her face, mixed with resignation. She reached towards the top button of her robe.

"Not like that," I cut her off, sharply, acting like that misunderstanding was her mistake.

"What do you mean?" she murmured, caught flat-footed by the sudden change.

"I want your loyalty," I said. She looked at me uncomprehendingly. "I'm watching you for a while. Despite the absolute lack of support, you have done a lot to survive, not hesitating to make the difficult calls when it's necessary." I waited for a bit. "But it's not enough, is it?"

"Maybe," she murmured, not willing to admit.

"How many levels you have gained since you joined the Silver Spires," I asked.

"What it is to you?" she lashed out, feeling angry at the mention of her level, which was understandable. I didn't know her exact skills, but it was obvious they were more focused on the research rather than combat, the only reason she was able to get a scholarship in the first place. However, it also meant that it was almost impossible for her to grind alone. And she was a pariah, meaning no one supported her in the school.

"Just a curiosity, but you don't have to answer. It's not hard to guess that you hadn't gained a level since you joined the Silver Spires. How long it has been? Almost two years, right?"

She flinched at the reminder. "It's not that important," she defended herself. "I can always maximize my level after I returned to my family."

"Yes, but then you won't have access to the best library in the world," I said. The second best according to one of my achievements, but that wasn't a point that needed to be raised, not without being able to explain how I know. "Would you be okay to waste everything you have worked for, that making every humiliation that you endured to go to waste?"

“And what,” she spat angrily as she gathered her arms around her chest. “Are you going to make all better?”

“I can help you level up, and in return, I want not only full access to your research, but also your assistance on the tasks of my choosing.”

I could feel pride and happiness emanating her when I mentioned her research. With everyone else treating her efforts as a waste, she clearly enjoyed the recognition I gave to them, making them a part of such an important bargain. “How can I be sure that you’re going to deliver what you promise,” she said, trying to make it sound like she was still against it, but I knew her tells enough to read her acceptance.

“Well, then, what about a preliminary deal. I push you over level ten in three months, or you can call the deal off?”

She caught herself nodding halfway in. “Maybe I’m already higher than that,” she tried to say, but her frustration made her lie obvious. I didn’t even bother to answer, just sent a glance towards her, which made her blush. “Do you think you can help me gain three levels,” she countered, this time underplaying her level by one. A good attempt, too bad for her that I had been cheating.

“As long as you follow my words, that’s quite doable,” I said. After all, all I needed was to mortally wound a few hundred class five to eight creatures. I could easily forge a new permission slip when the forest was reopened into training sessions to a more dangerous area, and help her level up.

“When?” she said.

“Likely in a few days. The forests are currently closed due to an incident with the wards,” I said, giving a brief explanation of the rumors behind the sudden change, making sure to keep my voice to calm but impactful. But even as I gave the explanation, I could see her relax. My charisma and speech skill was really giving their worth, making her mellower by each passing moment.

[Achievement: Patient Poacher. Take the first step of converting a target into a long-term loyal follower by sacrificing short-term fun. +500 Experience +1 Charisma, +1 Wisdom]

“I think we can call it a night, since we agreed,” I said, giving three more scrolls towards her, but this time, using my arcana abilities to make them float. “Take them as an advance,” I said, then started to walk towards the door, satisfied with the meaningful stride in my mission to

convert my first long-term ally.

“When are we going to talk next,” she said just as I was about to disappear at the doorway.

“I’ll find you,” I said before slipping away, once again using the first opportunity to disguise myself into a servant. A minute later, Helga passed me, not even making a note of my presence, proving the effectiveness of my subterfuge skill once more.

It was late, but I decided to take a brief walk outside before going to my room. Being in the same room with Helga brought some memories to the surface that should best be left untouched for an easy sleep, and the cold wind would work efficiently.

And it was a good thing I did, because I noticed a familiar raven-haired figure walking towards the training forest, her sword strapped on her back. I didn’t bother to call her, assuming the guards would prevent her from entering. But that turned out to be a strategic mistake, because the perimeter guard acted like he hadn’t seen anything, but sent a small signal after she passed.

“Damn it,” I murmured as I started looking around, trying to identify a spot I could slip between the guards. And seeing four figures, all heavily armed, using the same entrance to slip into the forest made that need even more immediate.

I needed to hurry up!

[Level: 10 Experience: 46725 / 55000

Strength: 11 Charisma: 15

Precision: 11 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 15

Speed: 7 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 510 / 510 Mana: 650 / 710]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [37/50]

Advanced Melee [26/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Chapter Twenty

Unlike Aviada and the conspirators that were targeting her, I didn't have an arrangement with the guards to turn the other way, so it took a while for me to find a spot where I could fade unseen. After passing the border, finding their tracks took another minute, delaying me further. I walked as fast as I could while following the tracks of four men in the middle of the night, afraid that I was too late.

Luckily, I managed to arrive on time. I could see the men closing towards Aviada, their weapons weren't drawn yet, but the same thing wasn't true for Aviada. Even from the distance, I could see that she was ready to burst into action, but she held herself back. Even with her sword, one against four wasn't the best odds to take.

I moved closer, not only to be able to listen to them, but also to be near her in case things devolved into violence suddenly. But I was careful, because one of them had established a ward to keep the monsters away, which unfortunately also worked against people. I needed to create a backdoor before sneaking into the perimeter. "Marcus," I heard Aviada saying. "What do I owe the presence of your ugly mug at this hour. Were you looking to have quality time with your friends? I heard that couples occasionally use the forest for that purpose."

The men were facing the other way, but one of them stiffened at Aviada's words, giving me a good idea which one was Marcus. Unfortunately, I still didn't know who the fuck was Marcus, or what he was trying to do. "I came to protect you," Marcus said, an obvious lie Aviada didn't bother to weigh, her sword still at its half-raised position, ready to burst into action in any second.

"Yes, that's obvious," Aviada said. "Four brave, strapping men, led by a former fiancée I humiliated by canceling the wedding after publicly beating him, following me in a dark forest... I never felt safer in my life." I had to admit, I was impressed with Aviada, even against the obvious mortal danger, there was no stopping her.

"Bitch," the one that I identified as Marcus shouted, preparing to charge, and from the way Aviada smiled, she was counting on that. Unfortunately, one of the others, the only one without a visible armor, grabbed his arm and whispered something, keeping him back. "The only reason you won was because of the unfair advantage given by your sword."

"Is this what you tell yourself when you cry yourself to sleep every night while trying to forget your humiliation," Aviada said, but this time, Marcus was expecting a taunt, and let it go with a shrug. Meanwhile, I managed to create a temporary gate on the protective field of the ward,

slipping into the perimeter without alerting the mage.

“You wish,” said Marcus. “I have no problems teaching you your place, permanently I mind you, but I’m feeling merciful. Relinquish your sword, and I’ll forget the damage on my reputation due to your cheating.”

I heard one of his hangers snort in amusement, clearly not buying the impression Marcus was trying to sell, but that didn’t make him move. I didn’t know who Marcus was, but considering the number of guards he managed to suborn, it was likely quite rich.

“Any time,” Aviada said, lifting sword even higher, its edge catching the glint of the moonlight. Combined with Aviada’s tall stature, and the ease she could handle her impressive sword, it was an impressive sight. Too impressive, because Marcus took a step back even as the others moved forward.

“Not when you still have that cheating sword,” Marcus said. “I want a fair fight.” His sneer made it obvious that the meaning he assigned to fair greatly differed from the common usage. “You’re going to use this one instead,” he added, throwing a steel sword towards her. It was a terrible sword, rusty with several chinks around its horribly maintained edge. It was more effective as a blunt weapon than as a bladed one.

“Are you sure?” asked the grunt in the middle, who had dressed as a mage. “What about the shadow wolf-” he tried to continue, but Marcus cut him off with an angry statement.

“Cut it out. How many times I have to tell you that it was your imagination. There is no way she would be alive if a shadow wolf actually passed the breach, and even by a miracle she managed to kill it, she would have more than a couple of wounds as a result.”

I nodded, glad to discover the people behind that particular mishap. Meanwhile, Aviada was carefully examining the additional muscle he brought with him, trying to decide whether to take her chances against four of them rather than languishing her sword, but in the end, she sank her sword to the ground, and picked the one Marcus had discarded instead.

“I’m going to teach you a lesson, bitch! You’ll pay for humiliating me,” Marcus murmured as he raised his own sword, an enchanted masterwork, though obviously inferior to Aviada’s ancestral sword. With that, he charged forward, and their swords connected with a loud noise.

The others spread out a bit, their hands on their weapons, ready to interject if things went bad. Aviada must be aware of it as well, because she was stronger and faster than her current display. She was trying not to give others an excuse to pull back. Marcus was a skilled warrior,

but not on Aviada's level.

But their formation had a very important advantage. They were spread around, leaving their mage, the only one that could notice my spellcasting, alone.

I took a breath before dashing forward, molding mana to create the quickest illusion I had to construct in my life. The mage noticed the surge of mana, but the veil of illusion hid him from the view, and his cry muffled by the silencing spell that followed. Both were simple spells that he could dispel in a second, but a second he didn't have. My dagger was in hand when the distance between us dwindled into nothing, and the dagger sank into his throat, while my fingers pressed against his mouth, preventing him from shouting.

[+3 Melee]

His fingers clamped around my wrist, trying to push me away, but even with the adrenaline, his strength was nothing. It didn't take long for him to start moving, and I dropped him on the ground, another illusion allowing me to steal his guise. I modified the veil of illusion to hide the still-bleeding body on my feet, and continued to watch the battle.

Aviada was still fighting defensively, and she didn't have a scratch on her, but the same couldn't be said for Marcus, who had two bleeding gashes, one on his arm, the other on his cheek. I started to gather mana, to be used in a surprise assault, while Aviada abandoned her defensive stance for a ferocious assault. Marcus' sword flew away, but he managed to avoid the assault. Aviada rolled to get her enchanted sword.

"What are you waiting for, you numbskulls!" Marcus shouted in anger. "Kill the bitch!"

It was the sign I was waiting for. I turned all the mana I had gathered into a mana blast, and threw towards the nearest target. It wasn't a spell that was preferred despite its strength, because it was slow to cast and easy to avoid, not to mention it didn't work well with magical resistance of the monsters.

But it was an excellent spell to get rid of a surprised human opponent, my target grunt realized a second before his head disintegrated into a pile of ash. I stopped maintaining the illusion over me, and Marcus' eyes grew when he noticed two of his grunts were already fallen.

A mistake, because Aviada used the opportunity to get rid of the other grunt, leaving Marcus with two-to-one odds, with him at a disadvantage. A bad matchup for a guy that needed three helpers just to feel confident enough to fight against Aviada. "Please," he whined, his earlier confidence nowhere to be seen. "We can-" he tried to continue, but Aviada cut his words with a

slash of her sword, separating his head from his body.

[Achievement: Speedy Saviour. Arrive at the last minute to save the life of a paramour. +500 Experience, +2 Speed]

“That was interesting,” Aviada said as she looked at me, still breathing hard.

“I’ll say,” I said. I thought about calling her on the unscheduled midnight trip, but after a moment, I decided to let it go. She didn’t have a personality that could take criticism, and for better or worse, the issue had been resolved. There was no need to create an argument that would break the mood when I was receiving a grateful look for saving her life. A more suspicious person would have explored the possibility of my involvement considering my lucky appearance, but luckily, Aviada had a more direct personality, which made the situation more fun.

“So, what now,” she asked.

“We need to put things in a way that would look like a fight between them,” I said, pointing at the four bodies lying in the different levels of dismemberment. Without saying anything else, I used my arcana abilities and levitated all four of them, shuffling them around it created a convincing crime scene, and another spell to remove the signs of our presence, including the footprints. I even changed the shapes of their wounds to make it more convincing. It wasn’t enough to trick a good ranger, but I was willing to bet that the guard that allowed them to pass would do his best to stick to the most obvious explanation, not willing to reveal his own involvement.

[-85 Mana]

[+2 Biomancy]

After that, we left the forest, keeping silent, partially to reduce the chance of getting caught, partially to give Aviada the time to process the situation. I was tempted to ask her to spend some time together, but unfortunately, that was not a possibility, not when there was a risk of escalation. Things were complicated enough without being caught out in a state of undress.

“By the way, why are you dressed like a servant,” Aviada asked, not bothering to whisper since we were alone in the corridor. Another careless mistake, as just because she couldn’t see anyone didn’t mean that there was no one around.

I sent a pulse to make sure we were alone before answering. “Nobody really notices a servant,”

I explained, but chose not to elaborate further until we arrived at the crossroads. "As much as I would like to spend some time with you, tonight is not the best for that. I'll see you in a few days, okay."

She nodded, and before she could say anything else, I turned and left, annoyed by the necessity of letting the damsel go after saving her from distress. Still, I had a better place in her mind. And hopefully, she would remember her gratitude in our next encounter.

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The next couple of days passed in a blur. Once again, I walked around the school, dressed as a maid, trying to get the latest information, but it turned out to be a challenge. The death of four students, two of them heirs to their houses, had managed to create quite a bit of stir. Thankfully, from what I could gather, the guard did the smart thing and used the story I had kindly prepared for him, which kept Aviada's name out of the proceedings. All the gossip was about a duel gone wrong.

With that closed, I decided to went back to the library, but not before I sat in my room, penning a rather long letter, using careful penmanship that wouldn't go remiss in a love letter, except for the complicated diagrams underlying the magical calculations. In the letter, I had detailed a rather complicated issue I was having on creating arcana bolts that would be effective against high-resistance monsters without wasting too much mana. I still remembered the danger I had run against the shadow wolf. I would have likely died if I had missed my attack.

But the technical challenge I was facing wasn't the only reason for the detailed breakdown of my own experimentations, as I had no doubt that Helga would require only a day or two at most to discover most of the things I discovered. No, I wrote a detailed explanation simply because, it was complicated enough to show my credentials, which would impress her more. At the end of the letter, there were several instructions for her to take for our meeting as well.

I felt a strange mixture of stress and excitement as I joined the usual morning meeting of the library staff, listening to the head librarian to distribute the tasks for the day. A wrong move here would have ruined everything I had worked for, but I couldn't help but watch her in appreciation since I had discovered the femininity that laid under her carefully-crafted serious facade. Too bad that I lacked the ability to make a move on her.

Maybe soon.

With that done, I once again moved to the back of the library, where I was once again tasked to gather the books that lay forgotten on the desks. One of the benefits of being known as an idiot, I was able to finish the tasks that were expected of me in a few minutes, and started walking around, searching for my targets.

Helga, I was able to find first. I used the same trick, examining the books she was studying to deploy the letter I had written for her. She looked around when she received it, but unlike the last time, it was a look resigned to failure, not expecting to see anyone around.

But the way her face brightened by every word on the letter was a sight to see. She was barely able to hold back shivers of excitement as she finished the letter, and dashed away to find the books she was looking for. The fact that she enjoyed the task I had given her was a positive development, meaning I would have more space to push in other areas before making her crack.

That task complete, I moved onto my next one, namely, finding Marianne, which, unfortunately, took quite a bit longer than my first self-appointed task. It was well past noon when I finally saw Marianne in the library, walking towards the less-occupied parts with a clear determination. Feeling curious, I walked towards the main corridor, close enough to alert her to my presence, but she continued to walk despite her intensifying blush, her gaze occasionally lingering over me.

She clearly wanted me to follow her, which meant I pointedly ignored her presence and continued my job, until a cough had disrupted my concentration. I turned towards the noise, only to see Marianne standing there. "Yes, sweetie," I said as I turned a not-so-gentle smile towards her, carrying the full brunt of my rather impressive charisma score.

"May I talk to you for a moment, M-" she started, only to come to a sudden stop. She didn't know my real name, and she was smart enough to realize that referring to my unflattering nickname wasn't the best way to start a discussion. "Please," she added instead, trying to recover ground after her near-disaster.

"Sure, go ahead," I said confidently, because I knew there was no one else nearby, thanks to the low-powered proximity wards I had set up around us. Thanks to my growing strength, hiding my situation was not the number one priority anymore, because I had to option to claim that I had been hunting alone during the night, as I was finally strong enough to survive such an ordeal. But the fact that I could survive the impact hadn't meant that I was willing to announce my

situation to the whole school just yet, hence the wards.

“Maybe in somewhere less crowded,” she whispered nervously as her eyes darted around. “Meet me around the storage rooms, the ones that are after the kitchen.” At that moment, I was glad for my observational capabilities, because, without it, I would be too afraid of a trap to follow her. But she was like an open book, and I could read everything through blue depths of her eyes.

“Whatever you wish for, my queen,” I said, tackling an exaggerated bow to the end, which wasn’t a cure for the shyness she had been displaying. She managed to give a trembling nod before dashing away, leaving me free to return my task; even if it was for just a few minutes before I disappeared after her.

I wondered what awaited me at my destination...

[Level: 10 Experience: 47225 / 55000

Strength: 11 Charisma: 15

Precision: 11 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 15

Speed: 9 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 530 / 530 Mana: 650 / 710]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [39/50]

Advanced Melee 29/50

Basic Speech 25/25]

Chapter Twenty-One

It didn't take long for me to find Marianne, as only one of the storage rooms had an unlocked door. An amateur mistake, if a servant had passed around, they would've locked her inside. She could have blasted herself out magically, but I didn't think that she would appreciate the resulting paperwork.

When I walked inside, I used a simple spell to lock the door behind me, as I didn't want any interruption. In the room, Marianne was waiting for me on a chair, but jumped up to her feet the moment I had walked inside. I could see the nervousness on her face, but no fear, making it unlikely that she had been planning an ambush.

"You're the one that invited me here," I said, but kept my voice soft, to avoid making the situation too confrontational.

Her blush intensified under my expectant gaze, but it didn't prevent her from speaking out. "I wanted to talk to you about something you promised to do," she said, managing to keep her voice even, but I could see just how much effort it took for her to maintain it.

"A promise?" I said, despite fully knowing what she had been talking about. She whispered something, too low to be heard even with my enhanced senses. "Sorry," I murmured. "Can you repeat it in a voice that I can hear."

"You mentioned that you might be willing to give me a massage," she whispered, but this time, it was a whisper loud enough for me to hear, even with her voice dwindling alongside the sentence.

"Yeah, I remember mentioning something like that," I said, doing my best to suppress a hungry smirk, but only with partial success. I had been expecting her to eventually fold to her own desires, especially since I had blocked the option of Cornelia, but I hadn't been expecting it to be so soon. Apparently, the treatment she had received during my undercover-maid career had spoiled her worse than I had been expecting.

She waited for me to continue, but I was contending in stopping there, and waiting for her to continue. It took several seconds for her to realize I was finished, and an equal amount of time to gather her courage for the next words. "May I take you up in that order," she managed to say, this time managing to keep her voice about a whisper, but barely.

Stringing her along was a tempting idea, but in her fragility, it was equally likely that it would

backfire, sending her with a retreat. It wasn't a risk I was willing to take, simply because she wasn't the only one that was feeling horny. I temporarily lost my access to Helga after discarding my ranger personality, and my attempts to woo Aviada had been delayed thanks to her ex-fiancee —though luckily, not anymore. Willing access to Marianne was not something I could gamble. "Sure," I said with a shrug before turning the impact of my charisma to the max, my speech skill helping me to time the delivery perfectly. "I could never disappoint such a lovely lady."

"T-thanks," she stammered, a sudden blush invading her face. I suspected that the beginnings of a crush rooted in her, the help of the mystery that surrounded me helping it significantly as well. If there was one thing I learned from my encounters until now -confirmed by wisdom-women loved the aura of a mysterious stranger.

"Would you prefer to use the storage, or would you like me to sneak into your room," I said, only after letting it leave my mouth that I noticed the rather dangerous slip I had made.

"You can sneak into my room!" she said in alarm, making me curse myself for the momentary slip. Apparently, even my wisdom stat wasn't the panacea for the foot-in-the-mouth disease.

"Well, I have a couple of paramours that I had occasionally met in their rooms, so, as long as you lower the wards and leave the door unlocked, it's not that hard of a challenge," I said in a casual tone. There were three reasons I came up with that excuse. The first, it further devalued the secret of my status in her mind. The second, it normalized our situation while simultaneously suggesting that anything between us would stay secret as well. Third, people liked to know they weren't alone in breaking the rules.

The fourth, it implied that I wasn't good at magic, not enough to break a standard alarm spell without triggering it, without me explicitly committing to that fact, so if needed, allowing me to break it without being busted. Assumptions could be as dangerous as a sword if wielded correctly.

I could see the curiosity flashing on her face the moment I had mentioned my other supposed paramours, which then turned red as she imagined the implied scenes... "Here is fine," she murmured hurriedly.

"Sure," I said, then noticed a cot that was lying on the floor. "I see that you're already prepared." She nodded softly. "Why don't you lay down and we can start." I let my smirk widen. "Unless you want to remove your robe, of course."

“No, with robe is fine,” she said rapidly as she threw herself on the makeshift massage table she had prepared on the floor.

I was amazed at the speed she was folding. Apparently, she was weaker to the withdrawal of pleasure even worse than my wildest expectations. As I closed in, my attention was grabbed by the subtle shiver of her skin, signaling her anticipation, mixed with trepidation. After all, to her knowledge, it was the first time a man was touching her skin in such an intimate manner.

I started by her neck, applying the full range of my massage skills to the fore from the start, trying to show her the difference between the so-called apprentice and the master. Thankfully, I had never applied my full range of capabilities while I was under the guise of Selena, not to mention my capabilities increased quite a bit due to my stat increase since our last encounter.

And it showed. A subtle purr started before even the turn of the minute, though it was short-lived, terminated the moment she realized she was making it. She sent a fleeting glance towards me to check whether I had noticed it, only to find a smug smile. “Maybe it was a bad idea-” she started as she tried to rise, for the first time realizing the vulnerable situation she put herself in.

The interruption came in a fun way. I slid my hand down as she started to speak, pressing a sensitive spot, and a pleasure-filled gasp interrupted her words. “If you prefer,” I answered callously, even as my hand danced on her back, destroying the stiffness that had been accumulated. “But you’re rather stiff, are you sure you want to stop early.”

If she could have answered in the first few seconds, the answer had been likely to be positive, but with her mouth occupied by moaning, she failed to answer. And when she managed to control her voice, the situation had changed. With her heartbeat thumping under my finger, clear despite the layers of clothing on the way, I doubted that it would be effective. “Maybe a just another minute,” she murmured, sealing her fate even if she didn’t know it yet.

From my end, the next half an hour passed in a familiar routine, pleasuring her without touching any scandalous spots while carefully reading her reactions to keep her on the edge. It was another sign of her naivety that she failed to recognize that tactic until it was too late despite already experiencing it several times from his disguised persona.

[+200 Experience]

I smiled at the notification. Not because of its value, as it was rather paltry for such a long effort, but it lacked the penalty indicator, suggesting she was still at a higher level than me,

which meant that I still had a convenient target to level up. Especially important, because I was yet to discover how the penalties were going to scale up with the level difference.

“Raise your arms,” I ordered her in a soft but even tone, one that expected casual obedience, like a teacher asking a student to show her answer. Under normal conditions, even with my speech and charisma, it wouldn’t have worked, but the situation was far from normal. She raised her arms, and I pulled her robe off her, its buttons I had untied beforehand without her noticing.

It took surprisingly long for her to realize that she had lost a layer of clothing, leaving her shirt and skirt with the task of protecting her body. Both were relatively conservative, but regardless, the lost layer meant that even the simplest of my touch had a renewed intensity. It was certainly amusing that when she turned her head in a way that she considered subtle, trying to come up with a way to argue against me removing her robe, but a mocking glare was enough to deter her, reminding her just how much it took to realize it.

It was another mistake, of course, but at this point, it was inevitable. She had been struggling under my touch, making things awkward in a way that would ensure a difference of opinion, without causing a total crisis.

Still, there was a lot I could integrate without giving her a reason to raise that difference of opinion. I focused along her spine, occasionally dipping as low as the small of her back before rising up, every retreat earning a disappointed sigh that she no doubt thought as unheard.

She was finally ready for more.

At first, I limited myself to intensifying the movement of my fingers, pushing her even closer to the edge, so that an accidental touch would be enough to put her on the other side. I could see her legs starting to rub against each other, which, unfortunately, would be enough to push her over the edge, so I placed my knee between her thighs.

“Mercy,” she murmured as she sent a pitiful expression to my way, but it met with an infertile field. Why would I let her escape my trap after spending all that time

“You want your release?” I asked, this time, abandoning my clinical tone for a dark amusement. Earlier, that tone would have sent her away packing, but now, it only made her shiver helplessly. She nodded. “Answer using words,” I countered, my smile widening.

“Yes,” she murmured.

“Excellent,” I said as I grabbed her shirt with both hands, and with a rather loud noise, ripped it off, the enchanted fabric unable to resist my improved strength. She shouted in a panic, but her attempts to stand up prevented by my hands, rubbing her now-naked shoulders. “Calm down, sweetie, the shirt blocks most of the pleasure, so I got rid of it. Of course, if you want to experience the weak version...”

“No, that’s fine,” she answered after a moment’s indecision. Her flare of disobedience dissipated, leaving me free to rub her naked skin, to mentally prepare her for the next step.

While on that step, I couldn’t help but think about Cornelia’s failure to instill obedience on Marianne, which was a poor showing of skill on Cornelia’s part. All she needed was to drag her around a bit, dangling the prospect of the pleasure in front of her, and Marianne would have folded like a house of cards. But instead, Cornelia prioritized her immediate pleasure with her usual impatience, forcing her to look alternatives where she could dominate with her power. And if all went according to the plan, that approach would be the reason Cornelia ended up in front of me, bent and weakened.

I turned my attention back to Marianne, who was rumbling and mewling under the throes of pleasure, her rationality dwindling with each passing second, replaced with mindless arousal. It was the time to enhance the situation with a touch of magic, I decided in a sudden moment of inspiration. With my advanced biomancy, it was easy to put a temporary spell that would prevent her from climaxing no matter how much pleasure she felt. And applied slowly, she didn’t have a chance of noticing the spell in her distracted state.

[+2 Biomancy]

[-30 Mana]

And with the specter of accidentally making her climax gone, I decided to cut loose, my hands dancing over shoulders without restraining before started a journey south, destroying the hooks of her corset one by one, each ruining her coverage a bit more. But she missed that development, preoccupied with the unbroken rise of pleasure that nevertheless failed to break the dam that held it together, failing to turn into an unquenchable flood.

[+300 Experience]

I moved onto her thighs, leaving her corset parted open, which partially revealed her spectacular breasts, tempting me to attend them, but I had a more precious target in mind. After I arrived at her thighs, I suddenly reversed the direction, but with a caveat. My hand was

under her skirt, pushing it up, revealing her milky thighs bit by bit while also caressing the softness of her inner thighs.

Her moans increased further, to a point when she didn't reach when her skirt received the same treatment with her shirt, abandoned to the side, its task left to her panties, which was rather insufficient in hiding her deliciously-curvy bottom.

Her thoughts finally managed to push through her haze when I sank my fingers mercilessly to her bottom, abandoning any pretense of giving a massage, mauling her flesh for my own pleasure. She tried to rise, using her trembling hands to support herself as her torso separated from the makeshift-mattress. "That's too much," she managed to say, miraculously, without being interrupted by a moan, though that determination only lasted a moment, and one escaped her mouth, functioning as the punctuation for her sentence. Unfortunately, it was a question mark where an exclamation mark was needed.

I elected not to answer, instead of letting my eyes dance over her torso pointedly. It took a moment for her to realize her corset hadn't risen with her, leaving her breasts naked for my perusal. A yelp escaped her mouth as she pulled one of her arms from the floor, trying to wrap around her chest to hide her breasts from the view. It had limited success, as her breasts were too magnificent to be hidden behind her fragile forearm.

"Sexy," I said as I leaned forward, my knees still on both sides of her hips, and closed in towards her. Panic danced behind her eyes, but otherwise, she was frozen in panic, the thick layer of pleasure that filled her mind preventing her from taking an action.

I grabbed her hair, just rough enough to create another layer for the pleasure she was drowning in, and leaned to her lips to a torturous slowness, and pressed my lips against hers, which stayed firmly shut.

At first, that was.

She lacked the strength and, more importantly, the willpower to resist the assault of my tongue into her mouth, which invaded the target without opposition.

[+1000 Experience]

[Achievement: Pushy Persuasion. Use an aggressive approach to seduce a nice-mannered beauty. +500 Experience, +2 Strength]

Her arm trembled in shock, which forced her to use the other for support as well, leaving her

breasts naked. The room was chilly, so in my usual merciful state, I decided to help her, my free hand sinking into her breasts. She tried to moan, but it dissipated between the assault of my tongue and the tight grasp of my lips.

My pants were getting uncomfortably tight, but still, removing them would be too extreme for the moment. But luckily, it wasn't the only solution. I lowered my body until my hardness was stuck between her rather generous booty, receiving a delicious massage as I moved back and forth, and the pleasure compounded when her hips started to move in the same rhythm with mine.

She deserved a reward. My hand, which was previously occupied with her breasts, started to travel down, and reaching her panties. I kept it over rather than sliding inside, but the difference wasn't big, as the fabric, drenched in her juices, was well-past the point of being able to perform as a barrier, however feeble.

[+500 Experience]

Under the multidimensional assault she was suffering, it didn't take long for her surrender to be complete. Her lips joined the heated dance as a participant rather than a helpless observer that suddenly found herself on the scene. I stopped grabbing her hair, preferring to enjoy the expanse of her breasts, but it didn't earn a negative comment, just more moans.

But kissing and caressing her wasn't the only thing I had done, no matter how enjoyable it had been. I was simultaneously using my magic to prepare her backdoor for the eventual assault, cleaning and lubricating at the same time, another spell she failed to notice in her distracted state. Biomancy had so many amusing little applications.

Meanwhile, the treatment she received continued to intensify, my fingers dancing around her clit, increasing the build-up of pleasure further and further, her moans getting desperate enough to escape the confines I painstakingly built.

[+3 Biomancy]

[-15 Mana]

[+750 Experience]

Then, without a warning, I grabbed the edge of her panties, destroying them with a rough pull. She was still not completely naked, but considering that it was limited to her shoes and a necklace that dangled between her breasts, I would admit that it wasn't a big issue...

It was the time to move onto the second act, I decided as I pushed her on the floor.

[Level: 10 Experience: 50475 / 55000

Strength: 13 Charisma: 15

Precision: 11 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 15

Speed: 9 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 550 / 550 Mana: 630 / 710]

SKILLS

[Advanced Subterfuge (50/50)

Advanced Arcana [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [44/50]

Advanced Melee 29/50

Basic Speech 25/25]

Chapter Twenty-Two

Marianne's breath escaped her mouth explosively as she collided on the floor. She lay motionless for a moment, trying to process the change in her addled mind, giving me just enough time to remove my pants, catching up with her in the scale of nakedness. I used the opportunity to remove her shoes as well, leaving her necklace as the only piece of accessory on her body.

Then, she managed to gather her wits enough to turn back, only to lose her breath once more. Unsurprisingly, I might add, even if it was a touch arrogant. During the last few weeks, my body had transformed from a shapeless blob into a chiseled masterpiece, a visual impact that was further enhanced by aura granted by my charisma. And to crown it all, my erection stood between my legs, dangerously present...

"N-no," she managed to say in shock, but it was a fleeting denial, ready to flutter away with the slightest wind. A wind that I was happy to provide, I thought even as I pressed my hand at her entrance, delivering a jolt of pleasure to her naked skin. Whatever she was going to say next disappeared into a moan that echoed on the walls, loud enough to force me to rapidly construct a silencing ward to prevent a wayward servant from checking the room.

[+1000 Experience]

[-25 Mana]

"Really, you don't want it," I said even as my fingers danced around her clit, triggering a new wave of pleasure that threatened to drown her without the escape valve of a climax.

It took four tries for her to answer properly, the first three melting down whenever I gently caressed her entrance, aborting her words in lieu of another moan. "My virginity," she managed to murmur at the fourth one.

"Why didn't you tell me so, honey?" I answered with an exaggerated cheer. "That's easy to solve." What I was talking about was easy to decipher when I jammed my thumb to her backdoor entrance, which I already magically prepared and cleaned for an intense session of lovemaking. It didn't prevent her from letting out a shocked cry, which was more pleasure than pain; inevitable at her current state. "Isn't that better?"

"N-no," she said, or more accurately, that was what I deduced she was trying to say. It was more of a gasp than a word, impossible to decipher even for my enhanced senses.

“Can you clarify, sweetie,” I said even as I pushed my thumb deeper, enjoying the way she had clamped around my fingers. She tried to shift position, but I was ready for it, and put my left hand on her back, pinning her in place. She tried to stand up, but it was a weak, reluctant move, easily aborted by the weight of my hand alone. And when my other fingers joined the fray by circling around her knob, even that ineffectual resistance faded away.

[+1500 Experience]

I maintained the position for a while, but my pace picked up speed. When I decided to let another finger to join my thumb in its efforts to loosen her puckered hole for the next step, I let my other hand start dancing on her back, bringing her pleasure to an even sharper state of overwhelming,

I could see that she was ready for the next step. The biggest evidence for it was the lack of protest even as I pulled my hand away, and placed my erection between her plump cheeks, sliding back and forth rapidly. This time, unlike my previous disguised state, there was no missing what was there, but like before, she let out no words of protest. She did send a glance back -which took a great effort on her part in her exhausted state- but in her eyes, there was only helpless surrender against the demands of her body.

“I hope you’re ready,” I said even as I changed the position a bit, aligning the tip of my shaft against her entrance, but just before I pushed in, I slapped my forehead in an exaggerated manner. “I forgot to lubricate it,” I said as I stood up and walked towards her other end. “Damn, what are we going to do?”

“W-what?” she murmured as she struggled to raise her head, and when she did so, she found herself just an inch away from my erection.

“Simple, honey,” I said. “I can’t, in good conscience, take your ass without a lubricant, it would hurt too much. If only there was a solution,” I said, making a show of waiting for a few seconds before letting my face brighten. “I found it,” I said even as I pushed my shaft forward, touching her lips.

The expression of scandalous shock on her face, thick enough to push through her pleasure-addled brain, was hilarious. It was likely that, as a noble heiress, she hadn’t once considered she would hear such a scandalous offer, let alone receive that offer in such a visceral manner. “I would never-” she started, but I was quick to cut her.

“That’s okay if you think that was enough for today,” I said with a shrug, but kept my position

stable. The level of desperation on her face as for the first time, she realized the depth of her mistake, enhanced further by the inescapable situation of it. She could have called it off, of course, but we both knew that it wasn't a real option, not with her body drowning in unmet pleasure.

She was mine.

"Good girl," I said as I patted her head patronizingly, which managed to awaken her annoyance, even if it was just for a moment before it was drowned by her desperate arousal. "Now, open wide, it's the time for your medicine."

The humiliating way I formed that order didn't prevent her from following it. She widened her mouth, surrendering to the inevitable invasion. The warmth around my shaft was positively delicious, enough to finally deplete my frayed patience. Instead of pushing it gently, allowing her to get used to my presence, I lunged forward in one sharp push, until the tip of my shaft was tickling the entrance of her throat.

It wasn't the nicest thing to do, but the resulting pleasure was too thick to ignore. I grabbed the back of her head, and pushing her even deeper, preventing her breathing. She gagged and gasped in a vain attempt to breathe while I enjoyed the virginal tightness of her throat. The tremors of her desperate moans increased the sensation even further.

A minute later, in a moment of mercy, I pulled out, examining her face, tears of strain filling her face, but it was nothing compared to the euphoria that was on her face. "Did you enjoy that, you whore," I said even as I caressed her cheek with a contrasting gentleness, and received an obedient nod in reply.

"Excellent," I said as I pushed forward once more, invading her throat once more, this time even deeper. "Just tap my leg if you need a break." And with that, one of the most pleasurable experiences of my short but renewed life had started. She coughed, wheezed, and trembled, but at no point, the tap that would make me stop had arrived. And despite the minutes that passed, she managed to stay conscious, probably only thanks to the supernatural endurance given to her by the system.

And with each passing minute, my pace increased, until I was fucking her face ferociously, in a way that doubtlessly damaged her throat — lucky that we both had access to healing magic to fix it later on. But the real surprise was the great tremor that caught her body a few minutes later, giving her an explosive orgasm.

[Achievement: Boundless Bliss. Create a pleasure explosive enough to break through a faultless magical barrier through sheer intensity. +1000 Experience, +2 Strength, +2 Speed]

[+2000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Expert Arcana, Expert Biomancy, Advanced Speech]

It wasn't a surprise that when her throat tightened around my shaft, combined with the rather distinctive sensation of power spreading through my body due to level and stat increases, I started to fill her throat with my seed. But even then, I was familiar with the leveling up enough to pay the proper attention to the significance of the level up, and picked Arcana to improve. I needed to maximize the benefit of my studies with Helga, after all.

I didn't need my enhanced observational skills to know that she was about to fall unconscious as the orgasm hit her with all the subtlety of a crazed dragon. But that would not do, not when I just started. The solution was simple, I put my hand on her body, and cast a healing spell that would remove the exhaustion and clear the mind. It was underpowered, of course, just enough to keep her awake, but under the control of the haze. And I didn't bother to hide the move, as she was too far gone to notice it.

[+1 Biomancy]

[-10 Mana]

I had already pulled out of her mouth and had taken my earlier position behind her, my shaft - erect once more- pushing against her puckered hole. "You're ready for the main course, right, slut," I said, punctuating the degrading comment with a rather loud spank that sent her plump bottom rippling.

I wasn't surprised when she murmured weakly instead of the angry exclamation she would have used just minutes before. It was a pity that she didn't reply with an explosive moan of acceptance, begging for more, but I had a solid read on her, enough to realize her shyness was the only thing that prevented it. Not to mention the fear she was feeling at the prospect of her first real anal experience.

Initially, I was thinking about letting her lay on her chest while I abused my full access to her bottom, but her shyness was enough to change my mind. I rolled her with a push so that she ended up laying on her back, her eyes widened at the unexpected eye contact. While she tried

to process the new position, I took my place between her legs, and cast a small arcana spell to create a small bump on the mattress, just enough to bring her puckered hole into the perfect elevation.

The expression of panic and pleasure that danced in her eyes was delicious as I leaned forward, placing my crown against it. Her eyes continued to grow as my shaft slowly disappeared into her tightness. "Damn, your grip is delicious," I said with a smirk on my face, which enhanced the scandalous expression on her face, even more, her lips tightened further in shock.

[+1500 Experience]

[Achievement: Tasty Technicalities. Convince a noble lady to protect her virginity in an unusual manner. +500 Experience, +2 Manipulation]

Her sudden shock was understandable. Clearly, she had to expect the experience to be similar to our earlier massage session, covered with a veil of denial that allowed her to act like it was nothing more than a professional treatment, just a bit more intense than the usual. But our current position was too intimate for her to maintain that particular lie, particularly thanks to our eye contact.

A moment later, she decided to take the simplest option, and closed her eyes. I had to intention of allowing such a simple plan to succeed after all the effort I had gone through, but I wanted to do that in a fun manner. Since her eyes were closed, she didn't see the momentary glow of my fingers as I cast a small spell that would increase her sensation, nor she noticed its destination until my fingers clamped around her nipples. A gasp escaped her mouth as I squeezed her breasts, my perception providing me information about the exact pressure I should be using for the maximum benefit. She opened her eyes, but it lasted a fleeting moment when she met with my gaze, colored with a victorious amusement.

[+2 Biomancy]

[-50 Mana]

[+500 Experience]

But that was just a beginning. I pushed my shaft deeper and deeper, forcing frequent moans through the lips she tried to keep shut, with not an inconsiderable amount of assistance from my fingers mauling her bountiful breasts. This time, she managed to keep her eyes closed.

So be it, I decided as I leaned forward, and my lips pressed against her neck with surprising

gentleness, leaving feather-light kisses that made her shiver sexily. It was effective, because the gentleness of my lips was contrasted greatly with the merciless pumping of my hips, drilling deeper and deeper into her tightness without a shred of mercy, the lubrication I had applied to her tightness that prevented her pain to rise high enough to cloud her pleasure.

Under the combined assault, it wasn't surprising that her determination to keep her voice down hadn't survived for long. Her moans rise unbidden, surprisingly melodic now that she deserted her attempts to stay silent. I was curious of the expression I would find in her eyes, but chose to continue my focus on her neck instead, determined to fill her with pleasure until her concerns drowned in a sea of euphoria.

The treatment lasted for several minutes before I pulled back from her neck, though I continued impaling her mercilessly. This time, when I met with her eyes, she made no effort to close them, her pleasure easy to read. "So, Marianne, what's your opinion on the true version of my massage technique? Much better, right?"

In response to my question, Marianne did something I would have assumed to be impossible in her current state. She blushed cutely, so much that it tempted me to lean forward and catch her lips in a sudden burst of hunger. Her lips joined the dance in enthusiasm, her tongue readily accepting mine in response, answering my question much better than her words could.

[+500 Experience}

[Achievement: Unusual Usurpation. Manage to trigger a crush in a lady under unusual circumstances. +500 Experience, +2 Charisma]

The last achievement managed to put a smile on my face. When I managed to convince her to this moment through underhanded seduction, I was expecting to establish a love-hate relationship based only on physical needs from her part. Her crush was an unexpected surprise, but by no means unwelcome. On the contrary, it gave me another hook to convince her for more.

I changed position once more as my own pleasure started to become too high to contain. I pulled away from the kiss, and grabbed her hands for extra leverage before starting to slam into her in a renewed speed, each connection creating another naughty clap that filled the room. Her tits flailed wildly with each repeat, the way her butt was wobbling was enough to break the resistance of a less experienced man.

But the most important part was the expression of ecstasy on her face, her reason lost, stealing

any recollection about her current location, or the significance of the events that brought her to this particular point.

The climax hit her as I started filling her tight hole with my seed, triggering a climax from her side as well. She gasped and moaned, trembling like an out-of-control earthquake, looking as delicious as a freshly-baked birthday cake...

[+2500 Experience]

Continuing further was a tempting idea, but after the emotional and physical ordeal she had gone through, Marianne looked just a dash away collapsing. Instead, I decided to lay next to her to leverage her recently generated crush. In her daze, she said nothing when she found my arms around her, embracing her with surprising gentleness. Though I was surprised when she leaned forward, initiating a kiss on her own volition for the first time.

I said nothing as I felt the softness of her chest against mine, the gentle kiss we shared reminiscent of the ending of a romance tale. I could feel my manhood awakening once more at the sensation, but this time, I decided to act patient. I wanted the moment to be clear on Marianne's mind, that she was the initiator.

It took a while for her rationality to catch up. Her hand had been wandering over my chiseled torso, enjoying the contours, when it slipped too low and wrapped around my shaft. Even then, only after she delivered several enthusiastic tugs she remembered the full extent of the situation.

The yelp that escaped her mouth was cutest to date. "I need to go," she stammered in panic even as she dashed towards her clothes, trying to put her corset in panic, only to fail due to her trembling hands.

"Why don't you come here so I can help," I said with a smirk. She looked at me in shock, like I had spoken the most absurd thing I could. "Really, that's what you feel self-conscious about after everything," I added, and she dipped her head. But her resurfaced shyness didn't prevent her from walking to me, one hand between her legs to hide her treasure; a move that would have made more sense if my seed hadn't been dripping out of her other hole.

She sat in front of me, and despite the temptation of pushing her down for another round, I kept my fingers on the hooks of her corset, slowly linking them. I didn't miss the opportunity to sensually caress her skin, of course, something that she hadn't missed. I even grabbed the shirt I ripped earlier, and repaired it magically to a workable degree.

[-7 Mana]

But when she reached for her ripped panties, I was quicker to grab them, and slid them into my pocket before she could say anything. "My payment for the services rendered," I said with a smirk. She said nothing, and just continued to dress in a blush on her face, well-aware of my gaze watching her every movement.

She said nothing while she finished her preparations, but turned back after putting her hand on the doorknob. "This was a one-time thing, there'll be no repeat!" she said in the sharpest tone she could manage, which would have been marginally convincing if she hadn't run out of the room with a distinct stumble in her steps.

The repeat was inevitable. The only question was how long she would be able to last...

[Level: 11 Experience: 61975 / 66000

Strength: 15 Charisma: 17

Precision: 11 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 11 Intelligence: 12

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 649 / 649 Mana: 763 / 935]

SKILLS

[Expert Arcana [50/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [44/50]

Advanced Melee [29/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

Chapter Twenty-Three

I was tempted to sleep in the storage room that was still filled with the smell of sin and sex, but I had another blonde beauty that was waiting for my attention. Luckily, the meeting was arranged for late afternoon, which gave enough time to clean and dress into something more appropriate for a mysterious stranger, as well as stealing a better sword from the armory. It wasn't enchanted, but it had a sturdier construction, and allowed me to channel my arcana abilities much easier, and I needed that if I were to impress Helga today with my display. And while there, I stole a bunch of throwing knives as well. There was no harm in having some extra equipment.

I wished that I could have stolen Marcus' sword after killing the asshole, but going around with that kind of evidence wasn't the smartest thing to do, even for a precious enchanted sword.

Soon, I was walking towards the third -and the most dangerous- training forest, dressed in grays and blacks of a warrior. Ranger's getup would have been even more appropriate, but I didn't want to dress too similar to my Orlin disguise for Helga. The patrols around the forest were marginally more difficult to slip through due to state of alarm, but not enough to actually catch me.

After the patrols, it didn't take long for me to find Helga, who stayed very close to the entrance, afraid of facing the monsters inside alone. It was justified. This section was mostly filled with class two and three creatures, but occasional class four and fives weren't unheard of. Nothing as dangerous as the pack of elemental hyenas that attacked Aviada and me, but dangerous nevertheless. And with Helga's research-focused development, even class three's were a threat against her under the right conditions, not to mention her stamina wouldn't allow a long engagement.

I gestured her from the distance, followed by a small flare spell, the exact shape, and tone described in the letter, and she started walking towards me. Even from the distance, I could see her fingers tightening around her staff, cluing me about her doubts, but to her credit, determination shone on her face.

I slipped deeper into the forest as she followed me, trying to get out of the line of sight of the patrols, but staying close enough to allow her to follow. "Helga," I said with a cheerful wave that was rather mismatched with the general mood, but she took it in the stride, and waved back. Maybe she appreciated my gifts even more than I estimated.

"Hello..." she said before stopping in sudden realization.

“You can call me Caesar,” I answered, not feeling concerned at giving my own name. With both Aviada and Marianne on the know, my identity was going to be revealed one way or another, so informing Helga about it wasn’t a big risk; especially not with all the secrets I had on her.

She nodded in appreciation before looking around in trepidation. “Are you sure that this is the best area for training. What if we get attacked by a herd.”

Her concern was not entirely unjustified. After all, this forest was dangerous not only because of the stronger monsters it contained, but also due to a limited number of students risking to farm here, occasionally allowing the build-up of a dangerous amount of creatures, such as packs of Dire Wolves, which was already dangerous with their class four status. “Don’t worry, I can handle it,” I said with a dismissive wave, choosing to punctuate my sentence by using one of my throwing knives into a bush about a hundred meters ahead, where a dire wolf was hidden, waiting for an opportunity.

Helga gasped at the sudden burst of action, which wasn’t entirely beneficial. Unlike the rabbits and foxes, Dire Wolf didn’t fear sudden confrontation, and dashed in an explosive rush, which met with an unfortunate end as I took its legs with a slash of my sword, arcane energy crackling around its edges. “Milady,” I said with a mocking bow as I pointed at the helpless creature, which was almost as big as me, like it was a cute gift.

[+1 Melee]

It was another point to her credit when she delivered the final blow to the creature’s throat using the small blade on top of her staff rather than wasting her magic. Then, her gaze turned to me, disbelief mixing with hope as she gazed me. It wasn’t hard to decipher her shock. Taking down a class four creature wasn’t an amazing achievement, but it couldn’t be said for immobilizing it with just a slash without actually killing. That required a level of power and finesse that was hard to find in a student.

“That was...” she murmured, disbelieving. I had no doubt that she thought my level should be in the twenties, considering she had seen me display impressive abilities in melee combat, magical abilities, and research. Level twenty was rare, and most of them either took an important role in their families, or chose a cushy job in one of the large cities. If they were lucky, they could even get a guard post for the royal family. Someone close to that point that was willing to help an outcast like her was a miracle from her perspective.

And while I was not a level twenty -and couldn’t exactly compare against them in their selected areas due to my generalist status even with my stats- Helga didn’t know that. She lacked the

combat experience to discern the details of my situation. And thanks to my extraordinary stats, I could put a decent fight against someone around level fifteen in a fight regardless of the type of combat thanks to my larger bag of tricks, which made her estimation not too inaccurate. “So, have you thought about the problem I outlined in my letter?” I asked her.

“Y-yes,” she stammered in shock, not expecting to have that conversation in the most dangerous spot in the school. But nevertheless, she started explaining rapidly, clearly not wanting to anger her new benefactor. “I was thinking that the spell matrix can be stabilized through...” And with that, we started an interesting raid, killing monsters and discussing complicated magical theory at the same time.

[Melee +6]

[Arcana +11]

[-523 Mana]

[Achievement: Charm through Charms. Make great strides in seducing a brainy lady through great magical aptitude. +500 Experience, +2 Intelligence]

Our expedition took almost three hours, and several dozens deceased creatures. When I finally called it to end, the sun was about to set. I was tired, because I was rather generous in mana expenditure, using it to try some of the theories we came up with Helga, but it wasn't wasteful. How could it be when I had managed to develop a more dangerous variant of the mana bolt with just a couple hours of discussion, one that would have penetrated through the magical hide of a shadow wolf without depleting half of my mana.

I didn't want to risk a repeat of the shadow wolf incident with an almost empty tank. Moreover, Helga was even more exhausted. She didn't fight directly, but she also didn't have my irrationally high physical stats, and spell practice drained her mana as well. But despite everything, there was a huge smile on her face. “So, did you level up?” I asked while we returned, ignoring the social taboo around the question. Inquiring about people's status was one of the bigger taboo's, one that hadn't been processed lightly.

“Not yet, but I'm very close. I have gained almost eight hundred experience points in a day,” she answered with a euphoric smile, dismissing my social blunder without a thought. I shook my head, once again appreciating the unbelievable advantage provided by my unique status. For me, a thousand points was a slow day. For anyone else, a small miracle. “Just four more days, and I should level up,” she added, giving me a clue about her current level progress. But despite

her enthusiasm, I wasn't really happy with her progress. I needed her to be stronger, because I needed the spells she would develop, spells that would fit perfectly for my unique combat style.

I didn't doubt that there was a challenge waiting for me in the future, and I needed to be prepared for it.

But while walking back, I realized that lady luck had other plans for me. When the familiar sound of the rush of dire wolves reached into my ears, I gestured Helga to take a defensive position while I stood in front of her, a sparkling mana bolt in my left hand, a glowing throwing knife on my right. I panicked, because I could identify at least five dire wolves attacking us.

When they dashed into the opening we were in, I realized my assessment was mistaken. It wasn't five dire wolves, rather, it was four dire wolves, and one dire wolf alpha, which hulked almost double the size of the others, its eyes shining with an unusual experience. Effectively, it was at least class six, maybe even seven...

Luckily, I had gone through worse challenges when I was weaker. "Distract the alpha for a moment," I ordered Helga.

"How?" she asked panickedly even as I dashed forward.

"Send something shiny towards it!" I shouted exasperatedly even as I met with the first wolf after throwing my knife and pulling my sword, who, surprisingly, was prepared for my display of speed. On my other hand, I still held my spell, ready to go. I felt the gaze of the alpha on me as it dashed towards as well, ignoring Helga completely, like it knew I was the real threat. Combined with the surprised adaptability of the other wolves, I suspected we had been observed during our hunt... "Wily bastard," I murmured in annoyance. The monsters capable of tactics was the last thing I needed.

"Let's see how adaptive you are, you bastard," I murmured even as I changed the shape of the spell on my hands, and converted it into an area-effect slowing spell, something I just managed to create thanks to Helga's clever ideas.

[-40 Mana]

Seeing the expression of surprise on the eyes of the Alpha was a delight, but not as much as when Helga's spell connected with the bastard, covering it with a thick layer of energy, immobilizing it momentarily. With a glance I could see that it was a weak one, barely last a couple of seconds, but that was enough. The formation of wolves was based on its presence, and with it immobilized, it allowed me to cut through rest in just a second, leaving two dead,

two too wounded to move.

I was already behind the Alpha when it was ready to move, cutting the hamstrings of its hind legs with just a slash. I smirked, it was amusing that he had died to the favorite tactic of the wolves. "Not bad. Let's see whether we can double it the next time," I said, making her chin drop in shock. "The rest is yours, milady," I said exaggeratedly with a smirk, enjoying the way panic melted off Helga's face, just realizing that the danger she had thought to be deadly just ended in a moment.

[Achievement: Martial Might. Save a damsel through an overwhelming display of power and initiative. +500 Experience, +1 Speed, +1 Precision]

[Melee +2]

She tried to say something, but words failed her repeatedly. She took a deep breath and walked towards the wounded creatures, finishing them with a stab of her staff. "That was ... incredible..." she murmured when she looked at me once more, a familiar blush on her face.

I said nothing, but closed on her, far too close to be innocent, my breath landing on her ruby lips, which opened reflexively. I leaned forward like I was about to steal a kiss, only to stop at the last second. "Why don't you go ahead pass through the guards, and meet me with the storage room we had met the last time in an hour," I said, and before she could answer, already pulled back.

The expression of shock on her face, while she watched me disappear, was utterly delicious.

When I arrived at the storage room a couple of minutes more than an hour later, Helga was already there, waiting for me with a nervous expression on her face. "You're here," she gasped, her nervousness instantly replaced by elation the moment she noticed my presence. Someone was enthusiastic, I noted with a smirk.

While she tried to calm her excitement, I examined her. One detail was very clear. She used the break to refresh herself, and done that very successfully. Her hair was still damp, and her face alight -but still more than her usual amount- makeup, highlighting her beauty to a level it easily surpassed the most girls. It was smart of her not to use that normally, as her position at the school was too fragile to actually take such a risk.

But the more interesting change was her clothes. Her robe was open, revealing that

underneath, she was wearing a blouse and a skirt, both much tighter than her usual selection. Even better, the top two buttons lay unlinked, giving me a delicious hint of cleavage. She seemed ready and enthusiastic about being seduced.

Though, I wasn't surprised. The civilian equivalent of our situation was a minor noble suddenly piling a maid with several precious gifts and great attention, with an implied mistress position to elevate her well out of her class. For Helga, supporting her leveling and research simultaneously was everything she needed, everything that had been denied in the school, and everything that she couldn't attain back home; so naturally, she was feeling grateful. Combine that with my charisma, my rather impressive physical state, and the fact that I had valiantly saved her from a dangerous ambush just an hour ago... Well, it would be surprising if it would take more than a word to make her panties drop...

Normally, I was planning to go for a quick seduction, but funnily enough, seeing her so enthusiastic changed my mind. I decided to play with her a bit. Luckily, I was prepared.

"I had an interesting idea about managing area effects of the volatile fields," I said even as I pulled a small blanket from my bag and spread it on the floor, gesturing her to sit. Her shocked disappointment was amusing. I sat down, continuing to talk about various implications of managing alternating magical currents. She answered my inquires perfectly, but failed to hide her disappointment.

I shook my head despondently. I had expected her to try better to seduce me, but apparently, her self-confidence was too weak after the struggle she had gone through. "Wine?" I asked, cutting our discussion on the magical theory to pull a rather impressive vintage of wine and a pair of glasses, both pilfered from the kitchen.

"I wouldn't say no to a sip," she answered, and I made sure to smile suggestively as I poured her a glass, which, in turn, allowed her to lean forward excessively, giving a deep view of her delicious cleavage. After she pulled back, I waved my hand, and a plate of cheese pulled itself out from the bag, following my magic, until it landed between us. I could have done it the same easily for the wine as well, but it required a personal touch.

"So, I think we were discussing the resonance effect between unequal constructs," I said, picking up the discussion where we left off. Helga was much more enthusiastic as she started answering once more, her answers garnished with a lot of unnecessary arm movements, which helped her breasts to dance alluringly. A particularly heated move even managed to pop another button of her blouse, enough to conclusively prove the absence of a bra — not that I needed a proof after watching the free dance of her breasts for the last several minutes.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty

The disappointment I felt from the rather excessive experience penalty didn't last for long as she lifted herself forward as she reached for the cheese plate, unnecessarily as she could have easily reached for it, but the reason was clarified when she decided to use the movement as an excuse to sit closer, desire clear in her eyes.

Well, who I was to reject such a beauty...

[Level: 11 Experience: 63075 / 66000

Strength: 15 Charisma: 17

Precision: 12 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 14

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 671 / 671 Mana: 345 / 957]

SKILLS

Expert Arcana [61/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [44/50]

Advanced Melee [37/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Chapter Twenty-Four

When Helga slid closer to me, I decided to reward her courage by meeting halfway. The discussion on the complicated nature of the magic continued, but I lowered my voice a bit, and using a huskier tone, one that worked just as intended if her nipples trying to poke through her shirt was any indicator.

I refilled her glass, then picked a piece of cheese, and gently placed between her lips, and she bit sensuously, followed by a soft moan. "Are you tired?" I asked, and for a moment, she looked afraid that her hints were misunderstood, but it lasted only until I slid even closer to her, and placed my hands on her shoulders, rubbing gently.

"A - a bit," she stammered after realizing what I was cluing towards, and leaned to my chest with a sigh while I started to rub her shoulders. The next moan that she let out was in no way exaggerated. It was not much of a surprise. After all, I managed to completely break Marianne through my skilled fingers, and Helga was already prepared to jump my bones.

A couple of minutes later, I removed her robe, which she let without the slightest hint of resistance. I noticed her hands landing on her own thighs, which, incidentally, caused her already short skirt to ride upward further, the sight of her toned thighs enough to make my mouth water. I let my hands drift down through her sides until they landed on her delicious thighs. "You seem restless, do your legs hurt," I asked, and she nodded enthusiastically, not trusting herself to talk.

I just chuckled as my fingers danced on her thighs, slowly moving towards the inner area while climbing upwards bit by bit, tortuously slow. Her excitement, once clear as a day, started to darken with frustration. She sent a glance upward, only to meet with my smug smirk, telling her that I was very much aware of what I had been doing. I was curious just how long she would be able to resist the temptation...

The answer turned out to be not too long. When my fingers reached the edge of her panties, each caress driving it further but still studiously avoiding her core, Helga let out a guttural moan, and I found myself being pushed on the floor, Helga firmly sitting on my shaft. "That's enough playing, you bastard," she exclaimed even as she moved back and forth, enjoying a dry ride.

I had been planning to play with her a bit more, but then I was distracted by an announcement.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 1%]

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty

The announcement managed to blindside me. Luckily, Helga was busy rowing back and forth above my shaft, her eyes closed to maximize her sensations to actually pay any attention to me, giving me time to process what had happened.

There was no doubt that the announcement was about Helga, the timing ruled out any other possibility. But I was mystified by the reason. After all, it wasn't the first time I was being with Helga, and I had gone much further with other girls as well, especially Marianne, who hadn't shown such a sign. And while I helped Helga, I also helped Aviada, to the point of saving her life...

But I hadn't done anything sexual in the aftermath.

Maybe that was it, that I needed to both help the girl in a profound way, and also take its rewards. It was a good guess, but in the end, it was still a guess. I needed more experimentation to test its accuracy. Luckily, Aviada was a perfect candidate for that particular experimentation.

Then, a particularly tickling moan reached to my ears, and I decided that theorizing about the new feature wasn't as important as tending the sexy blonde that was doing her best to grind my pants into nothingness. I placed my hands on her stomach, easily sliding under her blouse before starting to climb forward, revealing the beautiful smoothness of her stomach in the process.

Helga opened her eyes when my fingers started to caress the underside of her spectacular breasts, but they were filled with a deep need, a burning passion. Initially, I was planning to take it slow, but such a naked display of desire deserved a reward. Since my hands were already positioned appropriately, all I needed was to pull gently, and my enhanced strength worked wonders in completely ruining her blouse, leaving her half-naked.

A shocked yelp escaped her mouth, which I deliciously punished by a gentle slap to her breast, their impressive size dancing deliciously. She moaned in appreciation after the shock, not showing the slightest concern for her state of nakedness. Then, a mischievous expression popped on her face as she pressed her hands to my chest, her grinding picking up speed further.

And it worked wonderfully. My pants turned into a tight prison, begging to be released. An expression of joy was on her face, though it was equally strained by pleasure. I wasn't the only one that was starting to feel the brunt of the extended session of foreplay, and it would hurt my

pride if I surrender before her.

With that in mind, I slid my hands a bit further, my fingers already laced with an innovative mixture of transformed Biomancy and Arcana mana, a tricky construct that I created based on Helga's ideas, and pressed them against Helga's nipples.

[+2 Biomancy]

[+3 Arcana]

[-30 Mana]

[+300 Experience] 50% Penalty

[Achievement: Innovative Involvement. Leverage a brand-new technique to the noblest purpose of providing pleasure. +1000 Experience, +2 Intelligence, +2 Charisma]

Thanks to the system, I knew that the technique was exceedingly effective, resulting in two separate skill increases and a very profitable achievement in addition to its usual experience reward. But nevertheless, Helga's pleasure-filled face was a nice addition as well, confirming my success.

"That's amazing," she moaned helplessly as her grinding turned out to be even more heated, searching for a release that wouldn't come; because that was another function of the small trick I had developed. She would not climax unless I broke the magical barrier I had constructed, or the pleasure reached a mind-breaking degree. And she realized that detail a moment later when her unbounded grinding failed to achieve the desired result, and she checked my face to confirm the results. "Okay, you magnificent bastard, you win!" she said, declaring surrender, though any sign of defeat was soon erased by hunger as she reached for my zipper.

A brief struggle later, my shaft was standing proudly, ready for any challenge. "Make sure to prepare it thoroughly before using," I mockingly reminded her.

I had been expecting a counter-statement from her, but my shaft proved to be too fascinating for her to pay attention to anything else. Apparently, my recent boost in charisma worked even better than I had expected, and she was stuck watching my shaft in fascination. That hypnotizing effect only lasted for a moment, but even then, her eyes were rather glazed as she leaned forward to capture my girth between her lips.

And the moment her lips touched my shaft, her lips started dancing up and down, treating it like ice cream in the middle of the desert, hurrying to finish before it melted under the sun. She moved up and down, doing her best to swallow my length — though she only managed to take a portion despite her best efforts.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty

Watching her pouty lips dancing over my shaft was good entertainment, especially when the free dance of her dangling breasts were added to the equation, so I continued to lay without a movement, letting her do all the work. It was a nice change of pace, as other times I was doing my best to maintain whatever scheme I had been trying to achieve while also trying to ensure the target was adequately aroused to miss the details. After everything, laying on my back to enjoy the treatment had been a nice change of pace.

And Helga proved that she had no issues in doing all the work when she stopped the delicious treatment of her lips and sat on my midsection once more, stopping only to get rid of her panties. Her skirt was still on, but after she folded the hem a couple of times, it resembled a belt more than a skirt, showing the amazing sight of her slit devouring my shaft bit by bit. It wasn't entirely trivial for her to swallow the whole length even if she was incredibly slippery, my girth challenging her elasticity to the maximum. She bit her lips, the pleasure and pain fighting against each other as she lowered her hips, but in the end, she was triumphant.

Only then she sent me a victorious smile as she placed her hands on my chest, her hips grinding me even more furiously than her earlier dry-humping, the gyration of her hips nothing less than poetry. "Faster," I ordered, and she followed my direction without even blinking, her movements blurring with pleasure.

Since she was doing such a good job, I decided to reward her. With a flick to her nipple, I had dispelled part of the spell that was keeping her from climaxing, immediately followed by a silencing ward, not trusting the ancient walls to handle the explosion of sound.

And it turned out to be the correct choice, because when Helga opened her mouth, the resulting sound made me doubt that whether it was just a cry, or it was actually a sound-based attack spell. It left my ears ringing, while Helga collapsed to my chest after she spent the last of the energy she could spare to cry, the rest of her attention firmly on containing the aftermath of her explosive orgasm.

[+ 925 Experience] 50% Penalty

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 5%]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Expert Melee, Expert Biomancy, Basic Ranged]

Seeing another level was always a delight. And after a brief consideration, I picked to increase my close combat skills. Both Biomancy and Ranged was tempting, but I was supposed to meet with Aviada tonight at midnight, and I needed skills to suitably impress her. While my strength and other physical stats had suitably improved since our last meeting, an extra edge wouldn't be amiss.

"That ... was ... everything ... I imagined ... to ... be," Helga managed to whisper after lost her fight to be able to stand upright, and collapsed against my chest. I chuckled before leaning forward and capturing her lips, my shaft still inside her, ready for the second round.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

Unlike the previous notification, this one wasn't particularly welcome. I had been expecting something in those lines, but I was hoping for another reduction rather than a total denial.

Technically, due to lack of any additional experience, the smart thing would be to stop there, and continue only after I ensured Helga leveled up once more, but that decision was markedly hard to take when the aforementioned body lay above me, her lower lips still tightly grasping my shaft with the full intention to milk me until I was completely dry.

The decision made, I wrapped my arms around her waist before rolling, and she ended up underneath me, earning an enthusiastic giggle. Continuing to slide inside her until she passed from excess pleasure was the simplest thing to do, but I wanted to do something more entertaining. I grabbed the wine bottle, and slowly drizzled it over her amazing breasts, before leaning forward and slowly licking, sucking, and otherwise enjoying the vast expanse of her flavored breasts. Others might claim it to be a waste of good wine, but for me, that was the best way to empty a bottle.

When I repeated the trick for the second time, my hips started to move as well, slowly and sensuously, contrasting her earlier frantic crawling, but despite its slow pace, turning out to be more pleasurable for both of us. Her hands reached my back, her fingers digging deep into my shoulders, but with her limited strength, barely causing any pain against my boundless vitality. Still, the sensation was clear enough, which I enjoyed.

“Cum inside me, Caesar,” Helga moaned and since I wasn’t a rude bastard -or more accurately, wasn’t a rude bastard under these exact circumstances- I sped up, and her moans sped up along with it. I pushed, I licked, and I bit, and moments later, I started spraying inside her, accompanied by another string of cries that made my silencing wards work overtime.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 15%]

Still, when I collapsed next to her, our tongues gently dancing around each other, I was satisfied. With our enjoyment peaking, neither of us wanted to talk, so we let our bodies to talk in an extended post-coital session. But soon, the time of separation was there. She was too exhausted to continue -a drawback of her magic focused build- while I had other things to do, so after a brief discussion, we decided to separate for the night, agreeing to meet tomorrow morning for another leveling session.

But for me, the night was just starting. After a brief shower, I was dressed in my combat outfit once more, with the sword in hand. I wanted to increase by close combat abilities, and I wanted to increase them significantly before the meeting with Aviada. With that in mind, once again I went to the most dangerous training forest -though I was tempted to just walk outside to test my limits. It was unlikely that I would meet anything more dangerous than the Shadow Wolf around the school, and I was much stronger than the last encounter, strong enough that I could take a couple of them without taking a wound.

But in the end, I decided to leave that particular challenge until I gained a couple more levels. Instead, I cast my protection spells and slipped into the Third Forest, the most dangerous training ground in the school. Without a companion to protect, I was free to turn into a shadow, stalking even the most dangerous predators the forest contained. Dire wolves, elemental hawks, demonic foxes, even occasional dragon spawn younglings... All fell underneath my blade, helpless to do anything more than flail in panic.

When I walked out of the forest three hours later, I was exhausted and drained, but victorious.

[-438 Mana]

[+8 Arcana]

[+4 Biomancy]

[+26 Melee]

I couldn't help but smile at my gains. After three hours, my magical aptitude had increased, but it was nothing compared to just how much my physical abilities improved. The blade in hand felt like it was a part of my limbs, every swing optimized to create the maximum effect, their casual look hiding their deadly nature.

I was ready to meet with Aviada...

[Level: 12 Experience: 66000 / 78000

Strength: 15 Charisma: 19

Precision: 12 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 732 / 732 Mana: 234 / 972]

SKILLS

[Expert Arcana [72/75]

Expert Melee [63/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

Chapter Twenty-Five

Caught in the excitement of testing my enhanced abilities, I failed to properly manage my time, so I failed to find time to change my clothes before meeting Aviada. I wasn't too worried though, as Aviada wasn't the kind of girl that would be turned off by a bit of monster blood, or care about the cuts from an extended battle.

Sneaking through the guards of the second forest hadn't posed any challenge since, as usual, they were much more interested in movements in the forest rather than students that were trying to sneak in; since it was a pointless activity for the most. A minute later, I arrived at the promised location of the meeting, a small, obscure waterfall that most people avoided, because a lot of monsters tended to visit for a drink of water, meaning, there was no guarantee about the number of creatures that would be present. But I wasn't afraid of even the most dangerous creature in the second forest. Also, I had confidence in Aviada's skills to at least retreat without significant loss if she faced truly overwhelming odds, especially with the help of her impressive magical sword.

"You're late," said a familiar voice even as I saw a familiar figure charging forward, her sword ready to deliver a deadly blow, but the wide smile on her face was enough to tell me that it was just a friendly greeting. I turned and swung my arm, my sword already in hand, just in time to intercept Aviada's impressive swing, magic crackling around my weapon to prevent damage from her formidable sword. Her eyes widened in shock as rather than pushing me back, her sword bounced.

"Hello, beautiful," I said as I counter-attacked with an obvious blow just to create some distance.

"How," she murmured in shock even as she pulled back, which was understandable, because the only thing that allowed me to resist her during our last encounter was my superior mobility, deflecting and dodging. Now, I was able to push her back through sheer power.

"Let's just say I had a very fortunate encounter, with a nifty achievement as a result," I said, basically blaming the sudden boost to a single extraordinary achievement, which was much more believable than getting a few levels and several achievements since our last encounter. "So, do you dare to help me test my new strength, or would you like to do something easier," I smirked, happy to see challenge creating a flame in her eyes, her raven hair circling her face beautifully.

"Oh, I can handle whatever you can dish," she answered before swinging her sword once more,

and then things devolved into a delicious duel, where she tried trick after trick, only to fail repeatedly. After all, it wasn't just my stats that had increased significantly since our last encounter. My melee capabilities had also gone through a significant transformation, so, in the end, I was able to handle her attacks through skill rather than brawn.

Defending myself was a monotonous task, allowing me to turn my attention to her spectacular body. She was starting to show the first signs of exhaustion, sweaty, out of breath, with a couple of shallow cuts I delivered as a warning when she tried particularly dangerous maneuvers. But her condition wasn't the thing I focused on. No, that distinction belonged to the way she dressed. She wore a cotton tunic that didn't bare even a hint of cleavage, but that wasn't important, not when it was a size too small, its elasticity allowing her to display her voluptuous contours, her spectacular body getting more and more visible through her sweat. Unfortunately, her pants weren't as fun, making me rather enthusiastic about peeling them off.

But soon, my attention was pulled to her face once more. The expression of concentration on her face was understandable because she was trying to get the best of the learning opportunity, but admirable at the same time because a lot of people wallow in jealousy against such a rapid development rather than taking advantage of the situation. I approved, though not as much as the other emotion I managed to catch on her face.

A thick layer of arousal.

Her getting excited while fighting was not a surprise, after all, our last playful spar where she was more than happy about me using a blade to peel of her clothes was evidence enough. But even when she was almost naked, she didn't have such a thick layer of arousal on her face. A sudden suspicion appeared in my mind, and I increased the intensity of my assault, taking the initiative rather than allowing her to attack at her own pace, killing her assaults the moment of inception.

And her arousal increased with my dominance. Apparently, the respect she had toward martial strength was more primal than I expected.

I smirked with desire, as that particular detail quickened my plans significantly. "I think that's enough for the warm-up," I said lazily even as I swung the sword with my full power, opening her guard completely, the perfect opportunity to deliver a killing blow, but chose to take a step back.

"Warm-up..." she echoed in shock, a part of her outrageous because she was obviously doing her best, but her arousal increased even further just by the suggestion that I wasn't using my

full power.

“You know what,” I said as I suddenly pushed my sword into the ground, and picked up a piece of wood instead. “Maybe this will be fairer.”

“You’re playing with fire,” she growled in a way one might mistake for outrage. It wouldn’t be completely inaccurate, as she was actually insulted at the suggestion that I could handle her without a proper weapon, but the desire was hidden underneath, promising me everything if I could actually back my bragging.

“Then let’s see if I’m good enough to extinguish that fire,” I said with a smirk, before continuing with a more serious expression. “You just need to say I surrender, and I’ll stop. Clear?” I added, giving her an intentional out, with the full awareness that her pride wouldn’t allow her to utter those words for anything that I had in mind.

“Come at-” she started, but I didn’t give her an opportunity to finish her words, charging forward. Even when caught by surprise, she managed to raise her sword to parry. Just like that, I lost a part of my weapon, but a blow wasn’t my intention in any case. I grabbed her shirt instead, trying to turn the battle into a close-range struggle that she wouldn’t be able to leverage her sword efficiently. She swung her sword, forcing me to pull back. I did so, but I wasn’t dismayed, because a large patch of her shirt stayed in my hand, leaving her arm and shoulder bare, with the slightest hint of cleavage.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[+1 Melee]

The proof of her low level was not the most welcome detail, but not a surprise either, not when I was able to dominate her with such apparent ease. When she decided to attack, I abandoned the implications of her low level, and focused my aggressive defense instead. I ducked under her sword before dashing forward, close enough that I was able to slap her bottom explosively, enough to make her gasp. “You’re dead!” she exclaimed, but paradoxically, respect and arousal colored her tone rather than anger.

“If you think so, apprentice,” I countered before dodging another assault, and taking tearing another piece of fabric in the process, this time rewarded by an unobstructed view of her flat bell. Then, we fell into a routine, she attacked, I deflected or dodged -occasionally acquiring a new stick when the previous one had fallen into pieces. It was hard to maintain its durability even with the liberal magic usage. A random piece of wood wasn’t the best magical conduit.

Still, even with the substandard equipment, I was still smiling brightly ten minutes into the spar while my opponent's attacks were getting more and more furious, a demeanor contrasted greatly by the way excitement filled her face, ignoring her nakedness. And what nakedness it was! Her top was gone for all effective purposes, the few remaining scraps failing to cover her spectacular breasts as they tumbled with her every assault. Her pants were in a better condition, but only relatively. They were still ripped enough to give a full view of her underwear, a little black sexy piece that contrasted greatly with the rest of her practical outfit. Apparently, I wasn't the only one with expectations about the later part of the night.

[+600 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[-45 Mana]

But it was enough for a game, I decided, and when I dodged her assault the next time, I grabbed her wrist instead of trying to rip her clothes, twisting her wrist to force her to drop her sword. She tried to resist despite her pained cry, looking at me balefully, but the important thing was her arousal hadn't dimmed, even by a sliver. I squeezed harder, enough to threaten a break, and finally she dropped her sword, but instantly followed up with a punch, trying to turn it into an unarmed brawl.

I let her wrist go, because just with a punch, I could see that her skills didn't include unarmed abilities unlike my generic melee skill. I didn't even bother to throw a punch, just landed a playful squeeze on her breast before slapping her attack away. Her kick resulted in further loss of fabric from her pants, and then she followed up with a body-slam in an attempt to turn our brawl into a grappling match, where she could use her strength as an equalizer.

I let her succeed. Her eyes widened in shock as our bodies collided, but not as much as when she found herself on the ground, with her arms locked behind her back, her legs immobilized by the strategic placement of my leg. I slowly leaned forward, pressing my shaft against her ass, which lacked protection other than the scraps of her pants, and the deficient cover of her panties. "Are you going to surrender?" I whispered into her ear throatily.

[+2 Melee]

"Never," she bellowed as she struggled, but it wasn't a desperate struggle to get free, but an attempt to rub herself against the presence of my shaft pressing against her bottom. She was truly aroused.

"Really," I whispered even as I used a spell to remove my clothes without letting her go. When I

leaned on her once more, it was my naked shaft that pressed against her ass, her panties a poor tool to insulate against it. "How about now!"

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 1%]

While the presence of the notification had surprised me, making me even more curious about its reason and possible implications, it was hard to focus on that particular detail while Aviada was loudly declaring her intention to fight until the delicious end. "I can handle everything you can dish out," she exclaimed.

"Everything?" I countered, using a throaty whisper, enough to make her shiver. I started removing the remaining pieces of her pants, ripping them off with an agonizing calmness. Whenever the sound of the tearing fabric reached her ear, she shivered, lasting until only her panties remained on her body. Her little lacy panties, too thin to hide her juicy arousal. I grabbed the edge of it, and her back arched in preparation, her bottom rising to give me even better access. But I just chuckled, and let my fingers move up instead, tracing alongside her spine leisurely. "Still not surrendering?" I asked.

"Never," she said, trying to replicate her earlier determination, but it was an imperfect copy with desire filling her tone.

"I wonder how long you will be able to last," I repeated, one of my hands still firmly locking her hands, while the other slowly moved over her skin, leaving only shivers behind, while aiming for her spectacular breasts, busy dangling naked. She did nothing other than moaning obediently when my fingers sank into her breasts mercilessly with a sudden change of pace, pleasure her only response as I mauled her flesh aggressively. But when I pulled my hand away without a warning and returned to my gentle caresses, her gasp of outrage was a thing of legends.

"You're playing with fire," she warned even as she tried to push her hips back, trying to feel my shaft between her cheeks. I let her succeed for a moment, and her hips started to dance furiously, trying to push herself into an orgasm. I pulled back after a minute, just as she was starting to get closer to an orgasm.

"Such a naughty girl," I said while pulling back, my free hand sliding through her raven hair with a surprisingly gentle caress, contrasting greatly with her increasing struggle. When I delivered another spank as a warning, she only moaned with a desire for more. "Any thoughts about surrendering yet?" I asked again, reminding her that she had only one option to receive what she desired.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 3%]

[+700 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“Not a chance in hell,” she exclaimed, but even if I lacked the ability to detect her wavering commitment, the system notifications would be enough to save me from that particular mistake. She was on the edge of surrender, her pride rapidly losing importance. The reason for it was clear. Not only I had saved her life three times, but also I had also proved to her that even in her selected field of expertise, I was far superior. And to top it all off, I showed that I was more than willing to help her get stronger as well, another attractive offer as she clearly lacked a support structure of her own.

I could just rip her panties and have her, and the only thing I would receive would have been a moan of pleasure, but I wanted more. I want her to surrender herself to me, so I extended the unique torture she was suffering under, her unmet orgasm taking an increasingly bigger toll as the time passed. I caressed, licked, and occasionally bit her sensitive spots, until she started to rely on words less and less, showing her intentions through gasps, moans, and desperate attempts of rubbing our bodies together.

“Come on, sweetie, is it really that difficult to surrender,” I murmured gently even as I finally grabbed the edge of her panties, and peeled them off with torturous slowness, finally leaving her folds naked. I brought my fingers to her wetness, finally touching her most sensitive spot, but her moans came unbidden, her heart filled with the remainders of desire and arousal. Her voice was deliciously tempting as she yearned for an explosion, but I just continued gently caressing while she tried to push back, doing her best to take in my erect shaft, which I occasionally dragged over her naked ass just to tease her.

Her enjoyment was evident in her delicious moan under my touch. She clearly wanted my presence as much as I wanted to hide my shaft in her body. And after the small game I had set up, I needed her surrender before moving forward. That was why I dragged my shaft against her entrance, just enough to wet the crown between her lips, but not pushing forward. She suddenly threw herself back, trying to skewer herself, but I was much more agile than her, and pulled back just in time.

“You lack the strength to push through my grip, you need to get stronger,” I said even as I spanked her bottom, watching the ripples with great interest, curious how she would react when her biggest advantage was assessed and found wanting. “Let’s see if we can train it.” And just like that, a new game started where I still kept her pinned while teasing her entrance, challenging her to push back. Ultimately, it was a delicious play I managed to enjoy only

because I had an earlier encounter with Helga, taking the edge off the extended play. Aviada struggled, trying to achieve victory, but her attempts fell short, and I watched the counter for [Companion Acquisition] climbing up point by point.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

[+2 Melee]

“Excellent, a new achievement!” she moaned with pure joy, her frustration replaced with pride immediately as she renewed her struggle with a refreshed attitude. The reason for her mood increase was clear, because I could feel she had just received an impressive boost.

It didn’t take a genius to realize she had a strength-based achievement, one that put her strength quite a bit over mine. At least three points, maybe even four, I reasoned, because even from her disadvantageous position, she was on the verge of getting free, forcing me to apply an impressive range of tricks to keep her pinned. She thrashed, cursed, and moaned, but in the end, she ended up pinned on the ground, spread-eagle, with me directly on top of her, a very volatile position that made me doubt my ability to keep her pinned.

Then the system came to my rescue.

[Achievement: Struggling Strength. Win a sexy grapple match despite lacking pure power. +500 Experience, +2 Strength]

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Once again, she struggled, but her joy was soon replaced by resignation when her attempts were foiled again and again. But even as the joy of victory disappeared, arousal and desire remained. “I surrender,” she whispered in sweet defeat. She wasn’t able to say anything else, because my lips were over hers.

I was victorious. Now, all I needed was to enjoy the spoils of war...

[Level: 12 Experience: 74400 / 78000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 19

Precision: 12 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 10 Wisdom: 18

HP: 756 / 756 Mana: 173 / 972]

SKILLS

[Expert Arcana [72/75]

Expert Melee [68/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

Chapter Twenty-Six

My shaft was doing its best to rival enchanted steel in its hardness while I examined the frustrated beauty trapped underneath. I wished that I had the ability to paint, because the mixture of emotions on her face was a sight to behold. There was resignation, anger, frustration, acceptance, and joy. Most importantly, above all, there was a burning need that left her nothing more than a toy to desire. "Tell me what you want," I whispered throatily, still enjoying her surrender.

Her anger was a sight to behold. "I want you inside me, you bastard. And if you delay it any further, I promise that-" she said until her voice was suddenly cut off. The reason, the sudden presence of my shaft inside her, breaking through her barrier with one stiff move. My eyes widened in shock a bit, as I hadn't been expecting her to be a virgin, not with her enthusiastic begging, but smiled with satisfaction, an expression she missed while her eyes stayed shut, trying to process the experience.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

The grip of her walls was as tight as my hands around her wrists that pinned her on the ground. For another girl, I might have delayed the proceedings a bit, but her glare told me that any attempt to coddle her would have been met with a painful retaliation. So, I pushed forward sharply, earning a moan in response. It was a sharp moan, one that echoed in the forest, but both of us were too far gone to care about the consequences.

"Fuck me harder, you bastard," she exclaimed, and like any gentleman, I picked up speed, invading her insides.

"Do you like it, you slut," I said even as I let one of her hands go in favor of landing a slap on her dangling tits, one that earned a clear moan from her. However, despite her clear enjoyment, it almost turned into a big mistake, because her arm came swinging, and only my reflexes saved me from a punch that promised to be exceedingly powerful. "What the hell, you crazy bitch?" I said, but even as I said so, I was aware that I didn't have any right to complain, as rather than pulling back, I started to impale her even deeper.

"You didn't think I would just obediently allow you to have your way with me, right?" she said with a joyful smirk, her sentence interrupted twice by her moans. Despite the pain my intensified invasion clearly caused in her recently-virgin entrance, a fierce joy was the only thing I could see in her eyes.

“You are crazy,” I said, but even as I said that, I could feel my heartbeat picking up speed. It was impossible to deny the joy of pushing down such an amazing display of sexiness, each push creating another delicious contortion of pleasure even as she struggled. And the fact that even the smallest slip would result in a painful retaliation made the situation even more difficult, like I was riding an angry dragon, risking destruction with the smallest misstep.

And I liked it... It was an excellent change of pace from all the times I had shared with Helga and Marianne. Both were enjoyable, no doubt, but their obedience was starting to get monotonous. After experiencing Aviada’s rough ride, I was sure that I would appreciate Helga’s sincere lovemaking or Marianne’s obedient enjoyment a lot more.

But that momentary distraction proved to be a mistake, as I failed to react in a timely manner, when Aviada raised her head enough to reach my shoulder.

[-5 HP]

“You bit me!” I shouted, my loudness more about my shock than pain. Her biting was not a surprise, but I wasn’t expecting it to be hard enough to actually draw blood. Talk about violent sex.

“That should teach you not to get distracted,” she said, her expression the closest I had seen to pouting, though her bloodied lips added a violent edge to it.

“If that’s how you want to play,” I said as I leaned forward, my teeth clamping around her breast hard enough to leave a mark, earning a corresponding moan in response. And since she was clearly enjoying that part of the treatment, I started a barely-restrained assault on her body, biting and spanking even as I had done my best to ruin her entrance under my boundless pounding. Such a strategy wasn’t without a cost, of course, as whenever I let her hands go, she managed to extract a price, be it a painful scratch or even the occasional punch. But under my uninterrupted assault, her pleasure steadily built up, until the dam broke without a warning, and she turned into a shivering, moaning mess.

[+750 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Any other girl, I would have let her enjoy her first orgasm for a bit before starting the next round, but with Aviada’s usual attitude, pushing into the next stage was both safer and more fun. Pulling out for a moment, I grabbed her shoulder before flipping her into a position that had her chest was pressing against the ground. She gasped in shock when she realized what I was trying to do and tried to twist out, but her momentary delay gave me time to pull her arms

to her back painfully, and grab them together, allowing me to keep her under control by just using one hand. I could have used my belt or a conjured rope to keep her occupied, but using my power and nothing else gave a clearer message.

“I’ll kill you,” she moaned when I started moving once more, my merciless pounding triggering her exhausted nerves once more. But despite her complaints, her enjoyment was clear, a chain of moans leaving her lips while I used my free hand to rain a formidable downpour of spansks, each harder than the last, coloring her bottom crimson, occasionally moving to her breasts for a painful squeeze. But the real joy started when I grabbed her hair, forcing her head back, giving me the perfect angle to invade her insides.

The sight of her sweaty body, glowing under the moonlight, her magnificent tits dangling freely, her tight ass turned crimson under my rough treatment... She was a luscious vision, and when she tightened around me a few minutes later in another orgasm, it managed to push me close to an explosion as well. “Damn, I’m cumming,” I moaned.

“Not inside!” she exclaimed, her panic clear even as she started to tremble with her orgasm.

Unfortunately for her, she was the one that turned it into a struggle of dominance, and I had no intention of allowing her to pull back. “Honey, you were the one that turned this into a battle. So unless you beg me mercy and admit to your weakness, the game goes on.” The mention of weakness was enough to stall her complaints for a moment, a stubborn expression appearing on her face. And a momentary stall was all I needed, because the next second, I exploded, filling her insides with my seed, intensifying her moan even further.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 35%]

This time, I had no problems with letting her go, and she collapsed, barely able to turn enough that she was laying on her back, her chest rising repeatedly with her frantic breathing, adding another level of poetry to her vision. She looked enchanting with my marks all over her body, trying to process the rush of pleasure I just gave her to. Tempted, I leaned forward to capture her lips in a soft, lingering kiss.

Her expression of shock was simply too cute. She stayed passive under the soft caresses of my lips, the sudden intimacy catching her flat-footed more than my other actions. A fleeting, vulnerable expression appeared on her face, a cute one even though I would never dare to say that out loud. I had a feeling that she would react violently to such a claim. I let my hands drift

over her body, this time, my touch fleeting and gentle as my fingers danced along her curves. Her lips started to respond, slowly and hesitantly at first, but soon, her enthusiasm passed even mine, our tongues in an enthusiastic battle.

Then, her movements slowly changed, obviously planning for something. I was curious enough to act oblivious, and kind enough to act shocked when she pinned my arms to the side while she climbed over me in a mirror of the first position. "It's payback time, you bastard," she threatened, but unfortunately for her, my sight was sharp enough to catch her intensifying blush. I made sure to put up a token struggle while she smirked, trying to seem threatening, but only coming across as excited and aroused. Then, before I could say anything, she lowered herself to my shaft, engulfing me with her presence once more, and started to ride me wildly.

I did nothing even when her grip around my wrists weakened under the rush of pleasure, giving me the opportunity to escape. Why should I, when the sensation of being ridden filled me with pleasure, while giving Aviada the win she desperately needed? It was clear that she wanted the struggle, and even though she knew I was stronger, she still wanted to be strong enough to get the occasional win.

Maybe I should bring her to my leveling trips. With her addition and my recent power-up -not to mention the level I was about to receive- we would be strong enough to form a hunting party, potentially with much stronger rewards. But that was a discussion point for another time, I decided, when I saw her face contorted with pleasure, indicating that she was already building up to another orgasm. And since my earlier surrender was sufficient for a freebie, I chose that moment to slip out of her grip. My legs wrapped around her while I hugged her. I rolled, and she was trapped between my body and the ground.

I didn't bother to immobilize her arms, her fingers digging into my back to add a dash of pain to my pleasure. After all, not only did I have HP to spare, but I also had the healing spells to cure myself if she went too far. Indulging her was a small sacrifice while I pinned her on the ground under my weight, drilling her mercilessly... The position lasted for around twenty minutes, and ended predictably, with my seed filling her once more.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Master Melee, Basic Ranged, Basic Tactics]

I was tempted to get tactics with my upcoming expedition, but I was acutely aware that our

team would be extremely small, and I would be the pillar. The individual capability would have been much more useful, so I chose to enhance my melee capabilities. And with that momentary distraction gone, I leaned forward once more.

“Again?” she murmured dazedly.

“Don’t you want to see who has the better stamina,” I said, and the mention of competition was enough to awaken her from her daze, our lips connecting with an unmatched passion. It was sunrise when we finally stumbled out of the forest, though the only reason Aviada was able to walk was my healing spells. I was the victor of our little endurance challenge, something she found hard to be dissatisfied with after an endless number of orgasms she had experienced on the way.

[+5000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 45%]

[Achievement: Endless Endurance. Prove the superiority of your endurance against a worthy rival, and through a worthwhile competition. +1000 Experience, +3 Endurance]

“So, that was something,” she murmured sleepily after we sneaked around the guards and closed into the building with Aviada’s room.

“It definitely was,” I approved enthusiastically even as I let my hand drift down to the small of her back, happy to see that touch was all I needed even after several rounds of rough, sweaty sex. The rewards I gained were impressive, but it was nothing compared to the pleasure I earned in the process.

“When are we going to meet again?” she asked even though she had a blush on her face.

“How about tomorrow evening,” I said, and she nodded enthusiastically. “Actually, I’m planning to make a small expedition to outside tomorrow morning, to see what I could hunt, would you be interested?” I added, acting like I just thought of that.

“Of course,” she answered, and after one last kiss, she walked away, the sway of her hips enough to tempt me for another round if I already hadn’t been exhausted to the limit.

I had thought that after spending the whole night with Aviada, leaving only an hour to nap

before I had to dress in my robes and start working at the library would have left me exhausted, but on the contrary, I was bursting with energy. Maybe it was about my new level, or maybe I was underestimating the impact of a three-point increase in my endurance. Regardless of the reason, it didn't change the fact that after a bit of drudgery work, I was feeling randy again. Not enough to make me drop everything and search for Helga or Aviada, but enough to create a low-key annoyance.

Which was why when I saw Marianne walking toward the obscure part of the library, the decision to follow her was easy to make. I made sure to stay hidden, and soon, we were in a relatively obscure part of the library that held some obscure texts on healing, peripheral stuff that was rarely used, but still useful to someone trying to push for the mastery in the area of healing. Since she was in front of the shelves rather than walking around to catch my attention, it was obvious she was in the library for research purposes rather than to fool around, but that didn't stop me from closing in unnoticed, until I was close enough for my breath to caress her skin.

"Can I help you?" I whispered throatily, and she jerked in panic, turning her back, her lips ready for a shout she forced herself to swallow at the last moment when she noticed my identity.

"What the hell, Gaius," she asked, her chest moving violently under her out of control breathing as she tried to keep her breathing controlled.

She was even worse at handling shock than I presumed, a poor ability in a Melius, even for a healer, as ambushes by creatures weren't completely unheard of in the field, and such a delay might result in a total slaughter. I took a note to fix the issue later on, but for now I just needed to distract her a bit. "You're spooked," I said even as I pressed my hand to her chest, her heart thumping under my touch. And if that gave me an opportunity to cup her breast, it was completely incidental. "Take a deep breath," I said even as I moved my hand a bit, enjoying the sensation of her rather spectacular breasts.

She looked like she was about to complain, but a glare from my end was enough to make her change her mind, proving that she was getting more obedient. She followed my directions for a minute before her breathing was back under control, and as panic slowly drained from her face, my hand started to wander around her chest, exploring her breasts over her robe. "Um, I'm better now," she said hesitantly, pointing at my hand. Her meaning was clear.

Naturally, I ignored her wordless request, softly squeezing her breast instead, adding a small touch of magic to intensify her sensations. "So, what are you searching for?" I said, repeating my earlier question even as I explored her body, ignoring her rising panic.

[+50 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I was barely able to hold back a frown at the notification. I had been hoping her to be an even higher level, which, unfortunately wasn't the case. I didn't know whether Aviada or Marianne had a higher level, but even under the best of circumstances, it was clear that I wouldn't be able to reach level twenty without leveling them further -or finding a new assistant. "Gaius, what if-" she tried to start, trying to warn me about the risks, but I interrupted that by squeezing her breast hard, and she had to stop to prevent a moan from escaping. My earlier discoveries about her sensitive spots were coming in handy.

"I asked you a question, sweetie," I said even as I took a step forward. She tried to retreat, but pinned between my body and the shelf, my arms were enough to cut off her escape route. I was close enough for my breath to caress her lips. She licked her lips nervously, but it only made them more delicious. I leaned forward, and she tilted her head readily, but I waited without touching, and going as far as to pull back when she tried to close in, maintaining our sensual distance.

Soon, she realized that she had no option but to play along. "I was looking for alternative ways to establish healing fields," she explained. "I feel like my current method is not working as well as I hoped."

"Which method are you using?" I asked.

"I'm using a variant of the double-matrix reduction, but for some reason, my spells are destabilizing in a few minutes," she explained, more to follow my order rather than believing I could help her. After all, what she mentioned was an advanced topic that belonged to the healing field. Of course, she didn't know that I had a decent biomancy knowledge.

I just chuckled and waved my hand, and two books pulled themselves from the shelves and started floating in front of her. "I believe these two should help you abandon such inelegant methods," I said with a wide smirk, enjoying the expression of shock on her face. "Now, about the reward..." I added, and before she could say anything, my lips closed over hers, enjoying the touch, my hands caressing her body adventurously.

Then, my sixth sense went haywire even worse than the time I had been attacked by the shadow wolf, but it wasn't the sense of an impending assault. It felt more like the silence before the storm, a certain pressure that would doubtlessly ruin me in one wrong move. I pulled away from Marianne immediately. "Go to the corner and hide behind the shelves," I whispered to her, my voice had never been more serious. She looked like she was about to argue, but another

angry glare silenced her.

Marianne dashed away, and just in time, because not just a second later, the head librarian appeared around the corner in her usual calm demeanor on the surface, only my rather impressive wisdom allowing me to see that things weren't as straightforward. Never in my life I was so glad to pick advanced subterfuge, because even under her casual gaze, I felt that my mask was being assaulted. Luckily, I had the necessary acting ability to cover it.

"Boy, follow me," she said before continuing forward, not even bothering to check whether I was following. Why would she, when she ruled the library with an iron fist, so much that even rest of the faculty hadn't dared to intrude her domain? It was unthinkable for a lowly assistant to actually dare to ignore her order.

I followed, doing my best to maintain my mule persona, curiosity rising in me despite fear. It was the first excuse I had to interact with her, and I was curious about what kind of secrets I would be able to unearth...

[Level: 13 Experience: 84200 / 91000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 19

Precision: 12 Perception: 11

Agility: 12 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 18

HP: 858 / 858 Mana: 658 / 1053]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [68/100]

Expert Arcana [72/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Chapter Twenty-Seven

After signaling Marianne to stay away, I started following the head librarian, my full attention focused on maintaining my mule persona. Every step, every stumble, even the blank expression on my face had to be perfect, just in case her gaze fell on me for a fleeting moment. After all, she was dangerous enough to change the flow of a battle with just her presence, whether it was against the monsters or humans. Even under the most conservative estimate, she was well-above level twenty, and in reality, nobody knew just how strong she was.

I didn't know what would happen if she discovered my true nature, but I wasn't feeling lucky enough to test it, so I followed her obediently deeper into the library. Unfortunately, it was a long walk, and without anything to distract me, I found myself watching the way her body strained her bulky clothing to understand her body type. She wasn't the busty type, that much was obvious from the lack of a bulkiness around her chest. Similarly her hips were narrow, suggesting that she had a lithe body underneath. Considering that she wasn't very tall either, it wasn't hard to guess that without her mysterious clothing, she would have found it hard to put on an intimidating display. Of course, that wouldn't change the fact that she could rain fireballs with a twist of her wrist, making the observation relatively worthless.

Then, we arrived at a closed gate, and my heartbeat picked up speed, and a soft gasp escaped my mouth despite my best effort. The reason was clear. She was standing in front of the locked entrance of the restricted section, the room that housed the most valuable and most dangerous pieces of writing in the library. I had never ever thought of attempting to enter, because it was protected by layers of wards, making such an attempt no different than assisted suicide.

But now, things were different. I carefully watched the shape of her magic, straining myself to commit the complicated flows into my memory -a difficult achievement even with my unbelievable stats. Still, it was an unbelievable opportunity, one that would have been impossible to receive if she hadn't written me off as inconsequential. Yet another thing my abyssal reputation proved useful for. I stayed focused on the ebbs and flows of the key she was constructing while the wards around the vault deactivated one by one, and soon, the door opened. "Stay here," she ordered as she disappeared inside.

I would have preferred to follow her inside. Failing that, I tried to get a feel of her magic to understand whether there were other traps inside, but failed to detect any. Meaning, either the vault didn't have other wards, or it had the effect of hiding magic used inside while the door was closed. Still, the ability to open the outer shell was a rewarding enough, especially since I just needed to wait around a bit for it.

It took almost two hours for the head librarian to step out once more, and she pushed a cart filled with an impressive amount of books out. She glanced at my direction before starting to walk once again, leaving the cart behind. I quickly grabbed it and started to follow her, noting that she was considerably more exhausted, making it clear that there were further wards inside, much more difficult ones even. But that was a problem for another day.

I followed her through less-used parts of the library, then we arrived at another door, this one her own private residence, which she once again used her magic to unlock. It was considerably easier than the earlier vault door, so I memorized it easily as well. I had been expecting her to order me to stop, which was why I was surprised when she gestured me to follow her inside.

I found myself in a sparsely furnished living room. Surprisingly so, even, considering her reputation and the position she held. She had a large table piled with books, and an even larger bookcase piled with books, but a portion of it completely empty. Other than that, the only thing she had in there was an uncomfortable-looking wooden chair. Her home was as strict and soulless as she was acting outside, apparently.

My observations were cut short by her order. "Sort the books on the bookcase," she said, then, once again without saying anything, walked to the other room. I would have liked to use the opportunity to browse the books she brought, but they were sealed magically. It was easy to break, but applying them again in the same manner would be time-consuming. A time that I currently lacked. I could only read their titles.

It was an interesting mixture. Most of the titles, I wasn't even able to read, as they used an unfamiliar alphabet. The ones I was able to read, however, included a surprising number of books about ancient history. And, the rest of the shelf was filled with books on legends and myths, making it quite a mystery. Unfortunately, I was not in a position to explore that particular mystery.

Still, I didn't want my journey to be completely useless, and despite her power, her dismissive attitude was starting to annoy me. So, I decided to use a little trick. When she pushed the door close, I created a minuscule magical disturbance, hard to detect without looking for it, but sufficient enough to keep the door from closing. An almost filled expert arcana was surely useful. Then, I cast another spell, this time a small, almost transparent piece of floating crystal, while a linked mirror appeared in my hand, allowing me to watch what she was doing.

She was facing the other way, but it wasn't the reason my eyes were widened. No, it was because her hands were on her robe, slowly unlocking her buttons. I slowly placed the books on the shelf, not daring to use any magic for the job while watching her with my full attention. I

was surprised when she pulled her hair free from an oppressing bind, and her raven locks flowed on her shoulders. But it wasn't as interesting as when she started to push her robe down, revealing a pair of flawless and fragile alabaster shoulders, and when it moved down further, a naked back was added to the mix. My eyes widened with shock, as I hadn't been expecting her to be half-naked under her bulky robes.

[+100 Experience]

The other surprise was just how lithe and elegant her body was. If I didn't know her identity, I would have never guessed her to be the head librarian. It was hard to match her towering identity with her sweet body. When her robe moved even lower, it revealed her tight bottom, clad in her panties, which, unfortunately, was the white and boring kind. I was about to let the crystal disperse when I noticed her fingers reaching for the edge of her panties. I decided to maintain the spell despite its risk, a decision that was rewarded almost instantly when she pushed her panties down, revealing her cute bottom, and with a fleeting sight of her entrance, beautiful enough to wish me that I was strong enough to ravage her without fearing the consequences.

"Soon," I murmured to myself.

Since my luck had yet to disappoint me today, I decided to push further, and watched as she started to walk toward the other door in her bedroom, giving me a full-frontal view of her beauty. Her face was yet another surprise. She had a small, cute face even without makeup, one that should have belonged to a cute flower girl on the corner of the street rather than a scary mage that made everyone tremble under the threat of her bad mood. I could see why she was always wearing that hood and using magic to darken her expression. It was hard to take this cute face seriously. Of course, her small yet shapely breasts and thin waist deserved a mention of their own, completing the little fragile girl image.

It was impossible to stop once she entered the other room, not bothering to close the door, the sound of flowing water reaching my ears. I let the crystal float to her bathroom, and met with the beautiful sight of her bubble covered body, her impromptu dress melting under the flow of water. Soon, she had nothing but crystal-clear water droplets to cover her body, and since I had already finished my task, I decided to get a bit of reward, and put my hand in my trousers, playing with my erection.

[+500 Experience]

[Achievement: Dancing with Death. Stretch a hidden situation to its limit with the full

knowledge of the cost of failure. +1000 Experience, +2 Perception, +2 Agility]

Unfortunately, her shower stopped before I could attain my release, so, with great disappointment, I released the spell and fixed my pants, and waited for her to appear.

On that, I received another surprise, as I hadn't been expecting her to walk into the living room naked. Oh, she had an illusion on, but it was impossible to slip such a thing by a master of subterfuge like myself. And with that awareness, denying the illusion and seeing her naked body was trivial for me. Just like that, my heartbeat rose to a peak. After all, not every day did the legendary librarian stand in front of me, stark naked and bent over as she examined the bookcase, tempting me with damnation.

"Everything is in order, you can leave," she said, and I immediately turned and left the room, not trusting myself not to react in a way that would reveal myself if I continued to be subjected to that heavenly sight anymore.

When I walked out, there was a determination in my steps, and I even used several spells to find my target easily. Soon, I was standing a shelf away from Helga, and a floating note reached to her. Her eyes widened with shock, but I didn't waste time watching, just walking in determined steps as I reached the storage room I described in the note, casting several wards in succession while waiting for her to appear. Anti-detection, silencing, locking, even climate-control. Helga had a worried expression on her face when she stepped in. She opened her mouth to ask, but before the first word could leave her lips, mine was already on hers, devouring her lips hungrily.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

She froze under the assault for a moment, but it didn't take long for her lips to join the dance, her hands starting to caress my muscles, creating a pleasant, soothing sensation. Any other time, I would have let her continue, happy to see her taking initiative, but I was simply too aroused after watching the librarian's unintentional show. A part of my mind acknowledged that it was the effect of her high charisma, only flowing free rather than leveraged for intimidation purposes; and the adrenaline from the fear of getting caught didn't help my state of mind any.

However, regardless of its partially supernatural reasons, I was extremely horny, so I needed to solve it. I grabbed Helga's robe and pulled, her buttons flying around. Before she could even let out a gasp, her blouse and underwear received the same treatment, no different than paper under my great strength. "My clothes," she gasped in shock even as I grabbed her hips, and forced her to turn. She found herself against the wall, her bosom pressing the cold stone walls.

“Don’t worry, I’ll buy you better stuff,” I answered even as I pulled the robe off her, leaving her half-naked, with only her long skirt to cover her legs. A grievous issue that needed to be fixed immediately, I decided, and pulled her skirt up, gathering it around her waist, expecting to reveal her panties, which was why I was pleasantly surprised when I saw they were missing. “Naughty girl,” I said even as I slapped her bottom, her booty rippling sensually, breaking the last hold of rationality over my mind.

“For you,” she gasped even while I was busy removing my pants, which was all the invitation I needed before plunging myself into her depths, her strained cry of pleasure mixing with my groan of appreciation, and I started slamming into her mercilessly. “It hurts,” she managed to gasp between her cries, warning me to go slower. However, I was caught in a daze, and knew that slowing down was not an option for me. Luckily, I had other options. I flared my mana, not bothering to be conservative as I flooded her body with biomancy-based healing energies, deadening her sense of pain while curing the damage my merciless assault was creating. An extremely wasteful approach, but not without its benefits. And I had mana to spare.

[-50 Mana]

“Better?” I asked even as I sped my assault even further, the sound of flesh hitting flesh reaching a deafening point.

“Are you using-” she started, but interrupted by a moan when I started mauling her tits mercilessly. “Are you using your healing magic to deaden the impact? How?” she managed to slur, showing a great display of willpower.

“It’s not that difficult,” I answered, deciding to indulge her in a sudden hint of amusement. I was impressed that she was still able to think about the intricacies of magic while being stuffed mercilessly. And maybe focusing on a different thing would help me to combat the sense of arousal I was feeling, which was rather scary. “Actually, I’m basing the flow on one of your theories for arcana, but changing the energy flows...” I started, and launched a detailed explanation of theory even as I continued to drill her mercilessly.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 16%]

The notification managed to surprise me, because it only appeared after I started explaining to her about magic. Another clue, I realized, though it didn’t match the previous time. Then, I wasn’t helping her with magical theory...

But that time, I had just finished helping her level up! “It’s so simple,” I murmured in shock.

“What’s so simple?” she answered, or more accurately, she managed to slur certain parts of that sentence while I managed to piece together the rest. Her pleasure had risen to a point to prevent her from speaking coherently.

“Just reached an epiphany, give me a moment,” I answered, punctuating my sentence with a spank. She just moaned in lieu of an answer, leaving me free to focus my thoughts while I pumped her towards an orgasm. I realized that the companion process was about proving myself to them based on their perception, though as usual, I needed to seal it with a sexual process. It was pure physical domination for Aviada, and exemplar magical theory for Helga. Also, I couldn’t discount the fact that I saved Aviada from her fiancée, and helped Helga to level up, therefore removing their biggest problems. Maybe it was a combination of both. I needed to help them, and impress them... It certainly explained why I hadn’t received anything for Marianne despite the time we spent together.

With the next target of experimentation selected, I turned my attention to Helga, who was showing the signs of an impending explosive orgasm. I grabbed her hair, pulling her into a searing kiss, which triggered her orgasm immediately. I didn’t delay it, because she deserved a reward. Not only was she very helpful to get rid of the effects I had been suffering under, but she also unknowingly allowed me to mostly solve the issue of the companion process.

I pulled out of her, and she collapsed on the floor, her trembling legs unable to hold her weight. She was barely able to twist so that she was resting with her back against the wall, trying to control her trembles. As another part of her reward, I gave her a minute to calm down before ordering her to open her mouth. She did so immediately, and I invaded her throat, no less merciless than my earlier invasion. I let the healing magic fill her body once more. However, even as I invaded her I was explaining the flow of magic and theory behind it with great detail, amused by her struggle to decide what to focus on, the pleasure she was feeling, or the intellectual opportunity in front of her.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 19%]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 22%]

[+3 Arcana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

When the first stage was completed, her eyes widened with shock. After Aviada, I had a good idea of what she had just experienced. “Did you just receive an achievement?” I asked smugly,

and her shock increased even further. I pulled out for a moment, letting her speak.

“How?” she murmured.

“It’s a dangerous secret,” I said even as I filled her mouth once more. “I’m trusting you with it, and soon, I’ll explain it, but don’t even mention it to anyone else,” I warned her, and she managed to nod despite her busy mouth. I wasn’t worried about it. Her look of fanaticism was hard to fake, not to mention I had the system’s approval about her increasing loyalty. With that aspect shelved satisfactorily, I continued ramming her throat until I filled her mouth with my seed, which she swallowed with great fervor.

I decided to sit down next to her, letting her rest against my chest in a rare moment of pure intimacy. She sighed in satisfaction. “By the way, rest well tonight. Tomorrow morning, we’re going on an expedition outside to increase your leveling speed further. Let’s see whether we can let you gain two levels in a week.”

Someone else would have claimed that I was mad for even daring to go out for hunting with less than a full regiment, not to mention my claim that I could help her level up with a speed that would rival a bonafide hero. It was proof of the impression I had on her when she, rather than arguing, just nodded with a smile and climbed on my lap, slowly riding me toward the climax. We stayed in the room for almost two hours, our bodies melding together in a variety of positions, mixing tender and fast, managing to squeeze several high-level theory discussions to the mix.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 45%]

[-356 Mana]

In the end, even with the generous application of healing energy, Helga was completely spent. Naturally, she lacked Aviada’s stamina, and magic was an imperfect replacement. Still, a huge smile was on her lips as she stumbled to her room, naked under her robe. I followed her until she reached her room of course, not wanting her to meet with a dangerous situation in her distracted state. Only when she was securely in her room did I walk away, but not to my room.

I wanted to receive my reward for helping Marianne in the library...

[Level: 13 Experience: 90800 / 91000]

Strength: 17 Charisma: 19

Precision: 12 Perception: 13

Agility: 14 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 18

HP: 884 / 884 Mana: 274 / 1079]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [68/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

Chapter Twenty-Eight

One of the advantages of my earlier maid disguise was the great knowledge it provided me about the surroundings of the noble quarters, including where maids and other servants would be around at this time. With that knowledge, I didn't even bother to disguise myself, and just used a simple spell that allowed me to meld into the shadows, avoiding the casual attention of the visitors. With that, it didn't take long for me to arrive at Marianne's door. Unlocking it was trivial with my great magical abilities, and soon, I stepped inside, unnoticed by the occupants.

The occupants were busy with rather salacious activities if their heated moans were any indicator. And a smile appeared on my face as I registered the familiarity of their voices. One of them was naturally Marianne, which was to be expected. It was the identity of the other one that put a smile on my face, Cornelia. It had been a while since I had come across her. It was perfect timing, as I was not afraid of her anymore with my recent leveling. Just a couple hundred points would push me to the next level, and I was very enthusiastic about testing the limits of the situation.

Their voices -more moans and cries- were coming from the bedroom, so I decided to take a peek. A real one, not though the mirror trick I used against the head librarian. With a deep breath, I started wrapping the magic around myself, and soon, an advanced version of the shadow cloak was around me, good enough to hide me from the eyes of two distracted mages as long as I stuck to the corners of the room. Still, I was glad that I spent an hour meditating before visiting here, allowing me to recover a decent chunk of my mana. I was strong enough to defend myself if I revealed myself with a sudden mistake.

I carefully opened the door, ready to slam a shield to prevent a surprise attack, but the sight I met told me that it was not a concern. Cornelia and Marianne were on the bed, Marianne on all fours, and Cornelia behind her, both of them facing the other way, which made my infiltration trivially easy. I slid to a corner, under the shadow of a wardrobe, and started watching the amazing show. The situation was highly different than the previous time. For once, Cornelia had a strap-on tied around her waist, ramming against Marianne's tight hole, spanking Marianne's bottom repeatedly. Her attitude was closer to the time I had watched her torturing Helga than her usual demeanor with Marianne. She was clearly enjoying the opportunity to push forward, unaware that the road she was taking was created by the others.

However, Marianne's expression was even more interesting. She was enjoying the situation, but it was a muted enjoyment, nothing even close to the mind-blowing joy she had been enjoying under my attention. I smirked proudly, happy with the impact I had created. Then, I received a

very surprising notification.

[+500 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Basic Fire, Basic Elemental, Basic Meditation]

I wasn't surprised by the new level, or the fact that I gained experience. No, I was shocked, because there was no penalty to my experience gain. I was surprised, as I wasn't expecting Cornelia to be an even higher level than me. Still, I wasn't afraid, as no matter what, as long as she wasn't above level twenty -which she obviously wasn't- I didn't have anything to worry about. The overwhelming advantage of my stats combined with my varied skill set made sure that at worst, I could retreat easily. More likely, I could easily defeat her before she could cast a high-level spell. Her flame specialization was dangerous, but slow to implement.

With that done, I focused on my new level, and after a brief consideration, picked basic elemental skill. Flame specialization offered higher damage, but specialization worked much better for my circumstances. And meditation was rather redundant, as thanks to my melee abilities, my mana expenditure was much lower compared to other mages, and my mana pool likely triple the size of anyone on the same level. High stats across the board was really useful.

With that decided, I was about to show myself when I noticed a conspicuous bundle of letters among Cornelia's discarded clothes. The same bundle of letters I had seen her keep in the magically-sealed safe in her room during my visit. I smirked. Since she was kind enough to bare her secrets in such an obvious place, who I was to reject the opportunity. Telekinesis saw that they floated to my hand, and I started reading the letters.

And to multitask, I conjured a little flame between my fingers, making it dance, soon joined by a piece of earth and a droplet of water, all wrapped with a layer of magically-charged air. It was a ludicrous display of magic that should have been impossible for anyone with just a basic skill, but a combination of my arcana ability, my stats, and the theory discussions I had with Helga, allowed me to show a capability quite a bit above expected. Even better, since I was doing it next to Cornelia -a higher-level mage that would doubtlessly attack me if noticed- it was showing extremely rapid improvement. Just ten minutes later, my skill was already full, not to mention the experience gain from watching two beauties cutting loose.

[+2000 Experience]

[+25 Elemental]

[-14 Mana]

Meanwhile, I managed to skim through the bundle of letters, and learned quite a few interesting details. They were all in cipher, but against my wisdom and intelligence, it didn't survive long, especially since she had made the mistake of basing it to an obscure arcana pattern. The first nugget of interest was the fact that Cornelia apparently hit the level cap, which she was desperately trying to find a solution to, but her searches, as expected, turned up no result. Such a thing was either impossible, or it was possible but hidden as the most important secret of an organization, effectively impossible to discover. Of course, Cornelia was aware of it as well, therefore, her real focus was to find a way to allow her to continue earning achievements despite her level cap, or failing that, trying to find clues about items and artifacts that might boost her abilities. She was simply desperate to increase her personal power.

The reason for her desperation was clarified by the other half of the letters. Thanks to her earlier fight with her caretaker, I had already known about the power struggle in her House, but I hadn't expected it to be too serious. It was a series of correspondence with a loyal spy back at House Antony, each letter grimmer than the last, informing Cornelia about her allies disappearing or pulling their support. She still had considerable support, but the trend was worrying. Apparently, her uncle was playing for keeps.

It wasn't hard to guess that her uncle was playing it safe mostly because of Cornelia's stellar increase, afraid of making a mortal enemy, instead of trying to lock her into a junior position so that even when she took the reigns of the house, she would be dependent to him. But if he had known about her hitting the level cap before even reaching level twenty...

Of course, while it was bad news for Cornelia, the same couldn't be said from my perspective. On the contrary, her vulnerable position gave me the opportunity to move in, and support her. Companion process was a long shot, but even without that, I was powerful enough to easily rival her, and unlike her, I was yet to reach my prime. And more importantly, she had no idea about how strong I could be.

I could have taken no action, but interrupting seemed a better idea considering the rest of my plan. I first established a ward that would keep anyone from feeling the magical surges unless the spells were overcharged. The establishment of such a ward was impossible to hide from people inside it, so I didn't even bother, and started clapping the moment they jumped in panic, searching for the intruder.

It didn't take long for them to find me since I also canceled the shadow cloak. "Gaius?!" Marianne managed to murmur even as she was frozen in shock once more. She really needed

to learn how to handle shock better.

Cornelia, on the other hand, reacted much more predictably even as she sent a shocked glance at Marianne for recognizing the intruder. Her response came in the form of an impressively hot firebolt, her sweaty body's shine gaining an ethereal quality under the sudden flash of redness. Combined with her crimson hair, she looked like a goddess of war.

Therefore, it was amusing to see her confident expression crumble when I waved my hand, and a small sheet of water appeared on the path of the firebolt, extinguishing it easily, partly because of the elemental mismatch, and partly because I subtly reinforced it with an arcana matrix. It was unnecessarily expensive, spending twenty mana where I could have just used four, but the sudden turn was enough to make Cornelia freeze, which was what I needed. From her perspective, I was a strong water expert, a rather dangerous match against her, especially in closed space and a bath next door giving me unlimited material. "Who are you?" Cornelia asked as she raised her arms defensively, flames burning in her palms. And thanks to her lack of clothes, and earlier sexual activities, I was awarded with a chunk of bonus experience.

[-20 Mana]

[+1000 Experience]

I took a step forward, using my subterfuge skill to seem utterly relaxed and confident even though a defensive spell was ready to flicker into existence instantly. "I'm Gaius, as Marianne kindly informed you," I said smugly as I closed in the distance. "But you might know me as the mule," I added, watching as a completely different shock invading her face. Before she could say anything, I cut in. "I know, how can it be, weren't you supposed to be an idiot, and other such nonsense. The easiest explanation is that everything you know about me is a lie, and I have my own objectives that needed to fulfill by playing along, and now that those are complete, I'm free to act. How's that for a summary?"

"Very clear," Cornelia managed to answer, managing to recover a semblance of control during my explanation. But that clarity reminded her of a very important detail. She was still completely naked, and a glistening strapon was tied to her waist. She pulled the covers on herself, ignoring Marianne's circumstances as she still tried to control her shock. "So, why are you here?"

"Well, I was here to visit Marianne, to ask payment for my earlier assistance," I said bluntly, not hesitating for a second before implicating Marianne. Marianne's gaze danced between Cornelia and me helplessly, but found only amusement at mine, and anger at Cornelia's. No

doubt that Cornelia was thinking Marianne betrayed her, which was perfect for my needs, allowing me to interject myself between them as Marianne's protector. "But since I had learned about your circumstances, I decided to offer my help."

"Marianne-" Cornelia exclaimed, her anger flaring as she came to the wrong conclusion, her flaming hands turning to her bedmate, but once again, I was prepared, and a column of water flew from the bathroom, covering both while also turning the bed into a soaked mess -which I could use for follow-up spells.

"Stop, it wasn't her," I explained even as Marianne jumped off the bed, fear in her eyes as she dashed towards me, ignoring her nakedness, or the way her generous bosom tumbled with each hurried step. She hid behind me, her shivering little to do with her wet state. "You were the one silly enough to bring a full complement of notes of your little rebellion," I countered.

"Impossible, they are coded with a-" she tried to say, but I cut her off by creating a floating sample of the exact diagram that she used to hide her letters.

"Yeah, it took me a minute to solve the cipher. You might think about finding a better one," I said, reinforcing my image even further. I took a step forward, quite happy to see that Cornelia, the flaming witch that everyone was afraid of, slid back, reflexively pulling the cover up like a little child trying to hide from the big bag monster. It would be lying to say I didn't find her fear exhilarating.

However, rather than continuing to walk, I pulled the chair closer and -just to rub salt into the wound- wrapped my arm around Marianne's waist, pulling her on my lap. She whimpered, but her arm still wrapped around my torso tightly for assurance. After seeing Cornelia's anger, she subconsciously shifted sides already. I just needed to reinforce it. From the sudden tightening on her face, I could see that Cornelia realized that she fucked up and sent an apologizing glance at Marianne, which she ignored in favor of snuggling into my chest. The disappointment was clear on Cornelia's face, not to mention jealousy as she watched her girlfriend snuggle in my lap despite her nakedness.

[+500 Experience]

"Your concern about my choice of cipher is noted," Cornelia murmured, trying to seem confident and regal, but it was a hard image to pull off when she was still drenched after my latest assault, and wrapped with an equally drenched bed cover. "However, I'm sure it's not the only comment you have after reading my most important secrets."

“Of course not,” I said even as I moved my hand, grabbing Marianne’s breast. She didn’t like my brazen act of molesting her girlfriend without paying even the slightest concern for her opinion, but other than a flicker of flame between her fingers, she managed to control her anger. “I was actually thinking about helping you?”

[+500 Experience]

“Why would you do that?” she said dismissively. “You have read everything. I have no hope of victory against my uncle, and you can get an easy reward by just writing a letter.” She let out a dismissive chuckle as she pulled the sheet tighter. “It’s obvious that I can’t stop you.”

I had to admit, for someone thinking that her fate was in tethers, she was surprisingly resilient, far better than I would have given her credit for. That impression, more than anything, made me change my plans for her ultimate fate, though I was still going to tame her before elevating her. “Well, that’s true, but you need to ask yourself. What would I gain if I brought the news to your uncle? A few thousand gold, a minor title, or a magical weapon if he was feeling extremely generous.” Her expression changed as I dismissed the possibility of those rewards easily, as they were enough that even most of her noble peers wouldn’t dare to turn their nose at them, especially if they could gain it with little effort. Even just the positive impression from a ruling lord would be enough for them to sell Cornelia out. But I had other plans.

“And what do you expect me to give you?” she said coldly.

“That can be discussed later,” I said with a dismissive wave even though my other hand had long disappeared between Marianne’s legs, caressing her wet folds. “I don’t expect you to commit to anything before I prove my ability to deliver.”

[+1000 Experience]

“And what can you deliver?” she countered, trying to sound dismissive to get a semblance of control, but it was impossible for her to hide the sudden bloom of hope underneath.

I smirked even as I continued to finger Marianne, who failed to keep her moans under control. Deep, throaty moans that Cornelia failed to earn despite her best efforts just minutes ago. “I think I should keep that part as a surprise for now,” I said even as I subtly cast a spell. It was a simple one that opened my zipper and pulled down my pants, and Marianne’s moans intensified when she felt the presence of my shaft trapped under her naked butt. “However, I can give you a hint. I could have easily taken control of my family and relaxed as the ruling lord with my power, but I have spent the last several years undercover in the biggest library of the world,” I

said, once again ignoring the fact that the library's supposed the second-largest status according to the system. "Now, imagine what I might have, and why I'm confident enough to help you."

"Do you have-" Cornelia started, only to be silenced when I raised my hand in warning.

"We will discuss it later," I said, then shifted my hands to Marianne's bottom, and lifted her up. Then, without a warning, I pulled her down, taking her virginity without a warning.

[+3000 Experience]

[Achievement: Daring Defilement. Brazenly snatch the most valuable treasure of a noble lady in front of her significant other with a higher level. +2000 Experience, +5 Charisma]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 1%]

I smirked, enjoying the sudden silence that filled the room, both girls shocked by my action. Cornelia's eyes were burning with obvious anger, but the rewards I dangled in front of her was just good enough to prevent her from acting. Marianne was just bad at managing surprises, so she simply followed my lead and started grinding her hips despite her dazed expression. Marianne's companion process was a nice surprise, probably triggered by Cornelia's sudden betrayal and my protection, and the impression further solidified by my decisive victory.

Just to drive the situation even further, I unleashed the full impact of my charisma to the surface, but geared toward subtle intimidation. Thanks to the addition of my last achievement, my charisma had reached a devastating level, maybe even to a point of matching the display the head librarian had displayed.

As a result, Cornelia stiffened, her anger replaced with a healthy dose of fear instead. "I better go," she murmured and quickly dressed, trying not to look at her freshly-spoiled ex-girlfriend and the rather impressive shaft that was in the process of ruining her, but it was hard for her to avoid it when my charisma worked like a magnet, pulling her gaze to the epicenter.

"Sure, I'll visit you in your room tomorrow evening, and we can talk in detail," I said casually, like invading her living space was nothing more than a trivial chore. Just as she was about to leave, I added one parting shot, just to drive the fact that I conquered her girlfriend in her presence. After all, it was good to finally take revenge for her almost killing me.

"Also, feel free to join us whenever you feel lonely. I'm sure Marianne wouldn't mind your presence."

[Level: 14 Experience: 101300 / 105000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 24

Precision: 12 Perception: 13

Agility: 14 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 18

HP: 952 / 952 Mana: 864 / 1232]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [68/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Basic Elemental [25/25]]

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Watching the plethora of emotions dancing across Marianne's face as Cornelia left was amusing, though her dazed expression was understandable. After all, just a few minutes ago, she had been walked in on during a very intimate moment, the one that walked in was the one she was cheating on her girlfriend with, then a fight broke out where her famously-intimidating girlfriend had lost with her most important secrets revealed, Marianne got blamed with almost deadly consequences so threatening that she had to seek sanctuary with the intruder, then said intruder stole her virginity without a warning...

Truly, her confusion was understandable, so I decided to take it a bit slow at first. I pulled out of her. She stood dazedly until I slowly led her to the fluffy carpet soft enough to substitute for a bed -as her bed was ruined due to the water attack from earlier- and directed her to lay on her back, her deliciously plump body present for my attention. I hovered above her, an unusually gentle smile on my lips as my shaft probed her entrance once more. "Don't worry, you're mine from now on, and I protect what's mine," I whispered.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 2%]

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I watched as my words took the intended effect, which wasn't entirely shocking. From the beginning, it was obvious that Marianne was more of a follower than a leader, with a clear role in her relationship with Cornelia. Watching her leave defeated without even daring to retaliate even when she watched Marianne's most precious location being taken left its impact on her. Combined with the endless joy our physical relationship had provided her, it wasn't entirely shocking that she started to latch onto me. And I had every intention of leveraging the shift in attitude.

"Tell me what you want," I whispered into her ear with the intimacy of a lover even as my shaft pressed against her entrance, but didn't push forward. The blush that spread across her face was utterly delicious, but she was too shy to actually push forward, so I decided to give her a taste. I pushed forward, just enough for the crown to disappear in her entrance, which made her shiver in anticipation, which was quickly replaced with disappointment. "I can't help you if you don't tell me what you want," I whispered once more, following my words with a gentle kiss on her lips.

She was even more dazed when I pulled back from the kiss, her arms wrapping around my back to pull me back into the kiss. I let her succeed, restarting our slow but delicious kiss, but when

she tried to push her hips forward, I was careful to pull back. I wanted her verbal admission before the next step.

She whimpered.

“Come on Marianne,” I whispered even as I caressed her hair with surprising gentleness. “We both know what you want. You just need to admit it.” She was still silent. “Your shyness is the only thing that’s between you and an endless wave of pleasure.”

My little game lasted several minutes, where I caressed, kissed, and teased her until her arousal finally reached the point of overpowering her fear and shyness. “I want you ... inside me,” she murmured, her voice fading into nothingness.

“Sorry, couldn’t hear you,” I said with a wide smile, though I made sure to place a fleeting kiss on her lips to soften the impact. “Can you repeat that louder?”

This time, my words managed to awaken a reaction in Marianne. “I want you inside me, you bastard,” she growled with a shocking display of passion. Before I could do anything, her legs wrapped around my waist, and using her grip as leverage, she pushed my shaft far into her depths .

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 3%]

Amused by her sudden initiative, I was preparing to let her lead our horizontal dance, but the fire behind her eyes sputtered and died just as easily as it arrived, leaving only her shyness behind. A pity, I thought even as I pushed forward, filling her insides deeply, enough to make her yelp in shock. It was becoming exceedingly clear that Marianne was going to be a very passive lover for the near future and an overnight improvement was an impossibility, so I decided to enjoy the experience instead. I could always teach her to be more proactive in the future.

With that thought in mind, I leaned forward and captured her lips once more, but this time, the effect was much stronger because my hips were moving back and forth, filling her insides repeatedly. Seeing her enjoyment, I waited a bit for her to get used to the level of pleasure before adding my hands into the mix, and not even a few minutes later, she was shuddering under a stiff orgasm.

[+750 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 5%]

I pulled out as the orgasm hit her, because I could see that after all the shocks, exhaustion was catching up with her. Of course, I had no intention of suffering from a full mast all night. Luckily, her amazing body gave me a few options. I placed my shaft between her impressive breasts, then started moving back and forth with the full intention of enjoying her jugs.

Marianne tried to avoid my gaze, but I had no intention of allowing that. I wanted her to fully process what was going on. "Keep your eyes on me, sweetie," I said, the order behind my words clear despite my soft tone.

"It's ... shameful," Marianne murmured, still keeping her eyes away. I flicked one of her nipples warningly, and with a pained gasp, her eyes met mine instantly.

"Really, you think that this is more shameful than the time I took your anal virginity during a massage, or what happened mere minutes ago?" I said as I picked up speed, enjoying her growing blush and shock as much as I enjoyed the way her hefty bosom wrapped around my shaft, giving me an entirely new pleasure, especially when I managed to modify a simple water spell into a lubricant, leveraging my new elemental abilities to a maximum.

"Um, no," she murmured resignedly, her blush thickening to the point of drowning her, but underneath, her joy and desire were clear. Despite what was on the surface, she was one kinky woman.

"Good," I murmured as I picked up speed, not resisting the rise of pleasure. Soon, I was ready to explode. "Open your mouth, and try not to spill any!" I said.

"Why?" she murmured, but she suddenly understood my aim when the crown pressed against her lips. "No-" she tried to say, but I just used it as an opportunity to slide into her mouth, and as a nice bonus, preventing her argument.

"Don't forget to swallow it all," I said even as I started filling her mouth with my seed, watching an expression of outrage spread on her face. It was amusing to see her anger triggered, even though it didn't survive when I glanced at her with an amusement that was backed with the full might of my charisma. Her outrage evaporated in a second, leaving an obedient toy doing her best to gather my seed in her mouth -and failing rather spectacularly. And since she was failing, I pulled back and used the rest of the burst to cover her breasts. In a sense, it was yet another sign of my ownership.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 6%]

“I’m sorry,” she murmured cutely, so much so that a chuckle escaped my lips despite my best efforts to look stern. The sight of a noble lady, her lips stained with my cum, apologizing for failing to swallow all of it was just too much. It was shocking just how far I came in just a few days.

“Don’t worry about it,” I said as I laid down next to her on the floor, enjoying the comfort of the fluffy carpet. It was much better than my bed! Luckily, after today, I had a better bed to sleep in. I gently pulled her to my chest, allowing her to listen to my heartbeat while I caressed her shoulder. And it wasn’t just to strengthen my hold over her. I actually enjoyed sharing the moment of intimacy with her.

Soon, Marianne’s breathing slowed down, her eyelids getting too heavy for her to keep them open. Soon, she was sleeping against my chest. I could have left her there, but I didn’t have anything else to do until morning, and her sexy bosom was definitely the superior blanket. With that, I closed my eyes, drifting off to sleep...

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 8%]

It was the notification that forced me out of my comfortable sleep, though it didn’t take long to notice the reason. I could feel the surprising -and very welcome- sensation of a pair of lips wrapped around my shaft, moving in a determined -and a bit mechanical- pace. The identity of my morning wake up service provider was obvious, but even then, I was still surprised to see Marianne leaning forward between my legs, her dark blonde hair sprawled forward to block the view of her face. A rare display of initiative from her, and an extremely welcome one.

She was too focused on her task to pay attention to me, and I was sufficiently entertained by her courage, so I let it continue. Her lips danced up and down over my shaft, determined to push me into a climax. To reward her initiative -and sate my curiosity about just how far she would push without any external source- I decided to continue acting like I was asleep, and I even decided not to fight the sensation when it was time to explode.

The next few minutes passed while her head danced up and down, focusing exclusively on the upper side, lacking the experience or courage to take it deeper into her throat. She still had too much to learn. She occasionally licked the side or wrapped her tongue around my girth,

showing an instinct for experimentation that she hadn't displayed during our previous encounters. Maybe thinking that she was lacking observers allowed her to act free from her supposed role, or maybe last night's activities finally managed to break through her shell.

Regardless of the reason, I was happy with the service I was receiving, so I continued to feign sleep whenever she raised her head letting her work in comfortably. A simple illusion spell showed my eyelids as closed, allowing me to watch her every move, even when she turned to face me. And it proved useful when she decided to have a change of pace and brought her impressive tits into the deal, their warm caress enveloping the bottom of my shaft, while her lips still continued to work on the top.

Minutes passed while she worked without breaking her determination, until she got her reward, my seed started to fill her mouth. Once again, she failed to swallow it all, the rest spilling on her breasts, creating a rather interesting view in the process.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I started clapping softly, and she jerked back, her stained lips stiffening in shock. Shame invaded her face soon after. "Come on, sweetie, you don't have anything to be ashamed of, it was an amazing show," I said as I righted myself, and presented my hand to her.

"It was?" she murmured, once again struggling to process the sudden change of her circumstances.

Instead of just nodding, I leaned forward to gently kiss her cheek before murmuring another compliment. Only then, I stood up, displaying my naked glory to her eyes, which she watched fascinatingly. Admittedly, it was a nice view. "I need to leave, as I have a full schedule of tasks to complete today," I said, watching her expression suddenly fall. "But I have just enough time for a shower," I added as I presented my hand to her, which she grabbed immediately with a giggle. I gently pulled her up before starting to walk toward the bathroom, still holding her hand. She stayed close enough that our bodies were rubbing together every step we took. I was glad for the unforced familiarity she was displaying, though it reinforced the fact that the companion process was a result of the increased intimacy.

I held the bathroom door open, gesturing for her to step inside in an exaggerated manner, like I was a guard greeting a princess to a high-class ball. "Please go ahead, princess," I said, replicating the mannerism of an ideal guard perfectly. Subterfuge had surprisingly many fun applications as well. She giggled cutely, which was replaced by a needy moan when I used the opportunity to change mannerism and slapped her bottom suggestively. "A traitor in my palace

lusting after my virtue!" she gasped in similarly exaggerated acting, though much less realistic, and dashed forward.

"Your fate is inevitable, princess," I answered, following her. I caught her just in front of the tub, which, unfortunately, was still empty. Luckily, my mana was already full from the amazing rest I had, and I was looking for an opportunity to test my extended elemental capabilities. I waved my hand, and a huge wave of water was pulled from the reservoir, its cost barely in the double digits. A flash of fire natured mana ensured the water was sufficiently warm, and I stepped into the water. "Since you have been captured by the rebels, it's your role to serve me in my bath," I said as I turned my back to her.

"As my new lord commands," she answered, but unlike the last time, her acting was much more sincere.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 12%]

Apparently, it managed to trigger a real sentiment from her. And the system approved. A surprising but very welcome development. I closed my eyes, enjoying the way her hands caressed my body with surprising gentleness. She managed to learn some tricks after all the massages she had received. I kept my eyes closed as her soapy hands danced over my back, removing knots and dirt in an equal manner. After finishing my back, she started washing my hair, her service already surpassing the little roleplay we had, and moving into a servant's role.

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 14%]

I said nothing, happy with the development. Who would have turned down a willing high-born maid, especially one so sexy? "It's done, my lord," she murmured obediently after finishing my back.

"Good, now, come wash my front," I said. She tried to reach in from the outside, but I gestured for her to step into the water with me. She was rather excited as she stepped in the water, barely able to maintain her fake demure expression under the rush of excitement. She tried to stay away, but I grabbed her hips and pulled her down, skewering her deeply, earning a gasp in return. She continued to wash my front while her hips twisted on my lap, filling my heart with desire.

She took her time washing my front, an enjoyable feeling from my end as well. Therefore, it was understandable that all too late I realized I was about to be late for my meeting. I could have still caught them if I stopped at that moment and rushed to the meeting spot, but that was an impossible decision to make when I was buried deep in Marianne, and enjoying her treatment. Additionally, leaving her like that would have been a thoughtless move.

However, I didn't have time to waste. "I'm about to be late for my meeting," I informed her.

"Okay," she murmured, but her expression fell immediately. That expression survived only for a moment, because the next one, after I wrapped my arms around her waist and stood up, keeping her impaled on my shaft. It was surprisingly difficult to balance myself in a slippery tub with a flailing girl on my lap, but agility was useful in many situations other than direct combat. I stepped out and walked toward the towels, each step pushing my shaft deeper into her. A little biomancy trick to enhance her pleasure, and when I arrived next to towels, she was already shuddering under a wave of orgasm, giving me the perfect opportunity to leave her without being too late.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 15%]

Of course, when she pressed her hands against the walls to balance herself on her trembling legs, her plump bottom was facing toward me, hitting me with a fresh temptation. Another biomancy trick made sure that her backdoor was lubricated and cleaned. A push later, I was in her tight grip, waves of pleasure filling both of us. "Gaius!" she moaned, not bothering to keep her voice down.

A slap making her skin ripple was her answer. And she must have liked the answer, because she replied with an even louder moan, enough to suppress the deafening sound of flesh hitting flesh. She was squeezed between the wall and my merciless assault, moaning louder with each push, helpless to resist against my merciless assault. The situation lasted several minutes longer than I had been planning for, but once gripped by Marianne's tight hold, I found it hard to leave just because Aviada and Helga might be annoyed a bit. They were big girls, they could handle waiting a few minutes without a major crisis.

The cry that escaped from her lips mixed with my grunt as I released myself into her, triggering another climax from her as well, which fortunately triggered another power-up from my end, which had been a nice surprise. I had just leveled up last night, and since I had been too busy I hadn't tracked the experience benefits of stealing Marianne in front of Cornelia.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 16%]

[+750 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Expert Biomancy, Advanced Elemental, Basic Meditation]

Biomancy was tempting, but I was going for an expedition, and additional magical damage wouldn't have been amiss. And the pure damage potential of elemental was simply leagues above both biomancy and arcana, especially considering the area-effect abilities.

With the skill selection complete, I carried Marianne to her bed in a bridal hold, gently tucking her into bed. She had just woken up, but the chain orgasms she suffered worked quite well to exhaust her despite that. I placed a gentle kiss on her lips.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 18%]

A three-point increase for a gentle kiss was a nice surprise, I decided as I quickly dressed. I still needed to meet with Aviada and Helga, after all...

[Level: 15 Experience: 105050 / 120000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 24

Precision: 12 Perception: 13

Agility: 14 Manipulation: 17

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 18

HP: 1020 / 1020 Mana: 1264 / 1320]

SKILLS

Master Melee [68/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Advanced Elemental [25/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Chapter Thirty

After finishing my preparations, including packing the food, dropping in to my secret stash to take my weapons, and preparing a fake medical notice for the library to explain my extended absence took several minutes, sneaking out of the school bounds while avoiding the guards consumed another few. After that, I dashed away at a pace that would have exhausted anyone without my impressive physical capabilities.

At first, the road was crowded, intersecting with many different patrols, and several other groups of students and the occasional lone wolf, all geared to the brim, most with at least one magical item strong enough for me to pick up from a distance. Surely, it was nice to be rich. I doubted my family could have afforded to gear me with a comparable item even if it wasn't for my supposed disabled status.

But several minutes later, something happened that distracted me from the situation at hand immediately. I stepped out of the range of the ancient wards and defensive enchantments that covered the school.

It was a weird sensation to be deprived of them completely, I realized, a nervous smile appearing on my face despite my best efforts. I lived under those impressive wards since my magical awareness first developed. Even the special training forests I trained in were under those wards, just partially deactivated to give students space to train. But they were ever present still, ready to snap in place if real danger arose.

For a while, I stood still, feeling my surroundings without the imposing presence of the wards, trying to understand the difference. Magic was much easier to detect for one, to a point that most of the tricks that I pulled back in the school would have been impossible to achieve outside with my limited capabilities.

With a sigh, I continued running at the same grueling pace, but kept one of my hands close to my sword at all times. The roads weren't without protection, but it was markedly different from the ancient wards, at best enough to delay a moderately strong attacker for a minute before collapsing.

It was also the reason why the occasional group of travelers looked at me with a mixture of shock and fascination. They all traveled in crowded groups, even occasional large caravans with crowded guard regiments. The fact that I was willing to travel alone was a statement itself just as much as my fresh look despite my aggressive pace of movement, which implied significant stats. Luckily, we were close to Silver Spires, so it wasn't noteworthy enough to raise an alarm.

After all, there were a lot of students over level ten in Silver Spires.

Several more minutes later I started to slow down, finally nearing the hidden glade I had assigned as a meeting location for both Aviada and Helga. I hadn't seen the location before, of course, as my previous condition wasn't exactly conducive for free exploration, but posing as a servant after I first discovered my powers was helpful in more ways than one, allowing me to pick up a lot of minor secrets. The location of the glade, where a few students were using as a semi-secret gathering location whenever they had a mission, was one of those secrets.

I was greeted by angry shouts as I got closer, and was about to rush forward until I could discern the lack of urgency behind them, and more importantly, realized that those belonged only to Aviada and Helga. With a sigh, I slowed down, trying to understand the reason for their argument before interjecting.

"... at least I'm not a meathead that believes that waving a metal club around is the solution for every problem," I heard Helga yelling in anger.

"Yeah, and living your life surrounded by dusty tomes is any better," came Aviada's reply just as quick.

"Of course it is, though it's not surprising in a barbarian's failing to notice that everything in our society works thanks to the magicians and their discoveries."

I couldn't help but sigh again when I realized the cause of the argument. Yes, the only reason I arranged them to arrive before I did was to see how they reacted to each other's presence without my involvement -though due to Marianne distracting me, I was even later than I had first planned- but finding them in a childish fight about the validity of their selected discipline was a bit surprising. At least, it wasn't as bad as it could have been.

I thought about interjecting myself into the situation, but then decided to check the situation first from an arcane mirror. They were standing far away from each other, their body language signifying no immediate breakout of action, so I decided to stand back and watch them, curious about how things would develop. Their childish bickering about the merits of their own specialization lasted for several more minutes until it ultimately faded into listless jabs.

I was preparing to walk toward them when Helga stage-whispered. "... at least I don't have to dress like a whore to get attention." And just like that, the embers of the argument were inflamed once more.

Aviada laughed in derision even as she dragged her hand over the sides of her body,

accentuating her curves. “Honey, it’s not shameful to tease others about what you have,” she said before grabbing her sword momentarily, her smirk getting a predatory twist, “especially if you can easily prevent people from touching.” I had to admit, Aviada had a point there, as her clothes were tastefully chosen, a tight pair of pants that looked elastic enough to allow a complete range of motion, and a leather top just as tight, but with a few top buttons released. Her armor was limited to her shins and her forearms to protect her extremities against faster creatures without limiting her movements. Her lack of armor was a good choice, because non-magical armor was effectively useless against any creature above class six. And as a bonus, it enhanced her sharp sexiness, which meshed perfectly with her personality.

Helga was no less beautiful in her own softer, curvier way, but in this situation, her modest manner of dressing worked against her. Unlike Aviada, she was wearing a loose set of robes made of pockets and satchels, and as shapely as a potato sack. She had reasons for dressing like that of course, mostly relating to her relative inability to protect herself, and more importantly, her lack of clout to get away if she actually resorted to doing so. Under those circumstances, the less attention she drew to her figure, the better.

Of course, oblivious from her sudden spike of anger, the logical reasoning behind her mode of the dress did little to blunt the impact of Aviada’s words. “Unlike you, I don’t need to impress any wandering eye with my body just to have a chance,” Helga answered slowly despite her rage. “He’s discerning enough to appreciate a timely reveal, unlike whatever pathetic brute you’re trying to string along by pushing your breasts on his face,” Helga answered.

“You wish you had these to push in your little nerdy boy toy’s face,” Aviada countered as she cupped her breasts, once again showing off her boisterous personality. Helga laughed, which was justifiable considering the pair she was hiding underneath her robes. I hid a couple of minutes more, curious how the discussion would develop, but the girls stayed stuck on sniping me, unaware that they were talking about the same person. I shook my head in amusement.

It was going to be interesting once I revealed myself.

“Finally,” shouted both girls at the same time when I stepped into the small hidden glade, both of their faces filled with relief as they stepped toward me with determined steps, only to come to a sudden stop as they realized that they weren’t the only one that was walking forward. “What!” they exclaimed at the same time.

“Hi, girls, sorry to keep you waiting, but I had a last-minute emergency,” I said with a smirk, uncaring of the sudden glares I was receiving. After pushing the situation to this point, I needed to own the situation thoroughly to succeed in my plan of introducing them to each other. “But

it's good to see you getting along well," I added even as I continued to walk.

The girls looked at each other in shock, but it was slowly replaced by the realization, which then left its place for anger. In a moment of a sudden feminine alliance, both girls turned to me, Aviada slowly pulling her sword while Helga raised her hands, glowing brightly. "Do you want to explain?" Aviada spoke calmly, though since she was waving her huge sword threateningly, the effect was somehow different.

"Explain what?" I said with a smile even as I walked toward them, ignoring their sudden fury. It was a tricky situation, but I was just as relaxed inside as I was displaying outside, because I had a plan before inviting them here together, and their reaction was well within my calculations. In the end, neither of them was seduced through my sweet words or lofty promises; they still had no true idea about my identity. Despite that, we were thoroughly acquainted with each other, thanks to my impressive martial abilities in Aviada's case, and my mental alacrity in Helga's case. Though my willingness to help them in extremely dangerous situations didn't hurt my seduction attempts.

I just needed to impress them with those abilities once more.

Initially, I had a very complicated fight choreography to ensure the girls wouldn't be able to bring their full power to the fight, which, at the time of making the plan, was still required to give the impression of effortless domination. However, last night's unexpected gains removed the need for those plans. First of all, I managed to gain two whole levels, with a fresh new branch of magic as a result. Also, I gained five points of charisma, which would be helpful in supporting my arguments. The pure power it would add to my spells was just a bonus.

"You need a lesson," Aviada spat out even as she charged forward, waving her sword swiftly.

I smiled. "You want to spar to warm up before we leave to hunt," I said even as I pulled out my sword, deflecting her attack with a swing that might have been mistaken for a casual move by someone that was inexperienced, but it required impeccable timing to deflect Aviada's superior weapon backed by her deadly strength. Though, it wasn't as strong as it could be, meaning Aviada was just trying to scare me -or just impress me through her seriousness considering her personality- rather than trying to kill me. I took a step forward, far faster than Aviada expected, and slapped her bottom.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

The notification was unfortunate, but on the plus side, it highlighted the absolute difference of

strength between us. But before I could enjoy my suppression, I felt a tickle in the back of my mind, warning me about an oncoming spell. I didn't bother to look at it, just waved my hand to force a thick wall of earth out of the ground, and heard the distinct sound of an arcane bolt fizzling out, mixed with Helga's gasp. I took a step back from Aviada, ducking under her wild swing, which was much faster than the previous one, and spoke. "You girls want to have a spar together, huh? That works for me."

I took a few steps back while the girls looked at me with a thoughtful expression, their earlier anger melted away after my show. Their sudden change of heart wasn't surprising. In the end, in a world filled with monsters, there was nothing more attractive than power, and I had just displayed overwhelming ability simultaneously in their preferred area of expertise. Thanks to my rapid rise of power, I was good enough to contend against the top students of each branch, and with my full range of abilities in play, I was willing to bet that I could defeat the weaker half of the professors even. Also, with twenty-four points in charisma, I exuded a rather impressive aura, which didn't hurt.

The girls stood still for a moment, their eyes locked as they examined each other. While my impressive range of abilities didn't include mind-reading, I didn't need it to understand that they were trying to assess each other to see whether the other would leave after the reveal, solving the problem neatly. But from their increasing frowns, they slowly realized neither of them had the intention of removing their hat from the ring.

I decided to interject when I saw Aviada raising her sword, this time pointing towards Helga. "Let's start the spar," I said as I flicked a small stone at Aviada, which bounced off of her head. She looked at me with a frown. I made sure to look intimidating, signaling to her that hurting Helga was not a preferred way of solving the issue. "Come on girls, I'm waiting," I said.

Aviada didn't need more prompting and rushed towards my side, this time her movements backed by her full lethality. Unfortunately for her, by now, even her best was not enough to get anything more than a semi-serious interest from my side. But despite that, I made sure to smile at her with my seduction mode turned on, making sure that Helga saw it as well. Helga started peppering me with arcane bolts, forcing me to use my other hand to conjure shields to defend against her, splitting my attention.

Their teamwork was atrocious, of course. Aviada disregarded Helga's assault, and Helga was too focused on scoring hits of her own to use her magic in terms of utility, which would have blocked my options to deal with Aviada, turning her into a true threat. I was tempted to step closer to Aviada, tricking Helga into scoring some friendly-fire, but their relationship was bad enough before adding a wild variable. Instead, I started attacking Helga with my own magic,

sending waves made of elemental wind, individually weak, but quick enough to force her to take a step. After repeating it a couple of times, she realized my point, and copied my assault with arcane energy, limiting my range of movement, which in turn gave Aviada a strong advantage. There was still a gap between us, but without a free movement area to display my superior mobility, I actually had to try to keep her at bay.

Her sword was no joke.

The spar was fun, and if we weren't supposed to spend the rest of the day hunting dangerous animals in a dangerous location, I would have extended the spar until the girls collapsed in exhaustion. Unfortunately, leveling them up was more important than teaching them about coordinated combat. So, without a warning, I intensified my assault and sent several chains of earth at Helga. She was late in noticing them, and ended tangled up on the ground, where a few more chains pinned her in place. And without her assault, I was once again free to display my superior mobility. I stepped inside Aviada's guard, easily blocking her last-minute kneeling attempt to wrap my hands around her wrists, forcing her to drop the sword with a twist. After that, before she could adapt to the sudden change of combat, I pinned her in a hold impossible for her to escape from without dislocating her arm.

[+1 Melee]

[+3 Elemental]

[-5 HP]

[-47 Mana]

"It was a nice spar," I said even as I tightened my hold over her, which allowed me to free one of my hands. I first waved that hand to cast another earth spell, which created a moving platform under Helga to bring her closer, still bound in chains. While Helga closed in, I grabbed Aviada's hair and pulled back hard enough to force a gasp out of her, which I muffled in short order with a heated kiss, just to drive in my dominance further.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 47%]

When Helga arrived at my side, I pulled out a rope from my small bag and tied Aviada's hands behind her, still careful to avoid using magic on her. When I dispelled the chains on Helga, I was expecting her to struggle against the kiss, or at least play hard to get, so the searing kiss she initiated was a surprise. A welcome one, though it was only partially about the pleasure itself, which was clear from the victorious glare Helga sent to Aviada.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 46%]

[Achievement: Subdue the Storm. Decisively deter the following argument for your own benefit after being caught. +2000 Experience, +2 Agility, +2 Manipulation]

Helga's progress was nice, but not as nice as receiving yet another achievement, pushing my stats even higher. At this point, my stat point development reached to an unheard of before point, well past unbelievable and approaching ridiculous. Not that I was complaining. In a world where everything was trying to kill humans, extra power was never something to be scuffed at.

"So, girls," I said even as I freed Aviada from her ropes with a knife throw. "Are you ready for our adventure..."

[Level: 15 Experience: 107050 / 120000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 24

Precision: 12 Perception: 13

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 19

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 18

HP: 1050 / 1050 Mana: 1167 / 1350]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [69/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Advanced Elemental [28/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

Chapter Thirty-One

“Are we all ready to go,” I asked even as I gave my hand to Aviada to help her stand up, but she chose to ignore it in favor of standing up herself. Despite her overt display of dissatisfaction, it was clear that she was impressed with my confident display. My earlier martial display was enough to keep her in the run. From the frown that appeared on her face when her gaze slid to Helga, I could see that she wasn’t happy with me having multiple partners, but she was willing to play along.

Helga’s situation wasn’t too different, a bit worse, even. Unlike Aviada, proving my combat superiority hadn’t been enough to remove all of her immediate concerns, but since she was still with us, the promise of leveling assistance was clearly enough to keep her in place. And that was enough, because it gave me the whole day to work on them.

Both girls nodded after a bit of delay, and we started to walk deeper into the wilderness, the wards protecting the area weakening with each step. It was risky to step outside the protection of the wards, of course, but the danger was the whole point of our trip.

“Can you pass me your sword?” I asked Aviada without even bothering to look at her as I felt the wards weakening even more. It was a strategic request, as while I trusted myself enough to handle most of the dangers around, especially since the school tried to hunt any creature above level ten as much as possible. It was impossible to exterminate them even in the limited area surrounding the school, but still, it made a good area to hunt in a small group. For most of the other areas, anything smaller than a full squad would have been treated as total insanity, but around the school, it was just extremely risky.

She growled a bit instead of replying. “Sword,” I repeated, this time turning just enough to catch her gaze. It was a slightly belligerent approach, but at this point, I had a good understanding of Aviada’s personality, and being kind all the time would have damaged our relationship even more. After all, she was a girl that surrendered her virginity only through a physical struggle despite her clear desire.

“Why don’t you try taking it yourself,” Aviada answered with a smirk. “Do you think you can handle it?”

I kept eye contact as I brought my hand toward the hilt of her sword, acting like I took the bait. Her smirk widened just as my fingers were about to brush the ornate hilt of her sword. There was no doubt that a magical sword like that had a lot of protective enchantments that prevented it from being used without its owner’s permission. The effect was likely something

more humiliating than deadly since Aviada was willing to use the enchantment as a prank, but considering her rather vicious personality, it was hard to rule out extreme pain from the likely effects.

She seemed certain that her simplistic prank was successful, which was why she failed to react in time when I grabbed her shoulder instead and pushed her against a stone. She hit it with a nice thud, though the pain of it didn't even register to her. "Nice try," I murmured into her ear, a move that turned the situation into a tight embrace. "Too bad that you are too obvious with your intentions."

"So, what of it?" Aviada whispered back just as satisfied. "You still need my sword, and I'm not inclined to allow you to use it without a bit of pain." I pulled back enough to stand face to face, keeping my expression clear. "What are you going to do about it, torture me?" she added mockingly.

"No, no... That would be too much," I said in an exaggerated calmness. "Regardless, you seem to need a lesson to adjust your behavior." Before she could say anything, I waved my hand, and four thick manacles pushed out of the stone, wrapping around her extremities, pinning her in place before she could react. I made sure to make them extra strong, enough to keep them in place even if Aviada received another boost like the last time. She was close to reaching fifty percent in the companion system, which I suspected to be another point of explosion.

[-23 Mana]

She was caught flatfooted, not expecting me to use magic against her. "That's cheating," she gasped in shock and dissatisfaction.

"And using the protective enchantments of your sword in our little game isn't?" I countered, and then watched in satisfaction as her expression went alight with realization, followed by a blush. I continued with an amused calmness. "Since you are the first one to break our little rule, there is no harm in using a dash of magic to teach you your place, right?"

She nodded automatically before she could catch herself, which, upon realization, made her blush even more. "So, what are you going to do, torture me?" she spat out challengingly, though she seemed excited at the possibility.

"Of course not," I answered, dismissing the prospect with a careless wave of my hand. "I have other things in mind..." I turned to Helga, and made eye contact. "Could you come here, sweetheart," I said, and Helga followed the order despite the doubt on her face. I caressed my

hand over Aviada's skin once more, and put a spell up of my own devising, one that was a curious mixture of arcana and biomancy. Aviada failed to notice its initial presence since she was distracted with jealousy as Helga walked closer, unhappy with the sudden third party intrusion to our little game. Her jealousy rose even further when I pulled Helga into a sudden embrace and stole her lips with a kiss, though when I pulled back, Aviada wasn't the only one that was looking annoyed. Helga clearly didn't appreciate being used as a tool to annoy someone else.

I pressed my finger on Helga's lips to prevent her outburst even as I turned to Aviada once more. "Feel free to beg for mercy when you've changed your mind about giving me permission," I said, then held Helga's hand and walked to the other side of the stone, just out of Aviada's line of sight while ensuring she would be able to hear everything. Helga followed, but dragged her feet to display her dissatisfaction.

She spoke only after we reached the other side of the stone, and was thoughtful enough to cast a spell to block Aviada from hearing our discussion. "If you think I'm going to be your toy just so you can-" she started, but I pressed my finger to her lips, cutting her off once more.

"Do you want to see a brand new spell that uses multiple branches of magical theories," I said, not bothering to hide the victorious smirk. She looked annoyed, but this time, I knew it was aimed at herself rather than me. The reason, the nod that followed showing her interest. After all, it was far from the worst indignity she suffered on the path of magic. "Watch carefully," I said even as I raised my hands, and started to build the main part of the spell whose receiver part already placed on Aviada, biomancy and arcana energies melting together in a complicated pattern. "I use the arcana to decode the sensations of the target and for transfer, and biomancy is perfect for replication..."

[-45 Mana]

The spell wasn't exactly cheap even with my large mana pool, but the way Helga's expression brightened as she examined the complexity was enough reward, not that I was unhappy with the resulting notification.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 47%]

"The way the main spell matrix is bridged to its connecting parts is just fascinating..." Helga murmured before launching a complicated analysis of the structure, once again showing the sharpness of her mind. Just by listening to her for a few seconds, I already came up with a solution to certain aspects that stumped me before. However, while working together to

improve the structure of the spell was tempting, I had more important things to work on, so I leaned forward, cutting her words off with a searing kiss, using the closeness to merge the spell with her.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

Helga just gasped in pleasure, not doing anything to counter the spell from affecting her. Why would she, when she knew that it had no impact on her side? Aviada, on the other hand, gasped in shock at the sensation of a kiss was felt on her lips despite not having anyone around. "Caesar," she called out in anger.

I waved my hand to dispel the silencing spell and answered. "Yes, honey, do you need anything?" Even as I answered, my hands were wandering over Helga's body hungrily, caressing Helga's body aggressively.

"You're playing a dangerous game!" she exclaimed, but it was an empty threat. After all, she was firmly locked in place with nowhere to go.

"You can just admit defeat, and I'll let you go," I reminded her. "You just need to say that you're too weak to handle a simple magic trick."

Aviada's gasp of shock was almost as arousing as Helga's sudden expression of arousal. Not surprising, considering the discussion of superiority between magic and martial abilities had been the biggest source of argument between them discounting me. Always opportunistic, I used Helga's prideful distraction to untie her robes, which she failed to react to until a stiff breeze made her shiver. "We're out in the open," she murmured in shock.

"Yes, we are," I answered, but my fingers continued their holy task of divesting her from her bulky robe before repeating the task with her blouse, removing both of them smoothly despite Helga's attempts to ensure otherwise, leaving just a skirt and a bra on her body. When her bra came into view, a smile appeared on my face, because it was wildly different from the bulky ugliness she had been wearing the last time. It was still made from the same fabric, and its edges were a bit uneven to show that the work was probably done by her hand, not that it was even remotely as important as the generous amount of cleavage that appeared as a result, barely held back by the structurally-compromised bra.

"But anyone can come and see us," Helga gasped in shock, but I was familiar with her expression enough to catch the excitement underneath. I tried to reach her back, but she pressed it against the rock, cutting off my way to remove her bra. That would not do, I decided,

so even as I leaned to press my lips to her neck for distraction, my hand slid under her skirt, and pushed her panties aside. Helga's gasp of shock arrived just as my fingers got the first taste of her wetness, which was immediately followed by a gasp of arousal as my fingers started violating her core. She still tried to complain, of course, but conveniently, my lips were located in the perfect spot, making the task of silencing her simple and enjoyable at the same time.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 48%]

Under the combined assault of my lips and my hands, it didn't take long for Helga to abandon her attempts to play coy and wrap her arms around my body in a passionate hug instead, clearly enjoying the feeling of my muscles over her half-naked body, forgetting that by moving forward, she once again exposed the hook of her bra for me, which I unlocked with a flick of my fingers before trailing down her spine, enjoying her shiver.

All the while, occasional gasps were coming from the other side of the rock, marking Aviada's weakening capabilities to keep her reactions suppressed, but I just took a note of it before focusing back on Helga. Aviada still needed some time before she reached the point I wanted.

Helga let out a gasp when I pulled away from her lips as well, but unlike Aviada's, it was a sharp, loud one that was filled with need and desire. Such cries no doubt damaged Aviada's will even more, not letting her forget the source of the erotic sensation that was invading her body.

Her enthusiastic assistance deserved a reward, so I started moving down, covering the trail with kisses. I took a small break around her chest, of course, enjoying her generous bosom through pressing my lips against her teats aggressively. I would have liked to add my hands to the treatment. Unfortunately, both of them were busy, one with patrolling the sensitive points around her knob, the other was furiously removing the complicated knots of her skirt so that the area was prepared before my arrival.

Soon, her skirt met with the ground, and I was about to take this as the signal to restart my journey when I felt her hands on the back of my head, pushing me even tighter against her bosom. "Keep sucking," she shouted. She clearly tried to make it an order, but made a beginner mistake, hoping to compensate for the lack of authority with a louder voice. Also, I wouldn't be surprised if she was being extra loud just to annoy Aviada.

I was unable to answer because I was silenced, not that I was unhappy with the method she chose to do so. Any excuse to get a taste of her delicious breasts was welcome. Of course, just because my lips were busy with her bosom didn't mean the rest of my body stopped in their tasks. My hand that was previously busy getting rid of her skirt grabbed the edge of her panties

instead, intending to pull them down.

My hungry touch aiming to divest her of the last piece of her clothes reminded Helga of the fact that we were in an open field where anyone could stumble into. She grabbed the other side of her panties panickedly, but by doing so, she had forgot one important fact. In her efforts to make her underwear sexier, she had cut a lot of fabric from them, weakening it greatly. So, when she tried to pull it from the other side, it ended with her panties tearing into two pieces, the sound of ripping echoing in the opening.

Her shy yelp was amusing, but as her arms weakened, I decided to use the opportunity to travel down until I was down to her slit. Only then, did I pull away the hand that was continuously circling above her entrance to keep pushing her closer to orgasm. Just before I dived down to her slit, I raised my gaze up, catching the sudden shyness that colored her face.

At that moment, I wanted to push Helga on the ground and take her mercilessly until she climaxed again and again. Unfortunately, doing so would have ruined the punishment Aviada was going through. I didn't want her to climax. Instead, I wanted her to suffer on the edge for a while without the relief of a climax.

A shiver went through Helga's body as I leaned forward, which made her thighs jiggle attractively. I waited until my breath fell on her shivering lips before turning my head slightly and leaving a lingering kiss on her inner thigh, finishing with a soft nibble. Her legs trembled in anticipation, threatening her balance enough that she had to lean against the rock to keep herself upright, the same rock that had Aviada chained on the other side...

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 49%]

Her pleasure was not hard to read, but approval from the system was always welcome, especially when that approval also informed me that Helga was about to cross the likely point for the second milestone, making me curious about its benefits, both to me and to Helga. Wanting to push further, my tongue started to brush Helga's sensitive spot with increased intensity, enjoying her moans as she drove closer to her climax, but then a second set of cries joined her moans, reminding me of our remote companion.

"So, Aviada, are you ready to submit?" I asked.

"Never," she answered in a raspy cry, showing her mind was occupied by the impending climax. A little frown appeared on my face as I waved my hand, and the main structure of the spell appeared in my sight. Continuing to service Helga while manipulating the spell was difficult, but

not impossible. My left hand took the spot that was emptied by my lips and continued Helga's treatment, while my right hand was busy modifying the spell. Occasionally, I shifted my attention to Helga's face, enjoying the way pleasure battled with fascination as she watched the number of modifications I was making to the spell.

Under the circumstances, it was only a matter of time until Helga exploded with a climax, which happened a minute later, just as I completed the changes to the spell's structure.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 50% - Second Stage Completed +10000 Exp]

[New Perk: Mana Regeneration]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the third stage]

A wave of joy covered her body as she climaxed, but I was experienced enough with her orgasm face enough to understand it wasn't just that. "I'm guessing you received a boost to your charisma," I asked in a whisper.

"How?" Helga managed to mutter in shock.

I didn't know whether she was asking about the achievement she had just received, or how I knew she received it the moment she did, but before she could clarify, another shout reached our ears.

"What the hell!" Aviada shouted. "Why did it suddenly stop, I was just about to..." she continued before coming to a sudden stop. I smirked, happy to see that the modification of the spell worked just as intended.

"We'll talk about the achievement in more detail later," I told Helga. She nodded, still too distracted by her climax and her achievement as I grabbed her hand and dragged her along while I moved towards the other side of the rock... I was curious how Aviada had reacted to my little trick, and whether Helga would realize that she was still naked...

[Level: 15 Experience: 117050 / 120000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 24

Precision: 12 Perception: 13

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 19

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 18

HP: 1050 / 1050 Mana: 1141 / 1350]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [69/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Advanced Elemental [28/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Two

I couldn't help but to feel excited as I walked around the rock and stepped into Aviada's line of sight with a naked Helga behind me, who managed to miss the fact that she was still naked while still trying to process her last orgasm. Aviada's face was a work of art, still carrying hints of the pleasure that invaded her body, but the frustration was clear on her face.

"Bastard," she growled the moment she noticed me, but despite her disrespect and anger, I was familiar with her enough to see her respect underneath. My forceful attitude was clearly working wonders on her. Things changed a bit when Aviada's gaze turned to Helga, beset with jealousy. "And the whore is here as well," she said with an angry smirk, trying to vent her frustrations on her instead.

Helga stiffened at the insult, her shoulders slouched in a habit born from endless bullying. The insult was dissatisfying enough, as I worked too hard on Helga's self-confidence to appreciate it being undermined once more, but the insult reminded Helga about her nakedness, and she wrapped her arm around her chest in an effort to hide her amazing breasts, still carrying the marks of my hungry treatment. She would have dashed away if it wasn't for my hand around her wrist.

I let her hide behind me even as I took a step forward, a disapproving expression on my face. "That wasn't nice," I said, but my tone wasn't angry. I tried to replicate the tone of a nice but disappointed teacher. Seeing Aviada's anger flare, I smirked inwardly. I used that tone, because, for all its lack of obvious display of power, it came with an implied superiority. Aviada, despite her spectacular defeat, still saw the situation between us as on the same tier, so she didn't appreciate the assumption.

"So what if it wasn't nice," Aviada spat with renewed anger. "What are you going to do about it!"

Aviada was a sharp woman just like a sword. However, just like a sword, her mind worked straight and on right angles, so it took less than a second for me to decipher why she turned her anger from Helga to me. She was trying to goad me into taking a direct action in anger, which would put me in the same position as her. Instead of giving her what she wanted, I sighed deeply. "I'm disappointed, Aviada. I would have expected you to act more mature, but it seems that you haven't learned your lesson yet. It seems that I need to punish you more.

She smirked at the mention of punishment, watching me in anticipation as I waved my hand, and a chair formed out of the ground, giving me a comfortable seat. Aviada looked confused

until I flexed my magic and her chains suddenly lengthened. Not expecting to lose her support, she failed to resist as she fell forward, and found herself on my lap. “No,” she said in dread as I pulled her pants down, but I disregarded her complaint to land a spank on her bottom. Her shocked cry was a melody to my ears.

“How,” she murmured in shock. It was understandable, considering her level, I shouldn’t be able to hurt her unless I hit her hard enough to actually inflict damage, and my lazy spank was far from doing that. However, what she didn’t count on was my biomancy skill, modifying her pain resistance temporarily. Aviada lacked the magical ability to notice, but from the soft hum she made, it was clear that it didn’t slip Helga’s attention.

I ignored the question and spanked her bottom once more, enjoying the blush that was spreading to her naked bottom. Aviada spewed an endless string of threats, each more visceral than the last, but I ignored them in favor of covering her bottom with endless spanks. Five at first, then ten... Soon it reached thirty with no hint of stopping just like Aviada’s insults, but unlike her insults, my spanks didn’t lose the power behind them. On the contrary, each hurt more than the last as Helga examined the spell carefully, occasionally whispering her findings into my ear and allowing me to make changes to increase its effectiveness even further.

She was truly a genius. Converting her to my side was a true coup. She stood behind me, leaning forward to press her breasts against my neck, as if to remind me that she wasn’t just a genius but a true display of sexiness, which was enhanced by her recent charisma boost. From the impressive radiance she displayed, I guessed that she received three points to her charisma, maybe even more.

Unfortunately, I had other things to finish before I could taste her new state. With a renewed enthusiasm, I landed several more spanks on Aviada’s bottom, whose insults and arguments were fading rather rapidly after the last modification. “How long are you going to continue?” she murmured.

“Until I feel that you’ve learned your lesson,” I said even as I landed yet another slap to her crimson bottom. “So, for a start, definitely not while you continue to insult me.”

“Sorry,” Aviada murmured from her squeezed teeth, and when my hand landed on her ass once more, she stayed silent.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 48%]

I found it interesting that the companion tracker chose that moment to move forward, but it,

more than anything, showed that Aviada was getting off from being dominated. The sudden wetness of her core the moment she apologized was another piece of evidence to support that. Curious, I thought. "Excellent, ten more and we're done," I said as she shuffled on my lap, but said nothing.

I silently counted ten more spanks, but rather than stopping, I continued. "Hey, you promised only ten!" Aviada exclaimed when I was around fifteenth.

"Yes, but how do I know whether we reached ten?" I said in an exaggerated tone even as I slapped her bottom once more.

She squeezed her teeth so hard that it was audible, but still, when my hand landed on her bottom once more, her mouth parted open. "One," she said obediently. I smirked as I slapped her bottom, but this time, instead of pulling it back immediately, I let my fingers momentarily dip into her wetness to reward her obedience, which returned me a tremble in her tone as she counted the second spank. My fingers slipped down, the duration increasing with each spank, so when we reached the end, Aviada was panting in arousal. "Ten," she said with a sigh, followed by a moan as my fingers danced on her entrance.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 49%]

Aviada continued to lay on my lap obediently, enjoying my caresses while I used biomancy to cure her bottom and dispelling the pain sensitivity spell at the same time. In that moment of laziness, I couldn't help but think about the implications of the companion system, progressing only in certain situations. With Aviada, there was almost always a domination aspect on the line. Curious, I decided to test that.

With a flick of my wrist, the chains that were holding Aviada's arms and legs disappeared, but before she could react, I grabbed her arms, locking them behind her just like I had done before, easily maintaining the grip despite her struggling, much weaker than she was capable of. Even if she had used her full strength -which was higher than mine- I would be able to maintain it thanks to my leverage. I lifted her to slide under her, and took a position behind her, her bottom rising instantly.

My other hand was empty, but it was easier to cast a spell to free my shaft from the confines of my pants while using my hand to caress her entrance. However, my gaze slipped to Helga, who was looking at me with a frown, and no small amount of jealousy. I caught her gaze, and gestured for her to sit, giving a reassuring smile when her expression gained a questioning quality.

She wasn't entirely reassured, but she still followed my order to take a seat. Meanwhile, I pushed my hips forward, pressing my shaft against Aviada's entrance. "You handled your punishment well, and it's time for a reward," I said, chuckling softly when she pushed her hips back enthusiastically. I didn't let her succeed, pulling my hips back once the crown dipped deeper into her wetness, giving her a small taste to whet her appetite. "Don't be impatient," I added, punctuated by a spank to her bottom. "There's just one thing left to do. You need to apologize to Helga for insulting her earlier. It wasn't fair for you to call her names."

Aviada twisted her neck to catch my gaze, her astonished look replicated by Helga, who was frozen in her seat. Despite their questioning gaze, I just shrugged and stayed silent, waiting for Aviada to speak, which didn't take long. "If you think I'll apologize to that little slut-" she started, only to receive a stiff spank to her bottom, which, without the pain enhancement spell, caused an ignoble amount of pain, only the past memories keeping her silent. Which was okay, because the spank was nothing more than to cover for the two spells I applied to her. One to clean and lubricate her backdoor for my invasion, and another for her punishment.

"Either that, or I'll punish you for real," I said even as my empty hand moved up and grabbed her hair.

"Do your worst," Aviada spat out with a satisfied smirk, with the full confidence that she would enjoy the punishment as much as I would.

That was where she was wrong, but it wouldn't be apparent at the beginning, at least to her. Helga had a sufficient magical aptitude to understand the aim of the second spell, so she just smirked victoriously as I leaned forward, pushing the tip of my shaft into her puckered hole. Despite the lubrication, her bottom wrapped around my shaft tightly, an effect that was enhanced further by her endless exercising. Her ass was perfection itself, and the prospect of ruining it gave me a fascinating pleasure.

I attacked her hole mercilessly, impaling repeatedly without waiting for her to adapt, which would have been a disaster to someone weaker, but a high HP pool had usefulness above and beyond killing monsters. Aviada cried, but it wasn't filled with pain but pleasure instead, my reckless assault pushing her closer to her climax bit by bit, but my and Helga's smirks got wider the closer Aviada came to a climax, who was too distracted by her own pleasure to notice it...

A minute later, the reason for it became apparent for her as well. Aviada moaned loudly, her back curling in a beautiful arc in preparation of an explosive orgasm, only to stop confusedly even as I continued to slam her tight hole — which wasn't as tight anymore. "Is there a problem, Aviada," I said even as I tightened my grip on her wrists, which proved to be a good

idea because she started struggling a moment later, which proved to be ultimately fruitless.

“I’ll kill you!” she answered, her angry cry mixing with the sound of flesh hitting flesh. “I’ll make you pay!”

“Come on, sweetie,” I said even as I increased the pace of my assault, which caused the build-up of another climax thanks to her already charged body, but rather than mollifying her, it only made her struggle harder because of the ending of the process familiar. Helga was watching the situation silently, but from the way she was rubbing her legs together, she was clearly enjoying the sight. Not surprising, considering after all those times she had to suffer under her smug noble peers, it was exhilarating for her to be the observer for once.

I decided her attitude deserved a reward. Casting the spell to transfer the sensation between two people was a complicated affair, impossible to do while I was struggling to pin Aviada motionless while also pushing her toward another climax. Reversing an already existing spell, however, was much more trivial. I waved my hand, and Helga’s eyes popped open and a moan of shock was ripped from her mouth. She understood what I was trying to do, of course, but my instantaneous casting didn’t give her a chance to react before the ghost of my anal assault started invading her body.

Helga moaned loudly, enough to break Aviada’s annoyance, who understood that Helga was experiencing the same phenomenon she had gone through minutes ago. Their moans mixed together as they raced towards orgasm, but unlike Helga’s, Aviada’s were tinged with frustration, which was justified, because when Helga’s buildup exploded into an explosive climax, Aviada’s silently disappeared once more, leaving only frustration behind.

I doubted Helga’s explosive squirting covering her face helped.

What surprised me was the notification that appeared.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Duration, 8 hours]

The sudden boost in my mana regeneration surprised me in the best of ways. The reason for it was obvious, considering it only happened after I reached fifty percent in Helga’s companion progress, and it triggered only when she climaxed. But the reason for it wasn’t as important as the effect itself. Seeing my mana steadily climbing up was a benefit impossible to overstate, giving me the solution for the biggest mage problem. Combine that with my already huge mana capacity, and my melee abilities to reduce consumption rate, it gave me unparalleled survivability on the field.

The unexpected bonus gave me a renewed desire even though I was yet to discover the exact conditions of triggering the perk, or what a perk was. The name was obvious, but I had never heard a mention of them on the books I had read, or any of the doctors that tended to me when I was young had never mentioned something like that either. Regardless, it was another tool in my growing arsenal, even though it came with certain obligations like protecting the source of it.

Like hanging around a sexy and voluptuous blonde who was as smart as she was sexy was a great chore.

I decided to focus on that particular finding later on and shifted my focus back to the disobedient brunette who was doing her best to keep herself from moaning—and failing horribly. We had to repeat the cycle of orgasm denial twice more before Aviada opened her mouth for anything other than insults or frustrated moans. “I’m ... sorry,” she whispered, impossible to hear without my enhanced senses.

“Can you repeat that louder?” I asked casually even as I picked up the pace, pushing her toward yet another orgasm, which was getting easier and easier as her frustration built up.

“I’m sorry,” she repeated petulantly, which put a smirk on my face and astonishment on Helga’s, who was clearly enjoying the superior position she had, though the several orgasms she had experienced was definitely not hurting.

“Not a bad start, but after all the time it took, I’m not going to accept it without you proving your sincerity.” She turned to me with a questioning gaze. “Helga, open your legs,” I ordered even as I pushed Aviada’s head in further, my painful grip on her hair coming handy.

Helga followed my command, failing to hide her excitement at the idea. However, Aviada was a completely different issue. “Never,” she spat out as she struggled to get back.

“Well, your call,” I said even as I picked up speed, steadily pushing her toward another vanishing climax. She turned to me, her eyes filled with a begging expression, but I continued explaining, the amusement in my expression contrasting greatly with my exaggerated clinical tone. “You brought it on yourself by trying to mess with me close to such dangerous territory,” I said, neatly ignoring the fact that my so-called punishment was much more distracting than her little prank.

She managed to maintain eye contact as her orgasm drove nearer, her disobedience melting with each second until there was nothing more than a simple flicker in her eyes. But despite her

best effort, she wasn't able to hide the enjoyment she was getting from my total domination. After all, she believed in strength, and what she was experiencing was the purest reflection of it.

Without saying anything else, she turned around and her head disappeared between Helga's legs, whose expression brightened in shock and desire. It was nice, but not as nice as the notification I had just received.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 50% - Second Stage Completed +10000 Exp]

[New Perk: Mana Regeneration]

[Achievement: Tough Teacher. Be firm in educating a wayward companion. +1000 Experience, +2 Wisdom]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Expert Biomancy, Expert Elemental, Advanced Speech]

Gaining another boost to my power was always welcome. As much as having a better aptitude on healing spells or better speech ability would have come useful, I was about to launch a long hunting trip, making elemental the best choice. The fact that it would increase my hand against Cornelia during my evening meeting was only a bonus.

But leveling up wasn't the greatest benefit of the activity. No, that honor belonged to Aviada's companion progress. The fact that it was completed after forcibly bending Aviada to my will told me a lot about her personality. Still, instead of spending time trying to assess the implications of that particular discovery, I turned my attention to the spell that was preventing Aviada from reaching completion, and dispelled it with a wave of my hand. A few pushes later, Aviada started trembling with an intensity I had never seen before, threatening to send her to the land of unconsciousness. Thankfully, her endurance was high enough to maintain her consciousness under the rush.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 2. Duration, 8 hours]

The confirmation about the perk system was a nice benefit, and that the effect was stacking was the amazing bonus that came with it. It meant that I could experiment with my elemental abilities freely during the hunt without thinking about saving mana for a dangerous situation, because with the bonus, it would only take thirty minutes for my mana pool to refresh completely, a great improvement to several hours of meditation or sleep like it would normally

take.

I pulled out of Aviada and let her collapse on the ground. She needed to catch her breath before we could start hunting. With a sudden instinct, I reached out and pulled Aviada's sword from its sheath, stiffening myself for the impact, but it didn't come. Yet another evidence of my total domination.

I pushed the sword in the nearby rock, impressed by the effortless manner it disappeared before turning my attention to Helga. Since Aviada was going to need several minutes to gather herself, why shouldn't I entertain myself in the meanwhile...

[Level: 16 Experience: 128050 / 136000

Strength: 17 Charisma: 24

Precision: 12 Perception: 13

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 19

Speed: 12 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 20

HP: 1120 / 1120 Mana: 1345 / 1472]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [69/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Expert Elemental [28/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Three

Half an hour after Aviada's punishment, our little group was once again fully dressed and was about to finally step out of the cover of the wards that protected the main trade routes and their immediate surroundings. We walked silently, discounting my cheerful whistling holding an upbeat tone. Meanwhile, girls were busy trying to rein in their blushes, their eyes firmly on the ground.

Not a surprising reaction after our impromptu threesome.

Teasing them on the subject was tempting, but unfortunately, I had a more important task, getting used to Aviada's magical sword. I held it tightly, occasionally slashing a nearby tree or stone, watching the target slashed neatly into two pieces. I realized that the last time I had used, I failed to appreciate the true magnificence of the sword, only my enhanced melee skill and increased magical abilities allowing me to understand its true value. No wonder those assholes tried to assassinate her for it.

Luckily, I had a much better way of staking my ownership.

"Are we ready, girls?" I asked when I saw a huge dire wolf dashing toward us, marking the start of the combat. It was merely a class four creature, not even enough to alarm, but its presence showed that we finally stepped into the wildlands, an area most wouldn't wander without at least a full squad of experienced soldiers. It would take only a slash of my sword to kill it, but I chose to wave my hand instead, and a spike suddenly pushed out of the ground far faster than it could react, nailing it in the stomach.

[+2 Elemental]

[-14 Mana]

"Let's move," I said when the girls looked at me questioningly. I understood their rationale, as using magic was rather wasteful from their perspective. However, not only they had no idea about the true size of my mana pool, but also my extreme rate of regeneration thanks to the perks I had gained through the companion system. When I ignored their wordless concern, the girls didn't push for more. Aviada because she didn't know much about magic and assumed it was normal for a high-level mage, while Helga was too cagey to raise her concerns in the hearing range of someone else, even that someone was Aviada.

"Aren't you going to kill it?" Aviada said questioningly when she saw me walking away from the

creature, who was experiencing my extreme leveling method for the first time.

“Nope, last hits are for you girls,” I answered with a shrug, earning a shocked glance from Aviada. After all, no matter the situation, the experience was a precious commodity to people that were yet to finish their development. Otherwise, why would Aviada spend her nights killing an endless number of level zero creatures just for scraps? “But take turns,” I added at the last moment. When the next creature appeared, Aviada was about to dash forward when I gestured her to wait. “You and Helga are going to stay in defensive just in case something I can’t handle appears,” I reminded her, a direction she followed only after I conjured a small chain of earth, reminding her the last time she chose to disregard my orders.

Just as I predicted, the presence of the wolf had marked the beginning of an intense skirmish. More creatures appeared, usually below class five, but occasionally close to class ten, but regardless, they took only one move, be it a slash of my borrowed sword, or another elemental trick. It was a tough two hours, enough to leave anyone else below level twenty panting in exhaustion, but I was a unique case.

[+11 Elemental]

[+3 Melee]

[-2450 Mana]

It was nice to see my skills increasing rapidly. Of course, spending almost double of my mana pool would have been an extravagant waste if it wasn’t for my enhanced regeneration, allowing me to keep my mana pool almost completely full despite the constant rain of assault. I was planning to continue, when I came across a small cliff. It was about fifty meters tall, and it gave a rather impressive view of the area. “Let’s take a breather,” I said as I started climbing the small path upward.

“Is this a good idea?” Aviada asked. “Won’t we get bogged down if they notice us here,” she added.

“Of course, that’s the idea,” I answered with a smirk, and the moment I arrived at the top, I used my newly developed elemental skills to modify the cliff generously, enough to turn it into a small fort with thick walls and several arcana runes already carved ready to be powered. Another flex of mana, and they were ready to anchor the wards.

[+1 Elemental]

[-240 Mana]

“I want you girls to stay in defensive. Helga, start carving additional wards in case we have a breach. Aviada, you are responsible for watching the sky and the cliff, just in case a creature manages to slip the wards.” It wasn’t a likely outcome, but it wasn’t impossible either. Both girls nodded, and they started moving rapidly, though even my latest disciplining session was unable to prevent them from snarking at each other. I let it continue, believing it was better for them to get it out of their systems rather than keeping it away from my attention.

I left them alone in their task and stood in the center of the raised defensive formation, effectively acting like bait. It was a raised platform, because it would allow me to push the wounded creatures on the nearby pit that I had created. I looked around to make sure that everything was in order before casting a lure spell, enough to tempt the surrounding creatures from a mile. It was a dangerous move, but the danger also gave me the chance to maximize my abilities quickly. I wanted to be on top shape before the meeting with Cornelia, as it had the potential of ruining a lot of things.

Still, even though it was a quick decision, I wasn’t unhappy about revealing my status to Cornelia. Currently, she was the only girl strong enough to give me a few more levels while also being vulnerable enough to keep my secrets. The infighting in her family was much more important than revealing my hidden prowess. Still, deflowering Marianne in front of her was something that would make her angry. I would feel much safer if I could maximize my elemental abilities.

Soon, a rumble caught my attention, forcing my mind back to the present rather than the evening’s meeting. I could see a horde of undead, consisting of skeletons and zombies of varying strength, dashing forward, large enough to threaten a small town. Still, my smile widened even as I swung my sword, taking the lower half one of them while letting it topple back, tangling with the others, a kick sending an armored one back. The first one was barely class three while the second one was almost class nine, meaning I had to be really careful. Still, I expected the class nine one to be damaged quite a bit by the fall and opened my mouth to ask Aviada to push forward to get the experience.

[+1 Melee]

My words died in my lips when I noticed several weak zombies positioning themselves underneath the large one, reducing the damage it took while risking to destroy themselves. That level of coordination was extraordinary, with some dangerous implications for our side. I was suddenly glad of the excessive fortification I had prepared. “Aviada, I want you to stay

behind me and kill the ones I let pass. Helga, after finishing the defensive array, wait, but be ready to cast a strong defensive shield.” Cooperation between undead meant someone was controlling them, and I didn’t want to be caught flatfooted in case one of them attacked suddenly.

Luckily, I had improved my elemental casting abilities significantly during the last two days, turning an impossible battle into a farming opportunity. “Let’s see how dead fares against the inferno,” I shouted while waving my left hand, my right busy swinging the sword to take the legs of a class seven zombie, which then rolled helplessly toward Aviada. I didn’t pay attention to what was happening behind, trusting her to handle an injured monster rather easily. Instead, I focused on tying the firestorm into one of the wards I had created earlier, ensuring that it would keep up as long as it had sufficient mana, then dumped a generous amount behind it. A deadly firestorm appeared in the middle of the horde, immediately roasting the weaker ones while slowing down the stronger ones.

[+3 Elemental]

[-320 Mana]

“Amazing,” I heard Aviada murmur, so I turned back for a split second to wink at her, which made her blush rather sharply. However, as much as I would have liked to flirt with my sexy swordswoman while killing the zombies, a sudden flash of darkness took precedence. I saw a dark bolt traveling toward our encampment, crackling with dangerous energy that made me feel sick even in the distance.

It was necrotic energy!

I couldn’t help but curse my luck even as I jumped off the cliff, positioning myself between the fort and the energy. “Aviada, hold the fort,” I ordered even as I pushed my mana on the sword, forcing it to burn brightly with wild lightning, enhanced with a touch of life energy thanks to my biomancy abilities. I took that risk, because while building the fortifications, I hadn’t expected it to stand against a combined assault from the necromancers. Considering there was a generous bounty on each necromancer, I didn’t expect to find one of them so close to the school.

I shouted even as my sword slashed three times, its speed no less than the lightning itself, managing to disrupt most of the energy. I couldn’t help but feel proud at the move, fitting to be a part of the legends itself.

[+2 Elemental]

[+3 Melee]

[-83 Mana]

Only a small piece of dark energy escaped my assault and collided with my body. But even that was enough to burn as I had never felt before, draining a significant amount of vitality. Though I was lucky to be competent at biomancy, as a wave of life energy rose immediately to neutralize the necrotic power trying to penetrate my body. Without that, I doubted that I would be alive.

[-274 HP]

[-123 Mana]

I ignored the gasp of the girls in favor of dashing forward the trio of figures that revealed themselves while casting their deadly spell, whose panic was clear even when they were hidden behind their robes. I let out a laugh even as I dashed forward at full speed. These necromancers overplayed their hands in an effort to quickly end the battle, and I was more than willing to punish their arrogance before they could cast another spell.

“Keep him away,” called the necromancer in the middle panickedly even as his hands dug deep into his pouch, clearly searching for something. The other two waved their staffs and a fresh horde of dead shambled forward, trying to cut my path.

It was a sound tactic. Too bad it wouldn't work against me. I was fast enough to avoid the slow but strong ones, and several wind bullets were enough to destroy the fragile ranged units behind. Every swing of my borrowed sword was enough to cut a swathe through the weaker skeletons and zombies, their presence not enough to slow me down.

The one in the middle, who was clearly the leader, realized the problem as well and took a step back while pulling a pearl from his bag as large as his fist. It didn't take a genius to realize it was not a trinket, simply because he was trying to pull it while facing the risk of death. “Arise,” he called as he threw it in the midpoint between me and them. A thick layer of necrotic energy escaped it, and the pearl started to unfold into a winged skeleton that was growing very quickly.

“A fucking dragon!” I called in shock and quickened my pace even further. I had no idea who those guys were, or how they managed to convert a dragon into their undead servant, but I knew that if that dragon managed to cut my path, I wouldn't last long against three necromancers and it.

It was time to be creative.

I used my arcana abilities to cast two spells simultaneously, one to give me temporary invisibility, barely enough to last a moment, while other spell created an illusion. Then, I pumped that illusion with life energy, and sent it against the dragon. The dragon dispelled it with a swing of its claw, but it was all I needed to pass it and stood against the necromancers.

[-45 Mana]

Necromancers were too slow to reach anything other than a widening of their eyes as I appeared in front of them. My first swing took the head of two of them, while the third one stumbled back in fear. "Wait, I can-" he started, but another swing ensured that he had no chance to continue his words. And since they were necromancers, I did the prudent thing and sent a wave of flame to engulf their bodies, even though it would destroy any clue about their presence.

With a skeletal dragon behind me, I didn't feel like taking risks.

My instincts blared, and I threw myself forward and rolled, a sharp claw missing me by an inch. I turned after the roll, and barely managed to deflect another attack with my sword. The skeletal dragon must be at least class fifteen, maybe even closer to level twenty, which normally required a large squad of level fifteen warriors and mages. Even with my stats, I wouldn't be defeat in a direct confrontation.

Luckily, without a necromancer to lead it, it wasn't really smart, and I had a lot of tricks to keep it back. "Girls, keep your positions and destroy the rest of the horde," I ordered when I saw Helga back to back with Aviada, with both of them trying to abandon their well-defended position. They were good, but not enough to cut through a broken horde of undead even if they were wounded badly thanks to the ongoing firestorm, especially with the necromancers that were leading them were dead.

I could see their reluctance from a distance, but luckily, they followed my order, and stayed on the defensive while destroying the skeletons. I stayed focused on the bone skeletal dragon, using the full range of my melee and elemental tricks to slowly damage its limbs, while biomancy and arcana working wonders to keep it distracted. It took almost an hour for the girls to destroy the horde, while I spent almost two thousand mana to keep the dragon away from me, three of its limbs and one of its wings finally destroyed. I could have killed it, but I preferred to keep it bay not to waste the huge experience it represented, not to mention battling such a dangerous creature for an hour allowed me to maximize my skills, which was only possible thanks to my enhanced mana regeneration.

[+24 Melee]

[+28 Elemental]

[-1951 Mana]

When the girls finished with the horde, they could be mistaken for zombies in their exhaustion, stumbling forward. Amusingly, Aviada wrapped an arm on Helga, helping her walk despite her own exhaustion. It seemed that our little battle had worked wonders to resolve the animosity between them. Nothing like an extended battle against shambling undead to see the value of other skill sets.

Seeing them near, I broke the last limb with a mighty swing, leaving the skeletal dragon to collapse helplessly, waiting for the last hits. "So, girls," I said as I turned to them, presenting the sword for them to grab. "Who wants to do the honors. First come first serve."

Aviada was in a better condition, so she grabbed the sword first. But then, she surprised us by presenting it to Helga. "I was the one that killed most of the horde while you supported me, and I leveled up already. You deserve this."

Helga looked at her in shock, but Aviada just nodded encouragingly. Helga grabbed the sword, but in her exhausted state, failed to lift it until I used my biomancy to refresh her stamina. It took three swings for her to crack the dragon's skull, while her horrible lack of skill made Aviada wince. "I'm going to teach you how to wield it," she murmured, but Helga was too distracted by something only she could see to actually pay attention to us.

The reason turned clear when she murmured in shock. "Two levels at once," she murmured in shock, making Aviada look at me shocked. Aviada was smart enough to estimate Helga's level, putting the creature very close to class twenty. She was shocked, the fact that I was able to play with such a formidable creature for an hour forcing her to revise her estimations upward once more.

[Achievement: Epic Encounter. Defend your girls tenaciously against a deadly foe well-above your skills. +5000 Experience, +1 All]

I couldn't help but smile when I saw the achievement, though it was hard to argue it was undeserved. Three necromancers, backed by a dragon and a horde of undead was enough to make a small city restless, and I managed to defeat it alone with the help of two underleveled assistants. It was an achievement worthy of legends.

Too bad nobody would know. If my activities today were discovered, the faculty would do their best to control me, afraid of my potential and desiring my power. However, despite the fact that it would ruin everything in the current state of my plans, it wasn't what I was afraid of most. A small group of necromancers would have never come closer to the school without a good reason, and moreover, raising a skeletal dragon was clearly far beyond their abilities. I wasn't willing to bet on my survival if their backer learned about my intervention. Still, it was a pity that I had to destroy the bodies of the necromancers, along with all the clues about their source.

While the girls took a breather, I used my elemental abilities to burn the bodies of zombies and skeletons, including the dragon, then systematically dismantled the wards and the defensive walls. Luckily, the crystal that had been used to power the dragon was still in good condition, so I pocketed it. It was the most valuable loot I had ever acquired, and could be used for many purposes from powering wards to craft weapons.

On the way back, we had a long discussion on the importance of keeping the battle a complete secret just in case the mysterious leader of those necromancers had the ability to spy in the school. A dangerously likely possibility, as evidenced by the ease I had while exploring the school and taming the ladies.

We soon arrived at the school. It was a pity that girls were too exhausted for a celebratory orgy.

Luckily, I had another visit prepared.

[Level: 16 Experience: 133050 / 136000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 25

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 13 Intelligence: 17

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 1200 / 1200 Mana: 1552 / 1552]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Four

My mind was very busy as I walked through the school corridors, trying to analyze the situation I was forced to confront. I knew that I wasn't the best when it came to assessing the norms outside the school despite my improved capabilities, but even I could confidently state that finding necromancers close to the school was rather unexpected, and the fact that they were willing to ambush three random students without rhyme or reason suggested multiple possibilities, each wilder than the last. Even worse, they had a bone dragon, something well-above their magical prowess to raise, meaning they were a part of something bigger.

Not a comforting thought.

Still, when I got close to the kitchen door, I let it slide. There was nothing I could do even if I wanted to do anything. Exploring further was impossible before I got stronger. Only luck allowed us to survive their presence, because we already had an extensive defensive entrenchment when they attacked, which greatly limited the impact of their undead horde, and their complete lack of tactical sense handled the rest. There was no way we could have survived if they had summoned their dragon even a moment earlier. I was good, but not that good.

Not yet, at least.

Talking to someone about it was not an option either. Neither I nor the girls had anyone we trusted enough to talk to, and even if the girls had, it was impossible to explain how we were able to defeat a bone dragon without revealing the full extent of my abilities, something I wasn't willing to do until I was much stronger. Being mysteriously strong was attention-grabbing, but not as much as gaining fifteen levels in less than a month, especially combined with my abnormal stat growth.

With the decision taken to have no action, for the time being, I focused on my immediate task, namely, slipping inside the kitchen for some extra food. The bag I had taken before was about to be emptied, and more importantly, I was fed up with all those dried fruits and meats, with only stale bread and plain water to accompany it. I needed something more delicious. With that in mind, I walked into the kitchen, silently but proudly walking toward the pantry. Thanks to my improved acting abilities, no one even paid attention to me until I reached the servants responsible for maintaining inventory.

I stood in front of a burly order man, who looked strong and capable enough to work as a butler for a minor noble family, but he clearly chose to work for Silver Spires instead. "I have a

requisition for a wilderness outing,” I murmured even as I passed the list I prepared beforehand, with a genuine-looking stamp at the bottom. It was a decent forgery, not enough to pass a magical examination, of course, but no one was about to assess a kitchen requisition, even if it was rather extensive.

“Wine, magically-preserved meat, quail eggs, aged cheese...” the man read the list, bored rather than disbelieving. “Who fucking brings top-shelf wine to a hunting expedition,” he murmured grumpily.

“Noble brats are still brats,” I answered with a shrug, which earned a sardonic laugh. “Count yourself lucky, at least you don’t have to listen to them complaining about the quality of their linen in the middle of the wilderness while we servants struggle to find clean water.” I sighed pointedly, doing my best to copy a mentally-exhausted servant. “Do me a favor and give me some good stuff. I don’t want to be executed because I snapped and beat that snot-nosed brat with a substandard bottle of wine,” I said, earning another laugh.

“Of course, nothing less for our heroic scions, standing between us and the apocalypse,” he said in faux-worship before turning to enter the pantry.

“As soon as they figure out how to dress themselves,” I added, and the servant disappeared with one last chuckle. When he returned, he was carrying a large bag along. I took the bag, but left only after a few minutes of gossip. It was nice to know people around me. With the bag, I returned to my room and enjoyed a delicious meal, though I doubted that any other mage would have been understanding when I used my elemental abilities to cook myself a delicious steak, and using arcana to clean up afterward. I didn’t open the wine, however, as I had other plans for it.

When I left my room, I was once again disguised as a maid, but this time the clothes were just an illusion rather than a full costume. I had a lot of mana, so wasting a few dozen points was nothing.

My destination was Cornelia’s room. It was not the evening yet, but I wanted to ambush her earlier with my presence, just to make sure she wouldn’t be able to set up a trap. The magical lock on her door didn’t even take a breath to unlock even when I had to circumvent a trap that hadn’t been there during my first visit. My performance last night clearly spooked her, not knowing my display of competence was merely a trick.

Once I was in the room, I replaced the illusions with a field of invisibility. It wasn’t a true invisibility spell, which was ironically too noticeable magically, but a light trick to make me

harder to be seen. Only after that, I cast the second spell, and stepped into Cornelia's large living room, which was empty. So was her smaller guest room and her bedroom. I wasn't disappointed, however, because I could hear running water from the bathroom.

Excellent, I thought as I walked to the bar and took out a nice white wine and two champagne glasses. I wasn't being stingy about the wines I acquired earlier, but Cornelia clearly had better stuff than what was available through the general kitchen, not to mention taking her bottle without asking for permission was another subtle powerplay. Cornelia was under my power, and I intended to teach her how fun it was to be on the other side of the coin.

I even got naked before stepping into her bathroom -and removing another magical trap in the process- while doing my best to stay silent, then sneaked inside. I had to hold back myself from whistling in appreciation when I examined the extravagant bath, once again underlining Cornelia's wealth. But gold-plated taps or silver mirrors barely earned a glance from me, not when I was able to see Cornelia resting in the small pool in the center of the room, her body hidden under a thick layer of bubbles, her eyes closed.

Cornelia was not someone that would respond to kindness, so, the more impressive my appearance was, the better. So, I cast a weak silencing charm -weak because I didn't want to alert her with a mana flare- before walking toward the pool, and slid into the water, all without managing to alert her. "How have you been since our last meeting, little lady," I suddenly said as I opened the wine bottle, yet I also infused the water with mana to react quickly to the inevitable violent reaction.

She didn't disappoint. Her eyes popped open in shock, and a wave of flame came targeting me just as quick. However, it took just a flicker of my fingers to extinguish it. It wasn't even an issue of strength, as her hurried spell had a weak internal structure, easy to puncture with a stab of water, destabilizing it so that it faded halfway through.

Cornelia looked at me shocked, though it was understandable. After all, despite the weakness of her initial spell, it wasn't something a regular elemental mage could achieve. It required a strong analytical capability, and was only possible thanks to my extreme stats and high arcana capabilities.

"So rude," I said with a mocking smirk. "I would have expected more from the noble heiress of House Antony. No wonder your uncle is looking for a better alternative."

"Shut up," Cornelia shouted even as she raised her hand, which was glowing dangerously with swirling flames. I didn't react to her threat. Not because her magical ability was to be

underestimated, but because despite her explosive anger, she was smart enough to understand what was at stake.

If she hadn't exploded in anger after I took the virginity of her girlfriend in front of her, an offhanded insult wouldn't trigger her as well.

I slowly poured wine into the glasses and sent one to her, ignoring the threat. After a moment, the fire around Cornelia's hand dispelled, leaving frustration in its place. "What do you want?"

I took a lingering sip from the glass instead of answering immediately, just another trick to drive home my superior position. It was a nice feeling to feel superior to Cornelia, the scary noble heiress that even the teachers failed to intimidate. "Delicious wine," I commented casually.

"What do you want?" Cornelia repeated, angrier.

"Come on, sweetie. Let's not act like brutes. Enjoy your wine first, we can always talk business later," I answered, my laziness making her even angrier, which made her just more frustrated because she was not used to keeping her anger contained.

"Give me your glass, then," Cornelia said with a sudden expression of enlightenment, doubting there was an underhanded trick on the glass. Not an unreasonable one, though considering how easily I had penetrated her domicile, rather unnecessary as well.

"As you wish," I said, but upon seeing her smug expression, I decided to pull a little trick. A small application of biomancy later, the wine glass was contaminated with an effective aphrodisiac, enough to make the situation even more uncomfortable for her, the mana flare being masked by the levitation spell I cast to send it to her. A moment later, floated toward me. "A delicious vintage," I commented.

"It's from one of our wineries. It's a decent year," Cornelia answered, who used the small break to exchange the glasses to gather her composure.

"I appreciate beautiful things," I answered while keeping my gaze on her face, my smirk widening as Cornelia frowned. She fell silent, and I didn't bother to break the silence, enjoying the bath and the wine at the same time. Cornelia drank slowly as well, but from the distracted expression on her face, it was clear that she was trying to get a handle of the situation. Understandable, considering how much she enjoyed being in control. It was ironic that she was losing control of every aspect of her life, the control of her family due to her uncle, the control of her development due to her level cap...

And the control of her personal relationship thanks to my presence...

For the next few minutes, I asked her several questions, none of them related to her problems, which clearly annoyed her. Then, I decided to push the envelope once more. "So, do you still attend classes after the latest development?" I asked.

Considering her attitude and her situation, I wasn't surprised when her hands started trembling, preluding an explosion of anger. Still, she impressed me by somehow preventing herself from exploding. "I still go to some of them," she answered between her squeezed teeth.

"Good idea, every little bit helps in your condition," I answered.

My dismissive attitude finally managed to trigger her. "Shut up!" she exclaimed even as she jumped to her feet and threw the glass toward me, which missed my face by inches, but I didn't even flinch. I might have annoyed her with my inaction, but since it displayed her beautiful breasts in front of me, I didn't react too badly.

[+50 Experience] 50% Penalty!

"Such a bad attitude," I answered, ignoring her poor assault attempt in favor of shaking my head in disapproval. "It's no wonder your uncle wants to keep you away from ruling the house."

"You're playing a dangerous game," she exclaimed even as two thick coils of flame appeared around her arm, twisting and turning dangerously in a poor attempt of intimidation. Poor, because it wasn't even about the power difference. She was a fire mage currently submerged in water, and I had already shown my water elemental abilities.

I didn't bother to stop her assault, even crossed my arm to signal just how little her display had affected me. Her answer was to increase the intensity of the flames, colorful shadows dancing on the marble walls. "Calm your tits, firecracker," I said before letting my gaze slide pointedly to her chest. "Not your actual ones, of course. I'm very happy with their virility."

My dismissive attitude was enough to dispel her childish display. She dispelled her flames and sat down, the bubbles hiding her body once more. "What do you need?" she asked in a more subdued tone.

"I only need a few things, but I want a lot of things," I answered. "However, the real question is, what do you need, and what are you willing to part with?"

Cornelia scowled. "You know that. I need to find a way to break through the level cap."

I smiled softly. "No, that's not true. What you need is to protect yourself against your uncle and to take the reins of the family. Improving your personal strength is not the only way."

"You told me that you can help me on the level cap!" she exclaimed, anger and disappointment warring on her face even as she raised her hand once more, yet again covered with flames. Her tantrums were getting very stale. "You lied!"

"No, I haven't," I said calmly. "I have ways to circumvent the situation to increase your personal power, but as you can guess, they are neither easy to find nor easy to implement. I need to trust you a lot more before I actually teach you how," I said, bluffing shamelessly. I didn't know whether the companion system would help the situation, and I didn't even know that I would be able to trigger it with Cornelia, but since she was my only reasonable source of experience, I was willing to take the risk.

"What do you want in return?" Cornelia asked, excited.

"A lot," I answered without missing a beat. "However, you don't need to worry about it for now, because it's a bit early to actually offer that. I have a more reasonable deal in mind."

"You're playing a dangerous game, revealing the secret but promising to withhold it. Aren't you worried that I would reveal your secrets?"

"Not really," I answered casually, which, for once, was actually accurate. I still didn't want to reveal myself to the wider public, but it was no longer a deadly secret. Moreover, I trusted Cornelia to act true to herself and be a self-serving bitch. She knew only two things about me, that I was apparently much stronger than I had revealed, and I claimed to have secrets of circumventing the level cap. The first part made it a gamble to reveal my secrets, as she had no idea how strong I actually was. For the second part, she only had my words for the moment with no evidence to back it up. She would have been laughed at by everyone if she went to anyone else with it. The only reason she was listening to it at all was her desperation.

The despondent silence that filled the room indicated that she understood my point of view without an explanation. "What do you have in mind if you're not going to help me increase my power?" she asked.

"I'm going to support you against your uncle, of course," I said.

"Why would you do that?" she said in shock. "Training me in secret is one thing, but if you do that, you would be challenging the acting head of House Antony. Since I'm the rightful heir, there's not much he can do against me, but it's not the same for you. He would send an endless

number of assassins the moment he discovered your support.” She took a deep breath before continuing, her tone bitter. “You read my letters, you know that he already removed or converted most of my supporters. I can’t prevent him from targeting you.”

“I know,” I said, though I wasn’t really worried. Yes, House Antony was strong, but even for them, Silver Spires was not easy to penetrate. I doubted that they would risk a lot of their power, and considering I might gain a few more levels until my involvement was discovered, I wasn’t afraid of anyone below level twenty-five. House Antony was strong, but definitely not enough to risk losing such a strong warrior while trying to penetrate Silver Spires, risking their ire.

“Then why? You could have gone to my uncle with those letters and revealed my condition. He would have rewarded you greatly.”

“No, he would have given me a few shiny trinkets and a few empty titles. However, if I manage to put you on top...” I dragged, leaving the rewards implied. “You can’t win big by playing safe.”

“Then, what do you have in mind to help me?” Cornelia said, much more interested.

“Simple,” I said. “Your biggest challenge is to hide your stagnation from your uncle, while his biggest objective is to understand how strong you have become. By the way, why is that?” I asked, curious. Her letters mentioned the status, but didn’t go into detail about the reasons.

“I have six months until my uncle can challenge me for the ruling seat, but since it’s a life-and-death challenge, he will only do that if he’s sure of his victory,” she explained.

“Do you know how strong he is?” I answered.

“I’m not completely sure, but he’s likely just below twenty, but definitely stronger than I currently am, not to mention he has access to a lot of magical weapons and treasures,” Cornelia explained. Seeing me nodding without alarm, Cornelia relaxed a bit more. Her thought process was clear. Since I was calm on the prospect of facing a well-armed family head bordering level twenty, I must have been quite strong, which was accurate. If forced, I would have taken that bet, especially if I had Aviada’s sword in hand. “So, that’s my situation. What do you want in return?” she asked.

“I want you to be my maid,” I answered. Just like that, Cornelia was on her feet once more, flames covering her arm. But this time, she clearly intended to attack.

Things were getting interesting...

[Level: 16 Experience: 133100 / 136000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 25

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 13 Intelligence: 17

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 1200 / 1200 Mana: 1484 / 1552]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Five

Cornelia was busy sending a thick wave of flame toward me when I finally raised my hand and called a thick wall of water to block her assault, costing me a small chunk of mana. Cornelia clearly wasn't holding back, but I was annoyed because of a different thing. The collusion of magic created a thick cloud of steam, hiding her beautiful body from my sight.

[-45 Mana]

I was about to use an arcana trick to dispel the cloud when a shadow cut through the mist. It was Cornelia, trying to finish the combat quickly, unaware that she was making a terrible choice. It wouldn't have been a bad choice under other circumstances, because almost no mage had physical abilities, meaning she wouldn't have been disadvantaged, especially if the opponent panicked. Also, it gave her a chance to finish it quickly, a bath in the middle of the school wasn't the best arena to fight without alerting others.

It was a pity that it was the absolute worst strategy she could have used against me. Her flaming fist was strong, but it was effectively moving in slow motion against me. I didn't even bother standing up. A gentle palm strike was enough to change the trajectory of her punch, and when it went past my head, I turned my palm into a grip and pulled her on my lap. "Are you going to play nice, or should I teach you how to behave?" I whispered into her ear as I squeezed her wrist a bit, just enough to signal my physical stats. The fact that she was on my lap, naked was a nice bonus. Pity I couldn't take her virginity yet.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

When she didn't answer, I flared my magic, not by casting a particular magic, but to show my potential, enough to make it very certain that I was much stronger than her when it came to the mystical side of the deal as well. "I'll behave," she answered, trying to sound belligerent, but it was impossible for her to hide her sudden tremble while she was on my lap.

"Good girl," I said as I patted her leg gently, and when she tried to stand up, I was quick to wrap my arm around her waist, keeping her pinned.

"Let me go," she said as she turned toward me, but she must be learning, because this time, she didn't try to use magic to free herself, relying on her angry expression, with a dash of panic.

I had no intention to cater to that particular wish. The sooner she got into the habit of following my orders, the better. "I can let you go," I said, and her expression relaxed, unaware of the part

to come. “However, I would take it as you rejecting my generous offer,” I added, and her face fell just as quickly, but even as I loosened my arm around her waist, she stayed in place, thinking hard about my proposal. She was smart enough to realize the full implications of being my maid, not only the sexual parts, but the implied inferiority as well.

For a whole minute she was silent, and I didn’t disrupt her, not wanting her to commit before she understood the full implications. Also, it gave the aphrodisiac more time to seep into her bloodstream, adding yet another complication to her decision-making process. Soon, I received the first indication that it was working, when she rocked her hips several times like she was trying to get a better seat, several more times than it was necessary. Her body was getting in the mood even if she wasn’t.

Since she was struggling to answer, I decided to help her decide. My hands landed on her waist, caressing her sides gently. I decided to speak when she decided to answer angrily. “Is there something you want to say?” I said lazily even as my hands moved down, caressing her lithe hips. When it came to ass, she lacked Helga’s and Marianne’s generous expanse, but she was still very sexy. She just huffed and turned her head away, trying to make a decision.

Messing with her was extremely satisfying, so I decided to up the ante. One of my hands moved up until I grabbed her breasts, their size barely failing to fill my palms, but compensating for their failing with their perkiness. I directly focused on her nipples, squeezing hard. The moan that left her mouth surprised her more than it surprised me if her expression was any indicator. “Are you sure you don’t want to speak?” I said, amused by her reaction because the aphrodisiac I had given her could never get such a reaction, meaning she enjoyed my rough treatment considerably. Surprising, considering her insistent sadism.

“Keep your hands to yourself while I’m trying to decide,” she said angrily, but rather than annoy me, it amused me further, because I could see she was relying on a caricature display of anger to suppress her own shock. My plan was working even better than I had intended.

“And what if I don’t?” I countered as my other hand grabbed her beautiful crimson hair before pulling her head back hard, enough to be actually painful. Another moan left her mouth, recognizable despite her efforts to disguise it as a pained yelp. Her head was bent back, which gave me direct access to her neck. I bit her neck hard enough to earn another moan. Her thighs tightened around my shaft, another sign of her enjoyment.

[+300 Experience] 50% Penalty!

With her bluff seen through, she once again failed to come up with an answer. I didn’t push her

for it. Why would I when I already found such an amusing way to pass the time. I held her under a double-assault, my fingers mauling her breasts while I alternated biting and sucking on her neck, but both violent enough to leave a mark. She tried to hold back her moans at first, and when that failed, tried to hide them under yelps and grunts, but her attempts failed sexily.

I could see she was surprised by her reaction even more than I was, but unlike me, her reaction was a fresh surge of anger. I realized the explosion before she did. "That's enough!" she exclaimed and tried to stand up, but my grip around her hair tightened. "Let me go!" she shouted, but maintained enough presence of mind not to use a spell.

"I can, but I'm going to be kind and ask you a question," I said, speaking slowly, each word heavy and measured, with the full weight of my charisma behind it to intimidate her. "Are you sure you want to reject my support?"

The way Cornelia trembled at my words was delicious, and the fact that she was intimidated rather than lashing out was enough to prove that my way was working. Her lips moved a while later, breaking her frozen state. "I accept," she murmured.

"Excellent news," I said cheerfully before I pushed her away from my lap and stepped out of the water. "Follow me then we have a lot of things to talk about," I said and started walking. I snapped my fingers after two steps because I didn't hear her walking. The sound of a splash reached my ears, followed by several rapid footsteps, briefly interrupted by the ruffle of fabrics. I ignored it and continued to walk, using a small cantrip to dry myself. No need to ruin her couch.

I was going to spend a lot of time here, after all.

Cornelia appeared through the door several minutes later, her confident mannerism telling me that she had used the small break to gather her confidence, but she was unable to hide the truth from my sharp eyes. It was just a trick on the surface. Underneath, I could see her emotions churning in a panic. I wanted to punish her for daring to be late, but I chose to pause a moment to enjoy the sight of her body. Her long thin legs deliciously disappeared under a thick white towel, but even its thickness was unable to hide her thin waist and her shapely hips from my discerning eye.

Unfortunately, she had pulled the towel high up on her chest, hiding it from the view, not even a hint of cleavage was present. It seemed that I needed to explain to her about the appropriate behavior for a maid, starting from how not to be late. "What do you think you did wrong?" I asked her.

“What?” she answered eloquently.

I sighed. “Come on, firecracker, keep it up. You’re my maid now, and you need to call me sir,” I said dismissively even as I leaned back, putting my muscles on display. No matter what, her eyes trying to catch a glimpse of my body was extremely satisfying, especially with the blush that resulted after she did.

“If you think that I’m going to call you-” she started, only to be cut off by my angry glare, backed by the presence of my charisma, reminding her who was the boss here. “I’m sorry, sir,” she said instead. Her tone was still rebellious, of course, but it was progress.

“Excellent,” I said, once again cheerful as I stood up and walked next to her. “It’s going to take a while to properly educate you, but luckily for you, I’m kind enough to put in the time required,” I added even as I put my hand on her waist, leading her toward the table. Even through the towel I could feel her smooth skin, tempting me to cut to the chase and push her down for the true conquest. Unfortunately, slowly teasing and educating the angry queen of the school was too tempting to forgo just like that.

“I understand, sir,” she managed to say despite her clenched jaw, but her dissatisfaction was nothing compared to the one she would feel during the next stage of my plan. When we arrived at the dining table, I pushed her forward without a warning until she collided with the surface, expelling a painful breath. Her towel rode up, creating a delicious view of her naked bottom. “What the hell-” she managed to exclaim until I interrupted her once again, this time my palm exploding against her naked bottom.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“Why don’t you try that again?” I said with a gentle tone that greatly contrasted with my painful spank.

She managed to twist her head enough to look at me, but the angry tirade she was preparing faded against my stern expression. “What was that for, sir?” she replaced her words. Her resentment was still clear, but I let it go unmentioned. After all, it was her first day in her new role.

I had plenty of time to properly educate her.

“Because you were late by several minutes after I ordered you to follow me,” I explained. “I was willing to be merciful, then you went and disrespected me. Maybe some punishment will educate you about the perils of talking back.”

“As you wish, sir,” she answered smoothly, with an undercurrent of pride. She was clearly underestimating my punishment. Understandable, considering the scene between her and Helga I had stumbled on several days ago. She prided herself in her bondage abilities, and my simple spank must have seemed rather simple.

I couldn't help but chuckle as I waved my hand, summoning a bag from her wardrobe, dispelling its protections with another flick, which showed her arcane capabilities were extremely poor compared to me. “We can start if you're feeling ready,” I said even as I pulled a familiar crop from her bag.

“How?” she asked, shocked, but received a soft hit from the crop, and a quirked eyebrow. “How, sir?” she repeated.

“Come on, firecracker. You didn't think you were unnoticed when you were using them in the library, right?” I said, despite her shock when one of the ribbons flew out of the bag under the control of my magic, and tied her hands behind her back. “Where do you think I came up with the idea of making you my maid?” She opened her mouth, but I preempted her by using the crop on her bottom, hard enough to leave a mark. She gasped while I dragged a finger on the mark it left. “It isn't as easy when you're on the receiving end, is it?” I said.

“No,” she managed to say while she was trying to suppress her voice, when I flicked her ear. “No, sir,” she corrected herself, humiliation burning clear.

“Excellent,” I said even as I used the crop once more. “I want you to thank me after every caress,” I added. “After all, I'm here, wasting time to educate you.”

“Of course, sir,” Cornelia answered, her eyes burning with humiliation, especially since she was unable to hide the signs of arousal slipping from her entrance. I stayed silent, but the crop didn't, exploding on her tight bottom several times, each earning a grudge-filled thank you from Cornelia.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“Not bad, firecracker,” I said after reaching the two digits. “I wasn't expecting you to give such a nice performance, maybe there's hope for you after all.”

“Thank you, sir,” she said once more, but this time, her words turned into a shocked gasp at the last moment as I caressed her sopping wet entrance.

“Don't worry, I'm a good employer,” I explained. “You have worked hard for your reward.”

Before Cornelia could say anything, I dragged my finger against her entrance once more, making her gasp in shock, but otherwise staying silent. Not surprising, considering the sexual part of her job definition was obvious from the start, not to mention she was too horny to obviously care. Even more amusingly, she clearly hated her own reaction to being the submissive party in the relationship.

She was learning, however, because her only reaction was to thank me again when I pulled the towel away, revealing her naked body. “No problem, firecracker,” I said even as I dragged my finger on her spine gently, making her shiver in desire and appreciation. Under a dedicated assault, I would have her gushing like a spring in less than a minute, but as amusing as the idea was, slowly torturing her with pleasure while denying her a climax sounded much better.

With that idea in mind, one of my hands dragged down until it was on the outside of her thigh, gently massaging her flesh, occasionally slipping inward to give her a boosted dash of pleasure before moving outside once more. While she was busy trying to contain her reactions, I spent a minute enjoying the beautiful sight in front of me, lithe but curvy where it counted, with a great sensitivity that made playing with her really fun. I couldn’t wait until I could put her into a slutty maid uniform, ready for my attention.

I kept her in the same position for more than half an hour while I played with her body slowly, exploring her treasures while allowing her pleasure to build, but never to a point of allowing her to climax. Watching her getting frazzled even worse than she was when I forced her to become my servant in exchange for my support, though on second thought, it was reasonable. As a noble scion, there was little in life she couldn’t immediately attain, therefore she never faced a situation that she had to delay gratification, making the little edge-play I had been applying extremely effective.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“Are you enjoying your little reward,” I asked, jolting her out of her frustrated dreams.

“Yes, sir,” she moaned as I dragged my finger along her entrance, giving her a fresh jolt of pleasure. For the first time, the word sir left her mouth naturally rather than with a grudge.

“Excellent,” I said even as I dragged my finger over her entrance once more, carefully calibrated to prevent her from climaxing. “I wonder how impressive your climax would have been?” I added absentmindedly.

Despite her dazed state, she was smart enough to catch my particular usage of words. “Would

have been, sir?" she asked, and I was glad to note a huge dash of panic in her tone.

"Would have been, of course, firecracker," I said casually even as I slipped my fingers inside her for a moment, just enough to give her a jolt before pulling out and replacing it with a spank. "You can't seriously think you deserve a big reward after your lackluster performance. You need to really impress me before reaching a climax."

"But-" she started, only to be silenced by another spank. "Sorry, sir," she said reproachfully. "Is there anything I can do to gain enough favor?" she asked, which, more than anything, proved just how weak she was against pleasure, even overwhelming her prickly pride.

"Hmm," I said as I dragged my hand over her back, dipping toward the edge of her boobs for a moment, enough to make her shiver. "I wouldn't be adverse to it if you manage to give me enough pleasure. Do you think you can handle it?"

"I can handle it, sir," came the answer, much quicker than I had expected. I took a step back, examining her body, trying to understand whether she was actually that crazy about pleasure, or whether she was trying to lull me into a false sense of security. As I examined her, I could see that she had some kind of ploy in mind, but I didn't know her exact plan. Still, I felt secure enough to test her.

"Interesting, let's see whether it's just empty talk, or if you'll be able to handle your commitments," I said cheerfully as I waved my hand, and the ribbon that kept her hands wrapped disappeared back to her bag. "That's enough for today. I'm going to visit again tomorrow, right after sunset. I expect you to impress me," I said as I waved my hand, my clothes flying toward my body.

"That's it for today?" she murmured in shock, clearly dissatisfied. "Sir!" she added when I spanked her bottom in warning.

"Yes, and you're forbidden to play with yourself, and believe me I will know," I said as I patted her shoulder, using the opportunity to cast a spell to prevent her from climaxing. It wasn't impossible to break, but I would know if it was broken.

I could have easily pushed forward, of course, but I wanted her to truly process what she had signed up for. I wanted her to regain her fire, only to break her once again.

Playing with her was going to be fun, I thought as I stepped into the main corridor once more...

[Level: 16 Experience: 134600 / 136000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 25

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 13 Intelligence: 17

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 1200 / 1200 Mana: 1484 / 1552]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Biomancy [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Six

Imagining the expression of Cornelia as her arousal was slowly dismissed put a smile on my face. I would have liked to be there, watching as her joy and arousal was replaced by horror as she understood just what she had signed up for. Also, if I had stayed there for the night, it would have made the process even smoother, allowing me to suppress any sign of rebellion before it even started.

However, I had more important things to do.

The encounter with the necromancers spooked me, not only because I had met with a danger much stronger than what was supposed to exist, but because it showed me just how little I knew about my surroundings. I needed more information. Luckily, as a library worker, I was in the epicenter of information. Sneaking into the library in the middle of the night wasn't even a challenge for me, and more importantly, I had a ready excuse if I got caught.

My abominable reputation was occasionally helpful.

After entering the library, I ignored my usual destination, the shelves on magical theory or leveling, instead moving to where historical battle records were held. I knew a lot about battle tactics and abilities of necromancers as well as many other fringe organizations because they were talked about in detail in the magical theory books, but I had no idea what their aim was, or the reason for their existence.

After quickly skimming through several books, however, I wasn't any closer to the answer of those questions. From what I could discover, their existence stretched back for hundreds of years, but there was nothing definite about their origin, which was suspicious. Not because the lack of information itself, but there were also very few theorizing anything about their roots, which was weird considering that despite their sparse existence, the necromancers were allied across the continent, and knowing their origins would have allowed a much better understanding about their organization.

The more I read about it, the more suspicious I got. It was like they were intentionally avoiding finding an answer, making me even more curious about its roots. But no matter how many books I browsed, I wasn't any closer to its source. Soon, the idea solidified in my mind even further. It was known, but was being kept hidden for some reason.

Before I could delve deeper, however, a chilly sensation passed near me. If it had been any other time, I would have dismissed it as a night chill, but I had remembered that exact

sensation from earlier, where I had been fighting against the undead. It was necrotic energy, only much weaker than what I felt against the horde, so weak that I doubted I would have been able to feel it without my biomancy. Feeling the same energy in the middle of Silver Spires was not a good sign. The smart thing would have been to turn my back and leave the library. My identity was already tricky without angering a nebulous organization with a horde of death at their beck and call.

However, in the end, my curiosity won, and I started following the energy from a distance. Soon, I was close enough to the source to see a shade moving deeper into the library. It was both good and bad at the same time, because while shades were excellent scouts, they were utterly rubbish when it came to any kind of confrontation. Their value lay in their near-invisibility to any kind of senses. Too bad it caught me when I was most alert against that kind of energy.

However, there was a complication. Like any necrotic construct, their range of control was limited, meaning there was actually a necromancer in the confines of the school controlling it. That was dangerous news, no matter the situation. Necromancers sneaking into the school easily was not good news, but it was still better compared to the alternative. Moreover, shades contained a small piece of soul from their creator, meaning they couldn't be given to others to use. They needed to be near their creator.

The school had a traitor inside.

I doubted anyone other than myself would have reached that conclusion that easily, but I was the living proof that the vaunted security of the school was less than perfect against a sneaky approach once the initial infiltration was successful. It was supposed to be impossible for a necromancer to hide their unique aura, but I was the evidence that saying something was impossible didn't make it so.

With that in mind, I continued following the shade, but being careful to stay hidden, only to receive another shock. The shade arrived in front of the vault and slipped through the wards while taking a complicated route. Another evidence of long-term infiltration, otherwise, the shade would have never known the way to bypass the wards that easily. I waited outside, while trying to understand the point of sending the shade into the vault. Shades didn't have physical presence, so they wouldn't be able to take a book from the book. Even flipping a page to read a book was above its capabilities.

Regardless, I followed it when it left the vault as easily as it entered. Its controller clearly had a reason to send it there, and I was still curious about its owner. Luckily, shades had another

drawback, that they couldn't communicate their findings remotely. They needed to be reabsorbed by their creator. So, I followed from a distance, hoping to find the owner. I had been expecting it to go toward the creature forest, giving me the opportunity to spy on the owner, maybe even ambush them in the dark.

I received another shock when the creature started moving toward the central section, where the most prestigious professors lived. The situation was even worse than I had thought. It was either one of the keystones of the school was traitor, or a necromancer was hidden there, good enough to avoid the detection of the best the school had to offer. Combined with the three necromancers I had faced, it pointed to a disaster.

I was a selfish person, but not selfish enough to do nothing after stumbling on a situation dangerous enough to threaten Silver Spires. I decided to take action. I took a breath to still my trembling hand before sending a jolt of arcana energy, destroying the shade, therefore preventing its controller from learning whatever they were trying to get. Then I dashed away, my heart thumping crazily.

I cast several arcana spells rapidly to hide my presence before dashing back to my room, fearful and excited at the same time. I could almost feel eyeballs on my back, afraid of being caught. Unless I had been severely underestimating the undercover necromancer, they were already aware of the destruction of the shade. I had no doubt that if they weren't worried about blowing their cover, they would have already caught me. But they didn't have the luxury of raising alarm, not more than I do.

I tried to sleep, but it proved elusive, rejecting to arrive no matter how many twists and turns I had to take. Luckily, the library wasn't the only place that held distractions for me. I had another destination where my imposition would be greeted with enthusiasm while also helping me to level up. So, I stepped into the corridors once more and started walking, glad that Marianne's room was not close to the central residential or the library itself. Even if someone was searching, a servant walking around in the middle of the night, carrying stuff, was not something to pay attention to.

Sneaking into Marianne's room was a simple task, though after entering, I made sure to put an extra alarm ward just in case. The living room was empty, so I moved to the bedroom, only to meet with an amazing sight. Marianne was on the bed, sleeping with a soft smile on her face, occasionally letting out soft moans. Even more impressive was her body, partially revealed as her covers slid away, displaying her amazing lingerie, pure white, short, and transparent enough to give a hint of skin underneath and to reveal the absence of underwear. Her nipples pushed against her nightie determinedly like they were trying to cut free, making me excited

for the next step.

[+50 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I quickly shed my clothing and slid into the bed next to her, careful not to wake her up as I pulled her head on my chest. She hugged me immediately as a soft moan left her mouth, but she stayed asleep. Curious about the depth of her sleep, I caressed her shoulder with no effect, before slipping my hand under her nightie to meet with her generous breasts. I gently squeezed, but the only reaction was another sleepy moan, and her nipples hardening even further. So, I squeezed her nipple.

That managed to awaken her from her sleep. "Such a nice dream," she murmured as she looked at my face from her barely open eyelids. Since our bodies were close, all she needed was to turn a bit to capture my lips in a soft, fleeting kiss. I continued caressing her breasts while her hand dragged down, slowly tracing my chest first, then my stomach. But a gasp escaped her mouth as she wrapped her hand around my shaft, and looked at me much more alert. "It's not a dream, is it?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"Guess," I answered with a smirk as I initiated another kiss, gentle and slow. Meanwhile, I was enjoying the feeling of her breasts, kneading her impressive globes with a slowly ramping up intensity, her lips following the trend immediately as well. I didn't know whether it was the sleep grogginess, or whether our last lovemaking session had managed to destroy her shyness, but I was loving her taking initiative.

[+300 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 19%]

Still, I was surprised when I felt a pair of soft hands on my shoulder, pushing me back. I let her succeed, curious what she had in mind with such an aggressive move. She climbed on my lap, hovering over the length of my shaft close enough for me to feel the heat. "Close your eyes," she whispered in a sudden bout of shyness, and I did so, unable to resist her cuteness, even when I felt her leaving the bed and hurriedly pulling open a closet, followed by the sound of fabric.

Then, a warmth covered my shaft, and curiosity overcome me, only to see Marianne leaning over my shaft, brushing its top with her tongue while her hand was wrapped on its bottom, gently moving up and down. Moreover, she surprised me with her change of clothing. Her white nightie was gone, replaced by a pure black corset that pushed her already-amazing breasts to

perfection. Moreover, from her reflection in the mirror, I could see a very noticeable absence of her panties, replaced by a pair of thigh-high stockings. However, with the cute expression of concentration on her face, she looked like an angel who was doing her best to act rebellious.

It was a cute view, Marianne gently teasing the crown of my manhood, occasionally pulling back to appreciate the throbbing head before leaning down once again. Then, she did something that surprised me, and plopped an ice cube into her mouth before returning to her task.

I couldn't help but gasp in pleasure as the combination of cold and hot assaulted my shaft, though I was equally impressed with Marianne actually going out of her way to try a new trick. She truly managed to impress me.

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 20%]

I decided to respect her wishes and kept my eyes closed, enjoying the way she moved deeper and deeper with every repeat. Soon, she was holding most of my shaft hostage in her mouth, her hands dancing on the bottom, occasionally slipping down to my balls to enhance the sensation. Minutes passed as she moved back and forth, slowly and sensually like she was worshiping my presence. Understandable, as not only had I taken her virginity in every conceivable way, but I also impressed her by thoroughly defeating her hero in front of her to a point that Cornelia hadn't been able to react.

It was going to be fun when I educated Cornelia enough to make her serve us while I was together with Marianne.

As the time passed, she slowly deserted her slow and sensual motions in favor of wilder, more aggressive activities. As the heat enveloped me deeper and deeper, a gag reached my ear. But Marianne impressed me when instead of pulling back, she pushed even deeper, her hands clamping on my thighs to get extra strength. Soon, the familiar tightness of her throat wrapped around my head, pushing me closer to climax.

I could have held back, of course, but seeing she had gone through such an effort, I decided to reward her. My shaft started twitching inside her mouth, which she was alert enough to recognize and pulled out a bit, just enough to keep the crown in the perfect position. It wasn't a scene to be missed, I decided, watching as Marianne was humming in enjoyment as she devoured my seed enthusiastically, managing to catch all of it without spilling any.

[+300 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 22%]

“How was it?” she murmured, her shyness feeling a bit ridiculous considering she was wearing a sexy corset with panties absent, and had just finished a voluntary blowjob that went much deeper than I would have expected.

“It was amazing,” I answered as I grabbed her arm and pushed her down. “It’s my turn now,” I said as I leaned down over her, positioning myself nicely between her legs. I kissed her clit, but it was a sharp, aggressive kiss, one that implied dominance despite the supposed subservience the position implied. I was amused by the way her body jumped, but instead of saying something, I let my tongue work on more important tasks, such as exploring the area surrounding her knob.

When my tongue moved down, her hips started to move, following my beat to increase her pleasure. “Yes, more please,” she moaned out without bothering to keep her voice down. Her reaction was understandable, considering she was already sopping wet when I started, and her passion only intensified as the time passed. Soon, she was gasping and moaning helplessly while I cut loose, my tongue penetrating her again and again, pushing her closer to a climax.

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 24%]

However, I wanted to make the moment of completion where she got her achievement from the system more memorable, so I pulled back which earned me a short-lived disappointed gasp that turned into an excited moan when I hovered above her, ready to take her in the missionary position. “Do you want me?” I asked her as I leaned forward, capturing her in my gaze.

“I want you,” she murmured helplessly, her chest moving up and down wildly with her breaths.

“You want me to do what?” I asked again even as I pressed my shaft to her entrance, but didn’t push forward.

“I want you to ... fuck me,” she whispered. I would have made her repeat it, but she gasped with such a thick sense of desire that I decided to have a little mercy and pushed deep inside her. “Yes, fuck me! Hard!” she moaned, her expressiveness surprising me, or maybe I just misunderstood how horny she had been feeling. I slammed into her mercilessly, ferociously, until her expression was dominated with pleasure. I didn’t stop even when she started showing signs of climax, and impaled her until she started shuddering helplessly.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the second stage]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Expert Biomancy, Master Elemental, Basic Observation]

I quickly chose biomancy despite the combat-related advantages I would have received from improving my elemental skill. After two encounters with necromancers, I wanted to be better prepared against their presence, and biomancy allowed me to directly counter their necrotic energy.

Meanwhile, Marianne's eyes popped open in shock in the middle of her arousal. "Do you like your gift?" I said confidently, at this point, aware that she had received an achievement. It was a pity that our relationship had yet to reach a point that would allow us to progress to the second stage, meaning I need to find a way to help her progress, but still, it wasn't a huge challenge.

"How? Why?" she murmured dazedly, the shock of receiving an achievement not helping her to process her orgasm.

"It's a secret," I said to her even as I started moving inside her once more. "You need to keep it secret for now, but I can say that it's just the beginning. Understood?" I added, and she nodded enthusiastically, though I wasn't sure how much of it was true comprehension and how much of it was her enthusiasm for another session. Regardless, I pulled out and flipped her over before putting my hands on her back, pinning her in place. "Are you ready?" I asked.

"Yes!" she moaned, which turned into a loud cry as I plunged deep inside her. With my other hand, I grabbed her hair tight, pulling it back enough to give me access to her beautiful neck, sucking and licking to increase her arousal.

She was in the mood, I had no intention to sleep, so we continued our lovemaking until the sunrise.

[+5000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I would have continued further, but I had another expedition with Helga and Aviada, and after

the event with the shade, I had no intention to skip it. They were my only allies, and the stronger they got, the better.

[Level: 17 Experience: 146150 / 153000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 25

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 13 Intelligence: 17

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 1275 / 1275 Mana: 1621 / 1649]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [50/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Seven

“I can’t believe you’re forbidding me from going to the library!” Helga gasped in anger.

I sighed, but didn’t bother to silence her. We were in the middle of the wilderness, and if there was anyone close enough to hear us, we had bigger problems. “Really,” I said instead. “That’s your big reaction to the school being infiltrated by a necromancer of unknown power?”

“It’s not like I can do anything about that part,” she said, but I was happy to note a blush on her face as she realized her rather selfish perspective. “And are you sure my absence wouldn’t be more attention grabbing anyway,” she added, trying to make it sound like a logical argument, but I could hear the desperation in her tone.

“Come on, booksie,” Aviada cut in, smirking, her arms crossed on her chest. “It wouldn’t kill you to stay away from your real lovers for a few nights.”

“But I just gained a new skill for spell architecture,” Helga murmured, reminding me more of a child than a self-possessed ambitious woman ready to challenge every adversary for her own ambitions. “It’s an unfair sacrifice.”

“And I have to loan my precious sword again and again,” Aviada cut in with an annoying smirk. “We all make sacrifices.”

As much as I liked to see casual banter between them, it also cost us a lot of time. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have limited myself to two quickies to activate the mana regeneration perk before cutting into the wilderness. I took a step back, and two slaps exploded on their bottoms, one for each. “Come on, girls, pay attention,” I said. “We don’t have a lot of time to waste, we need to improve your levels as much as possible in the next few days.”

I had no doubt that anyone else would have received a deriding scoff for daring to mention the potential to gain even a level in a few days, not to mention multiple levels, but since yesterday’s expedition had resulted in three levels, I had a lot of leeway to mention such a thing. I received two shy nods before the girls donned their game faces and turned their attention outward. We were currently in the Soundless Canyon, a place famous for its deadliness even for high-powered parties, so we all needed to be on high alert.

I chose the canyon for two reasons. First, danger meant stronger creatures, which in turn meant quicker leveling. Second, and the more important part was that the canyon was in the opposite direction from our encounter, making it unlikely for us to be caught by the

necromancer scouts that were doubtlessly sent. I would be lying if I hadn't been tempted to hunt those. Their intrusion to the library felt really personal. After all, for better or for worse, that place had been the closest thing to a home for me, not to mention my damnable curse was broken there.

That place was special, and it annoyed me to see it soiled by undead trash.

Still, I was self-aware enough to realize antagonizing a faction of unknown strength and capabilities required more than a sense of annoyance. Yesterday's encounter and my impulsive decision to slay the shade had been rather unforgivable. It was for the best if they had never learned of my identity.

"Helga, this is for you," I said just after I incapacitated another Earth Serpent with a swing of my sword. Those were a dangerous species of creature famous for their ambushes, bursting through the ground with little warning, their jaws strong enough to threaten even the strongest warrior. Luckily, my earth magic allowed me to detect the vibration they created, allowing me to reverse their ambushes easily, making them easy targets. The girls, who long since lost their shock at my prowess of destroying class twelve creatures with a swing, were satisfied with the easy experience.

"Another detection spell?" Helga said even as she sank her dagger into the helpless serpent's brain stem, having long gotten used to delivering finishing hits.

I just nodded as I focused on my palm, creating another ball of ephemeral energy, holding it still for several seconds for Helga to examine. When she nodded I triggered a nova, its presence washing over my body like a warm blanket.

[-24 Mana]

[+1 Biomancy]

"It's better than the last time," she said with a cute frown as she stayed focused on my palm. "At least this time you managed to keep your connection with the life energy for twenty feet before you lost control."

"It's progress. If those dead bastards can throw their rotten energy left and right, I should be able to do the same with the reverse," I said with a shrug even as I conjured another ball, this time trying to put more power in it, but it destabilized and exploded as a ball, washing over us calmly, wasting a lot of mana. Manipulating pure life energy from a distance was much harder than I had been expecting. On a positive note, I felt my exhaustion disappear, and from the

rejuvenated expression on their faces, the girls experienced the same.

[-60 Mana]

“Do you really think that you can copy their approach? Necrotic energy is much more malleable than life energy,” Helga said with a concentrated expression, the one she had whenever she had a complicated problem.

“Of course. I already had a preliminary success, and it has been just a day since I have started working on it,” I said with a scoff. “I can’t believe no one else had tried this.”

Helga slapped my shoulder. “Not everyone has virtually endless mana to throw around.” She stopped for a moment. “Or they have good enough stats to take generic biomancy instead of healing. You’re the only one I know that has a chance to use such a wasteful spell.”

I shrugged. “If it works,” I said with a smirk.

Aviada cut in. “God damn it, Gaius, you’re making me feel like an idiot. Is there anything you can’t do well?”

“I’m not that good at throwing,” I answered modestly. That was one combat area I was planning to neglect.

“What are you talking about,” Aviada answered. “I have seen you hitting a moving target a hundred feet away with a throwing knife.”

“Yeah, but it hit its arm,” I explained. “I was aiming for the eye.” Aviada snorted as she leaned down, busy digging out the fangs of the earth serpent. They weren’t venomous, but they were still valuable, and more importantly, they were easy to carry. After that, we moved on, leaving the carcass behind, even though my heart ached for wasting a small fortune. Unfortunately, we weren’t in a position to hide those valuables.

The next three hours passed nicely. We came across a large nest of Kappa in addition to the serpents, pushing the girls close to a level up. Meanwhile, I continued to work on my detection spell, wasting a lot of mana but improving the spell quite a bit. The significant improvement of my biomancy was a welcome bonus as well.

[-546 Mana]

[+12 Biomancy]

“I think I got it,” I said with a smirk as I converted a nice chunk of mana to life energy and converting it into a stable ball before releasing it, feeling it spread around for several hundred feet without losing connection.

“It seems stable,” Helga said. “It’s a pity that we can’t use necrotic energy to test-” she continued, only to be cut when I suddenly pressed my hand on her lips.

Her annoyed expression left its place to panic when I spoke. “The spell detected something,” I said, quite surprised myself, not to mention feeling panicked.

“Are you sure?” Aviada said as her grip tightened around her sword.

“Not a hundred percent,” I answered. “It’s still a new spell, and there’s no guarantee that it’s working correctly. Before last night, I would’ve written it off as paranoia, but if they are strong enough to actually penetrate the school, we can’t afford to write it off as a coincidence.”

“We’re not going to ignore this, are we?” Aviada asked, looking ready to push forward already.

“Can we take the risk?” Helga asked. “The last time we almost died, and they underestimated us.”

I understood Helga’s point. We had just got rid of a sizable force, and if they were being led by a half-decent commander, they would be on alert. “I really don’t want to, but we can’t afford to ignore it. The situation is worse than I first thought, and getting rid of that shade and yesterday’s team might have galvanized them into early action. I need to check to make sure.”

“You meant we, right?” Aviada said, her tone sharp.

“Unfortunately, no,” I said even as I passed her sword back to Aviada. “I would move faster if I’m alone.” She looked like she was about to complain, but I waved my hand. “No, we can’t afford to fight. We’re going to retreat first and you’re going back to the school. I don’t want you to be out in case they get suspicious. They are already in the school, so they can check the records to see who was outside when they lost the battle.”

Both Aviada and Helga looked dissatisfied, but they were sensible enough to understand the reasoning. “Keep the sword at least,” Aviada said, trying to pass the sword to me once more.

“No, that’s too recognizable. They already have spies in the school, I don’t want them targeting you,” I said decisively, which put a small blush on Aviada’s face. “Moreover, this time, I’m not planning to fight but scout the opposition, so it won’t be necessary.”

I looked at my surroundings as I escorted the girls outside the canyon, not wanting to keep them near the event. I was confident in my abilities, and even if I was detected, I could trigger a landslide to escape. The natural limits and concealment that made the place a pain in the ass when fighting against the monsters were a bonus if I suddenly found myself against another undead horde. However, if I was forced to that point, trying to protect the girls while trying to run would have been too much even for me.

Soon, we arrived at the protection of the wards once again. “Do you want us to stay close, just in case,” asked Helga with a worried expression.

“Thanks for the offer, but I want you two to be visibly away from here,” I explained as I put my arm on her waist. “But I appreciate the offer,” I added, pulling her close for a kiss, and Helga responded enthusiastically, her body smashing against mine. It would be a lie if I said I wasn’t tempted for another quickie, especially since Aviada was watching us with hungry eyes, no doubt willing to join the moment we started. Unfortunately, I had a bad feeling about the undead presence, and didn’t want to delay anymore.

So, reluctantly, I pulled away from Helga, and after a goodbye kiss from Aviada -no less passionate- I was walking toward the canyon once more. It was not a good sign to come across undead wherever I walked. There was clearly a bigger plan, dangerous enough to target the school itself.

Though, as much as I wanted to protect the library because of my emotional entanglement, I was also aware I could be revealed. Earning some goodwill beforehand just in case would help immensely.

As I moved deeper into the canyon, I turned my attention back to more immediate concerns. As I moved, an oppressive feeling of death and decay filled the air, so much that I had to cast a warding spell to protect myself from the uncomfortable sensation while simultaneously hiding my presence.

[-12 Mana]

[+1 Biomancy]

Sensing that I was close to the center, I didn’t dare to cast my detection spell, afraid that necromancers would detect its presence. Hence the reason I was almost caught when a black robed figure suddenly appeared around the corner, forcing me to duck behind a large rock, glad that their presence had driven the monsters away.

I watched with a frown as the necromancer picked a central location and started drawing a large hermetic circle. Both the design and the runes themselves were unfamiliar, but the energy that was spreading from it was even more disgusting than the necrotic energy. Thankfully, it was rather muted, possibly because it wasn't activated yet.

The necromancer left the area after it was completed. I cast a detection spell to make sure I was alone in the area before walking closer to the array, trying to examine it through my arcana abilities. But the moment my mana touched one of the runes, it awakened, and it started invading my spell. I forcefully terminated the spell, and expelled a large amount of mana to make sure corruption didn't invade my body.

[-245 Mana]

Of course, such a flare of magic had doubtlessly alerted the necromancers to my presence, so I dashed toward the canyon walls once more, this time climbing upward several feet before creating a cave on the surface, one that closed behind me the moment I stepped in, only a small crack remaining.

I watched as three robed figures dashed towards the opening, their hands already glowing with the sickly gray of their death magic. "What was that surge?" asked one of them as he looked around carefully. He was the one that built the circle. "Are we under attack?"

I felt annoyed. I put myself into a deadly danger because of a moment's carelessness, and I had no illusions about my hiding place. Thankfully, my luck held up, and one of the others spoke after looking around cursorily. "Don't worry, the leftovers are obviously corrupted. Lictus screwed up, again," he said, his derision was clear.

"Say that again!" the first one bellowed, clearly unhappy about the insult.

With that, two necromancers argued for a while until the third one cut in. "Enough," he called angrily. "Stop acting like children. We still have several nodes to create."

"But-" one of them said until the leader cut him off once again.

"Enough," he said, and continued when the other seemed ready to cut it off. "If you want to explain to the boss why the trap is not ready, go ahead, keep arguing. I'm sure he will be understanding."

Referring to their mysterious boss solved the situation quickly. They stopped bickering and started examining the runic node with a rapid discussion between them. When they determined

the array was working as it was supposed to, they disappeared in different directions, too busy to ask why a perfectly working array had resulted in a surge.

Before leaving my hiding spot, I needed to decide what to do. The array was clearly dangerous, so much so that if I hadn't already positioned myself as an enemy of them, I might have chosen to leave. If my situation was ever revealed, it wouldn't have taken a genius to match my presence with their recent setbacks. Since I had already declared war, weakening them further was an obvious choice.

Once again I walked to the magical node, examining it carefully. I had learned from my mistakes, so instead of pushing my magic into the array, I examined it passively. With my limited time, I wasn't able to discover a lot about the array, but I managed to discover how to track its connection to other nodes.

It left me with another challenge, namely, how to take action. Destroying it outright was not an option because it would have alerted the necromancers. Deciphering it might have been a viable choice if I had enough time and access to the library, but I didn't know when it would be triggered, so that was not a viable option as well.

In the end, I decided to learn from the example, and created a small explosive array linked to the control one. The explosive array was a small but ingenious combination of arcana and earth elemental effects. Arcana to maintain the connection and trigger, earth elemental to destroy the foundation of the node, therefore harming the array.

There was one problem, I didn't know whether destroying one node would be enough to hamper its effects.

Since the necromancers were working hard on its construction, it would be foolish for me to assume that the loss of one node would destroy the integrity of the whole array. Luckily, I was able to discover the connection between the arrays, so finding the others wouldn't have been difficult.

Decision made, I started following the ephemeral lines of connection between the nodes, occasionally avoiding patrols while I planted my explosive traps near each node, each concealed under the nodes' intimidating corrupting glow.

I managed to trap almost twenty nodes when the necromancers suddenly dashed toward the center of the array. I followed them instead of doing the smart thing, as I couldn't help but feel curious about the aim of this huge array, trusting my abilities to keep me hidden in the canyon.

As I moved, I trapped several more nodes, much easier now that the patrols were pulling to the central location.

When I arrived at the center of the array, I was suddenly glad that I decided to stay, because even seeing the complicated patterns of the central array gave me a better understanding of wardmaking. It was truly a masterpiece. Too bad that it was developed by the necromancers and I had to destroy it.

Then, just before I could activate the array, I felt its presence disappearing, which reinforced my expectation that it was a trap. The question was, for whom?

The answer I received a minute later, when two figures dashed into the canyon, one unfamiliar figure wrapped in several arcana glows as it escaped, carrying a book in hand as he dashed away. But my attention was grabbed by the figure that was following it. It was the head librarian, covered in lightning, her anger visible even from a great distance as she pursued.

Shocked by her appearance, I forgot to trigger my explosives until I felt the array stirring, its softness belying the dangerous threat it presented.

I didn't know if it aimed to kill the head librarian, or something worse, but either way, I knew that I couldn't have allowed it. "Librarian! Be careful!" I shouted even as I activated my explosives, hoping that it would be enough...

[Level: 17 Experience: 146150 / 153000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 25

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 13 Intelligence: 17

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 1275 / 1275 Mana: 1621 / 1649]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [64/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Eight

My shout of warning arrived at the last second, because a moment later, twelve figures donned in black robes stepped into the opening, their hands already glowing with necromantic energy. The stirrings of the array increased while twelve webs of energy spread, each centered on a necromancer. Then, they connected, creating a cage with a domineering presence, impossible to escape even someone as formidable as the librarian.

Meanwhile, the one that had been escaping from the librarian had stopped just outside of the cage, showing, a blob of purple energy coalescing around him, with a distinct sense of aggressiveness that the cage lacked. However, despite all, it wasn't satisfaction in his eyes but anger. "Kill the intruder!" he shouted even as he pushed his energy to the cage, his attack amplified greatly by the array itself.

However, the attack flickered, its structure losing its balance halfway thanks to the destruction of some of the nodes. Combined with my early warning, the librarian managed to react in time. She raised her hand, and a wall of light appeared between the attack and her.

My eyes widened, because I didn't know what she had used, not just the specific spell, but the category of the spell itself. It wasn't arcana, elemental, or life energy, but something completely different. Whatever it was, however, it was far more potent than anything I could achieve. Even with some of the nodes destroyed, the necromantic attack was enough to erase me from existence just by a glancing touch, but the wall managed to resist its presence just with several deep cracks, protecting the librarian behind completely as well.

Even more impressively, a wave of her hand transformed the wall into an arrow, which slammed onto the cage mercilessly, making it shimmer dangerously. Unfortunately, the cage was too strong to be destroyed in one move, and it recovered after a momentarily dimming.

I wanted to watch more, as even a glance at such a high-level confrontation taught me a lot about magical combat. However, the sound of arrows cutting through the air took precedence, forcing me to turn away, only to see almost a hundred skeleton archers aiming at me with a second volley. I cast a wind wall, knocking the arrows away. Then, without lowering my hand, I flicked my fingers, and sending a low-level fireball in the middle of the formation. It wasn't strong enough to destroy the skeletons, but the same couldn't be said for their bows, their strings turning ash instantly, removing the danger from the stray arrows.

[-35 Mana]

Too bad that the skeleton archers were the smallest of my challenges. Behind them, I could see seven figures already casting spells, their bodies burning with necromantic energy. They didn't feel as strong as the ones currently managing the array, but they were strong enough to be a threat. Though, they weren't as scary as the three hulking figures appeared next to them. Three bone dragons.

Under the threat of a combined magical and melee assault thick enough to overwhelm me, the solution was obvious. I slammed my hand on the floor, triggering an earth elemental spell, raising a huge dust wave. I was already casting a second spell as the dust rose, creating an identical copy of my life signature, then a third spell to hide my own, before I started running away.

[-26 Mana]

[+3 Biomancy]

As I departed, several of necrotic energy passed the space I had been occupying just moments ago, but one of them had a worse aim than the others, and his bolt of energy moved wide, hitting my shoulder instead.

[-147 HP]

I couldn't help but wince as a horrible pain pulsed in my body, and I lost a tenth of my health, but I gritted my teeth and continued to run away. I didn't cast a spell to hide its effect, afraid that they would notice the discrepancy between my life signature and the mana flare. It was the same reason I had been relying on my physical power only to escape.

The curtain of dust was thick enough to cut their sight for a long while. Unfortunately, they were smart enough to realize the problem in just a few seconds. "It's a decoy! Find him!" shouted one of them even as their attack shape changed, using wide waves that swept the floor instead of bolts.

Luckily, I was already next to a large stone. With my agility and speed, it took a second for me to rapidly climb through its rough surface, avoiding their assault. And if there was one good thing about being in the middle of a necromancer camp, I didn't have to worry about any living creature. Their defenses had since long secured the area.

A sudden downpour of rain suddenly appeared in the opening, suppressing the dust, but it was too late for them. I was already hidden from their view. "Where is he?" called one of them.

“He is clearly hiding! Find him!” shouted the leader once more. I continued running away, confident in my success not only because of my stealth skills, but also thanks to the blanketing effect created by the battle between the librarian and her ambushers.

I stalled for a moment, trying to decide what to do next. I had underestimated the presence of the enemy. Even with a dozen of them locked in a battle with the librarian, they still had enough in reserve to completely overwhelm me. I could escape easily under the coverage of the librarian’s battle, but its final result was still in doubt. The librarian was stronger than I had estimated, but so was the ambushers with the support from the arrays. If I ran away, there was no guarantee who would be the victor.

However, facing them directly was not an option either, not when I had to defeat seven necromancers, three bone dragons, and numerous other critters... Luckily, they had other points of vulnerability, and I was thoroughly concealed. I stopped for a moment, using my perception to identify the location of the other nodes, which was shining distinctively in their active state.

I moved to the most distant location before starting to destroy the nodes. Destruction of the first four went unnoticed, but when the fifth node fell apart under my magical attack, a loud cry escaped the mouth of their leader. “He’s destroying the nodes in the northeast, you idiots!” he cried in warning, his voice enhanced magically.

Since he was kind enough to alert me, I dashed away before they could arrive, moving to the west section of the array, and destroyed three more until he managed to raise an alarm. “He’s attacking the east now, you idiots! He slipped away from your attack. Spread out and prevent him from destroying it!”

I stopped destroying the nodes once again, but this time, I didn’t run away, instead, climbed on top of a large rock that was towering above the only feasible path from the northeast section, holding as much as mana as I could without glowing like a lighthouse.

When two necromancers and a bone dragon appeared on the opening, accompanied by a horde of skeletons, I was ready. I waited as the dragon passed and the skeleton brigade started to pass. Necromancers were in the middle, standing next to each other, mana shields shining in their hands, ready to destroy any magical attack, their eyes dancing wildly.

Unfortunately, they trusted the skeletons to guard their immediate surroundings. So, when I jumped down from the rock when they were directly under me, they were too late to react. I swiped the sword once, and one head flew off, blood spraying wildly. “Goodbye,” I said even as I swung my sword, ready to decapitate the second one.

That didn't work as well as I intended. I succeeded in decapitating part, but this time, there was no blood spray, just a decayed neck, made of bone and sinews.

"Try again," cackled the flying head even as the body lifted its staff and slammed me with the energy he created by breaking the shield. I threw myself back, rolling with the attack, doing my best to avoid slashes of the skeletons gathering around me, but with limited success. Luckily, I still had HP to spare.

[-97 HP]

I couldn't help but feel excited as I found myself face to face with a lich supported by a significant army. The body of the lich raised its hand and sent a flare, no doubt summoning his compatriots. "Perfect," I murmured. Not only I had to face a full-blown lich, a bone dragon that was currently charging toward me, and almost a hundred skeleton warriors, but also I had to finish it before the reinforcements arrived.

One good thing about it was with my position revealed, I didn't have to pull back. I pushed a generous blob of life energy into my sword, making it glow brightly, enough to make the skeletons around me a step back, giving me the opportunity I needed.

[-120 Mana]

[+2 Biomancy]

I dashed forward toward the lich's head, aware that my makeshift enchantment wouldn't last more than a few seconds. My sword danced like a snake, the skeletons helpless against my master melee skill, especially when a good strike was enough to unravel their cursed existence thanks to the enchantment.

The body of the lich positioned itself between me and the head, its full-frame glowing with the necrotic experience. From the unstable way it glowed, I didn't have a good impression of what was awaiting me. I lunged forward even as I waved my empty hand, desperately trying to create a brand new biomancy spell.

The purple energy was already pulsating as the beginning of an overwhelming wave when I pushed my sword into its heart, using it to inject more life energy into its body.

[-673 Mana]

[+1 Biomancy]

My desperate innovation attempt succeeded only partially, turning its body into a pile of ash, but its spell stayed partially intact, hitting my body violently.

[-364 HP]

Being in the ground zero of a lich's desperate ultimate attack was not fun, I noted. I could see its head a few feet away, unaffected by its area-effect spell, unlike the skeletons, moving with a renewed energy. It was one of the most annoying aspects of fighting against Necromancers, they were free to use their area effect spells without fearing hurting their minions, as the necrotic energy enhanced them instead.

I cast a simple arcana bolt to its head, which fell apart easily, signaling that its soul had used the opportunity to escape. Their ability to send their soul back to their soul container was one of the things that transformed the challenge level from difficult to nightmare.

There was a limit to the range of effectiveness of the soul container, and under normal conditions, though still measured in miles. I might have searched for it under better circumstances, but the sound of bone dragon closing in didn't allow me to chase such luxuries.

Such as running away from an enraged bone dragon. The only good thing about destroying the necromancers was that the bone dragon had no controller anymore, so it was limited to blindly chasing me. I dashed back to the rocky part of the canyon, cutting and weaving through the skeleton warriors, once again using my melee skill to maximum benefit, running to my maximum capability even if I had to take a few blows I would have avoided normally.

It was well worth it, because the bone dragon was just a step away when I stepped into the passage, leaving it to crash violently against the thick stone wall before starting to dig with all of its undead single-mindedness. Secure, I used my biomancy to great effect once more, this time to heal myself.

[-320 Mana]

[+286 HP]

The agonizing pain had turned into an annoying buzz. I was glad to see that I had almost reached a parity between my mana spent and hitpoint recovered. I started running, but not before I left another decoy, more than enough to trick the mindless bone dragon. Then, I created a weaker, but still noticeable decoy, and sent it toward the south, hoping that it would distract the others.

Then, I sent a pulse of biomancy energy to detect their locations, to make a better plan about the next step. I couldn't help but smile excitedly as I realized that in their hurry to protect the arrays, the undead army had moved toward the periphery, leaving the center open.

Big mistake on their part.

Thanks to the limited mental capabilities of most of my enemies, it wasn't much of a challenge to avoid them, though occasionally I had to use some elemental tricks to create shortcuts, my mana surges obscured by the ever-increasing effects of battle in the center of the array.

When I arrived at the center, I met with an amazing sight. The librarian was still trapped in the middle of the array, defending herself with her unique light magic and using the same magic to batter on the walls of her prison instead. She looked exhausted, but it didn't alarm me, because her attackers were in an even worse state, furiously trying to keep the array stable. Even their leader was exhausted, more focused on stabilizing the array rather than trying to attack.

Still, a battle was an uncertain thing, and there was still a chance that the librarian might lose. I decided to tip the balance in her favor more. The necromancers were too focused on the threat she represented, so they failed to notice my presence as I sneaked toward them. My target noticed my presence as I swung my sword, but it was too late. With his focus and his magic dedicated to stabilizing the damaged array, before he could make a sound, his head was already gone.

"It's an ambush," shouted the leader as he looked at me before he sent a warning flare. "Everyone, come back!" he ordered, his voice enhanced. If the supporting army returned from all angles, they would trap me in place, making it impossible for me to escape alone.

Luckily, I wasn't alone. Even better, with the death of one of them, they had to focus all their attention on the ward just to prevent themselves from burning. Combined wards were dangerous when things were going bad. The librarian was smart enough to see the opportunity, and cast a much brighter spell, this time directly to attack rather than a modified defense spell.

The result was spectacular. Her prison shimmered and weakened, looking like it was about to shatter. I cast a fireball to leverage the opportunity, injuring two more necromancers enough for them to lose their control, burning up as a result.

[-65 Mana]

I was hoping that the battle was about to end, but then the leader proved that there was a reason for his post. "Cancel the prison!" he shouted, and before I could take the opportunity to

kill another necromancer, the librarian's prison shattered. Meanwhile, the reinforcements arrived in the form of five necromancers and three bone dragons.

Luckily, I had reinforcements of my own. But when I looked at the eyes of the librarian, I could see the exhaustion dancing in her eyes. The trap took more than I had been expecting. I looked around, and detected the east section was the weakest. I gestured her to attack that side, while I turned toward the leader, gathering as much as mana as I could, turning it into life energy.

It wasn't surprising that between the librarian and me, they decided to attack me first, reasonably taking me as the easier target, while sending the bone dragons to delay the librarian, supported by a few necromancers. That was a mistake from their end, because even exhausted, the librarian was able to deflect them without even slowing down.

"You have messed with the wrong person," said the leader as he walked toward me, his hands burning with necrotic energy, his intention was clear. He looked confident, understandable considering I was surrounded by ten necromancers and a lot of skeletons. Unluckily for them, most of them were still exhausted by operating the array.

The leader realized his mistake when he realized the spell in my hands was growing without a limit. He threw a bolt of energy to me hurriedly, but it was too late. I let my spell, the strongest I had cast to date. It was a biomancy nova, filling the canyon with life energy.

[-1230 Mana]

[+5 Biomancy]

Despite almost completely emptying my mana, the spell wasn't as strong as I would have liked. The skeletons were all destroyed, their weak structure unable to resist the area effect spell. The necromancers were, unfortunately, stayed alive -for a given value considering their occupation- but they were distracted, not to mention shocked by my spell. So, when I followed it with another dust spell to hide from their view, their first reflex was to shield themselves, ready to protect themselves.

That gave me the time to follow the opening the librarian had created, saving me from the envelopment. Soon, I caught up with the librarian. "Good, you managed to get away," she said, but when I noticed a slight slurring in her tone, I realized that the escape would be even more difficult than I had first assumed.

We dashed away at the full speed, hoping to avoid our pursuers, at least avoiding them enough to recover some mana, as currently, I was running on fumes. Though, a smile appeared on my

face when I received a notification the moment the last skeleton disappeared in my field of view.

[Deadly Departure: Rescue a damsel in distress from a deadly ambush in a great personal risk, impressing her greatly in the process. +2000 Experience, +2 Speed, +2 Charisma]

It was shaping out to be an interesting adventure...

[Level: 17 Experience: 148150 / 153000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 27

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 15 Intelligence: 17

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 967 / 1309 Mana: 93 / 1683]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Trying to escape from a horde of undead while trying to protect the famous head librarian of the Silver Spires wasn't what I had been expecting when I woke up, but I took it in stride. I was getting used to the curveballs the life was throwing to my way.

I raised my hand after we took a turn, mana gathering at my palm. The librarian rose her hand in an instant, her fingers glowing brightly, her expression threatening despite her exhaustion. I felt the hairs on the back of my neck rise in fear as I realized my mistake. Casting a spell on a situational ally afraid of her situation wasn't the safest thing to do.

Luckily, the situation was dangerous enough that rather than blasting me directly, she chose to threaten me. "Calm down, I'm trying to mask your presence," I said even as I pointed my own body, and let the biomancy-based spell to cover my body and mask my life presence. The spell took hold much easier thanks to my skill increase, while the librarian's eyes grew in surprise.

[-15 Mana]

"You can cast it on me as well," she said after a moment's hesitation. I appreciated her quick response, as I could hear the undead moving once again. I flexed my mana once again, ignoring the sense of exhaustion that filled my being. Still, I forced myself to cast another spell, this time creating two fake life signatures dashing out of the canyon, directly toward the school.

[-36 Mana]

"Let's move," I said, but rather than dashing outside the canyon, I turned back.

She followed me for a while, but I could see the doubt on her face as we moved deeper into the canyon. "We shouldn't move too deep," she said, though her tone was already reminiscent of order despite her exhaustion.

"Why?" I asked, more to highlight the fact that I wasn't her subordinate at the moment rather than actually learning her reasoning, which was obvious. She wanted to use the opportunity to slip away from the canyon before the necromancers could establish a cordon, not wanting it to turn into an endurance battle when her mana was so low. Of course, she didn't know that, for the next several hours, I had the absolute advantage thanks to my mana regeneration.

And if that gave her the impression that I was stronger than I actually was, all the better.

Upon being questioned, her displeasure was clear. After all, back in the school, she was famous

for her unbending ways, not just against the staff and the students, but also against the other faculty members. It was evidence of just how exhausted she was that she actually chose to explain. "We have already ditched them thanks to your spell. That's the best opportunity for us to get away from the canyon before they realize our trick and envelop the canyon."

"I don't think that'll work," I countered. "When we step off of the canyon, we'll be out in the open. They have too many disposable soldiers for us to be confident about ditching them safely."

"At least we would have a chance," she countered, her anger intensified. "Once they return and envelop the canyon, we'll be sitting ducks, and they'll find us long before we could recover enough mana."

Even with her exhaustion and her thankfulness about being saved, I could see that her patience was running thin. "Long before you could gather enough mana," I countered with a smirk on my face, mostly thanks to my subterfuge, because I was trembling inside.

"You can recover mana faster," she stated, not bothering to hide her shock, while I nodded, doing my best to look nonchalant. Her shock was not misplaced, as according to everything I read, mana regeneration had always been an insurmountable challenge for the mages, restricting their leveling efficiency greatly by forcing them to rely on warrior specializations. "When will your mana refill?"

Under her careful gaze, I felt like an animal to be dissected. Even if the mana regeneration wasn't my biggest secret, revealing it to someone whom I didn't have the slightest leverage against was dangerous, especially that someone was significantly stronger. Still, since I had already taken the step, there was no reason to hold back. "About half an hour," I said, glad that I had the perk active from both Aviada and Helga. Sometimes, being prepared helped.

She smiled, and for a moment, her harsh expression melted, revealing the beauty hidden under her prickly demeanor. "That's good," she said. "Our survival is almost guaranteed now."

I responded to her with my best smile, using the full extent of my charisma and my charm, even though the rational part of my mind cursed me for daring to something as stupid as trying to seduce the head librarian. The horny part of my brain, on the other hand, showed its full support, especially with my memory bringing forth the amazing sight I had observed when she was in the shower.

Some things were worth the risk, I decided.

We moved in silence for a few minutes, then I gestured her to stop when I noticed a perfect hideout. “Why do we stop here?” she asked.

“It’s the perfect defensible spot,” I explained even as I moved to the nearest wall and started to draw a rune. “The entrance is small enough to prevent the bone dragons from entering, and while some of the walls are a bit thin, we can reinforce them with runes, which will also function as an escape route. Moreover, we could easily trap the path leading to the entrance, and the cave itself is large enough that they can’t force us out with area-effect spells.”

“That’s an awful lot of enchantments,” she said doubtfully. “Even with your regeneration, can you really do all that before they find us?”

Her suspicion was reasonable. After all, the enchantments I had mentioned wasn’t the simplest in terms of mana consumption, not to mention the great variety we required to implement them successfully. However, thanks to my excessive stats, I had a mana pool quite a bit larger than my level justified.

Rather than answering, I started drawing the first runes on the walls of the cave to hide our life signature as well as partially suppressing mana fluctuations. It would not allow us to freely throw fireballs and lightning bolts, but we would be able to charge the defensive runes faster than a tortuous’ crawl.

After some complicated mental calculations, I started working on the defensive enchantments. “That’s an interesting rune,” she murmured as I draw the first reinforcement rune on the wall to prevent the walls from being collapsed with a swipe of a bone-dragon. “It lacks an internal balancing component, but you’re balancing it with your own magic,” she added, with just the slightest doubt. After all, stabilizing a rune was beginner stuff, which made my choice a bit weird at the first glance.”

I didn’t say anything, but focused on drawing the second rune, once again balancing it with my own magic, but pulling just a dash from the first one. “Interesting,” she murmured.

“Impressive perception,” I said, even as I couldn’t help but feel slightly bummed. I was hoping to impress her after the full scheme had been completed, though I guessed that was a bit arrogant. She wasn’t one of the most famous mages of the Empire for no reason.

“Not as impressive as trying to build such a large defensive scheme without self-balancing nodes, relying their magical weight on each other to achieve balance,” she said, for once, sounding impressed. “It requires more finesse to establish, but it would be more stable.”

Genius,” she continued, easily summarizing the benefits of my approach.

“I can’t take the full credit,” I said with a dismissive wave. “The idea belongs to a friend, I just came with the practical application for it.”

“I would like to meet that friend someday,” she said in a casual tone.

Too casual, even, but I didn’t comment on it. For all of her direct reputation, she apparently could play it slowly as well. It was an invitation for me to talk about who I was, but in a way that I could easily ignore without being rude. I chose to ignore, as I had already revealed more than I was comfortable with. “Maybe someday,” I answered in a similar easygoing manner as I finished another rune, feeling a sweat sliding down on my forehead. The array cost significantly less in terms of mana compared to the traditional approach, but required intense concentration when finalizing it.

My esteemed guest chose to sit a nearby rock, carefully examining me as I engraved the array, her gray eyes shining with deep concentration despite her clear exhaustion. Under her careful gaze, I carefully finished the last node before placing the last of the connection, then let out a sigh, letting myself breathe freely once more.

[-476 Mana]

[Mana: 531 / 1683]

The array cost me a good chunk of mana, but funny enough, my mana was around four hundred when I started establishing it, meaning I actually managed to recover mana while establishing a defensive formation. The mana regeneration perk was truly unbelievable.

After taking a few deep breaths to relax, I started drawing the next set of defensive arrays, not wanting to lose any time. She looked at me with no small amount of shock, clearly aware of just how much mana I had spent on the array. I just shrugged with a smile.

“Who are you?” she whispered, finally unable to resist the temptation, but her tone had a slight alarm as well.

I couldn’t help but stiffen. I understood her reasoning, as I had shown, and continuing to show, an impressive number of nonstandard abilities, making her wary even after I had saved her life. I guessed that from the extra effort I had to put in the ambush, she knew that I was weaker than her. She would have just cut through the ambush and freed herself and the hostage. But I was revealing too many diverse abilities to make her feel comfortable.

If it was someone else, or her under different circumstances, I would have just ignored the question, or outright rejected it, abandoning them to their fate. She was different, not because she hid an amazing body underneath her robes —though it didn't hurt— but because the necromancers were clearly stronger than I had first assumed —both in and out of the school— and she was the only one I could trust to be against them. It meant that sooner or later, our paths would cross. It would be more useful if she had good feelings toward me.

“That’s a complicated question,” I murmured, which, technically, was honest and true. Before that fateful day, who I was was obvious, but every day after that, it was getting more and more blurred. Just a week ago, I was scurrying around like a rat as I tried to peek on the students, but here, in the cave, accompanied by one of the strongest mages of the Silver Spires, preparing to face against a horde of undead led by more than a dozen necromancers... The answer was getting more blurry than I had expected. “But you can say that I’m trying to find myself,” I answered.

“Interesting place to look,” she answered, and for the first time, I saw a genuine smile of amusement on her face.

“Can’t argue with the results,” I answered with a shrug even as I drew yet another rune to establish a defensive trench at the entrance, littered with several fire and earth runes. I didn’t want the cave to be filled with the skeletons. “The school has interesting opportunities for clarity,” I murmured, though I looked at her pointedly, revealing yet another secret to her against my better judgment. I hoped that it wouldn’t explode to my face.

To her credit, her only reaction was a widening of her eyes, understanding my point. With my abilities, if I had been a genuine student, everyone would have recognized me, and she already knew the rest of the teaching staff and notable guards. Which left only a few options, I was either a stowaway, or I was a staff that was hiding his abilities, both having rather dangerous implications considering no one had noticed my presence.

“Yeah, neither the guards nor the wards really work to keep a sneaky intruder out,” I said, answering her concerns before she could answer. Yes, my role as staff had given me a big advantage, but even without that, I could sneak in with half of my current abilities.

“Maybe you can share some ideas to improve security,” she offered, revealing another benefit of my last statement. For her, the security of the school was more important than delving deeper into my identity. It was a small advantage, but an advantage nonetheless.

“I would like that,” I said even as I put the finishing touches for yet another magical exploding

trap. “But let’s handle our current problem first. Our biggest threat is their necrotic bolts. Those hurt a lot, and even with our defenses, there’s no guarantee that we can avoid if all of them attack at the same time.”

“True, but why do I feel like you already have an idea?” she answered.

I smirked in response. “Not a workable one,” I answered with a frown. “Not yet, at least,” I added before crouching next to her and quickly scribbling a few symbols on the ground. “I’m trying to establish a deflection field based on life energy, and using arcana to shape and stabilize, but I’m still having problems.”

“Arcana, elemental, and biomancy,” she murmured. “That’s an interesting selection.”

“It works for me,” I said, dismissing that line of inquiry. We didn’t have time, and even if we did, I had already revealed more than I was comfortable with. My leveling strategy could wait for the second date. “Do you have any idea how I can make this ward work?” I added, deflecting her question.

That launched a rather lengthy discussion about the comparative advantages of different ward schemes. I managed to surprise her more than a few times with my innovative approaches, but it was nothing compared to how much I had learned. Even if warding was not a focus area for her, her experience still towered mine an incredible amount, allowing me to figure out a lot of new applications for my stationary magic. Luckily, with my intelligence and wisdom scores, it had been rather easy to memorize every single word that left her mouth. Her words were truly treasures, especially considering she was the caretaker of the —second— biggest information repository of the world.

[Tempting Tutoring: Impress a sexy educator with your impressive learning capabilities. +1000 Experience, +3 Intelligence]

I could see the signs of her approval, but the system’s confirmation was always welcome, though three points increase from that was a surprise. I knew she was impressed because she holding herself back, revealing more theorems and secrets in half an hour than I was able to dig out in the library since my awakening, though, considering her survival was highly dependent on my performance, maybe it wasn’t that surprising.

A while later, I stood up, drawing another set of runes to establish the nodes even as I continued to talk with her. I was moving, because my mana finally recovered, and I didn’t want to waste a second of regeneration. More defensive encampments we had, the better. Of course, I took

time to heal both her and myself to full health.

[+310 HP]

[-245 Mana]

Soon, my new array took shape, creating a subtly glowing wall of arcana energy, but with the warm sensation of life magic. I just hoped that it would work better than we had hoped against the necrotic energy. After being hit by their attack several times, I didn't fancy struggling to defend a chokehold under a rain of their disgusting death bolts.

"So, why exactly you were chasing that guy with such anger," I asked even as I started working on the escape tunnel, in case things got too bad too fast.

"He stole a precious book of mine," she answered.

"It must be really precious," I answered even as my mind shifted to the vault. After failing to use a shade, it must be the next strategy. "By the way, I remember having to kill a shade yesterday, which, now that I'm thinking about it, was suspiciously close to the library, and was about to enter the faculty residence. Do you think it might be about that?" I said. At this point, considering everything else I had revealed, it was hardly a secret.

"Maybe-" she started, but before she could say anything else, a rumbling sound reached our ears, most likely from a bone dragon trying to push himself through a tight spot. "They are here," she said.

"About time," I answered even as I squeezed my fists, excited to test my new toys. "How is your mana situation? Do you think you can defend yourself here alone?"

"I have enough mana for a few big spells," she answered, though her expression confused. "Considering they wouldn't be stupid enough to push through the defenses blindly, I should be able to resist for several minutes without trouble. Why?"

"I was thinking about some creative greeting."

[Level: 17 Experience: 149150 / 153000]

Strength: 18 Charisma: 27

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 15 Intelligence: 20

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 21

HP: 1309 / 1309 Mana: 1685 / 1734]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty

I could feel the Librarian's eyes on me as I walked out of the cave, moving as fast as I could while I could still stay concealed. The biomancy-based detection trick I had figured earlier worked wonders, allowing me to avoid the horde that was circling around the cave. Their discovery of the cave was inconvenient, but also inevitable. After layering that many defenses, it was hard to hide.

The undead and the necromancers approached the cave in a disorderly way. The undead horde was as fresh as ever, but the necromancers were showing the signs of exhaustion, both mental and magical. Despite that, their confidence was obvious as they moved to their destination, thinking that their victory was a given. Even better, only around half of them were a part of the attack force.

I slipped through the cracks in their formation, then started searching for my target. I had arranged the defenses of the cave for a full assault, and with their numerical disadvantage, I doubted that they could crack it without sacrificing their resurrected monster horde, and since they think that they were in the cusp of victory, I doubted that they would be that wasteful. So, I was calm as I searched for my target, the leader of this little ambush.

I found him on the back of the formation, sitting on the shoulders of a bone dragon, raining orders to other necromancers. He sounded panicked, which was understandable. He seemed like a middle-management type, making it likely that his small army was a loan, or a part of his mission, and he had to explain the loss of so many high-level necromancers against two targets. I doubted anyone that ruled a band of necromancers could be classified as merciful.

So, his death was basically charity, I noted with a smirk as I stayed hidden just twenty feet away under the shadow of a rock, magically hiding my signature, waiting for the perfect moment to attack. I stood still as I watched him order a probing assault, mindless skeletons triggering the first layer of defenses before disintegrating among a flash of fire and earth. He frowned before calling the second and third waves, this time in different formations, minimizing the impact of the explosions but not giving them a chance to recover as well. The initial ambush was not a stroke of luck, I realized. He was really proficient when it came to tactics.

Too bad that he was wrong about the game we were playing. I waited until he was focused on talking with yet another necromancer, his attention split between the formation and the discussion, before I dashed forward, as silent as a shadow, my sword in hand. I was already behind him when I flared my magic, coating the sword with a thick layer of arcana energy,

sharpening the edge to an unimaginable degree for a split second.

That split second was all I needed to decapitate him. His eyes widened in shock as the blood spurted, showing that, unlike my other target, he wasn't a lich. Just to be sure, I drove the sword to his head and let out a thick rush of flames, bright enough to melt the sword while turned his head into ashes.

[-142 Mana]

The biggest threat was gone, but that didn't mean that I could relax. The other necromancer who was getting orders stood frozen, unable to react for a moment. Then, he opened his mouth, whether to cast a spell or to call for help, I would never know, because I stuffed my melting sword into his mouth, silencing him forever. It wasn't the simplest way to die, but also, they deserved it.

I grabbed the sack of the leader and checked to see whether the book was in there. Since it was precious enough to be bait, I didn't want to risk it leaving back. I even flicked it open, but unfortunately, it was in an alphabet I had never seen before. Pity, as I would have liked to know what the book was about.

My assassination attempt wasn't exactly silent. Most of the necromancers turned to face me, their hurried attacks cutting through the air. I responded to them with a deluge of magic missiles, it wouldn't hurt more than sting, but after my previous displays, it would force them to the defensive.

[-43 Mana]

While they were trying to conjure shields, I dashed forward, hitting the group on the flank, using their allies as a barrier. Fire and earth and life energy flew from my hands boundlessly, forcing them to defensive, burning one or two of them. It was aggressive and wasteful, but defeating all of them was a pipe dream, the best thing I could do was to intimidate them enough to pull back while I regenerated mana once again. The assault took a minute, but draining me almost to the limit.

[-1300 Mana]

Just as I was planning to pull back, a bright explosion of light exploded from the cave. A huge ray exploded from the cave, cutting through the horde without losing a spark, and disintegrating two necromancers in the process. I looked to see the librarian standing at the entrance of the cave, her robe dancing with the wind, like she was a part of the legend.

I hoped that our enemies were too distracted to notice the paleness of her face. I knew for a certainty that she had used the last scrap of her energy in that spell, and was struggling to stand on her feet.

But after failing the ambush, suffering under a series of counter-ambushes, losing their leader, and pincered between two formidable mages, the morale of necromancers finally plummeted. One of them dashed away, and it seemed like the signal, because the rest started running as well, choosing different directions. They seemed to think that the best idea was to avoid our attention. To reinforce the idea, I started following the largest group, pattering them with fireballs which looked much more impressive than they were actually dangerous, even if it drained the most of my remaining mana.

When I returned to the cave entrance, I was met with a dangerous sight. Without the necromancers to control them, the undead horde was charging toward the cave entrance. Most were destroyed ignobly, failing to account for the traps, but one of the bone dragons was too durable, and had managed to break through it, attacking the librarian.

She managed to defend herself, but not without a cost. She was using flares of light to deflect the dragon's claws. It was a simple spell, likely costing one or two mana for each casting, relying on her reflexes to work. But in her current state, even one point of mana was too costly, losing color with each casting. If I didn't know any better, I would have mistaken her for a zombie. Her robes were ruined by the dragon's claws, leaving bloody gashes behind.

I dashed forward as fast as possible, taking attacks of the zombies instead of delaying even for a second. Even then, I was almost too late. When the dragon swung its claw to a dangerous strike, she raised her trembling hand, but no light came out. There was no time to cast a spell, and I doubted I had the mana to deflect such a strong strike. I was running in fumes as well. I tackled her out of its way, taking a bad gash in my back in exchange.

[-264 HP]

The position I found myself in would have been rather romantic if it wasn't for the bleeding, exhaustion, and the undead horde trying to kill us. When I met her eyes, however, I found dazed disbelief. The temptation was simply too much. I leaned down and stole a fleeting kiss, pushing a bit of color back to her face.

[Achievement: Seductive Stranger. Melt the heart of an icy maiden with the irresistible charm of a mysterious savior. +3 Charisma, +1000 Experience]

The achievement was a nice surprise, especially since the sudden boost in my charisma giving me a few points of extra mana and a dash of extra strength just when I needed it. I grabbed her and rolled away, the claw collapsing the area I had been holding just moments ago. When I stood up, I was holding her in a bridal hold, dashing as fast as I could while using the extra mana to connect the array once more. I managed to step into the emergency tunnel, but not before I received another painful gash to my back.

[-326 HP]

“It’s payback time, you bony bastard,” I gasped in excitement as I flared my mana, once again emptying my reserves. The rush of mana triggered an inactive node in the defensive array, and a second later, the cave exploded into a true cacophony. It was a pity that I couldn’t return to destroy the stragglers, but neither I nor the librarian was in a good state, and my mana regeneration perk was about to expire. Spending that mana for healing and saving the rest for emergencies was a better idea.

Thirty minutes later, we were far enough from the canyon that I started to feel safe. I couldn’t say that the risk was completely gone, but after the last disaster which cost them their leader and —hopefully— the most of their horde, I doubted that they would try to follow us. I would have welcomed her opinion about the next steps, but she was limp in my arms, exhaustion and wounds long caught up with her. I had taken a quick break to cure the worst of her wounds, but she was still spent.

My first instinct was to return to school, but that was not viable. She was in tethers, and we know for a fact that there were enemies in the school. Doing so would end in a nasty assassination. So, I started looking for a nice cave we could stay hidden. Luckily, even if the necromancers changed their mind and continued searching for us, it was easy to handle without the endless numbers of the horde to help them.

When I found a cave with a hard-to-notice entrance with a reasonably close underground water reserve —elemental magic was useful for more than just combat— my mana pool was almost completely full once again, so, it was very easy to carve several runes on the cave to hide us from the dangers, as well as regulating the temperature and cleaning the air. If I was going to stay in a cave, I’m going to make it as comfortable as I could. I even created a large pool in the middle by digging a small water reservoir, which was needed to clean our wounds.

My first focus was my damsel in distress, even though she had skipped the risky period. The sooner she recovered, the sooner we could act. Her eyes fluttered open when I lay her on the floor —softened as much as possible using earth magic— and looked at me with an expression

of shock. “We’re alive,” she murmured, her whisper almost impossible to distinguish from the rustle of the leaves.

“Yes,” I said with a bright smile, bringing the full impact of my charisma and my seduction experience to the game, and I was happy to see another fleeting blush on her face. “You have performed amazingly, like an angel of vengeance, beautiful and bright.”

“Shut up,” she murmured shyly, which surprised me quite a bit. It was hard to imagine the figure that intimidated everyone with her sheer presence as shy. Though, considering just how comfortable she had been dressed in just an illusion, I ruled it out the general shyness, which meant my kiss truly had worked wonders in penetrating her defenses, though literally saving her life heroically likely helped.

“Now, for something uncomfortable,” I said with a soft smile, and she looked worried. “About your wounds,” I added, and her expression turned to panic. I let her stew in it for a moment before continuing. “I need to remove your clothes to cure you.”

The expression of shock on her face was spectacular. She looked like a teenage girl receiving her first catcall rather than the legendary mage ruled one of the most important locations for the civilization with an iron fist. “But...” she murmured, her exhaustion momentarily forgotten under the rush of adrenaline. She tried to stand up, but the only thing she was able to do was to shift in her place before the pain invaded her face.

“Yeah, that,” I said, trying to look equally shy at the prospect.

“Can’t you do it over the clothes?” she asked, her voice tiny. “The other healers do.”

“I’m not primarily a healer, and I can’t take the risk. I can try to bring you back to Silver Spires if that’s your preference, but...” I said, leaving it lingering. We both knew that returning back without the full recovery was a death wish.

“I don’t...” she murmured, her gaze finding my face once more, but her inquisitive gaze failed to penetrate the shy surface I was doing my best to reflect, leaving my dirtier thoughts inside. I watched as she tried to make a decision before sighing in defeat. “Okay.”

[Achievement: Meritorious Medic. Not all good deeds go unrewarded. +3 Wisdom +1000 Experience]

I had to hide my smile as the notification rang. Two achievements on the same day were definitely welcome, though I would say they were well-earned. I looked somber, because I was

pulling a knife, her clothes were stuck to her body with blood and grime, and trying to remove them otherwise would have been more difficult. She said nothing as I removed her clothes with smooth and methodical slices, leaving her body clad in her underwear, though wounded and covered in dirt, it wasn't exactly an erotic sight yet. The system seemed to agree with me, considering there was no experience reward.

"Now, take a deep breath," I even as I put my hands on the biggest wound in her body, looking dangerous despite the scab, and let my magic flow. With the latest improvement of my biomancy skill, it worked even better than I was hoping for, her internal wounds disappearing one after another, her bruises leaving their place to beautiful alabaster skin, though still dirty.

However, as I continued to cure her, I sensed a certain emptiness, like something was missing. Then, I realized that I couldn't feel her mana. It was suspicious considering it had been more than an hour since the last combat, and she must have recovered a bit for now. I decided to test her. "How's your mana recovery?" I asked her.

"Still in progress," she said, but I was still healing her, so it was impossible for her to hide her heartbeat picking up speed. I continued to look at her, still expecting an answer. "Is that really important?" she added.

"Might be, I'm not sure how it'll affect your recovery," I answered, which was partly true. More importantly, I wanted to learn why she wasn't recovering yet.

She stayed silent for almost a minute while I continued to heal her, when, she whispered. "It's a special ability of mine, I can overdraw my reserves until I hit negatives, but then my regeneration slows down until it climbs back to positives," she answered somberly.

"For how long?" I asked, afraid of the answer, dreading the answer.

"The worst until now was three days," she answered, which wasn't the best answer to receive, but still manageable.

Then, I remembered the last scene, where she had overdrawn so much that she wasn't able to cast even as a simple shield. "And, if we compare that time to now, how will it compare?"

Once again, silence ruled the room while I continued to heal her. "This is much worse," she answered in the end, then, continued with a small whisper. "I don't know what I'm going to do."

I gently cupped her chin and raised her head until she was looking at my eyes. "Don't worry, I'm here as long as you need me," I said in a selfless, heroic tone. With the situation I found myself

in, she was the only ally I could trust, and if I was going to stuck protecting her for a while, seduction was a good way to pass that time.

"I..." she murmured as a blush covered her body, even visible through the dirt. "Thank you..."

Her reaction was interesting. Combined with her power and her standoffish attitude, it might be that she never had to rely on others, at least to a degree of total helplessness, and she was reacting it in a very interesting way, promising quite a bit of enjoyment for me. I just smiled in response before grabbing a piece of fabric and drenching it in the small source of water I had created earlier.

She stammered once more as I pressed it on her shoulder, dragging gently, getting rid of the dirt to reveal alabaster skin underneath, making her shiver. "What - what are you doing?" she gasped, trying to look scandalized, but unable to keep her innocent arousal hidden, hinting her lack of experience.

"We need to clean you. Otherwise, you run the risk of infection," I explained.

"But, I'll be..." she murmured, unable to finish the sentence.

I spoke compassionately, though hinted shyness as well. "I know it's hard, but we need to do that. We don't know just how weak your body will be with no mana after all those wounds. What if you get an infection?" She still looked like she was about to argue, so I continued, doing my best to sound hurt. "You don't trust me," I stated despondently.

"No! NO! I trust you," she rapidly answered without even thinking, and rewarded by my best shy smile, unaware just how artificial it was.

"Okay, but feel free to tell me if you feel uncomfortable, okay?" I said before pressing the fabric on her arm. Then, I chuckled.

"Why are you laughing?" she asked, a bit cross. I had no doubt that she would have been crossing her arms pointedly if she could move in her own power.

"We still haven't met," I answered with a chuckle. At this point, revealing my name wasn't exactly a big risk. "My name is Caesar," I said.

"Titania," she murmured, once again shy.

"A magnificent name for a magnificent woman," I said, enjoying the way she blushed as I gently

cleaned her arm. Maybe tending her as she got healed was going to be more interesting than I had assumed.

[Level: 17 Experience: 151150 / 153000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 30

Precision: 13 Perception: 14

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 15 Intelligence: 20

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 24

HP: 1309 / 1309 Mana: 1321 / 1836]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-One

For a while, the silence was dominant in the cave while I gently cleaned Titania's arm with a damp piece of cloth. I couldn't help but feel excited as her arm was slowly freed from the ugly cover of dirt, leaving her alabaster skin, shining and supple after my healing treatment. I occasionally threw a glance toward her, but her beautiful gray eyes —lacking their usual hardness— avoided mine.

Understandable, considering she was being forced to receive nursing effort from a man she barely knew, and the huge crush she was starting to develop toward me definitely didn't harm. "Are you comfortable?" I asked as I moved to the other arm, and received only a soft nod in response.

She stayed silent as I finished her other arm including the shoulder, then moved to her legs, starting from the middle of her thigh and moving lower, trying to make her more comfortable by respecting her boundaries. Or more accurately, acting like I was respecting her boundaries while applying the full range of massage tricks on her, helped by the fact that I had spent several minutes carefully healing her body with my magic, figuring a lot of its secrets in the process, sensitivities, blind spots, and how best to awaken her primal desire.

The first break in her tone happened when I finally reached her ankle. A gasp escaped her mouth, one that she quickly hid behind a cough. I acted unawares as my fingers caressed her foot, turning the intensity a notch as well. "May I ask you a question?" she murmured.

"Of course," I said, once again trying to act unaware. I knew that she was asking for the question earlier than she intended, trying to cover for the idea. A good tactic, too bad it would not work against me.

"Why are you here, in Silver Spires?" she asked, her tone focused. It was good, because it reminded me of something I almost let slip during the last hour. She might be acting like a teenager with a crush, but she was still the head librarian that was strong enough to cut through an army, with the wits to back it up. I was lucky that I was dealing with her in her most vulnerable, exhausted, shocked, and devoid of mana.

"I wanted to be free," I answered casually, deciding that it was the best answer I could come up with, close enough to the truth without revealing my biggest secret. And funnily, when I said it, it resonated in me more than a well-crafted lie. It was true, in the end. I was trying to get stronger, because I wanted to be free even if my unusual power source was discovered.

“What do you mean?” she asked. I doubted that she didn’t understand my reason, but my fingers were digging into her soles in a determined assault, bringing her pleasure. And from the way she bit her lips desperately, it was clear that she was struggling to keep her reaction hidden.

“Well, the situation back home is complicated,” I said even as I turned my eyes to the cave entrance, my tone had a deep, husky quality, like I was struggling through a dark memory, playing the mysterious tortured hero. “At first, there wasn’t a lot of hope about my development, they assumed that I already hit my level cap when I was young, so I was sequestered like the family’s little shame. When I was old enough to understand the implications, I could have explained to them the truth, of course, but that would have put me back into the struggle for the family seat. At that point, I was already behind my rivals with no reasonable way to gain other’s support.” But even as I gave my dark monologue, I did my best to give her a mindblowing foot massage while acting absentmindedly.

“Seems difficult,” she murmured, trying to sound serious, but failing to keep the shadow of the moan hidden. “Do you want to return there?”

[+200 Experience]

I acted unawares even as I moved to her other foot. “Not exactly,” I answered. “It was not the best childhood, but I lacked a true understanding of the details. But there’s nothing for me back there even if I take the family seat, which I could easily,” I said, which was very true. With my current strength, it would take me less than a day to take the family seat, but why bother. The last thing I needed was to get stuck in the endless organizational meetings, border disputes, and other innate problems.

“And how come you’re in my school,” she said, even with the arousal and curiosity, a certain edge could be heard.

“When the opportunity came, my family enthusiastically shipped me to Silver Spires, hoping that I would kindly disappear from their view, unaware of my strength. I stayed, because the school gave me the best opportunity to get stronger. And before I knew, it was the only place I could call my own,” I continued as I intensified my massage, forcing a moan of her beautiful lips, of which I acted unawares.

“Is that the reason you’re fighting against the necromancers, that they are threatening your home,” she said.

“In part,” I answered even as I turned to her, with a bright smile on my face. “More importantly, I can’t let them hurt such a spectacular sample of beauty, can I?”

The blush that spread her face was spectacular. This time, I kept my gaze on her face, a teasing smile on my lips, as I climbed upward while cleaning her other leg. When I passed her leg, she was squirming helplessly, and when I arrived the upper part of her legs, enjoying the softness of her inner thigh. I wanted nothing more than parting them open, ripping off her underwear, and take her on the floor.

[+200 Experience]

Pity that it was too early for that.

Caressing her inner thighs with a torturous slowness was decent compensation for the lack of it, especially since she was reacting amazingly to my touch. She was even more inexperienced when it came to the matters of the flesh, I realized. “Let’s focus on your back,” I added as I gently grabbed her shoulder before gently flipping her over, the wet cloth dancing on her back. I would have liked to continue focusing on her thigh, but I want her to be completely clean before I tried my chance with the seduction. The last thing I needed was her to feel self-conscious about the state of her body in the middle of the seduction, ruining my chances.

I focused on her upper back at first, sliding under her bra strap repeatedly to hint her about the possible direction I might take. She managed to stay silent for a short while before a stubborn moan finally escaped her beautiful lips. “I’m not hurting you, am I?” I asked, fake-concerned. “I can reduce the pressure if you want.”

“No!” she answered, far too quick to be a nonchalant response, but she still tried to do that. “I meant, it’s better if you keep the pressure so that we can focus on our plan.”

“Of course, my lady,” I answered gallantly even as my empty hand trailed her spine gently, making her shiver. Her moans become commonplace once I arrived at her lower back, passing dangerously close to her buttocks. I cleaned the edges, but instead of her arousal increasing, she stiffened, so I let it slide for a bit. “Do you feel strong enough to sit?” I asked instead.

Her answer was a pointed, angry glare, trying to conceal the fact that she was feeling self-conscious. Understandable, considering her reputation and power. It was likely that no one had questioned her capabilities for a long while, certainly not something as simplistic as sitting up. I answered with a gentle but teasing smile instead. She avoided my gaze shyly and murmured. “I can handle it,” she said as she tried to push herself up her feet, only to fail spectacularly.

“Nonsense, for the next few days, I’m your obedient and selfless servant,” I said even as I presented my arm to her, helping her to reach a sitting position. She did so, her arms crossed in front of her still-dirty chest, covered only with a bra. However, I caught a glimpse, enough to see her nipples pushing hard against the surface, telling her arousal.

Even when I helped her to a sitting position, she looked like she might topple down at any moment. As a gentleman, I could never allow such a disaster, so I sat behind her, her back pressing against my chest, my arms gently around her waist. “Isn’t it a bit much,” she managed to murmur as she turned her head to face me.

It was a mistake from her end, of course, because it brought our lips almost to a contact point, separated by just an inch, her panicked breath dancing on my lips. She was frozen, and I decided to use the opportunity to focus on her stomach, flat and fragile under my touch. She just stayed there, frozen, while I continued caressing her body, guilt and shock and enjoyment dancing on her face.

[+200 Experience]

I gently hummed even as the fabric I used to clean her beautiful body rode up, dancing just under her breasts. She didn’t react as badly as before but still stiffened, so I used a simple spell to clean the fabric before focusing on her neck and her face. The silence stretched as I slowly caressed her face, revealing her dainty, beautiful frame and her delicious lips.

She stayed silent for a while, before a gasp escaped her mouth. She was getting antsy. In a moment of inspiration, I decided to try something new. “You trust me, right?” I asked, and she nodded, though it was a hesitant one, waiting for the twist. I smirked as I raised my finger. “Suck my finger.”

“What!” she exclaimed, managing to shout in her exhausted state. “Don’t be ridiculous-” she tried to continue, but I silenced her by pressing my finger to her lip.

“Come on, you won’t be disappointed,” I said even as I dragged my finger along her lip, knowing that her shivers had nothing to do with the cold, not with my body draped around hers. She looked at me hesitantly, her heartbeat beating hard enough to be felt on my chest. Then, she took my finger between her beautiful lips, pouty enough to make a courtesan jealous.

Her eyes widened as I let a minuscule amount of pure, and shapeless mana from my finger, making her eyes widen in shock. She bit my finger in shock, luckily not that hard in her exhausted state, but still enough to hurt. I continued to release mana for a while before

stopping.

[-157 Mana]

“What was that?!” she exclaimed, shock and euphoria on her face.

“Pure mana,” I answered, like it was a simple thing. In truth, it wasn’t. The only reason I was able to do was my rather impressive theoretical background combined with the expertise on three discrete branches of magic, giving me an extraordinary awareness of my magic. “How much mana did you recover?” I asked.

“Two points,” she answered, and I couldn’t help but frown. The idea was good, but the efficiency was too low.

“I spent over a hundred and fifty points,” I answered with a frown, making her smile fall as well. I was quick to console her. “That was just the first test, I’m sure that we can find a better way. Even if we can’t, it’ll still help your recovery immensely.” I sighed.

“Yes,” she said with a smile. “Your regeneration is really fast.”

“It’s a pity that that bonus is about to expire,” I answered, and she looked shocked. “Don’t worry, I can trigger it again, but not for now. The conditions are a bit tricky.” She nodded. “Are you ready to continue experimentation, I said even as I placed my finger in her mouth once again, this time, letting mana trickle slower, hoping for better efficiency.

Of course, it wasn’t the only thing I was doing. With her attention on my finger between her hot lips, and the mana flowing from it, it was the best time to move onto some sensual cleaning. The fabric dipped down on her torso once more, this time slipping until it collided her cleavage. She looked like she was about to complain, but I chose that moment to let a huge deluge of magic, filling her mouth, extracting a moan as well.

[-342 Mana]

[+400 Experience]

[Achievement. Tantric Treats. Use your mana to establish a deeper connection with a beautiful beau. +3 Perception, +1000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Master Biomancy, Basic Light, Basic Tantric]

I couldn't help but focus on the selection in front of me instead of her beautiful moan. Biomancy would have been useful, of course, and basic light was intriguing, but not as much as Tantric, especially when mana transfer triggered it. Under different circumstances, I wouldn't have taken it, but enhancing Titania's recovery speed was an advantage I couldn't deny.

The rest, I could discover in the future.

So, I selected before letting my mana flow from my finger once again, the flow already more stable and more effective.

[+100 Experience]

[-121 Mana]

[+2 Tantric]

I looked at her brightening face, happy that she was too occupied to notice the sudden jump in efficiency. Even better, she was too distracted by the flow to care about my hand diving deeper into the sacred area protected by her bra until the wetness of the fabric became too distracting. She dipped her head down, realizing the presence of my hand in her cleavage, stiffening once more. Luckily, my finger was in her mouth, so I distracted her with another jolt of mana, earning a beautiful moan as a result.

[+300 Experience]

[-246 Mana]

[+4 Tantric]

It was amusing to see just how easy was to increase the skill proficiency with a large mana capacity, though not as amusing as watching the impeccable head librarian of Silver Spires squirming in my lap, betraying her utter lack of experience when it came to men. "So, tell me about yourself," I asked with a flirty tone.

"I can't, my secrets are dangerous," she answered confrontationally, but as she stayed distracted by it, she failed to comment as I found her bra hook and releasing it with a flick, finally leaving it bare, limiting herself to a shy gaze instead.

"I need to have better access to properly clean," I answered innocently before moving back to the main topic. "I'm not asking about your secrets, I'm asking about you. Tell me what you enjoy

in your free time, what you don't. What's your favorite color, or what's your favorite food."

"I don't know," she murmured shyly, but also with a hint of confusion. "I have a great deal of responsibilities in my job, and my secret mission takes the rest. I don't have the chance or the desire to explore."

"What a pity," I said even as I dragged my cloth down to her last untouched spot, hidden behind her panties. This time, she was very much aware of the destination, but did nothing to prevent me other than a trembling hand reflexively reaching before coming to a sudden stop, showing I wasn't the only one that was feeling excited about the prospect. I continued speaking as I dragged her panties down, revealing her beautiful nether lips once more, neatly trimmed, while also giving her another dash of mana, the flow even easier than the previous time.

[+400 Experience]

[-131 Mana]

[+3 Tantric]

"Do you at least masturbate," I asked cheerfully at her even as I dragged the wet fabric on her most sensitive spot with torturous slowness, making her moan helplessly.

I wasn't expecting much, but the answer still surprised me. "No," she murmured. "Never."

Keeping the question back took quite a bit of effort. I could have accepted that she didn't masturbate often, as she was still enough around the school to do so. But to never masturbate, one needed to be seriously asexual, and from the responses she was showing under my hands, I was willing to diagnose that she was very sexual.

Which meant that it was something about her emotions or instincts being repressed. It was a wild guess, but it was definitely more believable than my power set, so who could know?

"Really?" I answered instead even as I threw the fabric to the side and placed my fingers to her entrance. "Then, let me have the honor of being the first one to teach you about true pleasure."

[Level: 18 Experience: 153850 / 171000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 30

Precision: 13 Perception: 17

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 20

Speed: 15 Intelligence: 20

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 24

HP: 1386 / 1386 Mana: 963 / 1998]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Basic Tantric [10/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Two

Her reaction to my proclamation was a thing of wonder. A beautiful expression of confusion spread on her face, enhanced further by the blush that turned her alabaster skin to red. She wiggled uncomfortably, but made no attempt to pull away from her comfortable position of leaning against my chest.

Her innocent yet accepting reaction made her impossible to resist even without considering the fact she was the impeccable head librarian, one of the deadliest mages in the country, her name enough to make her foes tremble. And now, she was trying to ignore her own reaction as I pulled her on my lap. She shivered, her shyness obvious, but that didn't prevent her from wiggling on top of my shaft, trying to get comfortable.

A little bribe for her tantalizing obedience was in order, I decided even as I put my finger to her mouth once more, but this time, rather than sliding it directly, I lingered on her lips, tracing the edges even as her mouth opened helplessly, a gasp escaping her mouth. She moved her lips, trying to catch it, but I moved my finger before she could, earning a frustrated growl, enough to make me chuckle. I let my finger slide into her mouth and let my mana flow once more.

[-55 Mana]

[+2 Tantric]

I was happy with the rapid development of my new skill, even though I had doubts about its usefulness. But I wasn't asshole enough to focus on long term goals when I had a fragile brunette on my lap whose work life and ambitions blinded her to the true pleasures of life.

So, while she was distracted, I discarded the washcloth, and let my other hand free on her body. I wanted to delve deep into her breasts, but for her first time, she deserved a more considerate treatment. Instead, I let my fingers drift on her stomach, caressing it with gentle, fleeting touches. Already charged with our earlier play, that was enough to trigger a moan from her, muffled due to my finger in her mouth. I wasn't letting any more mana out —I wanted to regenerate more in case we had another ambush— but she continued to suck it with the same enthusiasm, making my imagination work overtime about other things she might enjoy sucking.

“It feels ... different,” she murmured as I let my hand climb upward, dancing on the bottom of her naked breasts, ideas such as modesty and personal space long forgotten. I reached for her breasts, which, while smaller than what I had been enjoying thanks to Marianne, Helga, and Aviada, were still beautiful in their perkiness and perfect shape. And the way her nipples

stiffened at my touch was more than enough to address the deficiency in size.

She was beautiful. And the fact that she was several times stronger than me just made the moment even more exciting.

I wanted to speak, to tease her about her new experience, but when I saw her eyes closed in an effort to contain the new sensations, I decided to take it a different way. I gently traced her nipple, earning another moan in the process, before letting my fingers dance over her body.

[+400 Experience]

My finger wasn't in her mouth anymore, which allowed me to continue caressing her nipples even as my other hand moved down in a determined journey until it ended around her panties. I thought about sliding in her panties, then I decided to pull them off completely, leaving her naked for my view. She gasped cutely as I dragged them down her toned legs, but gave no resistance. I couldn't help but feel excited at the sight of her most sensitive location, cleanly shaved despite her lack of experience.

"So, let me teach you how to masturbate," I whispered into her ear even as my fingers gave a cursory caress to her lower lips before focusing on her inner thighs, massaging her slowly but sensuously.

"Okay," she murmured dreamily, but from her tone, I could easily see that she was not in a mood to listen, so rather than speaking, I decided to teach her by example. As my fingers started their determined dance on her thighs, however, she moaned once more. "Faster," she begged.

Normally, I would have stretched the moment, torturing my partner deliciously with a bit of delayed pleasure, but I decided to make an exception for Titania. Not experiencing arousal for decades was a true tragedy, something I knew intimately from my own fate. If I could enlighten someone else on the subject while enjoying the moment, I would never say no to it. So, I let my fingers move to the hot zone, enjoying the way her wetness coated my fingers.

[+500 Experience]

"It feels amazing!" she moaned loudly.

"Of course it does, but you haven't seen anything yet," I said to her even as my fingers started moving, her enjoyment displayed by a string of moans that left her mouth. She was truly delicious. I decided to push the boundaries even more. "By the way, I would like to try an

alternative mana conducting method, if you're okay with it," I asked her. Her response was an absentminded nod, followed by another moan. She wasn't in a state to really comment on it, barely understanding the significance of my question.

So, she froze when I pressed my lips against hers, cutting off another moan halfway. I kissed her softly, even as I let my mana flow from my body to hers, in a soft, lingering kiss.

[+200 Experience]

[-128 Mana]

[+4 Tantric]

Mana transfer was a silly excuse to kiss her, so I was surprised when I actually felt it flowing much smoother. I didn't need to ask her about the efficiency, as by now, I was familiar enough with the mana flow to realize mouth-to-mouth transfer was highly superior to delivering it through my finger. Of course, that brought up another question, whether a full-blown sexual delivery would have been even more efficient. I didn't know, but it was definitely a worthy — and potentially very enjoyable— test.

That was for later, however, as there were more immediate concerns that deserved my attention, such as the way Titania was wiggling on my lap even as she neared the first orgasm of her life, the distance between her muffled moans dwindling even further. So, when I finally slipped a finger into her entrance, it wasn't shocking for her to start trembling helplessly as she was struck by her orgasm.

[+500 Experience]

I slid my hands to her stomach, gently caressing her as she tried to process the pleasure, while I maintained a lingering kiss. "How was it?" I asked after a minute.

"It was amazing!" she said excitedly. "I have never thought that it would've been that enjoyable. I missed a lot of time."

"Don't worry, it's not too late, you're definitely beautiful enough to compensate for the lost time and if you want I'm always ready to help."

"Really?" she asked, looking between excited and shocked.

"Of course, that was my pleasure," I answered. Then, I decided to push her a bit. "May I ask you

a personal question?" I said, and she nodded shyly. "You said you've never even masturbated? Is there a reason for it? Weren't you at least tempted to it?"

"I don't know. Learning to use Light Magic took a lot of effort from me when I was young. I guess I never had the time or the inclination," she murmured, which admittedly, confused me a little. She seemed honest in her response, making it a bit of a mystery. Not doing it because of external pressure or some other reason might have been understandable, but not feeling the inclination for it was weird. It would have made sense if she was asexual, but from what I had seen in the last half an hour, she most definitely was a sexual being, though quite deprived. "Is it always that enjoyable?" she asked in a small tone.

"No," I answered, and her shy smile turned into a frown, but before she could say anything else, I continued. "What we have done was just a preview. The real thing is much better than that."

"Really, how's that possible?" she asked, shocked.

"That's just how it goes," I answered, even as I let my hands on her stomach start moving once more, climbing toward her breasts, caressing the edge sensually, something that made her moan. "This was just a prelude. The real thing is something special, even earth-shattering," I said then suddenly caught her eyes with a wide, smug smirk. "If delivered by a person that knows what he's doing, of course," I added.

She smirked back, though it still had a shy edge to it. "And the next thing you're going to say is that you know what you're doing."

"Well, I'm not one to brag but you can say that I have some minor accomplishments in the subject," I said even as I let my other hand slip down to her entrance, circling around her clit to force a moan out of her. "As you can attest..."

"Bastard," she murmured, yet feeling much more comfortable in my arms than before. I said nothing, but let my fingers dance at her entrance slowly, enough to arouse her, but not enough to build her toward another climax. The silence stretched for a while. Well, not exactly silence as her moans rang in the cave in an exciting frequency.

Then, she spoke once more. "Maybe we should explore the alternative ways of mana delivery," she whispered.

Since my blood was mostly in the lower half of my body, it took a moment for me to understand what she was saying. "Of course," I stammered, excited, not expecting her to actually take the recommendation that easily. "It's our responsibility as magical researchers," I said, though as I

said that, I made sure to lean towards her ear, delivering it through a husky whisper.

“Good,” she said as she raised her bottom a bit, enough to pull my pants down. She might not be as strong as me, but she was strong enough to almost rip my pants as she pulled them down, quite excited. She was about to lay on her back, but I gestured for her to stop before laying on my back. “Why don’t you take the seat of honor, Miss Head Librarian,” I said as I smiled in amusement, even though my heartbeat rose significantly. Inviting one of the most dangerous women known to mankind to ride you in a cowgirl position was a rather dangerous thing, after all.

Luckily, she lacked the mana to take offense, and more importantly, her blush and her excited smile weren’t exactly signs of uncontrollable anger. Her legs were trembling as she hovered above me, feeling excited at the prospect. She closed in before turning her back, lowering herself toward my shaft, but I stopped her just as her entrance kissed the crown of my shaft. “What’s wrong?” she whispered, her fear palpable.

“I want you to turn around. I want to get lost in your beautiful gray eyes as we do it,” I said. She turned at me, hesitant and shy. “For the safety of the experiment, of course,” I continued mockingly. “I need to watch your expression in case something goes wrong.”

“I see,” she whispered even as she turned to face me, once again giving me a full-frontal view of her beautiful, tight body, making my shaft throb in anticipation. “It’s good to see you’re careful about the experiment,” she added, trying to replicate my mocking edge, but unable to suppress her innocent excitement.

Then, she lowered herself, slowly engulfing me within her hot grasp. She staggered a moment when I felt the pressure of her barrier, but she didn’t let it delay her for more than a moment, getting rid of it with a stiff push, not even bothering to stop to adapt. Not surprising, considering her prowess, a little bit of pain wasn’t going to stop her from what she desired. However, as she sank lower, her speed slowed down, while her expression twisted in joy and desire.

[+1000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 1%]

I was happy to see the companion tracker ticking once again, though I was not exactly surprised. After all, not only had I saved her from a deadly ambush, but also come up with a totally new way of mana transfer just to cure her deficiency easier. It would have been surprising if she wasn’t feeling a connection with me.

“It feels amazing,” she murmured as she stilled, giving a pause to her task of devouring my full length. I let her move up and down at her own pace, letting her enjoy the experience before I took control. She rose up until only the crown was enveloped in her warmth, before she moved down with a torturous slowness, only to stop when she reached the previous point.

“You’re beautiful,” I whispered even as I maintained eye contact, doing my best to display my sincerity. It was not a hard task, not when her beautiful body lay in front of me in its spectacular full-frontal nudity while she did her best to make my shaft disappear from view despite her discomfort, her beautiful face contorted with pleasure.

Her sudden tightening was a nice surprise.

[+500 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 3%]

“Really?” she gasped, surprised, like she had heard it for the first time.

I was about to dismiss that as a ridiculous notion before I remembered that the raven-haired beauty in front of me was also the most intimidating person around back in the school. Even without adding in her unflattering clothes and steely expression there, I doubted that many had the courage to openly flirt with her.

It was a travesty that needed to be corrected, I decided. “Yes, you are,” I said. “The way your raven hair sticks to your glowing face, the way your beautiful lips shine under the flickering lights, the way your eyes sparkle in joy, every part of you is beautiful,” I whispered throatily even as I reached up and put my hands on her body, caressing her sides in a gentleness that wouldn’t go amiss in a marital bed.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 7%]

“Tell me more,” she gasped, her tone indicating that she was already halfway to orgasm.

“The way you walk is spectacular,” I whispered. “Scary and intimidating, but it still makes me want to pull you into an abandoned part of the library before I rip your clothes off to see what’s underneath...”

Her pacing picked up speed, every repeat forcing my shaft deeper into her core. She didn’t look entirely comfortable with the amount she took, but if she wanted to push her limits, who was I to argue. “And, do you like what’s underneath my clothes?” she gasped even as she looked into

my eyes, though despite her willpower, she was barely able to maintain eye contact.

“Oh, did I?” I whispered. “I found a treasure trove above and beyond even my admittedly ambitious dreams. Your shoulders are beautiful enough to breathe life to a dead man, your stomach smooth enough to make me lay on it forever, enjoying its surface,” I said with a throaty whisper, making her shiver at each word.

[+500 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 10%]

“Tell me more,” she gasped even as she picked up speed, rocking her hips recklessly, unaware of the danger that was building up inside me.

“Of course,” I said. “Your breasts are more perfect than a seven node array balanced to trigger,” I whispered, letting some magical theory into our flirting, curious of the effect. It was a nice surprise when she tightened even further, proving that her librarian role was not just for show. “Your hips are beautiful, sculpted to perfection, and your pussy...” I said, lingering a bit before letting out a moan. “Oh, your pussy is the greatest sensation I have ever felt in my life...” I added.

[Achievement: Seductive Sonnet. Woo a beautiful but attention-starved lady through the power of words. +2 Manipulation, +500 Experience]

That seemed to be the last trigger she needed, as her eyes suddenly closed and her body stiffened, giving me the signal of an impending orgasm. Since I was already on the edge and keeping myself from exploding through sheer willpower, I decided to add to the moment through my new skill. I packed as much as mana I could pack into my seed before letting it free.

[-400 Mana]

[+6 Tantric]

Assisted by my new skill, I started spurting inside her like a broken dam, beat after beat filling her completely. It proved to be the last thing she needed to push her over the edge, as she exploded in cries even as she collapsed on my chest, my shaft still inside her, filling her to the brim.

[+2000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 12%]

It took a lot for me to take control of my breathing as well, enjoying the sensation of conquering the most dangerous woman I knew while also achieving a spectacular achievement, Even as she tried to get control of her breathing, I continued pumping into her, wanting to enjoy the moment as much as possible.

But my beautiful plan was blocked by an interesting, and very unwelcome, notification.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 12%] Progress Blocked!

[Level: 18 Experience: 159950 / 171000

Strength: 18 Charisma: 30

Precision: 13 Perception: 17

Agility: 17 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 15 Intelligence: 20

Endurance: 14 Wisdom: 24

HP: 1386 / 1386 Mana: 624 / 2034]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

Basic Tantric [22/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Three

I was caught flat-footed by the sudden notification, so much so that I was barely able to respond to Titania's lingering kiss before she collapsed unconscious against my chest, her breathing soft and content. I could have slid underneath her, or started walking around the cave to gather my thoughts, to theorize about the source, but I chose to continue lying underneath her lithe body instead, my half-erect shaft still inside her. If I was going to spend some time theorizing about the sudden new challenge, I was going to do that through a delicious distraction.

Not to mention maintaining contact might give me some clues.

Even with the euphoria I was feeling after that spectacular explosion, I couldn't help but be stressed. The notification of my special ability being countered was never a good sign, but the fact that it happened with Titania was even worse. She was the strongest and most influential person I got in contact with by far, and she represented real risk for me. I was feeling comfortable due to her cute shyness and other reactions, but that was before realizing she had a skill that interfered with mine.

I decided to experiment once more. I leaned in for a soft kiss, slipping a sliver of mana inside her, but this time. Even in her sleep, she moaned softly as she sucked my tongue, eagerly allowing my mana into her body.

[+50 Experience]

[-13 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

However, this time, I did things differently. Instead of letting go of the control of the mana, allowing her to absorb it easily, I maintained the control, letting it slip inside her.

I was rewarded with an incredible finding. I could suddenly feel a familiar yet foreign presence of power throbbing inside her. I hadn't had to turn inward to check the source of the familiarity. It was the source of her power, the core of the system. It was hard to describe, of course, like a blind person trying to describe a dragon after a brief touch. Still, like a blind person feeling the majesty and danger of the dragon by just a touch, I could feel the majesty of her power, dwarfing my current status by a huge margin.

Then, my mana disappeared, so I decided to lean in and give her another kiss for another dose

of mana, to understand her power. Luckily, my mana regeneration was still active, even though I was counting the remaining time in minutes rather than hours. From the earlier experience, it was almost enough to fill my mana pool twice before expiry.

[+50 Experience]

[-16 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

The second impression I got about her power was marginally clearer. Some parts, I was able to recognize, such as Charisma and Wisdom. I even managed to identify her arcana skill, though the rest was hard to understand. The real clincher, however, was a thick web of white energy spreading over her power core, like it dominated all others. I let my mana touch it, only for my mana to disappear in an instant, absorbed into the web.

It was the same light magic she had been using in the battle.

Suddenly, a sudden inspiration clicked in my mind, proving the usefulness of my extraordinary wisdom and intelligence. I doubted that I would've made the connection that quickly otherwise. Some of the older books I have been reading to discover the root of my powers had snippets and footnotes referring to some metaphysical concepts like actual presences, describing them a bit more holistically than necessary, even giving them personalities and traits like they were real beings, like skills and stats had personalities once upon a time. It was not something I took note of at the time.

The stories and footnotes were by no means comprehensive, but I remembered it talking about the Light like it was pure, but also emotionless and unyielding, driven by logic and perception of justice more than anything, not to mention aloof and hard to connect to. It didn't describe the Titania that blushed with just a fleeting kiss. But it described the peerless head librarian that scared everyone, who worked and lived for her duty.

The difference, her mana depletion.

Once I realized that, it was so clear, especially with the learnings I gathered from my diagnosis. For whatever reason, Light Magic wasn't working like just another skill but affecting her mind, state and thoughts, as well as blocking out her emotions. I didn't know whether it was something unique to her or it would happen to anyone that would take that skill, but regardless, it forced me to change my plans significantly.

Suddenly, I was very glad about not taking that particular skill.

Of course, while considering all those points, I was still inside her, smoothly going back and forth, enjoying her tightness just in case I never had the opportunity to in the future. And even while she was comatose because of exhaustion, her grip was spectacular, and her moans were beautiful. And since I needed one last diagnostic before making a plan, I decided to use the opportunity to my benefit. I continued pumping until I was ready to climax, and then filled her insides once more, using the moment to deliver a burst of mana as well.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 12%] Progress Blocked!

[+1000 Experience]

[-120 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

Once again, I maintained the contact with my mana, the abundance of it allowing me to observe the changes in her power much clearer. But in the core of it, I could see something familiar trying to change, only to be suppressed by the cage of light. Something that carried a piece of me.

I was willing to bet everything that it represented the Companion process. I decided to experiment and flooded all the mana I could still control towards it, smashing the cage of light around it with all my might. It cost all of my mana, but it managed to make a crack in it, a crack that the Companion energy expanded just a bit more.

[Ability Countered!]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 13%]

[Achievement: Rattling the Rival. Use your superior abilities and trickery to get one over on your eons-old rival. +2 to all stats. +10000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Master Biomancy, Basic Light, Advanced Tantric]

I gasped in shock at the achievement I had received. The rewards were incredible, of that there was no doubt. Two points across all stats was an incredible benefit, and even at my current status, ten thousand points of experience was nothing to scoff at.

But it was nothing compared to the description. Until now, achievements were always amusing, sometimes mildly informative, such as the second-biggest library. However, the last one I received came completely unexpected. The rival thing was confusing enough, as even if I squinted badly, I wouldn't exactly put my budding relationship with Titania rivalry. However, the real kicker was the eons-old rival part. I was fairly certain that two decades didn't count as an eon.

It was a very intriguing —and potentially dangerous— mystery considering the spottiness of historical records, which tends to happen when cities and civilizations fall under monster hordes in a surprising frequency. Still I decided to shelve that for the moment, as no matter how intriguing, I had more immediate concerns to address.

Such as the beautiful girl currently on my lap sleeping, or the skill selection from the level up. Though, the latter part was relatively obvious. I just chose Tantric, as it was not only immediately useful, but also it had implications I wanted to explore. Not to mention avoiding Light Magic for the moment was the prudent choice.

The next half an hour passed in a relative calmness, though it required my utmost concentration. I was still inside her, sliding in and out repeatedly while also kissing her, injecting small charges of mana, trying to understand how best to slow down or destroy the encroachment of the Light into her mind and soul. I spent quite a bit of mana, but luckily, with my regeneration still active —with less than five minutes remaining on the clock— I still managed to recover my mana to near-full levels.

During that, however, I used my new Tantric skill to great effect, earning experience as well as improving my control on transferred mana.

[+4000 Experience]

[-420 Mana]

[+25 Tantric]

I decided to wake her up, and wake her up with style, even though it was risky with the Light magic spreading in her despite my best efforts —while not waking her up, making it much more challenging. “Good morning, sleeping beauty,” I cheered even as I used my biomancy skills to gently wake her up, not wanting her to feel groggy. It worked better than the best coffee, her gray eyes shining bright, but her expression was cold, showing that the suppression effect was working greatly.

The confusion on her face was annoying, but also beautiful. It was clear that she was trying to process what had happened, but through her logical, emotionless perspective. Her first activity was trying to pull herself away from me. I decided to make it even harder for her, and captured her lips in a searing kiss, also dropping a lot of mana with my kiss, something made easier thanks to Advanced Tantric, giving me a much better control over externalized mana.

[-80 Mana]

The shock on her face was beautiful, and her attempts to pull back choppy and reluctant, the rush of pleasure enhanced by the mana flow enough to affect even her emotionless state. Only after a minute of kissing, did I pull back, leaving her panting and confused, but my arms were still around her, preventing her escape.

“What are you doing!” she gasped, her hand raised threateningly like she was about to cast a spell. On the surface, her anger was apparent, but I knew that it was driven by her confusion. Thanks to my interference, she was still feeling something, but unlike before, Light Magic prevented her from processing it properly. Or at least, that was my best guess.

“I’m helping you recover your mana,” I said calmly, my subterfuge skill once again showing its worth. Before she could say anything, I continued. “We need to move, and my enhanced mana regeneration is about to expire. It’s for the best if I use the last moments of it in order to increase your mana, in case we come across hostiles. It’s simply logical.”

“Yeah,” she murmured, her tone cold, but her eyes shrouded with emotion. “That’s a very reasonable course of action. Give me your finger,” she said.

“Don’t you remember, we discovered that the finger is a subpar way of delivering mana, and found out a much better way,” I said, doing my best to look calm and collected, but keeping back that smirk was a difficult challenge. “The other way is physically more challenging, but considering the circumstances, it’s a worthy trade-off.”

“But-” she started, a small blush spreading on her face, proving that the interference I had been running while she slept was not wasted. She wasn’t too far gone into the emotionless space.

Her words would remain unfinished, because I slammed my lips against hers, silencing her the best way I could. And when I pushed my shaft deeper into her once again, I managed to extract a beautiful moan from her despite her reluctance.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 13%] Progress Blocked!

The notification annoyed me, especially since I was afraid that she would realize my fight against her Light Magic. I needed to distract her further.

Luckily, my experiences since my initial discovery gave me an impressive library of actions I could use to distract her. I decided to start with something simple, I flipped our positions so she was laying underneath me, my impressive frame hovering above her as I slammed in as deep as possible, earning another moan.

She looked at me with her confused gaze, desire battling with cold logic. Regardless of that, she looked far too aware of herself. So, I decided to carry things to the next level. Previously, she experienced calm and comfortable sex. Now, it was time to introduce her to pure fucking.

I grabbed her legs, and before she could react, put them on my shoulders and leaned forward, forcing her to bend in a very uncomfortable angle. An angle that gave me a perfect angle to impale her tunnel. I took the chance, and slammed inside her mercilessly.

What followed was pure drilling. I slammed inside her again and again. I kissed her repeatedly to inject mana, but even those carried no hint of tenderness, but pure domination. I used the opportunity to dump mana into her, but just maintained contact. It wasn't time to take action yet.

[-300 Mana]

[+1500 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 13%] Progress Blocked!

I was annoyed with the repeated reminders of the progress stalling. Luckily, she was rapidly approaching towards a climax under the unfamiliar sensations, giving me the excuse I needed. We orgasmed at the same time, her juices mixing with mine, as well as a flood of my mana, enough to massacre a small army if applied differently.

[-850 Mana]

[+1000 Experience]

[Ability Countered!]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 15%]

I could feel her Light Magic desperately trying to reestablish its control, but with her lack of

mana, it didn't have a fighting chance. The defense around her companion core was shattered completely, giving us a chance to establish a proper connection.

Since her emotions were back in the game, I decided to shift back to being gentle as well. I pulled out for a moment, letting her legs fall back to the floor. Then, without wasting a second more than necessary, I then continued loving her in the missionary position, our lips linked together, except for the occasions I pulled back to whisper heated compliments into her ear, something that triggered her as much as the calm and long beats of my shaft invading her again and again.

[+1000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 18%]

"It feels so good," she moaned, as she went through yet another orgasm. "How come I never tried this before!" she added wistfully, her sentiment also proving that she wasn't exactly aware of the emotional restriction her magic was forcing on her. Luckily for her, I was more than willing to shatter those imaginary cuffs, freeing her from her torture. And if I was going to replace those cold cuffs with velvet ones, well, that was a fair exchange for her.

Our tender lovemaking lasted another half an hour as she slowly absorbed my mana. I would have liked to stay in the cave all night long, exploring the details of our new relationship, but unfortunately, there were two things that made it a bad idea. The first one, were we needed to return to the school before her enemies decided to take action in her absence. Luckily, it wasn't yet nightfall, and even necromancers wouldn't be stupid enough to act while everyone was around. The second, my mana regeneration perk had finally expired, making it harder for me to refill her mana while being able to use mine.

[-400 Mana]

[+2000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 23%]

I could have pushed forward a bit more, at least to the point that I reached the first milestone of the Companion process, but I refrained, not wanting to add yet another explanation to an already-confusing situation. "We need to return to the school," I whispered as I pulled out of her, not bothering to hide my regret.

"Yes, we do," she agreed, looking no less enthusiastic about it. "My mana is recovered enough

to be able to avoid an ambush, and I need to be in my library before they try anything else.”

“Makes sense,” I said, then added another thing, no matter how much I didn’t want to. “I think we need to return separately, just to make sure they don’t identify me,” I added, no matter how much I wanted to hang around her, maybe even catching a quickie on the road before the Light Magic turned her cold once more.

“I agree,” she said with a nod even as she sat up, making no effort to hide her naked body, covered with my markings. “For now, they don’t know who you are and where you came from, and your skill set is diverse enough to make it impossible for them to pin your origin,” she added. “So impossible that I still don’t have an idea,” she added with a bitter tone.

I leaned in to steal a soft, lingering kiss. “Don’t worry, we’re going to speak more about it,” I answered. “Make sure you rest for tonight. Tomorrow night, I’m going to visit you in your room and we’re going to have a real talk without immediate danger.”

After a lingering kiss, I quickly dressed, and after one last kiss, I left Titania behind, naked. I didn’t worry about her, because with her mana back and without an extensive ambush prepared, it was impossible for them to hurt her, at least. And if they did, my presence wouldn’t be enough to change anything.

With a sigh, I dashed away, though only after ten minutes of frantic running did I remember the book in my bag. The book that was stolen from her, the one that started everything. I shrugged. I could always give her that back tomorrow, and maybe even use the opportunity to delve deeper in its secrets. Even if it was in a different language, there was a chance I could get some snippets about its source.

The last achievement spooked me a bit. I was in a mystery deeper than I first assumed. Every nugget of information counted.

[Level: 19 Experience: 180550 / 190000

Strength: 20 Charisma: 32

Precision: 15 Perception: 19

Agility: 19 Manipulation: 24

Speed: 17 Intelligence: 22

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 26

HP: 1653 / 1653 Mana: 946 / 2337]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Tantric [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Part Two

Chapter Forty-Four

The journey back to the school was surprisingly uneventful. I had been attacked by a few monsters, but there was no sign of any kind of undead. I wasn't surprised by their decision, as after the last battle, not only had their losses become untenable, but they had also lost their leader. Also, it might be vain of me to say, but I believed that I had thoroughly intimidated them, hitting them with surprise after surprise.

Of course, they weren't the only ones that experienced earth-shattering surprises. My encounter with the librarian had a fair number of surprises, from her enthusiastic carnal involvement to her mind-altering Light Magic, from my surprisingly effective new Tantric skill to the incomprehensible revelation I had received in my achievement. Things were even more complicated than I had expected, and the fact that I somehow positioned myself as a stalwart defender against a very dangerous Necromancer plot didn't help the situation any.

I slipped through the guards with familiar ease, and as much as I wanted to take a long bath, I didn't have the time for it. I still had my meeting with Cornelia —by some miracle, I hadn't missed it— and before that, I wanted to check in with Aviada and Helga, just to tell them that I returned safely.

I disguised myself as a servant before starting to look for Aviada, which turned out to be a good choice as I found her in the arena, battling against two men —one fighter, one mage-- at the same time, destroying them easily. It was easy to see the incredible development she had shown since our last meeting. I felt pride when I easily recognized some tricks I had used when I was fighting against her and Helga.

Unfortunately, the place was too crowded for me to actually talk to her, so I quickly scribbled a note for her, obscurely mentioning my return and giving her a meeting date for tomorrow early in the morning, then waited until her victory, then made eye contact with her. I gave her a small wave as I slipped the note between her items. The relieved smile on her face told me that she recognized me, though it was immediately followed by anger.

I was going to pay for my disappearance tomorrow.

With Aviada handled, I changed once more, this time into my library assistant outfit, then I

went to where I would find Helga. The library.

It didn't take long for me to locate her, huddled in an obscure corner, a tower of books piled in front of her as usual. Unlike the other times, I could see that her mind was on something other than reading, her gaze blank on the page, not bothering to flip it as I watched. She was truly worried.

I couldn't help but feel a stab of guilt as I saw her worried. It was the right choice to force them to leave, as I doubted any of us would have got away with our lives if we were together. They were definitely not ready for that level of combat. Still, seeing her scared gave me a little ping, so I decided to reward her for her obedient waiting.

I sneaked behind her until I wrapped my arms around her, and whispered gently. "Guess who?" It was a testament of our closeness that despite not detecting me before, she wasn't panicked by a pair of arms suddenly around her. Instead, she turned her head and caught my lips in a desperate kiss, one that conveyed fear, longing, and relief.

It was a beautiful kiss that lasted for a couple of minutes, which was still too short in my opinion, especially when it was followed by a hard slap.

[-1 HP]

I could have avoided it, of course, but I let her succeed, knowing it was a way to express her fear. "Where were you?" she gasped. "I was worried sick."

I briefly considered lying to her, but then I remembered the book in my possession. She was the best person to help me solve its mystery before I gave it back to Titania. "Things were more dangerous than I had expected," I whispered, letting my expression reflect the full seriousness of the situation. "Really dangerous. But we can't talk about it here, let's go to my room," I said. She nodded, but I was amused to see the slight blush on her face. "Don't expect much from my room, though," I warned her. "It's a real dump."

"It's okay," she answered as she stood up. After leaving the library, I once again changed into a servant outfit and guided her through the corridors, helping her to avoid attention as we walked down, something easy to achieve as we walked down the corridor.

To her credit, Helga managed to keep her curiosity in until we arrived at my room, which was then replaced by an unimpressed gaze. "I told you it's a dump," I said with a shrug.

"It's not that bad," she murmured with a blush, which was very unconvincing. I smiled widely to

tell her that I wasn't offended. "So, what happened?" she asked, immediately delving into more important topics.

"A lot," I answered even as I turned toward the wall, started drawing several runic nodes, tracks of mana burning brightly. "Too much to talk about without making sure we aren't overheard," I added, and after finishing the most basic layer of defense, I passed the book to her.

[-53 Mana]

"Meanwhile, can you please examine this, maybe you can get a better idea about it," I added. Setting up the defenses was going to take a lot of time, so Helga working on the mysterious book was a good opportunity.

"What's this?" she asked, intrigued. "I've never even seen this alphabet, let alone the language."

"I don't know either, but it's valuable enough that two dozen necromancers used it as the bait for a trap."

"Trap! Two dozen!" she exclaimed, the book lay forgotten at her concern. "And you were involved in-" she tried to continue, but I silenced her with a kiss. It was a slight miscalculation, as when I tried to pull back, Helga's arms wrapped around my torso, pinning me in place, preventing my attempts of pulling back.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the third stage]

The notifications were annoying, but I ignored them as I focused on the kiss. Helga was too delicious to rebuff just because the System decided to act like an asshole.

I moaned in appreciation as she slipped a tongue in my mouth, her hands caressing my body like she was trying to make sure that I was still alive, scared of the danger I had gone through earlier. And since she insisted on a break, I decided to give her a break to remember.

My hands danced over her robe's buttons and ties with a striking familiarity, quickly getting rid of her outer clothes, revealing her unappealing blouse and skirt, and a body that still managed to be sexy despite everything. I was about to undress her further when she surprised me by hiking up her skirt and pushing her panties down, following that by frantically pulling my shaft out.

Then, she pulled away from my kisses, and leaned against the wall, her ass raised, angle perfect for my entry. I was surprised by her initiative, but not as much as her next words. "Fuck me hard!" she moaned. "I need to make sure that you're still here."

It was a request impossible to deny, so I stood behind her, quickly fingering her entrance a few times to make sure she was loose enough before impaling her. She moaned loudly as she turned her head, her lips seeking for a kiss, her hips pushing out to meet my frantic pounding. The sound of flesh hitting flesh mixed with desire. With Helga showing such impressive enthusiasm, it didn't take long for her to reach climax, dragging me along with her. She tightened around me, and I filled her.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Duration, 8 hours]

The notification came as a surprise. Under the excitement of the moment, I had forgotten that I was edging depletion after pumping Titania full with my mana as well as my seed.

"Mmm, that was what I needed," Helga gasped as she tried to control her breathing, but she cried in surprise when I pushed her on the bed and ripped off her clothes, their resistance nothing against my enhanced strength. Soon, she was lying on my bed completely naked, her nipples deliciously erect and her entrance stained with my mark.

"You're delusional if you expect me to stop after that," I said even as I hovered above her in missionary position before sheathing myself inside her again. "We were supposed to work-" she started only for me to silence her with yet another kiss. I impaled her once again, but this time, it was a long, patient slide that contrasted greatly with my earlier frantic assault. The one before was to remind her that I was still alive, this one was about reminding her of the meaning of pleasure.

With my lips alternating between her lips and her neck, and with my fingers triggering every sensitive spot in her body, it didn't take long for her to fall under the daze of pleasure. With her usual caution burned into cinders with desire, she looked spectacular, almost making me explode prematurely. Luckily, I had excellent control over my body.

"Oh, yes," she moaned. "This is the peak of pleasure."

It was good to see her losing her mind from pleasure, but I wanted to teach her that what she had said was not entirely true. The test run of my new skill had worked wonders on Titania, so I was curious about how it would work on Helga.

[-5 Mana]

I started slow, using my kiss to slip a flicker of mana to her, while maintaining control. The first thing I noticed was the ease I could control that flicker of energy. In Titania, it would have disappeared in moments, but Helga's mana space was a calm sea compared to Titania's tornado.

I easily reached Helga's core, using my flicker of mana to examine her skills. The view I got from her was much clearer. I still couldn't identify exact points, but I had a much more accurate view of her abilities. I wondered about the reason for it. Maybe it was the level difference, or maybe it was the increased exposure. I didn't spend a lot of time on that, however, and focused on the concrete information it provided. I could theorize about its drivers later on.

The most important difference between Helga and Titania was the quality of the core itself. Titania's was much stronger, and much more concrete, though it was probably the effect of the level difference. Other things caught my attention as well. Such as the deficiency in her physical stats, her strength in particular. She really needed to bring them up. Her mental stats were much stronger, with her intelligence shining well above her other stats.

To make things even better, I could also read her skills as well. Though I wasn't able to recognize all of them, I could easily identify that they were either about magic, or mental aptitude, both working excellently with her designation as a magical researcher, with Arcana as the only actual applicable skill. No wonder she had never been taken seriously in combat parties.

I was lucky that the rest of the school was stupid enough to miss her true value.

With that cursory examination finished, I pumped more mana inside her, curious on whether I could make any changes.

[-250 Mana]

I targeted her strength, poking and caressing it with my mana, but failed to achieve anything other than a sudden intensifying in Helga's moans. So, I wrapped my mana around her strength, trying to reinforce it. That came with an interesting result, as I felt her hand around my biceps gripping me much stronger. With sudden inspiration, I solidified the reinforcement before pulling back.

"What! How!" Helga gasped between my long, even pushes.

"What happened, sweetie?" I asked.

“I just received a temporary strength bonus,” she murmured, shocked. I just smirked in satisfaction. “How-” she tried to ask, but when I quickened my assault, her cry of pleasure took priority. I decided to experiment a bit more. I pushed another generous dash of mana into her, but this time, just let her absorb it.

[-100 Mana]

[Achievement: Boosted Blast. Discover an alternative way of helping your ladies level up. +2 Intelligence. +500 Experience]

The achievement was a surprise, though definitely appreciated. “Impossible!” she cried even as she suddenly tightened around me as she climaxed. “I just gained experience!” Interesting, I thought, even as I let myself climax as well, filling her with my seed and mana.

[-500 Mana]

Her trembling just intensified further, experiencing a second climax before the first one even subsided. She was gasping and moaning helplessly, unable to control her trembling. I lay next to her, pulling her into a gentle spooning while I waited for her to calm down. It took awhile for her to recover from that spectacular high, while I just lay there, enjoying the moment of calm.

Then, she decided to speak, her tone still trembling and weak. “I just gained experience,” she murmured as she twisted until she was looking at my eyes. “Twice.”

“Before explaining, can you tell me how much experience you gained,” I asked.

“Not a bad amount,” she answered. “Two points the first time, which was nothing, but the second time I gained almost fifty points.” Not bad, I realized, though there was a great difference between the methods of delivery, the more intimate version had almost ten percent efficiency. Not a great amount, but considering the skill was not yet fully evolved, it still showed promise. “Stop thinking,” she cut me off. “You owe me an explanation.”

I could have tried to argue against that, or maybe try to convince her that it was an illusion, but I didn’t bother. I believed that our relationship was strong enough to handle the truth. Not to mention, after the latest reveal, I decided that I needed to understand the origins of my powers. Helga needed to know about it to actually help me.

“It all started one night in the library,” I started, before giving her a quick breakdown of my unique status. I didn’t reveal all of my secrets of course, and slanted the events in a way that made me look better. Still, some of them were shocking even when softened.

“I can’t believe you’re Orlin,” Helga murmured in shock, slapping my chest again and again in anger. Luckily, it was quick-burning anger rather than true rage. “Did you take that shape to seduce me?”

I smirked. “Believe it or not, I was just trying to read books without arousing suspicion, when I saw you needed help. Since I had a soft spot for you, I decided to help, and you can’t blame me for falling for you,” I explained. “And once I had to retire that disguise, I did my best to reconnect with you.” Luckily, rather than a punch, I earned an extended kiss. I once again thanked my charisma. Without it, I doubted I could have avoided a nasty castration attempt. Not to mention, explaining that after two spectacular, back to back orgasms made it even easier.

I still avoided giving details about the rest of the girls, and completely skipped Cornelia for the moment just to avoid triggering her. I had other ideas to handle that particular revelation. Then, the explanation reached today.

“I can’t believe you saved her life,” Helga murmured as fascination, shock, and hero worship were battling in her eyes when I explained to her what happened with Titania. Considering Helga practically lived in the library, her hero-worship for the strongest female in the school was very understandable.

I wondered how she would react if I could manage to arrange a threesome with her.

“It was a surprise for me as well,” I explained. “But it was mostly luck, the necromancers were so focused on keeping her contained that it gave me the perfect opportunity to destroy their traps. From there, even though it was a tough and exhausting battle,” I said. “Maybe I deserve a reward,” I said cutely while I blasted her with my charisma.

“Maybe,” she murmured, and I hit her with a biomancy spell, curing her exhaustion. Before she could say anything else, I had already slid inside her.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 52%]

The sudden notification put a smile on my face as I started pumping into her once more, enjoying the way she climbed onto my lap with a renewed fervor. Revealing my secrets made us closer, allowing the companion tracker to progress once more. But as she rode me wildly, my attention was firmly on her beauty rather than the implications of another power boost or the strategies to handle new challenges.

Those, we could handle tomorrow. For now, I had a blonde bookworm to enjoy.

[Level: 19 Experience: 181050 / 190000

Strength: 20 Charisma: 32

Precision: 15 Perception: 19

Agility: 19 Manipulation: 24

Speed: 17 Intelligence: 24

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 26

HP: 1653 / 1653 Mana: 1359 / 2375]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Tantric [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Five

I left my room three hours later, leaving Helga behind, sleeping. For three hours, we leveraged my mana regeneration to extract the most utility while enjoying our intimate embrace. Helga gained almost five hundred experience points in the process while I spent over five thousand mana points, almost completing her companion progress for the third stage as well. It was not the most efficient way of farming experience for her, but it was the most enjoyable way.

The fact that it was repeatable and free of danger was just another bonus.

I made sure to cover the room with a thick layer of defense before I left, including an impressive number of life-energy traps in case of a necromancer intrusion. It wasn't supposed to be likely, but after the last two encounters with them, I decided to play it safer. Helga was too important for me to risk. Her skillset was vital, and she knew a lot of my secrets.

If I was less wise, I might even convince myself otherwise, but with great wisdom came an annoying level of self-awareness, forcing me to admit to myself that I didn't want any harm to come to Helga, because she was important to me emotionally. She was mine; mind, body, and soul, and I was willing to go to very scary lengths to keep it that way.

A very dangerous thing considering my skill set. For anyone that was stupid enough to target her, of course.

I focused on more immediate concerns as I neared Cornelia's room, this time not even bothering to disguise myself as a servant but using arcana to hide. I didn't want to reveal my disguise trick in case Cornelia was watching. I was two hours late, not that I cared much. I made my position in her life very clear, which also implied that she was the one that needed to be on time then wait obediently for my arrival. I knew that she was smart enough to realize that.

The question was whether she could control her pride in the application of it. The answer laid behind the door I was standing against, so, after a brief stop to make sure there was no trap, I unlocked the magical lock and stepped inside, and passed the foyer in smooth steps before I arrived in Cornelia's living room.

I was glad to see she was there, waiting for me, and I was even more glad to see her wearing a maid costume. Or more accurately, a naughty approximation of a maid costume, one that fit her perfectly, revealing a lot of skin while managing to keep what was the important secret. "Where-" she started the moment she saw me, her face contorted by anger, only to be interrupted by a spell.

My spell, to be exact. The moment she started speaking, I conjured a ball gag in her mouth, preventing her from speaking. "Careful, firecracker. I almost thought that you were going to lash out at me, but I must be wrong," I said even as I dispelled the ball gag, but she stayed shocked. Understandable, considering the difficulty of being able to conjure anything in another magician's personal space, even if that mage was distracted like Cornelia. I doubted that I would have been able to before my recent level-ups and stat increases.

Cornelia might be a collection of anger and pride, but she was smart enough to realize she was truly outmatched. "I'm sorry sir, I forgot myself," she murmured as her eyes fell to the floor demurely. Since she was such a good sport, I decided to ignore the way her fist tightened.

"You're catching on, it's good," I said, then added in a stage whisper. "A bit slow, though."

The way her chin clenched was almost as satisfying as the way her dress revealed most of her naughty body for my viewing pleasure. "Thank you, sir," she managed to say, even keeping her tone relatively even, impressing me with her control. I would have never expected her to resist such a casual insult. "Is there anything I can help you with?"

The question reminded me that I was yet to take a bath after two very long carnal sessions, limiting myself to cleaning spells. "Draw me a bath, firecracker, I'm feeling exhausted," I said, enjoying the way her eyes brightened in anger whenever I used her new nickname.

"Yes, sir," she still managed to say through her squeezed teeth, making me smile in amusement. She turned to talk away into the bathroom, but before she could take a step, I was next to her, and slapped her ass hard enough for it to ring in the room.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

She stiffened, but still walked away without trying to turn back, her steps stiff. I watched her walk away, sad that she was walking away without swaying her hips, wasting the potential of her short skirt. She was thoughtful enough to leave a glass of wine already filled for me, and I sipped it, but only after I checked it for poison, just in case she had a nasty surprise.

She stepped out five minutes later, her face redder, and her clothes slightly more transparent thanks to the humidity, giving me a beautiful show. "The bath is ready, sir," she said.

"Thanks, firecracker," I answered as I walked in, only to stop and turn after a few steps in. "What are you waiting for there, come in," I ordered.

"In-inside," she stammered, but when she received a stiff glare, she obeyed immediately. Still,

when she arrived next to me, she received another spank to her barely-covered bottom. It wasn't painful, but humiliating. I had no doubt that she would have preferred to be chained to the wall and whipped rather than playing the servant.

Which was the whole point of the deal. Even without the Tantric, I was sure that I could help her, but I needed her ready to follow orders before I did so. I said nothing, just raised my arms and turned my back to her, no doubt tempting her to stab me in the back. Instead, she removed my clothes in a surprisingly gentle manner. I was expecting her to at least slip and accidentally scratch me or something like that.

She failed to hide her blush as she pulled down my boxers, revealing my shaft. And considering she was providing an amazing view of her cleavage as she did so, she met with the full mast version, though I had to admit that the only reason it was still alive was because of my biomancy skill. Even with my endurance, exhausting both Titania and Helga on the same day had been a challenging affair.

"Are you ready for your bath, sir," she murmured, doing her best to suppress her blush as she tried not to gaze at my erection, which was a difficult affair for her.

"I am, firecracker, but are you?" I asked. She looked at me with mild panic. I gave the explanation she didn't ask for. "You're going to properly wash me, of course," I said, then turned my back, ignoring the sudden mana build up behind me, recognizing the bluff. The mana build-up was too obvious to actually be an attack. The frustrated growl she let out confirmed it.

I set myself in the water, but in a way I faced Cornelia, enjoying the impromptu strip show she was about to provide. She reached for the straps of her dress, hard enough to rip it off. I was tempted to ask her to dance, but after consideration, I decided not to, mostly because I wanted to see her natural reaction.

She undressed rapidly, but didn't bother to hide her body, giving me a glimpse of her beauty before she wrapped a small towel around herself. Smart, but only tactically, I decided. She realized that acting shy would have made it more fun for me, and acted to remove that. Tactically a sound move, but strategically horrible, because it forced me to act in a way to satisfy my need for entertainment.

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I said nothing as she crouched next to me, using a small cup to rinse the parts of my body out of the water, followed by soap. Despite her gentle touch, I could sense her anger from the way her

fingers stiffened at each touch. However, considering the way she had been acting when she had the power, it didn't arouse any sympathy from me.

She was reaping what she sowed.

I pulled out of the water, and sat on the corner of the large tub —or more accurately, a small pool— once again giving her full access to my naked body. I grunted in appreciation as she slowly soaped and rinsed my back, her touch soft and gentle.

I opened my eyes when she started working on my legs, because her towel was straining to contain her body as she acted. I wanted to enjoy the full show. When she started on my torso, however, she was struggling to keep her blush down once again, her tiny towel not enough to hide the signs of arousal. I didn't know whether it was my muscles or the fact that I was forcing her to serve me, but I was happy with the result either way.

She even washed my erect shaft without a complaint, though I suspected the sudden lingering touches were not from her obedience, but her desire instead. My senses were sharp enough to smell her arousal after our extended contact.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

It was the reason I changed my mind about asking for a blowjob. I was planning to until she started showing signs of actually anticipating it. "Towel," I called as I stood up, enjoying the momentary flash of shock that passed across her face, soon replaced by a dull disappointment. Damn, educating her was going to be even more fun than I had expected.

She was quick when she dried me off, and even better, she followed me obediently as I walked back to her living room first, then directly to her bedroom. "It's time for a massage," I said, and she quickly reached for a drawer, pulling out several oil bottles. She was truly prepared.

However, I stopped her when she was about to pour some oil on her hand. "It's not me who's going to receive the massage, but you," I said.

"M-me," she stammered, my statement once again managing to break her bubble of calm. This time, she was angry. "Couldn't you find a better excuse to fuck me?" she said scathingly, her frustration from denial and her frustration from being ordered around finally bubbling out. Of course, when she realized the potential harm of her statement, she blanched.

I ignored her reaction as I walked closer, and when I was just a step away, I pulled off her towel violently, leaving her naked. She didn't even bother to hide her body. "Do you think I need an

excuse to take you however I wish, bitch,” I said, my tone not playful.

“N-no, sir,” she stammered.

“Good that you still have a sliver of common sense,” I said scathingly, though my anger was completely artificial, once again tapping into my Subterfuge skill. “The massage is a part of the treatment I promised, but since you know much better than me, maybe I should just follow your lead,” I continued, threatening her with the thing she wanted the most.

“No, sir,” she gasped in shock, her panic completely genuine. I was planning to make her sweat a bit more when she surprised me by kneeling in front of me, like an obedient slave trying to earn the favor of her master. “I’m sorry, sir. You’re my only hope. Please forgive my impudence.”

“You’re lucky that I have a soft heart, firecracker,” I said, my tone once again soft. She raised her head, her eyes shining with hope. It seemed that she was even more fragile from her lack of leveling than I had been expecting, which was suspicious. “Tell me what happened,” I said in a sudden bout of inspiration.

“I have received a message from my uncle, setting up a challenge between me and my cousin, or more accurately, his champion,” she said. “My only chance is for you to be my champion, but even then, it’ll be for survival only. They’ll know that I’m not strong enough to challenge my uncle, and it’ll be game over,” she said.

It was definitely an inconvenient development. I was hoping for more time. “It’s bad, but at least you’ll be alive,” I said, confident of defeating whatever champion her family could put in front of me, though not appreciating the necessity of revealing myself. “When is the challenge?” I asked.

“In a month,” she answered despondently, followed by a shocked gaze when I laughed out loud. “Is my suffering amusing to you, sir?” she said, which made me laugh even harder, especially since she still added the honorific.

“Quite a bit,” I admitted without shame. “But it’s not why I’m laughing, firecracker. Believe me, a month is more than enough to solve your little level problem,” I said in confidence. A month might as well be an eternity with all the options I had in front of me.

“Really, sir?” she asked, this time hope coloring her tone.

“Yes, but don’t forget the price. If you take my help, I’m going to make you my toy, mind, body,

and soul.”

“As long as it’s behind closed doors, I accept the bargain, sir,” she answered rapidly, showing more determination than I had expected. Or maybe it was the impression I made on her.

“Good, then go lay on the bed on your face, and we’re going to start the first phase of the treatment,” I ordered, she threw herself on the bed. It was interesting to watch a prideful woman like her folding into an enthusiastic maid because of a threat to her position, especially since she was so proud of her dominance.

When I stood above her, I spent a moment enjoying the splendor of her naked figure before putting my hands on her body. First, I checked the spell that I made to detect whether she followed my order about playing with herself, and much to my surprise, it seemed that she followed it.

I put my hands on her back, and started delivering a top tier massage that applied the full range of my abilities, even using the occasional Biomancy trick. Soon, she was biting the pillow to contain her moans, and that was without me touching any sensitive locations. She was backed up for too long, it seemed.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

She let out a surprised gasp when I put a finger in her mouth without a warning and ordered her to suck. “I need to use my mana to check your status,” I explained, and slipped my mana in her, only to meet a very stiff obstruction. Despite my increased skill, analyzing her was harder than doing it to Titania. I barely got a glimpse of her core, with virtually no detail. I couldn’t even identify her fire skill.

It might be the effect of the level cap, I decided. But more likely, it was the Companion System that allowed me to access their core. I didn’t have enough evidence to decide one way or another at the moment.

Luckily, it could be solved easily. I could have slipped inside her, finally taking her virginity to trigger the Companion counter, but it wouldn’t be amusing enough. Instead, I cast a spell on her to prevent her from climaxing, then I continued to massage her, driving her crazier and crazier.

Soon, even biting the pillow failed to prevent her from crying in pleasure, turning into putty in my hands. “Please,” she murmured.

“Please, what, firecracker?” I asked her, and got a shy moan. I leaned into her ear, whispering

throatily. "I'm going to give you two choices. If you want me to keep away, just say so, and I'll never touch you again, no matter what, but still help you. Or, you can ask me to fuck you, and I can give you the best, most delicious orgasm of your life. Choose, firecracker."

"I want you to..." she murmured, her voice dwindling into a moan as I continued to massage her.

"Clearer, sweetie," I said. "I can't hear you."

"I want you to ... do me," she murmured once again.

"Use the exact words, sweetie, or I will assume that you don't want to do it," I threatened.

The way she froze under my fingers triggered a primal part in me, begging me to take her, make her mine. Still, I waited for her answer. "Please, fuck me, sir," she moaned deliriously, trying to flip over, only to be prevented by my arms.

[Achievement: Delicious and Delirious. Seduce a stubborn vixen through an extended denial of pleasure, teaching her the place she deserves. +2 Strength, +500 Experience]

The achievement was a nice thing, but it had fallen wayside at the anticipation of finally getting really familiar with the Flame Queen.

[Level: 19 Experience: 182600 / 190000

Strength: 22 Charisma: 32

Precision: 15 Perception: 19

Agility: 19 Manipulation: 24

Speed: 17 Intelligence: 24

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 26

HP: 1691 / 1691 Mana: 1359 / 2375]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Advanced Tantric [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Six

Cornelia's helpless moan, begging me to fuck her, put a prideful smirk on my face. I couldn't help but feel proud, considering less than a week ago, I was skittering like a rat around her, fearing her attention. Now, she was lying in front of me, wet and naked, begging for my cock even after I assured that she would still receive the help she needed even if she chose otherwise.

I could have just slid inside her, of course, invited by the way her hips rose deliciously, giving me access to her entrance, but that would have been a relief she didn't deserve yet, especially with Helga in the mix. I needed to stretch a bit more, so once the situation was revealed to Helga, I could spin it off as an act of preliminary revenge I took on her behalf.

With that in mind, I waved my hand, and Cornelia's bag of goodies flew toward me. Another flick, and ribbons flew out and wrapped around her wrists, forcing her spread-eagle. She twisted her neck in an effort to glare at me, but the blindfold that wrapped over her eyes prevented her from doing so. "What are you-" she started, only to receive a spank to her ass.

"Don't speak without prompting," I ordered to her, my tone sharp and unyielding. The moan that escaped her lips, as a result, was positively delicious. She was getting wetter after she was completely immobilized, proving once and for all that she didn't just have a dominance but also a submission fetish.

A fetish that I was going to use for my benefit in the future. However, for now, I had a much more important task than planning for the future. Her entrance was glistening beautifully, waiting for my presence.

I pushed forward mercilessly, enough to make her cry in pain despite her wetness, the unfamiliar presence stretching her untouched walls. But that cry was followed by a string of moans, showing her enjoyment of pain.

[+1500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 2%]

I started hammering her mercilessly, the sound of colliding flesh filling the room. She tried to clench her legs, but the ribbons around her limbs prevented her from moving, keeping her in place. She gasped and moaned, intensifying whenever I slapped her ass to further enhance her desires.

“Do you like it?” I asked even as I slapped her ass once more, turning it into a glowing mess, but she just moaned further.

“Yes, sir!” she shouted in response. “You’re filling me completely. I never felt anything like this before.”

“That’s what you get for denying your true nature, firecracker,” I said even as I changed my pace, impaling her even harder, but instead of spanking her, caressing her ass. “You tried to overreach by trying to dominate others, trying to rail against your fate of being stuck at your level, not knowing that you needed to accept your true nature before you can break the barriers.”

“I understand-” she started only to be silenced as a sudden wave of pleasure hit her, silencing her much better than any other method.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 7%]

I didn’t stop, of course. Tonight wasn’t about teaching her the tender meaning of pleasure. No, tonight, she was going to be used until she turned into a helpless blob, unable to move in her own power. However, as much as I wanted to put my full attention on ramming her repeatedly, I had more important things to focus on, namely, measuring the effect of the Companion process on my Tantric capabilities.

With that in mind, I put my finger on her mouth, and she sucked greedily, too far gone to even notice the generous dash of mana I had slipped inside her.

[-100 Mana]

This time, the connection was much stronger, giving me a perfect view of her soul space, confirming my guess that it was the companion system that was allowing the smooth interaction. Pity, as otherwise, it would have been a really broken ability. With a sigh, I focused on examining her power, examining her soul space.

The first thing I noticed was the sensation of the area itself. Both Helga’s and Titania’s power felt, for the lack of a better term, more flexible, while Cornelia’s was stretched out to the capacity, preventing it from growing further. Though it had a scary implication. Titania was yet to hit her level cap. Just how strong was her potential!

“Fuck me harder, sir,” Cornelia cried, pulling me back to the present.

“What did I tell you about speaking without being asked first, slut?” I said, my tone harsher. I was about to slap her ass as a warning once more, when my eyes caught something more interesting. A small biomancy spell later, I forced my finger into her asshole without warning, making her cry in pain. “That’s what you deserve, slut,” I called even as I added a second finger, intensifying her moans.

“Yes, sir. I’m a worthless slut, and that’s what I deserve,” she moaned.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 13%]

She once again spoke without permission, but seeing the great jump in the companion acquisition process, I decided to let it slide, once again focusing on her powers. It wasn’t a surprise to see her mental stats much higher than the physical ones, though her physical ones were still decent, probably averaging around five. Not bad for a dedicated mage. In her mental stats, however, her charisma and manipulation were really high, understandable considering her explosive power and ability to shape her flames.

The surprising part is her skills. I was only able to detect three skills, Arcana which was either advanced or expert level, something related to mana I failed to pin down, and flame magic. Flame magic, however, dominated all others, probably reaching the Grandmaster level.

Suddenly, I understood the reason for Cornelia’s reputation. She probably received Grandmaster Flame skill quite early in her career, allowing her to build a reputation early on. However, I doubted that she expected herself to stop at level fifteen, because Grandmaster skills had one big drawback. They consumed five skill slots to fully mature, meaning, after taking it, the next four levels offered no new skills, each raising skill cap by ten until it reached a hundred and fifty maximum in its maturity.

In my personal opinion, it was a bit of waste. Yes, it allowed casting extraordinary spells, but with the cost of extreme specialization.

I didn’t spend much time over Cornelia’s misguided skill selection, but continued to examine the edges of her soul space, trying to get a better feel of the reason for her unable to gain more experience, but ultimately, I failed to understand it, though from Cornelia’s intensifying moans, it easy to see her enjoyment.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 19%]

In the end, I decided to stop my examination for the moment, waiting for the completion of the first tier of the Companion process. Whether she would get an achievement, and the changes in the process, would give me important information. Not that I needed the excuse to continue fucking her body, mind, and soul.

When she tightened around me yet another time, I decided to mix things up a bit. I pulled out of her, and she opened her mouth to say something, only to replace it with a gasp when she felt the familiar presence of my shaft pressing against her puckered hole.

I impaled her without a warning, making her cry in pain, taking her anal virginity in the process as well. She belonged to me, after all. My little noble fucktoy.

“Tell me what you feel, slut,” I said, once again using a spank as punctuation.

“I feel dirty, sir,” she moaned in reply. “I feel used, I feel worthless, and I feel like I’m just a little toy. I have never felt this good in my life!”

“Good,” I said in amusement as I pushed even deeper into her bowels, enjoying her untouched tightness. “And tell me what are you going to do to make it continue?”

“Whatever you want, sir,” she moaned. I decided to reward her with a unique gift. A flicker of mana was enough to make the ribbons disappear, and she collapsed on the bed. I wrapped my arms to her waist and pulled her on my lap, her back pressing against my chest, her eyes still blindfolded.

I lifted her and took a few steps, until we were standing in front of her huge mirror. Her legs were parted open, creating a perfect view of my shaft repeatedly disappearing in her asshole.

“Do you want to see your own slutty face?” I whispered into her ear. She didn’t say anything, but I decided to take her sudden tightening around my shaft as a positive response, and pulled down her blindfold.

“Oh my god!” she cried in shock as she saw her own slack-jawed face, broken with pleasure, which proved to be the last thing she needed to trigger yet another orgasm. With her almost-virgin asshole clenching around my shaft, I exploded as well, filling her bowels with my seed, not to mention a lot of mana, enough to make her pass out with pleasure.

[-500 Mana]

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25%]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Master Elemental, Expert Subterfuge, Expert Tantric]

Once again I selected Tantric before I quickly followed the stream of mana I deployed, analyzing her soul space. Thanks to my increased closeness, the view was even clearer, but it wasn't the only change. I could see a familiar sliver of energy floating in her soul space, trying to merge with her stats, but no matter how many times it smashed against, it failed to merge.

It was the achievement she just received, or more accurately, supposed to receive, I decided, and decided to help. Luckily, I had deployed enough mana to overwhelm her capacity, so I wrapped it around her stats, softening the surrounding space —for lack of a better term— to allow the new achievement to merge.

[+3 Tantric]

However, as the minutes ticked, I realized that I might have bitten a bit more than I could chew. No matter how much I played with her stats, I failed to merge the achievement with her.

I had no intention of surrendering. I caught her lips in a searing kiss, dumping as much mana as I could manage, feeling glad about my mana regeneration perk. It would have been a waste if I hadn't had my full mana here.

[-750 Mana]

[+6 Tantric]

With the addition of my new mana, I started my battle anew. I pressed and squeezed mentally and physically, forcing the borders of her soul space to soften. And suddenly, it started drinking my mana. I let it do that, because I realized that the more mana it drank, the softer it became. When it drank over a thousand points of mana, it finally softened enough for the achievement to slid inside its place.

[+8 Tantric]

[Achievement: Enforced Error. Create a forced glitch in the system while using only your own abilities, achieving a first since the Calamity. +2 to All Stats +10000 Experience]

I stumbled back to the bed, with Cornelia still on my lap, murmuring softly. I wanted to laugh and relax, as I had achieved the impossible. Even better, I achieved the impossible while filling the backdoor of one of the most eligible young nobles in the school, and once again received a spectacular reward in return.

However, once again, the description of the achievement threw me off. The reference for something called the Calamity was intriguing enough, but my attention was grabbed by the part that mentioned that forcing a glitch by my own power, achieving a first.

It implied that there were others capable of forcing a glitch, even if they were forced to use some external support.

That wasn't good, I thought even as I pulled Cornelia tighter against my body, cuddling her even as my thoughts run wild with the possibilities. I hated the feeling. I finally hit Level 20, an achievement that was supposed to ensure a safe and comfortable life for me, but instead, I was desperately trying to deduce whether I had an enemy behind the scenes, pointing a dagger behind.

I would have liked to believe that it had nothing to do with me, but a sinking feeling in my heart was telling me that it wasn't the truth.

"Perfect, just what I needed. More challenge," I murmured even as I lazily squeezed Cornelia's breasts, treating them like toys, exquisite ones, but toys nonetheless. It might have sounded ridiculous to someone else, but I had the full intention to take my sixth sense seriously.

I was tempted to lean down and fuck Cornelia mercilessly after waking her up with a slap, but a soft touch with my Tantric ability showed that her soul space was, in a sense, strained. I decided to refrain from fucking her before she got used to the new presence. I continued to lay next to her, my mind on the possible implications of the latest reveal while I also lazily observed the changes in her soul space, which gave me several interesting insights about it. The next time, it was going to be even smoother.

Cornelia's eyes flickered open an hour later, an astonished expression on her face. "Impossible," she stammered as she looked across the room unfocused, like she was reading a sentence that didn't exist. "I received an achievement!"

“Keep it down,” I ordered her, but unlike the other times, my tone was soft. I understood her elation more than anyone else, and I didn’t begrudge for enjoying it. I just didn’t want her to shout it. Intellectually, I acknowledged that there wasn’t a risk, but I was still feeling skittish. “This is the evidence that I can help you increase your power,” I said, and she nodded enthusiastically. “You’re smart enough to realize that you shouldn’t reveal it under any circumstances.” This earned another enthusiastic nod, and she leaned forward to kiss me.

I allowed her lips to connect, enjoying being the receiving end of her tender touch. I was still going to dominate her mercilessly the next time, but for now, I was happy to share that flicker of intimacy. But when she tried to climb on my lap, I stopped her. She looked at me, her expression between shocked and wounded.

“What I had to use to give you that achievement has some impact you can’t feel, but you need to rest to avoid side effects,” I said. I had no doubt how the increase of the companion core would affect the process, and I had no intention of actually testing it. “I want you to take a sick leave tomorrow and stay on the bed, doing absolutely nothing. I’m going to visit you in the evening after that, maybe even with a guest. Be prepared to serve two.”

“Understood, sir,” she moaned as she shivered, making me wonder whether it was my kindness or the following orders that triggered her enjoyment.

“Now, sleep,” I said, even as I put my hand on her body, using Biomancy to cure some of the worst damages, but leaving enough to be visible.

Then, I leaned forward just like I was about to give her a midnight kiss, but instead, I bit her shoulder hard, enough to leave a mark, which I made permanent with a unique application of Biomancy. “Just to remind you who owns you.” I whispered throatily, and from the way she pressed her legs together, it seemed that she enjoyed the idea immensely.

I quickly dressed, and when I left, exhaustion once again had conquered her, leaving her unconscious. I left the room, my mind on my next steps.

[Level: 20 Experience: 203100 / 210000

Strength: 24 Charisma: 34

Precision: 17 Perception: 21

Agility: 21 Manipulation: 26

Speed: 19 Intelligence: 26

Endurance: 18 Wisdom: 28

HP: 1980 / 1980 Mana: 920 / 2700]

SKILLS

[Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Expert Tantric [67/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Seven

After a brief consideration, rather than returning to Helga, I decided to leave the school for a midnight hunt, something only a madman would do.

A madman, or an extraordinarily-strong level twenty with a wide range of expertise that was suddenly feeling trapped after his latest realization that there was a mysterious threat out there. I felt trapped, and with my strength, I didn't appreciate the feeling, and I was willing to risk a violent death to get rid of it.

During the day, the surroundings were usually safe enough that even low-level students could go hunting without too big of a risk as long as they had a minder. The same wasn't applicable for the night, however. There were a lot of creatures that preferred the darkness to move around in, easily avoiding the culling efforts. The shadow wolf that almost killed me when I was in the protected forest was a good example of it.

So, when I actually heard the footsteps barely louder than a whisper, a smile appeared on my face. When I felt the presence closing in, I did nothing until the last second, then slashed expertly four times before my attacker could react. The shadow wolf collapsed on the ground, bleeding, quickly driving toward its death despite its impressive vitality. Just a sign of how far I had come.

However, I decided to experiment. I let my mana seep into its head, trying to force it into the creature's soul space, or whatever its equivalent was.

I received a stab of pain as a reward.

[-53 Mana]

[-266 HP]

"That was a stupid move," I murmured even as I rubbed my head, trying to ignore the sudden stab of pain. I hadn't expected its core to be filled with violent energies, immediately attacking toward me the moment I touched it. The smart thing would be just to let it slide, but I decided to do the stupid thing, and kept my mana around its core, just not letting it connect again. When the creature died, the core dissipated except for a sliver of energy, and that sliver of energy tried to connect with me, but failed to find a purchase before dissipating. It was nothing I had read about, but I had a feeling that I had discovered how normal people gained experience.

It was a barely noticeable process, the only reason I was able to detect it was because of my ridiculous stats and specialized Mana manipulation skill. Even then, I had a question. Did I discover something new, or did I discover something that others knew but kept under wraps. I had a feeling that it was the second part.

With a sigh, I continued my deadly hunt, killing several creatures in rapid succession, the most dangerous one being a Class Fifteen Blood Owl, but even that didn't survive for more than a minute against me. For every creature I tested, I observed the same pattern. Violent core, linking with its killer, but only to fail to find a purchase in my case. Maybe I should observe them being killed by another person. It would give me a better idea of what was going on during a level up, maybe even to a point that I might enhance the effectiveness of my newly-discovered leveling methodology.

It was a pity I didn't have anyone I could wake up in the middle of the night to ask me to accompany for a bit of killing.

Or did I?

With a smirk I returned back to the school, once again avoiding the guards with contemptuous ease. I knew that they were geared against monsters rather than human infiltrators, but it was still shameful. Rather dangerous as well, considering my encounters with the necromancers. Slipping into the Fighter quarters had been a bit more difficult. Unlike the outer walls, this section was protected by the students, and some rangers had rather sharp eyes.

Luckily, I was well past the point of being scared of their attention, not with my stats. Disguised as a servant, it required only a few low-powered spells before I arrived at the female section.

At a glance, I could see that the living principles in this area were very different. The mage section allowed expensive rooms with opulent furnishings, while this section was much more spartan. Noble students had a small room for themselves, while the others lived in bunk beds, a necessity considering there were a lot more warrior classes than mage classes, especially from the less fortunate with no perceived potential for high levels.

With a low-level cap, warriors were a much better choice than mage classes.

As I walked through the rooms, concealed in the shadows, I saw many beautiful students in various states of undress. Unfortunately, it was invariably followed by that infernal notification.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

At level twenty, I was well-past the limits of this school. I believed that I was strong enough to defeat the majority of the teaching staff, even, even if that was more about my unorthodox style and overwhelming stats than a dominating level advantage. Other than the very rare exceptions like Cornelia, students couldn't help me enhance my strength.

When I arrived at Aviada's room, I did my best to silently unlock the simple lock that was keeping her door closed, and slid inside before alerting anyone.

I wasn't expecting to meet with the naked figure of Aviada, who, apparently, preferred to sleep in the buff. I decided to mess with her a bit, and quickly undressed before sliding in next to her, curious just how long I could mess with her without waking her up.

First, I gently caressed her arm, making her turn restlessly until she was laying on her back, her legs parted enough to reveal the beautiful treasure between them. However, I had other priorities. I leaned in for a kiss, and with the opportunity, I even slipped a small stream of mana in, examining her soul space.

[-5 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

With our strong bond and the increase in my Tantric abilities, the impression I received was the clearest yet. I could easily sense her stat distribution, heavily leaning toward the physical side, with strength shining above and beyond others. Her mental stats were low, but relatively well-distributed.

Her skills, on the other hand, were extremely specialized. She only had two skills, a fully evolved Grandmaster Sword, and Basic Observation. She was amazing with her sword, which was shining on the hook above her bed, but without that, she was dangerously vulnerable.

Luckily for her, I was making great strides in understanding the System. Who knows, maybe when I attain Master Tantric, I might actually do something about that. After a brief examination, I carefully dissipated the mana, not letting it get absorbed by her. I didn't want to give her experience yet. Not because I didn't trust her, but because I was afraid that she wouldn't get the dangers associated with a wider reveal. She was too straightforward to be a part of this discussion.

Instead, I started caressing her breasts, enjoying the way they stiffened and she moaned, but still not waking up. I decided to up the ante, and let my fingers cross the smooth expanse of her stomach before arriving between her legs, caressing gently. Once again, she just moaned, but

still stayed asleep, even when I gently fingered her for five whole minutes.

It was likely because unconsciously, she identified me as a familiar presence, preventing her from waking up in alarm, as there was no other explanation for her sleepiness. Maybe I should teach her a lesson before we went out for training.

I climbed on top of her, and grabbed both of her arms, ready to pin her in place the moment she woke up. Then, I aligned myself at her entrance, and leaned down for a kiss. "Good morning, princess," I whispered before kissing her softly, and her eyes popped open in shock.

"Caesar-" she started, only to be silenced as I slid inside her, enjoying her tightness. She was wet thanks to the foreplay she received when she was sleeping. She moaned at the sudden intrusion, but before she could cry, I stole another kiss.

"I didn't put any up any silencing wards, so you need to be silent," I warned her with a playful smile.

"You're seeking death," she murmured as she tried to raise her arm, only to find herself unable to move. "You got stronger," she whispered in shock, which was very understandable. The last time we wrestled, she was stronger than me by a small margin, and I only managed to defeat her through my recent boost.

This time, she was barely able to move, not shocking considering I had several points more strength, and a superior position. "I did," I answered simply before leaning on for a lingering kiss.

"How?" she asked followed by a moan considering I was still moving deep inside her.

"It all started after I left you girls behind and went to the canyon, only to find a deadly necromancer ambush. A horde, several bone dragons, and two dozen necromancers," I explained, and her eyes widened in shock. Understandable, as that group could have easily destroyed a town, and even against a mid-sized city, they wouldn't have necessarily lost.

"How did you survive that?" she asked in shock, though from the way she tightened, she was clearly enjoying the story.

"The ambush was not for me, so I managed to hit them from behind, breaking their magical trap and killing a couple of necromancers as a start," I explained, before launching into a detailed breakdown of the battle, making sure to avoid any references that would reveal Titania's identity. Once again, I didn't trust her capacity to hold secrets in the areas she

wouldn't understand its importance. Even convincing her not to brag about my part was a challenge.

Still, I was glad that I told the tale for a few reasons. She was my ally as well as my girlfriend — or something like that, at least, the titles were rather confusing at the moment— and she deserved to know of the growing threat of the necromancers. Also, if I could resolve my challenges, I would be able to boost her combat capabilities a great deal, enough to make her a deadly combatant, especially with her unique sword. Also, unlike the more mysterious details, she fully understood the sensitivity of the combat information, and would keep her mouth closed.

Of course, the benefits were not limited to that. When I pushed deep inside her once more after finishing my tale, I was met with a welcome notification.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 51%]

Apparently, impressing her with the tales of my heroic battle made our relationship even stronger, making the discussion worthwhile. “So,” I said with a smirk as I lowered myself down until I started looking at her eyes from very close proximity. “Do I get a reward for my impressive performance,” I asked even as I sped up my pacing, impaling her again and again, enjoying the way she tried to suppress her moans, but with limited success.

I decided to have mercy as her orgasm hit her. I quickly established a silencing ward to cover the wall, but I didn't inform her of that, watching as she bit her lips desperately, trying to contain the moans of her orgasm, only to fail spectacularly. The panic in her eyes was just beautiful.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 54%]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 2. Duration, 8 hours]

“Don't worry, I silenced the room just before you lost control,” I whispered into her ear throatily, and earned a painful bite on my shoulder as a result, one that hurt despite my ridiculous endurance.

[-10 HP]

“That's your punishment for daring to play with me like that,” she explained even as she tried to get away from my grip. I let her slide away, but when she tried to push me out of the bed, I chose to roll out and started dressing instead. “You're leaving?” she murmured, her tone

uncharacteristically vulnerable.

“No, we’re going,” I answered. “I’m in the mood for a midnight hunt,” I added, before letting my smirk widen salaciously. “And maybe more if the way you dress impresses me,” I added.

“Is that so?” she murmured, her smile equally wide as she walked toward her closet. “Turn your back,” she ordered mischievously.

I did so, curious about her surprise. When she called me to turn back, I couldn’t help but frown as she revealed herself in a thick travel cape, tied up to cover her whole body. A frown appeared on my face, and she smiled wider before letting it widen just enough to give a glimpse of her armor underneath, one that covered significantly less area than I had been expecting. “Much better,” I said with a smirk, gesturing for her to follow me, while I once again cast a spell to conceal our presence and let us fade into the shadows.

[-15 Mana]

“I have to admit, magic can be useful occasionally,” she admitted with a sigh, which was a great thing considering her usual antagonistic approach. It was good to see her finally getting softer on the issue. We stayed silent until we reached the walls, and she spoke in shock. “We’re going outside?” she gasped.

“Of course,” I answered. “I’m not in the mood for hunting rabbits.” She looked unsure, so I put my hand on her shoulder, squeezing softly. It was enough to renew her courage.

She finally let her cape open when we were a couple of miles away from the school, revealing the ensemble underneath, making me harden immediately. She was wearing a set of completely useless armor. Well, useless in terms of combat, as I could easily imagine different usages. Her top was covered with no more area than a bra —a particularly salacious one, even — while the bottom part was literally a piece of metal kept upright with strings. Under the moonlight, she looked delectable enough to eat.

“That seems useful for combat,” I said mockingly, but I let my gaze devour her body to convey the impact of it on me. Also, I was touched. The fact that she walked outside with absolutely no protection highlighted her trust in me, conveying that, with my skills, she needed no armor.

Not a functional one instead.

I was tempted to push her down and take her on the grass, but we were interrupted by a band of golden lions. Scary creatures, class fourteen power, strong cooperation, and a vicious

mentality. Moreover, they were famous for their magic resistance, making them true pests. The attacking pride contained six members, definitely a scary combination. “Keep on defensive,” I ordered her even as I drew my sword, and dashed forward —after coating it with magic because its steel wouldn’t have resisted my strength otherwise.

[-96 Mana]

I was in need of a better weapon, as constantly wasting mana to reinforce my sword wasn’t the best option. Luckily, with two instances of my regeneration perk active, I wasn’t exactly straining for mana.

Golden lions were vicious predators with a unique blend of strength, grace, and vitality, but against me, they were helpless. I ducked under one of their claws, cutting its throat in return. I still rolled away, because even a cut to the throat was barely an inconvenience.

When I noticed two of them charging toward Aviada, however, I decided to act quickly. I raised my hand, and a thick earthen cage appeared around them, pinning them in place.

[-140 Mana]

They raged against the walls, trying to break it, while I delivered another bleeding wound to the one that attacked me first. I wanted to remove at least one of them as soon as possible. After receiving two more wounds in the next second, it pulled away rather than waiting for its pride mates. I used the opportunity to strengthen their cages, but didn’t bother to cast an offensive spell. Their skin was too strong to actually be affected by an elemental spell, at least not in a way that would be worth the mana expenditure.

[-430 Mana]

“Kill the wounded one,” I ordered even as I dashed forward and cut two of its tendons, but not without a cost. It landed a vicious blow to my shoulder. Luckily, I had HP to spare.

[-130 HP]

I stood in front of the wounded one, protecting Aviada as she approached, even casting a few lightning bolts to distract them. They might be resistant to magic, but nonetheless, the bright crackling of lightning cutting through the darkness was scary enough to trick their primitive minds.

I let my mana senses expand and wrapped them around Aviada and her victim, carefully

watching the changes as Aviada delivered the killing blow. Like before, the creature's energy dispersed into the air, with only a small sliver of it flying toward the soul space of its killer, in this case, Aviada, and merging with its boundaries, strengthening it slightly.

[+2 Tantric]

Interesting, I thought even as I turned toward the rest of the lions, ready to make quick work of them.

Even as I charged once more, I couldn't help but smile elatedly. The experiment I was running was a true joy, beautiful weather, danger enough to make me appreciate life, and a sexy brunette with a body to die for dressed in bikini armor.

Sometimes, being a nerd paid off...

[Level: 20 Experience: 203100 / 210000

Strength: 24 Charisma: 34

Precision: 17 Perception: 21

Agility: 21 Manipulation: 26

Speed: 19 Intelligence: 26

Endurance: 18 Wisdom: 28

HP: 1840 / 1980 Mana: 1920 / 2700]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Expert Tantric [70/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Eight

A laugh escaped my mouth as I swung my sword —shining with the magic I dumped into it, so much man that it was a miracle it didn't melt— once more, this time costing the attacking golden lion a tendon, then, rather than following up with a deadlier attack, I once again rolled in front of Aviada, preventing the second one from taking her down.

Meanwhile, the remaining three were still locked in their earthen cages, smashing into them, again and again, to get free despite impaling themselves on the spikes I had created. If they were any stupider, they would have stopped long ago, afraid of the pain. Unfortunately, they were smart enough to understand the implications, forcing me to expend even more mana to keep them away from the battle.

[-260 Mana]

“Come on, little guy,” I called in satisfaction as I suddenly charged forward, meeting its charge halfway, enough to shock the creature. I doubted that it ever experienced a smaller creature trying to wrestle it down. Normally, even with my phenomenal strength, trying to meet a monster in a contest of pure strength was not the smartest move, but the creature's astonishment was enough that it failed to react appropriately until I was on its back, grabbing its head and forcing it backward.

Aviada's combat senses were good enough that I didn't need to order her to charge for her to step forward and cut the monster's throat with a precise swing, making it bleed painfully. Even as I jumped down and turned the other way, readying myself for the assault of the wounded one, I let my mana wrap around Aviada once more, so when she stabbed the head of the lion, I was able to observe the changes that happened in her soul space perfectly.

The sliver of power once again merged into her soul space, strengthening it further.

Taking down the wounded one was trivial. With its rushed ambush failed, it was wide open, allowing me to cut off its front leg, and Aviada easily delivered the killing blow, her soul space expanding even further.

The remaining three monsters revitalized their assault towards the cage, but with a big difference, they were attacking at the other side of the cage, trying to escape rather than attack after their hunting attempt cost the life of half of their pride. Unfortunately for them, I had enough mana to keep them locked in, easily dealing with them one after another, while Aviada delivered the last hit.

[-620 Mana]

I watched her soul space carefully, observing the changes that happened. When she absorbed the experience from the last one, however, a large change happened in her soul space. It suddenly started to expand, widening significantly but also gaining an elastic quality. I was finally able to get a better understanding of the leveling process.

[+2 Tantric]

I didn't try to mess with it, of course, not even when her sword-fighting ability was strengthened even further, signaling that she had once again chosen to overemphasize her already strong abilities. I didn't have a problem with it, not when it made her even more dependent on me. Though considering the small change that happened, it was clear that her skill had reached the point of diminishing returns.

I let the process complete, watching carefully as her soul space solidified once more, covering a wider area, but also, for the lack of a better term, less elastic. Combining that with the findings from Helga and Cornelia, I had a preliminary hypothesis that the softness of the space was about the level cap. At one point, hardening enough to be unable to accept new inputs, whether it was from experience or achievements.

Experimenting on Aviada was definitely not an option, however. The risk of permanent damage was too high.

"Another level up, I'm level twelve now," she exclaimed happily before she dashed forward and caught my lips. I responded immediately, happy that she trusted me enough to reveal her level without me prompting her. I had long deduced it, of course, but the fact that she trusted me enough to reveal it counted for a lot.

I let my hands wander over her mostly naked body, enjoying the way her chainmail bikini smashed against my body. And as much as I was tempted to continue it by pushing her down, we needed to move before even more dangerous creatures were drawn to the smell of the golden lion corpses.

So, I reluctantly pulled back and instead started processing the carcasses of the creatures. As level fifteen creatures, they were very precious in making new magical items such as weapons, armors, and disposable items. Unfortunately, the low success rate of the crafting process, as well as the fragility of most of the resulting items, made such items pretty rare.

Aviada's sword was a very rare item in that sense, especially in the hands of a student. The only

reason Aviada had that because she was the only one in her family able to use it, and the only reason she was able to keep possession of it was due to other people's lack of knowledge about its full range of capabilities. I doubted that even her ex-fiancee who was willing to kill her to acquire the sword, was aware of the full range of its capabilities.

The fact that she was able to use that sword to kill a golden lion with a couple of swings—even if they were hurt and immobilized— was a significant improvement. Normal swords wouldn't even cut through their skin, and most magical swords would require several swings even with her impressive strength.

There was no hope that I could use the remains of the golden lions to make an item of a similar caliber—or even at the same class— but still, having a backup option might help. And since I finally made the decision to reinforce my room, storage was not a problem.

We were silent as we processed the lions, as even with magic, it was grueling work, but in the end, I was carrying a large bundle of precious magical ingredients—some I could even use to establish more permanent wards around my room... All around, a very profitable night.

“So, are you finally going to get something better than the garbage you’ve been using,” she said, pointing at my sword, which effectively turned into brittle scrap metal after the mana bath it received while I was fighting.

“Maybe, but I need someone to make a good weapon for me.”

She chuckled. “Finally, something you can’t do!”

“Hey,” I exclaimed as I slapped her ass, which was easy to do as most of her ass was naked thanks to the minimal coverage of her bikini armor. She gasped and tried to retaliate, but I dodged her and stepped forward, locking her in with a bear hug before leaning down and biting her neck near the collarbone, on a point that I knew she enjoyed immensely. She moaned...

And I pulled back, a smirk on my face. “That’s what you get for messing with me,” I said, enjoying the way she panted in arousal.

“Leaving a lady hanging like this is extremely rude,” she answered, but we continued to walk, exhausted and desiring to go back to the protection of the school. A pride of golden lions was far above my expectations. Even in the night, I wasn’t expecting the surroundings of the Silver Spires to be that dangerous.

“About your weapon,” she repeated after a couple of minutes of comfortable silence.

“I’m guessing you have an idea,” I said, which was a good guess considering she mentioned it again.

“Yeah, one of the enchanters is my mentor, and she does good work,” she said, missing the way my eyes brightened at the mention of a female enchanter. The discussion had immediately turned more interesting at that point. “She might be interested in crafting a new weapon for you.”

“Crafting a weapon from scratch is very exhausting work, would she really be willing?” I asked.

“Well, she is in a bit of debt,” Aviada murmured. “She might be willing to try if the payment is good enough, especially since she owes me one for allowing her to examine my sword.”

I almost slapped my head, unable to believe Aviada’s silliness. Trusting an enchanter with that sword was like trusting a shark with a piece of bloody meat. Though luckily, it also answered the questions about whether we could trust her or not. If she didn’t steal Aviada’s sword after examining it, she should be trustworthy enough to talk to. Not to a point of revealing any of my secrets, of course... “Sounds interesting, I’ll visit her if you can arrange a private meeting with her. I don’t want anyone else to see us,” I explained, and she nodded.

Our return was not without incident, of course. An impressive number of monsters had attacked us, though none of them worthy enough to take notice of —other than a lazy sword swing from Aviada —or a simple magic missile from me if they were too weak to even register for their experience.

Of course, I was gaining no benefit from the experience reward that they tried to give, I decided to experiment even more. Using the tricks I learned from my Tantric skill, I tried to redirect the nugget of energy that resulted in the experience gain, only to fail spectacularly several times, sometimes failing to affect it, sometimes pushing hard enough to evaporate it completely, wasting enough mana to leave me dry if it wasn’t for my enhanced regeneration.

[-673 Mana]

[+3 Tantric]

Then, one of my attempts was actually successful, and I managed to drag the experience nugget toward Aviada, and once connected, her soul space devoured it hungrily. She turned to me, questioningly. “Why did I just gain experience?” she asked.

[-1 Mana]

“I just figured out another trick, I can guide the reward for the last hit,” I explained. Unlike my ability to give experience through sex, it wasn’t exactly groundbreaking. And paradoxically, since it was related to combat, I expected her to hold that as a secret easier.

“Huh, that’s handy,” she answered, which was something I agreed with wholeheartedly. Aviada had no area-effect ability, and Helga was not much better at farming experience. This discovery would no doubt come in handy. More importantly, I could use this to help people with no companion bond if I ever expanded my circle more than the people I enjoyed spending naked time together.

I was about to answer, but then I noticed several dire rabbits escaping under the ground. A combination of earth magic and arcana enabled me to detect thousands of rabbits underground. Another earth elemental spell, although costly, turned their hive into a coffin, resulting in a rain of tiny experience droplets, as thick as the resulting cloud of dust.

[-420 Mana]

I tried to form a web to redirect the droplets toward Aviada. I wasn’t able to catch all of them, but enough to make her smile widely at what I achieved. “You’re the best,” she said with a wide smile, happy to receive her reward.

“Well, you better think about the payment,” I answered. She said nothing, but the sway of her almost-naked hips was sufficient for me. I took a step back and watched the way her hips swayed for the rest of the way. Only when we were about to sneak back into the school did she put her thick cloak on once more, not wanting to be seen in such a revealing state in the school.

“To the bedroom?” she asked when we finally arrived back at the communal section for female warriors.

“No, we need a shower,” I answered.

“I don’t have a private shower, we only have the communal ones,” she answered.

“And this is a problem, how?” I answered, earning a slap on my shoulder and a playful chuckle in response. She changed direction, and soon, we were in a room covered with rough stone, lacking the grandeur of the baths I had seen in Cornelia’s and Marianne’s rooms.

She closed the door, but since it was a shared one, locking the door was not an option. I put a detection ward up just in case even as I watched Aviada undress quickly. I would have preferred an extended show, but at times like these, she was definitely quicker.

Still, I watched her undressing with rapt attention. It wasn't the first time I was seeing her naked, but that didn't change the fact that her body deserved my undivided attention, tight and toned through countless hours of training, but deliciously curvy nonetheless.

I watched in silence as she walked toward the shower on the uttermost end, the towel in her hand rather than wrapped around her body. Then, just as she turned on the water, hot enough to raise a steamy cloud, I joined her.

"Do you mind washing my back," she gasped even as she stood close enough for my shaft to disappear between her meaty ass cheeks.

"Sure," I answered and started washing her slowly, tracing her muscles, making her moan softly.

I was tempted to push her against the wall and take her mercilessly, especially when she giggled playfully and started moving her hips up and down in a manner that was against her personality, but I held back, enjoying her elated mood after the great gains we made during the night. Of course, even as I caressed her body, I carefully examined her soul space, examining the way it slowly stabilized after the level up.

I was about to change the pattern when I felt the ward triggering. I didn't want to get caught in the middle of the showers with Aviada, not wanting to deal with the resulting scandal. The simplest solution was to cast an illusion spell to hide as another girl and act unnoticed, but that would mean leaving without tasting Aviada while she was in the perfect mood.

Luckily, my magic was versatile enough to give me another solution. A simple application of fire magic made an even thicker steam cloud, one that made it hard to see anything other than a shadow. Using an illusion spell to erase my own silhouette was trivial at that point.

"Keep your voice down," I whispered into Aviada's ear even as I slid inside her simultaneously. She gave me a scandalized look, trying to look like she did not appreciate my initiative, but her body disagreed as I easily slid into her wetness, forcing out a small moan.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 56%]

The thick cloud of steam might be preventing our uninvited guest from seeing me, but the same didn't apply for the reverse. Moments after my ward was triggered, a redhead that was even bustier than Aviada walked into the showers, and turned on the nearest one. I couldn't help but examine her breasts, miraculously defying gravity despite their impressive size, though her hips were no different. She didn't have Aviada's perfectly toned body, but she was beautiful enough

to make that thicker look work with her perfect hourglass shape.

[Level Difference of at least 50%! No Experience]

Pity there was no reward from seeing her, as I would have loved to make her a priority.

“Hi, Aviada,” she said cheerfully, indicating that they were good friends. I panicked momentarily when she easily recognized Aviada despite the cloud of steam, then I realized Aviada’s sword — a very distinctive piece of equipment— was just a few feet away. “You’re early again, another all-nighter hunting rabbits?”

“Same old, same old,” Aviada answered evenly, which annoyed me a bit. I didn’t like just how easily she was speaking with my shaft inside her, so I grabbed her breasts, my fingers sinking into her flesh to make it much harder. The gasp she let out was simply beautiful.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 58%]

“Hey, are you okay,” she asked in a concerned tone as she tried to peer through the cloud, her green eyes shining with concern. It was clear that she was a good friend of Aviada.

“Y-yeah,” she stammered, her response made even more difficult as I started pumping into her with long, even strokes, enjoying her warm tightness.

“You don’t sound okay?” she answered even as she stopped soaping up, and turned to face Aviada. The sight of her spectacular breasts, covered with a rapidly-thinning layer of bubbles made the sight even more delicious. I picked up speed, though still careful not to make any noise.

“I just p-pulled a muscle, not a big deal,” Aviada answered, but then she gasped painfully as a result of the surprise intrusion of my finger slipping into her puckered hole. I pushed Aviada even more, because our mystery visitor was clearly a good friend, and I was feeling adventurous enough to take the risk.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 63%]

And if the sudden jump in the Companion Progress was any indicator, despite her angry glare, Aviada also enjoyed my domineering action.

“It doesn’t sound like no big deal,” she said as she closed in. “I’m going to take a look!”

I could have easily hidden with a mid-level illusion spell under the circumstances, but since she

wanted to take a look, I decided to give her what she wanted, and let the cloud of steam dissipate, just as she was a step away from Aviada.

Their eyes widened simultaneously as they found themselves face to face without anything to cover their bodies. Our mystery guest's gaze fell down for a moment, to the point where my shaft repeatedly disappeared into Aviada's entrance, frozen in shock.

"So, Aviada, won't you introduce your friend," I said even as I increased the pacing, and suddenly the sound of flesh hitting flesh filled the room.

"Carla," was all she was able to say before her climax hit her mercilessly as she collapsed to the floor, shuddering. Normally, I would have held her upright and continued fucking, but the alternative was just too amusing not to take.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 65%]

I presented my hand to Carla. "Since Aviada is rude enough not to continue, let me introduce myself. Caesar," I said, and even grabbed her hand to place a soft kiss on her knuckles with such a perfect mannerism that it wouldn't be amiss at a high-class party.

Of course, the fact that I was naked, and making my rock hard shaft still coated with her friend's juices very visible might have changed the impact slightly. "Nice to meet you," she managed to stammer, mostly in shock as her gaze bounced around the room, including Aviada's naked figure, and my erect shaft. "I need to go..." she continued, still dazed in shock. "I have a thing..."

"You certainly do," I said even as I looked at her breasts very pointedly, which was finally enough to trigger her to escape, her ass jiggling with each hurried step.

"You're an evil man," Aviada said, but she made the mistake of saying that while she was still naked and on all fours in front of me, so I decided to teach her a lesson. A quick spell was enough to clean her puckered hole, and I slid inside for an even tighter second round.

When we finally finished almost half an hour later, Aviada was barely able to stumble into her bed, yet utterly satisfied...

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 72%]

As I snuck back to my room, a wide smile was on my face, my mind already on how to arrange another meeting with Aviada's interesting friend...

[Level: 20 Experience: 203100 / 210000

Strength: 24 Charisma: 34

Precision: 17 Perception: 21

Agility: 21 Manipulation: 26

Speed: 19 Intelligence: 26

Endurance: 18 Wisdom: 28

HP: 1980 / 1980 Mana: 2700 / 2700]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Expert Tantric [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Chapter Forty-Nine

When I finally arrived back to my room, the corridors were burning golden with the golden rays of dusk. I carefully sneaked into my room, not wanting to wake Helga up.

I was exhausted, and as much as I was tempted to slide next to Helga and bury myself to her bosom —very inviting in its naked state, barely covered by the blanket— but I had a lot of things to do.

With a sigh, I pulled some of the materials from the golden lions, and after a brief period of refining to make sure they lost their organic properties and condensed into magic crystals —my way of doing that was very inefficient, but finding an expert was unfortunately not an option— and started waving a complicated web of magic around them, connecting four corners of the room.

I didn't use any attack spells, or other dangerous tricks. At this point, hiding from or delaying any possible attacker was much more important than actually killing them. There were two options that would go enough effort to break through all the stealth and shielding charms I had integrated into the structure, either it was the faculty itself that tried to enter my room, in that case killing one of them would have no benefit other than ensuring their enmity, or it might be the necromancers trying to deal with me silently, and in that case, a simple alarm would be enough to get the attention of the faculty to deal with them.

Either way, a passive scheme was much more important than an active one, so I continued working on that. And one instance of mana regeneration perk still active, I didn't really care about wasting mana. Focused on the construction, I was startled when I heard Helga speak. "Impressive work," she gasped in amazement.

"Yeah, after screwing up plans of several necromancers, I think that there's merit in making sure I have adequate protection."

"Without a doubt," she answered before she started examining the structure itself. "Did you make these yourself?" she asked, pointing at the ward keystones at the corners.

"Yes, from golden lion bones, freshly hunted," I said, shamelessly bragging. To be fair, killing six of them was definitely worthy of a brag.

Helga chose to focus on a different aspect of it. "And you hunted them alone or..." she said, letting her words trail off.

“Nope, Aviada was with me,” I said shamelessly, meeting her jealous gaze with a glare of my own even though my hands were busy trying to layer another anti-screaming spell.

“You could have woken me up,” she said, pouting. I didn’t know the impression she wanted to generate, but considering she was completely naked, relying a blanket to cover her bottom half while her breasts stood in front of me deliciously visible, it worked like a playful call for sex.

I leaned down and kissed her, not neglecting to inject a lot of mana in the process, which returned her as some extra experience. “I could have, but it’s not like you actually need to hunt anymore, do you?”

[-104 Mana]

“I guess so,” she answered, her breath lost after the heated kiss. “But doesn’t it also apply for that slut?” she added, unable to resist the temptation to insult Aviada, but her tone lacked any real animosity.

“Not exactly,” I answered. “She’s too much of a hothead to actually trust with that secret, especially since I doubt she would understand its full significance. She’s not as bright as you.” I made sure to compliment her in the end, which put a smile on her face. Despite her impressive abilities and amazing intellect, she still suffered from a lack of confidence, so reinforcing her position through compliments was a good idea.

She said nothing for a while I continued to establish layer after layer of protection, watching intently. Considering her nakedness, it made good watching. “How about if you use a seven-point structure to connect the lower layers?” she asked a while later.

I briefly considered it, and unsurprisingly, I realized that she was correct. Not only she was smart, but also she wasn’t confident enough to offer opinion until she was sure that it was correct, so I wasn’t really surprised at her accuracy. “Amazing idea, as usual,” I answered, and she blushed. “By the way, how many experience you have received from the latest mana rush?”

“Sixty-three,” she answered. “You shouldn’t waste that much mana in the middle of setting wards,” she added.

“Nope, it was just eighty mana,” I answered, watching her eyes widen in shock as she understood the implications.

“How?” she asked.

“You didn’t think I went hunting for the fun of it, right?” I asked with a smirk. “I have a much better idea what I’m doing after watching Aviada gain a level.”

“You did that to surprise me?” she asked with a gasp, excitement back on her face. I nodded, as while she wasn’t entirely correct, she was mostly correct. Without saying anything, she jumped up to her feet and kissed me heatedly, her hands immediately around my pants, freeing my shaft even as she continued to kiss me.

I was tempted to respond, but my hands were busy layering magic around the room. “You deserve a reward,” she said as she lowered herself, and wrapped her lips around my shaft without prompting. As she bobbed her head, pleasure spread through my body, making it difficult to concentrate on the ward scheme.

Luckily, after slowing down my construction speed, I was more than capable of enjoying Helga’s enthusiastic treatment and working at the same time. After a couple of minutes, I even started to inject mana to our little game, allowing Helga to grind level in a way that we both enjoyed. I spent thousands of mana, but luckily, one instance of my regeneration was still active.

[-3620 Mana]

“I’m coming,” I whispered, warning her about the impending explosion. She pulled herself back a bit, but kept the crown in her mouth, so when I exploded, she managed to swallow almost all of my mana-laden seed, triggering an expansion of her soul space in the process.

[-1370 Mana]

[Mana: 160 / 2700]

However I didn’t care that I almost emptied my mana pool, because the following notification was more than worth it, once again rewarding me greatly for actually discovering the abilities related to my original way of leveling. Yet another mystery I need to solve, but I was more than happy with the quality of the clues I was receiving.

[Achievement: Alternative Advancement. Make love, not war! Just like you have done for centuries. +2 to All, +10000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Melee (Requires 5 Points), Master Elemental, Master Tantric]

I couldn't help but frown at the points required for Grandmaster level improvement. If I chose that, it would mean no new skill points for the next four levels while that skill fully matured. What a waste. It was the main reason why I believed a wider expertise was the more rational choice, even though the Grandmaster improvement gave a total of fifty points rather than usual twenty-five. Of course, considering it required five levels, it meant a measly ten points each level.

Naturally, I chose Tantric once more. Master Elemental was tempting as well, but Tantric gave me the key to discover more about the System itself, and the benefits from that was impossible to overstate.

Helga, on the other hand, had just finished swallowing my seed and stood up, enthusiastic for more. She turned her back to me, and looked at my construct. "What do you think about building connection points in layers," she asked as she examined my construct in more detail, followed by a gasp.

She gasped, because as she examined the structure of the matrix, she took a step back, aligning her entrance perfectly with my shaft. Feeling her warmth around my length, I pushed my hips forward, enjoying her moans. "Do you think it might cause an interference?" I asked, enjoying the way she tightened further. She was really enjoying the opportunity to have sex and discuss magical theory simultaneously.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 73%]

[+1 Tantric]

[-26 Mana]

"No, they will be stabilized by overlapping effect, invalidating the possibility of interference," she explained, though her explanation was interrupted by rapid moans as I started rocking my lips recklessly. For once, I was pushing for a quick explosion, because I wanted to activate the second instance of mana regeneration, which would help increasing her leveling speed. Grinding with such a speed with no risk was not an opportunity to be wasted.

"Good point, and if we set up an additional connection between node five and nine, we can stabilize the structure thirty percent," I added, even as I carefully stopped casting from my right hand, continuing with one hand. I did so, because I wanted my right hand free to enjoy her naked body. Not digging into her beautiful breasts was a great loss, so I fixed that.

"It might work, especially if we add an amplifier in between to leverage the connection

further,” she answered even as she trembled, stumbling hard enough to fall if it wasn’t for my grabbing.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 75% - Third Stage Completed +15000 Exp]

[New Perk: Skill Share]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the Fourth Stage]

She gasped as she lost her concentration for a bit, understandable, as I could feel her soul space changing as she received yet another achievement —a big one with significant boost to her mental stats if I was feeling the changes correctly. I let her enjoy the experience while I focused on the joy of receiving a brand new perk, feeling curious what exactly it was.

Well, I was about to find out if it activated the same way my mana regeneration perk did.

I sped up, pushing recklessly as I searched for release, which didn’t take long to finally attain. I exploded in joy, filling her with mana along with the usual liquid, losing every scrap I managed to regenerate in the process, dropping my remaining mana to single digits.

[-265 Mana]

[Mana Regeneration perk activated. Count 2. Duration, 8 hours]

[+1 Tantric]

Then, I felt myself almost forcibly being pulled into her soul space, until I touched one of her skills, with corresponding changes happening in my soul space. Or more accurately, just outside my soul space, creating a vessel similar to the skill I had just touched. It was the same skill she had chosen to improve.

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Expert Magical Theory. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Basic Magical Theory (25/25)]

A sudden clarity appeared in my mind, allowing me to make previously-impossible connection between different schools of magic, even leveraging my other abilities like Melee and Subterfuge. Helga probably had advanced level if it completed, with expert track just started. Her prodigious instincts toward the areas of magic she didn’t even use herself suddenly made more sense.

With the connections made, I turned my attention back to the ward scheme, and started making rapid changes, making the structure several times stronger.

“It seems that I wasn’t the only one that just received some interesting benefits,” Helga murmured as she tried to catch her breath, still leaning against me, my right arm wrapped around her waist to keep her from falling.

“Yeah, I just received a new perk that allows me to temporarily copy a skill of yours, and I just got Basic Magical Theory. I have to say, it helps a great deal,” I said before leaning and giving her a long, drawn out, thank you kiss.

“Happy to hear,” she murmured she answered before extending the kiss, and we enjoyed an extended moment.

“So,” I murmured after we disconnected for a long breath. “Do you have anything urgent for today?”

“Nothing I can’t do tomorrow,” she answered. “You?”

“Not until the evening, where I will meet with the Head Librarian,” I answered even as I squeezed her harder. “So, there’s nothing that prevent us staying here all day long, working on ... warding the room?”

She didn’t answer. More accurately, she didn’t answer verbally. Pushing me to my bed and straddling my lap was answer enough. We spent rest of the way wrapped around each other, sometimes working on the warding scheme, sometimes focusing my mana on leveling her further. I had drained my mana pool an staggering number of times, only for it to be refilled back again thanks to my active regeneration perk, though toward the end, the part I received from Aviada expired, slowing down the process a bit. But with great result, as Helga gained another level in the process, while I maximized my new skill.

[+23 Tantric]

When the sun finally set, the only reason we were still able to move was the generous amount of healing spells I had used, keeping our bodies on top shape. Even then, Helga was mentally exhausted. And two levels she had received during the day surely didn’t help her exhaustion. It was why I stopped using Tantric toward the end, just to give her soul space a chance to settle before she received another level.

For me, endless sex made my thoughts even sharper, though it wasn’t that surprising

considering the source of my powers.

“I just received another achievement,” Helga murmured lazily as I collapsed next to her.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yeah, I just received three more endurance points, basically doubling it,” she answered, underlining just how poor her physical stats were. Luckily, system took our extended activities as an opportunity to boost her physical aspects.

“Good news, maybe you can last all day without healing spells on two digits,” I quipped, only to receive a playful slap to my chest. She sighed as we cuddled, enjoying the euphoria of a day filled with supernaturally-enhanced sex.

“Do you have a plan for your meeting,” she asked, dispelling the question I had in mind.

“I have some ideas, but it all depends on Titania’s reaction. I don’t know just how strong her emotions will be affected after a day of rest. If she returns to her previous mood, I doubt that anything other than cold logic will affect her.”

“Maybe you should find another ambush,” Helga said with a chuckle. I was amused by the ease she had accepted Titania’s presence, contrasting with the constant needling about Aviada — even though at this point it was pretty low-key. Maybe it was the hero worship she had toward Titania. I shrugged, as regardless of the reason, I was happy with the output.

“Yeah, they are at every corner,” I quipped.

“Aren’t they?” Helga answered with a chuckle. I laughed as well, despite the danger her words implied. After all, we went out for extended hunting trips two times, coming across necromancers on both of them. Either we were supremely unlucky, or there was a big danger about to happen.

“Maybe,” I answered with a sigh. “I’m sure Titania has a better idea about the risk. You finished copying the book, right?”

“I did, which was a very grueling work. Quite few of the letters had magical imprints that encrypted further information. I copied them to the best of my ability, but I can’t guarantee that they are correct.”

“That’s a trade-off we have to take,” I answered even as I stood up, and used a water spell to

imitate a shower. Not the most pleasurable thing, but markedly better than going to see Titania while still smelling sweat and sex. I kissed her one last time and whispered.

“Wish me luck...”

[Level: 21 Experience: 228100 / 231000

Strength: 26 Charisma: 36

Precision: 19 Perception: 23

Agility: 23 Manipulation: 28

Speed: 21 Intelligence: 28

Endurance: 20 Wisdom: 30

HP: 2289 / 2289 Mana: 3045 / 3045]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty

I took a deep breath as I stood in front of Titania's private office, trying to still my nerves. Instead of wearing my library costume, I chose a simple rugged shirt and pants, the kind the menial servants wore. At this point, I didn't want to emphasize the fact that I had been hiding under her nose for the last few years, though I wouldn't hide it if she noticed as well. It was a weird balance to maintain.

"Come in," called Titania, but she used the quintessential head librarian, sharp, cold, and unyielding. Not a good start.

For a moment, I considered whether disappearing was the smarter option. My subterfuge was high enough —especially with the assistance of the most recent stat upgrades— to make me disappear in any city other than the school itself, so much that even her network couldn't find me.

Ultimately, it was just an errant thought. The necromancer threat was one thing, and the mysteries my achievements were continuously alluding to was another thing I needed to solve; and soon, if instincts were correct. So, I took a deep breath to gather my courage, and opened the door.

Only to find Titania sitting behind an impressive desk, its surface covered with books, ranging from destruction to warding. She stood impervious behind the desk, her eyes cold in their steely look, a thick robe wrapped around her, hiding her body perfectly. "Sit down," she said in a tone that was devoid of any emotion.

An ordinary person might have felt the stirrings of despair at her impervious action, but I felt the stirrings of excitement as I sat on the chair she had pointed, which was considerably lower and flimsier than her own. I was excited, because she was too calculated in trying to be intimidating, which ran contrary to her usual demeanor. Normally, she was scary, just because of her overwhelming presence.

She was overcompensating, and there was only one probable reason for it. Even under the emotionally-oppressive effects of her Light Magic, she was still somehow affected by the memories we shared in that particular cave while I helped her to relax.

I decided to test it. "Before we start, there's something I had forgotten to give you," I said as I pulled the book from my sack, the book that she had went all the trouble to find, only end up in a deadly ambush.

“You got it,” she gasped in shock, reaching forward without a thought and grabbed it. I made sure to shift my touch at the last moment, making our fingers brush. The fleeting blush that appeared on her face before she pulled the book was all the confirmation I needed that the memories of the event was still alive and effective. Then, she continued in a more even tone. “I appreciate your efforts.”

“Sure thing,” I answered, repressing my desire to ask for a special reward. It wasn’t the time yet. “So, necromancers?” I asked.

“They are the pests of the earth that we need to exterminate with extreme prejudice,” she said, her anger flaring for a moment before her emotionless state asserted itself once more. She continued in a more even tone. “For the last few years, they are getting more and more daring, mostly trying to ambush me during my missions. During my last mission, they managed to interfere when I was fighting against a monster horde attacking a town, managing to damage me with a cursed dagger. Even with the best healers, it took a while for me to get well.”

It was probably the reason for her disappearance. But the sight of her fighting against a monster horde, covering the landscape with light blasts to drown crowds of creatures again and again, was an image sexy enough to turn me on. I didn’t give any sign of my thoughts, and answered professionally. “It’s a dangerous prospect, getting stabbed in the back while defending against such a formidable danger. It was just like the necromancers to broke that taboo.”

Monster hordes were the single most dangerous phenomenon humanity had been facing against. The reason for their occurrence varied. Sometimes, it was a particularly effective monster leading or controlling the horde, sometimes they were escaping the territory of a Titan level monster, only to lash out something on their way. Sometimes, they even popped in existence without no rhyme or reason —at least not one humanity could discover— and destroyed everything on their path until they finally came across one they couldn’t destroy, still struggling until they were smashed into pieces. Sabotaging the defense efforts was a taboo with the harshest punishment possible.

Though, considering Necromancers had earned that same punishment just by existing, it was easy to understand why they weren’t bothered taking action under such circumstances.

“That’s not good news,” I said. “Do you think it was a target of opportunity, or it was planned?” I asked, despite having confidence in my guess that it was the latter.

“It was planned,” she answered. “The skeleton knight was buried at the center of the defensive

formation, and covered with multiple wards to hide its presence. Without accessing the defense schematics, it was impossible to do. I had been wondering how they did, then you discovered a mysterious figure controlling a necrotic shade in the Faculty building.”

“Yeah, that is not good news. Any idea about the identity?”

“No, and I don’t have anyone to help either. What if I tried to talk to someone, and they were the contact?”

I paused for a moment. I was happy with her discussing her concerns with me openly, though I was probably the only one that she could trust on the issue. After all, I was the one that saved her from a certain death in the hands of necromancers, which made me the only option for her to discuss the next steps. Of course, the fact that she had barely survived an assassination attempt in another mission probably had some effect on her decision as well.

Not to mention my unique ability to transfer mana!

“How about the headmistress?” I asked, referring to the enigmatic figure I had seen only once, during a graduation speech. “If she is on their side, we had already lost.”

“I don’t think that she’s on their side, but the same doesn’t apply to the people around her,” she explained. “If I contact her, I need to do that in a way that doesn’t evoke any suspicion, and she rarely meets the faculty privately.”

“Maybe I can try to reach her?” I offered, despite not wanting to do so. Revealing myself to yet another person was the last thing I needed, but the more I learned about the necromancers, the more I was getting apprehensive, to a point that I was willing to expand the number of people that knew about me.

Though luckily, the headmistress didn’t have to know anything true about me, other than I was a strong warrior or mage —or maybe I could present myself as an assassin— saved the life of one of her teachers and trusted by her. I just needed to sneak into her room and manage to have a talk with her without being blasted into smithereens.

Easy task.

“Maybe,” she answered noncommittally. “I need to consider it more thoroughly before deciding on an action.”

“Is there anything else I can help you?” I asked.

She paused for a moment. “Not for now, but I’ll make sure to leave you a note if we need to talk,” she added. “When I get a new mission, I will need a backup.”

I nodded. It was a sensible request. With the agreement in place, we talked for a couple more minutes, agreeing on several signals and locations to drop discreet messages in case we didn’t have the opportunity to talk face to face on an emergency.

I bid her a good night and left, surprised by the mundanity of the meeting. I was tempted to suggest testing my mana transfer skill, but I held back for two reasons. First, under all of her stiffness, she was still skittish. Second, and more importantly, I had no idea how I would measure against her Light Magic while she still had all of her mana, and didn’t want to risk it. Sooner or later, we were going to fight together, and she would need some extra mana to support...

Still, the night was young, and since I had left Helga enjoying a very deserved sleep. Luckily, I had another busy blonde friend that I hadn’t visited for the last few days.

I changed my path toward the Marianne’s room, intent on delivering a surprise visit. I even stopped in front of Cornelia’s room, sliding a note of invitation before moving forward. The note asked her to visit Marianne’s room, but dress normally rather than in her maid costume. I was tempted to humiliate her, but after a brief consideration, I decided against. Not only humiliating Cornelia next to her girlfriend —though my presence had muddied that term a lot — was not the best strategy to endear myself to either of them, but also that particular part of the training would be better under different circumstances.

After that brief detour, I arrived at Marianne’s door. As usual, neither the mundane nor the magical locks on her door helped as I opened the door, easily hiding myself from the view, even in a corridor filled with students of magic.

When I sneaked inside, I saw that Marianne was alone, on her desk, focused intently on a book in front of her. I carefully sneaked forward, careful not to alert her, and slipped to her dining room. Since I had already been there, I knew where the important things were, such as the wine bottles, glasses, and the cheese to accompany. I quickly prepared a small feast for us to enjoy in her bedroom, while she was still in her study, focused on her book, unaware of my presence.

I could have called for her, but I decided to make a flashier transition. I quickly dressed down to my birthday suit —as my musclebound body made a much better view than my ugly servant clothes— and slipped under her covers. Then I waved my hand, lighting several candles to

create a romantic atmosphere before slowly dimming the lights in her study, until the shining candles were the only light available, creating an intriguing trail for her to follow.

Her tenseness was visible when she stepped into her bedroom, an arcana spell twisting in her hand, ready to be launched, but it dissipated the moment she noticed my enticing presence, my naked torso glistening with the flickering candlelight, with her covers strategically pulled to the beginning of my abs, showing my muscles to the best effect while hiding the most critical part of my anatomy, leaving the responsibility of uncovering it had fallen to her.

“Caesar,” she gasped, excitement easily replacing her earlier trepidation. “Such a welcome surprise, but I wish you have notified me about your arrival, I would have prepared for you.” She gestured herself, her face without makeup, her hair casually gathered into a ponytail, wearing a casual thick nightie that made a good attempt to hide her body. It still failed, of course, as her curves were not so ordinary to yield her nightie’s mundane attempts, but the attempt was good enough to make her uncomfortable.

“Don’t worry, princess, you’re beautiful even when you’re dressed casually.” It was not the most impressive compliment, but with my charisma, it made her blush prettily.

“Still,” she murmured shyly, before she raised her head, a surprising level of assertiveness shining in her blue eyes. “Give me fifteen minutes,” she said. Without waiting for an answer, she ran to her wardrobe, pulled several items —and hiding them behind her body to conceal their nature— before she dashed away without waiting for a response.

I watched her surprising display of initiative with an amused smile, then lay on my back, enjoying the softness of her bed. Maybe I should ask her to buy another one. My room was in a desperate need for a better mattress.

I was enjoying the warm touch of quality red wine when I felt the ward I had left at the door triggering, but a follow up mirror spell showed that it was Cornelia, following my invitation. I cast a simple arcana spell, and glowing letters appeared in her field of view, asking her to come to the bedroom, but make sure to stay silent. I even added a couple of arrows to create a path for her to follow. I even silenced the bedroom, keeping Marianne unaware, wanting to surprise her further.

Then, Cornelia appeared in the bedroom, wearing an oversized robe that covered her whole body, her arms tight around as if she was trying to hide herself in case of accidental reveal, making me curious about what lay underneath. I gestured her to undress, and she did so without complaint, revealing that she was wearing a black lace set, designed in the same shape

with a corset, but soft enough to wrap her body perfectly. It wasn't like her body needed the support. Even more beautiful was the bite mark I had left on her shoulder the last time, suggesting my dominance. Surprisingly, she didn't try to hide, nor she flinched when my gaze found it. She was showing a surprising ability to accept her new circumstances.

Still, despite the amazing view, it took everything to prevent a frown from appearing on my face.

[More than 5 levels of difference! No Experience]

It was a completely new notification, and considering I was banking on the experience I would receive from her to push for a new level, rather untimely as well. I didn't know it was a feature that always existed or it was a consequence of passing level twenty barrier, but nonetheless, it was unwelcome.

Luckily, I was already planning to solve her leveling problem, which in turn would help me help me increase mine. And there was no point in delaying that.

I patted the bed, inviting her in. She walked forward without the slightest reluctance. Finally receiving an achievement must have broke most of her concerns. And compared to making her work as a maid, inviting her for a romantic evening was a much better option.

"Why the sudden change?" she whispered, unable to help herself as she closed in, making sure to walk seductively.

"You have been a good girl yesterday, and good girls get rewarded," I said to her, and she blushed, easily accepting the power imbalance inherit in my words. She was surprising me with the ease she had been showing. "Not to mention we have distressed our mutual blonde friend during our little scuffle."

"You're right," she murmured enthusiastically as she slid next to me, her body heat tempting me to ignore my earlier words and taste the fruits of her offerings. From the way her eyes were trailing my muscles hungrily, she clearly shared the same opinion.

"Good," I said even as I wrapped one arm around her waist, pulling her tight against my naked body, enjoying the sensation of her body pressing against mine. "So, are you happy with your new achievement?" I asked.

Her response was a lingering kiss, with a level of enthusiasm I would never expect from her a day ago, giving me insights about her personality much more than her fake dominant bluster.

She wanted to be taken care of, and by solving her biggest problem, I proved myself as the best candidate.

I was going to test that, to see just how much I could push my newfound dominance, but not today. No, today was a reward for them. For Cornelia, her surrender. For Marianne, enabling it to happen. Not to mention, they deserved a reward for starting everything. If it wasn't for their horniness, I would be still struggling to as a pathetic weakling stuck in level one.

Marianne signaled her arrival with a gasp. I turned to look at her, who was watching the scene with wide eyes —and a clear arousal— while Cornelia chose to speak. “Nice dress, honey,” she said.

I agreed. Marianne was wearing a white corset —a proper one unlike Cornelia. However, hers had one major modification. It ended just under her breasts, leaving her nipples naked while still supporting her already-perky breasts to the perfection, presenting them like a shelf. Her soft make up and new hairdo just enhanced the effect.

“Thanks,” Marianne murmured to answer Cornelia’s question, while I patted my other side, inviting her to the bed, and to an amazing show.

It was going to be a long, beautiful night...

[Level: 21 Experience: 228100 / 231000

Strength: 26 Charisma: 36

Precision: 19 Perception: 23

Agility: 23 Manipulation: 28

Speed: 21 Intelligence: 28

Endurance: 20 Wisdom: 30

HP: 2289 / 2289 Mana: 3045 / 3045]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Expert Biomancy [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-One

Marianne was silent as she slid into the right side of the bed, her gaze bouncing between me and Cornelia, no doubt trying to understand the sudden change. Her surprise was understandable, as during our last encounter, things were rather heated, to a point that she actually cast spells indoors, triggering a battle, only to stop when I tricked her to believe that I was overwhelmingly strong.

At that point, I was several levels lower than her, so I had tricked her through excessive preparation and several tricks. Luckily, since then, my power grew so much that she was not intimidating toward me anymore. It was the reason I was not afraid of poking fun of her. “Cornelia, before we start, you have an apology to make to Marianne, for scaring her that badly.”

Marianne looked panicked, no doubt afraid of her reaction, but rather than pulling back, she slid next to me, her tight hug showing her trust. Cornelia, on the other hand, looked like she had swallowed a lemon, but she didn’t dally much before opening her mouth, no doubt aware that it was the much better option compared to the treatment of the previous night.

“I’m sorry, Mary,” she murmured. “I was shocked by Caesar’s surprise presence, and lashed out. I hope you can forgive me,” she said, as sincere as she could manage. Anger was still present in her tone, but I let it slide. I wanted to teach her obedience, but I didn’t want to extinguish the fire that was making her unique. I liked her passion, it just needed to be under my control...

“I understand,” Marianne said with a soft smile, though still a bit hesitant. She was skittish enough to be badly affected by Cornelia’s surprise lashing out. “It was a rather difficult situation.”

“Good,” I said, cutting in to dispel the sudden seriousness. I didn’t want to waste time when they have a lot of interesting things they could do to have fun. “Now, kiss and seal the apology,” I ordered.

Marianne blushed, while Cornelia smirked, though when their lips met directly in front of me as they leaned in from either side, neither was unenthusiastic. After all, my presence might have put a damper in their relationships, but they were lovers for a long time, and with that background came closeness.

[More than 5 levels of difference! No Experience]

The notification of no experience appeared once more, like the System was telling me that I was wasting time. It wasn't right, of course. Watching them kiss slowly and sensuously might not help me gain experience or progress my companion system, but watching them was a reward of its own.

As I watched, my blanket rose, lifted by my rock hard erection. I sighed in contentment as I felt a hand wrapping around the base, gently moving up and down. Surprisingly, it was Marianne that took the initiative. Cornelia noticed it when my breath hitched for a moment. She pulled back from the kiss for a second. "Someone is enthusiastic," she murmured before kissing her once again, this time sharp and passionate. Her hand joined the little game that was going under the blanket, taking the responsibility of the topside.

I put my hands on their bodies, softly caressing their sensitive spots. I avoided the obviously-sensitive areas, but after all the times we had spent together, I knew how to play their bodies like a flute. Even the most casual touches carried the ability to make them pant and moan helplessly.

I started slow, wanting to warm them up properly. I had big objectives for the evening. Cornelia had access to one of my biggest secrets, and at this point with their relationship repaired, it was inevitable that Marianne would learn it sooner and later. She had neither the personality nor the ambition to betray my secret, but giving her an even better reason to keep my secrets was a good idea.

Especially since there were no drawbacks for doing so.

With that in mind, I decided to start the proceedings with my shy blonde. I leaned down and pressed my lips against her neck, making her moan gently. Her back arched, and she would have broken off the kiss she was sharing with Cornelia if it wasn't for Cornelia's initiative to grab her hair to force maintain her kiss. I couldn't help but smirk in amusement as I watched Cornelia's rougher habits immediately showed itself. I didn't say anything though, as Marianne was obviously enjoying it.

Marianne's moans intensified as I moved down. First, I nibbled her collarbone to make her gasp loudly. Meanwhile, Cornelia moved until she was on top of me. At first, I had assumed that she was looking for easier access to Marianne, so, she surprised me greatly when she pushed her panties to the side sank herself onto my shaft, making me moan, all without interrupting her kiss with Marianne.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 27%]

It would be a lie if I said I wasn't surprised. Combined with her unconscious acceptance of my mark, it suggested that I had misread Cornelia's personality. I had thought that she was either a sadist or a naturally domineering person, who I had to force and break before remaking her as a better person. But the ease she adapted to my presence and my position over her suggested that maybe the situation was different. Maybe she was looking to connect with people, but her need to protect herself due to her family's complicated situation had been forcing her to always hold the upper hand.

Now that she found herself linked to me —she was smart enough to realize that my revealing such a big secret, I was staking a claim, and there was no retreat for her— she was slowly shedding herself of her earlier behaviors. Of course, the pleasure I provided had a rather big impact on the process as well.

In simpler terms, I managed to fuck the bitch out of her.

However, as Cornelia started rocking on my lap, my thoughts shifted back to the present. It was unfair for me not to pay attention to the beautiful girls that were doing their best to make me enjoy life. I grabbed Cornelia's lacy lingerie, and ripped it off just enough to reveal her breasts, but leaving the ripped fabric to hang on her body, partially covering her. Dressed like that, her red hair waving freely with her every move, she was even sexier than her naked state.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 31%]

As I enjoyed Cornelia's tightness, however, I used my Tantric abilities to carefully observe her soul space, checking to see if there was any side effect from her forced achievement. The view of her soul space was much clearer than the last time, understandable considering my Tantric skills had almost doubled since yesterday. Increasing the progress of the companion feature helped as well.

Seeing that the achievement integrated itself without an issue, I shifted my attention to the borders of her soul space, the reason for her inability to level up. Observing Aviada while she leveled naturally taught me a lot, and Helga's assisted leveling taught me even more about it. Ultimately, it was a lack of potential, reflected itself as the absence of elasticity. The solution was simple. I just needed to strengthen her soul space to ensure the barrier could expand.

Of course, simple didn't mean easy. I dumped a great amount of mana inside her, carefully directing it so that it was absorbed by the borders of her soul space rather than anything else.

[-723 Mana]

Despite the mana expenditure that would leave a weaker mage unconscious, her soul space barely reacted. Of course, I wasn't exactly hurting for mana with my regeneration perk active—especially when I was about to receive a new one from Cornelia soon— so a barely noticeable improvement was more than okay for me.

I was about to continue my enjoyable treatment, when Marianne decided to pull away from Cornelia's kiss. "You already started?" Marianne gasped in shock as she looked at where Cornelia was trying to melt into my body. "It's not fair! You were with him yesterday as well! It's my turn!"

I couldn't help but laugh at the point she had suddenly decided to push through her shyness and defend what she saw as her right. I wanted to shift, but two things prevented me. First, I was making progress with Cornelia's soul space, and didn't want to risk it.

Second, I didn't want to pull out of Cornelia's warm grasp until I could paint her insides, especially when she decided to show initiative.

"Well, you should have acted faster," I said to Marianne even as I slapped her ass. Her tight, beautiful ass jiggled beautifully under my touch while Marianne moaned helplessly.

"Not fair," she moaned playfully.

"I'm sure I can come up with some kind of compensation," I countered before I dived down to her bosom, leveraging the revealing corset she was wearing by clamping on her nipple, biting softly. Marianne moaned loudly. "How's this as an alternative?"

"Well," she murmured, "I might indeed deign to wait for a few minutes if you were to continue to pamper me like that," she answered, but before she could say anything else, Cornelia stole her lips again.

Cornelia was in deep arousal. Her hips were grinding mercilessly back and forth like she was trying to break my bones, her moans rising despite Marianne's lips.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 31%]

"I have a better idea," I suddenly said even as I wrapped my arms around Cornelia's waist and pulled her off, and threw her on the bed, her back hitting the soft mattress hard enough to make a sound. Both girls froze at the sudden change, but before they could react, I was already between Cornelia's legs, once again sliding inside her warmth. "Sit on her face," I ordered Marianne as I started impaling Cornelia repeatedly in a merciless rhythm, our flesh clapping

mixing with her cries of joy.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 35%]

Marianne followed my orders immediately, pulling down her panties to reveal her delicious entrance, shining with arousal. She reached for her corset as well, but I gestured her to keep it on. Since the corset was low enough to reveal her beautiful breasts, I wanted to keep it. Also, its contrast with Cornelia's black lingerie —though mostly scraps at this point— added a touch of color to our embrace as well.

Cornelia responded immediately as Marianne sat on her face, her tongue darting out in a furious dance. I grabbed Marianne's hair and pulled her close into a searing kiss, tasting Cornelia from her lips. Under a concentrated assault, Marianne started gasping and moaning, some suppressed by my lips, some overcoming the barrier they presented. And when I put one of my hands on her breast and sank my fingers into her inviting flesh, her cries got even louder.

With Marianne properly distracted, I turned my attention back to Cornelia, and not just the way she was tightening around my shaft. I pushed another dose of mana inside her, once again strengthening her soul space. At the same time, I put my other hand on her chest, squeezing her smaller, but also firmer, breasts.

[-357 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 39%]

This time, despite spending less mana, the impact was clearer. Ultimately, it might be the pleasure she was feeling. Trying to deal with all different aspects, her control over her power was weaker, helping me to manipulate her soul space easier.

That, or it was simply because of the progress of the companion acquisition —which was also progressing quite a bit faster than the previous times, but I had a feeling that it had a link with my increased level or heightened charisma.

Whatever it was, it was working perfectly, so I continued ramming inside her, each push making her moan louder. However, I had a simple and fun way of testing that. A brief moment of concentration allowed me to solidify air into an accurate replica of my shaft. I pulled away from kissing Marianne for a moment, only to jam that in her mouth. She gagged and wheezed, but when I pulled back, the magical dildo was shining with her spit.

“Couldn't you use a spell to lubricate it?” Marianne asked exasperatedly.

“I could have, but that’s more fun,” I answered. I cast another spell, this time to prepare Cornelia’s backdoor to surprise intrusion. Biomancy was not just useful for destroying the undead. I slowly pushed the dildo in her backdoor without breaking a stride. Cornelia tried to cry, but Marianne was in place to silence her perfectly.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 42%]

[-235 Mana]

Despite the overwhelming increase in pleasure, I only detected a small improvement at the ease I was able to strengthen Cornelia’s soul space, which could be accounted for increased companion interaction. Not exactly a drawback, but good to know, though I was a bit sad to lose the excuse to have a spectacular orgy.

On second thought, nothing was preventing me to have one.

As I continued to impale Cornelia from multiple angles, Marianne started to have a jealous look on her face whenever she pulled away from the kiss we shared, especially as Cornelia started to lose control of her tongue as she experienced yet another climax, trembling and gasping, but still taking it like a champion. However, despite the pleasure, it was starting to make Marianne a bit neglected.

A change in position was in order, I decided. Another spell ensured that the toy in Cornelia’s backdoor continued to pump while I pulled out. Marianne pulled back, reading the situation correctly. I lay on my back, and Cornelia immediately climbed up on my lap, her hands on my chest to balance herself as she tried to ride me while she was trembling with the after-effects of the orgasms she had experienced.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 46%]

[-467 Mana]

“Are you going to wait there, or are you going to give me a taste as well,” I asked Marianne, and she sat on my face, though she was watching Cornelia jumping up and down with a not-inconsiderable amount of jealousy.

My tongue darted out, circling around her clit and brushed against her sensitive spots. “Yesss!” Marianne cried loudly, suddenly much happier about getting an oral treatment. Luckily, Cornelia was far too gone to notice the reason, or even if she did, feel jealous. She was too busy enjoying the moment.

Of course, it wasn't just my —rather phenomenal— lovemaking that was making her climax common and effective at the same time. No, she was being extra sensitive, because the treatment she was receiving in her soul space was affecting her mood and amplifying her pleasure.

With Marianne sitting on my face, I couldn't see anything, but the sound of their kissing was rather clear. I let it continue, but as Cornelia tightened once more, I felt climax knocking on my door as well. I could have hold myself back, but the idea of filling Cornelia to the brim was simply too tempting. Finally, I exploded, and sent a wide mana rush along with it.

[-1210 Mana]

[Achievement: Border Breaker. Limits might be set in stone, but no stone is unbreakable. +2 to All, +10000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Master Arcana, Master Elemental, Master Biomancy]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 49%]

“Yes, yes, YESSS!” Cornelia cried as I filled her, climbing steadily toward yet another orgasm while I enjoyed the beautiful feeling of getting yet another level. I barely had enough time to select my new skill —Biomancy, as the necromancers were still the biggest threat, and I needed to be ready for them— before Cornelia tightened, signaling her own climax.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 50% - Second Stage Completed +10000 Exp]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 2. Duration, 8 hours]

“Finally!” Cornelia cried deliriously as the earthquake hit her. “Another achievement!” she whispered, her tone drunken. I was happy as well, because unlike Cornelia, I could feel that the achievement sinking into her soul space without my intervention. It wasn't a surprise though, as the earlier achievement had already confirmed it.

Her level limit was finally raised.

It was yet another impossible thing I had achieved. But before I could consider its implications, Cornelia collapsed against my chest, the strain from a combination of her transformation, a new achievement, and several orgasms finally overcoming her willpower.

It wouldn't have prevented me from having some deep thoughts, of course, but Marianne pushed Cornelia to the side in an instant. "My turn!" she growled as she took Cornelia's place. She impaled herself to my shaft, which was already erect thanks to my ridiculously high endurance.

It seemed that I had a jealous blonde to placate...

[Level: 22 Experience: 248100 / 253000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 32

HP: 2618 / 2618 Mana: 1820 / 3410]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [75/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Elemental [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Two

“Somebody is impatient,” I said even as I looked up to catch her beautiful blue eyes, enjoying the impatience and arousal dancing behind them. Marianne was normally so passive, but apparently, watching —relatively— passively as Cornelia got fucked into exhaustion managed to break her endless patience.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 19%]

“You made me wait too much,” she answered with a moan even as she started jumping up and down on my lap, her tits dangling sexily. “That was rude, you come here and make me excited, only to spend all your time with Cornelia.”

“Sorry,” I said, but my smirk showing my insincerity, which earned a playful slap even as she continued to ride me without missing a beat. “But we had been working hard with her to solve her leveling problem, and now that I have solved it, she deserved a bit of celebration, doesn’t she?”

This time, Marianne’s determined ride stopped, her expression twisted in shock. “You solved her leveling problem?” she gasped. “Impossible!”

“Is it, though?” I answered even as I used the opportunity to switch positions, with her lying under me, but instead of taking a mild missionary position, I put her legs to my shoulder, locking her in a sexy prison. As I impaled her as deep as I could manage, she gasped loudly. Delicious, I decided.

“It was supposed to-” she started, only to be interrupted by her own moan as my shaft filled her completely. “It was supposed to be impossible,” she completed. “That’s what everyone says. It’ll make you a hero!” she said excitedly.

“No!” I warned in a dark tone. “That’s going to stay a secret, unless you want all of us to suddenly get locked in a cell and get experimented again and again.” To be fair, with my power and my ability to elevate others, I wasn’t entirely sure that would be my fate. They might decide not to risk it and decide to cooperate with me instead, but even that best case was not a good option for me. I was doing pretty well without any oversight, and I had no intention of changing it.

“I understand,” Marianne gasped fearfully, and I could see the realization in her eyes. She stiffened with fear, and I realized I might have overdone with the intimidation.

“Good girl,” I answered even as I leaned down to capture her lips in a searing kiss, one that I stretched until her stiffness disappeared, once again moaning as I slammed repeatedly inside her.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 21%]

For a moment, silence ruled the room —discounting the clap of our bodies slamming together, my grunts, and her moans— while I appreciated the rapid increase of the companion process. With that, I remembered that I was yet to examine her soul space, and sent a tendril inside.

The results of my findings didn’t surprise me. Like my other magically-inclined partners, her physical stats were simply abysmal while mental ones were at least workable. Only her wisdom was a step above the rest, and even that was below twenty. Like the others, she had one primary skill, one I easily recognized as a more specialized version of my biomancy —likely healing— so I started examining it more carefully. It was at Grandmaster level, I recognized, but unlike the others, it was yet to fully mature, probably requiring one or two levels before it completed its evolution and she was free to select another skill.

However, I received another surprise as I examined her skill in detail.

[+13 Biomancy]

The sudden jump was completely unexpected, and it occurred when our skills touched for a moment. Even more surprisingly, I could feel her skill evolving as well, though not to the same extent. “Why did I just gain three points of healing?” she asked, shocked.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 24%]

“A little gift for you,” I answered even as I impaled her even deeper. “Did you assume that Cornelia was going to be the only one that gets some benefits?” I asked. She didn’t answer, but the astonished expression on her face was answer enough. I shrugged. Since she had already received an important clue, there was no harm pushing it even more.

“What would you do if I tell you I have another gift in mind?” I asked, and her expression turned into shock and elation. It was understandable, as not everyone shared my ridiculous growth potential. Just gaining a few extra points to a high-level skill was not something she expected to happen in one day, and here I was, offering her even more.

“Whatever you want!” she exclaimed without even thinking, something I had all the intention of taking seriously. Luckily for her, my objectives didn’t run contrary to hers.

“Excellent,” I said as I leaned for a kiss while I continued to slam, until the companion process clicked again.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Biomancy (Requires 5 Points), Master Arcana, Master Elemental]

“An achievement!” Marianne stammered in shock, unable to believe what had just happened. While she enjoyed her fascination, I turned my attention to my skill selection, and after brief consideration, chose Elemental, despite the temptation of selecting Biomancy. An even stronger life-based ability would have been useful against the necromancers, but I wasn’t willing to make the commitment for the next five levels.

Ultimately, my versatility was the reason for my great success, and I had no reason to change that after the incredible boosts I had received to my skills, allowing me to progress more on my path without making big sacrifices.

Marianne sat on the edge of the bed, and I sat next to her, close enough for our shoulders to touch. She put her head on my shoulder, and murmured. “How?”

“It’s a secret ability of mine,” I told her, though I didn’t give more detail. After she had already received her first achievement, that part wasn’t exactly a secret, after all. However, I didn’t explain more, as I still needed to make sure I could trust her. “It’s just the tip of the iceberg,” I explained. “You’ll receive more benefits as we continue,” she explained.

“Why me? Why Cornelia?” she asked. “Is it because of our families?” she added, this time her voice trembling just a bit, like she was afraid she was just a tool to be discarded.

“No, on the contrary, your noble identities make things unnecessarily complicated for me,” I answered, which had the benefit of being completely true. Of course, the real answer was because of luck, then my stubbornness, but I doubt she would have liked to hear that particular answer.

“Then, why?” she asked.

“Because you are beautiful, kind, and very very sexy,” I answered as I gently grabbed her chin and stole a tender, lingering kiss, one that eroded her fears immediately. Charisma was such a

useful trait. “Not to mention you’re very skilled in your area, meaning with my assistance, you have the potential to become an overwhelming powerhouse.”

“Really? That’s it?” she asked, her smile blossoming. Apparently, the fact that I chose her for her beauty and skills rather than her family name was a great relief to her. Then, she frowned a bit. “But I’m just a healer, nothing impressive like Cornelia. She’s majestic, and with the potential to gain levels once more, she’ll just become even more magnificent. What if you get bored with me.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle. Even before I had gained a deeper understanding of their relationship, it was clear that Marianne had a star-struck attitude toward Cornelia, so her fears of being left behind where another woman might feel jealous were very much understandable.

“First of all, a healer is definitely not worthless, no matter the situation,” I stated, which was completely correct. A healer was always a strategic asset that increased the combat effectiveness of any group by several orders of magnitude. I could heal, of course, but due to my generalist skill, not as effectively —my stats and my huge mana pool compensated for that, but I had many roles in a combat situation, so a proper healer was always welcome.

Then, I briefly considered the biggest challenge I was facing, and decided to test her. “Secondly, you don’t have to be only a healer,” I said even as I raised my hand, gathering a glowing ball of life energy, the same one I was using to fight against the undead with incredible efficiency.

[-2 Mana]

“What’s this,” Marianne murmured, fascinated as she poked her finger, enjoying the sensation.

“It’s a variant of healing spell that I had been using against the undead with incredible efficiency,” I explained. “If you can learn that, you’ll be several times more efficient against the undead.

“Really?” she asked, her enthusiasm shining. “But I can’t take a new skill for the next two levels, and even then, who knows when I’ll have the opportunity to select the correct one,” she added, her enthusiasm wilting instantly.

“Doesn’t matter, I don’t want you to learn a new skill, I want you to figure out how to replicate this by leveraging your healing abilities, it’s not that different.”

“But that’s impossible...” she started, only to drift out. “It’s not impossible, is it?” she said. I smiled positively, and she beamed before raising her hand, and her mana rose, trying to

replicate it.

It wasn't a simple thing to even with an example in front of her. But she didn't feel discouraged as she spent the next half an hour trying to work that out, only to get the slightest success even with all my recommendations. I was glad that I still had the temporary skill I gained from Helga active, allowing me to make theoretical leaps that would have been otherwise impossible even with my abilities.

In the end, when her mana pool was emptied, we only have a fleeting success, something that wouldn't hurt even the weakest skeleton. "Sorry," she murmured. "I failed."

Unlike her, I was smiling widely. I kissed her to cheer her. "Don't worry about it, it's not something you can succeed in a session, and from what I saw, I can confidently state success is possible. You just need to work more," I said.

"I won't disappoint you," she said resolutely, and I rewarded her with another kiss, hugging her comfortingly.

"I know you won't. Just continue working on it tomorrow," I answered. I could have injected more mana into her and make her continue practicing, but we have stopped enough. I grabbed her corset, and ripping it off with one simple pull, earning a shocked yet excited cry for her. "We can return to our fun, then," I said.

"Y-" she tried to start, only for her to get silenced by another kiss, this time with a lot of tongue. I let my hands dance over her body while she managed to take a seat on my lap, once again engulfing my shaft with her warmth. To make things more exciting, I stood up and started walking around the room, cutting her feet off the ground, impaling her deep with every step.

She moaned loudly with each step, enjoying her joyride as I patrolled the bedroom repeatedly.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 29%]

"Fill me up," she moaned. I want to feel your warmth inside me, spoiling me, covering me..." she repeated dazedly. Who was I to disappoint the wishes of such a beautiful lady?

I moved to the closest wall and pressed until her back was straight against its cold surface, allowing me to cut loose mercilessly as I slammed inside her repeatedly. Her fat breasts pressed against my chest, wobbling with each beat like they were waves threatening to drown me. It was nothing, however, compared to her hungry kiss, trying to devour my lips, once again confirming the fact that it was the quiet ones you needed to watch out for.

However, realizing that there was still a bit until I cum, I decided to pull another trick on her, one that as a healer, she would easily understand the difficulty. I pulled out even as I flared my mana, and when I put my hand on my shaft, it grew three more inches and thickened considerably.

[-246 Mana]

[+4 Biomancy]

It was a costly spell that took a lot of expertise, but for me, it was as easy as breathing — partially thanks to my magical theory skill still active, allowing me to draw correct lessons and insights from the earlier practice attempts.

The results were worth it. Her eyes grew in shock. “How,” she murmured fascinatingly, but it was immediately replaced with fear as I pressed it against her entrance, threatening to tear her apart. “I can’t take it!” she gasped, but that didn’t prevent her from moaning as I slowly but steadily pushed her inside her, enjoying a whole new level of tightness.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 36%]

The sudden jump in the companion process, however, showed her rather impressive appreciation. I pushed even deeper, and she moaned, helpless but in ecstasy, her earlier fears discarded under the new sensation. She started trembling, signaling an instant climax.

I knew that she was very appreciative of my already-impressive size, but the fact that she turned out to be a true size queen was a surprise. A pleasant surprise that I was willing to use to the limit, though I made sure to maintain an active observation with my healing just in case.

I pushed, and she moaned deliciously, moving steadily toward another orgasm before the aftershocks of the first one had subsumed. And since I was actively maintaining a Biomancy observation, I decided to apply another trick, and prepared her back entrance for an intrusion.

The way her eyes widened in shock and arousal as I pressed my engorged shaft against her puckered hole was beautiful. “Im-impossible,” she muttered, but the crown was already in her puckered hole when she uttered the last syllable, too busy crying in pain and pleasure. I slammed deep, pumped a couple of times, then pulled out and repeated the action on her proper entrance.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 42%]

She was like a precious toy under my control, helpless to resist my perverse merciless assault. Of course, her face, contorted with a thick pleasure, provided an alternative narrative to that dark tale.

She was mine, I decided. Just like Helga, Marianne was mine, and I had no intention of letting her go.

“Tell me who you are,” I asked.

“I’m your slut,” she slurred, pleasure threatening to drown her completely. “You own me as long as you fuck me like this,” she added, once again managing to surprise me with her transformation.

“Good girl,” I said even as exploded inside her, filling her to the brim.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 46%]

She looked like she was about to fall unconscious, which was not acceptable, not when we were about to complete the second stage of the companion process. A simple healing spell prevented me from going soft, while another spell provided her with a jolt of energy, enough to keep her from falling unconscious.

“Ready for another round,” I said even as I wrapped my arms around her waist and started walking once more, this time directly to the bed, and I laid her on top of Cornelia. Marianne twisted until she was on all fours, her knees and hands on both sides of Cornelia while her tits dangled just inches above Cornelia’s.

Another delicious view, I thought for a second even as I plunged into Marianne’s tight hole, enjoying the way her moans echoed, but Cornelia was too exhausted to actually wake up, even when my seed and Marianne’s juices spilled over her body, covering her legs and stomach.

Enjoying the enhanced tightness of her body, this time, it didn’t take long for me to near another climax. Before I exploded, however, Marianne’s progress finally reached the critical point, and triggered a welcome notification.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 50% - Second Stage Completed +10000 Exp]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 3. Duration, 8 hours]

Another load was a good reward for her diligence, I decided, even as she slurred with joy, trying

to celebrate her second achievement, but too far gone to mutter a coherent word. I impaled my shaft into her tight hole and exploded, filling a second hole with my seed.

This time, when she fell on top of Cornelia, exhausted, I let her be after pulling the cover on her, leaving them wrapped in a dirty hug. They both had enough excitement for the night and deserved their rest.

I also gained some incredible benefits. Levels were always welcome, and I managed to bring possible mana regeneration perks to four, and from the current speed of regeneration, I assumed that my mana pool would be regenerated fully every fifteen minutes when all instances were active.

Meaning, I could the girls allow over fifteen thousand experience points every hour. Once I decided it was safe enough to reveal that secret, the leveling process of the girls would get a lot faster...

And a lot more fun, together...

[Level: 23 Experience: 263100 / 276000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 32

HP: 2737 / 2737 Mana: 3265 / 3565]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [92/100]

Master Elemental [75/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Three

It was barely after midnight when I left Marianne's room, and was exploding with energy. Helga was exhausted, and Aviada was not much better after our morning adventure. Titania was unfortunately inaccessible, and the less it was said about Marianne and Cornelia, the better.

I was hit by the surprising realization that I needed to expand my circle of ... let's call it 'close friends', the best I could do without being extremely crass.

However, that realization didn't help me in the middle of the night. I could have gone to sleep, of course, but I didn't want to waste the three instances of mana regeneration. Maybe I should go for another hunting trip, this time without Aviada, to properly test my new limits.

Even with that decision, however, I started walking toward the wing that housed the female warriors. I wanted to go out alone, and I trusted my magical abilities, especially with three instances of regeneration active, but a little extra insurance in the form of a masterpiece magical sword wouldn't be amiss.

Sneaking through the empty corridors was trivial, but when I arrived at Aviada's door, I hit a little snag. I could hear Aviada's tone, speaking with someone. A small arcana spell allowed me to peek through the keyhole, and revealed that Aviada sitting on her bed across a redheaded figure whom I could only see her back.

My eyes were sharp enough to recognize her impressive curves. It was Aviada's redheaded friend that I met in the showers —if I could classify that as a meeting. Regardless, considering the compromising conditions of our first encounter, barging in was not exactly a problem.

I managed to sneak inside without alerting them, amusing considering they were supposed to be sharp-eyed warriors. Feeling mischievous, I cast a silencing ward to make sure we didn't alert the whole ward, then spoke. "Hi girls, having a nice evening?" I asked.

The redheaded friend, Carla if I was remembering correctly, jumped to her feet, her hands reaching to her back to get a weapon that was absent while her hand dipped to the side. Just from that move, I could see that she was an archer, trying to get her bow and arrow at the same time. It was an impressive move, too bad that she was only equipped by a long conservative nightie.

Correction, wearing a nightie that would have been conservative if it was being worn by someone less endowed, because both her hips and her breasts were stretching the thick fabric

to the limit temptingly.

Before I could enjoy the sight to my heart's content, Aviada spoke. "Honey," she murmured with an exaggerated tone even as she pushed her chest out, her nightie struggling to contain her assets as well, just not at Carla's level. But Aviada was a smart warrior, and discreetly popped a couple of buttons to equalize the situation. "What a nice surprise!"

Her out of character response was amusing. Not the enthusiasm itself, as Aviada could act with a burning need whenever she desired something, but actually using her words to express her emotions. When Carla turned to give her an incredulous look, and Aviada responded with a smugly satisfied one, I understood the reason. Aviada was using me to brag to her friend, who no doubt had been grilling Aviada about our morning encounter.

"So, he just comes and goes whenever he wants," Carla said exasperatedly. "Who is he, exactly?"

Before Aviada could speak, I sneaked behind her, and whispered. "He could speak for himself," I said, and she jumped in shock, unable to catch my movement.

"How?" she stammered, her eyes wide. "I'm a ranger! No one can sneak up to me, especially not when I'm aware of their presence."

"If you say so," I answered with a soft smile, fully aware it was a more devastating brag than actually bragging openly. Carla blushed, but her eyes flickered with anger, but she didn't say anything before I sat down.

"So, what brings you here, sweetie," Aviada said as she put her hand on my shoulder, caressing softly. Well, if she wanted to play, I was going to play. I grabbed her waist and pulled her on my lap, nibbling her neck. "Stop," she giggled, another surprising reaction. "Don't do in front of Carla, she gets jealous."

I smirked at her words. Combined with Carla's flush of frustration, it was easy to understand the reason for Aviada's shift. They were clearly good friends, likely with a long-standing argument about boys and boyfriends. "Sorry," I said to Carla, not bothering to hide my smirk as I wrapped my arms around Aviada, pulling her tight.

"Okay," Carla stammered, trying to look unaffected but failing badly. "I should go, you're clearly going to be busy."

"Actually, you can stay. I'm just here to borrow something and then I'm going to leave," I said.

Aviada turned to look at me questioningly, and I nodded. It was only one thing that could borrow from her that would make a significant impact on my prowess.

“Sure,” she said as she stood up and reached for her sword, but when she returned, she gave me a flirty wink. I understood exactly what she was asking, when she carefully pulled the backside of her ass, giving me a glimpse of her naked bottom. Just as she was about to sit, I cast a spell to pull down my zipper and free my shaft, only to push it directly into her slit.

If she wanted a sneaky quickie in front of her friend in exchange, who was I to argue.

“I can’t believe you’re giving him your sword,” Carla said, shocked.

Aviada shrugged, which was a good excuse to hide her movement as she tried to fit the entirety of my shaft into her unprepared entrance. To her credit, she managed to struggle without an outward signal. “I trust him,” she simply said.

“I can’t believe you! You trust him! What do you even know about him? I have never seen him in any of our incursions or classes,” Carla said angrily.

“It’s expected,” Aviada answered.

“Why?”

“Because he’s a mage,” Aviada simply said. I couldn’t help but feel amused at her words more than Carla’s shocked reaction. A few days ago, Aviada would have never willingly admitted that I was a mage, thinking it as a shameful detail that needed to be hidden. Instead, she was using that as a humorous detail to mess with her friend to the point that she was underselling my warrior capabilities.

It was an amusing change.

“He’s a mage?” Carla countered as her gaze danced on my body, namely my thick arms and my broad shoulders that suggested a lot of explosive power. “Bullshit,” she countered. “Mages does not like this, and a mage could never sneak upon to me,” she said heatedly, in her anger, missing the fact that Aviada started moving up and down on my lap, struggling to keep her face straight. “And if he’s a mage, why does he need your sword?”

“Well, he dabbles with it a bit, and I see no problem letting him borrow my sword,” Aviada said, still hiding the fact that it was my ‘sword’ that she was currently borrowing.

"I don't believe it," Carla said resolutely, the stubborn expression on her face giving me insights about why these two were friends.

"Well, if you need proof," I said. I raised my hand, and cast a small, glowing ball of fire, dancing freely before it turned into water, then pulled the dust particles around to turn into a small but tight piece of glistening rock, only to disappear into the air. It was a simple, but impressive display of elemental abilities.

"Impossible," she murmured as she closed her eyes. "How did you sneak in, then?" she said. "A mage could never beat a ranger when it comes to concealment and observation."

"Never? Are you sure?" I said. "Do you want to bet?"

"Yes, whatever you want!" she answered.

"If you're sure," I said even as I grabbed Aviada's shoulders and pressed her down while I let myself explode into Aviada, making her moan loudly. It was a bit premature, but I wanted to make a point. Then, I raised Aviada's skirt, and showing my presence lodged inside her, making Carla's chin drop in shock, immediately followed by a blush that left her rooted in place.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 4. Duration, 8 hours]

I was expecting Aviada to be a bit dissatisfied, but the sudden shift from sneaky sex to voyeurism had managed to trigger her as well, leaving her gasping and trembling.

"Thanks for the sword, sweetie," I said as I kissed her lips, then pulled out of her and left her trembling on the bed, but with satisfaction on the bed. Normally, she would be asking for the second round, but she was still sated by our morning activities. I fixed my pants, grabbed the sword, and started walking toward the door, only to stop next to Carla.

"So, when do you want to handle the results of our bet?" I asked her, leaning forward just a bit like I was about to kiss her, but stopped before making contact.

"N-no, it doesn't count," she tried to stammer.

"Oh, honey, believe me, it does," I answered even as I put my hand on her thigh, and slowly let it climb up, and she stayed frozen. But just as it was about to touch her wet lips, I pulled back. "I'll send you a message I feel like taking the forfeit," I said and started walking once again, aware that both pairs of eyes were fixed on me, a pair shining with pride, the other with shock.

Then, just as I was about to leave the room, I gave her one last look. “Or maybe, I’ll drop by one evening,” I said, enjoying her gasp just as I left the room. I dispelled the silencing ward, only for Aviada’s laughter to reach into my ears.

Amused by the unexpectedly productive visit, I left the school as quickly as possible. I wanted to be back before the sunrise, and more importantly, I want to use my four active mana regeneration perks to the limit, lowering my complete regeneration time to fifteen minutes.

Sneaking out of school was getting easier and easier as I got stronger. After getting away from the walls, I started running with a mad dash, using my enhanced speed and endurance to a great effect, running faster than a magically-enhanced horse.

That was not without cost, of course, as it drained my stamina quite quickly. Luckily, I had the solution for it as well.

[-120 Mana]

[+1 Biomancy]

Recovering stamina was supposed to be a simple spell, but with a simple caveat. The stronger the target, the higher the stamina, harder to recover. And considering my stats were averaging around thirty, my recovery required a lot of mana, not that I cared about the expense, when that amount recovered in less than thirty seconds.

As I moved, detection spells came quite useful. Without Aviada to protect, I was free to sneak around. Especially with the assistance from some arcana spells to erase my smell and suppress my sound, I managed to ambush several dangerous creatures with very valuable ingredients on the way, my pack getting bigger and bigger even if I just took the lightest and most precious pieces.

However, it was a delight to sneak to a Shadow Wolf, and cut their head with a blast of wind blade, turning the table on the sneaky hunters. For the next hour, I never came across a creature stronger than Class twelve, which was a bit unfortunate. Still, the hunt was plenty, and after the first hour, the items I had picked managed to overwhelm my carrying capacity —if I still wanted to be able to sneak, of course.

[-7530 Mana]

[+11 Elemental]

[+7 Biomancy]

So, I found a cave, killed the thunder bear that staked its claim, preparing to set up several defenses. At first, I was going to create a temporary spot just to hold for the evening, allowing me to store my items, but then I remembered my last encounter against the necromancers, how I had struggled to hide while I waited for my mana to regenerate.

I needed better hideouts, I suddenly decided. There's no guarantee that I wouldn't have another encounter with the necromancers or another group. Also, having such a spot near the school would be useful I needed to run away. At this point, it wasn't very likely, but still, I would be more relaxed if I addressed it.

So, I changed my plan just a bit. Rather than reinforcing the cave itself, I used my earth elemental to dig a tunnel, and once I reached the target depth, I dug myself a large room, enough to host several people for a couple of days without a problem while also storing the desired items.

After setting up the defenses of my room, the ones in the cave was almost trivial, because unlike the school, I didn't need to hide it from hundreds of mage that was in close proximity, nor I was afraid of someone accidentally triggering something, allowing me to set up stronger and more aggressive defenses with less effort. I engraved flame traps, quicksands, water bolts, explosions of life energies —in case they try to use undead to trigger— and even tracking arcana missiles...

[-5420 Mana]

[+2 Elemental]

After adding several wards to hide the magical signature of the defenses and any possible occupants, the hideout was ready. I added another hidden exit just in case —a tunnel that traveled even deeper into the earth, rigged with explosives— my new hideout was ready. It was supremely uncomfortable of course, lacking any furniture, but it was safe. I was happy with the result even if it had used almost all the reagents I had collected.

Safety was important.

When I moved above ground, my mind was already made up about setting up several more outposts in all directions, but not tonight. Tonight I wanted to hunt... So, I decided to get away from the school even more, as even during the night, the surrounding area wasn't exactly dangerous. Running was nice, but I wanted to use a new trick.

So, I spent a great deal of power to create an imitation of a wind elemental —a real one was simply too dangerous, nor I had the time or ability to summon one— and mounted that. It flew close to the earth, easily moving several times my speed, but with a corresponding mana expenditure. In ten minutes, I traveled more than a hundred miles, but also it drained my mana pool almost completely despite the regeneration.

[-6211 Mana]

[Mana: 1211 / 3565]

[+4 Elemental]

I stopped in a concealed spot and dispelled the pseudo-elemental, taking deep breaths. I needed a more convenient method of fast travel, I decided. Pity that I lacked the ability to construct it. Maybe I should meet with the Enchanter Aviada recommended sooner than later.

After I rested for five minutes, I started casting wide-area detection spells. I was looking for a big target to test my abilities, maybe something like a Lunar Ursa or even a Goliath that would push me to my limits, when one of my detection spells gave me a result.

A biomancy-based detection spell... Suddenly, I had more interesting prey to hunt...

[Level: 23 Experience: 263100 / 276000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 32

HP: 2737 / 2737 Mana: 3265 / 3565]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [92/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Four

The moment I detected a group of undead, a smile appeared on my face, cold enough to chill a necromancer if one had been unlucky enough to observe it. Discounting the encounter with the shade, I had faced against necromancers twice, and both times, they had the initiative, forcing me to face dangerous odds.

This time, I had all the control, and I was more than willing to teach them just how big of a difference it would make.

One little drawback about my increased biomancy skills was the increased detection range. I had to travel a couple of miles before I saw the group that triggered my senses. It was a small group, one necromancer, and around a hundred assorted skeletons and other low-level raised creatures. Destroying them would barely take a minute, but one detail prevented me from doing so.

They were dragging several creature corpses toward them. It wasn't the corpses themselves that dissuaded me of course, but the fact that they were traveling toward a certain direction. I decided to follow them, hoping to discover their base of operation. After all, it was unlikely that I was the only one who was able to set up a hard-to-detect defensive bastion.

Following them was not a fun affair, not because of danger —as not only it was impossible for the undead to detect me, but also most creatures didn't come too close to the undead, a combination of their negative energy and their smell enough to dissuade the lower-level creatures. This meant that I had a pretty boring trek following them.

Not one to waste time, I started practicing a new trick with Biomancy. Since Biomancy allowed me to use life energy in a variety of ways, maybe it could also allow me to fake the death energy the undead was spreading around. I closed my eyes for a moment, extending my sense to examine the effect in detail, trying to understand the death energy.

Just from a glance, it was obvious that death energy was a corrupted variant of life energy, one that wasn't that hard to create. After examining it for five minutes, I realized that I could easily master its usage after a couple of repeats. It wasn't even that difficult.

The problem was avoiding the effects. I could see the effects of corruption and degradation on the necromancers pretty easily, but that didn't give me an idea about just how easily such effects had started. I wasn't really willing to test it, however. For some reason, a part of my mind was repulsed by the idea. I decided to follow my instincts.

However, that still left me with the challenge of avoiding their detection. Maybe I could reverse the effect, I suddenly decided, enjoying the sudden insight generated by the magical theory — that new perk was definitely proving its worth. I used my biomancy skill not to radiate life energy, but slowly drain it from my surroundings. It was a soft effect, not harming even a bug since it lacked the death energy's persistence, but from a distance, it looked like an undead's death energy.

It would never trick a careful examiner, or even a casual glance from a proficient one, but it gave me enough confidence to try to slip into the skeleton horde after casting an illusion to hide as a zombie. I cast the required spells, and then moved forward.

My hand was tight around my sword, but I wasn't feeling afraid. Why would I, when I could incinerate the whole horde with just a spell? The worst thing that would happen was losing the chance of infiltration. A pity, but definitely not something to be afraid of.

I moved another twenty minutes as a part of the skeleton horde, until it came to a sudden stop. The necromancers moved forward until it stopped in front of a stone, then activated a spell, making a detection wave spread, filled with death energy, enough to break through my poor concealment.

"Damn," I murmured even as I noticed the necromancer dashing forward, with a necrotic bolt already in hand, shining purple and black. I needed a distraction. Then, my eyes fell on the nearest creature corpse, and I cast a healing spell on it. The creature was dead, so it wouldn't resurrect, but it still repaired the body a bit, just enough that when I cast a weak lightning spell, it flinched wildly.

Necromancer's mad dash slowed when he noticed the wildly flailing creature. "Fucking mindless undead," he murmured, threw the death bolt to the creature to make it stop, and turned his back. When he arrived at the stone, luckily, he didn't activate the detection ward once more. Instead, he cast a couple of spells, and the ground suddenly parted, showing a tunnel, much wider than I had created.

If it wasn't for my elemental abilities, I would never dare to step into an underground facility filled with undead, but I decided to take the risk with it. No matter how crowded it was, and how strong the defensive abilities, defensive structures were not impenetrable, especially from inside. That didn't mean it was completely risk-free of course, but the temptation of finally getting some intelligence on the activities of the necromancers was simply too tempting.

With that in mind, I stayed mixed with the horde as we stepped inside a dark tunnel layered

with runes after runes, the magical energy getting thicker the further we moved. It was a work of years, maybe even decades. I couldn't help but feel alarmed at such an impressive construction project going unnoticed that close to the school.

The alternative was even scarier, that it was noticed, but their allies inside were able to suppress it. It shouldn't be possible, but considering that they were feeling confident enough to ambush one of the strongest faculty members—and gather the necessary intelligence to do so successfully— maybe they were entrenched enough to actually succeed with that.

Maybe some of the dissident voices were right about the fate of the Empire, and the need for action. If the Empire's most important education organization, responsible for churning its key officials, generals, and mages was lax enough to be infiltrated by the necromancers, what hope was there for the rest. Luckily, it was a problem well-above my paygrade, so I abandoned that track of thought, instead carefully examining my surroundings. No matter how deep we moved, the tunnel hadn't lost its downward slope, so when we finally stopped at a huge cave filled with a veritable army of undead, we were at least half a mile deep underground.

And it was an army. Countless zombies, skeletons, and other low-level monsters were abound, but it wasn't as scary as some huge creatures that interrupted their monotony, goliaths, giants, and dragons. I felt a chill as I looked at the endless piles. One mistake, and I had no chance of escape.

The members of the group I was hiding split. The ones that were pulling the dead creatures continued deeper into the cave, while the others joined the army. The necromancer, after giving the orders, took a side corridor.

I stayed with the mass army for the moment, examining the cave. The scariest part of the army was not just the size itself, but the fact that I could see undead creatures moving back and forth through several tunnels, suggesting that this might not be the only cavern.

It was an army that I had no hope denting. Even worse, I didn't even know the school could resist a full-powered assault from them. Ideally, it should be able to, as there was a reason the Silver Spires stood tall for centuries, despite every type of danger. However, their allies inside were a cause of concern.

What if they were high up in the chain to be able to sabotage the defenses?

I wish that I could solve the problem directly, but even with everything I had, I couldn't make a dent in the army in front of me. But I had to be at least ten levels higher to make a meaningful

impact before I heroically died. Winning against such a huge army was an impossible wish.

Luckily, however, a direct intervention was not the only option. Currently, I was in the middle of their base, and they were unaware of my presence. I might not destroy their huge army, and while killing the necromancers leading them was tempting, I couldn't kill enough of them to make a difference.

That still left an excellent way of damaging their effort. Intelligence.

The more information I could bring to Titania, the better response she could organize. Even better if I could get some strong evidence to convince the Headmistress about the danger we were facing, allowing me to make a credible first contact.

Of course, none of them was as important as me getting away from here alive...

As I moved forward, I couldn't help but feel glad to have Aviada's sword with me. If things devolved worse, it might give me the edge I needed to stay alive until I cut myself an escape. I moved into the same tunnel the necromancer had gone, and found a long, deep corridor, conveniently empty.

And more importantly, conveniently bereft of magical protection.

I decided to create a pocket of action. I quickly draw a temporary rune in the air to hide my magical presence before I put my hand on the wall and carved a small room, only to immediately erase the wall behind me. Then I tunneled deeper, hoping that their construction was sufficiently shady.

[-420 Mana]

[+2 Elemental]

After moving almost three hundred meters deep into the earth, and drawing several more permanent magic-concealing runes and wards —expanding even more of my dwindling stack of reagents— I found out my guess was only half-correct. They did have defenses underneath the base, but it was sloppy enough that I was easily able to penetrate it without raising an alarm.

[-1637 Mana]

Okay, I had to admit, spending twenty minutes and wasting enough mana to destroy a squad of bone dragons didn't exactly count as easy, but I was annoyed, and wanted to mock them a bit.

After competing for that, I started moving to the north in a direct line, digging a tunnel of three miles —layering with anti-detection runes and other protective measures— to ensure I avoided tangling with anything important. Only then I created a tunnel upward, careful to avoid entanglement with their wider tunnels. When I finally created an exit to the fresh air, I couldn't help but smirk in satisfaction. They might have worked for years to create an impenetrable base, but it took me only a night to break it.

[-2320 Mana]

[+6 Elemental]

Now that I had an escape route, I felt more confident. I reinforced the exit point with another trap before taking the tunnel down once again, returning to the base.

About fifty feet before the base entrance, I created a larger room, piling it with traps filled with life energy, ready to explode the moment an undead stepped through the gate. I stayed there for almost half an hour, filling the room with traps twice, enough to eviscerate anyone who dared to step through. If I got caught, I needed to scare them, and an apocalyptic explosion of life energy would doubtlessly do the trick.

[-6750 Mana]

I moved only after my mana was full once again —though I was a bit sad that the first instance of my mana regeneration, the one I received from Helga, had expired— just to make sure I was prepared in case something went wrong. I once again started pulling life energy to fake their necrotic energy, and soon, I arrived at the entrance and took a deep breath, steeling my nerves.

Even with all the preparation I had made, a mistake, and I was a lifeless undead... Still, I continued forward...

[Level: 23 Experience: 263100 / 276000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 32

HP: 2737 / 2737 Mana: 3265 / 3565]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Five

For once, I was glad of the necromancer's predilection toward using mindless undead as guards rather than living troops. It was the only reason I even risked going into the base once more. Undead were stupid. As long as I pulled a cloak to my head, and hid my life signature with a simple biomancy trick —simple in terms of mana costs, as it was complicated enough to strain my newly-expanded capabilities to the limit. Though the existence of the escape tunnel helped me to relax as well. As long as I stepped out of the base, I was confident of escaping. After all, it wouldn't be the first time I avoided the search of an undead horde.

Still, even with those advantages, my heart was beating like crazy as I walked deeper into the base, feeling the oppressive death energy getting thick enough to instantly kill a low-leveled person. Even with my resistance, I could feel my lifeforce getting damaged. Worse, I was afraid of using a healing spell, as such a pure flare might pull the exact attention I was trying to avoid.

[-13 HP]

Since I didn't have a map, I decided to follow the unusually-thick death energy toward its source, which, despite the inherent risk, was better than walking around without a direction in the huge expanse of the base. There must be something interesting at the source, maybe evidence strong enough to convince the Headmistress about the seriousness of the subject.

The sooner I find something convincing, the sooner I could leave this oppressive place.

With that in mind, I walked forward, doing my best to stay in the shadows. It was a pity that I didn't have a skill to enhance my sneaking abilities, but luckily, my extreme agility was enough to compensate for its lack, at least when they were not actively looking for me. Still, all the while, I continued to get damaged by the aura of the place.

[-39 HP]

I hid in the shadow of an open door, helped by the fact that the lighting conditions of the base were rather horrendous, to a point that I suspected it was an ecstatic choice, to make the place seem even more dramatic. Regardless, it helped me to avoid the attention of two necromancers that walked just a foot away from me, their attention on each other as they argued about the best way to reanimate a goblin.

I let them disappear around the corner before I started following the sound of their footsteps. They came from the same direction as the first necromancer, which meant that they were out

patrolling, and likely was about to report.

My carefulness turned out to be a good idea, because soon, another set of footsteps joined them, and they came to a stop in a large room. I stayed away as I could see they weren't the only occupants of the room, but even from the distance, I could see that the room was special.

First, the rest of the rooms and tunnels were barely more than natural caves. They had been clearly created in a hurry, with no care about the quality or details. That room was different. It was chiseled much more carefully, walls covered with dark gray marble, with several obsidian pillars to add some gravitas.

It was interesting to see that even in their half-dead state, necromancers were not free from the grasp of the vanity.

Unfortunately, vanity wasn't the only reason for the obsidian pillars. Even from a distance, I could feel the thick magical presence of several wards dancing around the room. At first glance, I could see that none of the wards were related to combat, instead of focusing on secrecy.

I would have preferred offensive wards. The current anti-spy setup prevented me from using magic to hear them. To make it funnier, I doubted I was the target. Considering the lack of security in the rest of the compound, they clearly didn't expect a hostile force to slip in, meaning the security measures were targeted to each other. I was a victim of circumstances.

If the room was less crowded, I might have tried to avoid the wards, as most of the spells were geared in for preventing remote spying attempts. However, while my acting abilities were fine, they were certainly not enough to bluff a group of necromancers in a dangerous secret mission that I was a surprise addition to their mission, sent by higher-ups, or something equally ridiculous. I doubted I would try that anything less than Grandmaster Speech, and even then, it would have probably been crazy dangerous, rather than plain impossible.

In the end, skills were not infallible.

With a sigh, I decided to continue toward the source of death energy that covered the corridors. Finding their operational headquarters was nice, but ultimately pointless without any physical evidence. If me being an eyewitness was enough to earn the trust of the Headmistress, I wouldn't have taken the risk of infiltrating the base this deep.

I moved toward the source of the death energy, the closer I got, the more painful the passive assault of the death energy became.

[-61 HP]

Even then, I smiled viciously when I arrived at the source. My destination turned out to be another huge cave, not as big as the one that kept the undead army, but still rather huge. There were exactly a hundred obsidian pillars around the room, each radiating death energy, but they weren't as interesting as the seven cages in the middle of the room, holding seven dragons — six corpses, and one alive.

I couldn't help but feel my eyes widen as I saw an actual living dragon, its emerald scales gleaming under the flickering lights of the cave. The bone dragons I had faced during my battles were nothing, mostly because they were raised from the corpses of the dragons that had died ages ago, and their powers were limited. As a faction, necromancers were a threat because they had managed to discover several historic dragon graveyards, using these millennia-old corpses to create the backbone of their armies.

An actual live dragon was something completely different.

One reason for the difference was their strength. Unlike most of the creatures, it was hard to guess a dragon's strength from the surface. They did not have the telltale signs of power, so battling against one was always a gamble. And just to make things worse, even the weakest one could probably contend against my current strength and could get away alive, if not victorious.

The strongest ones, according to the legends, were able to destroy whole armies and ruin cities.

Another reason was their mysteriousness. It was a relatively well-known fact that dragons provided no experience when killed —bone dragons did, but since they were necromantic constructs, it wasn't surprising. Of course, that didn't mean that a relatively weak dragon wasn't a good target for hunting. They might not provide any experience, but their bodies were arguably the best magical material in existence, easily worth a fortune.

With their intelligence, however, it was really hard to catch them. That part, there was no real agreement. Some claimed that they were even more intelligent than humans but held back by their aggressive nature, the others claimed that they were just very intelligent animals, with a particular leaning for low-cunning, but regardless, it didn't change the fact that the dragons were hard to find, and even harder to capture alive.

The fact that necromancers had managed to capture one alive was rather scary.

It was obvious the whole cave was designed to force its conversion to undead, but it didn't look like a regular reanimation —which only created bone dragons, which, while dangerous, nothing

really groundbreaking. Since they were going through that much effort, wasting enough mana to create a deadly miasma just as a side-effect, there was no doubt that they had other ideas.

[-163 HP]

The dragon was the only thing that was alive in the room, but not the only one that had a consciousness. There were eleven liches in the room, seven of them were wearing white robes and carrying bone staffs, their empty eye sockets glowing with an eerie blue. Each was sitting on top of a cage, and channeling the energies of the ritual they were conducting, the death energies invading the body of the dragon more and more.

The remaining four were wearing black robes, and carrying huge, ceremonial staffs from mahogany, watching the perimeter carefully. There was no doubt that they were strong, but I didn't how much. I was willing to test, however.

After all, I just found the distraction I needed.

I stood still for a moment, carefully examining the obsidian pillars, trying to understand their connection to the ritual. Deciding to take a risk, I gathered the smallest amount of mana I could push out while still maintaining connection, and slipped it toward the nearest pillar.

[-2 Mana]

I was caught the moment my mana touched the pillar, but not by a target I expected. The dragon's eye met with mine in a subtle movement, and suddenly, I was sure of something. Dragons were definitely intelligent creatures. At least, this one was, because I could see its expression shifting slightly, one that conveyed its request for help despite its monstrous face. And it did so without alerting the liches.

That level of subtle communication was not something an animal could achieve.

I nodded, then gestured it to wait. It was partially a test to see whether my understanding was just an illusion, but when it nodded subtly, I decided to accept my plan was correct. I made a few gestures, and it responded with subtle shaking of its head or the movement of its eyes, until we had a very rudimentary sign language, enough to convey the basic ideas.

Then, I turned my attention to the obsidian pillar, and slowly pushed more and more of my mana inside it, once again, tantric skill providing its worth. Drawing my own runes on the pillars was the better method of breaking a ritual, but I didn't trust myself to that while four liches with mahogany staff watched the perimeter. It was a small miracle I wasn't already noticed.

[-70 Mana]

Of course, while my direct invasion was much harder and wasteful, it also had a certain advantage. It left no direct evidence of my intervention. Of course, a determined examination might reveal that the source of mana was different than the others, but it was much less noticeable than the presence of a glowing rune.

I stood still for twenty minutes, slowly spreading my magic while trying to ignore the effects of the death magic on my body, but in the end, I managed to infect fourteen obsidian pillars through my connection with the first one, while sweating horribly. My body was hurting all over from the stress of controlling all those different sources of magic, and the erosion effect of the death miasma that already drained more than half of my health was not helping.

[-4423 Mana]

[-1277 HP]

Still, I made sure to keep my mana pool near-full, because I was going to need that during the next part. I was confident in breaking the ritual, but the rest was total chaos. I didn't know how strong the necromancers were, and I didn't know how much energy the dragon had remaining. I hoped that it was enough to make it move.

I took one last breath, making sure my mana was distributed across the nearest pillars, still unnoticed by the necromancers.

Then, I gave the dragon the signal to act.

The dragon was a prisoner for a long time, cramped, exhausted, and tortured by the death energy that was constantly channeled by a cabal of liches. Even then, when when it raged, I understood the reason for the legends about them. It might be exhausted, but when it smashed against the bars of the cage, the shock traveled across the room, forcing the four liches to turn inward to help their fellows suppressing it. Even then, for a moment, despite all of its disadvantages, it looked like the dragon was about to get its freedom, the cage cracking under its assault.

That impression didn't last for long, however. When the four black-robed necromancers raised their staffs and cast their spells, a complicated web of black energy fell over the dragon, wrapping its wings as it extracted a furious roar. Their staffs glowing brightly as they prepared to subdue the creature. The white-robed ones that were channeling the ritual were suitably distracted by the sudden rage of the dragon as well.

It was an excellent opportunity for me to act, one that I hadn't squandered. I flared my mana, an effect that spread through twelve of the fourteen pillars I had managed to infect with my mana.

They exploded simultaneously.

The chaotic shouts of the liches put a smile on my face, especially when their gazes danced on the remaining eighty-eight pillars. Eighty-six of them were starting to flicker, so naturally, they grabbed their attention first, not the two that maintained their stability.

A big mistake from their end, because these two still contained the majority of the mana I used to infect the ritual. A ritual that was conveniently going out of control with some pillars already destroyed and others flickering out of control. A ritual that connected me to the dragon.

I used the connection to send the mana to the dragon.

It was the trick I first used on Titania then perfected on Helga, with great benefits. So, while using the trick, helping the dragon get stronger wasn't my only objective. I also wanted to use the opportunity to probe its abilities, and maybe unravel a couple of mysteries about it. Maybe even get a peek into its soul space if I could manage.

However, the moment my mana touched its skin, I lost control of it, turning the second part of my plan impossible. Still, that was only a side benefit. The more important part was the sudden shine in the dragon's eyes as my mana touched its skin before letting out another roar, this time even louder.

The roar wasn't just sound, however. No matter how strong a roar was, it wouldn't just unravel the defensive wards around it like they were made of summer clouds. The necromancers tried to cast their spells, but they were too distracted by the sudden reversal of the ritual. They were a second too late to prevent the dragon from bursting out of the cage.

The dragon's first action in freedom was to open her mouth and spew out a flame so hot that it was bright white. Its flames spread around in a circle, hitting all six cages around it simultaneously, immolating the dragon corpses that were being used as a focus for the ritual.

Some of the liches that were sitting on top of the cages were quick enough to defend themselves, but not all of them. Two of them evaporated immediately under the raging flames. The rest managed to protect themselves from the flames, but not all of them did that flawlessly. Unfortunately, the one that was standing on top of the dragon's cage, who was clearly the leader, had survived. I had a feeling that it was the strongest one, evidenced by its survival

despite the dragon directly targeting him in its follow-up attack.

However, that retaliation cost the dragon quite a bit. The black-robed ones used the opportunity to retaliate, each letting out dangerous bolts of necrotic energy, all from close quarters. Despite the closeness, the dragon dodged two of them, showing surprising agility considering its size, but the other two connected with its bright green scales.

The attack pushed the dragon back as well, but luckily, it moved toward my side. So rather than trying to resist, actually moved with the blow, leaving the necromancers behind.

“Stop it,” called the leader, but he was unable to do so, because I had decided to leave one last gift, and used the two pillars under my control to further wreak havoc into the ritual, much easier considering I didn’t have to care about not killing the dragon accidentally.

The dragon managed to enter the tunnel as the ritual started to collapse, and all liches turned their attention to stabilize it, preventing it from exploding. As much as I wished to go and kill them, revealing my presence would be counter-productive if I couldn’t take all of them before reinforcements arrived. Even with the ritual collapsing, it was a long shot.

Then, I turned my attention to my unlikely ally.

[Level: 23 Experience: 263100 / 276000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 32

HP: 1126 / 2737 Mana: 3152 / 3565]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Six

I couldn't help but feel alarmed as I looked at the dragon. Yes, it acted as a nominal ally, and showed a surprising capability toward communication, enough to convince me about its intelligence, but that didn't remove the risk of a sudden betrayal. It didn't give a sign of doing so, but considering I was betting on reading the body language of a creature I first saw today, my stress was rather understandable.

However, when I stopped for a second to examine it, those concerns flew away. Even just a glance was enough to show that the dragon was near death. Most of its emerald scales had lost their luster, giving a rotten feeling instead, which was probably the effect of its extended exposure to death energy. Its claws were trembling badly enough to remove their threat. Its every breath was labored, showing its exhaustion.

Examining it carefully, my earlier fear was replaced with a new one. Just how much distraction the dragon could be in its current state. I sighed as I came to a decision, one that required me to bet on the goodwill of a mysterious creature with a sketchy reputation. In the end, I decided to trust my instincts.

"Hold still for a moment, I'm going to heal you," I said even as I put my hand on its body. It trembled under my touch, but made no move of pulling back. I gathered most of my mana together to cast a strong healing spell.

[-2329 Mana]

The dragon let out another breath, this time somehow smoother. Some of its scales regained their shine, and its trembling stopped. It was still far from the optimal condition, but that was the best I could do under the lack of time.

Pity I couldn't cast another spell even if my mana recovered. The only reason I was able to cast such a strong healing spell was the ritual that went out of control, and its effects were enough to prevent detection. However, I had to cast a protection spell to fend off the death energy when the ritual pulsed dangerously. Using the opportunity, I cast a healing spell on myself, even though it drained my mana further. With three instances of regeneration active, all I needed was to resist for twenty minutes for my mana to refill completely, making it a reasonable risk.

[-416 Mana]

[+623 HP]

“Let’s move,” I said to the dragon as I cut directly toward the nearest exit, and the dragon followed me immediately, smart enough to realize I was its only hope. I took a route opposite of the headquarters, wanting the necromancers to abandon that section as much as possible.

The first minute, we managed to avoid coming across anyone. I used a biomancy trick to hide our presence from their detection skill, which was a bit risky, but I was hoping that it would be attributed to the dragon. I was lucky that the dragon was relatively small, at least enough to silently move through the tunnels with its wings folded. It was still rather large, taller than a human even when it was all fours, but the tunnels were large enough to allow it to move.

Then, our luck turned, as I heard the shouts of necromancers, mixed with the unmistakable sounds of a bone dragon’s stomping. They weren’t too far away. “You try to get their attention, and I’ll hit them from behind,” I said as I pulled my sword and doubled back, looking for a connecting tunnel.

Dashing full speed, it took me less than half a minute to hit the ambush from behind, Aviada’s sword gleaming under the flashing lights of the spell battle. However, much to the misfortune of the four necromancers that was leading the skeleton brigade —and two bone dragons— a raging dragon was a distracting sight. Distracting enough to miss a warrior charging with a gleaming two-handed sword until it was too late.

I was so glad that I stopped by Aviada to pick up her sword, because with its assistance, one cleaving attack was enough to kill all four necromancers, though I slashed a couple of extra times to make sure before casting a flame spell and burning their remains. I didn’t want to leave blade wounds in their corpses.

[-23 Mana]

Meanwhile, the dragon was under the assault of two bone dragons, barely able to resist their assault, while the skeletons leveraged the opportunity, trying to stab its legs. I jumped up, climbing on the back of one of the bone dragons, breaking its spine as I climbed upward. It raged, trying to throw me from its back, but my twenty-five points of agility were not for show, so I easily climbed up to its head, destroying it with one mighty smash that would make a barbarian king proud.

Without the support of its mindless brethren, the other bone dragon failed to resist the raging assault of the emerald dragon. Meanwhile, I cleaved through the rest of the skeletons, which took me less than ten seconds. “Do you mind burning the remains?” I asked kindly.

The dragon sent me a gaze, and I had to suppress a laugh. I was amused because its suspicion was almost a physical thing, and receiving such a look from a monster was amusing. Still, it followed my small request, burning the remains with its breath before we started running once more.

We have dealt with three more blockades until we arrived at the entrance of the tunnel which led outside, every encounter making me more glad that I actually brought the sword with me, allowing me to save my mana. I even transferred some more mana to my unlikely ally, who was more than happy to receive the extra boost. As a result, when we managed to break through another hasty barricade and came near a tunnel that led outside, I was rather confident that it would be able to escape with its life.

“The exit is here. The rest is up to you,” I explained to the dragon, not even bothering the possibility that it wouldn’t understand me. Its actions until now had proved its communication capabilities.

I wasn’t surprised when it raised its claw, and wrote in the air with flaming letters. ‘I owe you one.’ After fighting together several times, it was clear to me that the dragon was much smarter than a regular human, but reluctant to show it for some reason. The fact that it knew how to write was not a surprise.

The only interesting part was the alphabet it had used, which belonged to one of the ancient languages, and even among the mages, only a minority used it. Unfortunately, I didn’t have time to go into the details of it with an actual army of undead trying to find us. The dragon turned and left after one last nod, and I waved after it, before turning back and moved toward my own target.

The presence of the dragon was godsend in my infiltration attempt, even though they were alarmed. Whenever I came across a large group, I let them pass first or circled around them, and whenever I found a small group, I killed them using the sword before burning their remains with a low-grade flame spell, weak enough to avoid their attention.

As the raging cries of the dragon mixed with shouts and explosions, my journey got easier and easier. I was curious about whether the dragon would be able to survive, though it didn’t slow down my steps. I had more important things to do than their survival.

When I arrived at their operational headquarters once more, there were only two necromancers there, neither of them a lich, both standing guard. Sneaking to them under the constant interference of explosions was almost trivial, especially when they were standing on

the other end of the corridor, not even paying attention to the entrance. I could have killed them easily, but I let them live. I didn't want to arouse suspicion by killing them.

Without any guard, walking into the room was a trivial activity, since the wards weren't designed to keep someone away. And once inside, all the anti-espionage wards actually worked for my benefit, preventing my spells from being noticed. I rapidly cast duplication spells to copy every document I was seeing, which detailed a number of plans. Some were clearly in cipher, but solving them was the later issue. However, for one of the documents, I stole the original while leaving back the copy.

It was the detailed breakdown of the ward scheme of Silver Spires.

I couldn't help but frown as I saw that. The presence of it put a frown on my face, because the number of people that had complete access to the defense plans should be limited. It might be that the headmistress was the only one that had access to them, or not. Regardless, I decided to talk with Titania first and discuss the documents before deciding on what to do.

There was a determined expression on my face as I escaped the headquarters, though not because of the escape itself, which, despite my earlier expectations, turned out to be rather easy. To be fair, it was easy to sneak around when there was a raging dragon loose inside. I used my escape tunnel to climb up, sighing relaxedly only after I took a deep breath of fresh air.

Still, even as the landscape blurred under my feet, I couldn't help but feel that this wasn't going to be my last encounter with that dragon...

For the first half an hour, I just run without casting a spell, doing my best to avoid attention. I healed myself and purged the remaining necrotic energy in my body once my mana was full, then summoned another pseudo-elemental as a mount. It cost a lot of mana, but the speed it provided was much more important, especially since I was a couple of hundred miles away from the school.

The journey took a while, especially since I had to take a break midway. I couldn't help but sigh relaxedly as I finally saw the walls of the school in the distance. I dispelled the pseudo-elemental I was using as a mount even as I examined rays of the morning sun coloring the impressive —but not impenetrable, especially with the help of the plans in my hand— walls of the school.

I slipped inside easily. Compared to sneaking around in a necromancer base, it was nothing.

It took me less than a minute to sneak through one of the weak spots on the walls, which once

again proved the complacency of the Silver Spires. No doubt the Necromancers were feeling confident enough to gather around. However, I had more important issues than the general overconfidence that infected one of the most important bastions of humanity. I needed to talk with Titania.

I met with a nasty surprise when arrived at the dead-drop location we agreed on non-urgent communication. There was a note from Titania, mentioning that there was an emergency, and she would be away for a day, maybe more. I bit my lips in disappointment, trying not to let out a cry of frustration. It wasn't just her absence, but the fact that she didn't bother mentioning anything about the mission, or how long it might last in the worst case.

The only happiness that I doubted the necromancers would be able to put another ambush together after my little surprise. I was able to browse through their plans on the way, and while many details were still encrypted, I was able to decipher enough to understand that the dragon I had saved to create a distraction was a crux in their plans, to be used as a ram against the weakest part of the magical defenses—which was discovered through detailed blueprints—by leveraging its magic resistance.

Running full-speed or trying to hold onto pseudo-air-elemental wasn't exactly the best environment to analyze a bunch of papers, after all. But even if I had the opportunity, it would doubtlessly take a lot of time.

Luckily, I had someone clever enough to help.

When I arrived at my room, Helga was still sleeping, so I put all the documents on the table, hung Aviada's sword on the wall, and had a quick shower in the corner of the room. Water spells were sure handy, especially when I could use some earth magic to create a drain and other amenities.

After showering, I didn't bother wrapping a towel around myself as I went and kissed Helga. "Good morning, sleepyhead," I said.

"Good morning," Helga answered with a huge smile, not bothering about the cover that slipped away, revealing her naked body underneath. After sharing an extended kiss, however, she pulled back and frowned. "You look tired. Were you out the whole night?"

"Yeah," I said, and chuckled at the flash of jealousy that passed her face, which was understandable. Just because she agreed that she wasn't going to be the only woman in my life didn't mean that she wouldn't feel any jealousy. Even if I had an actual good reason for it.

I was tempted to tease her a bit about her jealousy, but unfortunately, we had bigger problems, and not enough time. "I found the base of the necromancers last night," I said with a grave tone.

She grabbed my hand, tight enough that her fingers turned bone-white. "Explain," she said, so I gave her a five-minute summary of my adventure, not particularly bothering to disguise the risks I faced. It made her panic, but I needed her to have an accurate background before she started working on the documents, just to give her a better idea. "You're a madman, or have a martyr complex," she gasped as I explained how I freed a dragon as a distraction just so that I could raid their headquarter.

I shrugged. "Hey, I'm not exactly loving the risks as well, but it's not like we can just escape," I explained.

"Can't we?" she asked.

"Not if we still want to leverage all the benefits of the Silver Spires," I said. "And even if we're willing to give up all the benefits, do you really want to see what else they would do after the school has fallen. The Empire is already nothing more than a loose collection of cities, and the Silver Spires is one of the few places that is connecting them together. The royal family is strong, but they are barely able to stall the destruction, not reverse. I really don't want to see what would happen if we lost our most important training facility," I explained, then added with a smirk, "Even if that facility was elitist and pointlessly traditionalist one."

"You're right," she said with a sigh, but when my smirk got wider, I earned a slap on my shoulder. "But you don't have to be an ass about it."

"I know, but it's fun," I said, which earned a playful giggle that made me wish I wasn't about to collapse from exhaustion. Even worse, I only had a couple of hours to rest.

"So, you want me to decipher them, any particular priority?" she asked.

"Anything that pertains their contingency plans, I doubt that they would act immediately with their biggest weapon lost."

"Are you sure the dragon has managed to escape?"

"Not completely, but even if it failed to escape, the ritual is definitely ruined. Even if they managed to capture it, the best they could have is a huge delay, and more likely, they had to kill it and raise it as another bone-dragon. It might be a bit stronger with its skin still intact, but it

will not be anything close to their initial design.”

“Makes sense,” she said and just as she was about to turn, I grabbed her for an extended kiss, one that I used to drain my whole mana. Since I was about to regenerate it while sleeping, why not use it more efficiently. It wasn’t enough to make her Level Up again, but almost four thousand mana pushed her quite a bit in the distance. Also, I used the opportunity to examine her soul space, making sure that there was nothing wrong other than some harmless instability.

Still, a level a day should be a limit for a while, I decided, at least I could be certain about the side effects. I had managed to Level Up several times in a day, but my condition was rather unique.

“Have a nice sleep,” Helga gasped as I closed my eyes, her arousal clear. Pity that I was really exhausted, and didn’t want to abuse biomancy tricks to force myself awake.

“Wake me up in two hours,” I told her and closed my eyes. I was falling asleep when I felt a gentle kiss on my cheek.

[Level: 23 Experience: 263100 / 276000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 32

HP: 2737 / 2737 Mana: 373 / 3565]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Seven

I was expecting to be grumpy when Helga woke me up. After all, not only had I been up the whole night, but I had also gone through a rather harrowing and challenging evening filled with adrenaline. The total amount of mana I spent through the night had left its mark as well. If it wasn't for my incredible constitution, I would have likely received a permanent injury from having strained myself. Even with that, my body was hurting, suggesting me to take it easy for the next day or two.

However, despite all, I woke up in a good mood, solely thanks to the method Helga chose to wake me up with. She didn't poke me until I woke up, nor did she try to wake me up with a kiss. Well, technically, she was kissing me, just not my cheek or lips. No, I woke up feeling an incredible heat covering my crotch, giving me the most pleasurable alarm I had ever felt. I cracked my eyes open, only to see Helga's blonde hair pooling on my lap while her head bobbed.

"That's a beautiful alarm," I murmured, still feeling the haze of sleep, one that I was in no hurry to dispel. After last night, I had earned the right to be lazy for a while before I had to meet with Aviada and gave back her sword. Helga said nothing, her mouth occupied with a task much more important than providing me with a pointless statement, but her hand tightened on my thigh to signal she had heard my statement.

She stayed there for another minute without saying anything, before she suddenly pulled out. Before I could say anything, however, I felt her tongue on my stomach, trailing my abdominal muscles as she climbed up, leaving a delicious trail behind until her lips reached my chest muscles, only to stay there for a while. I couldn't help but snort softly. For all her explicit distaste toward warriors and their direct ways, she had no problems enjoying the benefits of the same track.

That snort earned a slap on the shoulder as she was smart enough to understand the root of that snort, but her annoyance was definitely not high enough to separate her lips from my body. Instead, she started moving back down once again toward my crotch while her hands caressed my biceps. Her tongue slathered lower and lower until it reached my shaft, which was starting to feel neglected.

Her grip around my biceps tightened suddenly, fingernails digging into my skin, but I barely felt a stinging sensation —inevitable considering the gap between my Constitution and her Strength. Still, combined with the warm sensation of her mouth engulfing my cock, it made me

moan. I could actually feel the self-satisfied smirk that tried to appear on her face on my shaft. She was enjoying being the one in control. I pushed some mana through my shaft, rewarding her much better than a pat on the head. It was a good change of pace to lay back lazily while someone else did all the work once in a while, especially when I was still feeling the exhaustion from last night.

[-120 Mana]

Still, the sense of discomfort as I channeled mana was an unwelcome reminder of my exhaustion, like a muscle feeling pain after a long exercise. I decided to keep it down a bit. I had done nothing but lay with my eyes closed while the smell of arousal slowly filled the room, her movements getting faster and faster. It was good to have confirmation that I wasn't the only one that was enjoying it.

She was clearly not in a hurry, because rather than pushing deep, her lips stayed around the head of my shaft, massaging me determinedly with the assistance of her tongue. I couldn't help but feel that she had been practicing on some lucky vegetable while I was away. She was too obsessed with perfection not to do that, and her increase in skill was too pronounced.

"Holy shit," I murmured, unable to keep my mouth closed after a particularly inventive swirl of her tongue. Her only response was to moan naughtily as she continued to tease the crown of my shaft. As much as I wanted her to quicken, I let her set the pace, not even guiding her by touch. After working hard, she deserved to deliver her show without interruption.

"You're amazing," I murmured as she moved deeper. She deserved every compliment I could give her. My cock was throbbing hard under the soft treatment of her pouty lips, beautiful enough to inspire a thousand artists. Her cheeks stretched out lewdly each time she descended on me, taking more and more of my shaft. The way her breasts softly rubbing against my thighs as she moved made it even more delicious.

She moved farther, but with torturous slowness, while my exhaustion slowly dispersed. Even the strain on my body lessened. While it didn't disappear completely, it was still an amazing development. I would have said that it didn't make any sense, but considering the rest of my leveling experience, I wasn't exactly in a position to claim that. It was certainly more reasonable than helping the girls level up through a rough fucking.

I couldn't help but feel disappointed when she pulled off of me, but her head stayed close to my crotch even as she smiled at me smugly, happy with the impact of her treatment. I smiled naughtily even as I let my impatience show, wanting to encourage her inventiveness. When she

brought her lips close again, she didn't wrap them around my girth. Instead, she started licking my length slowly, tasting and savoring the texture of every ridge and vein. Her lips occasionally wrap around the side of my shaft, delivering an interesting treatment from the side. At that moment, I couldn't help but imagine Marianne on the other side, delivering the same treatment, their lips touching each other, occasionally even sharing a kiss.

I immediately added that to my mental bucket list to be done at the earliest convenience. Having two blonde beauties, delivering a combined massage was definitely something to be arranged later. "It's becoming unbearable, honey," I moaned, signaling that I was nearing the end of my patience. Still, I let her continue at her pace rather than grabbing her head to initiate a rough deep-throating session. I liked the other girls, but Helga was my actual first, and she had a special place in my heart. Not to mention, the personality of the others didn't allow for something like this. Marianne was far too skittish to actually take the lead, while both Cornelia and Aviada were too obsessed with power and control. Allowing them to control the pacing would have lowered their opinion about me at this early stage.

"Too bad," she answered as she raised her head, giving me a naughty smile before lowering to continue the same treatment, doing her best to drive me crazy.

"You're pushing your luck, you naughty bunny," I said, but my tone stayed teasing rather than domineering.

She pointedly sucked me harder for a moment before pulling back, signaling that she had no intention of giving back control. Even when she pulled out and wrapped her fat tits around my shaft, moving up and down, her movements were pointed and deliberate, slowly moving up and down while her beautiful eyes stayed firmly fixed to mine, making the situation even more erotic. Her confidence was simply enchanting, especially when she still maintained her slow pace despite her own obvious growing arousal, signaled by her panting.

Then, without a warning, her grip tightened around my thigh before she lowered herself hard, so much that I felt her nose pressing against my skin while she devoured my full length with surprising ease, signaling that the vegetables she had used to practice with had seen some intensive usage. Not that I was dissatisfied with her assault, not when I could feel the tightness of her throat around my shaft, rapidly pushing me towards an explosion. I thought that to be the end of it, only for her to pull out at the last second.

"That's a bit rude," I said with a chuckle as she pulled out, leaving me throbbing and wanting.

"Don't be impatient," she answered as she stood up, giving me a glimpse of her body, wearing

nothing but a pair of panties, her fingers already hooked around the edges. She started removing them slowly, bit by bit revealing her delicious entrance to my gaze, already sopping wet. “We still have the second round.

She took a long time removing her panties, and even longer as she turned her back, giving me a full view of her bountiful yet still tight ass. Soon, her entrance was pressing against my crown, perfectly positioning her for some fun time in reverse cowgirl position, about to entertain me with the excellent curves of her ass while she rode me. However, once again, she was very slow as she slowly lowered herself, her pussy as tight as ever. A moan rippled off her lips as the crown slipped in, forcing her tunnel to widen to accommodate my girth.

My cock was already throbbing as she impaled herself slowly, turning it into a truly delicious torture. On the positive side, it worked excellently to remove more of the strain I had been feeling after the last part. Another moan escaped her mouth, a rather artificial, practiced one that was designed for seduction. It worked nonetheless, but I continued to lay still, liking the anticipation of being served. As she lowered herself deeper and deeper, I let my eyes feast on her naked body and its beautiful curves, from the elegant curve of her back to the delicious view of her dangling boobs, most of it hidden by her own body, only a part of it peeking out deliciously. Her smooth, long legs were parted to the side, trembling slightly under the strain of maintaining the perfect angle, all crowned by the perfect lines of her heart-shaped ass.

“You’re a goddess,” I worshiped as she moved in a circular motion, riding me slowly but determinedly, adding more to my pleasure every passing second. I crossed my hands behind my head, raising my head just a bit to enjoy the show perfectly.

“And you’re a stallion,” she answered, unable to keep her gasps contained. “And I’m going to ride you slowly until you’re tamed and begging,” she added. I just smirked at the challenge, confident in my abilities —though I doubted I would share the same confidence if I hadn’t shared the bed of four different ladies in the last twenty-four hours, which went a long way in curbing even my voracious appetite. I doubted I could resist even half of it if I had been on a mission for a few days.

I was getting rather used to my new way of entertainment, after all.

Still, I didn’t bother to resist the desire to explode as it built up. Instead, it was Helga that stopped whenever my shaft started to throb noticeably, signaling another explosion. She had long become adept at recognizing the signs, pulling out just before my explosion was about to happen. She turned back to meet my gaze, a smug smile on her face, only to meet with my comfortable position. “You need to work harder to break this stallion,” I answered lazily, which

roused her competitive spirit further.

“I’m going to show you,” she uttered in steely determination, waiting for a minute for my strain to dispel before lowering herself once more, this time slipping in much easier. Her circular motions got even slower as she brought me toward the climax. I was a bit late to my meeting with Aviada, but I wasn’t in a mood to care for being challenged explicitly.

Several minutes later, she stopped once more, but this time, I was yet to reach the edge. “Is there something wrong, sweetie?” I asked smugly.

“Shut up,” she murmured without bothering to turn, stopping for a moment, but it didn’t prevent her walls from tightening further. She wasn’t the only one that could read the other party, and considering my overwhelming stats and experience, I was able to do it much more efficiently. She was already tethering on the edge, and the small break she took was hardly a solution. When she started, she tightened even more.

When she pulled out once again, I recognized the sudden change in her mannerism, a sudden ride in aggression, mixed with some delicious anticipation. “Are you ready to-” I tried to ask, intending to ask whether she was about to surrender, only for her to silence me the fun way, by smothering me with her bosom.

“Shut up!” she repeated, even louder as she impaled herself with my erection once more and started to rock her hips, the sound of flesh hitting flesh exploding as she ramped up the aggression. Since it was impossible for me to say anything while smothered, I decided to put my mouth to better use, and started licking and sucking on her breast while traveling toward her nipple. Once I reached my destination, my teeth joined the game, gently biting her rock-hard nipple.

It proved to be the last step to push her over the edge, and she tightened around my shaft. Impressively, rather than slowing down, she picked up even more speed, her out-of-control cries making me glad for the judicious amount of silencing wards I had added to the protections of my room. “Someone is determined to break her stallion,” I commented in amusement when her back arched with pleasure, leaving my mouth free.

“Silence,” she ordered as she stuffed my mouth with her breasts —not that I was complaining— and continued riding me without giving an inch. My shaft was enveloped completely by her wetness, every push making me knock on her cervix like a particularly impatient visitor at the door. She was loud without the fear of being overheard. Really loud, enough to make my ears hurt, though I liked the feeling. It was good to see that I was able to break her even without

moving a muscle.

“Finally,” she murmured in victory as I finally exploded, filling her insides, though her victory was tainted by the fact that she climaxed at the same time, allowing me to clinch victory as strong as she clenched around me.

[Achievement: Patient Participant. Sometimes, patience is a virtue. +1 Wisdom. +200 Experience]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Duration, 8 hours]

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Basic Mana Manipulation. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Basic Mana Manipulation (25/25)]

The achievement put a smile on my face. The text was amusing, and while experience reward was completely negligible, extra stat points were always welcome. The temporary skill was also interesting. I could feel my mana getting even more flexible, which was always a benefit. However, the previous temporary skill I had received from her was lost, which, while expected, was a bit of a bummer.

She collapsed against my chest, her head snuggling into my neck. I laid under her —negligible — weight, enjoying the casual comfort of her touch as much as I enjoyed the high of a recent orgasm, proving that our relationship was evolving in an unexpected direction, not that I was unhappy about it.

“That was nice,” I murmured lazily while I gently extracted myself from under her. “Maybe next time, you can even give me a challenge.”

“Asshole,” she uttered as she slapped my naked chest, but it was impossible to erase her huge smile through fake annoyance, especially after a gentle kiss to her cheek. “What’s the plan for today,” she asked as she stretched in the bed while I used a water spell to clean myself, watching me with clear enjoyment in her eyes.

“I’m going to commission a new weapon,” I answered as I finished my quick shower and started dressing. I pointed at the sword. “Borrowing from Aviada is a temporary measure at best, not to mention it’s hardly hidden. I need something that fits better with my style.”

“Isn’t it a bit risky, you need to reveal yourself to yet another high-level person,” Helga asked as she tried to get her breath back.

“Not as risky as continuing to walk around without a weapon. Hopefully, I will be able to sell a bullshit explanation, or failing that, bribe the crafter for their silence,” I added. I lacked money, but that didn’t mean I was poor. Even after using most of them to set up the wards, I still had a decent amount of magical ingredients from last night’s encounter, especially if I added them to my existing stash. “You just stay here and focus on the wards, especially the weak areas they identified. If we know these locations, we can reinforce them in an emergency.”

After one last kiss, I left the room, dressed as a nondescript warrior, Aviada’s sword in its scabbard, an illusion on the pommel to make it look like a boring two-handed sword rather than the masterpiece it was.

I really needed a new weapon.

[Level: 23 Experience: 263300 / 276000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2737 / 2737 Mana: 3588 / 3588]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Subterfuge [50/50]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Eight

I missed the promised meeting time with Aviada, so she wasn't in her room —once again sneaking in through the convenience of illusion spells. The ease I was having sneaking around was a bit of a bummer, highlighting yet another problem with the security. Normally, I would have been happy with it, but the looming necromancer threat made me change my opinion. After centuries of safety, the school had become arrogant.

I just hoped that wake up call wouldn't be deadly.

While Aviada was not in her room, luckily she left a note about her location, saving me from making the effort to find her. After leaving the room, I dispelled the illusion and walked around as yet another warrior student —highlighting the lack of security and ease of spying even further— toward the small arena the students used to test themselves. As I arrived, the cries and jeers got louder, with no small amount of insults mixed in.

When I arrived, I wasn't too surprised to see Aviada in the middle of the arena, holding a two-handed practice sword, trying to defend herself against three male students at the same time, each equipped with a sword and a shield, trying to flank Aviada, but failing to close in as she danced around while raining merciless attacks on their shields. I didn't even consider stepping in because Aviada had a large smile on her face as she kept three people away, avoiding them with a grace she had lacked when we first met.

The boost she received to her Agility and Speed during the second-stage Companion process was showing its worth.

I watched as Aviada played with them for a bit until one of them made the stupid mistake of calling her a whore. A bad mistake, as not only did Aviada have an explosive temper, but she also wasn't using her Strength stat to the limit intentionally. A war cry escaped her mouth as she lunged forward, swinging her sword with her full might. The first one tried to defend himself with his shield, only to find himself flying back, while his friend suffered the same fate a moment later.

"I didn't mean—" the remaining one —who was also the one stupid enough to call her a whore— stuttered, only to be silenced when Aviada's sword connected with his shin, the distinctive sound of a bone-breaking filling the opening.

"Anyone else want a challenge?" she called out angrily, only for the crowd to fall silent. Aviada threw her sword down and walked out of the arena. Aviada was by no means one of the top

warriors in the school without her magical sword—at least not yet— but the stronger ones tended to avoid her challenges, afraid of their reputations even if they managed to beat her. Unlike the magic side, people of martial pursuits were usually sexist, which was part of the reason why Aviada was rather desperate to prove herself. Not to mention she didn't have a lot of friends, hence her midnight hunting trips before we met.

I followed her as she walked towards one of the empty balconies that overlooked the arena, happy to note that it was a bit concealed. I followed her, only to realize I had a follower of my own. A familiar curvy redhead was following her. It was her friend Carla, the one that I had been acquaintanced with rather memorably. She was trying to stay concealed as she watched me, no doubt still feeling rankled after the way I had picked to prove the lack of her observational skills. She was trying to avoid my attention, and her tricks were not half-bad. It was a pity that my perception was off-the-charts.

I acted like I hadn't noticed her, and walked to the balcony Aviada was in. "You're late," Aviada said as I closed in. I would have been impressed by her perception if I hadn't known about her ability to feel the presence of her sword. It was possibly the reason she picked a concealed balcony, allowing us to talk without getting too much attention.

"Sorry about that," I answered. "But I wasn't as lucky as I had hoped."

"No prey?" she asked, surprised. Her surprise was justified considering I had been hunting alone in the night, which was a very active time period for hunting.

"The opposite actually," I answered, which earned a curious glare from her. "Undead again," I whispered, low enough to make sure Carla wouldn't hear it. She opened her mouth, but I was faster. "Later," I said, adding a warning glare to convey my seriousness. I definitely didn't want to discuss such a sensitive topic where everyone could hear us. "Thanks for the sword, it helped immensely," I said even as I passed it back to her. She visibly relaxed when her fingers wrapped around it, though I didn't take it personally. The fact that she trusted me enough to lend her sword when I went for a midnight hunting session, making it very easy to steal it, conveyed her trust completely. Still, the sword was a big part of her fighting prowess, making its absence rather uncomfortable.

"Finally," she murmured, not bothering to hide her relief.

"Do you have some free time?" I asked. "Maybe we could visit the crafter you mentioned before."

“We’re a bit early for that,” Aviada said with a chuckle.

“Does she have a class in the morning or something?” I asked, only for Aviada to chuckle.

“She doesn’t wake up before noon, and she needs at least one hour for her hangover to pass. We should wait at least until dinner.”

“Did she have a party last night?” I asked.

Aviada laughed again. “I know that they had their weekly card game last night,” she said, laughing.

“And was it a particularly fun one, or was she celebrating,” I said.

“Drowning her sorrows for losing, no doubt,” Aviada answered. “She’s a rather poor gambler. Worse, she’s an enthusiastic gambler as well, making it easy for her to lose a lot of money. She usually uses fortified wine to drown her sorrows.”

“A gambler and a drunk,” I said, unable to hide the quirk of my eyebrow. “She sounds better and better. Are you sure she’s the best one?”

“Despite her faults, she’s good at her job. And she’s always in debt, so she’ll be open to your commission without asking too many questions as long as the payment is good enough,” she explained, sending me a dissatisfied smile, not enjoying my doubt.

“Okay, okay,” I said with a chuckle, raising my hands in mock surrender. “We’ll do what you say. But we should go early so I can cure her hangover. No harm starting our partnership on a positive note.”

“Smart,” she answered, then smirked at me. “We still have an hour. Why don’t we go back to my room, and discuss the rent you owe me for borrowing my sword.”

“No need, I like it here,” I said, and she frowned, reading my response as a rejection, which faded instantly when I stepped behind her, pressing my body against hers. “Don’t you think so?” I whispered.

“Do you think you can keep me here,” she replied, pushing her hips against my crotch even as she said so. I leaned forward, grabbing her wrists even as I pressed my lips to her neck. She tried to move her hands, using her full strength, only to fail spectacularly. But rather than feeling dejected, her arousal got even stronger, enjoying her own helplessness and my display

of power.

I said nothing as she struggled, which included a lot of unnecessary repeats of her hips rubbing against my crotch. I said nothing, enjoying the treatment even as I cast a mirror spell to allow me to discreetly observe my back. Carla was standing in the shadows, her shock obvious despite her stealth, no doubt unable to process our daring. After all, all it would take was a curious glance from the crowd below to create a scandal. Neither her nor Aviada knew that I had already cast an illusion spell on the balcony to hide us from the view of the students below. I wanted Aviada to feel excited, but not at the expense of displaying her delicious body to a bunch of assholes.

It was the best of both worlds.

For a while, I kept Aviada's wrists pinned against the railings while she continued to rub herself against me, waiting for her to get into the mood, which didn't take long thanks to a combination of a rain of kisses to her neck, contrasting greatly with my rough grip around her wrists. "I'll kill you," she murmured when I forced both of her hands behind her back, but there was no hiding the desire in her tone.

"I wonder what I should do to prevent that," I stated amusedly even as I weakened my grip. "Maybe I should let you go." The angry growl she let out in response was simply beautiful. "Or maybe, I should teach you your proper place again," I whispered. "You have a tendency to forget it." She growled once again, this time impatient rather than angry.

I ignored the soft gasp that came from behind, realizing Carla was responsible for it. Her shock was understandable, as I was using my free hand to unbutton Aviada's pants, feeling pity that she wasn't wearing a skirt, which would have given me much more convenient access. Another gasp from Carla reached my ear when Aviada's panties followed the destination of her pants, giving me an excuse to caress her legs. I pulled down my own pants with a simple spell, ignoring the discomfort.

[-1 Mana]

Then, I pushed inside her hard, still keeping her hands behind her back. My shaft slid in easily, my earlier rough treatment working wonders as foreplay, turning her sopping wet. Despite her best efforts, she moaned, struggling to stay on her feet as I ravaged her insides. I could have kissed her, as a method of silencing, but watching her struggle to keep silent would be much more fun. "Try to stay silent if you don't want any observers sweetie," I said as I leaned down to her ear. "Other than Carla, who is already watching us," I added, this time using a spell to make

sure Carla wouldn't hear it.

[-2 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 73%]

"I'll kill you," Aviada answered, but there was no mistaking the arousal in her tone, not to mention the enthusiastic way she pushed her hips back whenever I slammed in, or the way her legs widened a bit to allow better access. She still struggled to get free, of course, but it only made her wetter.

Despite her best efforts, another moan escaped her mouth when my free hand slipped under her blouse, caressing her stomach slowly to contrast my furious slamming, making her moan repeatedly. "I can use a spell to silence you if you can't handle it," I helpfully offered, not bothering to hide the mocking edge in my tone, only to receive a threatening growl back. She pointedly stayed silent, amusing me with the ease I could tease her. She might have lost some of her prejudice toward magic, but that didn't mean that she wanted to use magic to solve a challenge, however trivial.

I used another mirror spell to take a glance at Carla, curious about what she was doing, only to meet with a pleasant surprise. It wasn't her shock, or the fact that her blush was deep enough to rival her beautiful red hair. However, when I noticed her legs were pressed together tightly, rubbing each other furiously, I smiled. Apparently, the concern Carla was feeling toward her friend's ambiguous relationship didn't prevent her from enjoying the show.

To her defense, it was an impressive show.

But since we once again had our familiar voyeur, there was no harm putting on a bit of a show. I let my hand climb upward under her shirt, revealing more and more of Aviada's beautiful body, enough to reveal the functional bra she had been wearing underneath. I even changed our position slightly so that Carla would be watching us from the side, getting a much better view than what she had been seeing from our back.

Then, I conjured a rope, and tied Aviada's hands behind her back. Thankfully, her dislike of magic didn't extend to indirect effects. Then, I pushed her to her knees, forcing her down, grabbing her hair to keep her from collapsing. A flick freed her beautiful breasts from the oppression of her top. I started pushing inside her long and hard, though unfortunately, not hard enough to make the sound of our flesh hitting together explode. I could have used a sound-dampening ward, but it would have ruined Aviada's challenge.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 74%]

“You like it, don’t you, slut,” I whispered into her ear, loud enough for Carla to hear. “You like it when I use you like a toy, putting you in your proper place under me.”

“You’re courting death,” Aviada answered between her squeezed teeth, which would have been scary if it wasn’t for the thick arousal coloring her every word. Staying silent was taking her full concentration.

“And what are you going to do about it other than obediently taking what I’m dishing out until you cum like a helpless slut,” I asked. “You even have your friend here to watch your humiliation,” I reminded her. Meanwhile, the friend I had mentioned was watching us with rapt attention, her fingers caressing her inner thighs over her pants. She clearly wanted to do more, but lacked the courage to do so.

“I’ll kill you-” Aviada tried to say, only for her body to betray her, climaxing explosively. Since she was such an obedient little girl, I let her get her reward, filling her up, just as a wall of notifications filled my sight.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 75% - Third Stage Completed +15000 Exp]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 2. Duration, 8 hours]

[New Perk: Skill Share]

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Legendary Sword Mastery. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Master Swordsman (100/100)]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Melee (Requires 5 Points), Basic Swordsman, Expert Subterfuge]

I focused on the wall of notifications even as I captured Aviada’s lips in an effort to silence her. There had been a lot going on with the notifications I had received. The first thing I focused on was my own progress, of course, as it needed an immediate response. After a brief consideration, I chose Subterfuge, considering the rapid challenges I had been facing, faking a new personality wouldn’t exactly be a hindrance. Enhancing my melee abilities was tempting of course, but not at the cost of locking myself for the next five levels. My flexibility was the only

reason I was alive, and I had no reason to change that. Specializing further by picking the Swordsman skill was definitely out, especially since I had already received such a welcome workaround.

The skill share perk was not a surprise after already experiencing it with Helga, but its application was still a bit surprising. After all, rather than getting a basic skill, I had received a master skill. I could already feel that skill connecting to my already existing Melee Mastery, suggesting that I could receive specialized skills in this manner.

Very convenient, I thought even as I considered the possibilities it presented with Elemental and Cornelia, as well as Biomancy and Marianne. It was potentially a huge power boost with seemingly no drawback. A bit inflexible as it needed planning, but considering its potential implications, very much worth it. More importantly, it had some very interesting possibilities for training. Even without swinging a sword, I could feel a flood of information filling my mind about how to be a better swordsman, some I was hoping to remember even after I lost the skill, though it needed further practice.

“I got a new-” Aviada started with a fascinated expression on her face, only to receive a warning glare from me. She was justifiably excited as she just received a new achievement. I checked her soul space, only to see it was very similar to what Helga had received during her third-stage completion, a two-point increase across all of her physical stats, to a total of ten points. Considering a lot of people would gleefully sell their mother, sister, and grandmother for ten stat points, I couldn’t fault her, but she should know better to discuss that when she was aware of the little voyeur.

There was a reason I was yet to reveal my leveling trick to her.

She visibly wilted under my warning glare despite her euphoria, which showed that despite all of her shows of resistance, she firmly accepted her position under me. I kissed her once more to bring her mood back up. I continued to kiss her, only to receive yet another notification.

[Achievement: Vivacious Voyeur. Intentionally let a little voyeur enjoy the show you’re putting on. +2 Perception. +500 Experience]

Amused, I raised my head, only to meet Carla’s gaze, whose hand had finally disappeared in her pants, and looking like she had just experienced an orgasm of her own. She froze, realizing she had been caught. “Do you want to join us for the second round, or do you want to keep watching?” I asked amusedly. Carla stood frozen for a moment, then dashed away without saying anything.

“She’s a bit shy for a peeper,” I said, and Aviada laughed. Then, I leaned in for a kiss even as I started pumping into her once more...

[Level: 24 Experience: 278800 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2856 / 2856 Mana: 3792 / 3792]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [50/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Fifty-Nine

We spent another half an hour on the balcony after Carla's shocked departure, which reinvigorated me completely. We could have continued, but I was excited about finally getting a weapon of my own. Inevitably, it was going to be inferior to Aviada's, but still, it was a good trade-off for continuous access.

I followed Aviada from a distance as she moved toward a stocky building near the center of the campus, once again dressed as yet another warrior student, which worked wonders to avoid attention.

[+1 Subterfuge]

A smile popped on my face as I read the notification, feeling nostalgic. It was barely more than a month ago when I first received my Subterfuge skill, which allowed me to carve a place for myself without trying to fend off scalpels of curious experimenters. Even now, it allowed me to play a game that was above my potential. I had to admit that it was a true shock. When I was below level ten, I was sure that level twenty was an unreachable goal, one that would ensure my safety once reached. That turned out not to be the case. I was level twenty-four, with an unbelievable stat distribution to boot, and still needed to stay concealed. The stronger I got, the more threats I faced.

Apparently, there was a reason the world was teetering on the edge of a collapse despite countless heroes. Under the impressive sheen of legends and magic, lay a dangerous rot.

I focused on the present as we entered the building dedicated to the craftsmen. The first thing that got my attention was the noise. It was unbearable. The shouts of the servants, the clanking of the metal, the low hum of the wards, and even the occasional explosions. A crowd of servants was bustling around, carrying trays and cases filled with half-processed materials. The crowd occasionally parted, letting one of the core craftsmen pass through, with great variety. Enchanters, blacksmiths, wardmasters, each giving off a subtle aura of expertise.

However, I noticed something interesting. There was a great variety of experts in the building, but in no area other than the main corridor, the building was clearly separated into areas, and I could see no expert from a different discipline. Each expert clearly preferred their own group, and the others even avoided the side corridors that connected. Even more, whenever an expert came across another, the tension between them was clear. Alchemists avoided blacksmiths, engravers glared at tailors, the leather workers disdained enchanters...

Weird, I thought, doing my best to listen as Aviada guided me deeper into the building. Their distaste for each other was clear, but understanding the reason for it was a bit more difficult. Meanwhile, we walked until we reached the stairs, and used them to go down four floors, each floor showing less and less movement, as the space underground was mostly used for storage. Even so, as we moved down, I could sense the wards around the storage rooms weakening, which implied that they were using those rooms for less precious knick-knacks rather than anything precious.

We left the stairs after arriving at the fourth underground floor, the place was empty other than a few servants trying to pull some items from storage. Since there was no one around us, I started walking next to Aviada once more. "What's the deal with the craftsmen avoiding each other?" I asked.

"Something about guild budgets and the number of candidates they are allowed to host here," Aviada explained dismissively, once again showing her direct personality. I sighed. She had an excellent mentality for combat, wasn't afraid of risks, and her loyalty was certain, but still, I couldn't trust her with anything important in other areas due to her dismissive attitude. If it wasn't something she could cut down with her sword, she wasn't interested, which made her a poor assistant for anything complicated.

"Guilds?" I asked, feeling curious. I had been planning to do some research about the production facilities before I visited, which unfortunately went awry due to my repeated lack of luck. Trying to figure out my new Tantric skill, or investigating the necromancer activities took priority. If it was even two weeks ago, I would have rescheduled and done my research no matter how much I needed a weapon, but with my power, there were only a few people I still feared in the school, such as Titania, and the mysterious Headmistress.

"Yeah, the craftsmen are not a part of the student body, so they need to get permission from the school to operate here," Aviada explained carelessly.

That explanation didn't clear up my confusion. "But why are they so against each other's presence?" I asked.

"Something about limited spots and competition between the guilds," Aviada murmured with a shrug. "Oeyne explained it before, but I don't remember. You can talk to her about it."

I sighed, not bothering to hide my disappointment. True to her personality, Aviada didn't care. It was doubtful whether she even noticed. We covered the rest of the distance in silence, moving deeper into the floor, so much that even the occasional servant carrying stuff disappeared.

When Aviada mentioned that Oeyne didn't like to work with the other craftsmen, I was expecting a slight distaste, not a total social shunning. Not that I had any problem with that. As long as she was skilled, her lack of connections worked to my benefit.

"We're here," Aviada said as she stood in front of a door that stood out from the other doors on the floor, which were gray and featureless. The door was made from pure iron, and engraved with silver. It radiated magic, so it was not just a door but a magical artifact. She might be ostracized and have a gambling problem, but that didn't mean she was poor. After all, for a skilled blacksmith, it wasn't hard to get extra funds as long as they were willing to work hard.

Interestingly, however, other than the door, which was a standalone artifact, the rest of the wards weren't particularly strong. So, she either used the door as an advertisement of her skills and wasn't afraid of danger, or she didn't have any capable helper for the wards. I was quite curious about which, because the latter part gave me an in to prove myself. "Have you talked with her about me?" I asked.

"I mentioned that you're a friend who needs a weapon and willing to be very generous in terms of payment," Aviada answered.

"Good," I said. "Then, as far as she's concerned, I'm a mage that chose to branch out as a warrior just to annoy my family," I said. She looked at me questioningly. "I might need to show off some of my magical abilities, and if I also show myself as a full-fledged warrior, my magical abilities and their implications would make her suspicious," I explained. Magical abilities were different, especially if I stick to Arcana and avoid Biomancy.

"If you say so," Aviada answered with a shrug, not really interested in my tricks. Earlier in our relationship, it would have earned a more explosive reaction, but she had been farming quite a bit of reward from my sneaky approach, which went a long way to mollify her distaste for subterfuge.

She knocked on the door, only to be met with silence. She waited a minute before knocking again, this time stronger. Again, silence. "Maybe she's not in her workshop yet?" I said. "Should we try her room instead?"

"This is her room," Aviada answered with a scoff, and knocked on the door once more. However, this time, she used the pommel of her sword rather than her hand, making a truly unbearable sound, even leaving a mark on the metal door.

That earned a response. "Who the fuck is it at this forsaken hour," came a groggy voice from

the other side of the door.

“It’s already afternoon, Oeyne,” Aviada shouted back.

“It’s still early. Why are you here?” her shout came back.

“We already talked about this. I have a friend with me to commission a weapon. Do you want him to go to the Blacksmith Guild to commission one?” Aviada shouted back, but she was smiling.

“If he wants me to do anything this early, he can go fuck himself for all I care,” she answered back.

“Charming lady,” I commented, unable to keep my smirk contained.

Aviada laughed. “Even if he can cure your hangover?”

The shout that replied was different, replacing annoyance with enthusiasm. “Why didn’t you tell me that first, you silly girl,” she shouted immediately. As we waited, we heard a couple of doors being slammed, followed by more profanity.

“Do you want me to stay, or can you handle it?” Aviada asked.

“I’m sure I can handle it,” I answered. If her enthusiasm about the hangover cure was any indicator, I didn’t need Aviada to break the ice between us, and considering I was going to rely on my mage persona to further my relationship with her, she couldn’t exactly help me.

Then, the door opened, giving me the first glimpse of the mystery blacksmith, making my eyes widen slightly, along with a notification.

[+75 Experience] 25% Penalty!

The experience is nothing much at my current level, but the fact that I received any experience meant that she was level twenty-four just like me, making her a true powerhouse craftsman. I didn’t know a lot about the Blacksmith Guild and other organizations, but I was willing to bet that they weren’t filled with powerhouses like that, making her ostracization a true mystery.

But the political ramifications took the backseat as I turned my full focus to examine her, unable to keep my smirk as I did so. I received to experience the moment I saw her, because she was wearing only a dressing gown, its front loose enough to show her lack of a bra, instead of giving me a glimpse of her spectacular, caramel-colored bosom, looking delicious enough to eat.

To make things even more interesting, before I could raise my eyes to look at her face, she grabbed my wrist and pulled me inside, hard enough to break the arm of a weaker man. She was very strong. Even from a casual pull, from the ease she achieved it, I was confident that her Strength was above twenty, but I wasn't sure about the exact number. "Are you coming, girl," she said without bothering to look at Aviada, who was watching us with a mischievous smile, clever enough to realize the ultimate ending for her friend.

I was so lucky that I had fucked jealousy out of Aviada.

"I have a mission, so no," Aviada answered, and closed the door, leaving us alone.

Oeyne grunted in response as she pulled me toward a seat in the corner, and sat down, looking exhausted. "Cure, now, or I break you, boy," she grunted even as she pressed her hands to her temple.

I was curious just how much she drank last night. She was clearly strong, and as a blacksmith, I doubted that her Endurance was below fifteen. To make her feel such an explosive hangover, she must have imbibed a tub. However, rather than trying to estimate it, I pulled out a bottle that was filled with a purple fluid which I created through biomancy. It was basically a concentrated solution of minerals that would help replace the loss of energy. All she needed was to drink it, and her hangover would be gone in fifteen minutes.

However, that was the plan before I saw her. Even with her brown hair disheveled horribly, her face contorted in discomfort, and giving out a thick smell of alcohol, she was beautiful. She certainly wasn't young, probably in her forties, but like the wine she was clearly fond of, the years just made her tastier. She was almost six feet, making her just a few inches shorter than me, and her body was toned to perfection. Thanks to the supernatural nature of her strength, she wasn't overly muscular, making her tight body delicious, especially combined with her caramel skin tone. I couldn't wait until I could get a taste.

"Here it is," I said as I raised the bottle. She grabbed the bottle immediately and was about to drink it. Suddenly, I understood why Aviada liked her. They were both recklessly forward, making me wonder how the hell they managed to survive in such a dangerous world. Maybe there was a hidden luck stat, and theirs were off-the-charts?

I decided to leverage her direct personality. "If you drink it, it'll take effect in fifteen minutes, or I can apply it through your neck and use magic to activate it, and it'll work in a minute."

She said nothing, not that she needed to. She gave me the bottle before turning around, and

pulled her dressing gown enough to give me a glimpse of her shoulders, making my erection grow even after the hour I had spent with Aviada. “Hurry up,” she said.

[+150 Experience] 25% Penalty!

I quickly poured the potion on her shoulders before starting my massage, my fingers already dancing on her shoulders. Since Aviada mentioned Oeyne had some magical abilities, I couldn't be as direct as I wanted to be. Using my healing abilities directly wasn't an option, as it would raise a question about the need for the potion, not to mention I was trying to sell myself as an Arcana expert.

Thankfully, my magical abilities were more than enough to trick such an amateur. I used a large amount of Arcana-natured mana to blanket her senses, making the magical signature of the potion too chaotic to sense. Only after, I used my healing abilities to ease her hangover, while simultaneously making her body absorb the potion. However, even that part was a distraction, as if noticed, it wasn't exactly hard to explain. I wanted to reach into her soul space, getting a glimpse of her skills and abilities.

Since she wasn't relaxed enough for that, I decided to help her with that aspect first. Repeated sessions with Marianne had made me an expert on the subject, so after I let my hands free on her neck and shoulders, it didn't take long for her pained moans to be replaced by satisfied grunts. In a minute, her back was arching sexily as my fingers destroyed knot after knot in her back. She desperately needed a massage, it seemed. Not surprising considering the physical strain of being a blacksmith, combined with her drinking habits. But her sexy moans made it hard for me to keep my hands in safe places.

[+300 Experience] 25% Penalty!

[+2 Subterfuge]

Rather than trying to sleep with her, I used the opportunity to slip a small stream of mana into her body, finding her soul space. She was too strong to process without a better understanding, especially since, unlike Titania, she wasn't exhausted due to mana overuse.

The sensation of her soul space surprised me. It was significantly more defined than the girls, reminding me of Titania. Unlike her, however, Oeyne's soul space was stiff, which meant that she had reached her level cap. A glimpse of her stats showed that she was primarily physical — no surprises there— with a particular focus on Strength and Endurance. However, her mental stats surprised me, because she had three stats over ten: Intelligence, Perception, and Wisdom.

Intelligence and Perception were barely above ten, but still, it was impressive for a primarily-physical fighter, nothing I had seen before in someone else —though I couldn't say I had a large pool of examples. Combined with her Level, it made her truly formidable.

So, formidable that, rather than trying to turn the massage into something more heated, I pulled my hands back after getting a glimpse of her skills, which were mostly crafting related, a specialized melee skill, and one advanced Arcana to give her some utility. I pulled back, not wanting to risk getting caught. She was strong, beautiful, and most importantly, clearly lacking in allies, making her an excellent prospect. I didn't want to ruin it accidentally.

Also, it was always a good strategy to make a lady be left wanting...

"That's it," I said as I pulled back, cutting her moan off halfway. She looked back, her eyes widening slightly, only then realizing the inappropriateness of the situation. She fixed her dressing gown, though even as she did so, she managed to surprise me once more. Rather than pulling it on hurriedly as Marianne would, or doing her best to look impassive like Titania, Oeyne fixed her dressing gown slowly, bordering inappropriate, a curious smile on her lips.

"That was rather impressive," she said, her tone soft and silky now that she wasn't shouting angrily. "I'm going to ask you to wait while I put on something more appropriate, wait here, and don't touch anything," she said, her tone sharpening at the last part. Still, any possible sting from her words disappeared when she turned around. She did so quickly, making her dressing gown rise, giving me a glimpse of her beautiful thighs, riding high enough to reveal that her bra wasn't the only missing piece of underwear...

[+75 Experience] 25% Penalty!

I smiled as I watched her disappear into her bedroom. I liked Helga and the rest, but Oeyne's mature, confident gait was a breath of fresh air. Working with her was going to be an interesting experience...

[Level: 24 Experience: 279400 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2856 / 2856 Mana: 3792 / 3792]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [52/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty

I finally let my gaze wander around the room as I waited for Oeyne to get ready.

Just a glance was enough to detect that the place was a modified warehouse, but had gone through a severe renovation. Apart from her living quarters, her workshop was an open-plan space. A huge forge, clearly expensive, stood in the middle of the room, bubbling with magic even in its inactive state. It was old enough to show the signs of age, managing to survive past the standard expiration date for an ordinary magical item through maintenance. It paid to be owned by a blacksmith expert. Interestingly, the forge was clearly transported here recently, and the rest of the renovations weren't that old. Her move couldn't be any earlier than a year, and I was willing to bet for six months.

The rest of the workshop paled compared to the forge, but that didn't mean that they were of low quality. She had some alchemy tools on a corner, which was useful in processing magical reagents collected from the monsters. It was possible to process them without any equipment like I had been doing, of course, but not only it was much costlier in terms of mana consumption, but also it was quite wasteful. Other than that, a number of tools were spread around the room, giving it a messy feeling. Too messy for an expert, unless she was used to working together with assistants and apprentices to handle those things.

It made a certain kind of sense with Aviada's offhand comments about the argument between Oeyne and the craftsmen guilds. She was clearly an accomplished blacksmith, the half-completed weapons resting on the table were exquisite enough to prove that fact. I didn't know whether she was always living at Silver Spires, or moved here after her fight with the Guilds, but whichever was the case, I doubted that it was something simple if the Guilds were exerting enough pressure to actually prevent her from finding an apprentice to help her.

It also gave me an opportunity to gain her favor.

I could see a bookcase filled with books, and a soft probe made sure that there was no magical protection. Since half of the objects were warded in the workshop, I guessed that they weren't very valuable from her perspective. I walked to the shelf, and pulled a book, only to see it was the notes of a previous apprentice, focusing on basic techniques and procedures. As I read, I couldn't help but quirk my eyebrow. Whomever the apprentice was, they had excellent notetaking capabilities, not only recording their lessons but also comparing them with more common techniques, followed by a detailed breakdown of the advantages and disadvantages. I read it, because while the library had quite a number of books about blacksmithing, they were

much more focused on theory. The guide in front of me was giving me a lot of interesting insights.

Of course, since they were personal notes, the writer neglected to explain the simpler points, sometimes just abbreviating things into single letters. Most people would have been helpless against it, but it was different for me. With my Wisdom allowing me to fill the blanks and my Intelligence helping to connect the dots, I had gained a lot of insights about being a blacksmith just by reading. I wouldn't be forging my own sword anytime soon, but it was definitely a benefit.

When I heard her bathroom door open, I put the book back and moved to my seat. Instead, I pulled a valuable piece of material from my bag, and started processing it by applying my Arcana abilities, fashioning it into a keystone for a medium-powered defensive ward. It wasn't the full range of my abilities, but it was still a task that would challenge usual people that managed to attain Arcana Master skill. Not everyone had almost forty points of Charisma to power their spells.

A minute later, the bedroom door opened, and revealed Oeyne, wearing a pair of long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Her hair was collected to a simple ponytail, and a pair of combat boots competed for the ensemble. However, despite the simple and boring description, her clothing was anything but. Her pants were made of leather, and certainly too tight to be comfortable working in a workshop unless it was enchanted. It wrapped tight around her body, displaying her beautiful legs in full display.

Her shirt was made of thick linen, and was much looser, though it still strategically tightened enough to display her hourglass figure. More interestingly, a huge gap in the middle traveled down, creating an aggressive cleavage, deep enough to reveal the continuing absence of a bra. I made no attempt to hide my gaze as I examined her figure, pausing on her cleavage for a couple of seconds before finding her face.

Even if I had failed to understand her aim earlier, her smile, supported by her enchanting gait, told the whole story. She was teasing me, and if I was reading correctly, with no intention of actually carrying me to her bed. So, she either wanted to take revenge for the massage session in kind, or she wanted to unbalance me before our negotiation. Maybe, both of them were her aim together.

Whichever was the case, I was more than happy to contend against her in her chosen battleground.

Supporting my earlier detection, she plopped herself next to me without saying anything, close enough for our arms to rub together, which was certainly not proper. She smiled at me seductively, and while it was tempting to play the simpering fool, she seemed like a gal who would enjoy pushing my buttons. It might have been an option under different circumstances, but with the pressure from the necromancers and their mysterious allies, I didn't have the time to play the lovesick teenager for a couple of weeks.

I met with her seductive smile with a confident one of my own, making her smile freeze for a moment before it widened a bit. "Sorry to keep you waiting," she said, with just a little bit of gasp that sent a tingling across my body. For a supposed blacksmith with a wild look, she was surprisingly adept at the game of seduction. Her willingness to show skin enhanced her game to the next level.

"Please. I'm the one that came early and disrupted your rest. I should be the one apologizing," I said, not keeping myself from catching another glimpse of her impressive cleavage since she was kind enough to lean forward. I raised my hand, and showed the mostly-processed reagent in my hand. "It's not like I was wasting my time," I said.

"Hmm," she murmured as she turned her attention to it, her eyes widening slightly as she took a note of my expertise. I wasn't a dedicated alchemist, but that didn't mean my work was something to be dismissed. It was certainly far above what she could manage with her skills. "Impressive work," she admitted. "It's not easy to process the tooth of a golden lion without a complete set of equipment, even for a dedicated apprentice."

"I do my best," I said with a soft smirk. "I'm glad that it's good enough not to be an eyesore to a true master of the craft like yourself," I added, and she smiled, though she wasn't impressed by it. As an expert blacksmith, she must be used to compliments and people playing nicely while trying to commission a sword.

"So, what are you going to use it for, as an offensive node for a larger ward, or something more interesting?"

"Certainly something more interesting," I answered. "The tooth is useless in defense, but it has strong attack quality. By using seven of them, I can establish an attack ward. It will be a one-time effect, but it will certainly be impressive."

"It should be, if it's going to consume seven golden lion teeth," she suggested. "It's a bit on the costly side, of course," she added.

She delivered the latter part of it without any fluctuation in her tone, perfectly flatly, which would have convinced a lot of people that it was just an offhand comment. Not me. I easily recognized it as a good attempt to assess my net worth. She was more sly than my first impression suggested, though it made me even more excited about the prospect. "It's just golden lion teeth," I said dismissively. "They are at most uncommon."

She nodded at my answer, but her smile widened at my dismissive attitude. If she was as terrible in gambling as Aviada suggested, it wasn't surprising for her to get excited about my potential wealth, especially with the guilds blacklisting her.

"I'm not familiar with the carving method," she said. "Is this a way to connect with the nearest node?"

"Actually, no," I answered. "Through that carving, I'm planning to connect it to the other six teeth directly, establishing a tighter formation. That way, it can explode spectacularly."

"As long as you can keep it until the last moment," she countered, her eyes tightening. She wasn't a magical expert, but as I expected, she had good instincts about ward establishment. In the higher levels, it probably shared many fundamental concepts with blacksmithing. So, I didn't dumb down my explanation too much as I explained to her how I was planning to stabilize the attack formation by relying on neutralizing the pressure by using the other teeth. It took ten minutes, and she listened in rapt attention, though she continuously touched my arm and shoulder, playing it as a distraction.

"I wasn't expecting a warrior student to have such a deep attainment in the magical theory," Oeyne commented after I had finished my explanation.

"I saw myself more of a mage than a warrior," I answered. "It's a bit shameful, but I have to admit I first picked the sword as a part of a childish rebellion against my family, but after realizing the potential of versatility, I continued to develop it," I said. "A stronger selection of activities is certainly useful."

"A commendable approach," she said passionately. It personally resonated with her, but it was too early to easily ascertain whether it was a candid emotion, or she was just using the opportunity to subtly make fun of the guilds without being committed to the idea herself. It was a mystery for another day. "And I'm guessing you're here to get something better than the garbage you have on your waist."

"Exactly," I answered. "Since I'm going to do something unusual, I better do it with a true

masterpiece in my hands.”

“A good approach,” she said. “It’s a pity you’re going to be disappointed though,” she added, making a show of looking sad.

She clearly had something in mind, and while I could guess where she was driving at, I decided to play oblivious. “That’s a pity,” I said with a sigh. “I was hoping to wield a sword shaped by your masterful hands.”

She sighed loudly. “It’s not that I don’t want to help, but I’m currently in the midst of a small dispute with the guilds, and I don’t have a helper to assist me. I can still make something strong by myself, but it won’t be something that deserved to be called a masterpiece.” I waited a bit, making a show of looking disappointed, wordlessly inviting her to breach the subject.

[+2 Subterfuge]

A smile appeared on her face, like she had just an idea. “Actually, you are not bad when it comes to preparing reagents. You waste quite a bit, but the final quality is more than satisfactory. As long as you’re willing to help me, we should be able to create something I would be proud of.”

“That’s a tempting offer,” I said. “I accept.” It was quicker than I would have normally liked. Despite her attempts to conceal it, she was clearly enthusiastic about having me as temporary help. I had no doubt that helping her while she was being blacklisted by the guilds had some dangerous consequences. I could have used those potential consequences to extract several concessions from her, but at the cost of revealing my true nature, which would have made her cautious. Also, I didn’t want to join a craftsmen guild, and even if I changed my mind, I could easily apply to a position through brand new identity.

It was for the best if she thought I could be manipulated by a flash of tits and promises of a better weapon. They were currencies I was more than happy to deal with as well, though the cost itself was going to be much higher. “Do you have any preferences?” she said.

“Actually, I do,” I said as I raised my steel sword, letting my Arcana energy to flow freely, giving the otherwise mundane sword a dangerous feeling.

[-57 Mana]

“Interesting,” she murmured as she watched the magic flow. “But ultimately, very wasteful.”

“That’s because steel is a terrible medium to conduct magic, and it corrodes too easily,” I answered. “If we use something more malleable like alchemical silver with several reagents added to keep the magic from radiating uselessly, it should be much more effective.”

She frowned. “Still, isn’t it strictly inferior to a traditional magical sword? While it would be cheaper, it would still be impressively expensive. On the added side, you won’t waste any mana while using it.”

I said nothing as I raised my sword, repeating the trick once again, but this time, adding some fire nature to my Arcana trick. It wasn’t a full elemental spell —which wasn’t an ability I wanted to reveal her— but it was still impressive. Best of all, it was possible to do through Arcana. She watched the trick with interest, and just to drive my point, I quickly cycled through multiple elements, using lightning, water, and wind in quick succession. It barely lasted more than five seconds, but the rapid change turned the steel sword into useless molten slag.

“That was rather interesting, and certainly hard to replicate in a magical sword,” she commented. “I can see why you want that. Follow me.”

With that, she stood up and walked toward the forge, and I followed her a step behind. Her earlier measured gait was replaced by a determined walk, too focused on what I had shown to remember her seduction game. I was a bit bummed at the temporary loss of my entertainment. Thankfully, even without her intentional seduction attempts, her ass looked great in her tight leather pants. When she reached the forge, she grabbed a leather work apron from a drawer and put it on, which unfortunately concealed her beautiful cleavage.

“About the payment,” she suddenly added, realizing that in her excitement to work on a new theory, she had forgotten to talk about such an important topic. I nodded, waiting for her to continue, leveraging her impatience. “I want to receive two times the material that has been used consumed in the process of forging your items,” she said.

It was certainly a steep price, one that she used as an aggressive negotiation opener, so, my answer surprised her quite a bit. “Sure,” I said casually. “It’s not a big deal.”

Her eyes widened, her thoughts reflected on her face. She was clearly cursing herself for being impatient. It was easy to read her emotions. If she was as open when gambling, her losing streak wasn’t simply bad luck. “Okay,” she murmured, unable to hide the sense of defeat. After all, she couldn’t raise the price above what she had offered after I accepted, not without destroying the goodwill between us, at least. “You already managed to surprise me once when it came to using magical reagents. Do you want to try again?”

“Why not,” I said as I dug into my bag, and started pulling some select items. They weren’t the most expensive materials I owned, but they certainly weren’t the cheapest as well. Still, since I was planning for another hunting trip tonight —this time hopefully without stumbling on another wild conspiracy— I wasn’t conservative dipping in my savings. Most were already gone, either to my own wards, or the escape tunnel I had set up for the necromancer base.

“Interesting,” she murmured as she looked at the materials that spread out over the table—and two piles with the same materials placed in front of Oeyne. Her pouty lips parted in excitement as she reached for the piles that were was going to be her payment, followed by a sigh. However, her happiness was a bit exaggerated considering her position and potential wealth. I couldn’t help but feel like it had something to do with her gambling problem, maybe she owed the others some money. Then, she spoke, forcing me to focus on the present. “It’s an impressive ward, but I think I’m unable to connect some of the details. Why don’t you explain it to me.”

I did so, and after some time, she interrupted. “It looks like a good idea, but it wouldn’t work on a forged item,” she offered. I needed in understanding. It was my first time working on metal, and there bound to be surprised.

“How about now?” I asked, and she countered once more, which started a rather interesting discussion. My visit was turning even more interesting than I first assumed.

We have talked for half an hour, discussing various theories until we finally agreed on a set of features. The implementation of the ideas was solely her responsibility, of course. Embedding magical abilities during the forging process was much different than enchanting them afterward, or using wards to replicate the effects. My contribution was already well-above what was expected.

“I’ll alert the girl once the dagger is ready, but it might take a few days,” she said after the discussion, not even offering me to watch the process. Understandable considering her secret techniques, but still a pity. She didn’t even ask for my help to process the reagents, as we tried to keep the requirements for the dagger considerably low, since it was still an experimental product, with no great material requirements.

“Any chance for a rush order,” I said, only to receive a deadpan look from her. I chuckled. Her response was understandable, as even the simplest magical item normally took weeks to forge, and she was going to forge an experimental one in a few days. It was enough of a miracle as it was.

“See you in three days, then,” I sighed as I left the room, but not before feeling a playful slap on

my bottom.

I couldn't wait to respond to that in kind.

[Level: 24 Experience: 279400 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2856 / 2856 Mana: 3792 / 3792]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [54/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty-One

After leaving Oeyne, I swung by the library to check for Titania, but her absence continued. Helga was still busy with the documents I had pilfered from the necromancer base, and the rest of the girls were supposed to be in classes. And while it was tempting to pull them from their classes, I could visit them later on. I had a bigger issue. After the payment for my dagger, I was poor once again.

I needed to gather enough materials before Oeyne finished the dagger, which might even be tomorrow. Luckily, I already had two instances of mana regeneration active with still a decent duration left. After sneaking out of the school, I once again used the faux-elemental trick, and five minutes later, I was three hundred miles away from Silver Spires, facing the outskirts of a misty mountain.

I was at Mount Dread.

I had picked my destination carefully, because this place was famous for the constant mist that caused many travelers to get lost until their death. Therefore, not a lot of people chose to hunt here despite the potential richness both in terms of valuable monsters to hunt and the variety of magically-rich herbs and minerals. Like I had done before, I picked a cave and spend half an hour covering the place with a thick layer of wards, both with passive and active defenses, making sure I had a place to hide if things had gone too badly. Only then I started my hunt.

At first, I relied on my melee skill, curious just how much it would improve thanks to my new specialized skill. The answer turned out to be a lot. I was a good swordsman before, but the difference between the two states was incredible. The difference was more than the one between Expert and Master Melee, though it wasn't as much as the difference between Advanced and Master Melee. Apparently, I had been underestimating the impact of the specialized skills, as well as just how much my stats helped to overcome the others.

Still, I was glad for my more generalized approach, as it fit my strategy perfectly.

After making sure my sword skills were up to par, I started using spells to quicken my work, which worked wonders. Creatures below Class fifteen didn't even take a second to take down, while the ones reaching Class twenty took at most thirty seconds, and only because I wasn't willing to reveal my trump cards against them. After three hours of intense hunting, I had managed to collect enough to craft my sword and pay Oeyne for her efforts, which was above my expectations.

Mount Dread was a good hunting destination, it seemed, unable to keep a proud smile from forming. It felt good, being strong enough to treat a place the others were afraid to step in as a personal hunting ground.

However, as I was returning to my cave, that smile suddenly turned into a frown. My sixth sense started tingling, suggesting that I was being watched. It wasn't an intense feeling, and I wasn't able to see anyone around, but that didn't mean that I was going to neglect the sensation. However, I changed my mind about going back to my safe house for a rest and continued hunting while underplaying my abilities, acting unaware of the foreign presence, hoping to bait them into an attack.

[+1 Subterfuge]

I barely kept back my flinch at the notification, which effectively confirmed that I had been being watched. However, as time passed, I started to discern more about my observer, including the fact that their gaze lacked the hostile intent. While that deduction was by no means foolproof, it was enough to make me relax a bit. I stayed in the mountain for another hour, relying mostly on my sword skills to hunt, supported by simpler spells with limited mana consumption. I didn't want to alert my observer about my insane mana regeneration, which was still my most important trump card.

[+7 Subterfuge]

Seeing my subterfuge skill slowly increasing was convenient, both for the sake of progress, and informing me that I was still being watched. Still, I have left Mount Dread after the mana regeneration from Helga expired. I still had around half an hour for Aviada's, which was enough insurance, but I wanted to be halfway back when that expired. Even with a full mana pool, I didn't want to stick around against my mystery observer.

The sensation of being watched had disappeared when I left the outskirts of the mountain, but I maintained a slower pace for another fifteen minutes before I finally summoned the fake air elemental and returned to the school.

"Finally," I said, feeling happy. Not just because I was carrying enough valuables to make a minor noble house jealous, but also I somehow managed to get away without finding myself embroidered in a fresh mess.

I stopped in my room to drop the loot, only to see Helga sleeping, exhausted. Pity, I thought as I checked the library, only to see that Titania is yet to be back. "Where did she disappear?" I

murmured, unable to help but worry. She was strong, yes, but that hardly meant that she was invincible. She should be alert enough to avoid another ambush, but it wasn't impossible. Regardless, if her absence continued, I would be forced to talk to the headmistress directly, which was something I wanted to avoid.

However, if avoiding that wasn't an option, I wanted my subterfuge skill to be progressed to its new limit before doing so, just as an added precaution. Luckily, I had a good target for that.

I once again dressed as a servant and went to the Hall of Crafting, doing my best to penetrate the private locations of the various Guilds. I spent four hours in the attempts, and surprisingly, made very little progress. Apparently, the Guilds defended themselves much more meticulously than the school itself. I failed to penetrate their inner sanctums, but I managed to slip into servant areas for the Blacksmiths, Alchemists, and Enchanters, enough to swipe several apprentice-level books, while maximizing my Subterfuge in the process.

[+13 Subterfuge]

However, as I did so, I was able to listen to the gossip, even managing to convince some apprentices to have some idle chat. As a result, I learned quite a bit about Oeyne's situation.

It turned out that she was originally from a famous Blacksmith family which held an important role in Blacksmiths Guild, but she belonged to one of the less important branches, so the family didn't allow her to access their unique techniques, making her leave the family and join an adventurer group, which turned out to be highly successful, which wasn't surprising as she had managed to reach level twenty-four.

The problem came when she rejected her family's request to join back and take a role. Angry, the family had used the Guild to pressure her, only for her to resign from the Guild, which happened five years ago. Normally, it would have ruined her career, but she apparently managed to get herself a spot in Silver Spires, bypassing the school completely.

That was supposed to be the end of it, but for some reason, about a year ago, Enchanters Guild decided to join Blacksmiths Guild to suppress her, which was shocking enough considering the cold relationship between them. Even more surprisingly, about six months ago, the Alchemists Guild and Herbalists Guild joined them to exert pressure, which was something even her mysterious backers were unable to handle, which resulted in her losing her workshop. She apparently bypassed that by moving to the storage unit, but it was clearly a temporary measure.

Interesting, I murmured, curious why the hell four Guilds suddenly decided to suppress one independent Blacksmith, especially when they should be more than happy about the struggle of Blacksmiths Guild. In the end, I shrugged and left the Hall of Crafting, happy with my findings. Not only I had learned quite a bit about my latest target, but also I managed to maximize my Subterfuge.

I wanted to go hunting once more, but not before I activated my mana regeneration perk. I could have made a quick stop at Aviada, but after a brief consideration, I decided to drop by Marianne, curious about her progress. Then, I could swing by Cornelia, and pick her for the hunting trip, impressing her while helping her to level up again. Showing some of my capabilities in a nighttime hunt would impress her further about my capabilities, removing the last probability of a dissent.

After all the times I had been there, sneaking into Marianne's room was not even a challenge. I found her sitting on her desk, several books open in front of her, a concentrated expression on her face. However, my attention was grabbed by the flickering dot of energy hovering above her hand. It was the anti-undead pure life energy. Impressive, I thought. The spell might be still far away from the combat applications, but she had succeeded in using it, and she did so in less than a day. No wonder she was a renowned healer despite her age.

That achievement deserved a celebration, I decided even as sneaked to her, and without a warning, pushed her on her desk. Conveniently, she was wearing a nightie, so I easily pushed it up as she cried in shock. Only then she realized the identity of her assailant. "Caesar," she gasped in shock while I was busy pulling her panties down. "You scared me!"

"Sorry sweetie," I answered even as I cast a spell to clean and lubricate her back door, pressing my shaft against her puckered hole.

"Caesar! What are you doing!" she exclaimed again when she felt my shaft, unable to process the sudden change of the situation. Not surprising, since she was really bad at processing change.

"Rewarding you for your progress," I answered even as I pushed deeper, parting her puckered hole parting to accommodate the crown of my shaft. She gasped in pain as her body tried to adapt, but she made no move to avoid the pressure, obediently laying on her desk. It had been a while since our fateful encounter in the storage room, where she had surrendered her anal virginity while suffering from delirious arousal after my massage. And she had come a long way.

That time, she had accepted my presence resentfully —not only toward me, but also toward the betrayal of her own body. This time, after the initial shock wore off, she responded to my presence with an explosive moan of acceptance, even lifting her bountiful ass to give me a better angle. Her previous shyness didn't seem to be preventing her from moaning.

“So, you managed to make great progress with the spell,” I commented absentmindedly even as I pushed my presence deeper bit by bit, using the assistance of my magic to loosen her, but not to the point of completely removing the sting of pain. Marianne clearly enjoyed a subtle jolt of pain, she wouldn't have reacted to my anal intrusion with that much enthusiasm otherwise.

“The spell?” she stammered in shock, surprised by the topic of conversation I picked while I was fucking her anally.

“Yes, the spell,” I said even as I used the opportunity to slip some mana inside her, and her eyes widened with the rush of experience, which also triggered pleasure along with it. “Unless you want to stop and talk about it,” I added, giving her a nice ultimatum. I had no intention of leaving the discussion after sex.

[-614 Mana]

“But-” she started, only to receive a warning slap to her ass. I might have thought about actually pulling out and denying her the pleasure if the target was Cornelia, but Marianne was just too cute to torture like that. “Okay,” she moaned. “I managed to isolate the pure effect you have taught me,” she started explaining as I pushed deeper, enjoying the unique tightness of her forbidden hole.

“How long you can keep a fragment stable,” I asked even as I put my hand on her body, and pulled her nightie off her body, the fabric falling into pieces under my physical strength, leaving her plump body naked.

“Almost a minute,” she gasped while my hands scaled the familiar curves of her body once more, enjoying the curves.

“Very good. Show me,” I said even as I dumped another generous dash of mana inside her, but this time, I didn't let all of it to convert to experience. Some, I maintained in her soul space to observe, while I let some in reserve, to mix with her mana as she cast the spell. I wanted to test whether I could guide her in casting directly.

[-873 Mana]

“Right now?” she asked, only to receive another spank on her bottom, which raised another cry of pleasure. She said nothing else as she raised her hand, and a small, flickering light appeared on her palm, which was less stable than the one I saw while she was on her desk. It barely survived a second.

“Again,” I said even as I slammed deeper into her, her body shivering under my touch as my fingers found her breasts. I was happy to note that rather than trying to make excuses, she just cast another spell, which managed to survive for three whole seconds. “Again,” I repeated, but this time, I let my mana to infect her spell after she cast, keeping the structure stable even as her attention wavered. “Watch carefully,” I warned as I took partial control of the spell, letting it grow while stabilizing it simultaneously, until it was as large as an orange.

“Amazing,” she murmured, which followed by a moan as I slammed even deeper. By taking the control of the spell, I had allowed her to observe my casting directly, which naturally provided her with a lot of insight. I let the spell to disperse and she raised her hand immediately, casting yet another spell. It was brighter than her previous spells, and even then it managed to stay stable for fifteen seconds before it risked dispersing. I repeated the same trick, stabilizing it as I made it grow, allowing her to observe it directly with her mana.

We repeated the process several times, and we continued to have fun in the process. Of course, in our interesting tutoring session, my hands continued to explore her body while I continued to impale her puckered hole, her moans getting louder and louder. However, despite her fraying control, her spells continued to shine brighter and survive longer, though her spell fell in pieces when I finally climaxed, bringing her along in the journey.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Duration, 8 hours]

“Not bad, but you need to be able to maintain control in your spells,” I warned her as I pulled out.

“I’ll make a note, sir,” she murmured playfully even as she tried to break through the haze of orgasm. I held her hand and helped her to stand up, helping her to walk. She hooked her arm around mine, and we might have been mistaken for a proper noble couple if it wasn’t for her naked state, and my seed slowly dripping out of her puckered hole.

We said nothing until we arrived at the bed, and she lay down, her legs parted invitingly. Not one to miss such a kind host, I took my place between her legs. “Now, it’s time for your final test,” I murmured into her ear as I slipped into her womanhood. “Keep the spell active until I climax, and I’ll give you a reward.”

She said nothing, but her blue eyes shone with a hint of a challenge as she raised her finger, her eyes reflecting the light of the spell. I leaned down, my lips gently pressing against her slender neck, building a road from my kisses, leaving toward her impressive bosom. Seeing that the light of her spell was stable, I decided to increase the challenge. I continued to slide inside her gently, but my lips started to act aggressively, leaving hickeys and bite marks on her neck before they arrived at their final destination.

She moaned louder as I nibbled her skin, but she started to dance more enthusiastically, tempting me to pump her furiously. Instead, I took her with soft, gentle beats, increasing her moans as I explored her depths. As I did so, I filled her more of my mana, pushing her closer to Level thirteen, but didn't let her complete yet. It was the reward for her success, after all. Since we were in her room, she abandoned her sense of control, moans echoing off the walls. Still, she somehow managed to maintain control of the spell, showing the effectiveness of my new teaching method.

I licked, nibbled, and caressed her body while I maintained a steady pace of pumping. Fifteen minutes later, she turned into a delirious husk of moans and cries, barely holding the spell under control. I decided to take mercy, and when I felt I was about to explode again, I didn't bother to resist the call, exploding inside her. And since she was able to keep the spell stable, I infused my seed with a generous amount of mana, making her trigger. As I did so, a notification surprised me.

[-2164 Mana]

[Achievement: Talented Tutor. Bring a pupil to new heights through unconventional methods of teaching. +2 Intelligence, +500 Experience]

"I got a level," Marianne murmured, which was barely above a whisper. I let her lack of reaction slide, as while she was clearly excited, trying to keep the spell active for the duration of our beautiful embrace, all under a continuous rush of pleasure, took a lot from her, and she was tethering on the edge of unconsciousness. Luckily, she was already in her bed.

"I know, honey. Now, sleep," I whispered even as I placed a gentle kiss on her lips. She was already asleep before I could finish pulling the covers on her. I chuckled as I fixed my clothing, leaving her to her rest.

The next stop, Cornelia.

[Level: 24 Experience: 279400 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 21 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 32

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2856 / 2856 Mana: 1721 / 3840]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [75/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty-Two

Cornelia wasn't in her room when I checked, so finding her took a bit of a search. On the way, I stopped by Aviada for a quickie, getting another instance for my mana regeneration and borrowing her sword again before I continued to search for Cornelia. Though Carla's absence left me disappointed. Messing with her was fun.

It didn't take long to find Cornelia, I just needed to follow the flashes of light in the training grounds, contrasting greatly against the darkness of the evening sky. I didn't make a sound as I sneaked in, not that it was difficult. After dark, not many students hung around the practice forest, and the ones that brave enough to do so had avoided Cornelia, who was throwing fire around copiously. And it was good that they avoided her, as it meant no one saw Cornelia laughing deliriously as she killed rabbits in droves.

For a moment, I stood hidden, enjoying the beautiful vision. Despite her slightly unhinged laughter, she was beautiful with her blushed face, a previously-unseen excitement dancing behind her beautiful green eyes. Her crimson hair fluttered wildly with the winds created by her flame magic, their shine lighting creating sharp shadows that highlighted the beautiful lines of her face. Her well-tailored crimson robe completed the vision, elevating her beauty to an ethereal level.

My maid was truly beautiful!

"You should leave some rabbits for the others," I said, not bothering to restrain my laughter. Cornelia immediately turned to face me, and dashed forward the moment she recognized me. If it had been in the past, that scene would have scared me to death, but now, I was calm enough to notice the uncharacteristically huge, almost delirious, smile on her face. I would have doubted her for being drugged if I hadn't known the reason.

"Caesar," she gasped gleefully as she hugged me, burying her face to my neck, trembling in excitement. "I can gain experience again. Thank you, thank you, thank you..." she murmured repeatedly, and I felt the wetness of her tears even as she laughed uncontrollably. I had thought that I understood the stress she had been under, but it seemed that I had miscalculated if her candid reaction was any indicator. I would have suspected that a shapeshifter took her place if I didn't have the ability to check her soul space.

"It's nothing more than I had promised, my sweet maid," I said with a chuckle, wanting to tease her a bit, but even the reminder of her obligation was unable to chip her cheer. She said nothing else, just kept hugging me, so I decided to enjoy the opportunity. A second was all I

needed to sweep our surroundings to ensure there were no uninvited guests around, and another second to set up a three-layered ward to ensure our privacy.

The flare of magic was enough to make Cornelia raise her head. She closed her eyes, her mana reaching and touching the ward to examine, only to blush immediately. "Privacy wards?" she murmured shyly, and when I nodded, she managed to surprise me once more. She caught my lips in a searing kiss, the aggressive dance of her tongue conveying her enthusiasm.

"Someone is feeling eager," I said with a smirk when she pulled back for a breather.

"S-shut up!" she stuttered with uncharacteristic shyness, avoiding my gaze as she blushed. Then, just to cover up her frustration, she slapped my arm hard. "I'm just paying you back for your services."

"Of course," I said, nodding sagely, feeling kind enough not to mention the way her fingers trembled with genuine excitement as she tried to unbutton my shirt, even accidentally ripping a couple of buttons in the process. I decided to follow her lead when she pushed me toward a small opening, covered with thick grass that was more comfortable than my old bed. I knew how comfortable it was, because Cornelia pushed me down until I was lying on my back, removing my shirt in the process, only to lay on top of me.

And just like that, we started a heated make-out session, her hands exploring the muscles on my chest continuously, like it was the first time we're being together. In a sense, it was. The other times we were together, because Cornelia was driven crazy by my touch and my skills, but it was strictly physical. This time, she genuinely enjoyed my presence, awed and worshipful. Apparently, decisively solving a problem that was darkening her future was enough to break through her prickly exterior.

Initially, I was planning for a quick rump to test whether she could gain any experience through my unique method before bringing her along for a hunting trip, but her enthusiasm changed my mind for a bit. If she gained any experience at this moment, her focus would go to the possibilities of the moment, which would be a pity. I wanted to see what she would do while she had the lead.

The answer turned out to be quite a bit. At first, our bodies stayed locked together, deepening her kiss further even as her body writhed over mine desperately. She even managed to remove her robe hurriedly without stopping the kiss, once again causing the loss of a few buttons. because when she pulled out of the kiss, she close to trace my chest muscles with her hands as she moved down with a purpose, her expression ravenous.

A desperate need was oozing off her when she reached to my belt, trying to remove it, only for her hands to tremble so bad that she fumbled again and again. "Enough," she growled in beautiful anger, and burned the belt buckle, which also showed her precision. Fire magic was the most destructive of the elemental magics, and the hardest to control. The fact that she was able to burn off the buckle of my belt without burning my skin was definitely a credit to her skills, proving that my efforts to recruit her into my inner circle was not a waste...

However, when she pulled down my pants, happily running her hands over my naked thighs as she leaned down, I turned my focus to the present. Her lips closed around my shaft and her head bobbed aggressively. It was a beautiful, deliberate assault, made better by the fact that her beautiful emerald eyes stayed connected with mine, reflecting her arousal. Her loose shirt giving me an amazing view of cleavage whenever she reached the top, and her eyes watered whenever she took most of my shaft into her mouth.

I wanted to see her naked, but also, I wanted to show off. So, I decided to replicate the same trick with the belt, but on a wider scale. I took a deep breath as I collected my magic, and cast two spells simultaneously, fire magic to burn off her clothes, and an Arcana Shield magic to protect her skin, so that she wouldn't even feel a flash of heat, followed by a wind spell to scatter the ashes before Cornelia could even register.

[-52 Mana]

[Achievement: Dangerous Divesting. Safely undress a sexy vixen through a dangerous method. +3 Precision, +1000 Experience]

"W-what, how!" she stuttered in shock as she rose, displaying her beautiful perky tits fully in the process, only to meet with my smug smile. "Do you know how dangerous that-," she started, only to stop halfway. "Fuck, I don't care. I'm so turned on," she corrected herself as she climbed to my lap, and skewered herself with my length, her cry echoing in the opening, only to be absorbed by the privacy spells, keeping our little play a secret.

I lay on my back, doing nothing other than enjoying the frantic ride. And frantic she was, her hips rocked hard as she moved up and down, her hair fluttering with her movement, her fingers digging into my chest. At that moment, she was a quintessential fire mage, her desire burning as bright as her spells. Just to make a beautiful moment even more perfect, a notification appeared in my sight.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 52%]

For a moment, I wondered why the latest display of strength had done something the others hadn't done yet, but it occurred a moment later. The trick I had used to undress her was definitely nothing simple, showing great strength and precision with fire magic at the same time. I had pulled some tricks that convinced her about my strength before, but it was either pure power, or I was using other elements. It was the first time I had shown such an overwhelming ability in her chosen category. No wonder it triggered the next stage.

After a minute of frantic riding, she let out a frustrated growl as she grabbed my wrists before bringing them to her tits, inviting me to touch her body. Never one to reject such a kind offer, I sank my fingers to her perky tits, enjoying their firmness. She might not have the size to rival Helga or Marianne, but she was a step above them in firmness. The harder I squeezed, the louder she cried even as she rocked back and forth.

She trembled in excitement as I suddenly pulled my hands only to caress her tits softly, followed by a soft flick to her rock-hard nipple, the sudden change in pacing pushing her even deeper into the land of arousal. She collapsed forward and hugged my body, even though her hips continued their frantic motion. "Cum in me, my lord. Mark me hard with your seed, make me mine," she whispered repeatedly, her eyes clouded with pleasure.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 57%]

"As you wish, my loyal maid," I whispered back as I exploded inside her without a warning. And as a gift for her loyalty, I filled my seed with as much as mana as I could manage, practically emptying my reserves.

[-4320 Mana]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 3. Duration, 8 hours]

She was already on the edge of a climax, and my own explosion was enough to trigger an orgasm. The rush of mana that filled her soul space, turning into experience under my control, completely overwhelmed her. She cried frantically as she closed her eyes, trying to stay conscious under the rush of pleasure, but failing greatly. Every tremor, every jolt of pleasure pushed her closer to the land of unconsciousness, making her slur like a drunk.

"That's impossible," she managed to whisper as she registered that she had indeed received enough experience to push her one-third to the next level, a task that would require at least a week of concentrated effort even for a noble family, along with great risk.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 61%]

“Nothing is impossible for me, my maid,” I whispered into her ear even as I caressed her head softly, letting her lay collapsed against my chest, her breathing slowly calming from its earlier frantic pace. I let her to sleep until my mana was full again, occasionally infusing some more mana to her soul space to observe changes, just to make sure there was no adverse reaction. Luckily, everything was in order. I wasn’t relishing the possibility of damaging her accidentally.

Also, I was happy to see her gain experience from my treatment, as she was currently Level fifteen, the highest one between my list of paramours, it allowed me to test the limits of my rapid-leveling assistance. I was curious where was the limit. Luckily, I was in the perfect position to explore that. I woke her after twenty minutes of rest, when my mana capacity was refreshed completely.

I kissed her gently even as I used a simple healing spell to wake her up. “Wake up, sleepy,” I murmured as her eyes fluttered open.

“I had a weird dream-” she murmured as her eyes stayed closed, only for them to jolt open a moment later. “No, I really gained more than four thousand points of experience. How!?” she gasped as she grabbed my face, shouting frantically.

“It’s just another trick from my bag of surprises, sweetie,” I said lazily, amused that even as she rose frantically, my shaft was still in her, moving deeper as she moved.

“That’s impossible,” she uttered in shock, though the seriousness of her expression flickered as a moan escaped her.

“Really?” I said even as I grabbed her waist before flipping suddenly, trapping her under me in a missionary position, my shaft still inside her. “Let’s see whether it’s impossible or not.” With that, I started impaling her furiously, each push clapping loudly to fill the opening, loud enough to cause a scandal if it wasn’t for the privacy wards, each pump accompanied by a mana dump.

[-650 Mana]

“That’s impossible,” she murmured again, this time her voice colored with worship rather than disbelief. “How?”

I had no intention to admit to her that I had no fucking idea, so I played it mysterious. “There’s still some time until you can learn my important secrets,” I whispered, suggesting that not only I knew why I could do what I was doing, but also it was more earth-shattering than my unique rapid-leveling assistance or raising the level cap. The expression of devotion, mixed with pleasure, showed that it was the correct approach.

Her legs wrapped around my waist, using her full strength to pull me deeper. As a mage, even her full Strength was not impressive, but I was a gentleman, so I followed her kind wishes, ramming inside her mercilessly, each push creating a mixture of pain and pleasure, accompanied by another injection of mana. She moaned deliriously, her fingers digging into my shoulders hard enough to draw blood.

[-6 HP]

[-2416 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 66%]

"Yes! Oh, yes!" Cornelia cried as she shuddered uncontrollably, drowning in pleasure. Her back arched, thrusting out her chest, so I brought my lips to catch her nipples, adding yet another layer to her pleasure. Then, just to make things more fun, I stood up, easily lifting her along me, and walked toward the nearest tree. I cast a biomancy spell to make her body sturdier before trapping her between my body and the tree, impaling her hard enough to violently shake the tree with each push.

The harder I fucked her, the louder her cries of pleasure become, enjoying my displays of power whether it was physical or magical. She was really turned on by power. Luckily, power was something I had in spades, so it wasn't exactly a drawback. Her mouth found my shoulder, biting furiously as she shuddered with another explosive orgasm, the only reason she stayed conscious was my healing spell.

[-11 HP]

[-1328 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 71%]

I decided to change the pace and pulled out of her while simultaneously used the spells to prepare her puckered hole, only to slam mercilessly, forcing her to cry in pain, earning another merciless bite in response. However, that didn't prevent her from crying with pleasure, and when I met with her eyes, I could read her total surrender in its depths. She smiled in ecstasy, the way she shuddered only making her sexier. And I liked it as well. Fucking the Flame Queen of Silver Spires on a featureless grassy patch mercilessly was a delicious experience, especially she showed the ability to take as hard as I could give —with a bit of magical assistance, of course.

“Harder, faster!” she cried. “Take me, use me, ruin me!”

And I did so, fucking her so hard that the only thing that prevented her death was the copious amount of healing magic I was casting continuously. Foreplay was a forgotten word, and gentleness was a lost concept. A furious lust and a desire to bend her to my will guided my actions, as I rammed, impaled, spanked, and bit, every single one meeting with an obedient gasp. She didn't even argue when I tied her hands with conjured ropes made from Arcana energy, forcing her arms back, leaving her helpless against my assault. When I filled her backdoor, she just moaned obediently.

[-1721 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 75% - Third Stage Completed +15000 Exp]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the fourth stage]

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Grandmaster Fire Magic. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Master Fire Magic (100/100)]

“Another achievement,” she murmured in a haze. “So many stats...”

While I was happy with another completion, not to mention having another specialized temporary skill, I couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed at hitting a wall, as I had been hoping that the progress we had made would have been enough to progress to the next stage. It turned out not to be the case. A slight disappointment, but it faded against the pride and pleasure I was feeling. A small snag like that was nothing...

The next hour was filled with a merciless pounding that tested her limits both physically and mentally, but she managed to acquit herself perfectly. Even with her every hole was leaking, and her mind was turned into mush with pleasure, she moaned in joy, taking my shaft obediently... It took a bit longer than necessary to make her level up, because I was simultaneously reinforcing her soul space to increase her cap as well. After the first time, it was much more convenient.

“I leveled up,” she murmured dazedly before losing her consciousness once more, finally overcome with pleasure. Before she lost consciousness, I noticed that she had picked Master Arcana for her skill, rather than progressing to Legendary Fire Elemental, which was a decision I approved —though I wasn't sure whether she received the option in the first place. Still, despite all the good news, I frowned because of the notification I received.

[Target Level too High! Unable to Grant Experience]

Her level was sixteen while mine was twenty-four, which meant a fifty percent difference, the same amount that prevented me from gaining a level before the level gap had grown too high and five levels of difference also started preventing me from gaining any experience. Pity, I thought, as I was hoping for a more lax limit.

Luckily, I was already planning to go hunting. A simple water spell cleaned her body, removing dirt and cum from her body while I picked up her robe, the rest of her clothes already burned to cinders. I could have stopped by to pick new clothes, but the idea of her accompanying me, wearing nothing but a robe, was too tempting to pass on, so I dressed her in her robe before leaving the school with an unconscious sexy redhead in a bridal hold. Even then, leaving the premises was as easy as breathing...

The school really needed to update its wards!

[Level: 24 Experience: 295400 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 24 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 32

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2899 / 2928 Mana: 926 / 3840]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [75/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty-Three

Moments later, I was moving deeper into the wilderness on top of a faux air elemental, still carrying an unconscious Cornelia on my lap, trying to find some prey worthy of hunting. I wanted to test the limits of the temporary skills I had received, with both Fire Magic and Swordsmanship active, curious about the level of improvement. When my mana was halfway drained, we finally arrived at the target location, and I immediately found a small cave to set up another safe house, but only after laying Cornelia on a soft pile of leaves and kissing her on the cheek.

[-4620 Mana]

“Wake up, sleepyhead,” I said as I pulled back, only for her to grab my arm.

“Five more minutes,” she murmured as she shuffled, trying to pull me to her side. And as much as I wanted to lay next to her while resting, I had more important things to focus on, so I gently extracted myself, but let her sleep for a bit more. After all, I still needed to finish reinforcing the cave. Luckily, after setting up all those safe houses, creating one was a trivial task that didn’t deserve my full attention. Instead, I started thinking about the Companion System progress of Cornelia.

The latest improvement, reaching the third stage of the completion, surprised me. Considering our initial belligerent start, I hadn’t been expecting her to reach such an impressive point that quickly. Her level cap must have been distressing her even worse than I had expected, and power-leveling her on top of that must have gone a long way to ensure her loyalty. After all, progressing from level fifteen to sixteen usually required either weeks of concentrated dangerous solo hunting, or a large team invading a dangerous area for the sole purpose of power-leveling a young noble.

Essentially, it was a miracle not that much inferior to breaking through her level cap. No wonder she was truly impressed.

I racked my brain trying to come up with the final step of the relationship. With Helga, I had a feeling that it was about allowing her to finally get the acknowledgment of her skills, which required me to either bring Titania into the inner circle or establish a healthy connection with the faculty before I could do that, which required quite a bit of progress. Of course, that was just an assumption, and the fourth stage might have a completely different requirement. Aviada was also a mystery, as it might be about either dominating her or helping her get even stronger. Her personality was too weird to properly predict as she seemed to like dominating and being

dominated in equal measures.

As I thought about the girls, a sudden inspiration hit my mind. Cornelia was wired to power, so maybe showing overwhelming strength to her, especially on her chosen area of expertise, might do the trick. Even better, it worked my plan to help her level up perfectly. Even if it didn't work, there would be no loss, and I would still achieve my aim of testing the extent of my new fire magic abilities. As I worked, my mana reserves recovered thanks to my insane regeneration despite the expenditure, signaling me to finally start to move.

[-926 Mana]

Cornelia started to wake up as I put the finishing touches on the safe house. She stretched, which gave me a beautiful glimpse of her tight body since she was wearing a robe and nothing else, and the front of her robe was conveniently parted, allowing me to observe her beautiful peaks. "You're finally awake," I said with a chuckle as I walked to her, and offered my hand.

"Where are we?" she asked curiously even as she grabbed my hand, and I pulled her on her feet, but rather than answering, kissed her aggressively, while also using the opportunity to inject a fresh wave of mana into her soul space, reinforcing the borders to make sure she could continue to level up. Since I had already discovered the way to do that, achieving that was a trivial achievement.

[-737 Mana]

"We're about one hundred and fifty miles south of the school," I explained. "It's a good night for hunt."

"One hundred and fifty," she gasped. "How long I had been asleep?"

"Something like twenty, twenty-five minutes, why?" I said with a dismissive shrug, despite being fully aware of the reason for her shock. The ability to move that quickly was a very precious commodity, almost as impressive as my combat capabilities. And it was hard to replicate without some very precious magical items, because not many people had my mana to burn. Not only my mana reserves were bigger than even Titania at this point, but also I had an insane regeneration capacity. Hence the reason I could pull the insane trick with the imitation air elemental. Cornelia's fascination was understandable.

And it was just a small part of my plan to impress her.

"Shall we," I said even as I presented her my arm, and she put her arm on mine, ready to walk

out of the cave-like we were just about to enter a high society event. She reached to close the front of her robe to tighten, but I shook my head to prevent her. After all, we were in the middle of the wilderness, and I was the only one that could see her beautiful body. Why shouldn't I make our hunting trip more interesting visually?

"We shall, milord," she said mockingly, with a chuckle, surprising me a bit. It was impressive just how much she had mellowed after a merciless fucking.

We walked out, and I waved my hand, conjuring the faux air elemental once more. "Your chariot awaits, milady."

"W-what, how," she gasped as she watched, her panic only subsiding after realizing it was a fake conjuration rather than the real deal. A true elemental, even the weakest one, was a disaster, after all. I took my seat before pulling her on my lap. When she felt my hard-on, rather than flinching, she started wiggling sexily, intensifying my little problem even further. I was lucky that the solution was not too far away.

I sent two waves of detection, one with a shorter range to detect any type of monster but only if the creature was strong enough, the other a biomancy wave to detect the presence of undead.

I wasn't expecting positive responses to both of the spells at the same time, and from the same location. "What's wrong," Cornelia asked, positioned perfectly to feel my body stiffen suddenly.

"Nothing much, I just need to check something," I said even as I moved toward the target. After everything, the necromancers' presence wasn't exactly a surprise. And the amount I detected wasn't even a surprise, but the same couldn't be applied for the living monsters I had detected. It felt truly overwhelming.

With the overwhelming speed of the elemental, it barely took a minute for me to get close enough to observe, only to meet with another surprise. I saw a bone dragon, carrying three necromancers on top of it as it moved forward, but that wasn't the surprising part.

No, the surprise was the monster horde that was chasing after them. "Fuck," I murmured even as Cornelia trembled in fear.

I didn't begrudge her for that. After all, monster hordes were a unique phenomenon that was responsible for the majority of the lost towns and cities. It happened when a monster went through a unique transformation, getting several classes stronger in the process, and losing its sanity in the process, and started roaming the wilds, looking for an opponent. Most of the time, it was harmless, as it eventually died at the hands of the other monsters, or hunted by an

experienced team if it was too close to a city.

However, sometimes, very rarely, the transformed monster gained the ability to dominate the weaker monsters, sharing its craziness with them as well. And suddenly, a crazy but strong monster turned into a growing group of crazy monsters willing to destroy everything on their way. If undetected, it took only a few days for a horde to form, and after a certain size, even the stronger monsters started to avoid them. And after that, if they were left undetected, they grew into a tsunami, dangerous enough to destroy the towns or even the cities that they faced. This way, even a weak rabbit could turn into a threat that could engulf a town. A rabbit wasn't dangerous, but thousands of them, all in a mindless craze, could overwhelm the defenses of a small town in minutes, before reinforcements could even be organized.

Destroying a horde also took a lot of effort. Killing the regular monsters was the worst way to do that, as their numbers regularly passed tens of thousands, and sometimes, even hitting millions, with a potential to destroy even the strongest fortresses.

The most efficient way to destroy a horde was to kill the monster in the core of the horde. Killing the monster usually caused the horde to lose its cohesion, and without the mindless recklessness, they were much easier to push back. Killing the leading monster before they could reach a settlement was even better, as, without an external threat, the monsters would probably start fighting against each other, dispersing harmlessly. Too bad that the team responsible for assassinating the leading monster seldom survived.

Trying to penetrate into a mindless horde of monsters strong enough to threaten a city was hardly an activity bookies would classify as a sure bet.

Luckily, the monster horde in front of us was still in its early stages, measured in low thousands, and only a few hundreds of them class five or higher. The core monster was an earth tortoise, which looked big enough to be mature, meaning it was likely class twelve or higher. That part would have been bad news for a city, because while earth tortoises were relatively weak creatures, they had a defense that was impenetrable for anything at their own level, which would have made assassinating it a difficult task for a town.

Luckily, it didn't apply to me. I was more worried about the presence of the necromancers. Their movement speed was not even close to the maximum a bone dragon could move. Moreover, one of the trio was carrying a bright gem in hand, and that gem was radiating a thick flavor of earth-natured mana, strong enough to be felt even from a distance. Such a strong magical material was not cheap, not even close.

Mana gems true magical miracles. They were different from regular crystals or monster materials, as they could recover their own mana, making them really excellent tools for forging top-tier magical weapons, or establishing strong wards that don't require constant supervision. There wasn't a noble family that wouldn't mobilize their strongest team just to explore the rumors of their existence.

However, getting one was always a difficult and bloody affair, and not because of the rivalry between the teams. Humans weren't the only ones that battled for their ownership. Monsters fought for them even harder than humans did, because their constant radiance could strengthen them significantly through exposure, even triggering bloodline evolutions if they were lucky enough, especially if the gem and the monster shared the same nature.

No wonder the tortoise was following them recklessly. A gem of the same nature was a hard find.

The necromancers clearly using it as bait to lead the horde toward a town, but it didn't make much sense. How the fuck the necromancers had a gem in the same nature lying in their reserve free, ready to be used immediately as they discovered a horde. There was a reason using gems to pull the monster hordes away wasn't a more widely applied strategy. It only worked if the leading monster's type matched with the gem, and moreover, it was only effective when the horde was below a certain size. They had to react minutes after the monster was transformed, as communicating the news, bringing the gem, and enchanting the monster all needed to happen in a short window.

"Fuck," I murmured with a frown, unhappy with yet another mysterious ability the necromancers had revealed. The more I came across them, the more I'm starting to believe that they wanted something even more impressive than just destroying Silver Spires. I chuckled. Like destroying Silver Spires wasn't ambitious enough.

"We should go back and alert the Commander," Cornelia gasped in shock. "It's a crisis."

"What," I murmured at Cornelia's reaction.

"The horde. We need reinforcements," she spoke rapidly as she shook my shoulder, trying to goad me into action.

It took a moment for me to understand her reaction, then I chuckled. She clearly assumed my shock was about the threat the horde and the necromancers were posing immediately, and not the implications. "Honey, no need to panic, these guys are nothing more than a warm-up," I

explained.

“Nonsense, it’s a horde!” she exclaimed, forcing me to cast a silencing spell hurriedly prevent alerting necromancers. “You can’t sacrifice yourself,” she added, hugging me tightly, her naked body pressing against mine.

“Sweetie, as much as I like your hugs, this is not even a threat, trust me,” I said. “Now, just step down for a moment and watch me.”

Despite everything she had seen me doing until now, I doubted she would have believed me if I hadn’t been blasting her with the full might of my charisma. Even then, she had a doubtful expression on her face as she stepped down the elemental.

First, I needed to deal with the necromancers to prevent any nasty surprise. Luckily, without a horde of undead around them, they were even less of a threat, so I decided to test my extended melee capabilities. I charged toward them recklessly, using the full speed of the elemental, not bothering to hide.

One of the necromancers let out an alarm, followed by a rain of death rays. I could have attacked them from range, or use life energy to shield myself, but that wouldn’t test my new abilities. Instead, I pulled Aviada’s sword, slashing every single bolt of necrotic energy, dispelling them effortlessly. They reacted fast enough, every spell creating a pile of arrows rather than a singular bolt, but even that was nothing for me. I didn’t even bother changing my route, the sword moving fast enough to create a defensive orbit around me, the necrotic energy never coming nearer than several inches.

One of the necromancers pulled a talisman, no doubt to trigger some kind of an alarm or communication device, but they were too late. I was already in melee range, and a slash later, the talisman flew away, along with its bony hand. Three slashes, charged with biomancy energy, resulted in the destruction of the necromancers, and a fourth slash destroyed the bone dragon’s head alongside the unholy magics that kept it together.

The whole combat lasted less than five seconds from the first spell to the destruction of the bone dragon. “Damn,” I murmured even as I caught the earth gem in the air, impressed with the enhanced capabilities given by the specialized skill. It was definitely a notch above my usual capabilities.

With the necromancer dead —deader— the earth gem’s aura started to dim, so I injected a few points of mana to keep it active. Just two points of mana were enough to make it radiate even

brighter than the necromancer did, but it was likely about my elemental capabilities, making it much easier for me to manipulate it.

Then, I reversed my direction, sweeping up Cornelia into my arms before changing direction. “How,” she gasped in shock, trying to process the fact that I had just destroyed three necromancers and a bone dragon in less time than it would take to prepare a plate of fruit into a delicious and nutritious salad.

“Honey, you haven’t seen anything yet,” I said as I moved deeper into the wilderness, a monster horde on our heels...

[Level: 24 Experience: 295400 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 38

Precision: 24 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 32

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2899 / 2928 Mana: 2154 / 3840]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [75/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty-Four

“Where are we going,” Cornelia cried in shock as I suddenly changed direction, tightening my grip around her waist. Then, she looked back, only to realize the whole monster horde had changed directions, and following us instead. “What’s going on!” she cried in shock.

“In simplest terms, necromancers were directing the horde with this gem, and since I have it, they are following us.”

“How!” she shouted, before suddenly stopping. “No, that’s not important. It’s good that they are following us. It’ll give us a chance to alert the Commander, and they can gather a team.” She raised her hand, and her mana flared, no doubt about to cast a noticeable flare spell to alert anyone close to us.

I grabbed her hand to interrupt her. “Sweetie, I was serious when I said that I’m going to handle it. You just need to sit back and enjoy the show,” I said, even as I looked around, trying to find a decent position to funnel the monsters. I could have tried to take them in an open field, but why bother when they were mindlessly following me. A more defensive position would turn the defense into a trivial achievement.

It didn’t take long for me to find a small valley that would slow down their initial charge, and more importantly, would prevent them from escaping even after the death of the earth turtle. As I passed through the entrance, I quickly drew several runes, but leave them inactivated. Once we were center of the valley, I dispelled the air elemental, much to Cornelia’s shock.

She watched me in shock as I used my mana to etch runes in a wide circle around us in several layers. Thanks to the speed advantage of the elemental, I had about ten minutes before the rest of the horde arrived, just enough to refill my mana while also setting a temporary defensive position. I drew three circles of defensive runes, injecting enough mana to each to hold the monsters for a small while. I could have put more, but I wasn’t trying to set up an extended defense here. I just needed a few minutes.

[-251 Mana]

“This is where we are going to put a defense together,” Cornelia asked in shock. “This is a horrible defensive location, we don’t have anything to isolate our flanks or our rear, and we need to make sure we’re not surrounded by the other creatures.” Frankly, for a team with similar strength to her, these concerns were not wrong. By putting a defense here, not only I risked being surrounded, but also the monsters would have no problem attacking in a combined

manner. Creating a fake elemental took half a minute, making it a bad choice for an emergency gateway.

I felt curious about the potential of the earth gem, so I used it as a medium while casting an earth spell to create a seat.

[-14 Mana]

The results were spectacular. Transformation of earth mana flowed in an ease that surprised even me, allowing me to effortlessly create an intimidating throne in the middle of the defensive circles, resting intimidatingly on a raised platform that was created by the same spell. Impressive, I thought. I was starting to understand why people were willing to commit crimes just for a rumor of a natural magical gem.

“Isn’t it too much-” Cornelia said as I took a seat, only to be silenced when I grabbed her wrist and pulled her closer before forcing her down her knees, also lowering my pants. “Since we have some time to kill,” I drawled lazily.

“You’re mad,” she gasped, but with the front of her robe revealingly wide, I could easily see her stiffening nipples and moistening core. She was aroused by my confidence, even though it looked awful like recklessness.

“You better start if you want to make any progress before the monsters arrive at the valley,” I said, reminding her that at best we had just minutes. Of course, I had no intention of interrupting it even as the monsters arrived, but I didn’t say that to her immediately, giving her a moment to get used to the idea.

I grabbed the back of her head and pulled her toward my enthusiastic erection, not that she was resisting much, her mouth already parted open enthusiastically. The revulsion she had shown the first time was completely absent, along with her concerns that whether serving me with her mouth like a tavern wench was fitting to a noble heiress like her. The way her tongue wrapped around my length enthusiastically showed just how far she had come in a few short days.

Normally, I would have let her attack my shaft at her own pace, but this moment was about proving my overwhelming power to her, and I wanted to start it on the right note. “Brace yourself,” I commented even as I grabbed the back of her head, and forced her to swallow most of my length in one move, no matter how loud she gagged in the process. “Don’t fight it,” I commented even as I pushed once more, pushing my remaining length into her throat, making

her gag helplessly.

Her hands tightened around my thighs, not to free herself, but seeking more strength to keep her place. She was learning. I let her rise for a moment, giving her the chance to breathe, before pushing her down once more, and started fucking her throat mercilessly, ignoring her occasional pained gasps. As she struggled, I cast a simple spell to remove her robe, but not completely. No, when she brought her arms to her back to let the robe slide away, I flicked my finger, and the robe twisted around her arms, suddenly turning into an armbinder, tight enough to hurt. With my cock lodged deep into her throat, she couldn't even react to it.

I only let her pull back when the first monsters started to enter the valley, and at that time, my mana reserves had finally recovered. I waited until the first group was close to the defenses before letting Cornelia pull out. The only reason she didn't collapse as she coughed was my tight grip on her hair, keeping her upright. With her own body's painful reminders, it took a few seconds for her to notice the monsters. "Caesar-" she gasped, but I cut it with a spell, not on her but against the monsters.

[-17 Mana]

It was a simple fireball spell, or more accurately, it was supposed to be. But it burned brighter than a deadly explosion spell that would leave a weaker caster exhausted, expelling waves of her heat thick enough to be felt over our skin despite the distance. It immolated the monsters in an instant, their low-class resistance no match for even a weak spell from me. Using Tantric, I could feel several invisible pieces of energy leaving their bodies and rushing toward me. From my earlier experimentations with Aviada, I had learned that it was the phenomenon that caused the experience gain.

I also discovered how to redirect it, removing the biggest challenge in power-leveling people, namely, the need to deliver the final hit.

Cornelia's eyes widened as she received the experience, but I cut in before she could say anything. "Don't waste time, continue sucking," I ordered even as I pushed her down, feeling her lips around my shaft once more. This time, I didn't push her for a depththroat, and satisfied with her enthusiastic bobbing, accompanied by the skillful dance of her tongue. Conveniently, it left my hands free to direct my magic, raining fireballs against the first wave of the monsters.

It was the reason I picked a hard-to-access valley for my defense. As they entered in relatively smaller groups, it gave me an excuse to pick them easily while giving myself enough time to regain the mana I spent, bequeathing Cornelia experience in the process. It wasn't much, just a

few points of experience for each monster considering the gap between Cornelia and the monsters, but considering their numbers, still very impressive.

“Uh-huh,” Cornelia moaned, her voice distorted by my shaft, her enjoyment clear. Her cheeks bulged, and her spit dripped down as she attacked my length rapidly, but I could sense that her attention was flickering. I didn’t begrudge her for that. Considering we were under attack from a monster horde, her distraction was understandable.

The next few minutes passed in a weird routine where I received a delicious —if a bit mechanical— service from Cornelia while burning the first wave of attackers into cinders. Like the Swordsmanship before, I was rather satisfied with the performance of the specialized Fire magic, not that I was regretting taking the more generalist route to elements. Still, the qualitative transformation I was experiencing in my area-effect damage was impressive, allowing me to easily fend the attacks without spending more mana than I could regenerate.

[-965 Mana]

[Mana: 3720/3840]

However, soon, things started to get heated. With a loud clatter, the entrance of the valley collapsed, finally allowing the monsters to spill inside, probably done by the earth tortoise. It was definitely strong enough to handle that.

Cornelia gasped in shock as she pulled away, turning to the walls with clear panic in her eyes. “We need to escape before you deplete your mana-” she started, but I interrupted her by grabbing her waist and forcing her to face away before I pulled her onto my lap.

“Honey, the show is just starting, watch carefully,” I whispered throatily even as I aligned my shaft with her entrance, pressing against the entrance. Meanwhile, countless monsters filled the valley, and my fireballs nothing more than a matchstick against a tornado, trying to stay alive. She shivered, but didn’t otherwise protest as I let my shaft slowly penetrate her. She was rightfully afraid, but still willing to wait when I assured her that I had a plan. The monsters rushed against the outer wall of runes, but with a wave, I created an invisible wall of air, keeping them away, giving myself the time required to charge the second circle of runes, which was my main assault, and those runes devoured mana like crazy.

[-2108 Mana]

Cornelia was far too busy watching the wave of monsters slowly chipping down our outer layer of defenses, while more and more monsters piled behind them. Meanwhile, I put my hands on

her waist, directing her movements as my shaft disappeared into her bit by bit. When the outer defenses were finally fallen, Cornelia was jumping up and down in her own accord, even though her face contorted with fear, her arms still bound behind her back. She could have easily burned it away, of course. The fact that she didn't, still trusting me despite her hesitancy showed just how far we had come.

"Do you want to see a really impressive piece of magic," I whispered even as I forced her down, fully impaling her, accompanied by her moan.

"Yes!" she moaned loudly, making me doubt whether she was answering my question or reacting to the pleasure of my invasion. However, the monsters had finally penetrated the outer wave of defenses, making it inconvenient to tease her.

"As you wish," I said as I pushed another wave of mana. First, I triggered both the innermost circle, which created another defensive layer —this time a combination of water and air elements— to protect us, and the runes I had left at the entrance, which suddenly created a hundred feet tall stone wall, cutting their way to escape. "Inferno Eternal!" I cried as I triggered the middle layer of runes, while using the rest of my mana to ignite the mana I had stored.

The result was spectacular. The valley, which was previously covered in monsters, suddenly set ablaze, turning into a veritable hellscape. Flickering flames rose higher than a hundred feet, its heat enough to penetrate the water nature, just enough to make our location deliciously crisp. Luckily, the elemental nature of the defenses was enough to both supply us with air, and to keep the smell away.

[-920 Mana]

"Impossible," Cornelia gasped as she watched the spell to cover the entirety of the valley. Her shock was understandable, as my spell didn't look like something that could be done by a single person, especially not without the assistance of an established ward. First of all, the spell cost more than three thousand mana, which was a number unthinkable for almost all mages, even if they were above thirty. The only reason I had such a high capability was because of my ridiculous stats. Moreover, the spell showed the perfect attainment of all of my mental stats. Charisma for sheer power, the intelligence and manipulation to still control, wisdom to maintain its nature, and perception shape its borders perfectly.

The spell was a true masterpiece, equivalent to a masterpiece painting, only temporary, but even more impressive.

And as an aspiring fire mage, Cornelia was the perfect person to experience the majesty of such a spell. “Incredible,” she murmured as she picked up speed, followed by a cry as she rode me in reckless abandon. Her eyes were wide open despite the brightness, tears slipping down her cheeks as she was impressed. Another gasp escaped her mouth as the monsters started to die in droves, only for her to receive every almost half of the experience it created—even for me, directing all of it was not possible— pushing her steadily toward a new level.

However, it wasn’t as important as a very welcome notification that I planned, and another welcome one I hadn’t planned.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 77%]

[Achievement: Fiery Flirting. Who said that the flames of destruction worthy of hell couldn’t be sexy. +1000 Experience, +3 Charisma]

Finally the fourth stage, I thought with glee even as I grabbed Cornelia’s hips, and a nice achievement as a bonus for my excellent performance rivaling an artwork. I slammed even harder into her, my thickness fighting against her tightening walls, her arousal off-the-charts. I was tempted to tease her a bit, but I realized the moment turned into a holy moment for her, her fascination mixing with her arousal enough to drown her higher mental functions.

I sank my hands to her ass, enjoying its firmness even as I slammed even harder, and Cornelia just moaned in response, her eyes locked on the fiery show that was going on. I said nothing, as there was nothing to do but enjoy the moment. I had designed the spell to last five minutes, and interrupting it would have actually taken more of my strength. Instead, I was sitting in the heart of the inferno comfortably, mercilessly fucking my noble maid while also recovering my mana.

“You like it, don’t you, my poor servant,” I murmured. “You like being my maid, my toy, and my slave, the knowledge that I’m strong enough to destroy you with a flick of my hand, but using that power to make you mine, both body and soul.”

“Yes,” Cornelia moaned. “I’m yours, master, both in body and soul!” And when I finally cummed, it triggered her climax, her trembling body mixing with her loud cries.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 81%]

Her words soon turned into slurring moans as she was overcome with pleasure, trembling badly. As the fires weakened, Cornelia collapsed against my chest, murmuring absentmindedly. “Another level,” she murmured dazedly as she rested against my chest, watching the flickering embers as the spell collapsed, leaving the valley filled with smoke and cinders. Another wave of

my hand, and a sudden wind picked up the smoke, while making the cinders burn brightly.

There was almost no movement in the valley, which, admittedly, wasn't as impressive as it sounded, considering only a few rare monsters were above class ten. Not that destroying it by one spell wasn't impressive, of course. However, a subtle movement caught my attention. A large mound, which a careless observer might have mistaken for a geographical feature, suddenly moved.

It was the earth tortoise.

"How the hell it's still alive," I murmured in shock even as I cast an earth spell, creating a sudden ground wave that brought it closer despite its struggles. It was a creature of earth, but the power difference between us absolute, so I was easily able to dominate it through its own element. Cornelia, lying against my chest, my shaft still inside her, barely reacted.

I could feel the hint of a peculiar energy from the body of the tortoise, one I would have dismissed as the transformative energy that turned it into a horde leader, but it felt weirdly familiar. Curious, I waved my hand, using an air blade to cut through its defensive shell before dissecting it. I didn't bother to keep the materials, because it was a mere class twelve creature even with its transformation, making it useless for my purposes. To inspire Oeyne, I needed better material.

However, when I cut through the monster in search of a source, I met with a very interesting surprise. I found another earth gem, but this one with a slightly chaotic feel. I tried to focus on the sensation, but before I could even grab it, the chaotic sensation had dispelled, leaving only a burning question behind...

[Level: 24 Experience: 296400 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 41

Precision: 24 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 32

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2899 / 2928 Mana: 2154 / 3912]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [75/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty-Five

As much as I wanted to explore the mystery of a second earth gem I had extracted from the magical tortoise who had been busy leading a horde moments ago —and now, busy being overcooked— I needed to act. I instantly conjured another elemental mount.

“Are we leaving?” Cornelia asked, shocked. “But that was a horde. The reputation from destroying it singlehandedly would-” she tried to continue, only for me to cut her off.

“It would make sure we would die under the blade of an assassin,” I cut in even as I pulled her on the elemental, and surged forward.

“What! And why are we in such a hurry?” she asked, her voice mixing with the wind created by our speed, high enough to give her whiplash. I didn’t even bother removing the evidence, just spending a second to dispel the remaining runes. The other monsters would soon come for the cooked meat, messing up the already complicated scene more, not that the still burning inferno left a lot of evidence behind.

“Because the spell I used is hard to classify as discrete, especially in the middle of the night, sweetheart,” I explained. “The necromancers would soon discover our location either way, but only if the school doesn’t react to it first.”

“Why does it matter if the necromancers know it was you?” Cornelia asked. “It’s not like they can hunt you this close to the school.”

“You would be surprised,” I murmured, pausing for a moment to weigh in the pros and cons of telling Cornelia about the true overreach of the necromancers, and came on the side of openness. First of all, she had already seen the evidence of their presence, and her knowing the full extent of it was better than going half-assed and getting discovered. I didn’t want her to disappear in the middle of the night, not after all the effort I had put into developing her.

More importantly, she was already aware of some of my more important secrets, and after my incredible achievement of allowing her to level up and eye-catching performance of destructive fire, she both trusted me and relied on me. Add in our physical relationship and her emotional reliance, I didn’t have a reason to keep it a secret. So, for the next five minutes, I gave her a brief breakdown of the necromancer presence, including the secret army camp and possible spies.

“They can’t have spies in the school,” she gasped. “That is...”

“Impossible,” I completed in a deadpan tone. “Honey, believe me, not only it’s possible, but it’s not even that difficult. Consider just how easily we had slipped away today with our own skills. Now, add the possibility of a high-level insider, and we have a true clusterfuck in hand.”

“Are you sure we have a spy among the faculty,” she asked.

“Almost certainly,” I countered. Technically, it was possible that the shade I had destroyed after it scouted the library was an excellent example of double-bluff that was designed to seed distrust between the professors, it was not very likely, especially since it had already happened before I had started ruining their big plans, and they had chosen a night when Titania was absent.

“So, we know that we can trust the head librarian, the headmistress, and no one else?” Cornelia asked.

“Yeah, and the latter only because the school would have already fallen if she was an agent of the death cults. We’re trusting her, because if we can’t trust her, we already lost the battle before it started.”

“This is horrible,” Cornelia gasped in shock, followed by silence as she tried to process the most recent set of revelations. I didn’t begrudge her for it, considering the number of shocks she had experienced in the last couple of hours. I stopped speaking as well, not wanting to shock her again before she could process the current information.

Pity, because I was thinking of arranging a meeting between her and Helga, curious how they would react to each other with their loaded past.

As we traveled back to school, I finally turned my attention back to the latest development. Why there was a second earth gem in the earth tortoise. Earlier, I had assumed that the necromancers were using the earth gem to turn a lucky discovery of a growing horde into a weapon, but the presence of a second gem turned that assumption sideways, especially with the weird chaotic spell I had felt on it. It didn’t last for long once the creature was dead, but what I could feel at that fleeting moment was enough to unsettle me.

“Surely not,” I murmured to myself, trying to ignore the most obvious possibility, but failing spectacularly in the process. I hoped that my assumption was too wild, as the necromancers were dangerous enough without the ability to artificially triggering monster hordes. Their hordes of undead were bad enough, limited only by the relatively time-consuming and complicated process of raising dead.

However, while it was bleak, it wasn't suicidally bleak. After all, a natural magical gem was a rare treasure. A very rare one, to the point that even many mid-sized noble families didn't have one despite their desperate search. It meant that it was expensive and rare enough that they needed to be very careful while employing, and each failure cost them a lot, while enriching the defenders in the process.

So, as one of those lucky defenders, I was suddenly filthy rich. By selling these two gems, I could easily establish a new noble family if I felt so inclined—including the bribes required to get the noble title—, not that I wanted to do so. Not when I could use them to create a very beautiful weapon instead.

I dispelled the elemental only after moving more than a hundred miles, more than enough to avoid any kind of detection as long as I avoided flashy spells, which meant fire magic was out, not that it was a big issue.

"Are we going to rest for a bit before we return?" Cornelia asked.

"Why would we return?" I asked even as I draw Aviada's sword. I could see a golden lion prowling in a nearby bush, this time an old male, making it much easier to handle than the pride of lionesses I had battled before. "We still have quite a bit of time to

"But the monster horde, followed by conjuring that elemental mount?" Cornelia stammered in shock. "Aren't you exhausted?"

"I have to admit, I'm a bit low on mana," I admitted even as I charged toward the lion, turning the tables enough that I was able to get a slash before it could react, which turned an already unfair fight into a total rout. A few seconds later, the golden lion lay dead, making me richer in material, and making Cornelia richer by around a hundred and fifty experience points. "That's why I'm killing them with my sword, like a brainless warrior," I quipped with a smirk.

"You're unbelievable," she murmured in fascination as I quickly butchered the monster magically, extracting the most precious materials and leaving the rest to rot.

"Shall we," I said as I presented my arm in a move that would be perfect in a formal ball, but comically exaggerated in the middle of nowhere, earning a chuckle, though it still felt a bit hysterical. She was still trying to find her balance. We walked toward the next target, and at that point, I once again charged forward, taking down a small pack of twisted wolves with a few calculated slashes. I even activated the lure effect of the sword, making hunting much easier, as monsters started to come to us rather than the reverse.

I felt a desire to own a proper weapon as I sliced through the charging monsters, even as I started to suspect that it wouldn't rival Aviada's sword, even with the addition of the earth gem. It might be the expanded perception given by Master Swordsmanship, but I started to feel the hint of untapped potential, one that rejected my call even as I tried to reach it by mana senses. The more I used it, the more I was getting convinced that it was something more than just a simple long-lasting magical sword with some nifty magical tricks like lure effect.

However, even if my presumption was correct, I doubted that Aviada was capable of tapping into that power, or even if she was aware of it in the first place. Other families were certainly unaware of it, that was for certain, as otherwise, they would have never let Aviada's collapsing family keep it in hand. Yes, her ex-fiancee tried to take the sword, but it was equally about his pride as the sword itself. I could feel that whatever the mystery lay in the heart of the sword, the real big hitters were unaware of it.

I needed to question Aviada about the history of the sword.

Once the current crisis was resolved, of course. Whatever the mystery that lay in the sword, it was clearly not as important as the ever-growing necromancer threat.

I turned my attention back to the hunt, and decided to change my methodology a bit. And since my mana had recovered during my hunt, I decided to change my methodology a bit. Handling them in the melee was fun, but not as fun as the tricks I could pull with Cornelia next to me, wearing nothing but a robe, primed to finally complete the companion process.

Once again, I decided to impress. I activated the lure ability of the sword in its full potential, despite knowing that it would create a dangerous wave of creatures. After handling a horde single-handedly, it was simply not scary. I still established three layers of runes around me to replicate the earlier inferno trick just in case it pulls a larger group than I had first assumed, but I didn't expect to do so.

It was good, because I wanted to pay Cornelia the attention she deserved. "Now, why don't you show me just how much you have improved after gaining all those levels and achievements?" I asked her huskily, making her shiver. Before she could answer, I pulled her robe off her body once more, revealing delicious naked skin to shine under the bright moonlight.

Her melodic gasp reached into my ear even as I wrapped my arms around her waist, pressing my shaft against her entrance. "R-right now?" she stammered.

"No time like the present," I whispered into her ear even as I slapped her ass, once again

leaving a delicious handprint, my other hand freeing my shaft, which was feeling claustrophobic in the confines of my pants. "Show me just how much you have improved. There's even a reward if you can impress me. But let too many to reach the defensive line, and you'll get a punishment instead," I added, unable to keep myself from chuckling, curious whether she would enjoy the reward or the punishment more.

From what I had seen, until now, I had a feeling that it was the latter.

Before she could say anything, the first monster reached the boundary. A lone dire bear, charging fearlessly toward us, caught under the effect of the lure. While Cornelia tried to conjure a flame spear, however, I slid inside her, which caused her to botch the spell. She wasn't an amateur, so rather than dispelling the spell, she had managed to dump more mana into it and turn it into an area-effect fireball, burning the bear into cinders, even as she clamped around my shaft.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 83%]

"Not bad, but a bit wasteful," I said to her. "You could have easily killed it by spending a tenth of your mana, easily."

"Hey, not fair! You distracted-" she tried to complain, only to receive a spank to silence her.

"Yes, I did, but even your initial flame spear was excessive," I said. "Watch carefully." With that, I slowly conjured a much more compact fire arrow slowly, allowing her to watch the process. It was one of the tricks I had discovered during my studies with Helga. It was effectively three different fire spells tightly wrapped around each other, giving it a unique penetration ability. I used the spell on another creature, taking it down in one move.

[-11 Mana]

"That's too hard for me," she gasped, only to receive another spank to her ass.

"It's well within your capabilities," I countered after the small punishment, even as started pumping her rhythmically. "Watch carefully," I ordered as I built the spell again, this time much more slowly, giving her ample time to observe the trick, even as I continued to pump her mercilessly, forcing her to take my presence deeper and deeper. Her moans rose accordingly, adding to the effect of the lure we had created.

"How about this?" she asked as she created a poor copy of the spell, its structure already unraveling.

“Try aiming to that rock,” I said, pointing at a human-sized stone that was about fifty feet away. Cornelia followed by order, but the spell dispersed after flying ten feet. I grabbed her beautiful red hair, and forced her to turn to me. “Do you see where it went wrong,” I gasped.

“The structure is-” she started, only to explode into a moan as I left a bite mark on her neck. “The structure needs to be more stable.”

“Exactly,” I said as I slammed my full length inside her, forcing her to moan explosively. “Try again.”

She followed my directions for the next several minutes, while I continued reinforcing her soul space by dumping my mana. Whenever a creature appeared, she shifted back to her preferred spells like flame spears and fireballs, which didn’t help her mana pool. She tried to be more conservative in terms of spending, but that resulted in more and more creatures slipping through her defenses.

“Another miss,” I said as I spanked her ass once more, but this time, my touch was accompanied by a convenient biomancy spell, cleaning and lubricating her bowels, preparing her other hole for my invasion. I plopped a finger, making her moan, even as I continued to slam into her tightness. “You need to be more accurate on assessing the threat level,” I said even as the creature was eviscerated by my earthen fist.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 87%]

“Sorry,” she gasped, starting to slur under the rush of pleasure. “But I’m almost out of mana.”

“Not a problem, sweetheart,” I said even as I used our closeness to inject a generous portion of mana inside her, even as I increased the number of fingers from one to three in her puckered hole. Refilling her mana was almost trivial at this point, as her full capacity was about a third of mine despite the relatively small level difference, making it very easy for me to top her up completely.

[-1116 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 89%]

[Achievement: Amorous Assist. Help your paramour to stand against unbeatable odds through indirect and unconventional means. +2 Intelligence, +500 Experience]

“Is there anything you can’t do?” Cornelia gasped in shock, even as her spells picked up speed.

However, as her spells increased, so did the monstrous attention targeting us. Combined with the effect of the lure, it wasn't shocking for the stronger monsters to appear. At this point, almost half of the attackers were above class ten, making it very difficult for Cornelia to defeat them before they reached the defensive line, forcing me to get involved.

"You're slipping," I warned her, after we destroyed yet another wave of monsters, while I continued to pump her. She tried to answer, but it was a difficult task to achieve with her continuous moaning.

Instead of giving a proper answer, she started crying in joy. "Yes, yes, oh YES!" she cried, starting to shudder, but to her credit, she didn't stop her task of attacking the monsters, even when they had attacked us from multiple directions. She defended herself generously, though she required another mana injection to sustain herself.

[-983 Mana]

Then, I noticed something interesting in her soul space. A weird sensation flickered around the edges, then, for lack of a better term, the walls folded around itself by creating an independent cell, before moving to the center, and mixing into the center of power. "Another achievement," she gasped in glee. "This time, endurance and perception, two points each."

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 92%]

"I know sweetheart," I said, subtly taking responsibility for it —not that I felt guilty about it, as I clearly enabled it— even though I was pretty sure I finally watched the maturation of natural achievement.

I examined her soul space carefully even as she attacked the monster horde with a renewed enthusiasm, trying to understand the difference between the types of achievements. Surprisingly, I have realized that getting an achievement actually weakened the soul space, not enough to prevent it from a full level, but a few of them might actually reduce the level capacity by one. Yet another interesting detail I had failed to find in the library, and considering its importance, I wasn't going to write it off as me missing it. It was either unknown, or it was another secret hidden from the general public.

It made me curious, but not as much as the rapidly growing progress bar of the companion system. Considering the rewards I had received during the earlier phases, I couldn't help but feel enthusiastic about finally unwrapping that particular box of present to completion...

[Level: 24 Experience: 296900 / 300000

Strength: 28 Charisma: 41

Precision: 24 Perception: 27

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 23 Intelligence: 34

Endurance: 22 Wisdom: 33

HP: 2899 / 2928 Mana: 2834 / 3960]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Expert Subterfuge [75/75]

Basic Speech [25/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Chapter Sixty-Six

There was something special in being naked in the middle of the wilderness, maintaining a defensive line while simultaneously impaling a sexy redhead, whose moans echoing against the nearby hills even as waves of flames spilling out of her hands like an angry goddess.

An angry goddess that was being defiled by a demon even as she incinerated another wave of monsters...

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 94%]

Suddenly, her moans were interrupted by another slap on her tight ass. “Try casting the flame arrow again,” I ordered as I watched the majority of the monster wave burn into cinders, along with their potential magical materials, but I didn’t care much. None of the monsters that attacked during the current wave were particularly valuable. There were a few during the previous waves, but I had carefully picked them off by using an earth spell, shielding them from Cornelia’s flames to make sure their properties weren’t ruined.

Cornelia concentrated —as much as she could while she was being fucked relentlessly while also trying to accommodate rapid invasion of four fingers anally—to make three distinct sources of flame appear, floating inches away from her face before they started wrapping each other as they grow. She bit her lips to contain a moan as I chose that moment to change the pace a bit, and pulled out of her tight tunnel, only to invade her puckered hole with my shaft.

Impressively, she managed to maintain control of the flame arrow, and even directed it toward a wounded monster about twenty feet away, killing it easily. “I did it,” she gasped in elation.

“You did it,” I approved. Technically, the spell construction was shoddy and unbalanced, making it impossible for her to target anything farther than fifty feet, but I decided to let it slide. She had just learned the spell, after all, not to mention she was trying to cast it under some really challenging conditions. “Now, it’s time for a reward-” I started, only to be interrupted by an earth-shattering roar, and the ground started to shake.

I was already summoning an air elemental as a humongous creature appeared in the sky, diving toward us. The creature was larger than an elephant, with the body shape of a lion, but with wings reminiscent of a bat and a tail filled with poisonous needles.

A manticore. How convenient.

Manticores were creatures deserving of their infamy. Technically, an adult manticore could reach up to class thirty, which turned it into a veritable danger. Even an immature one like we were facing was just below class twenty, which technically meant that it shouldn't be about as strong as a golden lion. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. The monster classification was measured based on the experience the monster generated, which in turn was determined by the strength and stability of a soul space of a monster. Indeed, in terms of pure power or melee combat, a golden lion could easily rival a young manticore.

However, for a Manticore, there was no such thing as a fair fight for a manticore. Both its bite and its tail was covered by a deadly venom, a bite enough to kill a dire elephant in minutes. The venom in its tail spikes was weaker, but even more dangerous considering it can use them as a ranged weapon, each shake of its tail spreading eight-inch pointy bone needles, sharp enough to penetrate nonmagical steel plates, delivering their venom if the initial penetration hadn't already slain the target. Add in its great mobility due to its flying ability, and a thick mane to protect its vitals, no doubt people were scared of it.

It wasn't all bad, however. While the experience reward it bequeathed might be subpar compared to the sheer danger it presented, the value of its magical materials more than compensated for it. Killing it would make sure that I had reached the target for the day. I could have killed it easily, but why would I, when I could conveniently use it as an opportunity to finally complete the companion process. And if the bonus she received was good enough, maybe she could even take it down her own.

Cornelia gasped in shock as she tried to pull back, but I grabbed her waist and hoisted her on top of my elemental mount, keeping her on my lap, and using the opportunity to slide back in her warm tunnel. "Don't worry about defending, but killing it is your job," I whispered into her ear. "Prove to me that I didn't waste my time by leveling you up and educating you."

"I will," she gasped determinedly even as she raised her hand, conjuring a flame spear while I directed the fake air elemental to lift off. Manticores could fly, but luckily, a young one didn't have the agility of a mature one in the air. As a result, Cornelia easily nailed it with her flame spear, making it roar in pain.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 97%]

I didn't stop flying, a decision that was vindicated when the manticore appeared from the cloud of smoke, slightly singed. If it was easy to take down it by a simple fire spell, they wouldn't have their fearsome reputation, after all. Cornelia followed her initial attack by an even more impressive display, conjuring three flame spears at the same time, but the result was still the

same —except creating a bigger cloud of smoke.

The manticore responded by a rain of its deadly needles, but I conjured a tornado counter it, easily pushing them away. With over forty charisma, the strength of my spells had gone through another qualitative transformation, so much that I could actually hope to rival Titania as long as we fought in an open space, where I could leverage my superior mobility and regeneration. Not a bad improvement speed.

[-26 Mana]

However, as much as I enjoyed my own power-up, I couldn't be at the forefront always, so the girls needed to be stronger. "Think," I commanded even as I grabbed Cornelia's hips and lifted her a bit, only to pull her down and skewer her deep once again, delivering her some extra mana at the same time. "You need to bypass the magical resistance of its skin. Use the spell I had thought you."

[-436 Mana]

"But I can barely cast it," she countered.

"Luckily for you, it's the perfect opportunity to practice it," I said, which earned an incredulous glare from her. But I just smirked, and soon, she nodded in acceptance. I decided to cut her some slack, and stopped pumping inside her, though I was still inside her, enjoying her snug warmth, her wetness spilling to my lap. "Prove me just how good you are! Prove to me that you deserve to be the heiress of your family!"

"I will!" she shouted, her resolve finally solidified. She raised her hand, trying to conjure the special flame arrow I had taught her. It failed, but she didn't stop and continued to try, again and again.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 98%]

On her fifth try, she managed to stabilize it enough to touch the skin of the manticore.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 99%]

At her ninth try, her every repeat was finally hitting its skin, even though it was yet to penetrate its skin. "Good try, just a bit more," I said, declaring my trust, enhancing the impact of my words with the full impact of my charisma, which raised her morale into a fanatical frenzy.

Her eyes shone brightly. "Take this, you bastard," she cried even as she conjured another flame arrow, shining bright. It slammed at the chest of the manticore, finally penetrating its skin, making it roar in pain, its sound mixing with Cornelia's gloating cry. Not one to miss such a precious opportunity, I suddenly picked up speed, slamming inside her hard enough to trigger her climax, making her cry in pleasure, mixing with my own satisfied grunt as I painted her insides with my seed.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 100% - Final Stage Completed +20000 Exp]

[New Perk: Empowerment (1/1)]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Elemental (5), Grandmaster Melee (5), Advanced Speech]

I barely needed to think before picking up my next skill. Increasing my combat abilities was never bad, but with my impending meeting with the mysterious headmistress, a better verbal ability would no doubt be more convenient.

Meanwhile, Cornelia moaned in a shocking joy, but before I could examine the changes in her soul space, she raised her hand, and conjured three flame arrows at the same time, each strong enough to easily penetrate through the Manticore's skin. "Yes! Take that!" she exclaimed in joy as she conjured another trio, this time wounding one of its wings enough to force it to land.

I examined her soul space, only to meet with three big surprises at the same time. In the first place, the vision of her soul space was much clearer. It almost felt like I was meditating to examine my own power. The second surprise was her new achievement, feeling much stronger than the others. Since it was somehow linked to my power, I was easily able to understand its power. Five full points of enhancement for her every mental stat, and two stats for every physical stat. No wonder her casting abilities suddenly increased by such a wide margin. It was hard to overstate the impact of twenty-five new mental stats, especially for someone like Cornelia who already had respectable stats.

However, even that couldn't rival the sudden sensation of connection that filled my being. Cornelia was clearly unaware of it, lacking my sensitivity to the nature of her soul space, missing the sudden channel that appeared between us, establishing a connection that persisted even when after I stopped using my tantric abilities, getting stronger each passing second.

[Permanent Perk Established: Mana Regeneration]

[Permanent Perk Established: Skill Share]

The notification I received was certainly convenient. The mana regeneration, in particular, had been vital in my rapid development, but its relatively short cooldown had been limiting my ability significantly. Its permanency meant that I was finally able to roam around however I wanted —of course, that required the permanency to not to have any range restrictions, but I hoped for it to be the case.

While my attention was split between examining the still-changing nature of our connection and the potential implications of my new benefits, Cornelia continued to rain the flames of retribution on the wounded Manticore, intent on completely eviscerate it. Luckily, the Manticore was much more agile on the ground, so it avoided most of Cornelia's attacks. If all of them had connected, it would have ruined the magical value of the manticore.

However, the real surprise came from when I suddenly received another wall of notification, suddenly appearing in front of me.

[Cornelia - Level 17/21 - 46%

Skills: Legendary Fire Magic (1/10), Master Arcana, Advanced Mana Manipulation

Perks: None

Strength: 6 / Precision: 9 / Agility: 7 / Speed: 7 / Endurance: 6

Charisma: 26 / Perception 18 / Manipulation: 22 / Intelligence: 14 / Wisdom: 16

HP: 481 / 595 — Mana: 724 / 1632]

I finally had a direct connection to Cornelia's abilities, rather than inferring them from the impressions in her soul space, one that I could easily call without any effort on my part. Along with it, I could feel her current state of being, and even divine her location from a great distance. All around a very convenient upgrade.

It only left one thing to try, the last perk I had received. Empowerment.

Instinctively, I could feel that it wasn't a perk that I could use on my own. No, it was designed for an external recipient. With the ease of a mental flick, I activated it, dropping its counter from one to zero.

A mysterious light covered Cornelia in an instant, her aura transforming completely. Her spells

started to burn with the all might of a miniature sun, with a power that even I wouldn't be able to rival... Her spells, flying with a much greater speed, connected with the manticore, burning it to cinders.

[Achievement: Celestial Company. Elevate your companions to the next level give them the right to be on the same plane of existence as you. +3 to all stats. +15000 Experience]

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Elemental (5), Grandmaster Tantric (5), Master Subterfuge]

Cornelia's enhanced abilities were interesting, almost as much as the incredible achievement I had received —both in terms of the strength it brought, and the implications of the text. However, I didn't pay attention to them except quickly selecting Subterfuge skill for my development.

No, my full attention was on Cornelia, doing my best to stop my new perk, because I could feel Cornelia burning up under the sudden rush of power, ravaging her soul space. It took me just seconds to do so, and the moment the power stopped, Cornelia collapsed like a puppet without strings. I dashed toward her, pushing my mana to analyze her soul space...

Only to find a scene of utter devastation, the borders weakened and damaged, her achievements and skills dislodged. Using my new connection just confirmed her status.

[Cornelia - Level 15/16 - 21%]

She had lost two levels, and her level cap had dropped. With her achievements roaming freely, even her stats had dropped.

Luckily for her, I already had the solution for her. I dragged her to the nearest cave and established a defensive parameter around before injecting my mana, starting the most complicated operation of my life. First, I reinforced the borders of her soul space to stop corruption, then stabilized her skills and achievements, preventing them from being lost. In comparison, neither her level nor her level cap was as important, not when I could boost them, a task that got even easier thanks to our permanent connection.

The next three hours passed in utter concentration, but as a result, not only her skills and achievements were completely cured, but I also reinforced her soul space to be even stronger than before, and using my spare mana to give back her levels.

[Cornelia - Level 17/25 - 83%]

Though, I have learned that increasing the level capacity also had a limit. It seemed to be one level lower than my own. Logical, if slightly inconvenient.

After the operation finished, I collapsed next to Cornelia, breathing hard. Even for me, operating continuously for three hours without a break was not a simple thing to achieve. Once again, I could feel the signs of mana overuse straining my body. Luckily, it wasn't as bad as before.

I waited a few minutes for my mana to recover before conjuring a mount and going back to the school, carrying a naked Cornelia in the bridal hold, her robe lost during the latest debacle. As I traveled, I couldn't help but think about the implications of my newest perk, which was even more mysterious than my other abilities, and its link with the word 'Celestial' was definitely suspicious. I could feel that with every achievement related to my unique abilities, I was getting closer to some big secret, but without reliable information, I was just fumbling helplessly... Maybe I should take the risk and raid Titania's special vault.

I met with another surprise when I arrived at school. The battle wards had been activated, covering the surrounding area with a dangerous spell. Before finding the defensive schematics in the necromancers' base, it would have taken me quite a while to sneak into the school with the wards in full alert, but using the weak areas Helga identified, I achieved that with disturbing ease. Disturbing, because it highlighted just how defenseless we were against a necromancer assault.

Dropping Cornelia in her room was even easier. But when I tried to clean her up with a quick shower, she finally woke up. "What happened?" she slurred. "I remember a bright power, followed by some explosions, then darkness..."

"Nothing much, sweetie. Just some backlash from excessive mana usage. Your body is not used to handle that much power, especially you haven't get used to your new achievement yet," I explained to her even as I helped her to clean up, for once not using the opportunity for some shower fun. Both of us were exhausted. "Just make sure that you don't use any magic for the next day. I'll visit again in the evening for another check-up."

"Thanks," she slurred with a cute smile, drunkenly. "You're the best master..."

"That I am," I said with a chuckle, amused with her changes. Paradoxically, the stronger she got, the more accepting she started to get about her own role... I helped her to change into a long nightgown before leaving, also dropping a note by Marianne to take care of Cornelia during the day, just in case.

After that, I was planning to get some sleep —and maybe developing my Speech and Subterfuge a bit— before trying to find the headmistress, but on the way back to my room, I realized that one of the dead drop locations had been activated.

Titania was finally back, and she was asking for an emergency meeting...

[Level: 26 Experience: 331900 / 351000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 44

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3513 / 3562 Mana: 3210 / 4680]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [75/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Speech [25/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

Chapter Sixty-Seven

Titania's message couldn't have come up in a more opportune time, as the artificial monster horde I had discovered last night was a rather dangerous development that needed to be discussed before I took the risk of talking with an unknown quantity like the mysterious headmistress of the school. Also, the opportunity to face Titania again was a nice opportunity, especially considering I was finally strong enough to actually contend with her with the level difference. There was no doubt that we still had a huge level cap, but at this point, my stats were high enough to compensate for it.

However, rather than directly going to her room, I first changed the destination to my own to pick up the plans, and maybe also bringing Helga along. After seeing the incredible benefits of finally completing the companion process with Cornelia —and completing with her first had been a real surprise considering the nature of our initial contact, though maybe it was fated considering her aggressive and ill-considered foray in the library had changed my destiny— so I wanted to complete the process with Helga as well.

Of course, that left the problem of unlocking the progress for the fourth stage. At first, I was planning to use Cornelia as the bait, allowing Helga to experience their old deal from the other side, hoping that giving her a sense of power against her old dominatrix opponent, though I believed it to be a long shot. I had no doubt that Helga would have enjoyed that, as she had suffered under Cornelia's sexy toys for too long not to nurse a grudge, but that didn't mean that it would unlock her fourth stage.

My amazing display of power against the monster horde had worked for Cornelia, but that was because Cornelia had a personality that worshipped power. What I had done there was the purest display of it, not to mention I had achieved that through fire magic, the purest display of power for Cornelia to understand.

The same wouldn't work directly for Helga for the last stage. She was different than Cornelia, yearning for prestige and trying to carve a place for herself through her unique perspective. She wanted to prove herself against everyone that they were wrong throwing away her innovative approach to spell-casting to favor the inefficient ancient styles critically dependent on skills.

Also, as I walked away from Cornelia's room, I noticed that I could still feel Cornelia's presence, and that sensation was not blunted by the distance. Excellent, I thought. Having real-time access to her exact position and her mood might prove vital in protecting her. I definitely didn't

want to lose her after putting all the effort to raise her.

I let my mind wander on the solution as I walked to my room and opened the door, and saw Helga stretching cutely on my bed, the towel around her body barely hiding the deliciousness underneath, her hair glistening wetly, suggesting she had freshly showered. "Morning," she murmured as she stretched further, which 'accidentally' undone her towel and it fell down, pooling around her waist, leaving her vast bosom naked. "Oops," she murmured as she raised her hand to her mouth, the other wrapping around her torso like she was trying to hide them from my view, though it would have been classified as a spectacular failure if her intention was to actually hide her beautiful peaks.

"Did you rest well?" I said as I strode toward her, and leaned for an extended kiss, our tongues dancing as I delivered a generous boost of mana, which I converted to experience for her.

[-452 Mana]

"Perfectly," she said. "I couldn't wait to return to study the wards. Despite the faults, they are so interesting. The application of Mordin's theory on triple connections alone..." she murmured, bursting into an exciting explanation, her tits dangling freely as she waved her hands excitedly. It was amusing just how easily she could lose herself in the intricacies of magical theory as easily as the pleasure of the flesh.

A light spell exploded in my mind as I watched her, illuminating an interesting path. Maybe her excitement toward the theory, along with the desire to prove herself, was the best way to finally step into the last stage. Bringing her along to the meeting with Titania would achieve both, especially since I no longer feared Titania in terms of the difference in power. Revealing the existence of Helga was no longer dangerous, especially since I was Titania's only reliable ally against the necromancers. "I'm going to meet with Titania in five minutes, do you want to come with me?"

"Titania?" she said before it clicked in her mind and she stammered. "D-do you mean the H-head librarian," she stammered in shock.

"Yes, silly. I'm talking about the head librarian. We're going to have a talk about the necromancers," I explained even as I leaned down to steal another kiss from her shocked lips. "Get ready, you only have five minutes."

[+1 Speech]

"Right!" she gasped as she jumped up, while I moved to the desk that was piled with the

defense blueprints of the school as well as the copious piles of notes Helga had created during her analysis, though I kept my attention on her. Watching her as she hurriedly dressed was fun and sexy at the same time, with a large dash of cute mixed in. “I’m ready,” she said as I chuckled.

“No, you’re not,” I countered as I took a step forward and slipped my hand under her skirt, only to rip her panties off with one pull. “Now you’re ready.”

She opened her mouth to say something, but when I leaned forward, she canceled that in favor of parting her lips excitingly, rewarded by another searing kiss. Her moans intensified further when my hand slipped under her skirt to tease her naked entrance.

“Let’s go,” I said after pulling back, leaving her primed for more. “We’re in a hurry.”

“O-okay,” she stammered and followed me out of the room.

This time, I didn’t bother disguising myself. At this point, putting a simple illusion combined with a change of posture was more than enough for me to disappear into the crowd, faking ordinary perfectly. “Try not to act too shocked when with Titania. Don’t forget that I’m going to be there to keep the heat off, and don’t reveal anything about our unique way of leveling, or about the mysterious book you’re trying to decipher,” I reminded her. At this point, I was confident to weather the storm it would bring. At absolute worst, I could easily escape into Mount Dread to hide from the people, and it wasn’t a likely outcome in the first place. Even if Titania discovered it, it wouldn’t be her benefit to reveal the secret of her only ally to outsiders until the current disaster was concluded.

[+1 Subterfuge]

I planned to be strong enough to be untouchable before the current crisis could be solved—not to mention developing a better, more intimate relationship with Titania in the process— so revealing that particular secret wasn’t exactly scary.

I knocked on her door when we arrived at the destination, and reached the final target. The door opened, and I stepped inside, only to see Titania already sitting on a large table, wearing a fresh set of robes, though she wasn’t good enough with restoration spells or makeup to hide her exhaustion from me. “Who’s this,” she asked in a scary tone when Helga walked in, making Helga freeze in fear.

“She helps me study magic,” I said as I walked forward, ignoring her tone, gesturing Helga to follow me. Titania’s expression lacked emotion, but a sudden pressure filled the room, a

mixture of charisma effect and pure mana pressure. Helga gasped in shock, too weak to handle such a rush. I sighed exaggeratedly as I brought my own pressure forward, blanketing Helga for protection effortlessly. "Are you done posturing so we can start the discussion," I said even as I gestured Helga to sit next to me.

[+2 Subterfuge]

Titania's outward reaction was so small that even with my enhanced senses, I was almost tricked that she wasn't surprised with it. Even then, I would have probably underestimated the impact if I hadn't had an excellent secret trick in form of a growing Companion System, of which I was getting a better understanding with each experiment. After the enlightenment provided by the adventure with Cornelia, it was hard for me to miss the sudden rush of anger and shock, or how they faded immediately as a side effect of her light magic. Truthfully, I wasn't sure whether she actually felt them for a moment before her unique magic erased them. No wonder she was emotionless.

Though, that made my eventual victory tastier. I still remembered this impeccable woman cumming around my shaft as she mewled innocently, her raven hair stuck to her petite body, her gray eyes widened with pleasure.

"Why is she here?" Titania asked again monotonously while Helga flinched.

I grabbed Helga's hand under the table to calm as I answered. "She's here to give her findings about these," I said even as I threw the blueprints on the desk.

"Where did you find them," she asked, once again monotonous.

"A necromancer base," I said, which earned nothing more than a raised eyebrow. Apparently, not even the secrets of the school in the hands of Necromancers was enough to break her forced calm, through my Tantric senses, I could feel her panic for a moment before it was swallowed by her light magic. Apparently, it worked for all emotions, not just positive or intense ones. I gave a quick breakdown of the base adventure.

"It's worrying," she said.

"What's worrying is that our defenses have more holes than aged cheese," I answered before turning to Helga. "Why don't you give a breakdown of your findings to our dear librarian so she understands the true weight of the issue. Use illusions to create a three-dimensional model to be through."

“I’m not sure my mana is enough,” Helga answered, though only after she sent a hesitant glare at Titania, still unable to process her position completely.

“Don’t worry, I can transfer some mana,” I answered, earning a surprised gaze from Helga, and more surprisingly, a sudden flare of jealousy from Titania —which was once again quelled immediately. I turned Titania with a questioning glare. “You don’t mind, do you?”

[+2 Speech]

“Why would I mind?” she said in the same inflectionless tone.

“Excellent,” I said as I gestured Helga to start.

First, Helga took a deep breath and cast a complicated Arcana spell, creating a lingering light-based illusion that was visible to all, though it strained her quite a bit. Despite its small size, the level of detail it contained was not simple. “To begin, I don’t think this diagram represents all of the defenses,” Helga said. “Essentially, there are two tiers of wards, one to stay active indefinitely, one to be raised to defend against a dangerous assault, but both schemes have suspicious gaps,” Helga explained.

“Like what,” Titania said monotonously.

“Like these three points,” Helga said as she cast an additional spell, and the illusion expanded. Helga dragged her finger across several locations. “For example, at these three points, the wards folds in a way that was impossible to maintain unless they were wrapped around a spell pylon, but there’s nothing on the plan.”

“Maybe the plans neglected it,” Titania said, though I felt a flare of panic.

“While it’s possible, it’s extremely unlikely,” Helga countered immediately. “Such a pylon needs to be really strong to handle such interference, and around it, there’s no ward to justify the existence of such support. It clearly exists to support another set of the dormant ward, probably quite a bit stronger than the first two layers.”

At this point, I sent a warning glare at Titania through flaring my magic, because I could feel hers bubbling like she was about to attack. It was sharp and focused, so Helga didn’t even realize just how close she was to death. “Very good discovery,” I said. “Do you think it’s likely the necromancers discovered the same?”

[+1 Speech]

“Debatable,” Helga answered. “A ward expert would have probably noticed, but it needs to be a peak expert. I have no idea undead have access to such a thing.”

“And is the existence of the third layer of wards secret?” I asked Titania.

She looked reluctant, but still answered. “Not among the key members of the faculty.”

“So, we need to assume that it’s known by the enemy from day one, but they are still making a move,” I pondered. “Is there a special meaning to the third layer of wards?”

“I don’t know, they haven’t been raised for at least three centuries, where they needed to resist against an unprecedented horde led by frost giants that destroyed most of the Northern Fortresses. The rest of the details are only known by the Headmistress.”

“Such wards are likely not without its cost,” I murmured, but rather than continuing, I gazed at Helga when her illusion flickered. “Are you getting tired?”

“A bit-” she said, only to gasp in shock when I wrapped my arm around her waist and pulled her onto my lap, and kissed her aggressively, transferring enough mana to refill her reserves. “You don’t mind, do you?” I asked lazily to Titania, amused at her sudden flare of jealousy —once again suppressed by her light magic.

[-154 Mana]

“No, it’s logical not to waste time waiting for her to recover,” Titania answered.

[+10 Experience]

“Definitely,” I answered, though the sudden experience gain surprised me for a moment. Helga was clearly too weak to actually provide any experience. Then it occurred to me. Helga was weak, but Titania wasn’t. Apparently, frolicking with the third lady in front of the others worked well as well, though significantly less than what I would have gained through kissing her. Still, every little bit counts, especially if collected in such an entertaining manner. “So, about the wards?”

“They are likely not without their cost,” Titania continued, her mannerism unflappable. “No ward with such an incredible strength is. I expect that at a minimum, it would put the Headmistress out of commission for several days through exertion. But it shouldn’t matter, as doing so, she would definitely push the attack back.”

“It matters,” I frowned even as I cast a spell to unzip my pants and slipped through Helga’s wet entrance easily, making her moan under the unexpected rush. “Even that leaves too many motivation for such

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 76%]

[+40 Experience]

“How so?” Titania asked while I enjoyed the combined rush of getting more experience and finally bringing Helga into the final stage. The gamble I took was the correct one.

“Simple,” I said even as I started pumping inside Helga, making absolutely no effort to actually hide what was going on under the desk, softly bouncing Helga on my lap. “It might be that they are trying to assassinate Headmistress during the activation, or they might actually just rely on her exhausted state to do whatever they were planning to do in Silver Spires through their secret agents and retreat, neatly avoiding her wrath. The second part works well with the shade they tried to put in the library, or your ambush. It means that they have something to do, and they either require some significant time to activate, or they require more time than your forays to the wild give them.”

[+3 Speech]

“Do you think that’s the case?” she asked.

“Maybe,” I answered. “However, it can easily be something else completely. We don’t know the identity of their ally on the inside, we don’t know who leads the necromancers. We don’t even know who is the leader of their little alliance, or if is there really one?”

“Isn’t that obvious, necromancers are the leader.”

“Not obvious enough to rule other options out,” I countered, even as I lazily pumped into Helga, enjoying the moment. “Not unless you have some ironclad evidence that you’re yet to share with me, such as the identity of their supposed underling,” I said, and she fell silent.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 77%]

[+50 Experience]

[+1 Speech]

“I don’t have such evidence,” she answered, and I smirked.

“We don’t need to waste time discussing that particular topic then,” I said. “That we can leave after talking with the Headmistress and getting a better understanding of the impact of this supposed ultimate layer of wards.” I couldn’t help but scoff, as the first two layers of wards were hardly impressive, reducing my expectations toward the third layer.

“Helga, please continue about the details of the protective structure of the wards,” I said, even as I considered just how far I could push the situation before Titania finally reacted to the jealousy she was feeling...

[Level: 26 Experience: 332000 / 351000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 44

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3562 / 3562 Mana: 4311 / 4680]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [78/100]

Expert Arcana [75/75]

Advanced Speech [33/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

Chapter Sixty-Eight

Even as the architect of the situation, I could scarcely believe I was getting away with ramming Helga repeatedly in front of Titania, with absolutely no effort of actually hiding what was going on. It was incredible.

“T-this point is one of the most dangerous locations,” Helga said, though unable to prevent herself from moaning in between, tightening around my shaft just to push the situation deeper.

“Do you think we can reinforce it without compromising the integrity of the whole structure?” I asked even as I slid my hands down, cupping her ass to support her graceful jumping, allowing her to focus solely on her presentation.

“Maybe—” Helga said, once again cut by a moan. “If we can establish an isolated structure with opposite nature, the whole scheme might stabilize without intervention from the other wards.”

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 79%]

[+50 Experience]

[-84 Mana]

This time, Titania actually glared at us with a slight annoyance, which I took as a win, because this time, her light magic was slightly slower in neutralizing the emotion, making her actually experience the tendrils of jealousy for a moment before it was drained.

Also, that wasn't the only interesting finding. I was constantly observing her, and I noticed that the emotional isolation of her light magic was weakening whenever it needed to remove a strong flare of emotion —such as resulted by an old partner recklessly fucking another girl in front of her without even the decency of trying to hide it. Moreover, while it slowly recovered, it didn't take any mana from her existing pool, just relying on her regeneration capabilities, which wasn't enough to completely compensate for its weakening. I wondered whether it was just due to the nature of the light magic, or it was a way of keeping Titania unaware of its existence —though the latter raised quite a few poignant questions.

Regardless, it gave me a clear way of going forward to weaken its effects. I needed to run interference, but to do that, I needed to have some mana in her soul space. “How about this location?” I suddenly interrupted as I reached toward the other side, which required me to push Helga against the table for a fleeting moment as I reached, but it allowed me to brush my

finger against Titania's before she could pull it, making me succeed, while also giving Titania a better view of what was going underneath the table for a moment.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 82%]

[+50 Experience]

[+2 Subterfuge]

[-18 Mana]

"It's a satellite node..." Helga continued after a huge moan forced due to sudden push. While she explained, I focused on my successful infiltration attempt. Maintaining control of my mana from a distance was significantly harder. I doubted that I could have succeeded if it wasn't for my enhanced mana manipulation capabilities thanks to the temporary skill from Helga. I used that mana as a scalpel to carefully block the connections between her mana and the emotion-devouring light magic structure, carefully observing its reaction. I didn't try to destroy it, because it would regenerate, and also, it risked being noticeable to Titania.

But interference was much harder to detect, avoiding the attention of both her and her little emotion-blocking parasite. The recovery of the blocker slowed significantly, making me smile widely. It was going to be fun to strain it —and her— to the limits.

To work on that aim, I let my hand crawl up under Helga's robe, groping her tits aggressively, making her gasp repeatedly to interrupt her discussion. This time, thanks to the dwindling performance of her emotion-blocker, her annoyance was obvious. "Focus," she ordered.

"Hey, she needs mana to do it," I countered. "You don't want her collapsing halfway, do you?"

[+2 Speech]

Titania didn't answer verbally, but her angry glare was answer enough. I smirked at my success. Just moments ago, it was impossible for her to maintain any emotion. Her anger drained only after several seconds, leaving a thick frustration behind.

I continued pumping even as Helga walked Titania through all the faults she had found in the ward layout, her genius innovation working wonders in underlining the mistakes of the ancient wards, to the point of distracting Titania from the fact that Helga was being impaled through her explanation —though not completely, as the annoyed jealousy slowly became a fixture on Titania's face. It shone brightly, thanks to her lacking experience when it came to handling her

emotions.

“Now, about how we can fix - IT!” Helga said it after completing her explanations, but I timed it perfectly to make her climax, allowing her to cover the last of the distance with a sudden twist of her nipple over her bra. She shuddered helplessly while Titania gasped in anger, her fingers shining with the distinctive flair of her light magic.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 86%]

[+300 Experience]

[-72 Mana]

“Give her a minute to catch her breath,” I said with a chuckle even as I decided to push it further, happy with the sharp increase in the Companion Progress. My fingers danced down across her chest, unbuttoning her robe and her shirt as it went down. Titania growled and Helga gasped, but neither stopped me as I removed Helga’s robe and shirt, leaving her wearing nothing but a bra and a skirt. “So, sweetie, tell us about what you have in mind next,” I said to Helga as I grabbed her tits once more, but unlike previously, there was no shirt to hide the dance of my fingers.

Finally, I saw the emotion I desired reflected on Titania’s face. Jealousy, tinged with arousal. Titania’s breathing quickened as she watched me maul Helga’s rather generous tits. I had to keep myself from snorting in amusement when she gave a passing glance to her own modest bust, flaring her jealousy even more.

“I - I think we can fix the scheme by...” Helga started, her explanation interrupted frequently by her moans. Titania listened, but she couldn’t fully focus on the explanation as well, too distracted by the show that was going on in front of her. I decided to intensify the show. Removing Helga’s bra was trivial at this point, giving Titania a full view of Helga’s delectable upper body, my fingers disappearing in her soft flesh, extracting a fresh set of moans in return. All the while. Helga continued to jump up and down on my lap, while explaining her notes to Titania.

Luckily, Helga was meticulous when it came to note-taking, which allowed her to make her presentation without losing her place. For Titania, however, understanding it had been significantly more difficult, especially since she was battling with an unfamiliar set of emotions, and her growing arousal didn’t make it any easier. Once again, I watched as the indomitable Head Librarian slowly fade away, her place taken by an innocent woman who was yet to learn

about her own body... The more the emotional isolation effect faded, the more hesitant she became. She tried to focus on Helga's explanation, but it was impossible for her to be successful with Helga's tits swinging like a pendulum, marking the time until her eventual defeat...

Such a delicious opportunity to be the teacher, I decided, and placed my hand on her stomach before pushing her forward. Helga gasped as her tits pressed against the cold surface of the table, her ass pointed upward, her skirt barely enough to cover it. But even that much of coverage was abhorrent to me. With my strength, ripping off her skirt was simply trivial, leaving Helga completely naked under Titania's gaze.

"W-we need to work on the wards," Titania stammered, a spectacular blush covering her face as her mouth fell open, her earlier coldness destroyed completely. I could feel her emotional-blocker trying to calm her down, but with the blocks in place, it failed to gather enough power to renew its strength, getting weaker every passing second. At this moment, Titania was nothing more than an innocent schoolgirl.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 89%]

[+500 Experience]

[Achievement: Daring Display. Take a risky position to seduce a potentially hostile target. +2 Charisma, +500 Experience]

In one smooth movement, I thrust my hips forward, sliding inside Helga once again, which had been surprisingly difficult because she had tightened significantly as her naked body was displayed in front of one of her idols, reducing her to a simple slut. Impressively, she still managed to give a broken explanation about the planned improvements. Less impressively, Titania could only stare as my hands clutched her hips as I thrust rhythmically, each push shaking the table, one of the documents on the corner toppling on the floor.

"Do you mind picking it up," I said to Titania as I gestured at the file.

[+3 Speech]

Titania did so with an absent-minded nod and left her seat, taking a couple of steps before she leaned forward to pick up the file on the floor, a string of moves that brought her much closer to Helga's body. Titania pulled back after an absent-minded second, but very slowly, her eyes firmly stuck on the location where my shaft disappeared inside Helga repeatedly.

Unconsciously, she bit her lips as she watched, no doubt remembering how her own body had

stretched under my attention just a few days ago, where she had lost her virginity under my ingenious treatment. She sat back, but her legs stayed suspiciously close, rubbing against each other in an attempt to quench her growing arousal. It would result in the opposite effect of what she desired, but from the way she watched us, hypnotized, I was willing to bet that she wasn't aware of that particular fact.

Helga's explanations slowly lost their vigor, proving that even her bookworm tendencies had their limit. She grabbed the edges of the table in an effort to handle my merciless fucking, each push making it harder for her to think... Her ass jiggled with each smash, the sound of flesh hitting flesh filled the room, loud enough to suppress the occasional word Helga could utter, finally removing all pretenses of the moment.

"Oh, yes," Helga moaned in joy. "Harder, faster, fill me!"

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 93%]

[+500 Experience]

"As you wish," I said before turning my gaze to Titania, curious of her reaction. Surprisingly, she didn't even comment on the sudden change, too fascinated at the scene, her lips covered with bite marks of her own doing. Without a warning, I spanked Helga's ass. Helga moaned, while Titania flinched at the sudden move, her eyes meeting with mine. "Mana transfer requires a lot of effort, as you remember," I reminded her, and her delicious blush intensified further, clashing with her raven black hair.

"I - I see," she stammered. "Can't we just wait for her mana to recover?" she added, finally managing to gather a wisp of will.

"Impossible, we need to finish this as soon as possible before we go and visit the Headmistress. The necromancer incursion is of vital importance. We can't delay," I said, which made her expression shift. The explanation was ridiculous, but Titania, battling against her unfamiliar rush of arousal, was not in a position to push back against it, helplessly nodding in response.

"Let's change the position a bit, to make sure we get a better mana flow, I said even as I pushed back my chair, and sat down. Helga jumped up to my lap immediately, facing at me while her ass pointed at Titania, giving her the uninterrupted view of my shaft disappearing inside her repeatedly. She was even slicker, making me groan as I slipped inside her, spreading her wide.

[+1 Speech]

After another searing kiss, I hooked my arms around her waist, and let her lean back, her tits thrusting to the ceiling, swaying sexily with my every push, giving Titania an even better show. Time lost its meaning as I slammed inside her again and again, enjoying the way she trembled against my body, while she finally shuddered under the effects of an explosive orgasm, her moans filling the room.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 98%]

[+600 Experience]

I gave a glance at Titania, who was watching us with widened eyes, trying to process a scene she never imagined let alone expecting to come across, her expression radiated a horrified fascination along with ever-increasing arousal. Her hands were clutched on her desk, her fingers pale with pressure, like she was trying to convince herself it was just a dream. Of course, that didn't prevent her legs from rubbing furiously against each other in the hope to attain an unfamiliar high.

She deserved an even better show, I decided as Helga trembled under the effects of the arousal. I whispered to Helga's ear to warn her before standing up, and her legs wrapped around my waist immediately to support herself, easily hanging on me as I started walking around in the room, providing Titania with our view from several angles. "You like it, don't you," I whispered into Helga's ear, using a small flare of mana to make sure Titania doesn't hear it. "You like it when Titania watches you, helpless, wishing to be in your place, but lacking the courage to admit it, and replace your slutty ass."

"I do," Helga answered even as she picked up even more speed, her moans rising unbidden. It was like beautiful music, aggressively rising toward its crescendo. Luckily, I was already on the edge, so I had the perfect way to accompany her beautiful music. I exploded inside her, filling her with my seed, her body responding with trembling helplessly...

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 100% - Final Stage Completed +20000 Exp]

[Permanent Perk Established: Mana Regeneration]

[Permanent Perk Established: Skill Share]

[New Perk: Teleportation]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Master Arcana, Grandmaster Elemental (5), Basic Mana Manipulation]

“Finally,” I grunted even as I selected Arcana for my next ability, because my various illusions and supporting skills were lagging behind. Helga’s mouth opened in shock, no doubt trying to process her most recent achievement gain, very similar to Cornelia had acquired, giving five points for each mental stat and two points for each physical stats. Even under my touch, I could feel her getting stronger.

“You’re finally filled to the brim,” I said mockingly as I let her step on the floor, my seed dripping down her legs.

“Yes, I am,” she answered with a matching smirk as she turned and walked toward the table, uncaring of her nakedness as she leaned down, and cast her illusion once more, gasping at her own performance. She was lucky that Titania was too distracted to actually notice the huge jump in her abilities to cast illusions.

Meanwhile, as Helga explained the rest of the possible improvement areas to Titania, I called the details of her abilities to finally examine it directly.

[Helga - Level 12/17 - 85%

Skills: Expert Arcana, Expert Magical Theory, Expert Spellcrafting, Basic Research, Basic Mana Manipulation

Perks: None

Strength: 4 / Precision: 6 / Agility: 5 / Speed: 5 / Endurance: 8

Charisma: 12 / Perception 13 / Manipulation: 14 / Intelligence: 22 / Wisdom: 17]

Overall, I was satisfied with her distribution. She was weak on combat ability, but it didn’t matter with my presence. Especially with her latest stat boost, even with her poor skills, she had sufficient ability to defend herself against an emergency. It was especially important with the new perk, Teleportation, which was supposed to be a very difficult ability. I didn’t know the exact limits, or the way it worked, but I was confident that I could figure it out.

As I considered the implications of the new perk, Helga quickly finished explaining the rest of the points, Titania yet to recover from her shock. And as much as I wanted to walk behind Helga for a second session, I decided to take pity on Titania. Also, Helga was about to finish her

explanation, and with that complete, I didn't have an excuse for a repeat.

"I hope it was helpful," I said even as I gave her robe to Helga, but left everything else on the floor. She smirked as she put the robe on, fixing it so that her nakedness underneath wasn't peeking.

"Very," Titania managed to stammer, doing her best to hide her frustration —and failing spectacularly. "Is there anything else?" she added, trying to kick me away.

"Actually, there is," I said as I pulled one of the earth gems from my pocket, testing Titania. She tried to look ignorant, but she couldn't prevent a shocked gasp —a very obvious one, thanks to her emotional control being ruined through my interference. "However, your talk with the headmistress about the wards are more important. Just let me escort my sweet assistant back to her room, and we can talk about it another day. Send another message when you have some time to discuss," I said to her, however, as I did so, destroyed the blocks I had established on her emotional blocker. I didn't want her to have that discussion with the headmistress impaired, mostly because I didn't want the Headmistress getting suspicious. After all, I could easily apply the same trick the next time.

Then, I turned and left the room without even asking for her permission.

[+3 Speech]

Helga leaned against the wall the moment I closed the door. "That was..." she murmured in a trembling voice, exhaustion and excitement battling.

I leaned in for a kiss, even as I magically monitored the room, watching as Titania let out a frustrated growl, burning the remaining clothes of Helga with one spell, followed by slamming her desk. Even more interesting, she stood up and walked away while removing her robe on the way, showing just how frustrated she was feeling. Even better, she slammed the bedroom door behind her.

"That was just a start," I whispered to Helga as I chuckled, dragging her away. As much as it was tempting to go back to her room for the main course, things would be much more delicious once she had time to experience the aftermath of our show without the clutch of her emotional isolator. "Pity that we still need some time for the main course..."

[Level: 27 Experience: 356000 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3699 / 3699 Mana: 4814 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [80/100]

Master Arcana [75/100]

Advanced Speech [42/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 12/17]

Chapter Sixty-Nine

Helga barely managed to suppress her cheerful mood until we were safely behind the sound-suppressing ward in my room until she exploded in cheerful laughter. “It was ... amazing!” she exclaimed as she jumped up, her legs wrapping around my waist as she started kissing. “I can’t believe that we had sex in front of the legendary Head Librarian while I taught her warding, and she just watched us! You’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” she exclaimed as her lips closed around.

“And you are to me, sweetheart,” I answered. Unlike her statement, mine wasn’t completely true, but it was sufficiently accurate. Regardless of everything, Helga held a special place in my heart, and her progress made me happy. “What about your recent power-up?”

“I still can’t believe it’s not a dream,” she gasped as she looked at the distance, no doubt calling her stats. “A total thirty-five stat points at once, distributed evenly across my stats. Even in the stories, I never read something like this. It should be impossible.”

I smirked. “You should have learned by now. Nothing is impossible for me.”

In response, she kissed me extendedly as we stumbled toward the bed. Since she was wearing only her robe, it was very easy to shed that halfway, so when I threw her on the bed, she was deliciously naked. “Yes, nothing is impossible for you,” she gasped, as I slid inside her.

One of the conveniences of my direct access to her stat was to have a better understanding of the current position of her level. Since she was already at eighty-five percent, it meant that just three thousand points of mana were enough to give her another level, a number I could easily generate without depleting my mana reserves even without factoring in my regeneration. With two instances of regeneration permanently active, I could easily recover it in ten minutes.

My perks were truly game-changers.

Even as I slid inside Helga once more, I couldn’t help but think about the source of my abilities. From what I could decipher from some of the most important achievements, I could understand that it was somehow linked to the past, well before the disaster that marked the beginning of the known history. I was yet to unearth anything about those supposed disasters, let alone the world before the disasters —though to be fair, recently I had much more urgent issues that took my time. I made a note to make more thorough research once the most immediate problems were resolved.

And my current most immediate problem was the sexy blonde that was laying in front of me, her legs parted, her entrance glittering invitingly. However, just as I was about to delve deep, I heard a knock on the door. How inconvenient, I thought even as I cast a spell to check the identity of my visitor, only to relax.

It was Aviada.

I walked to the door, much to Helga's annoyed glare. "Can't you just send her away?" she said even as she sat on the edge of the bed, her arms crossed under her breasts, a frown on her face. It was clear she was trying to look annoyed, but that made her look sexier.

"I can," I answered, smiling wider. "But I won't." Why would I, when watching them bicker was so fun?

I opened the door, and looked at the brunette beauty on the other side of the door. As usual, she was wearing her combat outfit, which was not exactly feminine, but with a major difference. This time, she was wearing a leather vest, and she had unbuttoned it quite deeply, creating a delicious cleavage. "I came to take back my sword," Aviada said, but her inviting smirk suggested ulterior motives in her visit.

"Perfect timing," I said as I gestured her to walk in.

Aviada did so, but her seductive smile melted when she walked into the main room. "Hmmpf," she gasped as she glanced at Helga, trying to look dismissive, but failing in the process. Her jealousy was clear.

Helga just smirked as she leaned back, her hands on the bed as she gave a better pose to Aviada to make her even more jealous. "Do you have anything to say?"

"Why would I be jealous?" Aviada answered even though she looked slightly self-conscious. She was clearly being affected by Helga's radical increase in Charisma, which didn't change her looks, but changed her demeanor quite a bit. Of course, Aviada was a straightforward person, so chose to deal with her problem in a straightforward manner. Her hand reached to the already loosened string of her top that was holding it together, and pulled it free, revealing her perky body underneath. She might not have the assistance of Helga's Charisma advantage, but her amazing physical stats, combined with her endless exercising, turned her body into a masterpiece.

Helga looked at her, but her attempt to look disdainful was no more effective than Aviada's attempt to hide her jealousy.

I just stood there, trying not to laugh out loud. Despite their aggressive demeanor, they weren't exactly hating each other, it was more of a soft competition, which was a nice benefit of our time together hunting and our desperate battle against a band of necromancers. Shared danger—and shared bed— had a way of cutting down the hostilities.

Of course, seeing the potential amusement, I didn't say anything, and let them bicker. After a couple of angry words, Aviada pulled off her top, and her pants and underwear followed soon after, matching Helga in nakedness. "Jealous?" she asked gloatingly.

"Maybe a bit," Helga suddenly murmured shyly, which took the wind off Aviada's sails. She looked at Helga questioningly. "Well, you do have a very tight body. Sometimes, I feel a bit..."

"Don't be like that," Aviada answered immediately, her gaze turning soft. "You're very beautiful as well. Your soft skin, your silky hair, and your elegance..."

Helga looked like she was about to accept her explanation when I stepped behind Aviada and whispered her ear. "Why don't you go and apologize to her more intimately," I whispered, loudly enough to be heard from Helga, which made her blush intensely. Aviada was not much better. It wasn't our first threesome, but the other attempt had been driven by my aggressive control, and I played the main role. This time, I was asking them to start, while I stayed as a spectator for a while.

Aviada didn't move, frozen in sudden indecision. Helga's sudden blush was not much better. "Go on," I said as I slapped Aviada's ass without a warning. "Go and help your friend, she's feeling self-conscious."

Despite their matching blushing looks, Aviada stumbled toward Helga, slowly at first, but getting more sure-footed the nearer she got. "Why don't you lay down," she whispered even as she put her hand on Helga's forearm gently, still hesitant.

"S-sure," Helga stuttered as she looked at Aviada hesitantly before laying back, her eyes pointing at the ceiling, trembling softly. It was clear that her thoughts were wondering as much as her eyes, dancing between me and Aviada. Aviada was not much better. Still, she let her hand wander over Helga's supine body, slowly.

It was her shoulder at first, then her sides. When she arrived at her stomach, Helga trembled softly. "Is this okay?" Aviada asked, trembling.

"Yes," Helga said simply while she glanced at me, while I had unzipped my pants and revealed my raging boner, and my fingers already around it. Seeing Helga shiver, Aviada also turned and

noticed my activities, her smile suddenly turning confident. Apparently, my arousal gave them all the confidence they needed, because Aviada's touch was much more confident as her hand passed the valley between Helga's breasts, reaching to her neck for a moment before dipping back.

As Aviada's fingers delved deep into Helga's tits, Helga bit her lips, trying to contain a moan, only to fail spectacularly. Even more impressively, her legs parted open, revealing her glistening womanhood. Only for a moment though, as the next second, her legs met together, rubbing against each other mercilessly in an effort to quench her growing arousal. As seconds passed, her hesitancy melted.

Her nipples hardened with each passing second, enough to resist Aviada's touch momentarily as she squeezed them. Unlike Helga, Aviada was not gushing with arousal, but also she hadn't been just subjected to an amazing sexy encounter under the watchful eyes of her idol, so it was understandable.

Helga lay obediently as her wetness grew to a desperate point, and she tried to reach her entrance, her eyes closed. Aviada looked at me questioningly. I shook my head, asking her to stop Helga. The impact of the beautiful scene would get much lower if she were to be allowed to solve her own problems.

Aviada proved to be a sweet little soldier and grabbed Helga's wrist before her hand could reach between her legs. She whimpered helplessly, but followed Aviada's silent order without a complaint, keeping her eyes closed.

Excellent.

She gasped in disappointment when Aviada pulled her hand from her tits, but that didn't last long when her fingers landed on her tummy. Aviada explored the softness of her tummy while she busied herself with soft sighs, interrupted by occasional moans. And surprisingly, rather than delving deep, Aviada kept her movements slow, proving that she had learned quite a bit from our earlier interactions.

Our very special, very beautiful interactions.

Still, I would have been disappointed if she followed that direction forever. After all, her directness was one of the special things about her. Luckily, Aviada's instincts were alive and well, and when her fingers finally reached the treasure spot between Helga's legs, she assaulted Helga with sudden aggression. Her two fingers disappeared through Helga's entrance, hooked

to attain the maximum impact, her existing sensitivity working against her.

Helga kept her eyes firmly closed as she enjoyed the treatment, ignoring our presence blatantly to focus on her sensations, though I wasn't unhappy about it. The pure eroticism it created was much superior to other aspects. Even better, her idle hand finally landed on her own perky breasts, slowly teasing herself, letting her moans mix with Helga's.

I continued to pump myself as I watched Helga treating Aviada's touch as electric, squirming helplessly under her merciless assault.

Aviada was too distracted to notice when Helga sneaked her hand between Aviada's legs, but it was impossible for her to miss when Helga finally slipped them inside her. She opened her eyes as Aviada shared an enthusiastic gasp, their gazes meeting. Aviada looked questioningly. "It's not fair if I only get to play," Helga answered with a gasp.

Despite everything, they managed to surprise me when Aviada leaned down and they shared a searing kiss, their fingers still between each other's legs, pumping furiously. Such an enthusiastic show.

I couldn't help but walk closer, their arousal like sweet nectar on my nose, enjoying the passion they displayed as they were lost in each other, writhing in ecstasy.

It wasn't exactly a surprise to see them getting closer to a climax as the time passed. Helga even started shuddering under Aviada's merciless assault, but Aviada didn't stop. Nor did Helga, still pumping Aviada softly, methodically, with great contrast to Aviada's style. When she opened her eyes, she was startled to see I was hovering over her, watching their every single move with great attention. Our eyes locked, but it didn't slow her down after a brief stop, but only made her faster. I could hear her heartbeats easily.

I started to pump faster, desiring to cover her tits with my seed.

The sheer desire packed at the moment was simply unbearable. When Aviada started to shudder, it marked the end of my resistance as well. I exploded, covering Helga's tits with my seed, staining her aggressively as Aviada's toes curled visibly and her back arched. Her orgasm was powerful, though not as powerful as mine.

"Why don't you help Helga clean up," I offered to Aviada suggestively, and she didn't waste a second before leaning down and tracing her dirtied tits with her tongue, showing her readiness for more.

So delicious, I thought even as I waited for my erection to return, my mind already filled with ideas how to leverage the moment fully.

[Level: 27 Experience: 356000 / 378000

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Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [80/100]

Master Arcana [75/100]

Advanced Speech [42/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 12/17]

Chapter Seventy

Watching Aviada lick the last drops of cum from Helga's breasts was simply tantalizing. I watched with great interest as I climbed up to my bed, my shaft already coming back to life. Once seated, my shaft pressed against Aviada's leg, earning a seductive look as she felt my presence.

"Oh," she gasped seductively even as she gently bit Helga's breast at the same time. I smirked before shifting a bit, dragging my erection across Helga's belly.

"So tantalizing," Helga murmured, ready for a real encounter. "I can feel your hardness all over my body."

I smirked as I squeezed between two girls. Aviada moved to the side to give me some space, and I found myself squeezed between two beauties. "So, girls, any attention for me?" I asked.

"Greedy," Aviada commented, and Helga chuckled, but that didn't prevent them from grabbing my erection at the same time, Helga grabbing me along the base while Aviada grabbed the top. They started moving in tandem while I enjoyed the beauty of their supple bodies, completely exposed.

Their bodies were truly a marvel. I could waste days enjoying the expanse of their flesh, one fit and muscular, other soft and curvy, each more delicious than the other. Their fair skin was flushed with excitement, highlighting their curves even more. All the while, their enthusiastic treatment continued.

It was hard to resist the temptation of teasing them in turn. My hands found Helga's breasts while I twisted my neck to bury my head between Aviada's tits like a parched man diving into an oasis, earning a pair of synchronized moans. Occasionally, I raised my head to steal kisses from their ruby lips, while their bodies rubbed against mine.

"Does it feel good?" Aviada asked as her hand quickened, pumping me furiously. I nodded even as Helga followed her rhythm, my length being subjected to an amazing massage, giving me time to focus on their heaving —and respectably huge— breasts, occasionally teasing their pert nipples.

"It gets me so turned on when he touches me like that," Helga commented as she looked at Aviada, acting like I was invisible. Very intentionally, if her mischievous expression was any indicator. Earlier in our journey, I might have tried to quash such a behavior, self-conscious

about my positioning, but those days were in the past. Now, I just smirked confidently as Aviada giggled—an unfamiliar, yet beautiful tone.

“It can’t match at his expression when I finally wrap my lips around,” she added, earning a mirroring giggle from Helga.

“Not a bad idea,” Helga gasped as she immediately started to crawl down, her tongue pressing against my chest. Aviada matched her movement immediately, and they started traveling down, leaving a pair of parallel tingling lines, finally deciding to pay some real attention to my criminally-neglected erection.

A jolt of lightning pleasure passed through my body as Aviada grabbed the head of my shaft, while Helga focused on licking the base. So tender, yet so delicious.

I groaned in pleasure. It wasn’t just how it felt—though it felt amazing— but also the amazing view it created, their tits rubbing against my leg with each move with their every move, occasionally slapping hard enough to create a delicious echo. “Delicious,” Aviada gasped enthusiastically as she pulled away to breathe.

Unlike Aviada’s enthusiastic contributions, Helga pulled back after a brief interaction, watching us, utterly hypnotized while Aviada tasted me again and again, going deeper with every repeat. A couple of minutes later, Helga whispered. “That looks fun. How about I join?” she whispered.

“Go ahead,” Aviada whispered as she pulled back, but just a bit. When Helga lowered her head, she immediately followed her, and their heads at the opposite sides of my shaft, and started licking across my length, tasting and savoring the texture of every ridge and vein. They wrapped their wet lips around either side of my shaft, kissing the sensitive skin. Occasionally their lips would brush up against each other and they would exchange a playful kiss with my dick in the middle.

“Unbelievable,” I moaned, happy with the soft, playful service I was receiving. Their lips alternated to take the role around my shaft, bringing me more and more pleasure. As they did so, I once again gave my hands-free reign over their bodies, roaming and caressing mercilessly, until they started squirming helplessly.

“Maybe we should give you a better task,” Aviada suddenly offered as she pulled away from my shaft, taking a teasing trail up once again, her breasts caressing my stomach at first, then my chest. My breath was cut briefly as she pressed her tits on my face. But even that didn’t last long, as she continued to travel up, and soon, her muscular thighs on both sides of my head, and

her delicious smell hitting my nose strongly.

Helga let up on my blowjob to watch as her rival's hot core pressed down onto my expectant mouth. It was the perfect position to drive Aviada crazy with pleasure. All I could taste were the slippery-smooth texture of her nether lips and the sweet taste of her arousal. I lapped away at her enthusiastically, and the moans of her pleasure in response. It was intoxicating in a whole different way than just simply forcing her down and take her mercilessly.

I loved it.

The only disadvantage of the position was that I suddenly lost the pleasure of watching Helga at the same time, but I read them well enough to know that they were watching each other curiously as my tongue discovered the flavor of Aviada's pussy.

Aviada's moans intensified further when I grabbed her ass hard, my fingers testing the strength of her muscles. Meanwhile, Helga returned the task of serving my erection once more, bobbing aggressively. "Hmm, I'm still missing your presence in my mouth," Aviada commented suddenly and changed positions, so that rather than seeing her amazing tits, I was watching the curves of her ass. Luckily, it was equally delicious.

Aviada took a deep breath and went back to work, lowering herself down to inhale my cock, smushing her tits against my belly in the process, all the while I continued lapping her delicious core. I felt Helga's mouth move lower to make room, happily licking and sucking my sensitive balls.

It was stimulation overload. I groaned loudly, finding it more and more difficult to hold back my pending climax.

I could feel Aviada was getting close, too. She began rhythmically humping my face and I responded to her increased activity with powerful licks around her knob. Having two girls slurping on my shaft enthusiastically made concentrating on Aviada increasingly difficult, and I could tell from Aviada's stilted sucking that she was likewise having trouble staying focused. But we both powered through the pleasure and picked up the pace, our ecstatic moans muffled by each other's bodies. And luckily, Helga was up to the task, compensating for Aviada's loss of attention.

When she finally exploded, it was spectacular. She wrenched her lips off of my cock and howled in pleasure at the moon. Her pelvis spasmed against my mouth.

Seeing my poor desperate shaft suddenly unattended, Helga released my balls and focused at

the main even. She assaulted me with her warm mouth and sucked like a vacuum. That proved to be too much for me, as I finally exploded in Helga's sweet mouth, filling her mouth with my warm seed. Showing her improvement, she managed not to lose a drop, swallowing all.

Delirious in the grasp of her own climax, Aviada was too late to join the fun, gasping in disappointment. However, she was a decisive warrior, and before Helga could swallow the last drop, Aviada leaned forward and forced her tongue in Helga's mouth, stealing a load.

Spots danced in my vision as I breathed deeply, enjoying the aggressive battle in front of me for the last drop of cum. With my endurance, it didn't take long for my erection to come back to life.

"I win," Helga gasped a few seconds later, breathing hard, exhausted, but still, carrying a big smile.

Aviada frowned, an expression so excessive that it was clear it was fake. "Damn," she gasped in faux-despair. "What do I do?" Then, before Helga could react, Aviada jumped up to my lap, grinding her sopping wetness across my length. She smirked widely. "Maybe this?"

"Bitch!" Helga exclaimed as she tried to pull Aviada away, but it was no less fake than Aviada's earlier sadness. She barely made a perfunctory attempt to pull Aviada off —nor that she could actually do so considering the sheer difference between their physical capabilities. Instead, after a couple of attempts, she stayed hugging Aviada from her back, her hands gently caressing her stomach.

Seeing them playfully getting along made me happy. Our threesome had weirdly turned into a team-building activity, and I was happy about it. After all, we were facing a dangerous situation, and a warm relationship might assist me further. Aviada and Helga were a perfect duo, with their advantages conveniently covering the weaknesses of the other.

Of course, the comparative strategic advantages of their combat capabilities took secondary importance when Aviada slowly lowered herself along my shaft, devouring it bit by bit, while Helga kissed Aviada's neck playfully.

Her hot, sopping wet entrance wrapped tight around my girth, massaging the stiffness of my length the best possible way. "You feel amazing inside me," Aviada moaned loudly, earning a playful slap to her ass from Helga, followed by a moan when I suddenly cast a spell on them. It wasn't the same spell they had experienced during our threesome, but this time, it was Aviada's sensations that were being reflected back to Helga.

“Naughty,” Helga gasped in shock before continuing to kiss Aviada’s neck, shivering at the same time.

I lay on my back as I enjoyed Aviada pushing deeper and deeper along my length while enjoying the view as well. I drank the view of their enormous breasts, jiggling with each step, creating a delicious scene of solidarity even as I invaded Aviada’s delicate folds.

Deeper I invaded Aviada, louder Helga moaned, driven by the sensation-sharing spell. However, that didn’t prevent her from hugging Aviada tighter as her hands traveled higher, clamping around her breasts. Impaling a brunette while the said brunette was being played by a blonde created an extremely delicious sensation. Their back arched, mirroring each other, as the pleasure built up.

Soon, I exploded into Aviada, triggering yet another climax, and the echoes of her climax triggered Helga. Three distinct moans danced in the room, creating a delicious show as Aviada collapsed against my chest, while Helga lay next to me.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 3. Duration, 8 hours]

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Legendary Sword Mastery. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Master Swordsman (100/100)]

“That was something else,” Aviada murmured hazily, letting out another moan as I kissed her neck. “Too bad that I need to be in the training field in a few minutes.”

“You can always visit us in the night,” Helga unexpectedly offered even as she gently caressed the small of her back. It was surprising for two reasons. First, it showed that their friendship had grown even more than I had expected, even after our interesting threesome. Second, Helga taking initiative to invite someone to my room was unexpected, showing that she was already thinking of it as our room, like we were a pair of newlyweds.

I spent a flickering second on that thought, and found that I wasn’t disliking the idea.

“That would be excellent,” Aviada said. “Barracks sucks.” She rested her head against my chest for a moment before raising it back immediately. “Ah, I forget to tell, but Oeyne also sent a message, telling you to drop by if you have time. She says that she could finish the dagger much quicker if you can help her in the casting process.”

“Sounds interesting,” I commented. I decided to go. After all, I was free in the afternoon, and

the Hall of Craftsmen was the perfect location to improve my Subterfuge and Speech. Not to mention, Oeyne was a sexy, mature woman with a burning desire and an excellent skill-set, not to mention her importance as a source of experience.

Converting her from a remote friend into an ally was definitely an interesting prospect.

“The dagger?” Helga asked, and I realized that I was yet to explain to her about Oeyne. I gave her a brief breakdown of the meeting, though ignoring the massage part and focusing on the design part. Not that I was afraid of revealing my intentions about conquering such a delicious mature woman, but I had a feeling that if I did so, Helga would feel the need to prove herself, which, normally, a good thing, but I was a bit short on time.

Instead, I focused on the design of the dagger, also sharing some magical theories behind crafting. “That sounds interesting,” Aviada cut in as she stood up, her tone disagreeing with her words, “But I need to go training. Maybe I’ll drop by in the evening,” she suggested with a smirk. She quickly dressed, and left after stealing two kisses.

After she left, I continued to explain my plans about the dagger design with Helga, as despite our level gap, when it came to innovation, she was much better than me. She didn’t know much about crafting, but I had read quite a bit, and quickly distilled some major points to her.

However, as we walked, I slipped inside her, and she accepted my presence enthusiastically. It wasn’t the first time Helga was getting turned on by a complicated magical discussion. I also used our closeness to push some mana, giving her more experience. I wanted to level her up again.

[-925 Mana]

“The design of the dagger is magically promising, but do you really think she could craft that dagger?” Helga asked, interrupted by a moan as I pushed deeper.

“Franky, I don’t know,” I answered. “That’s why I need to experiment, and Oeyne is a skilled Blacksmith, with sufficient knowledge of magic to follow the designs.” Helga raised her eyebrow questioningly, but before she could comment on it, I suddenly shifted position and trapped her under me, mercilessly banging her as I delivered more and more mana inside her, flooding her mind with pleasure.

“More, more, more!” she cried enthusiastically as I flooded her soul space with mana to accompany the pleasure, and she squirmed beautifully, her soul space growing stronger, signaling another level up. I smiled in satisfaction at the results.

[Helga - Level 13/17

Skills: Master Arcana, Expert Magical Theory, Expert Spellcrafting, Basic Research, Basic Mana Manipulation]

[Level: 27 Experience: 356000 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3699 / 3699 Mana: 921 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [80/100]

Master Arcana [75/100]

Advanced Speech [42/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-One

After a quick yet very fruitful last tumble with Helga that left her laying on the bed with the consistency of melted butter, I left my room, once again dressed as a servant, moving through the crowd invisibly. When I finally arrived at the Hall, I didn't immediately want to Oeyne's room, no matter how much I wanted to drag my hands over her caramel skin. I walked around for almost three hours, changing my disguise repeatedly as I moved from section to section, trying to ferret out some secrets.

Ultimately, it wasn't very fruitful in terms of material gain. I had managed to swipe several books across many different halls, from alchemists to enchanters, but none of the books were particularly secretive—or at least, I assumed so, considering they were laying in the middle of the room, or abandoned in a corner. The real precious stuff was hidden behind the wards, and I was guessing that the top-secret items had never been brought to Silver Spires, instead kept in their exclusive guild residences.

Still, in terms of other benefits, it was extremely beneficial. I had to change my disguise several times as I slipped from one hall to another without arousing attention, and considering the dangers—being hunted by several high-class organizations—I had made incredible gains through the process.

[Subterfuge +13]

[Speech +8]

It was very useful before I was about to launch into another deal with Oeyne. I wanted her to use the earth gem I had acquired as a part of the sword she would ultimately forge, but the previous deal of providing her two sets of material for each finished product would not work. Before, I could be extravagant because the materials I had shared was ultimately not that hard to get, requiring just one hunting trip to collect.

The earth gem was not like that. It was a true treasure with a value that significantly eclipsed everything I had managed to collect. Luckily, I had the ability to renegotiate such a deal in excess.

After wasting some more time in the Hall, I finally slipped underground, toward Oeyne's room deep in the storage section, and knocked on the door with the pattern she had suggested to me the last time.

“Coming!” shouted Oeyne with a strained voice, suggesting that the previous hangover was not extraordinary. However, unlike the last time, the door didn’t open immediately. She kept me waiting for a couple of minutes before opening the door, once again greeting me with a disheveled look, wearing only a dressing gown.

Still, I had to hold back a smirk. Someone less experienced might have missed the effort that had went to today’s disheveled look. Her hair was a mess again, but this time, the mess was somehow arranged to put her face to the best benefit. Her face lacked any indicator of sleep, instead covered with a thin layer of makeup, enough to avoid the attention of a less careful man.

The dressing gown’s messy state was equally engineered. Its front was slightly open, giving the perfect glimpse of her otherwise naked chest, and one side of the bottom had ridden high enough to reveal that she was wearing panties this time.

The dark and lacy kind...

Ultimately, combined with her request, it was clear that she was prepared to impress, while trying to hide that fact. If it wasn’t for the cold, calculating glint in her eyes that was hidden for anyone but me thanks to my sharp eyes, I would have assumed that she was attracted to me. With the glint, I was inclined to believe that she had something to discuss, and wanted me to focus on her body during that talk.

Admittedly, it was a good strategy, as her body was excellent. She might be older, but her body was still at the height of her perkiness, not to mention her outrageous curves. Her caramel skin added a delicious diversity to the mix. Combined, she could have easily distracted me if it wasn’t for the rather memorable evening I shared with Cornelia, followed by the heated morning assistance by Helga and Aviada.

“Good afternoon,” I said cheerfully as I pulled the potion bottle filled with mineral solution.

“You’re amazing,” she said immediately in an honest relief as she grabbed my arm and dragged me with strength what would have left a weaker man broken. Despite her preparations, she was still hungover.

“Maybe I should pay you in hangover potions rather than materials for the next dagger,” I suggested in amusement.

“Deal,” she immediately answered without even blinking, leaving me amused, yet slightly shocked. I hadn’t expected her to value my hangover treatment so much. Maybe I should have

offered a higher price.

I was expecting her to lay on the couch we had used the last time. Instead, she continued to drag me, and soon, I found myself in her bedroom. Unlike her rough workshop, her living space was furnished expensively, filled with purple velvet curtains and some expensive-looking paintings. However, I was more interested in the occasional spots with thicker colors, suggesting that they were holding similar paintings until not too long ago.

Her gambling problem seemed to be even worse than Aviada had mentioned. Combined with her sudden lack of income after her fight with the Guilds, she must treat me as a godsend.

A nicer man might have reacted differently, but as I watched her lay on the bed before pushing her dressing gown down, giving me access to her beautiful shoulders, I had much dirtier things in mind. I could even get a glimpse of her boobs from the side, making my shaft twitch in enthusiasm.

[+50 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Taming her was suddenly sounded like a better idea.

“Hurry up,” she ordered as she looked back, giving me a seductive gaze, convincing me that she wasn’t just driven by her pain. She was intentionally trying to seduce me.

I smirked. I couldn’t wait until I could teach her the length of her mistake.

I poured a generous amount of potion into my hands and rubbed them repeatedly to warm them. However, while doing so, I cast another spell, turning the potion into a strong aphrodisiac, but one that would only act after a significant delay, starting to effect in one hour, peaking the effect in three hours.

Only then I gently pressed my fingers to her neck, caressing gently. Her moan came immediately, sexy and arousing.

But also artificial.

I smirked coldly, knowing she couldn’t see my face. She was trying to play with me, unaware of the beast she was challenging. I decided to teach her the lesson for trying to play me, especially in this particular arena.

Her moans started to have an echo of honesty even before I moved down to her shoulder. I had

already used my healing abilities to completely cure her headache, but she made no mention of it, continuing to enjoy the massage.

I focused on her shoulders, once again unleashing the full range of my massage abilities, her moans turning more honest with each passing minute. I easily resolved the knots on her shoulders. The last time, I had stopped when I arrived at her shoulders, but this time I continued, slowly focusing on her upper back. “How does it feel?” I asked. “Any discomfort?”

“You have magical fingers,” she answered lazily as she stretched under my touch, which caused her robe to slid even lower. She looked at me carefully, though tried to disguise it as an accidental one, giving me permission to be even more aggressive. However, that didn’t tempt me, because it was still a rational decision. I wanted her to crawl in delirium, begging for me to take the next step.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

At first, she was clearly unhappy with my tame movements, trying to convince me nonverbally to go down by shrugging occasionally, which pushed her dressing gown even lower. And when that didn’t work, she muttered. “Maybe you can go a bit lower, that part is giving me trouble.”

“Understandable,” I answered lazily. “After all, blacksmithing is not an easy job, no matter how strong you are.” Still, even as I said so, I moved lower only a bit, and stayed strictly in the center, avoiding getting near her breasts. Her dissatisfaction was clear as a glacier, most of it hidden below the surface, but the visible part was more than enough to signal the inherent danger.

Like a glacier, it was impossible for her dissatisfaction to survive the warmth of my erotic massage. Soon, her moans quickened once more, and unlike the previous ones, they were completely genuine. She was finally under the effects of the wonderful sensation, captured by my skillful fingers, teasing her nerve endings to evoke her thrill. She was paradoxically relaxing and stiffening at the same time. Relaxing because her exhaustion and stress melted under my fingers, stiffening because of her growing arousal.

It was cute how she thought she could keep her sudden confused expression hidden behind her mask. She had not expected her ploy to turn into a genuine seduction, which was a big mistake. Just because I hadn’t pushed the envelope the last time due to respect for her abilities, she thought that she was good enough to play in the same league.

I was more than happy to teach her the mistake she had stumbled upon.

As I moved lower, she stopped shrugging, recognizing the danger. Unfortunately for her, I had no intention of letting her passivity stop me. I pulled down her dressing gown without warning, revealing her back fully for my fingers. Unfortunately, her ass was still covered by the gown, as doing so would have been too much.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

It turned out to be the correct choice. She opened her mouth as if she was about to argue, but stopped when she realized her bottom was still covered. A strategic mistake on her part, but she was yet to realize that. “Your back doesn’t look like I expect,” I lazily commented.

“What do you mean?” she said, interrupting a moan, alarmed.

“I expected your back to be more rough and clumpy, filled with muscles. Swinging a hammer every day couldn’t be easy. But instead, your back is shapely and curvy, with muscles hidden underneath. Much sexier than I imagined,” I explained, starting normal, but turning seductive toward the end.

My soft, throaty tone made her shiver. “T-thanks,” she stammered, interrupted when I pressed at her lower back, triggering another moan. I stayed silent, and she dedicated herself to moaning as I cut free across her back, assaulting and caressing repeatedly until her moans started to get louder and louder. She bit her lips desperately to contain them, but it only made her sexier.

Soon, she fell into a dichotomy—trying to convince herself to stop, but also desiring for me to go further. Her mind was slowly drifting into complacency while the very center of her being was so aroused that I could smell.

[+200 Experience] 50% Penalty!

She clearly realized that it was going further than she intended, in feeling if not in content. If she were of right mind, she would have stopped it, but she just moaned, even when my fingers traveling dangerously close to her ass, every pass revealing more of her back by pushing the gown. Soon, I could see the edge of her panties. At this moment, I was sure that if I pulled the gown down along with her panties and plunged my fingers inside her entrance, she would have accepted it.

Unfortunately, it would also ruin my aim to teach her a lesson, and wasting all that aphrodisiac. So, without a warning, I pulled back, but not before adding a nifty spell to prevent her from climaxing easily under her own effort. Thanks to my growing magical presence, I wasn’t afraid

of being found, especially with my unrestricted access to her body. "That's it," I said as I slapped her thigh softly and walked away.

[-14 Mana]

"W-what?" she stammered.

"That's it," I repeated as I stepped out of the room. "I'll wait for you in the forge," I said as I slammed the door close. Only then I started sniggering, imagining her ridiculous response.

Once again, I killed time by reading the old notes from the bookshelf. This time, assisted by the benefits of my scooping, I had learned quite a bit more from my adventures. Then, I felt a sound-blocking ward activate. I immediately cast a spell to tunnel a convenient access point inside, eavesdropping on her. Inside, I could hear her moan and gasps, starting enthusiastic, but soon turned desperate, tinged with frustration. She was clearly doing her best to finish it herself, only to fail spectacularly. And with me waiting outside, she didn't have enough time to waste.

Fifteen minutes later, Oeyne walked in, trying to look normal, though she could have succeeded better if it wasn't for her slightly damp hair, suggesting that she had to take a shower to quench her arousal, and the stiffness of her walk. She clearly wanted to climax after my arousing massage. Her clothing could be constituted as revenge. She was wearing a leather vest and leather pants, but both of them were considerably tighter than comfortable, revealing her curves perfectly. Especially her pants, which were tight enough to reveal the shape of her panties underneath.

She was clearly trying to get revenge by showing me such an arousing sight. I just nodded softly, acting like I missed the challenge she was proposing. "Shall we start?" I asked.

"Yes, let's start," she said, challengingly, unaware of the trap she had already fallen thanks to the aphrodisiac mixed in her massage oil...

[Level: 27 Experience: 356600 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3699 / 3699 Mana: 4914 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [93/100]

Master Arcana [75/100]

Advanced Speech [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Two

I finally let my attention shift back to the strategic issues as I followed her toward the forge. In particular, why she had suddenly changed her initial estimation about the production of the dagger. “So, the last time we talked, you mentioned that you need three days to complete the dagger. Why the sudden change?” I asked.

“Is it really important?” she countered with a lazy, dismissive tone as she walked in front of me, her leather-clad hips shaking sexily with each step. However, it was her tone that caught my attention more than the beautiful dance of her hips. It was too dismissive, too even.

She was trying to hide something.

“Not really, just curious,” I answered. I decided not to confront her about it, even though the sudden change of delivery date was suspicious. Even more suspicious was the invitation to help. Previously, her determination to keep her secrets was clear, subtly but decisively rejecting my offer. Now, only a day later, she had changed her mind completely.

How interesting.

“How strong are your mana reserves?” Oeyne asked as she stood in front of the forge, a pile of processed magical reagents and an ingot of alchemical silver already prepared. “The forging process for your design is very mana intensive, and once started, it needs to be completed, otherwise, the structural matrix of the dagger would dissolve.”

“My mana reserves are quite decent, definitely top percentile,” I answered, and she nodded in satisfaction. Of course, without a qualifying statement, she no doubt assumed I was comparing myself to the students, while I was actually comparing myself to the faculty.

“Good, then forging the dagger together will be simple,” she answered. “But before starting, let’s do a practice run with a simple dagger,” she said, before grabbing an ingot of iron, completely mundane, and put it in the forge.

In a mundane forge, no matter how hot, an ingot of iron would have taken several minutes to melt. In her high-quality magical forge, it took seconds for it to reach a nice glowing heat with a soft consistency. “Watch carefully,” she ordered as she created a complicated web of arcana energy before wrapping it around the ingot, forcibly shaping it and levitating it magically to her anvil.

Once at the anvil, she kept her magic wrapped around the soft iron as she put low-quality magical ingredients inside. Due to its nature, the magical ingredients flared, pushing against the web, but she suppressed the effect forcefully through her arcana mana. Interesting technique, I noted. The working principles were simple, and the notes I had read on her shelves while waiting for her had already taught me the working principles behind it. Essentially, she was skipping several critical steps in forging through the application of the spell in a process that normally required letting the steel absorb the magic bit by bit.

Interestingly, none of the books I had swiped from the Guilds mentioned such a technique. Most of their blacksmithing content was about measuring the ideal amount of magical material for each round of forging, and possible ways to enhance effects, while guides on how to prepare said materials were spread between Alchemists and Enchanters based on the steps required and the source material used. Of course, Oeyne's technique was not purely advantageous, actually applying it required a great deal of Blacksmithing skill and Strength, not to mention some magical aptitude.

The radical difference in their approach and Oeyne's technique was interesting, and certainly explained the fight between Oeyne and the guilds. Oeyne's technique required a combination of skills and not only did it cut through the traditional Guild boundaries, but also it was much quicker to get results. They couldn't be happy about Oeyne perfecting the technique even further.

I continued watching Oeyne beating the iron of the dagger rapidly, each push smoothing the raging magical presence of the dagger. Five minutes later, a workable dagger appeared in her hands, and she dunked it in a large barrel filled with water, creating a large cloud of steam. Just as she reached for a second ingot, I cut her off. "Do you want me to try that one?" I asked, but without waiting for her to answer, snatched the iron ingot and threw it in the flames.

"Are you ready? Already?" she asked. Her shock only survived for a second, leaving its place to a cold intent to interrogate.

"Sure, as long as you just want me to maintain the spell matrix, of course," I explained rapidly. Actually, I wouldn't have minded trying my hand on blacksmithing, as while I lacked the skill, my stats should cover the deficiency, at least enough to handle crafting a simple iron dagger. However, doing so would have revealed my hand unnecessarily, so I kept hiding my hand.

Using a levitation spell, I dragged the ingot through the flames and put it in front of her, wrapping it tightly with my magic as she infused it with the magical materials. Honestly, it was even easier than I had expected, because the technique itself was rather straightforward, only

requiring me to keep the matrix stable. And while I lack the practice with it, my magical abilities were simply superior to hers, making it an easy achievement.

[+1 Arcana]

[-15 Mana]

“Not bad,” she said, impressed as she turned. “But let’s see how you handle a real challenge.” With that, she slammed her hammer on the steel much harder than the previous times, creating a flare of magic through an intentional mistake.

The strength of the flare wouldn’t even create a flicker on my spell if I didn’t allow it, but I deliberately fumbled the matrix for a second, flooding the room with a flicker of magic, before I suppressed it again, for two reasons. First —and less importantly— I wanted to look my learning curve convincing. More importantly, I wanted to have a screen to confuse her senses as I let some of my mana stick on her body, infusing her leather top.

I wanted to play with her a bit.

[+2 Arcana]

[-24 Mana]

“Try to keep the lines more stable,” she commented as she continued to beat the glowing rod of iron, missing my little trick in her concentration. With that, our trial run continued. She made a couple more mistakes, but with lower intensity, allowing me to control them easily.

However, five minutes into our practice session, she started squirming. It was barely noticeable at first. I noticed it only because I knew what to look for, a lingering gaze here, an uncomfortable shuffle there. But as my subtle magic continued to tease her already-erect nipples softly, those little tells grew into a delicious show. Her nipples hardened enough to clearly show through the texture of her leather top like it was no harder than soft velvet.

Delicious, I thought, as she finished the dagger and we moved onto another ingot. “Let’s make sure you can handle it flawlessly before we move onto the real stuff. We shouldn’t waste the real materials,” she explained, her voice carrying the slightest hitch.

At that point, I assumed that she was going to hide her arousal as much as possible, which was why I was surprised when her fingers grasped the buttons of her top, and flicked open two in quick succession, creating a deep, delicious cleavage, more appealing than the best caramel

dessert. “Working in a forge gets hot,” she explained with a smirk when I looked at her with a quirked eyebrow, surprised by her action.

“I see,” I answered, not bothering to hide my gaze as I focused on the recently-revealed caramel valley, matching her smirk. If she was going to play off her arousal like that, why should I play stupid, after all. A brief consideration later, I decided to push her as well. “You know what, you’re right. The heat is really uncomfortable,” I explained as I pulled off my shirt, revealing my muscular torso.

She was shameless enough to match my hungry gaze as she visually explored the curves of my torso. “It’s hard to believe you’re a mage.”

“I’m a surprising man,” I answered even as created another spell matrix to stabilize the iron ingot, flexing my body slightly as I did so to give the perfect pose, stretching my Charisma to the limits. “Let’s work,” I added with another smirk when I noticed her getting absent-minded just for a moment. I was proud of my body, and with the assistance of my Charisma, it was no wonder even an experienced woman like Oeyne was being affected.

“Let’s work,” she reiterated, but before she continued, she popped open another button, turning her already impressive cleavage into something borderline obscene, showing that she wasn’t exactly hung up on turning up the heat. Her hammer slammed repeatedly, her tits jiggling with each repeat, making my shaft rock hard, so much that I would be afraid about the final score of our little game if I hadn’t already rigged the game, making her loss a certainty.

[+300 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I could see a subtle blush creeping up her neck as she continued her work, missing the significance of her growing arousal. Unfortunately, she still needed to get to the perfect temperature, so I turned my focus on the task at hand, namely, the spell matrix she had taught me. Now that I got a feeling about its objective, I started modifying it, weakening some aspects while strengthening the other parts.

[+2 Arcana]

[-65 Mana]

“You’re doing it wrong,” she commented as she looked at me, with a slight hint of disappointment coloring her looks. Apparently, she valued competency quite a bit even when it came to her pleasurable activities.

Luckily, I wasn't screwing anything up. "No, actually, I'm not," I corrected her. "Try making a big flare," I offered. "It'll hold better than your rudimentary structure. I bet that no matter what you do, you won't be able to break it through your blacksmithing skills."

"Oh, really," she murmured, the shine back in her gaze, with a considerable boost. I met with excitement instead of anger I had been expecting after I challenged her expertise. "You're willing to bet on that, huh. What do you have in mind?"

I observed her sudden change of demeanor. Apparently, Aviada undersold her gambling habits. "Well," I murmured with a wide smirk. "Since you're going to lose, it doesn't feel fair for me to make the bet. You should be the one to set the bet."

She laughed. It was a clear, crystal laugh that made her body shake repeatedly —and considering her deep cleavage, creating a delicious view. "It's nice to see the empty confidence of youth. How about if you lose, you're going to help me with a task. With your skill, it shouldn't take more than a week, maybe two," she said in a manner that could have been easily mistaken as nonchalance, but my senses were too sharp to miss the subtle tightening of her tone. She clearly wanted my help, for something important if she was willing to sacrifice extract quite a bit of wealth off me. It made sense, especially her sudden decision to teach me about her secret techniques.

"Hmm, sounds interesting," I said. "A bit soft, though. Still, if you're going to be a coward, I can only ask you to forge my sword for free. Anything more would be unfair."

As expected, my words triggered her quite a bit, enough for her to slam her hammer to the anvil, creating another flare of magic as it damaged its structure. I used the opportunity to turn the heat on the little trick that was making her more and more aroused. "Big words for a little boy. Do you really think you can handle my full effort," she said.

"Of course I can, little girl," I said, mocking her right back, though I avoided mentioning her real age despite her dig. No need to ruin the deliciously heated atmosphere that way. "How about if you lose, you give me a massage. Body to body," I offered, letting my eyes dangle down her body, cutting through the last flickering sense of professionalism.

"And if you lose, you stay in here for the night, following my every order," she said with a smirk. "Every, order," she repeated just to highlight her words.

"Deal," I said as I raised my hand, casting the spell matrix again. Outwardly, it wasn't very different from the initial form, with some cosmetic changes. However, the theoretical basis of it

was completely changed. It was harder to cast skill-wise, but much stronger. “You have five minutes, do your best,” I said to her with a challenging smile.

“I only need one hit,” she boasted as she raised her hammer. Over her head, the hammer started to shine as she gathered her strength, and she slammed it. If I was using the matrix at the same proficiency I had displayed earlier, the flare of magic would have destroyed my restraints. Instead, it didn’t even make it stretch. She frowned as she slammed twice more, only to fail both times.

“Are you finished with the warm-up yet,” I asked her even as I gestured with my other hand, and levitated a chair, and sat with my legs crossed, just to drive the message better. It was a sharper challenge, but I was willing to risk it.

“Yes,” she said with a frosty tone, though her heaving chest didn’t agree with her coldness. She pulled another magical ingredient and threw it on top of the dagger, this time much stronger. Essentially, it was cheating, as a fresh ingredient would increase the strain several times, but ultimately, I was confident in my skills, so I said nothing. Since I had already taken the step to push her further, proving my capability was the better idea.

[-126 Mana]

[+1 Arcana]

She continued beating the dagger, each hit stronger than the previous one, shaking her body beautifully. Each hit caused a flare of magic, giving me the cover to magically tease her further, softly tickling her breasts, a subtle intervention that could have been easily mistaken for the way her tits were rubbing against her leather top as she beat the anvil aggressively, trying to break my confinement structure.

Despite her attempts, every flare was successfully fed back to the dagger, strengthening it instead. Through that loop, it was even easier to contain the flares, keeping me from wasting too much mana. Her magical abilities were good enough to realize that fact, and she started alternating her rhythm in an effort to disrupt that effect, but got only partial success. More interestingly, as she did so, she forgot one important detail. Her leather top was already not optimized to hold her perky tits, and the amazing cleavage she had created didn’t help. When she delivered a particularly strong hit, one of her tits popped out of her top, creating a delicious view.

[+300 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Before she could fix it, I made sure to flicker my spell, not enough to lose the bet, but give her just enough hope that she might ultimately win the bet if she distracted me sufficiently. Her hungry smile revealed that she understood that point.

“Damn, this top is too tight,” she murmured as she pulled it off, giving me the delicious view of her naked upper body. As she smashed the anvil, again and again, her tits jumped up and down, creating a delicious view for me. My spell matrix flickered with each beat, like she was succeeding in her task, but never taking the last step, my face stiff with a fake strain. Then, five minutes finally elapsed.

“And, time,” I said with a smirk as I met her gaze before letting my eyes drop down to her spectacular tits that defied her age and the gravity at the same time proudly. I couldn’t wait to see if they had the caramel taste like their color suggested. “It seems that I’m the victor.”

“It seems the case,” she answered grudgingly, but despite her defeat, her eyes were burning with excitement, Understandable considering she was on the edge of a climax, unaware the last step was cut off by a magical chasm. “Should we continue with our task,” she murmured as she grabbed her top once again, but didn’t put it on.

“Nope,” I said even as I turned and walked toward her bedroom. “I want my massage first.” I walked away, excited about the service I was about to receive.

“As you wish,” she called from behind as she followed me...

[Level: 27 Experience: 357200 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3699 / 3699 Mana: 4914 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [93/100]

Master Arcana [81/100]

Advanced Speech [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Three

Even as I walked toward Oeyne's bedroom, I was pleasantly surprised to see that my aim of getting her in the bed was working even better than I hoped. Of course, a part of it was her intention, she was clearly trying to seduce me as I tried to do so as well.

The change of pace was very much welcome.

I knew that her attempts were not about my handsomeness —or, at least, not entirely so. Her sudden offer to share her forging secrets suggested she was in a pickle big enough that she couldn't be sure to pull me in the mix without a personal connection. And considering the amount I was willing to pay her to craft my weapons, she had considerable leverage, but clearly it was insufficient for her request if her sudden change of attitude was any indicator.

My sixth sense was telling me that whatever the issue was, it was going to be dangerous, so much that, if it was just a few days ago, I wouldn't have taken the risk. However, with the amazing benefits I received thanks to completing the companion process, as well as the last few levels, I was confident to face risks.

If I could risk fighting against the necromancers, I could handle whatever problems a blacksmith could have.

With that in mind, I once again focused on the present. In her bedroom, I did two things. First, I put my hand to my pack before casting a biomancy spell, creating a unique massage oil that would work excellently to relax and lubricate me at the same time. Second, without even turning my back, I removed all of my clothes except my underwear without looking back, and lay on her bed, my face buried on her pillow, which conveniently hid my smile after I heard Oeyne's shocked hiss.

I was proud of my muscular body, one didn't look like a mage at all. Oeyne clearly liked what she saw, even though she was surprised by it.

Still, my heartbeat got stronger when I heard the sound of leather hitting the floor, suggesting that she had got rid of her leather pants as well. Since she had already removed her top, it meant that she was standing only in her panties. But before I could even imagine that, another sound reached my ear, this time much softer, like a whisper.

Her panties hit the floor as well.

How interesting, I thought even as I listened to the sound of her applying oil to her hands. “Are you ready, big boy?” she whispered as she pressed her soft hands to my back —which was rather interesting considering her job, but considering the abilities of the System, it wasn’t completely unexpected. However, while her touch was soft, it didn’t mean that the strength behind it was delicate. Her hands wandered over my back rapidly with a pressure that would have cracked me if I was still level ten, though, despite that, it wasn’t unpleasant. Clearly, she was decently skilled in massaging.

“Of course,” I whispered back lazily. “I can handle whatever you can dish, no problem.”

“Oh, is that so?” she murmured. “Those words seem like a challenge for me.”

“Take it as a challenge if you want to taste defeat once more,” I answered smugly. She didn’t answer, though the sudden tightening of her hands was answer enough. Her pride clearly didn’t appreciate the reminder of her recent loss, nor did she like the implications about the current challenge.

I felt a momentary worry when her hands left my body, but that worry was squished when I heard the sound of oil pouring. Still, it was weird, as she was pouring far too much oil. Apparently, she decided to compensate with excessive oil, which, unfortunately, was an amateur mistake. I prepared myself for an unsatisfactory massage experience.

Only to be surprised when I felt her climb on the bed, and immediately after, sitting on my back, her oil-covered skin teasing mine. Her torso pressed against my back, with a pair of globe-shaped presences pressing against both sides of my neck, once again covered with a generous amount of massage oil.

Generous, but definitely not wasted.

[+100 Experience] 50% Penalty!

She said nothing, but her pride was apparent as her delicious body rubbed against mine as she slowly moved down, as if she was trying to map her curves on my body. I let out a satisfied moan, conveying my thoughts and encouraging her at the same time. I was surprised by her initiative, bringing the massage to such a heated level so soon. I couldn’t help but feel curious about what she had in mind the next.

For the next few minutes, she glided up and down on my back, treating me to a delicious massage through the pressure of her breasts. I lay without saying anything, enjoying the glorious, uninterrupted treatment. Then, she spoke once more. “Switch,” she ordered even as

she grabbed my arm, making me turn.

I was more than happy to turn under her control, enthusiastic about catching the sight of her glistening caramel body, but this time, my plans had been ruined. Just as I was about to catch a glimpse, she pressed a towel on my face, cutting my sight. How quaint, I thought in amusement. I could have dealt with it easily, but I decided to take the passive route.

Partially because I genuinely enjoyed the change in the pattern, being seduced rather than playing the aggressor, however, it was still mostly about watching her squirm. The spell to prevent her from climaxing was still on, ensuring that no matter how aroused she felt, she wouldn't be able to reach orgasm before I let her. I was curious just how much it would take for her to reach that point.

[+150 Experience] 50% Penalty!

"How do you feel?" she whispered into my ear even as her tits rubbed against my chest, enough to turn my underwear into hell.

"Pretty relaxed," I answered, my tone much lazier than my actual feelings to tease her, and if her stiffening was to be taken as an answer, it worked as well as I could have hoped.

"Relaxed?" she questioned as she started to lower herself, and suddenly, I felt her hand pressing against my bulge. "That doesn't feel relaxed. I better help you." Then, without waiting for a response, she dragged them down, freeing my erection. "You don't mind, do you?" she asked with a playful, exaggerated giggle.

"You're the boss," I answered, but I failed to maintain my tone of disinterest when I felt the unfamiliar yet recognizable presence of her amazing breasts wrapping around my shaft, sliding easily thanks to the thick layer of massage oil. "That's nice," I murmured.

She giggled, but said nothing as she abandoned all pretenses of a massage and focused on my erection, teasing it with her tits, occasionally assisted by her tongue, enhancing my pleasure build-up significantly.

"You're enjoying the treatment, right," she murmured as she suddenly changed position, and lay next to me, replacing her tits with her hand. She pulled the towel off, letting me enjoy the glistening caramel wonder that was her body for a while, before pinning me under her chocolate-colored irises. She hovered above me, which presented her curvy body to the best effect, tempting me to eat her.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“It should be obvious,” I answered with a satisfied smirk.

“It is,” she answered with a matching smirk, though I could see frustration behind her gaze. I would have assumed that it was the frustration of her denied orgasm, but one important detail changed my mind. It wasn’t her unmet arousal, or at least, not only that. If it was so, she would have pushed things further rather than slowing things down.

No, she wanted something, and she decided it was the perfect time to do so.

“I’m sure you would like to make it a regular thing,” she whispered as she lay next to me, trapping my arm between her amazing tits while continuing her hand job.

“Well, to be frank, I wouldn’t mind. If this is the starter and not the main course, of course,” I said, my smirk widening even further.

The shine of interest in her eyes was impossible to fake. “That can be arranged,” she whispered. “How’s your schedule for the next few days.”

“A bit complicated,” I admitted. “But not so bad that I can’t squeeze a few short visits,” I suggested, and her expression flickered before she could recover. It was an important tell. Whatever she was trying to convince me, she needed it soon.

For a moment, she said nothing, just quickening the treatment of her hand. Then, she shifted, kissing my neck before trailing down, leaving a trail of kisses, tracing my muscles back and forth, paying particular attention to my abs. When she arrived at my crotch, she gave me a challenging smile and whispered. “Is there a way you can adjust your schedule a bit?” she whispered before giving a seductive lick across my length, her eyes firmly locked to mine as she did so.

When she swallowed my length without a warning, I was unable to contain the gasp of pleasure that escaped my mouth. The reason, the smooth way she swallowed my shaft, devouring half of its length in one move, suggesting that she hadn’t had a tame youth. I watched as she bobbed her head repeatedly, each repeat pushing her deeper and deeper, and soon, she was swallowing two-thirds of my length with each repeat.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“And what if I need you to stay more than a few short visits, to give me a hand?” she finally

asked after five minutes of enthusiastic sucking, but I could hear the strain as she asked that.

It couldn't be easy to stay on the edge for all that time.

"Depends," I answered lazily, without bothering to change my lazy position. "What exactly you need me to do?" I asked. I was rather happy with her service, both in terms of forging and in terms of 'massage', but neither was critical enough for me to commit to a task before I knew the truth behind it, especially since she was being very careful not to reveal that particular aspect. Not when I was already beset with enemies on multiple fronts.

Rather than answering immediately, she continued to suck me, alternating between the shaft and the balls, however, that amazing service only made me more suspicious. The more she avoided, the more my sixth-sense warned me about the underlying dangers. At this point, the smartest thing to do was to ask her to stop, put on my clothes, and leave, never to return.

However, as usual, I chose the more dangerous path, and continued to lay as she devoured me.

It took five minutes for her to speak once more. "Nothing much," she murmured. "I just have a challenging forging job, and your assistance will be useful," she said. "It will be exhausting, very exhausting, and will probably require at least three days of forging, without even an opportunity to sleep. It takes a real man to handle such a grueling task."

"That seems like a tough job," I murmured, admiring her simple, yet effective trick. What she was asking for was indeed huge. For a normal mage, casting full power for three days would be indeed disastrous. The experience itself would have been exhausting enough, but the aftereffects of such effort on the body would put a normal mage out of commission for a week, maybe even more. Altogether, it was a sufficient reason for her to make that request in the bed, especially considering our mutual attraction made it an amusing challenge rather than a degrading chore.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

It was what made her offer insidiously clever. By asking it in such a distracting moment, while giving me a very convincing reason for it to be reasonable, she did her best to prevent me from digging deeper. Her dig on my manhood, while obvious, was also a nice touch, adding another layer of distraction. If it wasn't for my own mastery in deception, I would have missed the slight quickening of her tone as she explained, indicating she was trying to hide something.

[Subterfuge +2]

Something big.

“Interesting,” I murmured. “It will be tough, but I trust my mana reserves. I doubt it would take more than two days,” I said lazily, like I had already accepted it. The smile that tugged visible despite her best effort showed her elation. Of course, with my regeneration and my ability to replenish her mana, I would be surprised if it took more than a day, even less if I could make decent progress in our companion process. “What are we going to forge?”

“A shield,” she answered, her tension draining even more as she answered.

“And who’s the customer?” I asked.

That made her stiffen. It was again a subtle movement, but for me, she might as well be waving a huge flag of alarm. My digging finally hit the vein. “That’s confidential,” she murmured.

“Oh, really?” I asked even as I lifted myself on the bed for the first time, slowly and deliberately, alerting her. She raised her body as well, but before she could react, I grabbed her shoulders, and pushed her on the bed, and put my hand between her legs, reversing the situation. “Who’s the customer?” I repeated the question, slowly and deliberately, even as my fingers slipped inside her.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Her lips pressed shut, realizing her mistake, but that only galvanized me further.

An interesting interrogation was awaiting me...

[Level: 27 Experience: 358700 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3699 / 3699 Mana: 4914 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [81/100]

Advanced Speech [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Four

For a long and glorious moment, I stopped to enjoy the looks of the busty beauty with caramel-colored skin lying under me, gasping in a mixture of anticipation and dread as she awaited my promised interrogation. From her brown eyes, I could read a hint of panic as she realized the lost control of her little game of seduction, mixed with an unwillingness to change the course.

“So, we were talking about the identity of our customer,” I whispered into her ear as I leaned over her, letting my chest press against hers.

“Is it really important,” she gasped even as she put her hand on my shoulder, dragging softly. “I can think of several more interesting things to do rather than wasting our time talking about the customers.” As she said so, she arched her back, making the sight of her body even more delicious.

“That does sound tempting,” I answered lazily, enjoying the way hope flared in her eyes, straining her willpower. After all, she was still suffering from my little trick that prevented her from cumming, while her body was covered in aphrodisiac massage oil.

It was delicious torture.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“Doesn’t it?” she said as her hands started exploring my body.

“It does, but the identity of the customer is more important,” I countered. “After all, we’re going to spend quite a bit of time together as we forged and aligned a personalized sword,” I commented.

“Yes, but don’t worry-” she started before she cut herself, frustrated. “I mean, what are you talking about!”

I chuckled. “Come on, sweetie. It’s obvious that we’re going to spend quite a bit of time with our customer, and creating a personalized weapon is the only reason to spend extended time together.”

“But how could you know that we’re going to spend time together?” she followed up.

I sighed even as I let my hand explore the delicious curves of her body. “Simple, if it was a simple order, you could have just given me a random name, and it would be done.”

“She’s going to kill me,” Oeyne murmured, revealing the gender of the visitor, which put a smile on my face. After all, if I’m going to spend extended time together with a stranger, I would vastly prefer a woman. It had many interesting potential combinations.

“Not if I make you die with pleasure first,” I whispered as I aligned myself to her entrance and pushed my hips, like I was about to slip inside her, only to pull back when she tried to meet in the middle by pushing herself up. “Not yet,” I whispered playfully as I slipped two fingers instead, teasing her womanhood as I moved down, intending to replace it with my tongue.

[+250 Experience] 50% Penalty!

Her response, which came in the form of a helpless moan, was simply divine. “Please, just move onto the main course,” she begged, but I ignored her begging in favor of moving down, about to treat her to a delicious oral service. She moaned helplessly as I flicked her labia, already primed.

I raised my gaze to meet her helpless looks. She tried to move, but I was prepared. A simple arcana spell restricted her limbs, preventing her from moving. It wasn’t strong enough to prevent it from breaking completely, but she was in no condition to actually exert her full strength, nor she gave a sign of actually doing so. A combination of her burning desire and her urgent need to enlist my aid limited her options very much.

“You look delicious enough to eat,” I murmured as I looked at her flawless body from my unique angle, enjoying the curves of her body. Just to reinforce my statement, I softly bit her inner thighs, though still leaving a mark.

“Hurry up and eat then,” she answered quickly, so quickly that if it wasn’t for my ability to catch deception, I would have been assumed she was just submitting to avoid questioning. But her burning desire was unmistakable. I kissed her clit, making her whole body jump, straining her chains. Despite the apparent submissiveness of the act, it was a pure act of domination, signaling that she was nothing more than a toy for my amusement.

I couldn’t help but chuckle even as I dove down between her legs, nibbling and licking around her clit, teasing softly rather than searching for quick completion. When I added occasional thrusts of my tongue, her hips rose to meet my movement, her body clenching hard enough to crack the chains, forcing me to reinforce them magically.

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

[-165 Mana]

[+1 Arcana]

“Please,” she moaned helplessly, begging me to stop, which was amusing. The chains I created were strong, but definitely not strong enough to resist if she strained her full strength. All she needed was to pull, and the magical chains would end up destroyed, but she chose to push her hips to my face, searching for a quick climax.

I decided to reward her obedience as I let my tongue slip inside her tunnel, giving her a preview of the activities that would follow it. She responded with a loud moan. It was a good opportunity to push the interrogation further. “Who’s the customer?” I asked.

“Not really important,” she answered. “She just wants to keep it confidential due to her family situation.”

“Family situation,” I murmured before returning to lick her nether lips, while my mind focused on the possible candidates. At first, I thought it might be one of the faculty members, but I rejected it. While Faculty members were strong, they weren’t politically strong enough that Oeyne would be afraid of saying their names. Admittedly, there were some faculty members that deserved such reputation, but they were either mages themselves, strong enough to assist Oeyne’s forging, or they had enough reputation to ask for a favor of a graduated mage.

So, it must be either an illegal organization, or a part of the nobility. “You haven’t promised it to a criminal, right?” I suddenly asked. Considering her gambling addiction, I didn’t think that asking that question was unfair. Who knew if she sold a favor in exchange of her debts.

“Of course not,” she answered in indignation, putting that particular worry to rest. “How can you ask that!”

“Well, there are two possibilities for a client considering your tight lips, and if it’s not the criminals, it must be a noble client,” I asked, and received a positive moan. Unfortunately, that hadn’t exactly solved my problem. If it was noble, it must be someone like Cornelia who was facing dangerous problems with her family, and looking for a power-up.

Of course, that left another problem. How the hell a marginalized member of a noble family afford a personalized magical weapon. They were really expensive to produce, and worse, once their intended recipient died, they turned completely useless. I tried to come up with the identity of the client based on the intelligence I had collected on the noble families, but I came up short.

However, seeing Oeyne’s determination not to reveal the identity of her, I decided to focus on

grinding her willpower before I pushed her for an answer. I let my tongue dance wildly at her entrance, until she was mewling like a kitten, begging for a release. "Please," she gasped. "Let me cum!"

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

"Not yet," I answered, ignoring the way her thighs tightened around my head along with the implied threat. Instead, I spanked her ass. "Behave," I ordered.

"You're pushing your luck," she warned, but considering she continued to lay obediently, I decided I still had quite a bit of margin to push. As my tongue continued to dance, she fell into a daze, moans escaping uninterrupted, but whenever she fell too deep, I awakened her with a tight slap on her plump ass.

Five minutes later, I decided to ask again. "Tell me," I ordered. "Who is the customer?"

"It's the youngest lady of the Stilea family," she said. Unfortunately for her, even under the best of circumstances, she wasn't good enough to slip a lie when I was careful, let alone when she was panting helplessly, desiring for an orgasm.

I pulled my head away from between her legs, and spanked her tits as a warning. "Are you sure about that?" I asked. "You wouldn't lie to me, would you," I slowly asked as I twisted her nipples, making her shiver in a mixture of pleasure and pain. As she shivered, I pressed my shaft against her entrance, but didn't slip in. "I would hate to stop here to punish you for your lie, after all," I murmured.

Her determination lasted less than half a minute under the assault of her pending orgasm. "No, I'm not," she gasped. "But, are you sure you want to learn? It's going to be really big. Big enough to risk your life if you actually let it slip," she warned me.

"Nothing I can't handle," I countered. Considering the number of secrets I was holding, what was one more.

"If you're sure," Oeyne said, surrendering to my interrogation. "Our client is Silvia. Silvia Romulus."

That name surprised me. "Silvia Romulus," I repeated in shock. "The same Silvia Romulus that is the oldest daughter of the current king. The Silvia Romulus that had just lost an intense battle with two of her brothers, losing her already slim hope of taking the throne as the Queen," I murmured.

“Yes, the same,” she admitted.

“That is a bit more than I expected,” I murmured, overwhelmed with the sudden realization. “And she’s going to come here to get a weapon in a few days,” I said. That was not good. A hidden visit from a candidate to the throne was surprising, but nothing I couldn’t handle. However, considering the circumstances with the traitors in the faculty and the necromancer presence outside the walls, ready to assault at any minute, the situation turned out significantly more complicated.

The impending assault on the school was scary enough without the disaster that would follow if the visit of the Princess was revealed, or even worse, she was actually harmed during the assault. Yes, despite their name the Royal family was nothing more than a toothless beast when it came to controlling the Empire, but they still controlled the Capital with an iron fist, with a rumored magical arsenal enough to erase any noble family easily.

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

There was a reason they were untouched despite their waning political power.

But that was something to be determined at a different time. I had a more important task. I needed to reward Oeyne for her surrender. “Thank you, sweetheart,” I murmured softly. “Tell me, what do you want as a reward?”

“I want you,” she moaned immediately. “Fuck me!”

“Are you sure?” I asked even as I slipped the crown inside her, enjoying her wet tightness. “I’m a jealous and controlling lover. Once you’re mine, you’re mine.”

“You need to be able to handle me first,” she moaned back even as she strained her strength, breaking the chains before she hugged me, pushing her hips upward. “There’s no need to talk when you collapse under me, dried after a long night.”

Rather than letting her succeed, I pulled back for a moment. “As you wish,” I warned her, declaring my intention, then slammed inside her, extracting a delicious moan off her. “I’m going to teach you just how well I can handle you.”

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 1%]

[+500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“What do you want, slut?” I asked even as I impaled her mercilessly, again and again, starting with a rough assault rather than a playful push.

“I want you to fuck me,” she murmured through her gritted teeth. “Impale me with that big cock. Teach me the meaning of obedience, prove me your strength,” she said even as her legs wrapped around my waist, pulling me even deeper.

I chose that moment to break the spell that was preventing her from climaxing, and a surprise orgasm exploded like a geyser, leaving a devastating earthquake behind. However, since she challenged me to break her, I didn’t even slow down, continuing to drill her mercilessly.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 4%]

[+1500 Experience] 50% Penalty!

“How is it,” I asked as the minutes passed, and she gained a semblance of control, but it was barely enough to make her speak.

“It’s noth-nothing,” she stammered, trying to look brave, but after that spectacular orgasm, chased by an incoming one, her face was a mess. “Do your worst!”

“You’re daring,” I admitted with a chuckle. “Let’s see if you can handle my best,” I said even as I cast a conjuration spell, quite a bit smaller than my shaft, glistening with lubricants. Her eyes widened when she felt its presence against her puckered hole, slipping inside before she could react.

“That’s - that’s cheating,” she complained, interrupted by a moan as the plug was safely inserted into her backdoor, enhancing her pleasure further.

“You’re the one that claimed you can take my best,” I warned her, even as I cast another conjuration spell, this time a pair of ice cubes. I dragged one around her erect nipple, still red after all the twisting, and she gasped in shock. Before she could say anything, however, the contrast, assisted by the unfamiliar presence of an anal plug, triggered yet another orgasm in her.

She screamed in a desperate need as the climax hit her with all strength of a rabid elephant, leaving a shivering and moaning wreck. As she squirmed, I ran my hands down her breasts, my soft touch triggering even more pleasure from her, while she gushed helplessly around my shaft.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 7%]

[+1000 Experience] 50% Penalty!

I would have liked to enjoy her delicious body even more, but after her last orgasm, she collapsed back, murmuring before she fell unconscious. "I surrender."

Pity, I thought even as I pulled out, strangely disappointed with my early victory. On the positive side, she was conquered easier than I expected. Considering her skillset and power, it was a definite win. Now, I just needed to make sure I could trust her about keeping the achievement a secret.

After dressing, I left the room, my mind focused on the possible implications of the princess' visit, and whether it was somehow linked to the necromancer presence, or it was just a horrible coincidence.

I had a lot of work to do...

[Level: 27 Experience: 364200 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 27 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 26 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3699 / 3699 Mana: 4914 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [82/100]

Advanced Speech [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Five

Despite the entertaining and productive time I had spent with Oeyne, I found myself with a frown as I left her workshop. The sudden involvement of a princess of the Royal Family tickled my mind. With everything else that was going on, her arrival threatened to add even more to the upcoming chaos.

And I wasn't naive enough to hope that it was just a coincidence.

However, the question still remained about her involvement, whether she was aligned with the necromancers, or whether she was another target to the secret plot that was going on. Of course, there was still a small, but realistic possibility that her visit had nothing to do with the pending necromancer assault, but as I mentioned, I wasn't going to bank on that.

Unfortunately, my relationship with Oeyne was not enough to dig deeper about the princess' visit without scaring her off, nor it was bad enough that I could employ more hostile interrogation tactics.

Since I was temporarily unable to do anything about the impending visit, I needed to focus on something I could control. Namely, a beauty that I had been neglecting for a while.

Marianne.

It was hard to believe that it was just a couple of days since I last visited her. It felt much longer with everything that happened, from the discovery of the Necromancer base to the discovery of the artificial monster horde.

Of course, while I missed her voluptuous body, it wasn't the only reason for my visit. It was not even the main reason. With the possible necromancer assault, Marianne had the potential to play an important role if she could progress with the trick I had taught her, especially if I power-level her to the same point as Cornelia.

Having someone else that could deal area-effect damage to necromancers without hurting allies might prove critical, especially if the necromancers deploy a multi-pronged assault.

Luckily, it wasn't hard to find Marianne in the late afternoon. I easily sneaked into her room, which turned into a routine task after many repeats.

She was in her room, practicing the Biomancy trick I had taught her, so focused that she failed to notice me as I walked toward her, even when I didn't bother to hide my presence. It was good

to see her working seriously, every attempt to cast accompanied with a great focus.

Of course, soon, my attention slipped down from the glowing energy in her hands to the loose, half-transparent nightie she was wearing, which displayed her curves to my eye. Even more impressively, the absence of any underwear was equally obvious.

“Not bad,” I murmured as I hugged her from behind.

She flinched. “Caesar, you scared me,” she said, but that didn’t prevent her from leaning against me with a deep sigh. “I missed you,” she murmured.

“Sorry, honey,” I answered even as I gently kissed her neck. “But the last few days had been very complicated, and filled with mortal danger. It’s good that you worked diligently on the spell I taught you.”

“I still can’t cast it,” she said dejectedly. “And what happened?”

“About the spell, don’t worry. You made more progress than I had hoped. And about what happened...” I said, dragging my words as I let my hands dance over her body, tasting her curves before finding her shoulders, squeezing lightly. “We can talk about that, or we can work on your tense shoulders. Which one would you prefer?”

“The second,” she immediately answered even if she blushed thickly, her habits as a noble daughter making her feel self-conscious even after everything we had done together.

I said nothing, just chuckled as I lifted her in a bridal hold, carrying her to her bedroom. “Who am I to deny the request of such a beautiful woman,” I murmured before clasping her lips with mine, enjoying the assault of her enthusiastic tongue, to the point that I rewarded her with slipping back some mana.

[-56 Mana]

Her eyes widened in shock. “I just earned some experience,” she gasped in shock. “What’s going on!”

“It’s another reward you earned with your cute obedience,” I immediately answered. “Keep it a secret though, okay?” I added, and she nodded immediately. She was smart enough to understand the implications of such a momentous development. But following her shock, I could see the hint of worship in her eyes solidifying even further.

“Who are you?” she asked, her face full of fascination.

I responded with a quirked eyebrow. “That’s another secret, and if you be a good girl, maybe you’ll learn it as well one day,” I answered mysteriously, hiding the fact that I had no idea about who I was either. Maybe one day, I’ll learn it too.

“I can’t wait for the day,” she said with a worshipful expression, her honesty suggesting that I hadn’t wasted my time working on her.

“Let’s focus on the important things first,” I added as I lay her on the bed. “For example, the reward I had promised for you for working hard.”

She gasped in anticipation as I grabbed her nightie, only to rip it off in a primal pull, leaving her completely naked, then leaned over her. She tried to raise her body to cover the rest of the distance, trying to steal a kiss, but I pressed my finger to her lips, cutting her motion short. “Don’t worry, honey,” I murmured. “This is about rewarding you. Just lay on your back, and enjoy.”

“Mmmm,” she moaned as I traced her jawline with little fleeting kisses, her floral perfume teasing my nose, before I moved down, focusing on her neck for a fleeting moment, followed by her dainty collarbones. However, the next step on my journey, I spent quite a bit of time. Why wouldn’t I, when her amazing breasts deserved it thoroughly?

“Harder,” she ordered when I subjected her tits to a rain of fleeting kisses.

“As you wish,” I said as I dragged my hands on her tits, doing a soft pass to familiarize myself with the softness of her skin once more before sinking my fingers deep. But that was nothing compared to my clamping lips, sucking her tits hard enough to a bright red mark that signaled my ownership. “Better?” I asked.

“Much better,” she responded, surprisingly verbal, though that didn’t mean her shyness was completely gone. I could feel that she was trying to look a bit more outgoing and confident, but she was clearly trying to copy Cornelia.

I came to a sudden realization. She was feeling neglected, therefore she was trying to look more attractive to me, and she was doing so by trying to copy Cornelia’s more outgoing attitude.

How cute, I thought, but didn’t say anything. It wasn’t something that could be fixed with words. Saying something would only make things worse. Instead, I made a note to visit her more often,

before refocusing on her delicious tits. The best way to reinforce her confidence was to give her an earthshattering orgasm.

Or maybe a few.

“I missed this,” she moaned as I squeezed her tits, her nipples hardening against my palms. I enjoyed the rumble of her moans, but as much as I loved her tits, I had other ideas in mind. My lips and one of my hands stayed on the vicinity of her bosom, but a naughty hand sneaked downward, circling around her cute bellybutton before dropping down even lower, finally unearthing the treasure that was hidden between her deliciously plump thighs that made me want them wrapped around my waist whenever I saw her curvy figure.

“Oh, yes!” she moaned as my finger circled around her clit like it did around her belly button, but to a much greater impact, followed by a much louder moan once my finger slipped inside her, making me glad that I had long reinforced the silencing ward in her room. Her slickness covered my skin as I added another finger to our little game, pumping inside her rapidly. “Faster, please,” she begged.

“As my sweetheart wishes,” I answered playfully, immediately following with a bite on her soft breasts while my fingers quickened. She might have tried to answer my little quip, but my rapid assault didn’t give her a chance to speak, especially when I enhanced her pleasure by coating my finger with mana, triggering her enjoyment even further while simultaneously helping her relax.

[-449 Mana]

Who said power-leveling was a boring affair?

I only pulled my hand away when her moans started to strain, signaling she was getting closer to a climax. I had a better idea to bring her over the hill. “Mmm, delicious,” I murmured as I pulled my hand out of her entrance, only to suck them with great gusto. “Let’s see whether it tastes even better at the source.”

Marianne said nothing, just let out a deep, guttural moan that betrayed her primal need, legs parting open invitingly. When I pressed my lips against her soft, moist lips, she let out a moan that would have convinced me that she was drunk if I hadn’t seen her sober. Still, maybe she was drunk, with pleasure, at least.

When my tongue joined in, her moans exploded even louder, giving great background music to my entertaining enterprise. “I love that you keep it clean,” I murmured as I enjoyed her smooth

skin before I let my tongue free, drawing complicated shapes that drove her even crazier.

“Yes, for you,” she moaned even as her back arched with pleasure under my probing assault, occasionally slipping inside to add some penetration to our little teasing game. However, my aim wasn’t to make her moan in pleasure, or not just that. I also wanted to help her level up, using the opportunity to pass more and more mana, quickening her leveling journey even more.

[-725 Mana]

However, while focusing between her legs, I realized that my hands were quite empty, so I let them free on her skin, one of them climbing upward back to the great expanse of her tits, while the other dug into her thigh, with a roughness that contrasted with the delicate assault of my lips.

“More, please,” she begged, signaling that her climax was not too far away, but unlike the previous times, I disregarded her order. It might be her present, but everyone knew that anticipation only made the present better. “Please,” she repeated as my tongue performed a slow dance on her most sensitive spot, doing its best to drive her insane with pleasure, her moans getting louder and louder.

Unfortunately for her, her loud yelps and unrestrained howls only made it better for me. I barely paid attention to my primary aim of helping her level up, letting my enhanced Tantric skill show its benefit as I continued to deplete my mana while pushing her toward a new level. I wanted it to time it perfectly, so that she climaxed at the exact moment of leveling up, which would create a delicious memory for her, and a convenient mental association for me, just in case.

She begged, she moaned, she gyrated her hips, all in the hopes of making me move quicker, but unfortunately, it was never a symmetrical affair. At this moment, she was both the recipient of my performance and the instrument I played with. Only, she wasn’t a contributor, but a passive receptor, which, according to her moans, something she was perfectly happy with.

For a moment, I wished Cornelia was here. A performance like this would only be better as an audience, especially the said audience was my current maid and Marianne’s ex-girlfriend —and maybe still was... Regardless, I was vain enough to get off by Cornelia’s double-layered jealousy, both from never letting Marianne achieve the same heights, and not being the one to experience the said pleasure at the same time.

Maybe I should do that at the same time.

Even as a part of my attention wandered into interesting fantasies, I made sure to continue treating Marianne with my professional-quality edge-play, driving her crazy, all the while never stopping the mana flow.

[-1646 Mana]

Using my mana senses, I could feel her soul space strengthening further, another event horizon nearing, which signaled level up. Just as she was about to level up, I pulled back, but left just enough mana to enable her to level up.

“Don’t stop, please,” she begged. “I’ll do anything, just let me cum!”

“Really,” I said, several interesting scenarios that I could use that favor playing in my mind. “As you wish, Marianne,” I said, still staying away, but that didn’t mean that I stopped completely. Instead, I blew my breath against her sensitive flesh, and letting the last scraps of mana merge into her soul space at the same time.

The resulting cry of pleasure was simply a masterpiece, a transitory art piece that rivaled the best works of the grandmasters. Pity that I had no way of recording such a beautiful moment.

As she trembled with the aftershocks of her spectacular explosion, I pulled to her side, and hugged her tight, enjoying her sweaty skin against mine as it delivered every bubbly tremor directly, making me proud with the satisfaction of a job well done. Even her leveling went perfectly, and I could feel her Healing Skill get stronger, and more importantly, transitioning from fragmented to complete, signaling she had finally achieved the complete Grandmaster level.

[Achievement: Tremendous Tongue. Use your tongue to unlock the route for greater power. +500 Experience, +1 Precision, +1 Speed]

“I leveled up,” she murmured in fascination, though she only said that a minute later, where she finally pushed through the haze of her explosive orgasm.

“I’m wounded,” I said with a chuckle. “All that effort, and you simply focus on your level.”

My quip earned a playful slap. “You are a bad, bad man,” she accused, but it was hard to stick those harsh words with a dreamy giggle. Still, she tried.

“Really,” I said, as I suddenly shifted my position and trapped her under me. “Maybe I should show you just how bad I can be,” I said before I sealed her lips with a kiss...

[Level: 27 Experience: 364700 / 378000

Strength: 31 Charisma: 46

Precision: 28 Perception: 30

Agility: 28 Manipulation: 33

Speed: 27 Intelligence: 37

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 36

HP: 3753 / 3753 Mana: 4396 / 4914]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [82/100]

Advanced Speech [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Six

Sharing a kiss after a spectacular orgasm was a divine experience, especially when she was still shuddering due to the after-effects of the shock, despite the reprieve I had given her.

So, I kept the kiss gentle, at first at least. At first, she was motionless, just enjoying the weight of my body, but soon, her hands found my back, caressing softly. “You are delicious,” I murmured as I let my kiss wander from her lips to her neck, enjoying her giggly moan, her fingers digging into my shoulders in response, showing her enjoyment.

It didn’t take long for the same fierceness to mix into her kiss, when I returned to her lips, she bit mine hard, and I yelped. “Careful,” I said, slapping her thigh just to underline it.

“You deserved it,” she answered in a surprising moment of rebellion —the erotic, exciting kind — while her fingers dug even deeper into my shoulders, so much that if it wasn’t for her pathetic physical stats, it would have drawn blood. I just let my tongue attack harder, returning to her ardor in a more measured way.

[-213 Mana]

As the seconds rolled, she was started to get even more expressive, biting, scratching, clutching, even hitting, while I caressed her body with a contrasting gentleness. Apparently, the last orgasm denial left her wanting more than I had expected.

However, the real surprise came when her legs wrapped around my body, trying to pull me in, her hips gyrating already. “Do you want me inside?” I asked. She nodded. “Do you want me to slide inside you hard, slamming mercilessly?” I added.

“Yes,” she moaned, her legs tightening even more. ‘

“Do you want me to flip you over so that I let loose like you’re nothing more than a piece of meat existing for my enjoyment,” I whispered.

“Yes, please,” she begged. “I’m still burning with the sensation you created. Finish it, please,” she begged.

“Too bad,” I said mockingly as I faked standing up. “If you wanted to keep me down, you should have invested in your Strength more.”

“No! Don’t go!” she begged as her arms wrapped around my neck, keeping me in place.

I chuckled even as I pulled back a bit more, but rather than leaving the bed, I flipped her over so that I was looking at her plump ass. I pressed one hand between her shoulder blades, effectively immobilizing her while I got rid of my clothes quickly, matching her in nakedness.

“Don’t worry, I’m just messing with you. There’s nothing south of a total disaster that could pull me away from your peachy ass,” I whispered as I lowered myself over her once more, this time, my cock safely lodged between her plump cheeks.

Still, no matter how tempting it sounded, I didn’t slide inside her immediately. Instead, I once again focused on her neck, but this time, wrapping her hair around my hand slowly, once, twice, three times... Until her shining blonde hair turned into a delicious rope that gave me the leverage to pull her head back to seal her lips with a searing kiss.

Her hips started to shoo, signaling that she was more than ready for the main event, only for me to pull out of the kiss and focus on her neck once more, biting hard enough to leave my mark of ownership. “Are you ready for it?” I whispered.

“Yes-” she started, only to be interrupted as I slid inside her mercilessly, enjoying her walls, which was properly loosened thanks to the extended foreplay. Even then, she let out a delicious cry, giving me the chance to silence her with another kiss.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 52%]

[-961 Mana]

Seeing the progress in the Companion Progress was always welcome, but I was more focused on the delicious way her walls wrapped tight around my shaft, like she was trying to stop my invasion —even though her moans disagreed with that conclusion vehemently.

I could have just kept her pinned under my body as I cut loose, but then I decided to be a bit more mobile. Without even skipping a beat, I wrapped my arms around her waist and stood up, easily lifting her as well. Two steps later, I trapped her body between the wall and my burning body. And just to push the envelope, I cast a cold spell on the wall just before her body connected to it, making her experience the contrasting sensations of cold and heat, making her moan even louder.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 55%]

[-631 Mana]

Her cheek pressed against the wall, she was barely able to moan as I slammed against her ass, again and again, the sound of flesh hitting flesh accompanied by the occasional spank I delivered, unable to resist the allure of her curvaceous ass.

She just took the assault, her hands pressing against the wall like she was a victim about to get arrested, willingly taking everything that I dashed out, taking my cock inside her moist opening repeatedly.

She just groaned in satisfaction with every slam.

“Do you like it when I use you hard, like you’re nothing more than a device for my own enjoyment,” I said even as I increased the pressure, making her moan even harder?

“Yes,” she cried, just a dash of pain, but a lot more pleasure.

Seeing her submission, rather than being satisfied, I only felt a desire to dominate her more, make her mine even more. Why wouldn’t I, when I had such a perfect little obedient girl to conquer entirely?

I fucked her hard in fury. I wasn’t angry, but I doubted that if we had an observer, she would agree. Still, Marianne just moaned obediently, clearly enjoying my merciless slams, so there was no real problem. Even when I pulled back to give her a moment to rest, she just moaned in disappointment, goading me for more.

And I did so, slamming even harder, doing my best to turn her into a simpering wreck. Too bad that she lacked the Endurance to truly handle my strongest effort.

Still, the results were spectacular. “That’s right, impale me,” she moaned deliriously. “Take me, use me, make me yours!”

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 59%]

[-388 Mana]

“You really missed me in my absence, huh,” I commented, surprised by the longing and desire she was able to put to her words even when she was being flooded with pleasure.

I decided to turn up the heat even more. I pulled out and forced her to turn, only to grab her waist and lift her once more. “Grab my neck,” I ordered even as I kept her uplift with one hand under her ass, displaying my great strength, while used the other to lead her leg to my

shoulder. After repeating it with the other leg, I slipped both hands under her ass to generate leverage and enjoy the softness of her ass, essentially forcing her body to a V-shaped position.

It was a perfect position. She had no power, no leverage, and even her pace was completely under my mercy, while every time I pushed, I let her move down as well, using the gravity to create an even more spectacular stab.

And it showed. She closed her eyes as the pleasure invaded her body, her cries slowly losing their coherence. "Keep your eyes open," I ordered, keeping her pinned under my gaze. If she wanted to be dominated, I was going to dominate her, without allowing her to take shortcuts. "If you close your eyes, we stop!" I warned.

"Y-yes, sir," she moaned in the sweet-spot between fear and need, showing her understanding. And I cut loose, aggressively invading her entrance, every push making her tits jiggle wildly. Just to underline my overwhelming physical strength, I started walking around the room to room, from study to her guest room, like I owned the place.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 63%]

[-251 Mana]

I couldn't help but imagine the rush I would get from walking around the corridors like that, in front of everyone, without a care of the world. Unfortunately, it was impossible. First, I needed to be strong enough to survive such a scandal, and I doubted even the Emperor had such power. Second, I needed to turn the school into a female-only organization, because I was a jealous man, and had no intention to display my girl to the other men.

It might be a hypocritical attitude considering my own situation, but it was the best thing about being powerful. Only powerful had the right to be so.

"Tell me who you are?" I ordered even as I squeezed her ass, enjoying her immobilized body to my heart's content.

"I'm your toy," she moaned back, her eyes still pinned to mine, burning with honest desire, all the while I pierced her again and again.

She was too focused on my eyes to notice or care when I brought her against her dresses, which had a full-body mirror, not that she had a real-time view of it due to her back being turned to it. However, I split my attention between her eyes and the reflection of her beautiful back, watching in fascination as every merciless push stretched her further, filling her to the brim.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 68%]

[-391 Mana]

The view got even better as I pulled her asscheeks apart, revealing her puckered hole. Luckily, thanks to the convenience of magic, all it took was a simple dash of magic to prepare her back entrance, both cleaning and lubricating, before slipping in two fingers to loosen it.

Even as I prepared her backdoor for the impending invasion, I continued to slam her with my full weight. Her legs stiffened under the stress of the position, but she continued to moan, only to intensify when I added another finger to my next target.

A squeal escaped her beautiful lips that were swollen with my hard kisses when I pulled out, only to put it in my other target. "Yes, yes, YES!" she cried as my shaft slowly invaded her backdoor, once again showing her preference toward the forbidden hole, something I suspected that I was responsible due to the nature of our earlier relationship, when I took her repeatedly in the ass before finally claiming her virginity.

Her body shook, tears slipped down her cheeks and her cries echoed on the walls, but none of them was enough to hide the sense of completion shining in her beautiful blue eyes. She clamped on my neck with her full strength, while I continued to take both of her holes in alternating strokes.

In the same position, seconds turned into minutes, while she did her best to break the magically-reinforced glass with her voice.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 73%]

[-1308 Mana]

"Let's do a pop quiz," I suddenly ordered her, like she wasn't being challenged enough. "Show me the spell."

"But-" she started, but I cut her off with an aggressive kiss.

"I didn't ask for your opinion," I suggested to her, even as I continued to slam inside her. "I ordered."

Facing my sharp glare, she was unable to reject my order, and pulled off one of her hands from the back of my neck, and raised up between our bodies, inches above her beautiful tits that

jumped every time I impaled her mercilessly. She did her best to cast it, but her concentration was marred with pleasure and the disappointment she felt prematurely, before she even tried.

Predictably, she failed. "Sorry-" she murmured.

"Repeat!" I ordered even as I continued to pump her with my mana, and preparing to pump her up with my seed. She tried, only to fail again.

Before she could apologize again, however, I exploded, which immediately triggered a climax in her as well, along with a flood of notifications.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 75% - Third Stage Completed +15000 Exp]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 3. Duration, 8 hours]

[New Perk: Skill Share]

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Master Healing. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Master Healing (100/100)]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the fourth stage]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Biomancy (5), Expert Speech, Basic Craft]

The flood of notifications was truly impressive, and it was always nice to see yet another level up.

However, as much as I wanted to improve Biomancy to the next stage due to impending undead assault, but locking down for the next five levels seemed to be a dangerous investment while facing such a complicated situation. However, if it wasn't for the impending meeting with the oldest princess of the Empire, I might have chosen Craft Skill to round up my skillset, so that I could create better equipment for myself, working in combination with Oeyne.

But facing the prospect of such a critical meeting, not to mention a possible one with the Headmistress, I decided to rely on the utility of the Speech skill. Both the Princess and the Headmistress might have skills that would counter my Charisma, so the smoother my speech skills, the better.

After finalizing that, I turned my attention back to Marianne, who was enjoying her most recent achievement. “Try again,” I ordered, but this time with a smile. “Yes,” she said with enthusiasm, and after she waved her hand, the familiar warmth of the pure life energy filled the room, the gap in ability compensated by her stat increase.

However, we had another little surprise just as I was preparing to let her walk. “Another achievement, giving me two points of Agility,” she gasped in shock, and I reached for her soul space, only to feel a natural Achievement sliding into place.

I immediately focused on the process. It was a rare opportunity, especially since the great contrast I could feel with them. Naturally, it was different from the achievements that were generated by the Companion System, but to my surprise, it also felt different than my own natural achievements.

Yet another facet of mystery to my ability, I thought, even as I kissed her to congratulate her for her double achievement. Then, I received a surprise of my own.

[Achievement: Strange Source. Take a step on the discovery of the root of all abilities. +5000 Experience, +2 All]

I froze for a moment as I held Marianne tight in the same challenging position we had been sharing during our ‘adventure’ while I tried to process the implications of the achievement. Luckily, Marianne was lost in a haze of her own, distracted by a spectacular combination of a climax and two new achievements.

I walked to the bed, almost drunk, while I tried to understand the implications of the latest achievement. It confirmed two things. First, other people received their achievements from an external source —maybe the same, maybe different— but somehow, my own came from a different place.

Moreover, I was starting to have a feeling that my own System somehow wanted me to explore that difference. Whether it had some kind of sentience, or it was some kind of magical automatic response, or even whether it was a reflection of my own subconscious desires was a very difficult question.

However, when I arrived at Marianne’s bed and threw her on the bed to lay next to her, hugging her curvy figure, I decided to ignore the implications of my latest major achievement for the moment.

I had already enough to worry about in the short term.

[Level: 28 Experience: 384700 / 406000

Strength: 33 Charisma: 48

Precision: 30 Perception: 32

Agility: 30 Manipulation: 35

Speed: 29 Intelligence: 39

Endurance: 27 Wisdom: 38

HP: 4172 / 4172 Mana: 2571 / 5326]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [82/100]

Expert Speech [50/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Seven

I had departed Marianne's room after cuddling for a bit, when she fell asleep. Initially, I had planned to bequeath her two levels, I decided to moderate it after she made considerable companion progress and received two achievements at the same time.

I still didn't know whether leveling several times in a day had any side effects, and Marianne was not a good target to test that.

Also, I had quite a few challenging things to deal with, such as digging the mystery behind the low-key visit of the princess. Unfortunately, there was only one person I could discuss with. Titania.

Unfortunate, but not because I didn't want to spend time with Titania. I genuinely enjoyed breaking through her artificial coldness to reach her innocent core —both metaphorically and literally. Nor I was really afraid of clashing incentives. While it was completely accidental at first, I positioned myself as the enemy of the necromancers, and whoever was standing behind them. Even if my aim didn't completely match with Titania's, the presence of an overwhelming enemy sufficiently ensured that neither Titania nor someone from her faction would target me directly. It wasn't a certain thing, of course, but that was the best I could get in my political position.

No, I was afraid that she would drag me into a meeting with the Headmistress.

I didn't feel ready to meet with the Headmistress, because she had a scary reputation, even more, overwhelming than the current Emperor. According to the rumors, she was alive for centuries, and even if that was an exaggeration, she was the Headmistress of Silver Spires for the last century at least, making sure she was definitely over a hundred. However, her past was hard to dig for my meager means.

Even scarier than her possible identity as an ancient crone, there was the fact that I was yet to discover anything about the faction she belonged. She didn't work directly with any of the city-states, nor she directly worked with the Royal family. Nor she gave any benefits to border armies, Guilds, or the merchant families. For all intents and purposes, she was a neutral party.

And that scared me, because she was able to maintain her independence and the independence of the school despite the shifting web of politics and power dynamics. Of course, there was also the possibility that she was a powerless puppet, put in there by an agreement of all political parties as a compromise, but I could feel in my bones that it wasn't the truth.

If she was weak, the necromancers wouldn't be holding on the side despite the army they had already collected, and used it to destroy the school directly. Even Titania wasn't enough to destroy that army, and it was a known truth that she was one of the strongest members of the faculty. Along with the traitor and the problems in the ward scheme, it should have been an easy victory.

"I hate this," I murmured. For the first time since I had discovered my ability to level up, I was feeling overwhelmed. I was in a complicated web of intrigue, with too many moving parts, each one enough to bury me if I dared to stand against them directly. The idea of running away was getting sweeter.

Pity that Silver Spires was my best bet to discover any clues about the System.

Ultimately, all it came to an important qualifier. Whether I could survive the upcoming crisis, or escape if the crisis snowballed into something impossible to handle? And while it might be arrogant, ultimately, I had trust in my own abilities enough to make staying worthwhile.

"To the library," I murmured, not even bothering to dress as the mule. My stats and abilities had reached such a point that even without explicitly changing clothes or using illusions, I could easily fade into the background. All it took was a simple change of posture, and suppressing my aura.

[+2 Subterfuge]

It was also a good opportunity to mess with Titania a bit, I decided, which put a huge smile on my face. Just a week ago, I was trembling in fear of getting her attention, and now, I was willing to tease her due to my own sheer enjoyment.

The sensation power was intoxicating.

Admittedly, it might not be the smartest idea, but after the display we put together with Helga, getting away smoothly, it wasn't exactly a suicidal attempt either. So, when I stood in front of her private door and flexed my magic subtly to make sure I wasn't detected as I unlocked her door, it wasn't because I was afraid of her, but because I wanted to surprise her with my presence.

However, disabling her lock without triggering the rest of the wards turned out to be a more difficult task than I had expected, forcing me to waste almost five minutes, and enough mana to leave a weaker mage in despair. Luckily, it had its own rewards.

[-813 Mana]

[+4 Arcana]

My smile widened as I realized the sound of running water coming from the bathroom, signaling that she was perfectly prepared for my attention. Suppressing my presence sufficiently not to alert her was not difficult as I looked at the bathroom. She was in her huge bathtub, which was covered with bubbles, as she pressed her back against the marble, relaxing.

I undressed quickly as I watched her, before stepping into the bathroom, not bothering to wear a towel. Luckily, the tub was sufficiently big, so she failed to notice my presence as I slipped in at first, only realizing when my legs touched hers when I sat across her.

She flinched in shock, her hand already gathering a blast of light magic, ready to be launched. I was ready to lash out with a shield, but kept it in reserve. When our eyes met, she didn't release her attack, instead of speaking with a dangerous voice that would have sent me running a week ago. "What are you doing here!" As she spoke, the light she was holding got even stronger.

"We have something important to talk about," I answered immediately, but my lazy tone contrasted greatly with her sharp one.

"Speak," she ordered, but keeping her hand raised, no doubt ready to lash out.

Instead of launching into an explanation, I chuckled. "Come on, after everything we had gone through, isn't it a bit illogical to draw the line here?" I asked, using the steamier memories we shared to dismiss her argument.

That managed to push through her unnatural calmness. "B-but, t-that's-" she stammered, her blush covering her face for a fleeting moment as she felt softer emotions, which once again worked excellently. Unfortunately, her calm reasserted itself back quickly. "Why did you enter without connecting me through communication?"

I stopped for a second, considering whether to reveal the Princess's visit, but after a brief consideration, I decided to admit it. As much as I liked Oeyne, she wasn't as critical as Titania due to impending necromancer assault. Moreover, it might not affect Oeyne adversely as well. Ultimately, at this point, it was impossible to progress without risk.

"The oldest daughter of the Emperor is going to secretly arrive at the school in a few days," I explained.

“What!” she exclaimed immediately, once again breaking her cold calmness, this time with fear. “Are you sure? Why? When?” she asked rapidly.

“Calm down,” I said lazily even as I dipped my hands underwater, and grabbed her foot. My thumb pressed against her sole, and started caressing her skin, displaying the full extent of my massaging abilities, even using my Biomancy subtly to enhance the pleasure. “We still have a few days to react, no need to put your panties in a bunch,” I added, then smirked. “Not that you’re wearing any, of course.”

[+100 Experience]

“Focus,” she ordered, once again calm, but I still smirked in satisfaction, for two reasons. First, I was still able to earn experience without penalty from her, which was a nice win. Second, my senses were sharp enough to detect a familiar hitch in her tone, one that I had heard much louder when I was accompanying her in that cave, selflessly helping her to recover her mana. “Do you know why the princess is going to visit?”

“Yes, but I’m not going to reveal that,” I answered.

She once again raised her hand, threatening me with the glow. “I’m not in the mood to play, spill!” she ordered.

“Oh, really,” I said, entirely confident, because I wasn’t playing with her delicate foot because of my own pleasure —or not entirely. Through contact, it was easy for me to get a rough assessment of her status, and her mana pool was mostly depleted, barely a quarter remaining. Since she carried no sign of combat, she likely exhausted herself repairing the wards. “Go ahead, if you’re feeling confident to take me down,” I challenged her.

Even when she was going through the slight emotional turmoil, she was far too cold to actually take such an obvious risk when she was far from her best state. “Don’t talk nonsense,” she cut. “I need to make sure the information is correct.”

“That’s not my problem,” I said, even as I continued to massage her foot to the best of my ability, letting my fingers occasionally caress her dainty little ankles. Sometimes, it was hard to believe such a soft body belonged to one of the most intimidating figures in a school that constantly raised the powerhouses for humanity. “I’m not your servant, but your ally. I’m already doing you a favor by sharing information with you. Rather than trying to extort more, you better think about how to compensate for it,” I explained, doing my best to put the weight of my charisma in my words without alerting her to my trick.

[+2 Speech]

“How?” she asked, suddenly changing her pace, which underlined my success. I loved my Speech skill, which not only helped me to be more eloquent, but also giving me a useful sixth-sense about the direction I should take the discussion to get what I want based on the subtle clues.

“For example, you can start by telling me what you know about the recent adventures of the princess, so that I can get a better idea whether she is a problem, or an asset to the problem we are facing,” I said. “Due to some unique situation, accessing general information flow is more trouble than it’s worth,” I murmured in annoyance, doing my best to convince Titania that I was anything but a lone trickster trying to carve a place for myself, especially since the truth of my situation, gaining my power in less than a month, was completely unbelievable. It was for the best if she believed that I had a mysterious power backing me.

[+1 Speech]

“According to the latest information, seven towns in her direct sphere of influence had fallen to monster hordes in the last fifteen days, along with several others in the land of their most ardent supporters,” Titania said. “Two houses lost their head in those assaults, even.”

“Monster hordes, you say,” I repeated with a frown, receiving a knowing nod. If it wasn’t for the discovery with the earth gem, I would have discounted it by assuming it was a string of bad luck, though Titania probably would have done the same, discounting them as irrelevant. “Very unlucky.”

“Yes,” she said, her voice hitching slightly as my fingers started traveling lower on her legs, teasing her soft calves. “She is very unlucky.”

[+200 Experience]

“Any undead presence in her lands,” I asked.

“No, not even a gossip, and we did our best to search,” Titania said, blushing slightly when I gave her a mocking grin. Considering the success they had displayed searching for them in their own backyard, their information about a lack of undead wasn’t exactly conclusive. But the fact that she was reacting to my wordless teasing shyly was an even better finding, proving my constant massage was having an effect in breaking her magical coldness.

“Let’s assume there aren’t any for a moment,” I said, which earned an angry glare. “What? You

disagree?” I pushed. If she was willing to act injured, I had no problems in pushing her failure to the surface. Her anger got even more pronounced—which allowed me to easily move to her thigh without earning a comment— but she said nothing to defend herself or her faction.

[+1 Speech]

[+400 Experience]

However, rather than continuing based on her silence, I stopped, focusing on caressing her thighs. “Continue,” she spat, unable to hide neither her anger nor her growing arousal.

“If the necromancers don’t have the ability to create monster hordes, it means that they have an ally with that ability who are also against the oldest princess, and collaborating with the necromancers to take her down without revealing their hand. And I think that’s even worse than the alternative.”

“Why?” she asked.

That question was alone was enough to prove strategic thinking was not exactly her strongest suit. Admittedly, I was cheating thanks to the benefits of my Wisdom as well as my Subterfuge and Speech, which provided me some political insights. “Would you give an ally of convenience your strongest weapon?” I asked, and she shook her head. “Exactly. If they are willing to give even limited access to the necromancers, who are not the most trustworthy group of entities, it means that they have stronger things in their arsenal. That, or they somehow control the necromancer faction that was about to attack us, which is an even scarier idea.”

“You’re right,” she admitted. “We need to talk about this with the Headmistress. You’ll come with me,” she ordered, her tone stiffer than it required to hide her arousal.

“Well, I don’t have anything urgent to do, so I can help you,” I said and stood up, displaying my magnificence to her eyes. Her eyes widened in shock, unable to pull away from my raging erection no matter how much she tried to pull away. I stepped out of the tub, but stood next to her.

“What are you doing, go!” she said, blushing.

“Just a second, I just need to do one last thing before leaving,” I said and before she could respond, leaned down, capturing her lips, slipping my tongue in her mouth along with a strong rush of mana to help her recover.

[+300 Experience]

[-167 Mana]

The kiss lasted for several seconds as she froze under my touch, then she pushed me away reluctantly. It was a soft push, but I pulled back nonetheless. "What was that!" she exclaimed, but rather than threatening me with a spell, she just looked at me in shock, her body rising just enough to give me a sight of her small yet perky tits for a moment.

"I'm helping you recover your mana, of course," I said calmly, like I was commenting on the weather. "Since you're going to see the headmistress, it's for the best if you're in top shape. What if she needs help."

"That-" she stammered, trying to say something, but her wits abandoned her, leaving her mouth half-open. Never the one to such an opportunity, I leaned in for another searing kiss, this time lasting even longer. Even better, she didn't push me away.

"Makes sense, right?" I said with a smirk as I pulled back for a breather, but before she could answer, I slammed my lips against hers once more. She just stayed still at first, but toward the middle, her tongue started to respond to my caresses.

[+800 Experience]

[-939 Mana]

[+3 Speech]

After another minute, I decided to push my luck even more, and let my hands-free on her body, caressing her tits, curious whether it would provoke her anger.

As it turned out, it would. "That's enough," she cut in. "Do your hands help you transfer mana," she accused me.

"Not particularly, no," I said with a smirk as I stood up, once again showing my shaft to her completely. "It was just for my own enjoyment." That admission cut the winds off her sails, leaving her unable to answer. Still, it was a sign of our progress that she just processed it silently rather than lashing out. I continued. "So, that's all I could do through the inefficient delivery method for a short while. That's it for the moment, unless you want to try the full-performance method, of course."

“Get out!” she exclaimed as she threw a block of soap at me.

I could have dodged it, but the image of the mighty head librarian attacking me with a block of soap while accidentally displaying her bubble-covered tits was amusing enough that I let it hit. “Violent much?” I said mockingly as I walked away, still giving her the full show of my naked body. “See you in a moment,” I said before I gave her a mocking wave, and closed the door, leaving her alone with the realization of what had just happened...

[Level: 28 Experience: 386500 / 406000

Strength: 33 Charisma: 48

Precision: 30 Perception: 32

Agility: 30 Manipulation: 35

Speed: 29 Intelligence: 39

Endurance: 27 Wisdom: 38

HP: 4172 / 4172 Mana: 4106 / 5326]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [86/100]

Expert Speech [57/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Eight

I sat on her desk while waiting for her to leave the bathroom, and started examining the books open on her desk. The books and her notes were about repairing spell structures and wards, validating my assumption about the reason for her exhaustion.

She didn't neglect to send me a frustrated look as she opened the bathroom door and stepped into her bathroom, dressed in nothing but a towel, giving me a glimpse of her glistening skin before she cast a spell to slam the door close.

[+100 Experience]

I chuckled at her impotent anger, showing that the time she spent alone did little to regain her emotionless status. It was good news, allowing me to benchmark both the power and the recovery state of her light magic's anti-emotion feature. And what I learned encouraged me further.

Pity I couldn't miss her on the way to the meeting. I had no intention of revealing such an important freebie to the vaunted headmistress. Our playing field was sufficiently unequal before I started providing her with free cards. It was the same reason I didn't bother Titania as she dressed, giving her some time to recover.

However, as I waited, I couldn't help but feel panicked. The headmistress was a legendary figure, and the students barely encountered her, each encounter turning into an urban legend. Based on what I had searched, the last known student meeting occurred two decades ago, and left the student with constant nightmares for the rest of his life.

It was an interesting tale, though it was hard to guess whether it was correct or it was just another result of the mystery that surrounded her.

The gossip and tales about her were not a surprise. She was holding one of the most important posts known to mankind for significantly more than a century, but still managing to keep anything related to herself a mystery.

Including her political stance, powers, and even her appearance —not that I expected much from a crone that measured her life in centuries.

Even the thought of it was ridiculous.

Titania left her room almost half an hour later, and when she did so, her expression once again

stiff as an iron plate. "Let's go," she said coldly, and I followed her, suppressing my desire to mess with her.

"Anything I should know about, before finally meeting the legendary headmistress?" I said.

"Just answer her questions truthfully, and don't waste time," Titania said. "And don't think you can lie to her, you can't," she underlined.

"Really?" I said, feeling intrigued at her certainty. "Then, how comes there are traitors in the school without her noticing."

"Politics," Titania answered with absolute certainty, unaware that she had revealed important information to me. They knew the identity of the traitor.

How interesting.

Still, rather than pushing her on the subject, I decided to focus on her certainty about my eventual inability to lie. She might be talking about the insights generated by living long, but I had a feeling that it wasn't something that simple. Maybe it was a skill like my Subterfuge, only about revealing the truth rather than hiding it, or maybe it was some kind of spell. Regardless, it was not something to be underestimated.

Honestly, I would have never taken the risk if I hadn't already nominally allied with her accidentally when I saved Titania from the necromancers, and while I had secrets, they were not the kind that would come up easily.

Regardless, I could feel my heartbeat climbing up as we climbed the stairs of the central tower, which was the dedicated residence of the ruler of the school.

Then, Titania knocked on the door, a door that was glowing with magical wards. I wouldn't like to try breaking it while the wards were active. "Come in," called a voice from inside, rusty and cracking. Titania did so, giving me the first glimpse of the office of the headmistress.

And the first thing I noticed was darkness. The room was entirely too dark, from furniture to the walls, everything was in tones of black and dark brown, including the thick curtains, blocking the sunlight to leave a few flickering lights as the only source of light.

The sensation of darkness didn't abate when we stepped in. Instead, it increased further. Without being blocked by the wards, her aura slammed against my magical senses immediately, which was just as dark as the decorations of her office.

Then I saw her.

She was sitting behind a huge desk, and the only reason I could tell she was a woman was her title. She was dressed in a black hooded cloak wrapped tight around her, revealing nothing but a lock of white hair peeking through. So mysterious, I thought even as I walked toward her in reluctant steps, even if something was tickling on the back of my head. To complete her looks, she had a huge hunch on her back, disfiguring her looks even further.

The dark accents of her room and her aura gave me a reason to second-think my visit. The only reason I didn't beat a hasty retreat was the fact that she controlled Silver Spires, therefore had no reason to ally with the necromancers.

"Speak," the headmistress ordered, her voice still croaky.

The situation was far too complicated for me to delve deep into the implications of her voice and her darkness, before I could get a better handle of the situation, at least. "I heard from a confidential source that the princess will be visiting the school..." I started and gave her a short yet effective explanation of the status.

As I explained, however, I was doing my best to analyze the aura that filled the room, to understand the accuracy of Titania's warning about not giving her a signal.

It proved to be an excellent tactic, because, without my full focus, I could have never identified the subtle tendril of mana that doing its best to worm itself into my body, directly toward my soul space.

I had to hide my frown of disappointment, as her action clearly signaled that I wasn't the only one aware of the secrets of the soul space. Me being the only one that discovered that secret would be a stretch, but still, I felt a bit disappointed at the loss of my advantage.

The disappointment was barely a momentarily flicker in my focus, however, as my attention was on running my own mana, stretching my Tantric and Subterfuge skills to the limit, and started designing a fake layer of soul space.

I was lucky that I was very familiar with the other people's soul space appearance, allowing me to customize it based on the impressions I had gained from the girls.

The first thing I had done was to adjust my stats lower, not wanting to alarm her. I doubted she would be as calm if she noticed only two of my stats were below thirty —and barely— while my highest stat was almost fifty. Instead, I created a much more modest stat spread, showing my

physical stats were even higher than the mental ones. I kept the likes of Perception and Manipulation extra-low, just to reduce her alertness further.

Of course, I couldn't just downgrade everything and still maintain my credibility as a fighter. I faked my level higher to mid-thirties, but very limited space for further growth, and carrying the skills dedicated for combat. Tantric and Subterfuge were gone, replaced by Legendary Biomancy and Grandmaster Melee and Elemental, everything that Titania had observed me create.

Miraculously, I managed to finish it in seconds and cast it without alerting them —helped by the fact that I was targeting my own body.

[-146 Mana]

Then, the headmistress's mana tendril invaded my fake soul space, exploring carefully. Weirdly, there was no subterfuge bonus.

Maybe I was caught already, I thought, doing my best not to reflect anything outward as I carefully examined her mana tendril exploring my soul space. It was certainly a possibility, but I had already committed to faking, and changing the tactics would only make things worse.

Instead, I decided to counter-attack —in a very limited sense— and started examining her mana, while I continued to explain the Princess's visit. I wouldn't have dared to copy her assault when I could see her magical flexibility was above mine, but her probe gave me a chance to do so.

The exploration gave me another shock. Everything in her room was dark, including her own aura, but in contrast, her mana was purer than anything else I had felt, which included Titania's light magic. The headmistress's magic was as bright as Titania, but it lacked the sensation of a crusader that was tempted to burn everything, instead of signaling a soft acceptance.

Such an interesting paradox, I noted. Especially since I didn't know whether her aura, or her mana was her true self. Maybe neither was, and her mana was another layer of fake she developed to acquire Titania's alliance.

Pity that I was not in a position to enjoy delving deeper into this particular mystery, still unable to decide whether she had discovered my own little ploy. She gave no indication of it, but I was not over the fact that my Subterfuge had not increased. Though curiously, my Arcana didn't as well, which was supposed to be more about the successful construction of the spell rather than the effectiveness of the trick aspect.

Maybe it was just about the interference of the fake soul space... I certainly hoped so...

However, I wasn't free to waste my time on alternative scenarios. "... and that's it," I said, completing my explanation as I looked at her face, hidden under her hood so that even my enhanced senses unable to see anything other than her white hair.

I expected the headmistress to speak, but Titania acted quicker. "What should we do?" Titania asked.

Rather than answering, the Headmistress looked at me. "What do you think?" she asked in the same raspy voice that reminded me of an old oak covered with mushrooms.

"I think we should attack their central base and damage them as much as possible," I answered, despite having better ideas. Attacking was not the worst idea, as it would at least reduce their cards, but it would also reveal our hands unnecessarily, and wouldn't give the initiative back. However, I suggested it for two reasons. First, I didn't even know their resources to create a more complicated plan that could steal the initiative.

Second, and more importantly, I didn't want to reveal my strategic abilities to the headmistress, certainly not before I could have a better understanding of her.

"What do you think, Titania?" the headmistress asked.

"We should have done it earlier," she sharply answered, showing her hatred toward dark magic, which only made her obvious sympathy toward the headmistress even more curious. "What about the team?" she asked.

"You two will be enough. Their forces have already started dispersing around, and we need to keep some of our forces in reserve in case they target the towns with their monsters," the headmistress said, speaking the longest sentence since I entered.

Titania didn't look satisfied with the suggestion —which was telling considering her emotion-blocker was running at full power— but she still nodded. "Is there anything else?" she asked, and the headmistress shook her head.

She stood up and I immediately followed her, curious about the lack of interrogation, but feeling even more scared of the headmistress as a result. I had expected her to ask about my origins, leveraging her power position, but she hadn't done so. So, she was either confident enough that she had got a handle of my abilities, therefore didn't feel alert, or she already discovered more than I was aware, therefore staying calm about the subject.

Regardless of the reason, when I left the room, I was even more alert about the mystery of the headmistress...

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [86/100]

Expert Speech [57/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Seventy-Nine

We were silent as we walked out of the headmistress's office, which lasted until we arrived at her room. If she had any problems with me following her, she didn't show it off. The walk barely allowed me to relax from the wild ride I experienced in the headmistress's office. She had surprised me with her abilities, and not in a good way. I felt truly vulnerable there.

Titania started speaking only after we arrived at her room, which was the safest place to talk tactics. "We will leave with the first lights of the day, so we can ambush them around the sunset, where they are at their weakest-" Titania started, trying to take control, but I cut her off.

"No," I simply said.

"What do you mean, no," she asked in her usual cold tone. "That's an order from the headmistress."

I shook my head, but let a smirk appear on my lips. "I didn't disagree with the attack itself," I said. "I disagree about attacking them during the day. We should attack them in the middle of the night."

"Nonsense, the sunlight-" she started, but I cut her off once again.

"Will actually hurt us, considering we're going to attack them in their underground base, where they are protected from the sun. If we attack in the night, at least most of their troops will be out, making our job even easier."

"Still, we can't wait until tomorrow night-" she tried to take control.

"I agree," I said. "That's why we should leave immediately. With magic, we can arrive there in less than an hour, and start our assault in immediately afterward. Since their spies probably reported that you're back in the school, we would catch them completely unprepared."

"Out of the question," she argued. "I'm still not recovered from my latest mission-" Titania tried to argue, but I cut her off again. However, this time, not with my words, applying my tongue and lips in a different way.

[-159 Mana]

[+100 Experience]

“Any other arguments,” I said as I pulled back from the kiss, enjoying her dumbfounded expression. I had used some of the mana to help her recover her mana, but most went to hijacking her emotional-suppressor once more. “Take your gear, and we’ll leave.”

“But-” she tried to argue, once again stammering with a blush without the insulating effect of her magic. I interrupted her with a spank to her ass.

“Let’s not waste any time. It’s the order of the headmistress, after all,” I said, using her earlier words against her. “Just take your gear and let’s leave.”

She looked dumbfounded, a thick blush covering her face. The confusion worked excellently, as she nodded obediently before walking to her bedroom. A moment later, she reappeared, this time wearing a new robe, and carrying a crystal staff, both radiating magic despite the restraining runes on them. They were clearly powerful, but it was also understandable that she didn’t carry them around daily. Most magical swords and other items for warriors had short lives, but compared to magic amplifiers, they might as well be turtles.

“Do we need to stop in your room as well,” she commented even as her grip tightened around her staff in an effort to suppress their magical presence.

“Nope,” I said, which made her look curiously. “Unfortunately, I can’t access my arsenal here,” I said, which was a blatant misdirection from the fact that I was still extremely poor when it came to disposable items.

Luckily, not for long, thanks to my growing relationship with Oeyne.

“Let’s go,” she said calmly, making a bid to regain her calm, which would have worked better if it wasn’t for her cute blush. She walked ahead of me, but this time, rather than going out, she brought me a random area in the depths of the library, and unlocked a secret passage.

“That’s going to bring us out?” I asked as I followed her, my gaze locked on her hips. She might not be as voluptuous as the other girls, and her battle robe might be too thick to hide her meager curves, but she still noticed my gaze, making her blush even thicker.

“Yes,” she simply answered before turning her attention back to us. After almost ten minutes of travel, the secret passage brought us to a warded cave, which also functioned as a stable for a Pegasi, one of the rare monsters that were tamed en masse to function as mounts. “It’s going to be difficult for her to carry both of us,” she said.

It was a critical decision point for me, which was in a case that looked deceptively simple. I

could either use the mount together with her, or could summon the fake air elemental again. The existence of the fake elemental was not the issue, but the fact that I would be able to use such a magically-intensive method to travel, and still battle at the full performance was something different.

I wouldn't have considered it if it wasn't for the mysteries I had faced against the headmistress. Her ability to analyze soul spaces blindsided me, and when combined with her weird contrast between her aura and her mana, marked her as a much more unconventional character than I had expected.

Admittedly, it was my arrogance. I knew that she was able to keep her post for centuries despite many rival factions, therefore, she should be holding many cards. I just didn't expect one of those to invalidate my greatest advantages that easily. I was afraid that once the immediate threat of necromancers had passed, she would start searching for me, easily finding the girls as well, likely discovering the Companion Mechanic as a result. Other than taking the girls and running away, it was hard to prevent it.

So, I needed an alternative approach, I thought even as I let my gaze fall on Titania. She clearly knew at least some of the secrets of the headmistress, and I could use this trip to pry them out of her mouth. The Companion Mechanic would have worked wonders in this situation as well. Yes, there was a risk that Titania would go to the headmistress and explain, but maybe, progressing in her companion system, along with the possible rewards, might help me quite a bit.

After a while, I decided to go with the riskier option. "Don't worry, I have a better option in mind," I said, once again creating an elemental mount, pumping enough mana to stabilize it perfectly.

[-2306 Mana]

Converting her to my side completely was a long shot. Luckily, that was not necessarily my only option. I could use our growing closeness to interrogate her about the headmistress —along with many other important things. If I discover something that required running away, it was a perfect time.

If not, maybe it would act as a peace offering between me and the headmistress. After all, she ruled a neutral faction, and I was very effective in helping her faction.

"But... Wasting mana..." she gasped in shock as she felt the waves of magic.

I chuckled even as I mounted the elemental before riding it to her. I leaned down to pull her gently, letting her sit in front of me, hugging her gently. I whispered. "Did you forget my advantage when it comes to regeneration," I whispered into her ear. "Did you forget my specialty already?" I asked.

"Mana regeneration," she gasped.

I chuckled. "Yes," I said even as I put my hand to her chin, gently pushing to position her lips for a perfect kiss, which I delivered even as I commanded the mount to move at the full speed. She gasped in shock, which was suppressed by our kiss. Despite the speed, however, our ride was comfortable, as I used another air spell to protect us from the winds.

[-103 Mana]

[+200 Experience]

"That, and mana transfer," I said in a low, throaty tone after I stopped the kiss, leaving her gasping in excitement.

"But..." she started, failing to continue her words under my gaze, which never stopped being funny considering the power she held in her fingertips and her lofty position. I was lucky that such a brunette beauty remained untouched, waiting for my eventual conquer.

"But, nothing," I said aggressively as I let my hands explore her body. "We're going to go into a very important battle, and you're not going to go in with a half-empty mana reserve." I waited for a moment for her argument, but it was not forthcoming.

I leaned in for another kiss, but this time, I pulled her onto my lap. Also, I had another surprise for her, as I ordered the elemental to turn the smooth ride into a bumpy ride, like a stage coach going through a poor country road. The effect, every tremble echoed in her core, arousing her even further, and she was already close to a surrender thanks to my kiss. The bumpy ride made things easier.

So easy that her hands barely found mine as they reached her robe, putting an ineffective display as I unbuttoned her battle robe. She barely resisted as her robe opened further and further, revealing a long modest skirt and a boring blouse underneath.

When I finally removed her battle robe and folded it before stuffing it in my bag, she barely let out a murmur of disagreement. When my hand slipped under her skirt and started climbing up her naked leg, however, she shivered before muttering, "Isn't it a bit ... much?"

“Is it?” I asked even as I ripped her panties with one pull, giving myself access to her wetness. “It’s the best way to transfer mana, and we’re short of time,” I explained, even as I used my other hand to free my shaft. “I’m just doing the best for the mission.”

Of course, it was a nonsense explanation, but her condition, she wasn’t searching for a reasonable explanation. As her innocent body once again felt the stirrings of arousal, she just needed a flimsy reason to silence herself for a moment.

Under different circumstances, I would have taken a different route, softly teasing her until she started begging for more. Pity that we had limited time before the attack. So rather than teasing her, I decided to move to the main event. I dangled her panties in front of her for a moment before letting them go, and they disappeared in the winds immediately.

“Hey, I need that,” she complained in a very out-of-character manner, highlighting her loss of control further as she wiggled on my lap, separated only by her skirt.

Our adventure was just getting started...

[-103 Mana]

[+600 Experience]

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Master Arcana [86/100]

Expert Speech [57/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty

There were many interesting things going in my mind as we traveled toward the huge base of the necromancers, but coincidentally, none of them was about the undead we would have to face. Not when I had just got ridden of the panties of Titania, fingering her mercilessly. Most of my attention was on the amazing sensation that covered my fingers.

[+300 Experience]

[-256 Mana]

However, a part of it was focused on a related, but very important problem.

The Companion Acquisition Process.

Even with Cornelia, introducing the system had been a relatively simple affair, that while I didn't trust her entirely, I was relieved by the fact that she had no choice but to rely on me for the power she searched.

The same didn't apply to Titania. While my assistance was critical, it was only until the current crisis was resolved, one way or another. Even worse was the presence of the headmistress, with her unknown strength and her ability to assess soul spaces. The ancient witch was truly dangerous.

However, to make things even worse, even with the looming potential threat of the Headmistress, I had to continue. For better or worse, I had already triggered the process, and it had created its unique node in Titania, which might have been already discovered by the Headmistress. The only thing I could do under the circumstances was to push forward, and hope either Headmistress doesn't make a habit of checking Titania's soul space regularly, or, in the case of discovery, she would entertain my offer of alliance enough to ignore I boned her subordinate repeatedly...

That left only one problem. I still didn't want to alert Titania until it was too late, so I needed to hide the source of her first achievement. So, rather than pushing inside her immediately to quench my throbbing shaft, I waited until the perfect opportunity, fingering her in the process, as well as deploying enough mana to suppress her emotional blocker.

Her resulting moans were spectacular, so was her distinct lack of complaint.

[+500 Experience]

[-411 Mana]

I saw the opportunity in the form of a Darkness Wyvern, preparing to dive toward us immediately. It had a scary reputation in a similar vein to Shadow Wolf, only several times larger in scale. After all, despite its intimidating skill set, Shadow Wolf was a class nine creature, meaning its danger to real powerhouses was limited, and it culled the weak.

Darkness Wyvern was the opposite. It was a high-class creature, usually above twenty-five, some even passing thirty, and like the Shadow Wolf, it was an ambush hunter. Unlike the wolf, it had a more select palette, only hunting people with overwhelming strength, rarely attacking anyone below level twenty. Luckily, it was a rare creature.

And, even better, I wasn't afraid of it thanks to my skill set, allowing me to both detect it easily and assault it with ranged options. I even achieved something most thought as impossible, and noticed it as it prepared its dive, rather than just before its claws connected. With that, it wasn't a threat, because its explosive attacking ability wasn't matched by its defensive traits.

Just as it was about to dive, I pulled my shaft free, and plunged it in Titania, earning a loud moan as she was assaulted by the familiar presence of my invasion. "Did you miss it?" I whispered as she tightened around it.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 24%]

[+1000 Experience]

[-217 Mana]

"O-of course not," she stammered. "It's just for the mana, and nothing-" she tried to continue, but I cut her off.

"Look out," I cried as I wrapped one hand around her waist as I ordered the air elemental to move to the side, dodging the dive attack at the last second. "Attack," I ordered, while casting an earth elemental spell, summoning several pillars around the creature to pin it in place, strong enough to resist its furious thrashing.

[-651 Mana]

For her credit, Titania didn't waste a second despite the extreme situation and raised her hand, sending a ray of light that cut through the darkness of the night, filled with a scary amount of mana, even as I continued to pump in her. I could feel a huge chunk of her mana, almost half,

disappear in one spell, but not without its reward. The moment it connected with the Darkness Wyvern, the creature burned immediately, leaving a pile of ash behind. Damn, I thought, pitying the waste. Even with the strength of her spell, I wasn't expecting such a result, but maybe, Darkness Wyvern was weak against her light magic, to the point of ruining it completely, leaving no hopes of extracting any materials.

Still, the notification that popped told me that I fulfilled my primary aim, so all was well.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

She made no mention of an achievement—which didn't surprise me—as she gave an order. "Let's go back, we alerted the necromancers to our presence."

"No," I said even as I started pumping inside her.

"W-what do you mean, no," she stammered as she turned to look at me, forcing her to turn at the waist as my hands were still firmly on her hips, preventing her from moving.

"It's an excellent opportunity," I explained while I directed our mount to take an alternative route to our secret entrance. "No matter what, the surprise effect of our assault will fade in a few seconds. If they increase the guards at the entrance, it's even better for us, as we're going to use a hidden entrance."

"But-" she tried to speak, only to be silenced when I ripped her top without a warning, leaving her only with her bra.

"No, the plan is solid. Now, we need to focus on recovering your mana," I explained before I silenced her with a kiss, transferring a great amount of mana in the process to fill her drained mana reserves.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 27%]

[+1000 Experience]

[-216 Mana]

[+2 Speech]

One good advantage of the changed route was that it gave me a chance to enjoy Titania as we travel. She was a spectacular sight, her alabaster skin shining under the moonlight, wearing nothing but a bra and a bunched-up skirt that revealed her delicious legs, while I continued to

pump her.

I pulled out of the kiss, pulled her on my lap more comfortably, pumping in a leisure manner. She caught flatfooted by the sudden change, but made no attempt to change her position, no doubt convincing herself that it was for the mana only, though the way she tightened around me betrayed her enjoyment. I could easily imagine her staying on my lap silently for the rest of the route, trying to act impervious as much as possible.

I had no intention of allowing that, not when I finally have it under my hand.

“So, are you comfortable with the position,” I asked even as I lazily pumped her, each push slowly filling her mana.

“W-what,” she stammered as she tried to adjust her position, feeling self-aware, but didn’t pull out. I slipped my hands underneath her skirt to rest on her hips, enjoying the way her ass clenched under my touch.

“I’m asking whether you’re feeling comfortable, or whether we should push for a change of position?” I asked. “Maybe you want to lay down and I take you in missionary, or maybe you want to ride me in cowgirl? Or maybe I take you from behind while you lay on all fours?”

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 29%]

[+600 Experience]

[-135 Mana]

“T-that’s not necessary,” she managed to stammer, even though her blush intensified with every whisper of a new position, her eyes losing focus as she fell into the imagination.

“As you wish,” I said, though that was by no means was a reason to stop my meddling. I grabbed the hem of her skirt, and after a pull, ripped most of it off, turning it into a miniskirt that would barely hide her ass, and that was only when she was standing perfectly still. It was delicious. And even better, this time, she didn’t even complain. “This is better, right?” I asked, pushing my luck enthusiastically. “This way, it’ll not get in the way.”

“Y-yeah,” she stammered and answer, doing her best not to moan, but failing spectacularly.

“Good,” I said even as I returned my hand to her hips, continuing to pump as I enjoyed her wetness gushing around. “You just need to suffer for another five minutes, and then we’ll arrive

at the secret entrance, you can handle it, right?”

“I can,” she whispered, her eyes closed, feeling more self-conscious after my questions, which was the aim in the first place. I didn’t want her to let her go dazed, I wanted her to enjoy every single detail.

For the rest of the journey, it continued at the same pace. I stayed slotted inside her, pumping gently, while she did her best to act like it wasn’t affecting her —and failing terribly.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 33%]

[+1000 Experience]

[-291 Mana]

“We’re here,” I told her as we arrived at the entrance of the cave, and dispelled the air elemental, glad that its drain was much more manageable thanks to my improved abilities. Unlike before, I still had almost half of my reserves even with all the mana I transferred.

Multiple active regeneration perks were certainly useful.

My feet touched the floor, but I didn’t let hers touch. Instead, I hooked my arms under her knees, forcing her legs to open to the limit, her body lighter than a feather thanks to my strength. “L-let me walk,” she stammered.

“No,” I simply said as we walked at the cave, and rather than continuing, I stood in the middle of the cave. “We still need to fill your reserves completely before we can act.”

“The position is weird,” she whispered, admitting.

“Sure, let me fix it,” I said as I grabbed her waist, and turned her 180 degrees, so that she was facing me, before I rammed her again. Her legs wrapped around me reflexively, and our eyes met, allowing me to read her emotions.

Frustration, because she was being betrayed by her own body as her entrance tightened around me, slippery wet.

Humiliation, because she was feeling a lack of control, turning her into a toy despite all her might.

Excitement, because of the stirrings of a way of life she had never imagined before.

Pleasure, because as I picked up speed, she was losing control of her own thoughts, overwhelmed with pleasure.

Then, I exploded, filling her insides with my seed and mana in equal amount, the torrent of liquid sweeping her conflicting emotions, leaving pure ecstasy behind as she climaxed, making her forget every single unimportant detail, from her position to impending deadly assault, making her focus on the reactions of her own body, her arms and legs tightening around.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 38%]

[+2000 Experience]

[-611 Mana]

“Not a bad way to recover, right,” I commented lazily, enjoying the way she tried to calm her expression, only to fail spectacularly. I wanted to tease her, ask her whether she liked my cock, but I had a feeling it was still slightly early to break the illusion of mana recovery assistance. She knew the truth, and I certainly knew the truth, however, speaking the truth still ruined the comfortable illusion that was established, one that was still necessary.

Pity we didn't have a bed in here, as I would have loved to enjoy an extended holiday.

However, just because we didn't have a bed, or I still needed to maintain the illusion, didn't mean that I couldn't push my luck a bit more. I finally let her go, and she stood straight, her legs trembling, my cum sliding down her inner thigh. “You're still not full, right?” I asked, despite knowing the answer.

“No, I'm at two-thirds,” she answered.

“Good,” I said as I cast a spell against the wall, turning its rough natural surface into a smooth layer that would rival the best marble. “I want you to remove your bra, then go and lean against the wall, and push your ass out.”

[-4 Mana]

The position certainly wasn't the craziest we had done together, but there was a big distinction. Until this moment, everything we had done together, she had been a passive participant, following my every whim and nothing else, like a leaf caught in the wind. This time, however, while still under my orders, she needed to take the action herself, with the full realization of what was about to follow.

Her stiff expression suggested that she was very much aware of that particular nugget. After all, she might be inexperienced in managing her emotions, but she was a very smart woman, and understood what was going on. And after several repeats, the pleasures of the flesh weren't so novel that it would blanket her decision-making process completely.

She was still in control.

Still, she walked toward the new wall I constructed, her hips dancing invitingly, her hands reaching back to remove her bra, before she tossed it on the side. She did look at me questioningly when I cast a fire spell to burn it. "It's better if we don't leave any evidence," I explained, like a sculpted wall—or a secret tunnel—wasn't evidence.

She leaned against the wall, her tits pressing against the cold surface, her hands stilted to support. "Good," I whispered as I stalked toward her, enjoying the sight of her puffed lips, her short skirt barely able to cover the upper side of her hips with the angle. "Now, bring your hand down and separate your lips, so that I can slide in."

[+3 Speech]

Once again, it was not a functional request, but a test of my control over her. Even more beautifully, she followed the order immediately, widening her slit enough to reveal her soft flesh, begging for my presence. "Beautiful," I gasped, fascinated by her obedience even more than her beauty.

Then, I pushed, my shaft disappearing inside her inch by inch, slow enough to savor it. She swallowed all without the slightest issue, almost sucking me in. Her wetness making it even easier. "Faster," she moaned, and I gasped in shock. She turned to face me, frozen by her own reaction, though she was quick to recover. "T-the sooner my mana recover, the sooner we can attack them," she gasped, even though her tone indicated that she didn't have the slightest conviction behind her latest excuse.

"As you wish, sweet cheeks," I said, spanking her ass to leave no ambiguity about which cheeks I was talking about, before I slammed hard inside her, and a cry of pleasure escaped her mouth, loud enough to make me glad the wards in the cave included silencing charms.

"Do it," she groaned as I slammed, again and again, my spear dominating the battle, leaving her no option but to surrender to pleasure. "Faster, harder."

Following her request, I started a merciless assault to her entrance, each slam making her tremble, pushing her to the limits. And unlike the other magically inclined girls, her physical

stats were quite a bit more developed, allowing me to truly ravage her.

She was doing her best to handle the assault, huffing, puffing, moaning, crying, and even begging, all for her search for a release, while I slammed her repeatedly, filling her with mana until she was filled to the brim.

It was another test, to see whether she would ask me to stop now that her mana reserves were completely full. However, from the way her moans exploded, I doubted that it was even an option in her mind. Several minutes later, I exploded inside her, triggering another orgasm in her.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 45%]

[+2500 Experience]

[-1396 Mana]

My seed was once again accompanied by a flood of mana. However, since her reserves were already full, I decided to leverage it a different way. I continued to inject mana, however, used it to envelope her emotion-blocking perk, essentially warding it up so that it would be impossible to affect her anymore. For all intents and purposes, it was destroyed.

[Achievement: Stolen Servant. Acquire the Acolyte of your rival through direct intervention, cutting his connection completely. +3 to all stats. +20000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Tantric (5), Grandmaster Elemental (5), Basic Craft]

My gasp of shock mixed with Titania's moans as I received the achievement. It was a spectacular gain in terms of benefits, but also, it finally gave me a few more clues about my system. The term Acolyte seemed technical enough to give me a starting point, and the huge rewards suggested that it was pretty important to do so.

In contrast, skill selection was easier. As much as I was tempted to select Tantric, it was still sufficient for my needs. On the contrary, Craft might provide me with the edge I require, allowing me to prepare against the challenges beforehand.

I pulled out, hugging her to prevent her from collapsing, intent on taking a couple of minutes of

rest, allowing her to recover while I regenerated mana.

A dangerous battle awaited us.

[Level: 29 Experience: 421500 / 435000

Strength: 36 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 41

HP: 4756 / 4756 Mana: 2475 / 6003]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [86/100]

Expert Speech [62/75]

Basic Craft [0/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-One

“Shall we,” I said after we rested for about ten minutes, which allowed Titania to reasonably recover from the after-effects of her orgasm, while my mana had regenerated completely. She was leaning against the wall, with her delicious body still on display, wearing only the ruins of her skirt and her shoes.

“Are you recovered?” she asked. “Already?”

“Of course, sweet cheeks,” I answered. “You know that I recover quickly.”

“But this quickly?” she said, her expression split between shock and fascination.

“What can I say, tonight, I’m feeling rather ... virile,” I answered, which earned another blush.

“So, shall we?”

“Pass me my robe,” she said, once again trying to act in her commanding usual self, but that didn’t work as well with the thick blush that covered her face.

I looked at her body on display, which made her arms twitch like she wanted to cover it, no matter how unnecessary such an action would have been after our earlier mana transfer actions. I grabbed the robe from my pack and raised it, only to pull back when she reached. “Do you really need this?” I asked.

“Of course I do,” she answered. “It’s an enchanted robe, perfect for defense. I can’t assault a base without it.”

“Even if I defend you?” I asked, and she looked at me questioningly. “Your Light magic is clearly a better option against the undead, the only disadvantage is your limited mana.”

“My mana is not limited!” she answered heatedly.

“Compared to me, it is,” I countered. “What if we replicate the same trick with the air elemental, and I handle the mobility and the defense, as well as trapping the corridors in our wake, while you handle the offensive side.” A smirk popped on my face. “And don’t worry, I’m going to make sure to use an earth spell to keep a spell to keep your body hidden from the others. I am a jealous bastard, after all.”

[+2 Speech]

She blushed as I explained, but in the end, there was no other option but to accept. Which was good, because I preferred to use that approach for multiple reasons. It was tactically advantageous, but even more importantly, it would allow me to camouflage the second milestone of the Companion Process. The fact that I would be enjoying her delicious body in the process was an excellent bonus, as always.

I presented my arm to her with an exaggerated move, like we were about to walk into a ball hosted by the Royal family, blushing spectacularly as she did so. “You have an excellent poise,” I complimented her as she put her arm.

“It’s a habit of my youth,” she answered, trying to look impervious, even doing a half-decent job of it. Her adaptability was impressive. Though I chuckled, as talking about her youth while she was barely thirty —and definitely not showing it— was rather hilarious.

We walked in silence, though she examined the walls as we did so. “Impressive work, considering the environmental limitations,” she said. “Though I would be surprised if they could stand at the end of the month.”

“Two weeks is a more reasonable estimation,” I corrected her, even as I occasionally reinforced a rune or added another trap. It wasn’t a structure built to last, after all. “What do you think about the balancing structure of this part?” I asked, launching an intellectual discussion as we moved deeper underground, each step bringing us closer to the undead base.

[+3 Arcana]

As much as I enjoyed the discussion, when we stood in front of the entrance, it was the time for action. “Ready?” I asked as we stood. She nodded. “We need to be quick,” I explained. “I’m going to move us without stopping, just focus on killing the greatest number of undead possible, I’ll handle sniping the necromancers,” I said. I expected her light magic to work much better in dealing area-effect damage, even with my temporary Fire Magic skill, acquired from Cornelia.

Of course, that didn’t change the fact that at this point, I was stronger than Titania with a significant margin. Not only I could overwhelm her in terms of burst damage —fifty points of Charisma was definitely no joke— but also I was miles ahead of her in terms of utility and other abilities. That also didn’t mean she was useless, as with me properly supplying her with mana, she was a veritable weapon of area denial, especially against undead and other creatures vulnerable to her Light Magic.

“Wouldn’t it better to focus on the necromancers and the bigger creatures?” she asked.

“Not entirely,” I answered. “I can handle taking the necromancers while you focus on the mass creatures, but trying to take down the bigger creatures would require too much effort.”

“I can take them in seconds,” she argued.

“Yes, you can,” I said even as I bobbed her nose, enjoying her blush. Teasing her was fun! “However, that would drain your magic too quickly, and while my regeneration is not slow, it’s also not instantaneous. Pausing to recover would ruin our strategy. They have no reason to bring out their weaker zombies for their daily operations, and if we could cleanse the majority of them, it would help us.”

“But they wouldn’t be a threat against the school. There’s no chance they could penetrate the wards, and even if they did, our mages could easily cleanse them.”

“You’re missing something,” I reminded her. “What if they use those zombies to attack the other settlements. They could use the horde to siege every town simultaneously, forcing us to disperse our forces to defend them, or risk isolating the school forever logistically. Even worse, they could use the weaker monsters to conceal their real assault forces, and we would have no idea the true danger until we could face them properly.”

She ducked her head, blushing in shame. “I didn’t think of that,” she said, which didn’t surprise me. She might be a spectacular mage, but when it came to strategy, she lacked nuance, preferring to burn forward like her own magic.

“Ready?” I asked again, and when she nodded, I created another pseudo-elemental, however, this time it wasn’t air but earth. It would be slower, but with the added benefit of bypassing the walls and taking shortcuts at impossible locations. However, it was surrounded by a subtle air spell, to prevent the smell of the undead to reach our nose. It even had a throne-like chair on the top, which I sat on immediately before patting my lap.

[-1374 Mana]

She blushed, but followed my invitation, slowly lowering herself to my erection, gasping as her wetness wrapped my girth. “Ready,” she approved, looking ahead. Once we took a seat, walls appeared around us, sufficiently hiding us from the view while allowing us to attack with our magic. Essentially, it was an unholy mixture of a mobile fort and a love nest.

[+500 Experience]

Her high level was definitely convenient for development, I surmised, even as my arms

tightened around her. "Hold on, it's going to be a wild ride," I whispered.

Our first destination was the huge army gathering spot I had discovered at the entrance, filled with thousands upon thousands of zombies and skeletons, hundreds of bone dragons, a variety of other creatures, and a veritable necromancer sea to control them. It wasn't the safest place to hit, but the later we hit there, the harder our job would be. In terms of benefits, it was the most important area.

If we were hitting this place during the day, the necromancer's central meeting spot might have been a better location, but unlike the zombies, they had the ability to counter my spells, so I wasn't really willing to risk it.

I used my biomancy to check our surroundings, and the elemental mount moved slowly toward the meeting location, using a deserted path. "In five seconds," I warned her. "Start casting."

Since we were connected, I could feel her mana draining with an alarming speed as a rotating glow appeared in her hand, drawing complicated patterns. I could feel that it consumed about the same mana as the spell she used against the Darkness Wyvern, but the spell itself was several times more complicated.

The impact of it justified it. When we burst into the huge opening, we came across a necromancer, who looked at us with empty eyes, trying to process. He was still trying to understand it, when I lobbed his head with a ranged air spell before he could even react, the blood spraying. He was clearly a novice, as his transformation had barely started.

[-63 Mana]

I managed to take down two other necromancers the next second before they could react, one of them failed to react, and the other managed to raise a shield, but it might as well be a piece of glass against my attack.

The third one was able to raise an alarm, but it was too late. Titania's spell was complete. She sent a hand-sized orb toward the center of the room, reminding me of an overgrown firefly, beautiful yet ultimately useless. That was the impression for my eyes, of course.

For my magical senses, it was burning like a secondary sun, fascinatingly-complicated even if it was unraveling as it moved. It was one advantage of specialization, I guessed. I doubted I could cast a spell that complicated without years of training.

Luckily, I had many options to cheat.

It finally triggered, several yards before its ultimate location, when one of the larger bone dragons tried to bat it away like it was a simple toy. A bright explosion covered the area, accompanied by the cacophony of cries so loud that it forced to cast a spell to block the disgusting sound.

Titania was gasping in exhaustion. "Excellent work," I whispered to Titania as I grabbed her breasts and started pumping, also casting a healing spell to take the edge. Rest until I gave the signal, then repeat it," I asked even as I pumped her with a fresh flood of mana.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 48%]

[+1000 Experience]

[-974 Mana]

I led the earth elemental through the middle of the zombies, which was attacking us mindlessly, unaware of the significance of the explosions. The bone dragons, and the other undead with rudimentary intelligence and self-preservation, however, were pulling back in what could be termed as panic if it was shown by a living creature.

Necromancers, on the other hand, were in a full-blown rout. Protecting the great collection area was nothing more than grunt work, therefore, assigned to the lowest ones in the totem pole of hierarchy. Some tried to attack, their necrotic bolts splashing helplessly against the walls of my construct, while others run away.

"Let's add some heat to their panic," I whispered, earning a glare from Titania even as I pounded her furiously, no doubt thinking that a deadly combat was no place for one-liners.

I disagreed. "What was the point of being strong if I'm not going to posture for a sexy woman," I said to her, making her stammer. She was cute, feeling shy being called sexy when she was being impaled repeatedly. And while teasing her was fun, I had more immediate concerns to focus, such as necromancers, finally deploying a half-decent defense.

A lich stood in the middle of a circle, leading a ritual using the energy of the seven other necromancers spread around. I felt Titania stiffen, no doubt flashing back to the fateful day of our meeting, where she had almost died in a similar combination assault.

However, there was one huge difference. That day, they were the ambushers, and their ward was already charged, circumventing the biggest disadvantage. This time, they were playing catch-up.

Pity that they had no chance of succeeding. A fire dragon, mixed with a generous dash of life energy to prevent them from standing up saw to that.

[-531 Mana]

Before they could even raise a shield, the dragon slammed against them, breaking the node. The failure of their own spell was likely to destroy their bodies, and with my inferno, it was a done deal. “It’s time for a second spell,” I reminded her, and after ten seconds, another explosion of light occurred, this time spreading even larger, destroying another chunk of low-level zombies.

This time, I pushed her down until she crouched on all fours, slamming repeatedly to refill her mana, while also enjoying the way she gripped my shaft while she climbed toward her orgasm, clearly enjoying the new way of battle as much as I was enjoying, confirmed by the notification I had just received.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 50% - Second Stage Completed +10000 Exp]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 4. Duration, 8 hours]

[+1500 Experience]

[-1374 Mana]

Through my connection, I could feel her getting a new achievement, giving her a major bonus to her Charisma —four or five points— and a minor yet noticeable one to her Agility.

“Unbelievable,” she murmured as she started casting the same spell without even asking me, ignoring her own exhaustion, and soon, another explosion, this time even bigger, covered the area.

Shooting the helpless undead was fun, but I could feel the wards of the main hall slowly activating, and if we chose to stay here for another minute, we would be locked. So, we burst out of the main hall, and entered one of the main corridors that led toward the surface.

“That’s it?” Titania murmured, her eyes shining with excitement despite her exhausted state.

“That’s for you to chose,” I offered, even as I stalled for a moment, drawing a biomancy rune that would explode with life energy, hidden enough to be hard to detect unless they were looking for it intentionally. “We can’t return to the main hall with the wards, but there are

several other fun things we can do. What do you think?"

Looking at her excited eyes, I didn't need her to answer to turn back, prepared for a fresh battle.

[Level: 29 Experience: 434500 / 435000

Strength: 36 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 41

HP: 4756 / 4756 Mana: 4215 / 6003]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [86/100]

Expert Speech [62/75]

Basic Craft [0/25]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Two

Titania's face was glowing with excitement as I changed direction, and moved deeper into the base, but it lacked the manic obsessiveness I expected her to have. Just like her carnal joy, it was probably the first time she was enjoying the adrenaline rush of a battle without the effects of her emotional dampener, but she was already getting a hang of it.

I wasn't the only one that benefited from a high Wisdom score in decision-making, it seemed.

Unfortunately, we needed to avoid the gathering spot, no matter how good it felt for her to burn hordes of skeletons and zombies. A part of the reason was my mana, still regenerating, but a bigger part of it was the wards that were being activated. Ambushing a bunch of inexperienced necromancers was fun, but I didn't want to repeat it with the great wards backing them up.

So, instead of returning, I leveraged the benefits of my earth-elemental mount, and created a temporary underground tunnel. Their underground road was protected with wards, of course, but covering miles and miles of road perfectly was not an easy job. A simple application of my Arcana abilities was all it took to avoid their detection as we disappeared underground.

[+1 Arcana]

[-53 Mana]

Since it gave us a moment to rest, I let Titania sit while I stopped the movement of our mount, letting her catch her breath after her latest orgasm while I grabbed a chunk of stone, to test my newest skill. Crafting.

Crafting was a difficult skill to master, and since I was a beginner, it came with a very limited set of instinctual understanding. However, unlike my other skills, I had a great advantage. I had worked with Oeyne, a master of her craft, and it gave me a much greater understanding of the skill. Folding my mana several times around the piece of stone while using Earth Magic to sculpt it was almost trivial.

[-281 Mana]

[+4 Craft]

"Not bad," I murmured as I examined the stone dagger in my hands. From an objective assessment, it was nothing more than garbage, constructed from a material worse than

garbage and carrying only one layer of enchantment, it was a total waste of mana.

Luckily, I had more than enough to waste it.

“What are you doing?” Titania asked as she realized we stopped. “We should hit them before they could react!”

“No,” I answered even as I grabbed another piece of stone and repeated the earlier crafting activity, which worked quite a bit better due to increased familiarity. “It’s better if we don’t hit them immediately.”

[-234 Mana]

[+3 Craft]

“Why?” she asked, her voice sharp, but even that was an incredible development with her famously dominant personality. The fact that she was asking me to explain angrily rather than trying to force me to speak was a huge development. Of course, compared to fact that she was sitting in front of me, wearing only a damaged skirt that didn’t even cover her slit, her reduced aggressiveness wasn’t even worth mentioning.

“I want them to start searching the intruders,” I explained. “Once they are committed to it, they’ll have many strong necromancers, maybe even some of the liches, away from each other, making them easy pickings. Hunting their strongest members will work much better than otherwise. Even better, after your display, they are likely to assume that you’re pushed to your limits, meaning they’ll prioritize speed over safety”

[+1 Speech]

She nodded, approving my strategy, before her eyes landed on my hand. “Why are you wasting your mana like this?” she asked.

“Why? Do you want me to give you some more ‘mana’ instead?” I said with a naughty smirk.

Her blush was spectacular. “You dog,” she murmured, avoiding my gaze as she tried to process it, wrapping her arms around her chest.

I just chuckled before explaining. “I just received an inspiration on crafting, and want to try a new production method,” I explained.

“You can craft as well?” she asked, shocked. “What you can’t do?”

“I can do many things, including you,” I quipped, this time earning a slap on the shoulder rather than a shy avoidance. I just smirked as I grabbed another piece of stone, this time fashioning them into stone handcuffs, adding a simple suppression effect to them.

[-467 Mana]

[+5 Craft]

“Careful,” I warned. “Or I would tie you up to make sure you don’t get naughty while transferring mana.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” she challenged, which was all I needed to dash forward and grab her arms. Before she could even react, I pulled both of her arms behind her, and locked them with the handcuffs. “No,” she said. “Stop.”

“Do you really want me to stop?” I said as I pulled her on her feet, and slipped my fingers into her slit, which was getting wetter at a noticeable pace. “Your body doesn’t agree. Instead, it reacts like you want another dash of my ... mana. Am I wrong?”

She didn’t answer at first, so I started pumping my fingers, trying to force her to answer. When that failed, I decided to employ my new crafting abilities to the limit. I grabbed another piece of stone, and started crafting another item, a cylindrical one that resembled my shaft, only shorter and thinner. Unlike the daggers, I invested quite a bit of mana on its crafting, and made sure it had several spells integrated into its nature semi-permanently, including the ability to vanish waste and constant lubrication.

[-1139 Mana]

[+13 Craft]

For anyone else, it was nothing more than a total waste of mana, but for me, it was valuable above and beyond my improvement with the magic. It was a toy that would allow me to teach Titania a pleasurable lesson.

She gasped when I pressed the newly-crafted stone anal plug against her puckered hole. “What’s that,” she gasped.

“Your punishment for talking back to your betters,” I said, even as I used my free hand to pull one of her ass cheeks to the side, giving me a better view of her rosebud, small and tight, waiting to be broken in.

“I’ll kill you,” she said, her earlier submissiveness disappearing as the plug threatened to invade her alternative entrance. However, when I pushed my shaft against her entrance, the head dipping into her wetness, her struggling ceased quickly.

“Really,” I said, even as I pushed the plug slightly deeper, earning a hiss. “Come on, Titania. You’re a big girl,” I said as I slapped her ass with my free hand, staining her alabaster skin. “You can handle a little pain.”

She might have tried to refute my words, but when I pushed the plug even deeper, she prioritized gasping in shock, which followed by a moan of pleasure as I slipped the plug completely into her entrance, relying on the enchantments to prevent an injury, but that didn’t reduce the pain the slightest. Simultaneously, I slammed my shaft into her soft entrance, making her reaction even more spectacular. Even better, I received a very welcome notification.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 52%]

[+2000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Tantric (5), Grandmaster Elemental (5), Advanced Craft]

The skill selection was a foregone decision. I quickly picked Craft once more while I spanked her ass. “Someone is enjoying being plugged in the ass,” I commented cheerfully as I grabbed her handcuffed wrists before starting impaling her mercilessly.

“N-no,” she moaned, but it was impossible to hide the pleasure echoing in her tone as her two holes were teased simultaneously.

“Really?” I said, and pulled back the plug, only for her to let out a disappointed gasp, clearly not expecting me to follow up my offer. Luckily for her, she was correct on that account. “So, you don’t want me to do this,” I said as I replaced the plug with my shaft, the tip sinking slowly into her lithe ass. She was not a rival of Marianne in the hips department, but her tight ass had its own taste.

She just moaned as I sank into her ass inch by inch, objections suspiciously absent as I forced her tightness to expand. I pulled out once I reached halfway, only to slam into her pussy once more, dumping a generous dash of mana, once again feeling the fullness of her reserves while

mine dipped down dangerously low. Luckily, with four instances active, I barely needed ten minutes to fill completely again.

[-1381 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 54%]

[+2000 Experience]

“You’re a monster,” she moaned, but when she twisted her neck to catch my gaze, anger was suspiciously absent. Instead, she nibbled her lower lip, giving me a sexy glare that shouldn’t be possible for her, but somehow working perfectly, begging me to move faster.

And I did so. I launched an assault, alternating between her holes as I wreaked havoc, pulling her arms back hard, slapping her ass repeatedly. And she was clearly enjoying the rougher treatment. “You like this, don’t you,” I murmured even as I cast an earth spell, and created chains to lock her legs, though, unlike her handcuffs, they were simple spells rather than true magical items, meaning they wouldn’t last.

She didn’t say anything else, but the way she tightened further was sufficient as an answer. What were the chances that the feared Titania enjoyed bondage? It wasn’t even like Cornelia, a submissive that bowed down to a stronger person. For Cornelia, it was about the power, but for Titania, it was clearly different.

I grabbed yet another piece of stone, quickly crafting it into a collar, connected to a chain. It was exactly what I needed to test Titania’s limits. I even etched a magic-blocking ward on it as well, one that would only hold if Titania didn’t stretch her powers, of course. With her magical abilities, truly cutting her off her magic was an almost impossible task without the help of extremely strong arrays, well-above anything I could craft on the fly.

[-559 Mana]

[+6 Craft]

She stiffened when she felt the stone collar on her neck, making me wonder whether I had finally pushed her too hard, but that concern didn’t last long, not when she suddenly started cumming, more explosive than I had ever seen her do before.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 61%]

[+2000 Experience]

[Achievement: Spotting Secrets. Help a paramour discover their true selves. +3 Wisdom. +1000 Exp]

I held her arms to prevent her from hitting on the floor painfully, instead helped her to sit. I even opened the handcuffs, but kept the collar on, which looked extremely beautiful in combination with her ripped skirt and used appearance. While she rested her back against the stone wall, trying to recover from the extreme high she had just experienced, I stayed on my feet, occasionally using weak Biomancy pulses to check our surroundings while I recovered my mana.

About fifteen minutes later, my mana was completely full, but she was still resting against the wall, her eyes still closed. "Are you ready to act?" I asked.

"M-maybe," she stammered, cracking her eyes open. "I can still feel my legs trembling..."

"Yeah," I murmured even as I leaned for a quick kiss, and after that, tugged her chain. "You have enjoyed the collar more than I expected."

"But why?" she said, unable to hide her shame. "Isn't it wrong to enjoy something like that? Like I was some kind of slave..."

"Not necessarily," I said as I sat next to her, delaying the assault another couple of minutes. "What you enjoy during sex doesn't necessarily have to be what you do in your daily life. Maybe that was what you needed, a contrast to your strict life, where you do nothing but missions or managing the library, forcing you to be always on command. You were always so stiff before we truly met, after all."

"Do you think it's permanent?" she questioned even as she dragged her fingers over her collar.

"Maybe, maybe not?" I said, caressing her raven hair. "The important question is, why do you care. We can always stop if you stop enjoying it," I offered, then smiled mischievously. "And I promise I'll forge you a much better collar if you continue to enjoy it," I offered.

"You bastard!" she exclaimed, hitting playfully, but her wide smile was enough to tell her true feelings.

I sighed. "As much as I enjoy spending time with you, we need to move," I murmured, and cast telekinesis on her robe, bringing it to us. "Put it on, and we can move again," I suggested. She

looked at her robe with no small amount of disappointment. “I know, but unlike before, we’re going to hunt strong magic users rather than mindless hordes. Our attack-defend combo is not guaranteed to work. There’s no guarantee that they can’t split us temporarily by attacking from multiple directions, and leaving you defenseless is not a risk I’m willing to take.”

“Okay,” she murmured mulishly, but her blush signaled that she enjoyed the attention. While she got dressed with her battle gear, I made the elemental mount move again.

Destination, their meeting area...

[Level: 30 Experience: 439500 / 465000

Strength: 36 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 44

HP: 4920 / 4920 Mana: 6300 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [95/100]

Master Arcana [87/100]

Expert Speech [63/75]

Advanced Craft [31/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Three

Titania was silent as the earth elemental burst in one of the tunnels deep into their base before melting into nothingness. It had outlived its usefulness momentary. If the earlier assault was a hammer, the current one was a scalpel, and a clumsy earth elemental would only hurt us.

“Let’s hide us from the view,” I murmured even as I cast one of the best concealment spells I had learned, making our figures fade into the background, with shadows wrapping around us.

[+2 Arcana]

[-316 Mana]

However, as we walked, I could feel a slight stirring in connection with Titania. Curious, I followed the connection, only to realize her emotional-suppressor from her light magic stirring in discomfort, pushing against the bondage I created. It was an ineffectual thing, barely pushing back before my own Companion Core worked its magic to reinforce the bonds, making them even stronger. Still, it was an interesting reaction against an arcana spell, even the slightest component of darkness stirring against.

Such an inconvenient ability. No wonder until now, Titania was a furious hammer of destruction on the battlefield. Her powers didn’t allow it to be otherwise.

Surprisingly, her next words proved that she was already moving ahead of her earlier instincts. “We should try to steal the information from their headquarters,” she whispered.

I was glad to see her already leveraging subterfuge in her thinking, though still elementary. “Normally, it would work excellently, but under the current situation, it doesn’t work for two reasons, one tactical, and one strategic. Do you want to guess why?” I questioned, wanting to encourage her sneaky approaches. I was starting to like her more and more, above and beyond her power, so I was willing to spend the necessary time to correct her thinking.

Luckily, with her spectacular mental stats —spectacular for the rest of the world, not in comparison to me— I didn’t expect our impromptu lessons to take too much time. I had all the confidence that she would prove a quick study, and if she didn’t, there were several more interesting lessons in subterfuge we could employ back in Silver Spires.

“Umm,” she murmured as her face scrunched in concentration. “Their defenses should be activated, and that would make sneaking in too risky,” she offered.

“Good, that’s the tactical challenge we’re facing. If we wanted to sneak in, we should have done that before our initial assault. But what’s the strategic challenge?”

She thought for a bit as we closed in the distance between us and their operational headquarters, even though we had to take a few detours, whenever my Biomancy waves alerted me to a nearby undead presence. “I’m not sure,” she murmured, disappointed.

“No worries,” I said as I patted her head while she preened, a part of me still unable to believe her changes, from the indomitable head librarian to the girl eager for my approval and a liking for chains. “It doesn’t make strategic sense, because I have already raided that place and discovered their most important advantage, all without making them aware. It doesn’t make sense to risk getting caught.”

“Can’t we just burst out together if we get caught? We’re certainly strong enough,” she offered.

“Not exactly,” I explained. “First of all, I was able to sneak in the last time because I was able to engineer a distraction without implicating me, mostly due to luck. Without that, the headquarters are too crowded to sneak in, even for my abilities. More importantly, if we get caught while trying to get in, it’ll alert them about a possible breach of information, forcing them to change their plans. We want them to hit our perceived weakness,” I explained. “Sometimes, a hidden card is more valuable than ten out in the open.”

[+3 Speech]

She nodded as she tried to process my explanation, while I received a nice surprise. Apparently, teaching someone could also improve Speech —though I suspected it was mostly about it changing her general outlook to the strategy, and not just acquisition of the new knowledge. However, before we could delve any deeper into the topic, we arrived at the entrance of the secret location. “I’ll attack first, stay hidden, and wait for my order to attack, even if you think I’m struggling,” I explained, even as I gripped my dagger tight. I left her quite a bit behind, shouldering the task of handling the first response alone.

It was time to test my new weapon.

I walked toward the headquarter, using my arcana to examine the wards as I got closer. I was happy to note that the ward scheme was the same, confirming that they had no idea about the earlier breach. And since I had studied their wards intensely before, it was almost trivial to trigger an alarm, informing that there was someone in the outer wards, trying to break in. I even avoided the most obvious trigger, and instead touched one of the hidden ones, to better

sell the attempt. Otherwise, my presence inside wouldn't be convincing.

[+1 Arcana]

[+2 Subterfuge]

[-13 Mana]

There was no visible alarm, but I could feel more than a dozen presences inside moving, along with another dozen signatures patrolling the corridors suddenly changing their patterns. A much better response than I had been expecting. Apparently, without the presence of a rampaging dragon, they were much more competent.

Too bad they hadn't expected someone to be brazen enough to ambush the bulk of their army in the middle of their base.

The first assault of the necromancers was spectacular enough to take down a lesser man. Four of them appeared from behind me, launching a volley of death bolts, while six others appeared on the front, some relying on death bolts, while two of them relied on elemental spells, one casting a large fireball to obscure my vision, while the other cast earth spikes, bursting from the walls.

Even more impressively, none of those was the real attack. No, the real attack came in the form of a hidden presence, its death energy throbbing like cancer to my magical senses. I had no doubt it was a strong lich, stronger than any I had faced to date. I could feel its mana gathering, mixing with the defensive wards as it prepared to launch a devastating strike. I had no doubt that I could protect myself with my magic, but that would reveal a lot of secrets that would best be kept hidden.

Luckily, while my physical stats were lesser in comparison to my magical ones, that inferiority meant little when compared to others, not when my weakest stat, Endurance, was already at thirty, which was supposed to be an unreachable target.

I turned back and dashed toward the four on the back, straining my Speed to the limit for the first time even as I imbued my dagger with the life energy. The spikes exploded against the walls, while the fireball exploded behind ineffectively, leaving only the death bolts to contend against. They had planned their assault well, with death bolts aiming to reach me simultaneously, but their assumption neglected my speed. As I dashed, I first met with an attack wave of four, dodging them without even reducing my speed.

I was among them before they could cast another batch of spells, which was the worst thing a traditional mage, be it an elementalist or necromancer, could experience. Before they could even finish their emergency spells, my dagger flashed, cutting the neck of the first one, and stabbing the neck of the second one, all in the same movement. Both of them collapsed despite the negligible life energy I had injected into the dagger, only around fifty points of mana.

Oeyne's craftsmanship was truly excellent. Not only the dagger didn't hemorrhage mana like my earlier attempts, allowing me to use it much more effectively, but the effect was amplified as well.

Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to admire the dagger with the other four death bolts arriving. This time, rather than dodging, I grabbed the third necromancer and pulled him in front of me, manhandling him with my strength like a toy, using him as a shield, while I stabbed the last one in the hearth. Two of the death bolts hit him, while the other two went wide, missing us altogether. He absorbed most of the energy, though a small part of it splashed over me, with an effect that would be devastating to a lesser man.

[-129 HP]

After receiving the bulk of the energy from two death bolts, the necromancer was still alive without noticeable damage, which didn't surprise me, as they were quite adept in handling death energy. He would have got stronger if he had completed his transformation to lichdom, but in his current state, reducing the impact was the best he could do. However, his wellness collapsed significantly when he received my dagger in his kidney, the life energy I converted through Biomancy wreaking havoc in his system. Rather than finishing him off directly, I pumped him with life energy, before I kicked him, launching him toward the new wave of attack I received from the other side, skewered by the earth spikes and burnt by the fireball.

Then, I turned back and dashed away, escaping the impact area of the ward before the lich could complete his spell. The angry cry of the lich as the spell exploded the area I vacated was a song to my ear, though I was still received quite a bit of impact from the splash, enough to remind me that playing with them was dangerous.

[-351 HP]

I turned a corridor, then cast another simple Biomancy spell, faking life energy getting away while I crouched in the shadows, letting the necromancers escape. Of course, the necromancers didn't chase me blindly. Even they were smart enough not to do so after my display of physical superiority. I felt their flares of death energy, and several strong signatures

walked closer, their purity of death energy more like the regular necromancers rather than pure like the lich, but much stronger. In total, there were eight of those.

I stayed stuck firmly against the wall, waiting for those figures to pass. Four of them pushed forward, while four of them stayed with the necromancers. Soon, four armored figures with glowing eyes passed me, unable to detect my presence.

Death Knights, I recognized them. Essentially, they were not exactly undead, but not exactly living as well, kind of like a necromancer going through a transformation, but unlike the necromancers, they stayed in that state. According to what I found out during my library trips, they were made from captured warriors, through a unique and very difficult method, preserved most of their stats, and even some of their skills, only without a mind to drive them, instead of following the commands of the lich that bound them. And due to the cost associated with their crafting, the liches rarely bothered to convert anyone lower than Level fifteen. They were rarely seen, because then they were precious enough that only a minority —the strongest ones — of the liches possessed one.

I doubted the lich that was directing the wards were strong enough to possess eight of them, so, either they were a combination of effort from a bunch of liches, or they belonged to a much stronger one, one that was not afraid of the others trying to steal its possessions.

Regardless of the reason, I was facing an opportunity to damage their strength much more than taking down a bunch of useless necromancers, or even a couple of low-tier liches. And it wasn't just about the battle potential. Death knights were an integral part of the lich's power, and destroying them might affect the leadership structure of the horde, as creatures that were willing to surrender their humanity for an eternal cursed existence weren't the kindest when it came to power struggles.

Still, I let four of them walk away, while sending a subtle signal to Titania, asking her to attack them once they turned their back to attack me. I gripped my dagger, tight like a spring, ready to launch forward. Then, two more death knights passed me, followed by the necromancers and the lich, and two more death knights behind them.

It was time to strike.

My dagger was shining as I escaped the cover of the shadows as I pushed it to the limit, filling it with life energy.

[-361 Mana]

Even then, however, when I stabbed the first death knight, it barely staggered, still swinging its sword. They were stronger than I expected, and much more resilient. I dodged the swing and damaged it again, this time managing to disable its arm. Behind them, I could see the necromancers preparing to attack. I didn't have a lot of time to waste, but I still didn't want to reveal my magical abilities, so I did the next best thing, and dumped even more mana to the dagger.

[-819 Mana]

It was cracking badly under the strain of mana, so, I did the best I could do, and stabbed the dagger at the mouth opening of the armor, which was pointless to exist on an undead as they didn't need to breathe, but I was more than happy to abuse the stylistic choice. Then, I dashed away, doing my best to get away before the dagger malfunctioned. It proved to be the correct choice, as the explosion was spectacular, sending pieces of death knight's armor around like a bomb, killing the nearest two necromancers, and wounding four others.

And just like that, with the high cost of a specially-crafted magical dagger, I was able to take down a death knight without revealing my magic.

Titania chose that exact moment to hit the other regiment, and her light magic filled the corridor, however, it was much more concentrated as she tried to burn down four death knights. Still, among the brightness, the death knights changed direction and charged toward her. I had the hope that she could take them down.

Then, things went horribly wrong. A cry of anger reverberated in the corridors, laced with death energy, strong enough to damage me without touching.

[-193 HP]

The damage itself was trivial, but the reaction of the death knights was the scary part. Their eyes started to burn with ethereal blue light, and the closest one swung its sword —now burning with a blue flame that radiated coldness and death— while the others started to move much faster. And like that wasn't enough, a deadly presence appeared on the depths of the base, enough to blanket my death senses.

It seemed that my earlier guess was correct. Those death knights belonged to a much stronger lich.

And by destroying one of its death knights, I managed to anger it thoroughly.

The presence was getting closer to us, and in the background, I could feel some kind of magic going haywire. Apparently, it was busy with something important, and when it decided to take revenge for the destruction of its death knight, I caused whatever magical experiment or ritual it was busy to be destroyed. Like it needed another reason to chase me down...

As much as I wanted to test myself against such a presence to understand my true limits, I decided to follow the better part of the valor, and escape. Not only I was horribly undergeared for such a confrontation, the middle of their base, while surrounded by hordes of undead and the untold number of wards was not the best time to test my limits. Instead, I decided to dash through the crowd in front of me to meet with Titania, hoping to rely on my Speed. Not the best option, as I managed to receive a bad wound from one of the remaining death knights, which hurt much worse than I had been expecting, even though it was a glancing blow.

[-792 HP]

However, it only made me dash forward faster, because I didn't want Titania to be locked between four of them. She might survive a blow. Might. She wouldn't survive four of them.

Luckily, even with the boost from their owner, they weren't as fast as me, and since the four of them were focused on them, dodging those was much easier. "It's time to go," I said to Titania as I grabbed her in a bridal hold, and dashed forward, as fast as I could.

Realizing the situation, Titania started using Arcana to cast impediments rather than trying to kill them with her light magic, but the death knights were able to shatter them with a stab, barely slowing down. "Why are they so strong," she gasped.

"I have a feeling that we stumbled upon the opponent of our dear headmistress," I quipped even as I dashed, not bothering to hide as I run through many of the weaker undead that tried to cut our path, none fast enough to even touch me at full step.

Still, a smirk appeared on my face as I slowed down slightly, just enough so that the four death knights were just a few steps behind us when we finally entered the secret passage I had prepared.

The secret passage that I filled with a great number of traps. Then, when I arrived at the middle of the passage, I cast an air-elemental, much stronger than the ones I cast before. Not the most efficient way to leverage my mana, but with a frenzied lich trying to catch up, it wasn't time to be stingy.

[-4915 Mana]

I jumped on top of the air elemental, and it dashed away faster than a tornado. The moment we left the cave, I triggered all the traps I had created the previous time, where I had spent hours and a great number of magical reagents. I would have waited a bit more, but I was afraid one of the necromancers recognizing the trap and warning the death knights.

Then, we rode into the dark of the night, with a white glow covering our escape, leaving behind four death knights which almost certainly turned into glitter in the core of the explosion...

[Level: 30 Experience: 439500 / 465000

Strength: 36 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 44

HP: 3455 / 4920 Mana: 936 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [90/100]

Expert Speech [66/75]

Advanced Craft [31/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Four

“Wow, that was exciting,” I murmured even as I hugged Titania on top of the strongest air elemental I had created on the cost of wasting quite a bit of mana, getting away from the underground base as fast as possible, which seemed like an excellent idea after I had triggered the trap with the four death knights at the epicenter, angering their owner. And based on the sheer strength and resistance those Death Knights displayed even before their owner buffed them to their maximum capacity, I managed to anger a mysterious corpse that was best left undisturbed.

For some reason, I had a feeling that after destroying five of his eight Death Knights which were strong enough to tank a full-powered strike from Titania, that mysterious lich might feel a smudge of grudge toward me.

Luckily, the two factors that ensured renown of the liches were their capacity for boundless mercy as well as their ability to take accidental setbacks in good humor!

Meanwhile, Titania was breathing wildly as she tried to process what had happened, the impact of the deadly situation hitting harder than she was used to without the protection of the emotional dampener, her breathing out of control. “Calm down,” I whispered into her ear even as I caressed her hair. “Whatever it was, we’re already moving too fast for it to catch up,” I murmured.

“What if it has a faster mount,” Titania gasped in shock. “Even his Death Knights was able to take my full-powered attack. How can an undead resist the destructive powers of the light? It’s impossible.”

It was clearly not impossible, but putting that out directly wouldn’t have helped Titania to calm down. So, rather than trying to explain, I hugged her tighter even as I used to cast a healing spell on her, to suppress her adrenaline and relax her out-of-control breathing for a while.

[-19 Mana]

“I’m sure that they had some special protections against light magic,” I murmured after she calmed down a bit more, trying to calm her down about her inability to take down Death Knights with one burst attack despite depleting her mana. “After all, you’re one of the biggest challenges for them. It makes sense for them to prepare specifically against you.” It didn’t exactly make sense, as while Titania was strong, the lich we faced shouldn’t need to work that much to take Titania down.

“You’re right,” she mumbled sleepily as she let herself relax against my chest, her eyes closed as we traveled, her tension draining without a follow-up assault. The exhaustion and the aftermath of the combat had caught up with her, and she didn’t have a monstrous Endurance to blunt the impact. “They definitely have some counters against the light magic. Otherwise, they could never take down the headmistress...”

“Right,” I said even as I caressed her hair, letting her fall asleep. I was glad that she closed her eyes, because she missed the expression of shock that doubtlessly covered my face as a reaction to the secret she had slipped from her mouth.

She was confirming that the headmistress using light magic! I barely kept myself from gasping in shock. Neither my research, nor anything I had felt during my visit indicated anything about her using light magic —other than the dubious sensation I had felt from her probe. Titania’s confirmation didn’t simplify things. Rather, it made it even more complicated considering the aura of darkness in her room being so thick that I would have suspected her being in cohorts with the undead if it wasn’t for her position invalidating such a need.

Titania’s careless reveal about her true abilities put a rather interesting spin on things. Most importantly, it removed the possibility that the sensation of lightness was a unique trait of her probing, and elevated it into one of her core abilities. So, she was either like me, with a wide range of abilities, and hiding some of those as secondary secrets, or all the darkness was there to conceal her true abilities.

How interesting...

Since I had wasted an excessive amount of mana on the air elemental, we managed to arrive at the school in several minutes, including a small break I took to cure us.

[-74 Mana]

[-559 Mana]

[+1465 HP]

Still, the journey was not nearly enough to process all implications of the headmistress’s surprise ability. Pity that the presence of that lich was too important to delay reporting, so I took Titania with a bridal hold before sneaking inside. Only when we were in an empty corner not too far away from the headmistress’s office, I woke her up with a kiss on the cheek.

[+50 Experience]

She murmured gently like a particularly cute cat before she cracked her eyes to look around, only to realize we were on the feet of the headmistress's tower. "Good morning," I said mockingly.

"Shut up," she murmured as she jumped up her feet, conjuring a mirror to check her face. Then, after making sure everything was in order, she grabbed my hand and tried to drag me toward the headmistress's tower, only for me to stay still. "What are you waiting for, we need to talk with her and explain everything," she said panickedly. "That lich is too dangerous."

"I know, that's why I brought you here," I murmured, still trying to decide whether to go with her or not. Going with her, I risked revealing my secrets, but still, I was considering it. It wasn't all negative, by being there, I could run interference between her and Titania, at least until Titania got a better handle of her new emotional state. Not to mention, I didn't want to let Titania go for too long. The emergence of such a dangerous creature was a warning for me to get stronger even further. While the most critical part of it was the new weapons I was going to forge with Oeyne, more levels wouldn't hurt, especially if I could use them to bring my capabilities even further.

Still, while I finally made the decision to accompany her, I still needed to give her an excuse for why I was hesitating. "Sorry, I was just thinking..." I murmured, faking indecisiveness.

"Thinking what," she said. "Whatever it is, it can't be as important as that scary undead. Let's go."

I still didn't move, and when she looked at me angrily, I smirked at her. "I was thinking what to say if she asks how you regenerated your mana that quickly to go for a raid, and how you regenerated it further during the raid," I explained.

"W-what!" she stammered, her earlier bravado evaporating instant. "What are you talking about?!" she said, slapping my shoulder just to underline it further.

I shrugged lazily. "It's a valid question, but I can just answer her questions directly if you think it's a pointless concern."

"No!" she exclaimed. "You can't tell her thfat! It's... It's... indecent," she finished after a couple of attempts, her voice barely a whisper by the last word.

"Okay, then you should explain it."

"No need," Titania cut it off. "If she asks, I strained myself too much, and need a couple of days

to recover.” Then, she looked at me threateningly while pinched my hand. “Nothing else, understood.”

I nodded, but rather than answering, I sneaked forward and stole another kiss from her beautiful lips.

[+50 Experience]

Her frustrated growl afterward was too exaggerated to be genuine, not to mention, if she disliked it, it would mean her tongue got into my mouth accidentally. I just smirked, which earned another growl before she grabbed my hand, prepared to drag me to the meeting.

I was really liking her new expressive personality.

So much that, I wanted to have another taste of her deliciousness before we go to the meeting. A gasp escaped when I pushed her against the wall, her chest pressing against the wall, with only her robe to protect her. Before she could even realize what was going on, I pulled her robe above her hips, revealing her delicious nakedness, unable to be covered by the ruins of her skirt. “W-what are you doing,” she stammered in shock, just as my fingers caressed her wetness.

“Helping you to wake up properly before the meeting,” I whispered even as I pressed my shaft against her entrance, easily slipping into her familiar wetness.

She failed to come up with an answer to my brazen statement as I started pumping inside her, in an open area where anyone could walk in. It was very unlikely for anyone to sneak up to me even when I wasn’t paying attention of course, but that didn’t prevent her from panicking. I slipped deeper inside while she tried to get a handle of the situation, enjoying her wetness.

[+500 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 62%]

She managed to suppress her moans by biting her lips even as she abandoned herself to my grasp, enjoying the assault. Though, a minute later, she managed to ask a question. “Why I’m not recovering any mana?” she murmured dazedly.

“Because I’m not giving you any,” I answered even as I grabbed her ass tighter, slamming my hips even harder against hers, loud enough to necessitate a quick silencing ward.

“But...” she gasped in shock. “Why are we doing it then?”

I leaned for a quick kiss before I pulled back, keeping my gaze on her beautiful gray eyes. “Because I want to fuck you,” I answered directly.

The blush that spread on her face was simply spectacular. The fact that I was enjoying sex with her was not a surprise, nor I was the only one that was enjoying it. We had done the naked dance enough to remove any kind of mystery about that. Still, the excuse of mana transfer always stood in between her and the honest acknowledgment of her transformation, however flimsy.

Then, just after such a momentous battle, and before a critical meeting, I pulled the pretense down, forcing her to acknowledge the truth. And from the way she tightened and her hips quickened, I could see that she accepted the truth exactly the same way I hoped she would...

The realization, combined with her growing arousal, hit her strong, and soon, she was tightening around my body, her subtle moans mixing with mine.

[+900 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 69%]

I would have loved to pump her until I stained her insides once more, but pity that we had an important meeting, and she needed to be nominally presentable. I pulled out of her, and she collapsed on the floor for a minute, trying to catch her breath under my amused glare.

“Shut up,” she murmured with a cute blush as she conjured another mirror, and fixed her appearance before grabbing my hand once more to drag me to the meeting. I allowed her to do so, even though messing with her more sounded really tempting.

But as we climbed up the stairs of the tower, I replaced that smile with a calm yet hard-to-read expression, which, counter-intuitively, would have made her focus me more. This time, however, I wasn't as afraid of her probes, because I had the time to construct a more robust soul space for her to probe, with just enough extra power to convincingly sell our adventure, and the achievement of taking down five Death Knights and a big chunk out of the undead army—thanks to the explosion of the latest trap.

Titania squeezed my hand for one last time before she knocked on the door, and we walked inside.

Once again, the first thing I noticed as we walked inside was the aura of darkness that was thick enough to slam my face. Thick, viscous darkness that almost throbbed threateningly, promising to engulf everything. Despite expecting it, my instincts cried in alarm, the hair on the back of my head standing out. All the while, the headmistress sat on her chair behind her intimidatingly large desk, her cloaked and hunched figure almost a silhouette with just one small crystal glow to brighten the room.

She was giving the impression of an evil witch perfectly. Too perfectly, even...

I had to admit, it was an excellent setup, so much that, along with her intimidation factor — both in terms of power, and the suspicious lack of skill improvement next to her— it would have tricked me if it wasn't for Titania's slip about the light magic and my own discoveries about the feel of her mana when she tried to probe me. However, looking with a new perspective, I could finally see the seams of her trick, like watching a street illusionist for the second time after learning how the trick worked.

"You look exhausted," the headmistress said to Titania, which triggered a lengthy explanation from her, including how we traveled, the battle tricks, and the intimating presence of the lich and the Death Knights. Most noticeably, however, she neglected to mention the little detail of mana transfer, with all the tricks it implied. It was endearingly cute to watch her gloss over such a critical piece of information just because she felt ashamed.

Her lengthy explanation gave me the excuse to analyze the suffocating aura of darkness in a more detailed manner. I appreciated the extra time, because it took almost five minutes for me to acclimatize myself to the darkness thick enough to choke my senses despite my overwhelming abilities.

The first thing I was able to definitely prove about the aura was the uniformity of it. Despite its strength and the implied chaos of the darkness, the pressure itself was smooth, suspiciously so, like amber frozen around a flower, preserving it to eternity. Such a juxtaposition between concepts would have been enough to awaken my curiosity if I wasn't already alert due to the significance of the headmistress on my safety.

So, I delved deeper, to understand the reason for that smoothness. It took another couple of minutes for me to identify the source of the darkness. To my surprise, it confirmed my assumptions in a definite way I wasn't expecting.

The darkness was radiating from the ward that surrounded the room itself!

I could barely keep myself from exclaiming in shock as I realized that particular fact. The darkness didn't come from the headmistress, but the room itself. Combined with her dangerously-capable abilities in light magic if I were to take Titania's sleepy comment about light magic as an accurate assessment, it likely meant that the aura of the room ran contrary to her nature.

Unfortunately, there were too many possibilities for me to deduce, so, when Titania's explanation finally reached the Death Knights—which distracted the headmistress significantly— I finally had the courage to extend a tendril of mana toward her, just a lingering touch, nothing more. Risky, but no risk, no reward. And even if she detected my intrusion, what she was going to do, kill me on the eve of a dangerous assault, where I might prove critical to save her school.

The tendril of mana tried to slip underneath her robe, however, only to be absorbed immediately, giving me just a glimpse before disappearing. But even that glimpse was confusing enough, because I received two different sensations at the same time. The first felt like an endless sea of light, reminding me of Titania's Acolyte core, but only purer, and spread around rather than collected as a core, therefore less intense.

The second was a raging piece of darkness, strong and pulsating, for some reason, giving me a sensation of a rabid animal, locked behind iron doors, but slamming repeatedly in search of freedom. Whatever it was, it wasn't good news, so much that I was glad my intrusion went unnoticed.

She was not a creature of darkness, with some interesting selection of lighter magic. No, on the opposite, she was a creature of light, but for reason, carried a mark of darkness. The question, whether that mark was intentional, or something that she was forced to carry.

As a result, I looked at the hunched figure of the headmistress, hidden under her magically-insulating cloak, with even more questions. She was even more mysterious than the rare stories about her implied—though the fact that the stories about her were rare in the first place while she led one of the most premier institutions in the world kind of reinforced the point. I was starting to believe that the whole point of having that ward was to hide her presence. Of course, that raised two more questions.

Why she was trying to hide?

And more importantly, who, or what, she was trying to hide from?

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Precision: 33 Perception: 35

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HP: 4920 / 4920 Mana: 6300 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [90/100]

Expert Speech [66/75]

Advanced Craft [31/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Five

After making the last deduction, I continued sitting, listening as Titania finished her explanation. Just as I predicted, I felt the tendrils of headmistress' mana probing my soul space once again after Titania explained the final fate of the Death Knights, though it was smoother than her previous attempt. Less wary, for a lack of better term. Maybe the perceived ease of success she had experienced the last time made her more confident.

Considering her age that spanned centuries and her implied power, her flight of confidence was understandable. I could certainly empathize with it, as I had suffered my own share of those bouts, the most recent one being daring to probe her simultaneously. Of course, it was possible that it was a giant double-bluff on her part, but I didn't want to focus on that probability. Not because of the relative unlikeness, but because if she was aware of my tricks and playing me, there wasn't a lot I could do against it. There was no chance I could stand against it, certainly not in her seat of power.

So, rather than going into a complicated assessment of possibilities, I tried to focus on what I could do, and analyzed her probe to the best of my ability. The bright nature of her mana was not a surprise at this point, but I still made sure to give a detailed examination, making sure it wasn't a trick to mislead me. Luckily, she was making it very easy by pushing her mana inside my soul space—a fake one, but still, firmly under my control.

However, the more I examined, the more shocked I felt. The Light was the true nature of her mana, which, despite its unassuming status, was actually a very critical finding. Because, a mage's mana took the flavor of their strongest abilities, ultimately, it was just that, a flavor, something that happened only on the surface, with only flakes of transformation affecting the core unless it was an actively-cast spell.

The headmistress' mana was not like that. It was almost pure Light magic even in its resting state—with hints of darkness that felt like contamination, possible to detect only because I had felt the weird pulsating darkness in its core, allowing me to assess with a more discerning eye.

She pulled her probe before I could delve deeper into the mystery of her mana. I didn't feel disappointed, because I was sure that having a couple of extra minutes wouldn't help me solve that particular mystery. I simply lacked far too many variables. Maybe it was about bringing one's skills to absolute perfection—if such a thing even existed in the first place—or maybe it was related to the Acolyte ability of Titania that had been suppressing her emotion, but only stronger.

Maybe was something completely different..

So, when the headmistress finally spoke once more, after a minute of silence following Titania's story, I didn't have any trouble abandoning that particular line of thought for a later date. "You were lucky," she said in her cracking, raspy voice that screamed old. "You managed to survive Zokras the Eternal's rage."

I didn't have a reaction to her statement, which was okay, as Titania reacted for both of us with a loud gasp. I was so lucky that her emotional state was also a side effect of mana exhaustion, as otherwise, the headmistress might have got suspicious enough to check her. "Impossible," Titania gasped. "Is he still alive?" I chuckled at her description of a lich, and she slapped my shoulder immediately. "Shut up," she murmured shyly. "You know what I mean."

"Sorry," I said unapologetically, while I could feel the headmistress's attention sharpening further from a slight shift in her posture. In such a secretive person, that was the equivalent of a dramatic gasp. At this point, a little flirting was the best chance to distract her from the really important secrets. It wasn't like Titania was able to hide her emotions during her explanation. "So, who is this Zokras?"

"He's one of the oldest liches known, and a major reason the undead are still a major threat rather than a pest that slammed down where it occurred," Titania explained. "Almost two hundred years ago, the Empire led a crusade against a coalition of dark, and according to the stories, a deadly ambush from Zokras was one of the major reasons for failure. Though I don't know how accurate the story was, as according to the stories, he was supposed to be destroyed completed. "

I turned to the headmistress, and she just nodded. "No, he escaped," she said, and for the first time, I felt a tinge of emotion in her tone. Fury. Pure, unadulterated fury. Then a flicker of aura accompanied it, one that burned as bright as the sun, threatening to eradicate the darkness that filled the room. It lasted barely a fraction of a second, and even I would have missed its nature if I wasn't deliberately looking for light magic, but the intensity and purity of her ability were shocking.

However, her momentary flare of anger didn't come without a cost. She started coughing, followed by a flare of darkness, which also came from her. Whatever the darkness she had in, it broke the containment for a while, and her painful coughs were the result. Titania stood up, ready to help, but the headmistress stopped her. "Sit down, child," she murmured. "I'm not old enough to be taken down by an old wound..."

That was another mystery revealed, I realized. However, unlike Titania's accidental slips, I had no doubt that the headmistress had revealed that fact intentionally, though it was more of leveraging her earlier failure of containment rather than a planned ploy, because, despite her best efforts, I could see her arms trembling under her imposing robe. Her intention wasn't hard to guess either. With the appearance of her old enemy Zokras, she clearly needed some more allies, and despite my lack of background, I was a good ally, after proving myself without a doubt by destroying five Death Knights of Zokras, proving both my abilities and my side on the upcoming battle, without a doubt.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" I offered despite knowing she wouldn't accept. "I have a fair hand in healing spells."

"No need," she whispered. "Unfortunately, curing it is a bit more difficult than a fresh cut." I nodded at her kind dismissal, but said nothing else while she examined me carefully. "You're a surprising variable," she finally muttered. "What exactly do you seek that made you hide in my school for several years under a fake identity?" she finally asked.

"Oh, this and that," I murmured, doing my best to keep my expression calm. The fact that she assumed my presence was a carefully-arranged fake posting was very reasonable. Based on the facts in hand, that was the only reasonable conclusion. After all, who would assume that until less than a month, I was nothing more than a simpering fool, walking around like a hypnotized ape, stupid and weak? Her assumption about my roots was a bit curious though, as it was rather difficult to make sure I hadn't killed the previous Mule and took his identity weeks ago. Maybe she had a mysterious method to validate that, or maybe she was just relying on the information Titania provided.

Though regardless of her method, her attempts of the investigation were doomed to fail, simply because her initial assumption was faulty. My sudden increase of power was impossible to be factored in.

"This and that," the headmistress murmured, her croaky voice gaining a threatening edge, accompanied by her magical pressure.

Despite her naked intimidation, I looked at her coolly, without flinching. She might be stronger than me, but after killing those Death Knights, and with her obvious attempts to recruit me to her inner circle, I held all the cards. Combine that with the fact that it was impossible to unearth about the 'mysterious organization' that supported me, the headmistress had a hand too weak to even threaten a dire rabbit... "Yes," I murmured in the same tone. "This and that."

Funnily enough, it was Titania that broke our standoff, by rudely kicking me in the shin. “Don’t be an asshole,” she chided me. “You’re doing that intentionally.”

“Sorry,” I said to Titania with a chuckle, before turning toward the headmistress once more. “Well, actually I was doing less than you might expect. I’m mostly here to do some confidential research, searching for some ancient secrets that need to stay unmentioned for the moment. It’s more like an extended holiday after my latest mission rather than a true mission, actually. A bit of reading, some sightseeing, and maybe some recruitment of sharper candidates, but those are all bonuses.” Still, even as I said those words, I had to suppress my heartbeat to a more normal level. I was confident in my position, but it still didn’t change the fact that I was giving lip to one of the most dangerous people I had ever encountered —which is a toss-up between her and Zokras.

“Yet you’re in the middle of my fight with the biggest undead coalition that had seen since two centuries,” the headmistress countered. “Wouldn’t that make your bosses unhappy?”

“Eeh,” I murmured as I shook my hand dismissively. “We’re not that strict when it comes to following orders. And we can’t exactly talk about bosses. We’re more like a loose collection of individuals, concerned about the inevitable decline of the world, doing our best to limit the damages. It wouldn’t be the first time I destroyed an army full of undead, or assassinated a few pesky necromancers with more ambition than sense without any confirmation from the rest of the group.”

“How interesting,” the headmistress murmured while I was impressed by the bullshit I was able to spew, though her tone maintained its usual croaky quality. “Is there any chance for your group to send more assistance, and in return, we might discuss what Silver Spires could do to support them once the current crisis has passed. Maybe I could help you search your ancient texts.”

“Let’s not go into a discussion of reward immediately,” I quickly cut her off, not wanting to reveal what I was searching for. I didn’t want to reveal anything about my power, because not only I didn’t trust her for anything above this crisis, but also revealing it would unravel my nice blanket of lies, leaving me unprotected against outside ploys. “However, I’m going to mention the possibility to the rest of the group, and then we’ll see if there’s any spare manpower they could afford to share. But don’t expect anything in the short term, as one of the disadvantages of the decentralized organization is a slow response time.”

The headmistress nodded, no doubt confused by the plethora of possibilities that our talk had implied. The silence stretched, a minute at first, then two, elongating further and further. I

wondered whether she was trying to come to a decision, or using another intimidation tactic, though I had a feeling that it was both.

Her next words carried a surprise, more to Titania than me, though my shock was considerably strong as well. “Would you be interested in a personal trade, the power of light magic, in exchange for a tighter coordination between us during the crisis,” she offered.

“You can’t,” Titania gasped in shock. “With your injury that might-” she tried to continue, only for the headmistress to silence her with a gesture.

“Enough, I know my health more than you,” she warned Titania before turning toward me. “What do you think?”

“I didn’t know it was possible to just acquire abilities, especially when it came to rare abilities like light magic, but it sounds like a good deal,” I said, acting like I had no idea about what she had in mind. Still, even those words alone were a sufficient treasure from this meeting. Just by a sentence, I learned that Titania’s Acolyte status was either directly from the headmistress, or she was somehow a conduit to it —considering the pure light nature of her mana, I was more inclined to think it was the first.

Which made my decision not to reveal my secrets even better, considering the implied rivalry —as implied by my achievements, with a mysterious intensity which might range from friendly competition to outright hatred— between the source of my power and the light magic.

“There are many secrets buried in the history of the System, and many ways to go above its natural development,” the headmistress whispered theatrically, but in her tone, I could sense a hint of elation. Of course, why she felt so was a mystery, maybe she was happy that she discovered a strong hook, the information about the System, to bargain with my group, or maybe, she was happy with my interest in her power, hoping that its emotional-suppression abilities —and possible brainwashing capabilities— would help her to control me, or at least influence me.

“Sounds interesting,” I murmured. “May I have a day or two to think?” I asked, which earned a nod. “Excellent,” I murmured. “What should we do about the princess?”

For that, the headmistress shrugged. “Feel free to handle however you feel appropriate,” she said. “It fits better under your organization’s remit of preventing the decline.”

“As you wish,” I answered. I was impressed with her answer, as she suddenly turned a dangerous aspect of the crisis she was facing into a huge test for me, and my imaginary

organization. Which meant I needed to pay more attention to the incoming visit of the princess. "Do you mind if I introduce myself as a hidden protector of the library, just to make discussion with the princess smoother?" The headmistress nodded.

I would have cursed my big mouth if I hadn't been looking forward to getting acquainted with the princess in the first place. At least, in this way, I could take more overt actions, without a need to stay under notice all the time.

After another lengthy pause, the headmistress pointed at the door, which was opened magically, signaling the end of the meeting. It was a bit unnecessary as a power move in my opinion. Still, I wasn't surprised, as the more I learned about her, the more I realized just how much of her dangerous dark witch persona was constructed rather than natural.

"You can't accept, she can't handle another transfer," Titania gasped in shock the moment we left the tower, her hands clasping around my arm desperately.

"Calm down," I whispered, caressing her cheek gently. "You're stressed and exhausted. Why don't you go back to your room and try to sleep for a few hours while I go talk with my organization. Then, after you feel less frazzled, we can discuss it. But I promise I won't make a decision without talking to you," I whispered. It was rather easy to make promises when one didn't care about the reward in question in the first place. For me, Titania herself was leagues more important than an extra skill, especially one that might hurt me as likely as it might help me.

"Thanks," Titania murmured, and then with a surprising gesture, raised to her toes before stealing a gentle kiss, and dashed away shyly.

[+50 Experience]

"What a cute development," I murmured in fascination as I turned my back, chuckling as I walked toward the Hall of Craft.

I wanted to test my newest skill and talk about the princess some more. Getting another taste of the caramel skin of Oeyne was just a bonus.

A very nice bonus...

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SKILLS

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Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [90/100]

Expert Speech [66/75]

Advanced Craft [31/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Six

When I left the headmistress's office, it was still the nighttime, with at least two hours until dawn. So, I expected Oeyne to sleep. If it wasn't for the impending visit of the mysterious oldest princess of the Empire, I might have refrained from waking her up, but that discussion already forced me to reveal some of my cards.

Compared to that, breaking her wards to visit her without permission was not a big deal.

The doors of the Hall of Craft was closed to the visitor during the night, but since they had many apprentices and servants bustling around to clean and to replenish their material stocks, I managed to sneak in without even skipping a step, as easy as I was entering my own room. Though, with my current abilities and the latest boost I received, breaking into Oeyne's room only took a moment's concentration, a complicated flaring of my mana enough to unravel her whole protection scheme.

[+1 Arcana]

[-16 Mana]

I was expecting to find a silent room, maybe with a soft snore if Oeyne had indulged in too much alcohol. Instead, I found her on the desk next to her forge, a huge pile of papers in front of her, with another pile of bottles next to her that rivaled the papers on the side. My eyes widened as I measured the size of the pile. No wonder she was feeling hungover in the mornings even with her supernatural endurance, if that was her casual consumption. She wasn't drunk, as she was still clear-minded enough to work on her complicated smithing schemes —though double-checking them after sobering was likely a good idea.

I walked without bothering to hide, but she was far too focused on her task to notice me, even when I stood behind her and read her work over her shoulder.

[+2 Craft]

The notification surprised me quite a bit, so I decided to make a small game out of waiting, curious how long it would take for her to notice me. However, after a couple of minutes passed, I had to admit that it was very unlikely for her to notice me, at least not until she noticed my presence. However, the bigger disappointment came when I looked down at her cleavage to enjoy the other benefit of my position.

[Level Difference of five or more! No Experience]

I sighed disappointedly as I noticed that particular detail, as realized I had overgrown yet another source of experience. Yes, there was still the experience I could gain from the companion process, but I wasn't willing to progress that with Oeyne yet, not until I could get a better handle of her relationship with the princess, and the possible implications of her visit. I had already pushed my luck too far by my trick with Titania, but at least, the headmistress needed me, enough to come up with an offer of empowerment —both to increase my value and to control me, but there was a general understanding between us.

At least, I hoped that was the case...

With the princess, things were a bit different. I didn't know anything other than a few nuggets I had managed to extract from Oeyne and Titania, and neither was the embodiment of political awareness. Moreover, from what I understood, the princess' position was weak enough to actually use my existence as a bargaining chip against her rivals —I still didn't know how rare was my abilities to give extra powers or assess them directly. The headmistress also had them in some fashion, which meant they weren't completely unique, but the headmistress was one of the most mysterious characters in the Empire, therefore not the best benchmark about the rarity of an ability.

Luckily, I had many ways of enjoying our time without triggering the process of the Companion Process further, and the simplest one was enjoying the look of her spectacular body.

Her caramel skin looked even better under the murky shadows of the room, illuminated by a solitary crystal on her desk and the ever-glowing coals of her forge, adding a flickering pink tint to her light brown skin, which made her look even more luscious. And considering how she looked like sex incarnate without paying the slightest attention to her clothing and posture thanks to her bountiful curves and perfect body, it was a considerable achievement.

Her current clothing also enhanced her sexiness quite a bit. As usual, she wasn't exactly dressed to impress, rather, just wearing the stuff she wore when she slept in her lonesome. Thanks to her curves, however, a shirt old enough to lose most of its color, with several small burn marks littering revealing the glimpses of her more intimate parts of her body including her lack of a bra, worked like a wondrous piece of clothing rather than garbage only fit to be used as a rag.

The shorts that were responsible for covering her bountiful ass was in a better condition, but that didn't affect her sexiness, especially since her shorts were both tiny enough to reveal her toned legs, and clingy enough to reveal the curves of her ass. The soft material looked

comfortable, but without detracting it from her sexiness. So, splitting my attention between the schematics she was working on, and her body, wasn't exactly a chore, even without the benefit of some extra experience.

[+7 Craft]

Still, I decided to act when the skill acquisition started to slow down, because the blueprints she was scribbling were too complicated to understand, especially since I didn't know their ultimate aim. Still, from the details of the magical aspects, which I was very well-versed in, I could see many errors, some of which she managed to fix with each iteration, but only through making even more major changes.

If the smithing portions of the calculations were as riddled with the mistakes, no wonder I couldn't understand what she was trying to do...

"How about if you link the secondary structures together directly-" I started, a smirk on my face, only for her to swing her arm in panic. Understandable, considering I had startled her completely.

Her punch flew threateningly, cutting through the air at a scary velocity even when she was unprepared. Her strength was not a joke. I had no doubt that if I let her hit a wall with minimal magical reinforcements, she would punch through, even when she was unprepared and poorly balanced.

Too bad that I had enough strength to catch the said threatening punch without flinching. Her expression of shock was beautiful, flaring at first because I caught her punch, only to burn even thicker when she realized my identity. "How have you been since we last met, Oeyne?" I said with a smirk, like the situation we were under was by any means normal.

"W-what are you doing here?" she whispered, shocked.

"Huh," I said lazily even as I let her hand go before pulling a chair for myself. "And here I am, expecting you to be curious about how I entered without alerting you." It was a trick I had leveraged several times to disrupt my opponents, the more casual I looked under dangerous circumstances, the more they panicked. And for the purposes of the conversation that was about to happen, Oeyne was definitely my opponent.

"How-" she stammered, only to cut short, her body alert. "What do you want?" she asked, alarmed.

“We need to talk about the upcoming visit of the princess,” I said.

“I know I shouldn’t have told you that,” Oeyne looked at me, alarmed, her fingers twitching. She wasn’t as bad as Aviada, but she was a straightforward person, so wanted to solve the problem directly. Still, she was reluctant, which was the whole point of the trick with the punch, telling her that I was more than I had revealed during our earlier talks. “Who are you?”

“For the purposes of the discussion, you can think of me as a patriotic citizen concerned with saving the life of a royal,” I said.

“Are you threatening-” she started, only to be cut short by a silencing spell.

[-5 Mana]

“Don’t talk nonsense,” I said lazily. “If I had any intention of harming her, I wouldn’t be here, talking to you,” I said.

The spell I used was rather simple, so it didn’t take much for her to break it. “Then, why are you here?”

“We need to make sure to arrange her security. First of all, is there a chance for her to still change her mind and cancel her visit? It’s really dangerous for her to be here.”

[+2 Speech]

Oeyne looked conflicted, but her drinking habits worked to my benefit, making her less cautious. Combined with her adrenaline rush, and the confusing pattern of discussion I had applied, she lost control of the talk.

“Not a chance,” she murmured. “She is already in a shaky position, and she barely arranged this visit. It’s impossible to cancel. One of her subordinates had discovered an old artifact that has the potential to rival some of the best weapons in the private armory of the Emperor, but only if it’s properly repaired. And she can’t trust anyone in the Capital, as if discovered, one of his brothers could stake their claim on the sword instead, leveraging their relative power. Royal politics are more complicated than I can understand.”

“I see,” I murmured. “So, we’re talking about a really important weapon. What’s that, a sword?”

“No, a spear,” Oeyne corrected.

“Still, is it really this important. There’s a high chance that she would die if she visits. The life of a princess should be more valuable than a spear. Is there really no way to cancel the trip.”

Oeyne stopped for a long breath. “Probably not. The task here is too important to delay, and her position is too shaky to hope for a reprieve.” She stopped for a moment for another breath. “But with her guards, she has the power to detect and avoid any ambush too big for her to defend against, and she should be secure once she steps into Silver Spires. No one would dare to attack a royal under the protection of the headmistress,” Oeyne explained, only to freeze when she saw my expression. “Right?” she continued, but her voice was much more vulnerable, asking for confirmation.

“Not if the headmistress is busy defending against several monster hordes and a huge undead army at the same time, while possible traitors launching an attack from inside the wards.”

“Impossible,” Oeyne murmured, but still, she obediently listened as I gave a breakdown of the major points, without revealing anything concrete like the location of the undead base or such, instead of leaning heavily onto the headmistress’ and Titania’s reputation, prompting Oeyne to ask them if she wants confirmation.

It took quite a while for her to process that, then she went in a different direction. “So, you’re a member of the headmistress’ inner circle, then,” Oeyne said. “A secret knife to the librarian’s sledgehammer of light.”

It was a good assumption, and for a moment, I was tempted to accept that, as it would make my job easier in the short term. Considering the limits of the circumstances, accepting that would be certainly convincing for the princess. On the other hand, it would completely cut any chance of making inroads to the princess without the involvement of the headmistress, as the princess would rightfully assume that the real decision-maker was the headmistress.

No, I decided. Staking my independence was the better option. “Not exactly,” I answered Oeyne. “I don’t belong to any power block in Silver Spire, or even in the Empire. We’re more like a group of loosely aligned allies, supporting each other in our missions, and the headmistress is a remote, but welcome ally. I’m actually in Silver Spires for a completely different reason.”

“Is this about the princess?” she asked.

“Sure,” I said. “If I could project the princess visiting two years in advance, of course.” She chuckled at my response. It wasn’t the best joke, hell, it was barely a joke, but the moment was tense enough that even the barest joke was a relief. “No, I’m here to do some research into the

past, some other aims. I come to find you because I genuinely need better gear, and you're the best unaffiliated blacksmith," I said, then grumbled playfully. "Or at least, you were supposed to be, this royal visit complicates things a bit. Maybe I should properly punish you for that," I added suggestively.

"Maybe you should," Oeyne countered, her smile no less delicious.

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Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [68/75]

Advanced Craft [40/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Seven

Oeyne's whisper was all the permission I needed to launch myself off my chair with a mighty push and grab her without slowing down, until she was sitting on her desk, her plump ass squishing the papers she had been working on all night. She didn't look perfectly happy with the way I manhandled them, but the merciless assault of my tongue gave her something better to focus on. Our lips did the familiar dance, her moans providing the accompanying music.

"Hey," she gasped, when we pulled away for a breather. "I need those papers."

"Are you sure?" I said, a mocking grin on my face as I grabbed one of the latest papers. "Because from what I had seen as you worked on them, you clearly have no idea what you are doing. The supporting enhancement structure is completely wrong, the magical containment field would self-destruct in three hits no matter how much adjustment you can squeeze through, and even with my limited smithing knowledge, I could see that the alloy for the repairs is completely wrong."

"I know," she frowned. "It's just an initial draft. I'll find the best way to work on it sooner or later."

Rather than answering, I pressed my lips against hers for another extended kiss, and happy to notice her aggressiveness bouncing up another notch. Deliciously torturing her the last time with all that edge play had been fun, but ultimately, Oeyne was a bundle of excess energy, and I liked her to be more active. As she tried to defend her territory, my fingers started to wander aggressively, digging into her supple flesh.

This time, the kiss lasted much longer than the earlier peck, and she was panting and gasping once I pulled back. She said nothing, but trying to look calm, but her frazzled hair and her parted legs were sufficient as the answer about just how much she was being affected by the kiss. Wordlessly, she begged for more.

I just chuckled in response. "Maybe we should work on it together from the design?" I offered even as I grabbed her nipple, twisting lazily like it was a desk toy to be played with whenever I was bored. She gasped in shock. "No disrespect to you in the field of smithing, but your accomplishment in magic is significantly below mine. And you need me in any case since the princess lacks a competent mage versed in those aspects."

"Maybe she does, maybe she doesn't," Oeyne tried to answer obscurely, trying to hide the princess' secrets, but it was too little too late.

Just to amuse myself, I gathered some cold-natured mana on my fingertip before I dragged it around her nipple, her thin top failing completely to cut the sensation. She gasped in shock while her nipples got even harder, pushing against the fabric of her flimsy shirt, begging to be cut free. And since I was such a nice guy, I ripped her shirt, freeing her tits from the tyranny of their coverage.

Only then, I answered her attempt to deflect. “Nice try, honey,” I said. “But if she had anyone to help her with that, you wouldn’t ask my help to help you forge.”

She failed to answer, blushing at her own slip. I was mostly sure, but her latest reaction confirmed that. Oeyne was really not fit for any kind of political intrigue. Living alone in Silver Spires, away from politics was the right choice for her. Still, while she searched for an answer to recover her situation—an answer that didn’t exist—I focused on her breasts, trailing her naked caramel skin...

She failed to come up with an answer, even when I stayed away from her lips. That didn’t mean I was depriving her of my kiss, of course, not when my lips landed on her cheek before trailing down to her jawline. I stayed there for a while, every kiss bringing me a tiny bit lower, and making her shiver a tiny bit more... When I finished my journey on her jawline and switched to her neck, trailing down much more aggressively, she was yet to find an answer.

“So, do you want my help in the design process?” I whispered as I nibbled her collarbones, while my hand sneaked to her back and dragging down her spine, making her purr.

“Maybe,” she murmured, before sighing in defeat. “I do need help. Even from the limited information they were able to send in advance, it’s obvious that the spear is well above anything I had ever seen. I don’t know I could even repair it without destroying it.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll handle it,” I whispered even as I separated my lips from her skin for a moment. “Why don’t you explain to me the details while I help you relax,” I whispered as I slipped even lower, and took her nipple in my mouth, caressing gently. She tasted sweet, with just a hint of smoke, reminding me of the best whiskeys.

“It’s made from an unknown alloy, supported by a wide number of magical arrays,” Oeyne started, launching an explanation that lasted almost ten minutes, telling me everything that they were able to decipher based on the spear, though toward the end, her explanation became hard to trace. No wonder she was having trouble developing a preliminary method, half of the magical information she presented contradicted the other half. The problem, we didn’t know whether it was the spear that was truly extraordinary to the point of breaking my

understanding of magical theories, or princess' assistants had screwed their diagnostic spells.

I hoped it was the first, which would allow me to push my abilities forward, but reasonably, I expected it to be the second.

Since I had decided that the preliminary work was of limited usefulness, I decided to use my time better, and increased the intensity of Oeyne's treatment. Moans started to interrupt her explanation rapidly, until her moans overtook the explanation itself. "Please," she gasped. "It's hard enough to remember everything already."

"No worries," I consoled her, even as I let my hands finally move down her belly and landing on the waistband of her shorts. "There are too many contradictions on the spell structure, to a point that it's impossible to solve the problem remotely. We just need to focus on processing the required materials, and some excess, as preparation. Others, we can focus on after the princess arrives with the spear. She just needs to stay as a guest for a few days while we decipher firsthand," I explained.

"Makes sense—" she managed to murmur before my hand slipped through the waistband of her shorts, circling around her knob, then her mouth was occupied by her moans. She leaned back, her hands landing on her desk, not caring about damaging the papers she had been working on all night anymore.

"So, tell me about the alloy structure, and how are you planning to repair such a dangerously magical weapon from a smithing perspective," I whispered.

"R-really," she managed to stammer between her moans. "Right now?"

"It's not like you're doing anything," I countered, my smirk wide enough to twist her face into annoyance, but it didn't last long, once again replaced by ecstasy. A measured flick to her clit while coating my finger with ice-mana saw to that.

"You're evil," she gasped, but still, her explanation started. "The root of the problem is creating the correct alloy structure..." she started, her moans slower than necessary.

[+1 Craft]

Happy with the quick skill gain, I slowed down my teasing, mostly to keep her coherent enough to continue her explanation, while distracted enough to occasionally slip one of her precious personal smithing secrets. For some of them, I was knowledgeable enough to understand their significance, though I had no doubt that for every single secret I understood, I was missing ten

of them. Luckily, with my Intelligence stat, I was able to memorize her words verbatim even as I enjoyed her juices flowing around my fingers, preparing for future success without sacrificing the present pleasure.

Multitasking had never been this fun.

There was a unique sense of pleasure derived from the sensation of control, watching her gasp and moan as my fingers slowly slipped inside her, teasing her most sensitive spot, but never enough to topple her to the other side. Her struggle to hide the impact of my moves made it even more delicious. Then, she reached the end of her explanation.

[+4 Craft]

At this point, I could have used follow-up questions to ferret out even more of her secrets, but ultimately, I decided that she had earned her reward through her obedience, and decided to deliver the implied promise. I kept my right where it was, with fingers buried in her snatch, while my left hand landed on the great expanse of her breasts, once again gorging itself with the delicious firmness of her breasts.

It was all that needed to push Oeyne into the territory where everything but the pleasure lost its significance. As my fingers disappeared in the great expanse of her caramel breasts, she moaned in pure ecstasy, forcing me to snatch her lips in another kiss just to protect my eardrums —not that kissing her plump lips as she writhed in pleasure was by any means a great chore.

“It feels amazing. Do it harder! I’ll whatever you want,” she gasped when I pulled away from her lips, signaling my victory, not that it was in doubt. And as an honorable warrior, it was my duty to respect such a heartfelt surrender. I squeezed her tits even harder even returned my lips over hers, my tongue ravaging her mouth mercilessly. Most importantly, the dance of my fingers quickened, from a soft caress to a merciless assault.

From there, it took a bare few moments for her to stiffen for a moment, before trembling invaded her body, losing any coherence of control, relieved to finally arrive at her destination with an explosive climax. She collapsed on me as she trembled, putting her head on my shoulder to maintain her balance.

Of course, it was just a start, and I still had one important thing to attend, one that was making my pants very uncomfortable. Bringing her to her bed was an option, but I decided to take a bigger step, one that would symbolically clench the new balance of authority between us. I

lifted her up in a bridal hold, and walked toward the forge, where a cold stone surface lay in the middle of her tools and equipment, where she created the weapons and tools that she was so proud of.

I carried her toward the forge, and pushed her down on the smooth surface near bellows, empty of the clutter of her ongoing work. It was inches away from the area where she usually forged, which would have been extremely dangerous for anyone that didn't share our overwhelming physical stats.

She tried to speak, only for her breath to explode as her chest hit the smooth surface. Another gasp followed when I cast the spell to clean up and prepare her backdoor entrance, ready for my visitation.

Her shocked tone was rather glorious as I pressed my shaft against her puckered hole, pushing forward quick enough to make her feel a sting of pain, but not quick enough to actually hurt. "W-what are you doing!" she exclaimed even as the crown disappeared in her spectacularly tight grip.

"I'm looking for something to distract me while I forged, of course," I said lazily, even as I quickly cast a couple of telekinetic spells, pulling one of the pure silver ingots she had in storage. It floated along with her hammer.

"You -" she started, only to be interrupted by a gasp.

"I, what?" I said mockingly as I slapped her plump ass, enjoying its jiggle.

"You can't be serious!" she exploded, however, she continued to lay obediently on the stone surface while I plunged the silver ingot in the ever-glowing embers of her forge, then turned my attention back to Oeyne.

"Oh, but I am," I said lazily even as I alternated between squeezing and slapping her ass, enjoying her distraction that followed an orgasm. "Why, is there a problem?" I asked, but at the same time, slipped two fingers in her wet snatch, making her moan in lieu of answering. "I thought so," I said mockingly, as I slowly pushed deeper.

"That's -" she gasped, trying to contain her voice as she struggled under the multiple sources of pleasure. "That's unnatural," she barely managed to say.

"Really," I said domineeringly as I pushed my shaft deeper into her tight hole, enjoying her grip as I kept going deeper and deeper past her ring, forcing her to widen more and more. She was

getting more and more ready for the ultimate penetration her spectacular ass had deserved.

It took a minute for her useless arguments to fade away, and another minute for her to reach back and spread open her ass cheeks to make my invasion even easier, signaling her changing opinions about anal sex. Her moans rose, deep and low, as she raised her ass, presenting an even better angle for me to penetrate deeper. I followed her invitation, enjoying her tightly constricting grip even further, finally treating every inch of my shaft as I finally pushed my full size.

A different girl would have been crying in pain, but Oeyne just moaned in pleasure, not surprising me with her pain resistance. Even with all the supernatural protections stats afforded, smithing was a painful business. Since she was moaning enthusiastically, I didn't bother to warn her before pulling back, only to slam back in, this time harder, testing her tightness further even as her ass jiggled under the unusual blow.

Then, just before I started really enjoying her tight hole, I noticed the silver ingot glowing in a nice pink shade, signaling that it was finally time to start as well.

The timing was as perfect as it could get.

[Level: 30 Experience: 441500 / 465000

Strength: 36 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 44

HP: 4920 / 4920 Mana: 6300 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [68/75]

Advanced Craft [45/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Eighty-Eight

“Watch carefully, you need to check whether I’m making any mistake,” I ordered Oeyne even as I cast a spell, levitating the glowing glob of liquid silver, flying in the air under my control, even as I used my earth magic to create a casting mold for the design I had in mind, mixed with some ice magic to ensure rapid cooling. Meanwhile, I saturated the earthen construct with my mana, letting my mana fill the structure of the silver, essentially testing the limits of casting.

[-267 Mana]

[+1 Craft]

“That’s one way to optimize -” Oeyne murmured, her voice strained, cutting short as I plunged deeper inside her tight hole, stretching her further.

“Yes, a wide range of magical abilities doesn’t exactly hurt,” I said lazily as I slapped her ass once more, watching her vast flesh ripple. At this point in our relationship, I was intentionally revealing some of my abilities, with the full knowledge that she would mention those abilities to the princess. It was an indirect method of elevating my value.

Otherwise, the trick I had just done didn’t achieve anything that couldn’t be done by any normal blacksmith, but it did save me almost half an hour in terms of time. It was especially important because, unlike a normal blacksmith, I didn’t have multiple pieces I had been working on to leverage the waiting time more efficiently.

And while playing with Oeyne while waiting was certainly tempting, with the growing undead pressure, wasn’t really in the mood for that. The sooner I finish with this trinket, the sooner I could move onto the other items on my agenda. It was particularly bad, because I had no idea when the necromancers or their mysterious backers would react to our rather outrageous assault.

They might react later in the day before we could restructure our defenses to factor in the presence of their dangerous leader, or they might attack a week later, with a completely different plan. It was for the best if I prepare accordingly.

Oeyne was busy moaning under my repeated teasing as I broke the mold, floating the cold piece of silver toward me, along with a large hammer that would be used for shaping the silver further. Working on silver wasn’t as scary as it might sound, because, unlike iron and steel, most of the work was done through cold smithing, meaning there wouldn’t be inconvenient flying

globes of burning metal or other dangerous features.

Not that iron smithing would have been too dangerous, as I was confident in my abilities to protect us, but still, it would have prevented me from enjoying Oeyne's deliciously tight grip.

I raised the hammer even as I gathered a generous amount of mana, quite a bit more than what Oeyne had recommended earlier. "That's too much—" Oeyne tried to speak, but I slammed the hammer down, leaving a strong dent on the circle-shaped silver piece, the ringing of the hammer suppressing her voice.

[-196 Mana]

[+1 Craft]

"Impossible," she tried to speak once more as I raised my hammer, no doubt trying to communicate her disbelief as I raised the hammer again, the mana safely injected into the silver, obediently soaking into its internal structure. Her shock was understandable, as I imbued the hammer quite a bit more than what could be deemed safe. Any ordinary blacksmith — assuming one strong enough to gather sufficient mana in the first place— would have created an unstable explosion that destroyed the hammer along with a good part of their arm, and I doubted that even Oeyne could handle injecting that much amount of mana with one hit

Though, she certainly had the skill to create a stronger item with less mana. What I was doing was essentially bullying the mana through my exceptional mana control, which I owed mostly to Tantric, and skipping several necessary steps. Essentially, if I could perfect it, I could forge a decent magical weapon in minutes rather than hours and days others would require. That wouldn't change the mana requirements, of course, which might be a reason why there was no such recorded technique. Usually, blacksmiths and other crafters lacked mana and materials, not time.

Still, I was glad that my experiment didn't blow on my face.

Oeyne opened her mouth even as she watched the piece of silver, no doubt about to inquire more about the near-impossible success I had just achieved, only to gasp in shock as I impaled her hard, forcing her to deliver a delicious moan instead. And just as she was about to gather her wits, I slammed the hammer again, once again imbuing the silver circlet with more mana.

[-206 Mana]

[+1 Craft]

Oeyne attempted to speak once more, only to receive the same treatment again, my shaft invading her tight hole rather aggressively, until she let out a delicious moan, the sound of our flesh colliding mixing with her moans. The assault of pleasure worked even better than the sound of the hammer to suppress her attempts to talk.

Just like that, the moment fell into a predictable rhythm, each slam of the hammer imbuing more and more mana to the silver circle, strengthening the material both physically and conceptually, all the while I enjoyed Oeyne's cries, indicating that the pleasure was building up spectacularly.

And what a build-up that was. As my shaft delved into the deepest recesses of her body, her moans turned into a boundless river, constantly flowing out, mixing with the silvery rings of the smithing hammer. There was only one problem with the position, as I couldn't continue smithing and explore her body with my fingers at the same time.

Still, that didn't mean I was completely helpless.

It was difficult to split my magical attention further, but using a simple arcana spell was still within my limits. I let my spell free, squeezing her breasts aggressively through a phantasmal hand, intensifying her moans further. All the while, I continued to forge, until the silver piece I was working on had soaked as much mana it could structurally handle without exploding despite my efforts to keep it contained.

[-1206 Mana]

[+2 Craft]

It was finally time to shape the enchantments. If I had been creating a sword, it wouldn't have been that challenging in terms of enchantment, because unless the aim was to embed an exotic effect, the strengthening conceptual strength would have allowed the sword to be sharp enough to cut through the defenses that would normally resist such a blow, even from magically-reinforced steel.

It was a bit trickier when it came to the choker. The effect I was trying to create was different, so when I changed to a fine finishing hammer, I also connected directly with the mana, tying the whole mana structure under a Biomancy spell, creating a permanent obscuring effect that would help her to hide from death-energy based detection spells, as well as giving her some protection against surprise attacks.

Facing the potential necromancer invasion, some extra protection wouldn't be amiss.

As I slowly shaped the enchantments, which required focus on fine control, both that I had in spades thanks to my monstrous stats, so much that I was once again able to turn my attention back to Oeyne, who had been watching my achievements with a dazed expression, the shock from my capabilities, combined with the pleasure that was filling her whole being, distracting her quite a bit.

Since she had no problems with my exceptional drilling, I continued the treatment, slamming harder and harder inside her, testing the limits of the lubrication I had applied earlier, while the arcana spell still caressing her body, pushing her closer to a climax.

Her moans rose even further, gaining a surprisingly melodic quality as she abandoned all attempts to contain her own voice even a bit. It was a pity I missed the expression on her face, as it was no doubt spectacular, but I didn't conjure a mirror to watch her. Mostly because I was already dealing with too many things, and we were in a tricky part of the process. So, I let her drown in her own euphoria while I finished tying down the achievement, which stretched my capabilities to the limit.

I even added some precious reagents from my pack, including a core fragment from one of the crystal monsters, its diamond-like skin perfect for containing the pure spell. After a few soft touches, the item was done, other than polishing to add a spectacular shine, but once again, my magic helped me to skip that exhaustingly time-consuming step, replicating the effect with a simple earth spell. Since the enchantments were yet to settle, it was easy to repair it magically.

It wouldn't be the case a few minutes later, hence the reason for the easily disposable nature of the magical weapons. Once the underlying mana structure was broken, it was near impossible to repair one. And even without being broken, while maintenance was simpler than crafting from scratch, it also carried a spectacular risk of backlash if the blacksmith failed at any step.

The satisfaction of completing my first proper magical item was overwhelming, but not as much as the way Oeyne tightened around my shaft once she saw the resulting item, climaxing spectacularly. Apparently, my successful display of skills had worked even better than my other seduction attempts.

A rare kink, not that I was complaining, as Oeyne's tightness was enough to trigger my own climax, allowing her tightening bowels to milk me, my grunts accompanied her moans. And just to make things even more perfect, a notification rang.

[Achievement: Superb Smithing. Hard work and superb craftsmanship is its own reward, but sometimes with some extras. +1000 Experience, +3 Strength]

Once again, the achievement managed to put a smile on my face. It was nice to know that whatever the source of my unique variation of System, at least it had a working sense of humor.

“So, how was it?” I asked even as I pulled out of Oeyne, finally slapping her ass, making it jiggle. “Do I get a passing grade?”

Oeyne tried to stand up, which worked more or less as intended while she pushed against the stone surface of her forge, but hit a snag once she tried to rely on her legs exclusively. A sudden aftershock hit her, making her collapse on the floor, with her ass on the floor. “Would you mind helping me?” she gasped.

“Nope,” I answered even as I cast a water spell, quickly cleaning my shaft before I took a step toward her. Elemental spells were useful, and not just for skipping time-intensive aspects of forging. “I’m going to forge a few more trinkets to make sure I learned perfectly,” I said, then looked down with a teasing smile. “I’m sure you can find something to occupy yourself with...”

What I meant was rather clear, especially as when I took a step, my shaft stood inches away from her plump lips, growing rapidly as it begged for her attention. She was quick to follow the clue, and wrapped her plump lips around my shaft, devouring half of it with relative ease, while I started working on another set of silver jewelry, this time creating small bracelets, each with a different design. However, their design had one major difference, focusing more on defense and protection rather than saving them from detection, as for them, it was a higher priority.

I was lucky that the design of the others was relatively easier after the first attempt, which meant when Oeyne pulled back to leave my shaft free for a moment, only to rise just a bit and lean forward, only to capture my shaft between her caramel tits. With the soft skin of her breasts massaging my well-lubricated cock as she slowly moved up and down, it generated a lovely feeling, almost as lovely as the tight grip of her puckered hole.

However, it was even more distracting, because, unlike the previous time, I wasn’t the one in control, meaning whenever she leaned down to lick the crown of my shaft for some extra pleasure, it worked spectacularly. Under the entertaining distraction provided by her soft globes, the forging both passed too quickly, and somehow managed to extend in an eternity, her throaty moans almost as reliable as a clock counting seconds...

As she squeezed and loosened the grip of her breast to alternate the sensation, it barely took minutes for me to explode on her face, but luckily, using her advanced forge, it was more than what I needed to finish four protective bracelets. I groaned as I exploded, adding some milk to her caramel.

“It has been a productive lesson,” I murmured even as I grabbed her hand offered her help to stand up, but she shook her head, preferring to stay collapsed next to her forge, enjoying the aftermath of her latest climax.

“Yeah,” she murmured, trying to recover from the high of her arousal, but not being particularly successful about it. “Will you come again?” she suddenly asked.

“Well, that entirely depends on your skill,” I chose to answer, enjoying her blush against the double entendre that was created. “But yeah, I’ll make sure to drop by, to enjoy another beautiful lesson if nothing else. But make sure to send me the news if there’s any change with the princess situation,” I added, reminding her of the more serious aspects of our situation.

“Definitely,” she answered even as she tried to stand up, but I gestured her to rest. I didn’t need her help getting in, and leaving was even easier.

Just as I was about to leave, when I remembered something very important. I had lost my weapon against the death knights when I used it as an explosive weapon, meaning I needed replacement. And while I was getting more able, and could apply a number of really tricky effects without the assistance of an enchanter, I still couldn’t match Oeyne when it came to straightforward weaponsmithing.

“Also, please forge me another weapon, a sword this time, and maybe a couple of daggers,” I asked her directly, not even bothering to soften the request. Considering everything we were doing, a straightforward order wasn’t something to be discussed in detail. Especially not when I was concerned with price.

“Sure,” she murmured as she finally made an attempt to stand up, and I helped by presenting my hand. She grabbed and pulled herself upright. “I’m a bit beat, though, why don’t you prepare the materials, and I’ll start them as soon as I wake up.”

“Excellent,” I said even as I caressed her cheek gently. She smiled naughtily before she stumbled toward her bedroom, somehow managing to add a delicious swing to her hips despite her trembling legs...

As much as I was tempted to follow her there, I stayed on the forge to process the required magical reagents instead. I still had undead to purge, and dangerous political intrigues to counter.

[Level: 30 Experience: 442500 / 465000

Strength: 39 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 44

HP: 5010 / 5010 Mana: 1871 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [68/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Part Three

Chapter Eighty-Nine

I stayed in the forge for a couple of hours, processing an incredible amount of material, enough for a small arsenal. A larger arsenal wouldn't have hurt against the danger that was knocking on the door.

When I finally walked out of Oeyne's room, the sun was finally appearing on the horizon, marking a new day. But it wasn't just another day, because the guards were moving around with a great hurry in the courtyard, their alertness much higher. The magical sword gleamed on the waists of anyone on sufficient rank, signaling that the school had finally tapped into its legendary arsenal.

The headmistress must have decided that there was no merit in holding back completely, not after our little assault had already revealed our knowledge to the enemy. There were even several student teams dashing around, no doubt preparing for an incursion. Most of those teams were moving toward the training forests even though they were too strong to get any kind of benefit from a slaying few weak dire beasts. They were probably doing that to remove a potential weapon from the arsenal of the attackers.

The monsters in the training forest might not be the strongest, but if the wards that kept them separate from the school proper, it might prove a dangerous distraction at a critical moment.

Interestingly, however, despite the preventative measures, the school didn't go to a full mobilization of the wards, which meant the classes would continue for any student without an assigned task rather than being pulled as a part of the standing army. Not yet, at least. Maybe it was about the politics, I surmised, not wanting to risk the students unless it was absolutely necessary. Or maybe, she was trying to bait them into attacking by showing she was underestimating them. A panicked attack from them before our intelligence about their plan had degraded—or they had discovered the changes made into the defensive wards of the school— could prove decisive.

Unfortunately, there was no undead presence out on the walls yet.

Funny, though, how quickly one's perspective could change with power. I could never imagine preferring to have an undead army attack directly as soon as possible, so we could 'handle'

them, rather than trying to escape as far as I could manage to avoid the backlash.

Unfortunately, I didn't have time to waste on introspection on the physiological impact of overwhelming power, not when I was facing a danger that forced me to accumulate even more power.

Then, just as I was considering the relative merits of focusing on Marianne or Helga first to maximize the potential of our little group, I noticed something that made me shelve that little plan. A couple of familiar figures stepped outside as part of a small group. It was a group of students, a total of eight, following an instructor as they dashed toward the main gate in a great hurry.

Cornelia, and Helga.

That was a rather interesting combination, I noted as my suspicion tingled. As, other than Cornelia, every single student was a low-leveled commoner. Helga was the strongest of them in terms of combat potential, even before my help, and considering Helga's reputation for combat abilities and the fact that her recent developments were still a secret, it was entirely too suspicious.

And the identity of the instructor did nothing to actually limit that suspicion. They were being led by was a young female instructor with a tight expression on her face, one that I recognized only through reputation. Her name was Iomene, and she was a part of the school of tracking. I knew exactly three things about her. She came from a distant corner of the continent that was outside of the Empire's borders —which was more of a technicality rather than the actual ability to project military power— that was populated by many city-states, relying on trade to survive. She was an excellent tracker, and a decent warrior.

And, she was a complete outsider, her extreme standoffish attitude keeping her distant from everyone else, teachers and students alike.

In other words, the perfect candidate to blame for the loss of one of the most promising noble scions.

I had to admit, the ploy was rather incredible despite its transparency. With the chaos going on, it would be too late for anyone to notice any mistaken paperwork about the assignment, and in the aftermath, it was almost trivial to blame the mistake to one of the dead clerks —as it was almost certain to happen, and if by some luck all the clerks survived, the conspirator could easily nudge one of the less important ones to the other side, before destroying his reputation

as a traitor, working against House Antony.

At first glance, it seemed like a simple ploy. Cornelia's uncle was doubtlessly looking for a way to take control of the house without risking a duel. Cornelia's lack of leveling was a conjecture of their part, after all, and even if that had been the case —as it would have been without my intervention— direct combat was too unpredictable, especially when facing someone like Cornelia, with a perchance toward overwhelming firepower.

House Antony was certainly important enough that more than one instructor would be interested arrange an assassination in exchange for future favors.

However, what made the trick really impressive was the quickness of implementation. It was almost like whomever responsible knew that a crisis was on the door, and already arranged everything, ready to be initiated!

Finally, a clue toward the identity of the mysterious owner of the shade, but whether direct or indirect, it was a mystery. It was a possibility that they were the same people —as someone would be willing to sell the defense secrets of the school wouldn't have felt torn about sending a few more students to death. It might be also one of his subordinates, trying to create some ancillary benefit outside of the knowledge of his boss.

Unfortunately, it was unfortunately impossible to discount alternative possibilities, that either the plotter had learned the ploy accidentally, and decided to use for his benefit rather than reporting it. Moreover, it was always possible that he had a different plot in mind ready to go, and was adapting it for current circumstances.

Meaning, rather than intervening quickly, I needed to wait for the plot to unfold. And to prevent it from turning into a total disaster, I needed to follow them. After checking the general direction they were traveling, I dashed to my room, to see if there was any note from Helga. I found a quickly scribbled note from her, telling me that she had been assigned to an emergency mission, but they didn't give her any detail.

Cornelia's note, which was in her room, hidden under a new ward —no doubt to prevent her maid from investigating its contents. Her note was marginally more detailed than Helga's, which was a good indicator of their relative difference of authority. Cornelia mentioned that they had been assigned with a mission to reinforce one of the nearby towns as a precaution, then scout the surrounding area for any dangerous monster build-up. She also mentioned that she didn't know who would be in her team, but since the team was led by Iomene, she wasn't too concerned, as she knew that Iomene was one of the instructors famous for staying away

from house politics.

I shook my head at her lack of awareness. For an heiress that was about to be deposed, she could be dangerously optimistic in certain topics. On the surface, Iomene's apolitical stance seemed to be in her benefit, but she failed to think that together with her lack of support, also made Iomene a perfect scapegoat for the loss of a noble scion —especially if she was unfortunate enough to fall under the ambush as well. Since Iomene wasn't really famous for her strength and her skill set leaned toward tracking and hunting, I wouldn't bet on her surviving an ambush that was designed to take down Cornelia.

Sneaking into their rooms and reading the notes barely took two minutes, which meant that the group was still visible from the gate. I followed them. Since Iomene was a dedicated ranger, it was difficult to follow them closely under the bright sunlight unless I started relying on my spells, so I let them open a bit of distance first. Yes, Iomene was skilled in erasing their tracks as well, but due to the nature of the mission, she didn't bother to do so. Which meant that following them was a trivial job.

I was experimenting with my magic in subtle ways to kill some time, when I noticed that by focusing on Cornelia or Helga, I could actually detect their location. I didn't know whether it was a benefit of one of my perks —like Teleportation, which I didn't dare to use yet considering the disaster Empowerment had almost created— or just a feature of the completed companion system, but regardless, it was convenient to feel their presence.

Since I didn't have anything else to do, I tried to replicate the same feat with Marianne and Aviada, but had mixed success. I could barely feel a subtle presence, but actually deciphering the location was much more challenging, strengthening the assumption that it was another benefit of the Companion system. So, I focused back on Cornelia and Helga, to understand the limits of the connection. To my surprise, it wasn't limited to just location, but also I could sense their general state of mind. It wasn't exactly detailed, but at least I could separate immediate fear from low-level combat awareness.

However, despite my convenient alarm system, I didn't let them open the distance too much. I didn't know whether there was an ambush waiting for them, or the spy had sent them away in the hopes of a lucky accident as the undead started to act. I followed them from a mile away, which was distant enough that I could subtly hunt whenever I noticed a worthwhile creature, while close enough that I could intervene with an elemental mount in seconds in case of an emergency.

Conveniently, at this point, it wasn't too inconvenient to remove myself in case of an actual

emergency.

They traveled for almost half a day before they arrived at a small town, Tertullian. While Iomene spoke with the guards at the gate, I sneaked into the town by jumping over the wall, using illusions for temporary invisibility. Invisibility wasn't the best solution to stay unnoticed as it created shimmers as I moved, especially under bright light, but it was good enough to trick the lazy guards on the wall, who were more interested in their lunch than any possible intruder in the middle of the day.

Who would be crazy enough to jump over the walls in the middle of the day, after all?

The town itself was decently large considering the lack of farming or other direct economic activities. Essentially, the town was an overgrown trading post, standing on one of the main roads that connected Silver Spires with the nearest big city. It wasn't enough to be classified as a proper city, or even a large town, though the strength of its walls and wards, as well as the military presence in the town, was worthy of a city. Likely, considering the proximity, the town was being supported by the Silver Spires, to make sure the trade flowed without a problem.

It was an interesting place to arrange an ambush. The town itself was supposed to be safe. Considering the relative safety of the town, and its location —it was to the North of the school, while the undead camp was to the South— it wasn't likely to become a sacrifice under the undead horde as well.

Interesting, I surmised. So, either the spy didn't know too much about the necromancer plot, or there was something else under wraps...

[Level: 30 Experience: 442500 / 465000

Strength: 39 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 44

HP: 5010 / 5010 Mana: 6300 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [68/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/17]

Chapter Ninety

Thanks to my ability to track the location of Cornelia and Helga, I managed to find their exact location in the town easily despite the chaos that filled the street during lunch hour. They arrived in a street filled with inns, though, before choosing one, a small argument went between Iomene and Cornelia. The distance between us was considerable, but Cornelia's body language was familiar. She was clearly unhappy with the quality of the inn, and demanding to go for a luxury one, only to be vetoed by Iomene, who ultimately won the argument, and led them into a more modest one.

Cornelia didn't look too happy with that conclusion, as evidenced by her glowing hands like she was about to launch a fireball while Iomene walked away from her confidently. I shook my head in amusement at Cornelia's attitude. It seemed that her rash arrogance was alive and well despite my lessons. She had just learned not to use that on me.

Rather than following them directly into the inn, I went for the back entrance —the windows. That close, I could find them with my eyes closed, so it wasn't particularly hard to identify their exact location. An illusion spell allowed me to climb the wall of the inn while avoiding notice. The inn was warded against the intruders, of course, but to someone with my skill, it was no different than not existing. To the defense of the inn, it wasn't exactly their fault.

It was hard to defend against someone that could erase the town itself singlehandedly if they were sufficiently motivated...

I expected them to be in their private rooms, and was trying to decide which one I should be talking about first, Cornelia or Helga. Surprisingly, I detected them staying close, even after they went into their room. Curious, I moved toward their room and perched under their window, once again relying on my magic to stay hidden.

A simple arcana mirror allowed me to spy inside their room, to check whether the whole team was sharing a room, only to realize Cornelia and Helga were sharing a single one, looking at each other silently, the atmosphere thick enough to cut with a knife.

To make things more interesting, neither of them was aware of my relationship with the other. Cornelia's information about my greater aims had always been limited even though she had a good understanding of my abilities, and while Helga had a better view of both my abilities and my greater aims, I deliberately didn't inform her about my relationship with Cornelia yet, wanting to leave that particular fight to a later, less sensitive time. Looking in hindsight, it might not be the best idea, as instead, it turned into a timed explosive at the most sensitive time

possible.

Maybe I should stop procrastinating the important things.

I could have easily sneaked inside, but I stayed out, resting in a concealed spot in the outer walls, watching them through the spell. I was curious about how they would react to each other, so that I could resolve it more effectively. If I interjected immediately, I would suppress their argument, which would keep the issues suppressed until they explode.

Neither spoke until Helga quickly cast a silencing ward, missing the curious glance Cornelia sent to her way. Helga tried to keep her development hidden, but I knew from experience that it was hard to fake that after experiencing a comprehensible improvement. And Helga did so, both in Levels and in Stats. The fact that Cornelia had also experienced a radical jump in both, allowing her sensing abilities to transform significantly, made it virtually impossible for Helga to hide her abilities. At least, not without paying much more attention than the dismissive way she cast that particular ward.

“So, how have you been since our last meeting?” Cornelia asked, unable to prevent herself from adding a victorious and vicious edge to her smile despite the clear intrigue she felt at Helga’s proficient magical display. Her outburst against Iomene first, now this... It seemed that I failed to fuck mindless arrogance out of her, and simply taught her to never employ it against me.

Step by step, I sighed in surrender.

“I have been well,” Helga said curtly, sending Cornelia a haughty look before focusing on organizing her wardrobe, once again making me shake my head. Apparently, Cornelia wasn’t the only one suffering from excessive arrogance. I understood Helga’s point of view intimately, and to be fair, I had also experienced the arrogance of rapidly improving, which led me to rather ill-advised actions, but it was always easier to criticize the flaws of the others.

Unsurprisingly, Cornelia didn’t appreciate the lip Helga was giving her, not since their latest meeting had included Helga being wrapped in chains while being whipped by Cornelia. Though, she managed to react it better than she did against Iomene’s decision, and didn’t threaten her with a spell. “I see it has been a while since we had a session, if you have forgotten your lessons enough to bark,” she said instead. It was direct and combative, but from what I observed, it was closest to diplomacy Cornelia could achieve against someone she saw as inferior, which was an achievement in itself.

They weren’t resorting to spells yet, which was a fortunate miracle.

If it was before, I would have just walked in and helped Helga to suppress her, to help her take revenge against the previous indignity she had suffered in Cornelia's hands, but things had since changed. For better or worse, Cornelia managed to earn a place in my life as important as Helga in my life, which meant I couldn't just help Helga break Cornelia.

Helga huffed in dismissal. "There's not going to be another lesson," Helga said decisively.

"So, you found another 'sponsor' then," Cornelia countered, her tone bitter. "How enterprising." I snorted at Cornelia's statement, as she herself had no problem acquiring a 'sponsor' to resolve her leveling problem or helping her to power-level. Trying to shame Helga for the same thing was rather ridiculous.

"I did," Helga said with a wide smirk, prideful in her achievement. She opened her mouth to continue to brag, but a moment later, she stopped, smart enough to realize bragging might have endangered my secrecy. Of course, Cornelia was in the know for most of those secrets, but Helga didn't know that yet. "Too bad that despite all your beauty, you have all the charm of a porcupine, unable to get anyone unless you buy their loyalty first."

Cornelia snorted in dismissal, which was a rather uncharacteristic response. "If you say so," she added, her disregard clear. I realized that Cornelia was measuring the imaginary new supporter of Helga, only for that portrait to come short against me severely.

I couldn't help, a snort escaped my mouth as well, making the girls aware of my presence under their window. "Who's there?" Cornelia jolted to action, her hand once again glowing with a flame spell, ready to lash out. Helga was not too slower, immediately crafting an arcana shield, reinforced by two ancillary wards and a third connection ward ready to connect it to the inn's general wards, showing the extent of her development.

And impressive development, for both girls.

I could have easily escaped, but doing so would have been pointless. I had already learned what I wanted to learn by observing them. They didn't have a burning hostility ready to explode, and the rest of their problems could be better mediated through my presence.

"Hi, girls," I said as I pulled myself into the room.

"Caesar," the girls said simultaneously with an elated tone, though it lasted only until they were able to process each other's tone. "No! Not her!" they said angrily, again, simultaneously.

"I love how smart you girls are," I said, making sure to smile roguishly, earning a pair of

blushes, their emotional fluctuations enough to defuse their anger for a moment, which was all I needed. I walked to one of the beds with deliberate slowness and sat down, while they just watched, trying to handle the sudden change of pacing. I patted both sides of me, and ordered. "Why don't you girls take a seat. We have quite a few things to talk about."

"No, that's too much-" Cornelia started while Helga already took a step toward the seat I showed.

I cut her off quickly. "Sit," I ordered, my tone stiff and demanding. Cornelia quickly caught up with Helga, triggered by my order. She looked frustrated, but underneath, her arousal was not to be hidden. She was getting triggered by her submission more and more, which was a weird combination with her still-existent sadist tendencies.

[+ 2 Speech]

"So, do you girls learned anything more about the mission?" I asked after they sat down, putting my hands on their thighs, one each, and squeezing gently.

"Nothing much, it's just a routine cleansing mission, for a reported pack of shadow beasts making night raids. Apparently, they don't want to have any problem while the undead crisis is going on," Cornelia answered immediately, quick to take the role of team captain. Helga looked frustrated by her assumption, but a tight squeeze of her thigh was enough to silence her.

"I see," I murmured, not particularly surprised by the lack of useful information, but it was better to check to be through. "So, you girls don't find it suspicious?"

"Not particularly, no," Helga murmured, but her tone was indecisive. "At least, not until you suddenly appeared. It seems like just another emergency mission, many other students had received such orders." Cornelia looked equally confused and alert, their hostility forgotten in the face of immediate threat.

"Don't you feel the exact configuration of the group is a bit suspicious?" I asked, while moving both of my hands at the same time, pulling their robes high. It was evidence of our closeness that neither girl was bothered the slightest by my wandering hands, caressing their naked thighs underneath their clothes.

Helga continued to look confused, while Cornelia realized what I was talking about after a moment of silence. "It's an ambush for me," she gasped in shock.

"That's what I'm suspecting," I said.

“What?” cut in Helga, her surprise understandable since she was lacking critical information. “Who exactly is targeting her, and why?”

I gestured to Cornelia, wordlessly suggesting that there was no problem mentioning the truth. “Probably a rival house,” Cornelia said instead, electing to keep her situation undercover. Which was rather pointless in my perspective, but I was willing to leave that as her choice. “The important thing is, how are they planning to achieve that? Do you think instructor Iomene is on their side?”

“Probably not,” I answered. “Frankly, there’s more than one way, but from the way they had arranged the group with students without a background, led by a foreign newcomer with almost no internal support, I’m inclined to expect a blunt approach, rather than a surgical strike.”

“Should we retreat?” asked Cornelia. “I still have enough pull to cancel a mission, at least.”

I smirked at her suggestion, even as I let my hand travel higher on their thighs, caressing the soft inner side, making Cornelia mewl in unexpected pleasure. Helga managed to hold on, but just barely, speaking instead. “We shouldn’t,” she suggested, but her tone was soft and indecisive, waiting for my approval. I nodded, and she continued. “Since they won’t be expecting Caesar’s presence, we can counter their plan, maybe even discovering the identity of the attacker.”

“Exactly,” I said even as I pulled Helga on my lap before sliding down her panties until they hit her ankles, leaving her core free for my assault. Cornelia’s expression of jealousy was just delicious.

“No need,” Cornelia bristled as she stood up and took a step toward the door. It wasn’t an ordinary step, but more of a stomp, highlighting her displeasure. She was jealous, not because I had another girl in my lap, but because that girl was someone inferior to Cornelia, at least in her own perception. “After my latest level up, I can take whatever they throw at me.”

“Really?” I said even as my hands danced over the buttons of Helga’s robe, removing it with a rapid movement, not making a move to stop Cornelia, even when her hand landed on the doorknob, signaling that she was about to leave. Rather than turning it and leaving, however, she looked back angrily, waiting for me to ask her to stay. Rather than catering to her ego, I decided to bait her instead. “So, you’re saying that you don’t need an additional level?”

“Another level?” Cornelia gasped with no small amount of shock, her fingers pulling away from

the doorknob. “This soon? How’s that possible?”

“I’m a man of mysteries, of course,” I said even as my fingers shifted to the buttons of Helga’s shirt after quickly removing her robe, leaving her wearing only a corset and a skirt. Helga moaned in arousal, enjoying the treatment immensely. “Do you think that I would allow my maid to stay as a weakling?”

Cornelia bristled at being called a weakling —which wasn’t an entirely unjustified reaction considering she was likely stronger than half of the faculty after her latest level up— her face colored with anger, though even with that, her eyes danced on Helga’s body for an extended stretch. Neither her anger, nor her desire for more power didn’t prevent her from enjoying the view, it seemed. She said nothing for a moment, just watching as I started kissing Helga, our tongues dancing with an extended dance, while using the opportunity to transfer some mana, but rather than directly helping her to level up, I reinforced her soul space at first, strengthening her leveling.

[-1679 Mana]

Then, after a minute of heated kissing, I pulled back. “Sit down,” I ordered once again. Cornelia looked reluctant to follow my order, though considering she had no problem with that before, it was likely about looking weak in Helga’s presence, who she deemed as lower class. Still, her reluctance was nothing compared to my dominance. “Now,” I added, my tone once again sharp, and this time, she started walking closer, her aroused expression contrasting with her hesitant steps.

[Level: 30 Experience: 442500 / 465000

Strength: 39 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 44

HP: 5010 / 5010 Mana: 5765 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 13/18]

Chapter Ninety-One

On my lap, Helga's smugness was almost palpable, highlighting her position on my lap as the superior case, like she was sitting on the throne of a queen. It would be a lie to say that if I didn't puff up my pride. "Oh, Caesar, you're so hard," she gasped, unnecessarily loud under the current circumstances, clearly aimed at Cornelia's jealousy rather than the pleasure she was feeling at the moment.

Under different circumstances, I wouldn't have let that go without making Helga pay for such shenanigans, but considering her warped relationship with Cornelia, I decided to allow it. It was a good way to initiate a controlled confrontation between them.

And if Cornelia got competitive to steal the throne, well, I saw no drawback in that.

Cornelia didn't look ready to act, at least in the beginning, so I turned my attention on Helga while Cornelia made up her mind. My fingers found the zipper of her skirt, and after a pull and a brief tumble, it was removed as well, and since her panties were already around her ankles, revealing her smooth crotch. Her corset was the only piece of clothing she had on her.

A silence filled the room when I pulled my shaft out, and slid between her plump thighs, her wetness rubbing against the topline. "So, Cornelia," I said even as my fingers reached the strings that kept her corset in place, aware of Cornelia's hungry gaze. After all, despite their rocky relationship, there was no doubt that Cornelia found Helga attractive —though I couldn't help but think that Cornelia had a rather clear type she liked, as both Marianne and Helga was curvy and blonde— enjoying the way I was about to divest the last piece of clothing Helga was wearing to reveal her amazing tits. "Tell me, what do you think our plan should be?"

"Our plan," Cornelia stammered, her eyes firmly on Helga's cleavage, getting wider with every loosened string, her tits jiggling every time she moved up and down.

"Yes, our plan for the evening," I repeated, using the tone of a disappointed teacher. "Try to focus, please, we're dealing with something serious."

The shape of Cornelia's face was almost as enjoyable as the sudden tightening of Helga's hips, enveloping my shaft within her plump thighs, who was clearly enjoying the teasing Cornelia was receiving. Though, if her vindicated expression was any indicator, she would have enjoyed even more if I had been resorting to chains and whips, but despite everything, Helga was a realist, willing to take whatever that was provided to her. "Sorry," Cornelia stammered after a moment of silence, trying to get her grips with the situation, but failing rather spectacularly.

My presence, my relationship with Helga, the possible ambush she was walking in, and the show she was receiving... It wasn't shocking that she was feeling a touch overwhelmed. I kept my gaze on her while my hands continued to work on Helga's corset, and when I finally removed it, I threw it to Cornelia, which worked perfectly to pull her out of her dazed state. She pulled her eyes away from Helga's tits, only to be caught by my gaze.

"Come on, why are you wasting our time? We're facing a great disaster," I said even as I cupped Helga's breasts, making her moan gently.

"Sorry," she stammered again. "What was the question?"

"The plan for the evening, about the possible ambush," I said, not bothering to hide my mocking glare. To Cornelia's frustration, however, I wasn't the only one that was looking at her mockingly. Helga even let out a little giggle as she tightened the grip of her hips. While Cornelia tried to put together an answer, I squeezed Helga's breasts, making her moan repeatedly.

"T-there's not much we can do other than staying in defensive and saving most of our mana, ready for an ambush. We don't know what we're facing against," Cornelia answered, managing to recover her calm after a slight stammer, trying to focus on the problem, which was rather hard with the amazing show that was going in front of her. Helga's moans were getting louder as I teased her nipples, especially after she had established a quick silencing ward around the room, making sure that her commotion wouldn't be heard by the rest of the inn.

"Really, that's the best you can come up with," Helga cut in, her voice rather louder than appropriate for a strategic meeting, but considering my fingers were dancing above her entrance, bringing her great pleasure, it was an acceptable flaw.

"Why don't you show your ability, then," Cornelia answered angrily, not appreciating the challenge she received.

"Sure," Helga answered, her smile widening like she was waiting for that exact opportunity. However, rather than answering immediately, she raised her hips, only to lower them directly on top of my shaft, her wet lips enveloping my shaft. A loud grunt escaped my mouth, which might have been partially faked to annoy Cornelia further. Teasing her until she displayed her impotent anger was still fun, especially when her green eyes looked as bright as a forest fire. "Let me show you my skill," Helga said as she lowered herself, taking half of my shaft in one smooth push.

“Go ahead,” Cornelia said,

“First of all, we need to assess the possible enemies. There are several options. They might have an undercover agent as a part of the group, they might have arranged a group of assassins on the mission location, ready to launch, or they might have been relying on faulty mission description, and the monsters in the location might have been much stronger...” Helga started, giving a rather detailed breakdown of the possible attacks. It wasn’t comprehensive, missing a couple of options, but considering she was trying to give said breakdown while trying to devour my thickness, it was an excusable oversight.

Especially since she was continuously receiving experience-gain notifications. I was increasing my mana transfer speed as I made sure there was no drawback to the process.

[-3721 Mana]

Cornelia didn’t seem to appreciate Helga’s relative eloquence, her face once again taking its usual stormy quality. Her hands twitched, signaling that she wanted to rely on her violent instincts to teach Helga a lesson, like all the times she had relied on that particular strategy, but my presence made that path impossible.

I wasn’t messing with Cornelia because it was fun. Well, at least, not just because it was fun. While the entertainment value of watching her usual arrogant attitude split between arousal and impotent anger was entertaining, I wanted her to have some experience reigning her anger. Otherwise, her uncle —who seemed to be a political animal based on my impressions— could easily manipulate her during their confrontation.

“So, Cornelia, what do you think our plan should be based on the updated risk assessment?” I asked even as I let my hands slip down Helga’s hips, leaving her amazing tits to dangle freely as she jumped up and down on my lap. Helga’s face was contorted with a smug sense of victory, complementing the thick layer of pleasure.

For a moment, I was sure that Cornelia would have exploded in anger, which would have disappointed me rather immensely. She even raised her hand like she was about to slap Helga, but then, she noticed my disappointed expression, and lowered her hand. “Good girl,” I said in approval, making her smile for a moment.

“We need to scout the area first...” Cornelia said, starting a lengthy tactical breakdown of the actions we could take, along with a detailed risk-benefit assessment, surprising me positively. Her explanation almost lasted ten minutes, near-flawless despite Helga’s increasingly frustrated

attempts to distract her, ranging from heated kisses to earth-shattering moans.

She impressed me, because it wasn't a dry explanation. She stood up at the beginning of her explanation, slowly unbuttoning the buttons of her robe one by one as she swayed with the music. Soon, her dark robe was pooled on the floor, revealing that she was only wearing panties and a corset underneath. "Daring," I murmured, approving her approach to fashion —no matter how ill-advised was to dress like that for a mission— especially the way her black and crimson corset wrapped around her body, enhancing her cleavage spectacularly.

She might not have the spectacularly large bosom of Marianne, but that didn't mean they weren't gorgeous in their own way. She continued to dance as she explained, even shedding her panties, but deliberately leaving her corset on, which added to her sexiness.

"Impressive," I said after her explanation finished, much to her satisfaction, and the displeasure of the blonde beauty that was doing her best to milk me, so much that if our relationship was any weaker, she would have walked away, or in minimum, exploded in anger.

"Thanks," Cornelia said smugly, glad that she had managed to prove herself.

Helga wasn't happy with the sudden reversal. So much that, even the fact that she had managed to gain a level while watching Cornelia's delicious explanation didn't manage to uplift her mood. She didn't appreciate the sensation of losing, especially coming from someone she had positioned as a rival.

[Helga - Level 14/19 - 14%]

However, since lashing out was on her cards, she chose to channel her frustration in a different way. She cast a familiar spell on herself, cleaning and lubricating her backdoor entrance before a quick switch, enveloping me with her tightness despite the pained grunt that escaped her mouth. As far as distraction attempts went, it was a spectacular one.

Cornelia had many negative qualities. She was rash, quick to anger, and her perceptions were colored by a sense of superiority. However, no one could call her a quitter. Seeing the smugness on Helga's otherwise strained face, she didn't bother to comment, instead walked toward me in a deliberate slowness, her naked hips swaying with the grace of a dancer.

She was leveraging her recently-enhanced Agility to the limit, with rather spectacular results.

"Smug bitch," Helga murmured as Cornelia climbed on the bed, hugging me from behind.

I silenced her with a stiff spank, making her ass jiggle beautifully. “Don’t be crass, sweetheart,” I said, which made Cornelia’s smug smile widen even more, which received a spank of her own. “And don’t focus on enjoying other people’s misfortunes,” I told Cornelia, before devouring her lips in a heated kiss.

It wasn’t the first kiss I shared with Cornelia, but it was the most heated one. Not only she was feeling aroused by the show she had been watching —not helped by her own striptease— but also she was fueled by the desire to prove her superiority to Helga. Her tongue danced freely, trying to dominate mine, the hopelessness of the skirmish doing nothing to blunt her enthusiasm.

Helga was clearly unhappy with the shenanigans that were going behind her. Luckily, she had an easy solution for that. She stood up, only to make a half-turn before impaling herself with my erection again, facing me instead of pressing her back against my chest. The moment Cornelia pulled back for a breather, Helga took her place, her tongue just as aggressive.

“Bitch,” Cornelia murmured, but I could hear a faint hint of respect in her tone. The fact that Helga was willing to confront her directly slightly changing her opinion.

However, she showed her growing respect in a surprising manner. While Helga continued to devour my lips, Cornelia’s hands passed around my torso landed between Helga’s legs, directly on her soft entrance, which was currently empty.

Helga gasped in shock as she felt Cornelia’s fingers slipping inside, reflexively pulling back. It wasn’t the first time she felt Cornelia’s touch, of course, but highly likely, it was the first time she felt Cornelia’s touch tenderly.

Cornelia just smirked smugly as she took back her place on my lips, her tongue battling with mine while she rubbed her body against my back, her hard nipples creating a delicious sensation. “Bitch,” Helga murmured, repeating the earlier insult, but with a broken voice littered with moans, as neither Cornelia nor I stopped the impaling her, the double-assault taking its toll. Meanwhile, I rewarded Cornelia with another flood of mana, the transfer eased further by my improving Tantric skills and the potency of my mana.

[-1491 Mana]

[Cornelia - Level 17/25 - 95%]

Helga wanted to counter-attack, I was familiar enough to read that particular conviction on her face despite the pleasure that flooded her, but as she moved closer to the edge, mounting a

counter-attack was starting to get harder.

“I’m-Going-to-Make-You-Pay!” she managed to shout as Cornelia’s fingers disappeared deeper into her wetness, unable to prevent herself from crying in pleasure after every single word. Admittedly, my repeated spans to her ass or my girth, stretching her puckered hole to the limits as I impaled her furiously didn’t help her much, especially when I picked up speed to turn it into a furious assault. She was getting closer and closer to a final explosion.

“Don’t be impatient, sweetie,” I whispered to Helga’s ear when Cornelia pulled away from my lips to focus on the dance of her fingers, while using her free hand to grab Helga’s breast, squeezing mercilessly. “We’re about to switch, and you can do whatever you want after that,” I added, and Cornelia missed that particular discussion, too focused on the amazing perkiness of Helga’s tits.

[Achievement: Peculiar Pacification. Resolve an animosity between Companions in an extraordinary manner. +2 Endurance +500 Experience]

The notification of the achievement signaled Helga’s acceptance as much as her quickening hips did. She started to move up and down repeatedly, pushing me ever closer to my own climax, and when she finally tightened in a final manner, her voice filling the room, I was halfway in filling her entrance. Soon, she moaned and cried helplessly.

Cornelia was rather smug as she pulled back, watching as I helped Helga to lay on the bed, gasping desperately to catch her breath after her explosion.

She had no idea the intensity of the ride that awaited her...

[Level: 30 Experience: 443000 / 465000

Strength: 39 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 32 Wisdom: 44

HP: 5070 / 5070 Mana: 4126 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 17/25]

[Helga - Level 14/19]

Chapter Ninety-Two

Cornelia watched smugly as I laid Helga on her bed, to allow her to catch her breath after the spectacular orgasm she had just experienced, her mind further strained by leveling up. As Helga leaned against her pillow, Cornelia coughed, which sounded suspiciously like the word weak. But I was convinced that it was just my misconception.

Definitely.

Still, when I turned to Cornelia, I was just smirking in amusement rather than feeling the anger that I would doubtlessly feel. But despite her habitual bitchiness, she somehow gained a place in my growing area of influence. Admittedly, her current mode of dress—a sexy corset, and nothing else, not even panties—made it much easier to convert what might have been annoying disobedience into sexy playfulness.

Taming Cornelia was still not a completed task.

“So,” she murmured as she took a step forward, not bothering to hide her arousal. “Your warm-up is over. Are you ready for the real fun?”

“Oh, really,” I said even as I watched her close the distance, still amused by the great change Cornelia was displaying. It wasn’t long ago that the only thing she felt against me was burning anger, and barely a couple of weeks ago, she didn’t even see me worthy enough to lick her shoes. A month ago, before I get a glimpse of her beautiful body on that fateful night at the library, I actually wasn’t worthy to lick those shoes.

Life was interesting.

My introspection didn’t last long, abandoned when I felt a pair of lips pressing against mine, initiating a searing kiss. Cornelia was showing a surprising level of initiative, as while she had clearly enjoyed the previous times we shared together, she wasn’t always as enthusiastic in the beginning. Though, it wasn’t particularly difficult to realize it was still about proving herself better than Helga, as any good woman from a proper lineage should be compared to one from a merchant family.

I grabbed her ass when she jumped, her legs wrapping around my waist. “You’re already hard,” she whispered into my ear as she stopped kissing for a moment.

“My physical prowess shouldn’t be surprising at this point,” I whispered back, making her shiver

in anticipation. After all, just because she was trying to prove herself to be better than Helga didn't mean that she wasn't enjoying the treatment she started to receive. I slid my hand down her corset, using magic to untie the strings until it fell on the ground as well, finally revealing her deliciously lithe body. She might not have Helga's curves, but no one could argue that she was any less sexy because of it.

She grabbed my hand and gently led me toward the empty bed in the room, her hips swaying excessively with each step. I sat on the bed, my legs parted, and she crouched in front of me, without the slightest prompting. "Delicious," she murmured as she grabbed the crown between her lips, her hands gently dancing on my thighs. As a reward for her initiative, I sent a flood of mana through our erotic connection, rewarding her with another level.

[-916 Mana]

[Cornelia - Level 18/25 - 2%]

She moaned in appreciation even as her movements froze, processing her level, while I made eye contact with Helga, who was slowly awakening from her explosive orgasm. The anal assault had been decisive enough without the addition of Cornelia's fingers, which were rather skilled around the private parts of other women—an expected development considering the general direction of her taste.

I shared a conspiratorial smile with Helga while Cornelia impaled herself deeper onto my shaft, her lips swallowing enough of my shaft to trigger a little jump of anticipation. Still, Helga continued to lay as she tried to catch her breath, so I turned my focus back to Cornelia, letting my fingers slip through her flaming red hair. She moaned in genuine joy as she continued to swallow more of my length, showing that she had learned quite a bit from our earlier encounters.

She might have a poor personality, but still, she was really fitting to be my personal maid. And if I could simultaneously make the head of her noble family, even better.

A groan escaped my mouth as her tongue wrapped around my girth, and I pushed my hips forward in desire, finally penetrating into the tight grip of her throat. Despite my girth stretching her lips, I could see the twitch of a satisfied smile on her lips. It stayed there even as I started to thrust harder and harder, her tits jiggling under the constant rhythm.

Cornelia's moans of joy started to echo louder, once again making me glad for the silencing ward, signaling that her lust had grown to an uncontrollable degree. Her hips started to move

mindlessly even as she sucked, seeking stimulation, more than her silken lips could gain from my rock-hard shaft. Luckily, I saw Helga standing up in her bed, suggesting that Cornelia's desires were not too far away.

At my level, multitasking was not a problem, which was why it was extremely easy to conjure a craft a strap-on for Helga from a distance, using more magic than material, while also allowing Cornelia to gain more experience.

[-1619 Mana]

[Cornelia - Level 18/25 - 11%]

The redheaded beauty moaned in appreciation as she climbed toward another climax, her body giving in completely for the pleasure, alternating between providing an excellent suction and taking my girth to her throat, wondrous enough to make me moan. Even better, she didn't show the slightest hesitation as I finally put my hand through her red hair, stealing the control from her in favor of furiously fucking her face.

She just accepted my furious assault, enjoying the impact.

But as I saw Helga walking toward us, the crafted strap-on firmly affixed to her waist, and nothing else. Her curvy body looked delicious as always, her tits jiggling with each step as if they were begging me to abandon Cornelia and bury into their comfortable depth. However, the most important thing was her expression. colored with the excitement of revenge, enough to convince me to move onto the next step of our fun activities. I pulled out, which earned a disappointed hiss. "I wasn't finished," she slurred, her tongue addled with pleasure.

"No worries, sweetie, I have better things in mind," I answered even as I grabbed her waist and raised her to her feet, only to bend her down from her waist and force her to turn toward Helga.

"W-what-" Cornelia tried to comment, only for me to slide into her wetness, losing the rest of her sentence in a moan of pleasure. More importantly, Helga used the opportunity to slide her strap-on into her mouth, neatly preventing any other argument.

She tried to moan in protest, of course, but I just chuckled as I caressed her back. "Come on, honey, Helga is just being a sweetheart and helping you climax, just like you have helped her to reach there many times. Don't be an ingrate. It doesn't fit your noble bearing."

She didn't say anything, mostly because she couldn't say anything. Unless she started using

spells, of course, but she was smart enough to realize I wouldn't appreciate such an activity. Instead, she twisted and moaned, trying to protest —which, surprisingly, did little to actually push Helga away, or stop the furious dance of her hips as she was invaded by Helga's toy —the only saving grace was I didn't craft it to be particularly large, a bit thinner and shorter than my own, which meant proven ability to handle it without complications.

I tried to make eye contact with Helga, but her eyes were locked on Cornelia's struggling face, her face contorted with dark satisfaction. An understandable reaction. She was not an aggressive person, but she wasn't naturally meek like Marianne as well, and the only reason she acted passively against all the abuse she had received was the —justified— fear of being targeted by the more established nobles.

And while it could be argued that Cornelia offered her a fair deal before dragged her into the role of a sadistic release, logic was rarely a tool that could be used to handle resentment. Helga needed a release, and despite the underlying shift in roles and the implied insults, Cornelia was clearly enjoying being double-teamed, so all was well.

Realizing I wasn't facing a fragile situation that forced me to maintain a constant observation, I shifted my focus back on Cornelia's delicious body, impaling her aggressively, every push accompanied by another moan.

[-916 Mana]

[Cornelia - Level 18/25 - 17%]

I decided to up the ante just as Cornelia started to tighten around my girth, trying to extract my seed, but failing to do so. I kept pumping without skipping a beat, but a simple cleaning spell ensured that her backdoor entrance was properly cleaned. I slipped a finger, earning a grunt, which would have been a bunch of words if it wasn't for Helga's toy, still invading her throat mercilessly.

I pushed forward, enjoying the way her tightness closed around my finger, getting even snuggler as I added a second finger in short order. As usual, Cornelia's tightness was spectacular, resisting my attempts to loosen her up successfully with an impressive resistance. Too bad that ultimately, it was doomed for failure, as the longer it continued, the more passionate Cornelia's moans become, her red hair desperately sticking to her sweaty body.

Her moans of pleasure contrasted greatly with the gasp of disappointment when I pulled out of her, which was immediately followed by a louder moan of joy when I impaled her tight hole,

especially as at the same time, I conjured a buzzing toy to plug her wet tunnel. With all three of her holes plugged in, Cornelia's moans turned into a string of mindless gasps, her hips moving back and forth under the combined assault of me and Helga, picking up more and more speed.

Then, I watched as Helga pulled back and removed her strap-on, surprised by the sudden change. I hadn't been expecting her to show mercy at this point. Then, she pushed her crotch against Cornelia's lips as she grabbed her hair in a painful manner, replacing earlier shock with understanding. "Lick it, you smug bitch," Helga exclaimed in a surprising manner, ignoring Cornelia's shocked cry as her treatment got even rougher.

Still, much to my surprise, Cornelia actually followed Helga's rude request, her tongue jumping out to caress Helga's wetness. I couldn't help but speed up even further, the collusion of flesh filling the room. Cornelia managed to achieve the impossible, and continued to get tighter and tighter as she moved toward another climax, while Helga's unobstructed moans filled the room.

"Oh, yeah, just like that, bitch," Helga continued, cursing in a very uncharacteristic manner as she tapped deeper into the frustration she accumulated as she tried to survive in Silver Spires, no doubt enhanced by the fact that her life was being targeted in a plot, and not even because anything she had done, but because she was a convenient target that wouldn't be missed. Her free hand trawled down and arrived at Cornelia's tits, slapping them mercilessly while tugging her hair even harder.

"Damn, girl," I murmured in amusement, though my voice was also strained by a climax that was about to arrive. I transferred even more mana to Cornelia as she was proving to be an excellent sport, which deserved a special award.

[-2188 Mana]

[Cornelia - Level 18/25 - 32%]

Her reaction to the flood of experience was another joyful moan that didn't particularly stand up amongst the chain she was continuously letting out, enjoying the fragile balance that was established. Her expression was not visible, unfortunately, but Helga's was, her usually stoic face contorted with pleasure as her long-time opponent's tongue let loose over her most sensitive spot, displaying her breadth of experience.

Since Cornelia was enjoying spankings too much, I decided to join in. My hand landed on her perky ass, the clap echoing hard enough to suppress their moans. Cornelia clenched harder, while Helga's attention finally turned back to me —which didn't stop her hair pulling or tit

slapping activities— her eyes shining with mirth. She was clearly enjoying her reward immensely.

“Lick faster,” Helga ordered as she maintained eye contact with me, her expression quirked deliciously. However, Cornelia failed to follow that particular order. Not because she suddenly decided to rebel, however. No, instead, she finally toppled over the cliff, the impact of her climax hitting her like a tackle of a rabid dragon, draining every single scrap of energy from her body as the pleasure replaced every single thought she possessed.

“Such a weakling,” Helga commented as she pulled back, merciless enough to make Cornelia hit the floor painfully if it wasn’t for my reflexes, immediately grabbing her from the waist, even as I started spraying insides. I would have liked to say that I disapproved of Helga’s sudden meanness, but that would have been a lie. It was extremely arousing to discover another facet of my blonde beauty, despite the extreme conditions it required to extract.

I was barely able to put Cornelia on her bed when Helga pushed me on the same bed and sat on my lap, managing to impale herself to my half-erect shaft —which didn’t take long to return back to full life thanks to my endurance. Just a searing kiss from Helga had been enough to complete the task. “Don’t be rude,” I said to her after the kiss, though failed to hide the mirth from my tone. It was more or less a fair payback considering their relationship up to this point.

“Hey, we’re still going to have a talk about hiding important information,” Helga countered, though she failed to add an angry tone to her words as her wet tunnel was finally impaled with something other than Cornelia’s adventurous fingers, her wetness spectacular.

“Really, what’s going to be my punishment, then?” I asked even as I grabbed her hips and pushed my shaft inside her to the hilt, forcing a delicious cry off her lips which killed her argument before she could even verbalize it. A few strokes into her core, and her entrance was wide open, sucking me deep into her presence.

“I - I don’t know,” she managed to stammer after a minute of uninterrupted moans, finding it hard to speak as my fingers dug into her generous chest, while her hips rose instinctively to meet my strokes. “J-just make me cum,” she ultimately requested.

“As you wish, milady,” I said with a wide smirk as I grabbed her waist and threw her on Cornelia’s body, creating a delicious mixture of red and blonde before I slipped inside her once more. We still had a few hours until the arranged mission time, and I wanted to help them level up as much as possible.

After all, assisting others to level up was the selfless thing to do. And I certainly felt like a saint as I penetrated Helga on top of the exhausted figure of Cornelia...

[Level: 30 Experience: 443000 / 465000

Strength: 39 Charisma: 51

Precision: 33 Perception: 35

Agility: 33 Manipulation: 38

Speed: 32 Intelligence: 42

Endurance: 32 Wisdom: 44

HP: 5070 / 5070 Mana: 2168 / 6300]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 18/25]

[Helga - Level 14/19]

Chapter Ninety-Three

It was almost six hours later that a knock was heard on the door, distracting us from the sweaty three-person knot we had become as we rested after another particularly exhausting bout. The break was a necessity after the marathon we had shared, which brought great dividends to both for me and for the girls, not just in terms of the amazing pleasure we had all drew from our rest, but also in terms of their development, much to their fascination.

[Helga - Level 17/21 - 12%]

[Cornelia - Level 19/25 - 96%]

After all, around their power level, improving by even a single level was an incredible achievement.

“Cornelia, the professor is saying we are going to meet in the lobby in ten minutes,” she had called.

“Got it,” Cornelia answered as she tried to raise her head from my chest, disturbing Helga’s rest in the process, earning a stink-eye in the process.

Their relationship evolved in a way I hadn’t completely foreseen during our boundless marathon. They mellowed against each other slightly, not to a point that they were any close to be called friend, but their stings got a bit blunter, and their attacks on each other received a more sexual undertone, releasing their repressed feelings in an unexpected way. Though, the competition aspect that they had, in the beginning, had never disappeared, turning it into a weird competition where they ambushed each other with various tricks, sometimes physical, sometimes magical.

A much better alternative to a boring variant of battle.

“We need to move,” Helga murmured dispirited, her exhaustion sapping her desire for the mission. I slapped her ass, which I used to cast a healing spell to remove exhaustion, jerking her awake better than any external stimulant. Then, I turned to Cornelia, who was looking equally exhausted, but this time, I chose a different way to awaken her.

I slipped inside her, her tunnel already slippery due to a mixture of her wetness and my many releases, to a point of feeling bloated. If it wasn’t for the generous amount of healing spells I had used, all of us would have been scrubbed raw, and even walking would have been

exhausting.

“We need to get ready for the mission,” she gasped, but that didn’t prevent her from pushing her ass backward to achieve deeper penetration.

“I know, but wouldn’t you like to have another level before you moved,” I said, reminding her that she needed less than a thousand experience points to level up.

“I would like that,” Cornelia gasped, her arousal peeking up immediately at the reminder. After all, while a level up wouldn’t bring up immediate benefits since she was yet to complete the skill development from her earlier spells, but it didn’t matter when she was about to step into level twenty, which was widely accepted as the mark of a true elite. It was especially important for Cornelia, who had been being plagued by the fears of being unable to level up until very recently.

Not to mention, any boost to hit points or mana was welcome.

“Then, shut up and shake your ass,” I ordered, followed by a playful spank. Meanwhile, Helga giggled before stealing a kiss, elated with the payback she had been able to extract from Cornelia. Cornelia didn’t just surrender, and gave as good as it got, however, it was a very positive development from Helga’s perspective, as their earlier interactions had been just Cornelia lashing out while Helga suffered helplessly for scraps discarded for Cornelia.

“Would you mind helping me with the shower?” Helga asked.

“Sure,” I said and cast a simple water elemental spell, which pulled a thick line of water from the bathroom, cleaning Helga up in less than ten seconds, even leaving her dry. I would have liked to clean her slowly, using nothing but my hands —or maybe some other parts of my body as well if we had enough time to get dirty, and clean again— but unfortunately, the mission was about to start. Considering the potential underlying risks, including a potential spy in the midst of the group or disguised as another customer of the inn, it was for the best if they weren’t late to the meeting, avoiding attention.

While Helga watched, I was pumping inside Cornelia furiously, not bothering to hold myself back during a quickie, blasting Cornelia with my hot seed and my mana at the same time, finally allowing her to step into the vaunted level twenty.

[-1484 Mana]

[Achievement: Superior Support: Help two companions to level up three times each in one day,

to protect yourself from the things to come. +2 to All Stats +3861 Experience]

“You can take a shower as well,” I said to Cornelia even as I slapped her ass, pushing her out of the bed even as I summoned another blob of water to help her shower quickly. “You girls can dress and leave, I’ll follow you from a distance,” I said.

While they burst into a flurry of activities, I turned my attention to the latest notification. Receiving another boost was always nice, but for two reasons, that achievement felt different. The first part was the amount of experience it had granted. It was the first achievement that had granted such a broken level of experience, instead of the nice, rounded numbers I had been receiving repeatedly.

That was suspicious enough, but even the text itself was different, flickering weakly like a torch that was about to be extinguished. I barely paid attention as the girls finished dressing. But just as they were about to leave, I remembered the bracelets I had created for them. “Wait a moment,” I called as I pulled the bracelets, and quickly slid them to their wrists, followed by two kisses while they blushed.

Their blush was understandable, despite everything we had done together, and the amazing bonuses they had received as a result, it was the first proper gift I was giving them. “Thanks,” they murmured simultaneously, with matching shy expressions.

“Nothing is too much for my girls,” I said, distracting myself from the irregularity of the latest achievement. “I have crafted them myself, and they are also woven with several protection charms that are effective against necromancers, both to keep you hidden and defend you against death bolts,” I added, their eyes widening as a result. Understandable, as it was a rather innovative product that reflected my amazing skills in smithing, Biomancy, and general magical aptitude. Since Oeyne couldn’t replicate it, I doubted there were many blacksmiths in the Empire that could actually do so.

The girls looked like they were ready to reward me properly for my gift, but unfortunately, they needed to go for their mission. After one last searing kiss, they left the room with a cute blush on their faces.

I stayed back, and turned my attention to the notification of the latest achievement, examining the shape of the text. Surprisingly, it flickered off, and then appeared again.

Another irregularity that had never happened before.

[Achievement: Superior Support: Help two companions to level up three times each in one day,

to protect yourself from the things to come. +2 to All Stats +4193 Experience]

However, I didn't receive a double bonus, my experience just increasing by about three hundred points. Then, I felt a sudden emptiness, similar, but not quite the same with the sensation of spending the full amount of my mana. Then, another writing appeared on my sight.

[Warning! Divine Spark is depleted. Connect with more Divine Sparks to continue supporting the System of ———]

"Fuck," I murmured as I turned my full attention inward, examining my soul space desperately. The notification was scary, especially since it wasn't exactly clear on what the System lacking in energy meant. For a moment, I was scared that I would start losing my power. I used my Tantric skill to carefully examine my own soul space, to see whether my power was fading, but failed to find any evidence for that.

Unfortunately, it wasn't sufficient evidence. I could only hope that my abilities wouldn't suddenly start to fail. Still, I sighed, losing some of the tension. Lack of an immediate depletion was definitely better than nothing. Maybe nothing would happen to my acquired abilities, and even if something had happened, at least I would have time to resolve the issue. If the worst happened, I could always go and have a talk with the headmistress, who might have a better idea about what was happening, owing to her great age and mysterious connections.

I doubted that I could handle losing everything I had gained, not after already experiencing the clarity of the power. Compared to that, temporarily —or even permanently— joining her camp was a much better option.

Luckily, it didn't seem like a necessary thing to happen, because my perks continued to maintain their activity without any apparent loss of power. I raised my hand and cast a simple water spell, before flaring it in a complicated pattern that stretched my control abilities to the limit, clearing that at least my elemental abilities were intact. Then, I repeated the same with a fire spell, checking the performance of the temporary skill granted through my connection with Cornelia, and it also worked like it was supposed to.

Then, I moved onto my other skill, rapidly testing them, from other magical skills to melee, even testing crafting just in case. Luckily, they seemed to work without a problem as well. Now, the only problem was whether it was a comprehensive issue that prevented me from gaining strength from all sources, or whether I could continue to gain experience directly and through ordinary achievements.

Still, there was a silver lining in my challenge. Since other people in the inn wasn't going crazy with the sudden loss of their power, it was clearly something unique to me, but the broken text of the notification was clear that my System was depleted of its unique energy source, strongly suggesting that my System was actually independent of the one that other people accessed. Its mysterious blocked name only confirmed it further.

In a way, it wasn't surprising. The other people received experience through killing monsters, and absorbing a sliver of their potential in the process. However, I didn't have any such source, and while sex-related activities triggered the development, I didn't actually drain any power from the girls I was together with, or, at least, I didn't do that in a noticeable way.

On the contrary, I could easily strengthen them with my mana. Or at least, I hoped so, because if using mana to enhance them was tapping into the same source with the experience, it would be a nasty surprise. The timing of the power depletion was suspicious, and whether it was the case needed to be confirmed through the experimentation. Hopefully, it wouldn't be the case, not just because it would turn out to be a dangerous unforced mistake I had committed, but also it would significantly affect my future plans, forcing me to keep my supporting cast of ladies much smaller.

I certainly hoped that wasn't the case.

"Such a nasty timing," I murmured as I thought about the incoming undead attack. I had been planning to gain a couple of more spells by visiting Titania once more before the ultimate siege, but it doesn't seem to be possible anymore. I sighed, and left the room through the window after a quick shower.

"At least I already have a clue on how to fix it," I murmured, glad to have that notification. I didn't know what a Divine Spark was, let alone where I could find them, or actually use them to enhance my power. Still, it was a clue in the right direction, and gave me an angle to research.

More importantly, it proved that there was a potential solution in the first place. I just needed to add another thing to my growing list of mysteries.

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 5121 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [91/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 20/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter Ninety-Four

When I stepped out of the inn, there was a flurry of activity going on in the city, preparing for the night. The civilians were moving quickly toward the city center —the richer they are, closer to the center— while many armored people started to move their posts for the night. The night was dangerous, as not only it was much easier for the creatures to ambush people, but also their heightened activity level represented more danger.

Silver Spires didn't have a similar burst of activity during the evening because of two reasons. First, the protective wards were much stronger, blunting the risk of a monster breakthrough significantly, and more importantly, the hordes of students were more than enough to handle any sudden breakthrough that might happen, and anything that couldn't be handled by the ordinary guards or the students would be detected before they could even reach the walls.

The only thing that the school was really vulnerable to was assassinations, evidenced by the ease I displayed as I repeatedly sneaked in and out without even a guard being aware. Not surprisingly, the city walls were even easier to slip through even when they tripled the number of the guards holding vigil.

I left the city limits to follow the party of the girls, but only a sliver of my attention was on them. How could I maintain my focus, when the notification I had received about the system being depleted of its power threw most of my future plans into a chaotic storm. I didn't know whether my trick to hasten the leveling of the girls would even work —or indeed responsible for the sudden depletion in the first place— or even my Companion Acquisition process would continue.

The only silver lining was the fact that there was no visible drop in my actual abilities, both in terms of Stats and Skills.

Still, even as I started thinking about the best sources to start my research for divine spark, I couldn't help but snort in amusement. "Such arrogance," I murmured. A month ago, just gaining a level was an incomprehensible achievement that seemed like a miracle, and now, I was unsatisfied by my Level thirty status, a cap that many would be willing to risk their life to have, not to mention the decades they needed to spend and the support they needed to actually reach that point.

And it wasn't even my actual cap, but a temporary stop.

Greed was addictive, I realized with a self-depreciative snort.

However, as the cover of the night darkened, I abandoned my introspection about the perils of powers or the ways to reverse my status, and instead focused on my senses. Yes, I trusted the abilities of Helga and Cornelia to stay safe before I could catch up with them, but it was better to be safe than sorry as they walked toward an ambush.

As a fringe benefit, I finally had the chance to see Iomene in action. During their day travel, the students had handled the monster appearances while she stayed in the back. During the night, however, she took the lead, showing her worthiness as a ranger. She had an ornate longbow as her main weapon, using it with an ease that suggested either an impressively high level, or a hyper-focus on her weapon skill. For some reason, I was inclined to think the latter was the case. If she had other abilities to match her bow skills, she wouldn't be marked as an easy target, no matter her lack of political support.

Of course, just because she was hyper-focused on her weapon skill didn't mean she was useless. The ease she was showing as she picked the targets hundreds of yards away easily, followed by a pinpoint accuracy arrow, suggested both a keen eye and significant experience. The cold yet clear orders she conveyed, allowing the group to move efficiently without losing strength or time also suggested a long leadership expert, though that was less surprising. Her abilities might be barely enough to make her an ordinary faculty member in Silver Spires would have made her one of the leading figures in most cities.

As they continued to move deeper into the wilderness, I was slowly reducing the distance between us, partially because the darkness provided a convenient cover for my presence —and any nearby monster attacking them first before they even noticed me— and partially because I was getting a better understanding of Iomene's observational capabilities and her perception Stat, allowing me to better measure the distance.

From a closer distance, I finally had a decent view of Iomene. The first thing that popped out about her was her hair, a shiny silver cover that shone brightly under the moonlight even when she tried to use her hood to cover it to avoid notice. The color was simply too noticeable to actually keep covered. She wasn't tall enough to be actually classified as such, and had more of a lithe build both in terms of her chest and her hips.

Her face, however, strikingly beautiful despite the sharp angles, reminding me of the myths about fey folk, especially with her glimmering eyes that shared her hair color, especially under the moonlight. No wonder the rest of the faculty didn't accept her despite her capabilities. However, despite her beauty, her clothing was extremely conservative, consisting of brown featureless leather armor and pants that hid her body perfectly.

The only exception to her drab dresses was her longbow, made from a tree I was unable to recognize, ornate enough to make me assume it was a decorative piece if I hadn't watched her take down many low-class monsters with a single hit, delivering her arrows directly into the weakest spot. I suspected that it was a magical item, but it was hard to be sure from a distance in the absence of a direct effect.

As they got closer to the mission area—a small, concealed valley, perfect for an ambush—I started to feel a subtle sense of danger, and prepared myself to act. Then, Iomene gestured her group to stop, showing that I wasn't the only one that was feeling tense. She stilled for a moment, looking at the distant valley, about half a mile away, for almost a minute. "Prepare a camp," she ordered, pointing at a nearby rocky area.

"Do we need to, madam," called one of the students in an exhausted tone, no doubt unhappy with the night mission, and wanting to finish it as quickly as possible. Arrogance was a dangerous habit.

"Prepare the camp, that's an order," she repeated calmly as she climbed over a nearby stone, not even bothering to look at the guy that commented, expecting her order to be followed. The guy bristled at being dismissed, his hand tightening around the hilt of his sword, but ultimately, that failed. The other students—except Cornelia and Helga—started cursing under their breaths even as they set up a perimeter quickly.

Iomene just ignored them.

"Should we set up magical defenses?" Cornelia asked, whose expression was much more serious.

That earned Iomene's attention, her silver eyes momentarily shifting toward Cornelia. Cornelia took her gaze without flickering, her calm arrogance different than the confidence of an ordinary student. Ordinarily, I would have blamed it for Cornelia's noble ego, but there was no frivolity in Cornelia's tone. Unlike the rest of the team, she was fully aware of the danger they were facing, maybe even more acutely than Iomene herself, who only had a subtle sensation that alerted her about the danger.

Surprisingly, Iomene was quick to pick on that as well. "Set up the strongest defense you can set up without compromising your combat capability," she ordered. "I have a bad feeling."

"Paranoid bitch," murmured the same male student that first challenged her decision, loud enough to be heard by everyone.

Iomene ignored the insult easily, but Cornelia was not as calm. "Would you mind repeating it?" Cornelia asked, her tone intimidating enough even without the ball of flame that started crackling in her hand threateningly.

The boy gasped in shock, stammering in shock, but before Cornelia could act, Iomene interjected. "Enough," she called coldly, no doubt losing some of the respect she had generated toward Cornelia. I just shook my head. She still needed to learn to keep a better handle on her fury. "Just prepare the defenses as soon as possible. You have twenty minutes," she said as she jumped down the rock, and gestured to the angry boy, as well as two of the rangers. "You two, follow me, we're going to scout," she added.

Despite their grumbling, the boys followed Iomene helplessly. They weren't like Cornelia, with the strength to challenge the faculty members, so, rejecting a direct order was not an option, especially with a lack of sizable support.

They left, which left only four people in the camp. Helga and Cornelia, as well as a random healer girl and another male warrior. "You two, stay on guard," Cornelia ordered sharply even as she moved toward the center of the camp, pulling a large emerald from her pocket, already carved with several runes to support many types of wards. Since Iomene was gone, it was trivial for me to sneak into the camp, so I got closer.

Helga walked toward her even as Cornelia was about to cast a spell. "We can't use that for the center," Helga said even as her fingers closed on the diamond.

"What do you know," Cornelia snarled angrily, but considering anyone else daring to do the same would have threatened a fireball on the face, I could confidently say that their relationship was developing nicely, if a bit slow for my tastes.

Helga's development, on the other hand, was much more noticeable. "Hey, if I need a brute to burn a forest down, I would trust you to handle it, but wards are my area of expertise," she countered with smug expressions. "Or, can you actually set up a ward that is balanced between five nexus in less than ten minutes?"

Cornelia didn't answer, but the tightening of her hand was sufficient as an answer. Her arcana proficiency was less than useful to achieve such a monumental task. "Doesn't matter how fancy your initial structure, it's meaningless if you can't tie the appropriate destructive spells into the matrix, unless you count grazing a monster as a win," she countered.

As much as I would have liked to watch their low-key argument, we were under a potential

ambush, and I wanted to secure the camp as quickly as possible. “How about you girls work together?” I interjected, enjoying the way they flinched at my sudden appearance.

“Caesar,” they once again whispered simultaneously, angry at my sudden appearance.

“Hey, I told you that I’ll be following,” I said.

“Shouldn’t you follow instructor Iomene,” Helga asked. “She’s the one that’s facing a likely danger.”

“Maybe,” I said, as I wasn’t entirely sure of that, mostly because I was yet to discover how the ambush was going to be launched. “But I do know that I would risk her life than you two,” I added.

“You jerk,” Cornelia murmured, but she clearly appreciated the weird compliment. “So, what should we do?” she asked, her earlier dominance immediately disappearing with my appearance.

“You two are going to set up a defensive ward together,” I said, enjoying the simultaneous flash of distaste that appeared on their face. “That’s nonnegotiable,” I added, not giving them a chance to reject the suggestion. As much as I would have liked to watch them bicker, we were facing a dangerous situation, and I wanted to get a handle on it as quickly as possible. “Understood?” I added sharply when I noticed their petulant expression.

“Okay,” they murmured simultaneously, pouting cutely.

“Excellent,” I said, smiling even as I took a step forward, and kissed Helga’s lips, using that to transfer some mana, while I observed my soul space to check if there was any reaction.

[-156 Mana]

After a searing kiss, I pulled back while Helga blushed, confident that there was nothing wrong with the mana transfer. Interestingly, however, unlike many other times, I didn’t receive no experience notification due to the level difference, something that I had been solidly ignoring for a long while.

Then, I looked at Cornelia, who was looking haughty, doing her best to be prideful and not ask for a kiss, but failing spectacularly. “Come here,” I said with a chuckle. She snorted in anger, but that didn’t prevent her from smashing her lips against me, her tongue similarly enthusiastic. This time, I transferred mana not to help recover her mana, but to give her some more

experience.

[-192 Mana]

Once again, I didn't detect anything extraordinary, even when Cornelia received her experience boost normally. "Now, go and create the ward," I said as I slapped her ass. "And don't worry about spending all of your mana, as I can always help you recover," I reminded the girls, happy with the lack of performance degradation in my support capabilities.

The girls left for the edges of the camp, immediately starting to argue about the warding scheme loudly, while I started creating a secondary hidden ward in the center of the camp, one that would keep me hidden from even the strongest observer as a side benefit. I wanted to stay in the warded area just in case.

I started constructing a complicated, layered ward that would stay hidden until I triggered, many weaves of mana wrapping around each other, something that was only possible through my ridiculous Manipulation stat, allowing unprecedented mana flexibility. I spent my mana excessively for the next hour, spending quite a bit of mana than what was necessary for a temporary camp, my attention on the state of my soul space. It was another experiment. I wanted to see whether excessive mana spending would affect my leveling status.

[-8315 Mana]

[+4 Arcana]

Luckily, during the construction phase, I hadn't noticed any adverse effect, either on my magic potential or my regeneration speed, suggesting that the only change due to the depleted Divine Spark was the lack of further leveling —though, even that was an assumption that I needed to experiment further. The fact that my Arcana skill continued to develop was just another interesting bonus.

Only after constructing the ward, I turned my attention outside the wards, only to see Cornelia and Helga still arguing about certain details of the wards. "No, that wouldn't work with the other spells," Cornelia cut in. "We're wasting mana."

"I don't think so, you're forgetting the resonance effect," Helga countered. They were too focused on the glowing structure in front of them to notice my closing presence. While they continued to argue, I looked over from their shoulder, seeing the impressive ward they had created, both more elegant and more dangerous than anything they could have created alone.

“Looks impressive,” I said even as I leaned down and captured Cornelia’s lips in a searing kiss, refreshing her mana through a searing kiss, before I pulled and repeated it for Helga.

[-1846 Mana]

“So, it seems that we’re ready for any kind of activity,” I said even as I watched their blushing faces. “So, who is going to stay on guard and who is going to accompany me in the tent?” I asked.

“Maybe we’re going in and leave you on guard,” Helga tried to counter, trying to beat her shame in a different way. Cornelia smirked as well, like they had trapped me perfectly.

Unfortunately for her, I was more than happy to turn her bluff into reality. “Oh, really, go ahead if you can handle,” I said, smirking in such a patronizing manner that they had no choice but to follow their threat and walk into their tent.

I just smirked, curious which was stronger, the bad blood between them, or desire to resist my mocking. Unfortunately, the sound of an explosion reached my ear just as they were about to step into the tent.

“It seems that your little show is delayed, girls,” I sighed in disappointment even as I moved to a hidden observation spot, determined to stay until I could catch the reason for it.

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Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 5121 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 20/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter Ninety-Five

The girls dashed toward the outskirts of the camp after they fully activated the ward, covering the camp with a flickering dome of crimson energy, ready to destroy any creature that slams to it. Meanwhile, I climbed on top of a large rock, shadows around me erasing me from the view with the help of a nifty little trick I had embedded into the secondary wards, hiding me from the monsters and people alike.

And it immediately proved to be a good choice, because the first thing I had noticed was a huge horde of monster —several times bigger than the one I had taken down during our nighttime adventure with Cornelia— chasing Iomene and the rest of the students.

“Damn, she’s good,” I said even as I watched Iomene dashing fast enough to keep up with the other two students —one of the ranger students was absent— who had been using their fastest speed, their faces red with exertion, their weapons and backpacks abandoned. Iomene, on the other hand, not only still had her backpack and her weapons, but also she had her bow in hand, releasing an arrow smoothly whenever a flying monster pulled off from the group, either directly killing it if the monster was weak, or targeting a soft spot like an eye or a wing tendon to slow them down if it was a stronger monster.

She was impressive when she stretched her abilities to the limit. Also, I was finally seeing the magical features of her bow being displayed after she run out of arrows, sending glowing bolts of energy rather than physical arrows. “Interesting,” I murmured as I tried to decipher the magical nature of the arrows, but failed to do so. The distance was a factor in that of course, but still, I could have detected it easily if it was some kind of elemental or arcana trick.

“Interesting,” I murmured, my curiosity awakening. Unfortunately, as the monster horde closed in, I didn’t have time to pay attention to her, no matter how interesting her weapon was, my attention switching to the nature of the horde.

The horde was several times bigger than the one I had taken down before, the dust cloud they create threatening to drown the horizon. It was clear that, unlike the previous horde I had taken down, it had a chance to grow. Still, the sheer numbers weren’t exactly a threat to a well-fortified town.

Unfortunately, the real problem was the composition of the horde. As usual, most of the monsters were the low-class ones, but still, it had enough creatures above Class Ten — hundreds, as far as I could detect with a glance. The defensive structures of the town could probably hold them for a couple of days, but unless the high-level monsters were taken down

quickly, they would eventually result in a breach.

It was a smart approach, I realized as I saw the presence of the horde. After our breach had told them their attack was no surprise anymore —while simultaneously destroying a majority of their cannon fodder in the process— apparently, they decided to follow an extended campaign. And monster hordes were the perfect weapon to be used for that, especially since they just triggered and directed the monsters, rather than actually commanding them.

I suspected that their initial aim was to use them as a blunt instrument against the defenses of the school before following up with their undead army, creating layered chaos, but honestly, their current strategy was better, forcing the school to disperse their forces to defend their supporting towns, exposing the high-level combatants in the process.

It was a sure bet that this horde wasn't their only weapon.

“Such an interesting method of warfare,” I said even as I frowned. Humanity was already struggling to survive against the ever-growing threat of monsters, a careful reading of the history displaying the negative trend swallowing more and more cities, pushing humanity back despite all the advantages given by the System. And now, a bunch of nobles decided that the loss of even more cities was just an incidental loss in their struggle for power, potentially destroying the most important school for raising combatants in the process.

With a mentality like that, it was shocking that humanity had managed to survive until now.

“It seems that I need to take a more active role,” I murmured. I didn't know just how many deadly threats we were facing, but I wanted to keep things under control. With that decision made, I started drawing a long string of runes around the ward structure, turning it into a bomb, even as I watched as Iomene and the students stepped into the protective area of Cornelia's ward.

Only for the monsters to smash against the wards with their full strength, threatening to overwhelm them immediately.

Luckily, the assault triggered several fire spells at once, taking down a nice chunk of the horde, gifting Cornelia with a considerable amount of experience —particularly valuable since as the level difference between us dwindled, I was about to lose my ability to boost her level directly. Still, rather than focusing on the convenience of helping her farm experience, I turned my attention toward the single-minded focus the monsters were displaying to chase Iomene, something outside of their usual crazed behavior.

Just like the previous horde I had watched.

Very suspicious, I thought even as I expanded my senses, and caught the subtle aura of another magic gem, this time an air-natured one. It was on the bag of the surviving ranger, which I suspected that he was aware of. Now that I was examining him carefully, I could see that he was calmer than necessary, and moreover, I was able to recognize the signs of acting. He wasn't as exhausted as he was showing.

It seemed that I misread the group composition. They weren't just a bunch of random students, they were a bunch of random students with a spy mixed in.

That particular mystery didn't take long to solve. "Anton, where is my fiancée," asked the healer girl panickedly even as the ranger collapsed on the ground, making a show of his exhaustion. However, as he did so, he surreptitiously slipped a dagger into his hand, one with a subtle magical aura that I only noticed because I was focusing on it. And since it was subtle enough to challenge my detection capabilities, it was clearly a very dangerous weapon.

"I don't know," answered the ranger, who named Anton. "We split for scouting before the horde appeared..." he started explaining, his tone signaling that he was probably dead. Personally, I doubted it, not the ultimate fate, but the exact way he had died. If the bloody edge of his dagger was any indicator, our little spy seemingly used the opportunity to slip the dagger between his friend's shoulder blades before baiting the horde. "But don't worry, I'll protect you," he added even as he grabbed the hand of the girl, signaling a rather interesting motivation about killing the other ranger.

I shook my head in amusement, as I watched Anton's responses, the illogical pattern of attack started to make more sense. It would have been much more logical to trigger the horde when they were closer to the camp, giving Anton the excuse to be the only survivor while threatening the city at the same time, but our spy turned out to be too ambitious. Not only he wanted to get rid of his rival, but also he wanted to do it in a way that would ensure his hold on the healer girl.

I would have called him an idiot, but frankly, I was the last person to blame anyone for trying to seduce someone during mortal danger. The only thing I could blame the idiot was the methods he had used, not to mention his misfortune of trying to employ the trick against someone I care about.

"Cease talking, and focus on recovering," Iomene ordered even as she sent arrow after arrow outside the wards, while the monsters smashed against the wards repeatedly. "We're going to

move in a minute,” she added before turning to Cornelia. “Can the wards hold on?”

“It can hold for five minutes, unless a stronger monster attacks,” Cornelia answered, her face contorted as she supported the wards actively, her mana draining at a steady pace. “We’re still at the outskirts of the horde, and the attacks are easy to push back, but soon, we’ll get enveloped. I don’t think we’ll last long after that.”

“Good, can you keep it going for a minute after we left the camp before triggering an explosion.”

Cornelia took a second to answer, and only because I was using a simple arcana spell to whisper her directions. “Yes, that’s doable,” Cornelia said. “But it’ll take three minutes for me to set it up.”

Helga was startled at the response, as due to the nature of their ward, it was not a viable solution. Luckily, she was smart enough to keep her mouth shut. Unfortunately, her acting abilities weren’t good enough to hide it from Anton, who started to watch Helga suspiciously, especially after Helga and Cornelia shared an extended glance.

I needed to train them about how to hide their attitude at the first opportunity.

Anton stood up, his bow in hand as he walked toward the defensive perimeter, but my attention was on his left hand, holding the concealed dagger, much more professionally than I would have expected him to be capable of. Apparently, Helga wasn’t the only commoner hiding her skills. I had no doubt that as a commoner, he had struggled a lot among the noble students, insulted for his efforts as he did his best to rise to the top, but unfortunately, he decided to save himself by trying to sentence thousands of people to death, which lost any possible mercy he would have gained.

“Rest as much as you can, we’re going to move in two minutes, Iomene warned Anton.

“No, I have rested enough,” he said as he started shooting outside the wards, aiming for the flying creatures. Iomene’s attention was on the horde that was pushing against the wards, doing her best to take down the stronger creatures before they could breach the wards. His voice was sharp and heroic, posing perfectly for the healer girl. However, he also positioned himself perfectly between Helga and the rest of the group, ready to act at a moment’s notice.

I was impressed with his reaction. Too bad that I had no intention to let him live. The only reason he was still alive was that I was hoping to find a way to take him prisoner alive to interrogate, though, if he dared to act against Helga before the wards were breached, I could

easily change my mind. He was stronger than his role as a student required, but he wasn't strong enough for his survival to be a certainty under the circumstances.

It was an important detail, because that meant that he had been deemed an acceptable sacrifice in the ploy if things went wrong, meaning he wouldn't have access to top-secret information. Meaning, between an injured Helga and a dead Anton, the choice was clear. I watched him carefully, ready to cast a shield the moment he acted. Luckily, before he could do so, Cornelia acted.

"I'm going to create a gate at the other side of the camp in fifteen seconds," Cornelia shouted. "Let's move."

"Move," Iomene ordered, but the students were already moving before she could give the order, the imminent threat conveyed by a crazed horde of a monster destroying the last scraps of discipline they possessed. That didn't apply to my delicious companions, of course. Not only it wasn't the first horde they were facing —another monster horde in Cornelia's case, and an undead horde in Helga's— but also they were aware that with me present, they weren't actually in any danger.

Unlike the girls, Iomene wasn't aware of the insurance. Still, she bravely stayed at the rear guard, her bow elegantly singing whenever a dangerous creature pushed against the protective walls of the ward threateningly to delay breaking. She still moved with the group, but from a distance, giving the students a chance to get away.

Hence, she missed when Anton stumbled, falling behind the group as well. I easily recognized the fake stumble, one that was done to create an excuse for the small dagger that left his hand, flying toward Helga. I reacted immediately, deflecting the dagger with a simple shield, but added an illusion to make it look like a successful hit. I even asked Helga to stumble as well. She didn't do a good job of it, but the spy was too confident, turning his attention to Cornelia, another dagger in hand. I cast another spell.

[-416 Mana]

That was the moment when an air elemental appeared inside the wards, and before the group could even react, pounced at Anton. Cornelia cast a fire spell, but she recognized my favorite mount, so she intentionally used a flashy spell with no actual substance, which functioned more as a visual screen than an attack. When the flames were down, Anton was grabbed by the elemental, being dragged away.

“No!” cried the healer girl, but apparently, there was a reason for Anton to make a show of his achievements, because it was all she reacted. She didn’t even bother to stop, just continued to run, along with the rest of the group.

Iomene sent a couple of energy arrows at the air elemental, which damaged the construct more than I had expected, slowing its flight significantly. Apparently, I had significantly underestimated the power of her bow. Though, her continued attacks were not without cost, and seeing her spells were not effective, she turned her attention to the more immediate threat, letting one of her students go so that she could actually protect the others, making me admire her even more. I never faced such a decision myself, but without a doubt, it was a hard decision.

I made my construct to take a detour over the concealed spot, making it drop the backpack — more importantly, the air gem it contained— before it continued its escape, carrying the spy along. With the security of the girls ensured and the spy secured, all I needed to do was to keep the horde from following them, before detonating my trap once they were sufficiently away.

“Move, it’s about to explode,” Cornelia cried, quickening Iomene’s escape, who had been alarmed by the fake breach of the air elemental, expecting the wards to fall in a few seconds. I had expected her to notice the ploy, but that expectation only lasted until I looked at her carefully. She was on the edge of exhaustion, about to collapse, but still attacking the strongest monsters she could see.

“I’m going to go back to the school to discuss the latest developments. Go back to the city, and stay away from others,” I asked the girls through another spell, receiving simultaneous nods. Then, in a flight of fancy, I added one last sentence. “Also, make sure Iomene doesn’t die.” That made the girls look back simultaneously toward my location even as they continued to run, their expression having a matching suspicion.

Pity they were too far away to see my smirk, I thought even as I shifted my attention toward the horde that was pushing against the wards. I could have easily destroyed them with a spell, but that would have cost me the opportunity to take the other air gem.

And, more importantly, where was the fun in that...

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Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 20/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter Ninety-Six

As the girls dashed away in the horizon, I faced against the second monster horde of the week, preparing to cut through even as I grabbed a disposable sword, my heartbeat quickening. I was about to delve into the belly of the beast, ready to meet the challenge.

However, it wasn't going to be as easy, because the area-effect spells that I used to handle the previous horde were not available for me. While Iomene and the rest of the group had been dashing away, they weren't far enough to miss a number of explosive fire spells illuminating the night sky. No, I had only one flashy option to use, and that was triggering the wards as an explosive, which would destroy the air gem unless I extract it from the mutated monster.

And even then, I was facing a time constraint, because Iomene and others would be expecting an explosion. Meaning, I had a couple of minutes at most to slip inside the monster horde, slay the mutated monster, and get away to trigger the explosion, getting rid of the rest of the horde in the process. I had to rely on my melee skill to achieve it, I realized even as I squeezed my dagger tightly, preparing to dash forward.

It wasn't greed that motivated me to take the riskiest approach possible —well, not only greed. I wanted to test my melee skill to the limit while also developing some experience in the process. I wanted to test the true limits of my melee skill, which I had been neglecting due to my recent focus on magical abilities. It hadn't been the worst of ideas as I had been discovering a new magical ability every single day, but with my leveling stalling —hopefully only a temporary setback— I needed to make sure I was using every single skill to their utmost limit.

Still, it didn't change the fact that charging toward thousands of monsters, armed with only a knife —albeit a custom-designed magical one— didn't look like a glorious suicide.

Rather than using arcana to sharpen the knife, this time, I decided to use the elemental mana, air in particular, using it to extend the cutting edge of my daggers. Running at full speed, I burst into a crowded mess of low-class monsters, only for them to turn into a neatly-sliced meat pile before they could react.

I was about to rush forward when I felt a shift in the wind, my reflexes allowing me to dodge the attack of a diving dire falcon before I could even process its presence. "Not bad," I murmured as I analyzed my own reaction, trying to understand the reason. Yes, I had strong senses, but for some reason, it felt different.

I realized the reason after I dodged a few more assaults in the same manner. It was the airflow.

To use air elemental on my daggers, I was constantly circulating the same type of mana in my body, and it seemed that it was granting me an instinctual connection with the airflow around me. It was such a nice surprise, as on the books I had never read something close to that, though, on second thought, it shouldn't be a surprise. After all, how many elemental mages there were strong enough to connect with their surroundings in such an instinctual manner, yet had the physical capabilities and reflexes to leverage such a minuscule input.

“Come on, you bastards,” I murmured even as I dashed forward with a renewed enthusiasm, each slash taking the life of multiple creatures, leaving a deadly trail of blood behind. I received a wound here and there, but time was more important than staying untouched, and luckily, I had HP to spare.

[-196 HP]

I could feel the small nuggets of energy splitting from their presence, floating to nothingness as they failed to find purchase in my connection. What a waste, I thought before a wild thought entered my mind. I had a permanent connection with the girls, and maybe, I could use the connection as a conduit to transfer experience. It wasn't particularly critical for Helga, as I could still use my own mana to boost her further, but Cornelia was about to hit the transfer limit.

I pulled my mana, once again guiding these nuggets of energy like I had done earlier, while hunting with Cornelia, but this time, pushing them through our connection rather than shoving them in her soul space.

“Perfect,” I murmured as I saw Cornelia's experience counter stirring as I pushed the transfer. It wasn't a perfect transfer. I could feel the nuggets losing a significant amount of power as they traveled through the connection, but it was significantly better than wasting all those kills — particularly so since I lacked the time to properly harvest anything.

With that done, I turned my attention toward the horde, dashing forward. However, as I moved deeper, facing against stronger monsters, I was glad that a monster horde was nothing more than a mindless crowd held together by hunger and madness, rather than a coherent strategic unit, because even with all my abilities, I wouldn't have liked my chances if they were trying to anticipate my moves or surround me like the wild monsters usually did, their animal cunning enough to create a very dangerous threat.

I cut and sliced, driving toward the center of the horde, falling into a weird monotony as I did so in seconds, following the instincts provided by my melee skill. My body moved almost

automatically at first, while I carefully observed the reactions of my own body, trying to learn from my own movements no matter how paradoxical and weird it felt.

As I moved forward, the sound of my own slices, the sprays of blood, cries of monsters all mixed together, creating a confusing blanket that prevented me from using sound as a source of alert despite my perception. Luckily, I had my new trick with elemental magic to help me cut through the mess.

I moved forward, like the calm center of the storm, displaying perfect control in a radius of two yards centered around me, killing any monster that dared to step in that distance with a calculated slash. With every blow, I could feel my movements getting noticeably smoother, something that was only possible through a combination of my agility and intelligence, creating a dangerous learning curve. In a minute filled with murder and danger, I could feel learning enough to surpass months of effort from the others.

The deeper I pushed, the faster I started to move, turning into a scythe of death despite having the form of a simple dagger. Identifying the location of the leading monster wasn't too difficult, as the closer to the center, the more rabid the monsters become.

Even with my increasing skills, getting closer was not without its cost. I had to buy every step with gallons of blood, mostly belonging to monsters, though occasionally my own joined the crimson carpet that covered the ground. It had been barely a minute, but I was starting to feel like I had been fighting for an hour.

[-329 HP]

Then I finally found what I had been looking for in the form of a giant Elephant, one that looked remarkably like a normal one supposed to look like, though the way ground cracked under its feet with every stomp suggested otherwise —or its bloodshot eyes shimmering with power, but for reason, mini earthquakes were slightly more attention-grabbing.

I had prepared to rush toward it, only to barely realize my mistake before it was too late. The elephant rushed toward me with a surprising speed, reminding me that an air gem had been used to drive it crazy, and the constant flow of natured elemental mana had managed to transform its nature correctly.

I managed to throw myself away as it charged without touching me, but even the wind it created was enough to throw me away, not unlike a hurricane, killing a huge chunk of its own monsters in the process. Still, despite the incredible friendly fire it just caused, I had to respect

the one who had selected that elephant as the target creature. Clearly, it was something around class eleven or twelve even before the transformation, and air gem not only increased that power several times, but also its elemental nature had turned the creature's biggest weakness —its speed— into its greatest weapon.

Adding its surprise nature, I wouldn't be surprised if it could break down the walls of the town before a proper response could have been mounted.

A dagger might be the worst weapon to actually challenge such a creature, bulky yet strong at the same time. Meaning, it was the perfect way to push my skills to the limit.

I decided to confront the monster directly, rushing toward it just as it managed to turn, swinging its trunk like a bludgeoning weapon, as quick as a storm. It wasn't the only one that could use the power of the air, however, as I managed to dodge at the last moment, swinging my dagger to cut through the devastating wind it created, protecting me while the attack killed many monsters behind me.

"Too slow, big boy," I said mockingly as I closed in the rest of the distance, and swung my dagger three times before it could attack again, turning its trunk into a useless, bleeding mess. It might be strong for a monster, but it was nothing against me.

The monster might have been maddened, but it maintained enough presence of mind to realize its most versatile weapon had been disabled, and tried to ram me with its tusks. It was just as quick as the previous assault, but this time, I was expecting its crazed rush. I waited until the last moment before jumping backward, using its momentum to cling into its body, and stabbing its head.

A crazed monster's bone strength was near-unbreakable, but the former part of that statement was more relevant when its supposed untouchable was being challenged by a magical dagger with almost forty points of strength behind to support its assault. For all its thickness, neither its skin nor its bones prevented my dagger from slicing them like a hot knife through butter, allowing me to slide my hand and pull the gem.

After that, a point-blank spell delivered inside its skull destroyed its life utterly, leaving the rest of the monsters to roar in confusion.

I used that confusion to create an air elemental and beat a hasty retreat, though received a couple of wounds from confused monsters as I concentrated to create the elemental. Despite my increasing practice, creating such a complicated construct still took several seconds.

[-2142 Mana]

[-132 HP]

triggering the explosion of the wards the moment I was out of the confines. The explosion was spectacular, destroying most of the creatures in one attempt, while I strained to transfer all that experience to Cornelia, with rather spectacular results. Despite the huge loss during transfer, Cornelia still gained a level, and completing most of the transfer for the next one.

[Cornelia - Level 21/25 - 92%]

Pity I didn't have time to get my reward. Even more annoying, I saw in my vision the familiar flickers of the light show that happened just before achievement, but it faded away before it was completed, indicating the lack of power.

"Fuck," I murmured, annoyed by losing the benefits of another achievement. After losing all the riches such a big horde represented, losing the potential benefits of another achievement was rather annoying. I cursed loudly as I turned my attention toward the gem, trying to assess the chaotic spell that they had used to trigger the monster horde, but like before, it dispersed before I could get a decent read of the spell.

Maybe I should try to capture the next one alive, I thought, ignoring the inherent craziness of my thoughts, mad enough for other people to lock me up. But ultimately, the only difference between madness and genius was a success, and I had enough power to attain success under the worst of circumstances.

I sighed as I dismissed that particular track for the moment, and even if I could capture such a specimen live, I lacked a place to keep it.

I directed my mount toward Silver Spires at full speed, to have another strategy talk with my favorite librarian...

And maybe to spend some quality time if the opportunity allowed...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 4912 / 5370 Mana: 4201 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter Ninety-Seven

When I arrived back at the school, I wasn't surprised to meet with utter chaos. After all, as intimidating as they were, just one monster horde was hardly enough to dent the defensive measures of Silver Spires. There was a reason for its reputation as the greatest learning center in a world where everything was determined by combat capability.

But multiple monster hordes, forcing the school to choose between dispersing most of its elite fighting force to destroy them and losing all of its supporting infrastructure, leaving it isolated for a long and costly siege.

I started searching for Titania among the chaos, but a few discreet inquires I had initiated failed to give any useful result. So, I decided to try the same trick I had applied to track Cornelia and Helga. Since Titania's progress was far from completion, getting an accurate sense of her direction was neither as effective nor as effortless, but luckily, it still worked from a close distance. I could easily feel Aviada's and Oeyne's locations.

Unfortunately, neither Titania nor Marianne was in the school. Not really the thing I had been looking for.

Paradoxically, I worried more about Titania than Marianne despite the huge gap in their strength. After all, Marianne was one of the better healers among the students even before the progress she had made thanks to my assistance. So, unless the team she was assigned was filled with complete morons, she would be protected to the best of their abilities as not everyone had my luxury of self-healing.

Titania, on the other hand, had been the target for at least one ambush, which would have been successful if it wasn't for my accidental interruption. And during such an important mobilization, she was too important to be kept hidden completely. While asking a few random soldiers yielded no result, I was operating under the assumption that our enemies had better spying capabilities, meaning, they had the ability to arrange another ambush for her.

I was afraid that, even with forewarning, Titania lacked the personality to avoid a complicated ambush. She was in a habit of preferring direct solutions. I could only hope that without the constant interference from the source of her light magic forcing her to be emotionless and aggressive, she could be more cautious.

However, since I was already at the school, I decided to pay a visit to Aviada first. Even if Titania was going to be targeted, they would only do so after she properly exhausted herself, meaning I

had at least half a day to visit her.

Visiting Aviada was important. She would probably be sent out for a mission as well, and unlike Marianne, she didn't have the implicit protection of being a healer. As a front-line fighter, she was under tremendous risk, and several extra levels would come in handy. And after my interactions with the headmistress and the upcoming danger, revealing my leveling ability to Aviada wasn't as dangerous. At this point, it was inevitable that it would be revealed sooner or later.

As another side benefit, I would be able to test whether the Companion progress was developing further.

I once again walked through the familiar corridors of the fighter section, easily slipping into the female dorm. Aviada was in her room, but she wasn't alone. A familiar face was accompanying her, Carla, the sexy redheaded archer that had become the unwitting voyeur during our first encounter, before she evolved into a shy yet willing voyeur the last time.

Hard to believe it was just a few days ago, with everything that happened in between.

"Good evening, girls," I said with a cheerful tone as I closed the door, barging in without even asking. Since it was Aviada's room, it wasn't rude, not that a little social nicety would have stopped me.

"Caesar," they said immediately, Aviada with deep enthusiasm, but Carla's tone was more shocked, no doubt remembering our last encounter, where I caught her masturbating while watching my private time with Aviada.

"So, how are you going in this fine evening?" I said even as I walked toward the bed, where Aviada was sitting, while Carla occupied a chair next to the bed.

"We're discussing the mission for tomorrow," Aviada answered. "We're tasked to patrol the perimeter tomorrow, and Carla here is the squad head," she added, just a touch

"Because you still think that direct violence is a solution for everything," Carla countered exasperatedly, suggesting it wasn't the first time Aviada had raised that exact topic. Not even close.

"Well, she's not wrong," I said, which made Aviada sent an annoyed glare at me, but Carla didn't have enough time to enjoy her small victory, too distracted by my movements as I pulled off my shirt, earning a strangled gasp rather than a smug acknowledgment.

“What are you doing!” Carla exclaimed.

“Undressing,” I said in a matter-of-fact tone. “Couldn’t your sharp ranger eyes decipher even that?” I said, then smirked. “We know that they can’t detect everything,” I added, referring to the time where I had fucked Aviada in front of her, all the while she was thinking Aviada was simply sitting on my lap, while bragging about the sharpness of her perception.

“That was-” Carla tried to argue as her face took a deep red color to match the hue of her hair, but interrupted by Aviada’s amused laughter.

“He got you there,” Aviada said simply, removing her top as well, revealing her perky breasts. Apparently, she wasn’t wearing anything underneath.

“Hey!” Carla said, her blush achieving the impossible as she watched Aviada’s uncaring nakedness. Though, since they used a communal shower, it was clearly more about the implicit action it was about to enable rather than simple nudity.

“What?” Aviada said even as I removed my pants and underwear on the background, and Carla shut her eyes.

“You’re both getting naked!” Carla answered, shocked that her objection wasn’t seemingly obvious for us.

“So,” Aviada shrugged even as I lay next to her, while she finished removing her clothes. “It isn’t like the first time you’re going to watch us having sex, is it? Or you can only handle watching while hiding in a corner like a coward, like all rangers.”

Aviada’s words were harsh, but from the way she uttered them casually, and Carla’s resulting blush and a lack of anger —except the frustrated, friendly kind— it was clear that it counted as banter to them. I might have attempted to judge them, but after watching Cornelia and Helga trying to one-up each other during a threesome that lasted hours, it wasn’t exactly extreme.

“It’s called patience and tactics, not that I expected a meathead that required her full intelligence to figure out how to swing a big sword to understand it,” Carla shot back, almost automatic, using the familiar grounds of the banter to

“Don’t judge your friend, sweetie,” I said even as I hugged Aviada’s waist. “She’s clearly feeling self-conscious, it’s not something to be mocked. We should understand that,” I said, which earned a quirked eyebrow from Aviada. Then, I grabbed the cover and pulled on us, hiding our bodies from her view. “Here, it’s done,” I said, my smirk widening even further. “You can surely

handle it like this, right?"

"I don't think she can," Aviada jumped in before Carla could answer.

"Of course I can," Carla answered rapidly, her pride overcoming her common sense. "You should be more concerned. Can you focus on our mission while you moan like a slut under his cock!"

"What can I say, he has a nice cock," Aviada countered her, but before she could continue, my fingers found her entrance, caressing aggressively to moisten her entrance. Not that I needed to spend a lot of time doing that. The possibility of having sex in front of her friend was already doing wonders for her.

"So, about the patrol route," Aviada said after a moan escaped her mouth while I lodged my shaft to the inviting embrace of her ass, enjoying the warmth of her plump curves. "What should be the role distribution?"

Carla replied with several names and their strengths and weaknesses, but Aviada wasn't exactly in a point to give her all to listen to those words, occupied by the way my free hand landed on her breasts, teasing her nipples. The occasional moan that burst out informed Carla that her explanation wasn't being listened to.

Not that Carla seemed torn about that particular fact. Even as she explained, her gaze was sliding repeatedly toward the blanket on the bed, or more accurately, the movement that gave a general idea of what was going on under it. She continued speaking, but it was more droning while her earlier shock slowly melted into desire and arousal. Her legs, subtly rubbing against each other, was another sign of her growing arousal.

"It sounds-" Aviada said once Carla finished her explanation, though the latter half of her explanation was mostly gibberish. I chose that exact moment to slip inside her, which extracted a delicious moan off her lips. "- nice," she completed after her moan subsided.

"Really?" Carla said, amused at Aviada's attempt to act like everything was normal, though that didn't subtract anything from her growing arousal, her beautiful green eyes shining with desire. "I'm not sure about the third rotation, what's your opinion on that?" she asked.

"Third rotation?" Aviada flinched, though, it might be more about me pushing my shaft even deeper into her wetness rather than the question. Still, that didn't change the fact that she had clearly missed most of Carla's explanation. "I agree with your plan completely."

“Really?” Carla said even as she rotated on her chair to display her side to us, which was a subtle adjustment to hide the way her legs rubbing furiously, though it wasn’t successful as she was clearly thinking. “So, you don’t have any problem taking the rear guard both for second and third rotation,” Carla said smugly, saddling Aviada with the most annoying job during such a patrol, with lots of risks, but little actual excitement, responsible for defending the group for unexpected ambushes while they dealt with monsters.

It wasn’t the worst job in general, but with her personality, it was clearly the worst job for Aviada, forcing her to stay alert for the duration of the duty, but depriving her of the excitement of combat. For a combat junkie like Aviada, it was an excellent punishment. And the best part was that all Aviada needed to get out of it was to tell her she had made a mistake, but her pride would never allow her to do so.

That small jab had elevated Carla’s position in my mind a couple of ranks. She might be quite shy and a little perverted, but even in her distracted state, she was cunning enough to squeeze a little punishment despite her passive position.

Of course, her little victory might satisfy her mentally, but it was far from satisfying her physically as she watched Aviada’s face contorting with pleasure as I pushed deeper and deeper, the blanket moving violently. She could have beaten a hasty retreat, or accept her defeat with grace, but she did neither, her womanly pride blocking both paths. Instead, she decided to push back the only way she could, by messing with Aviada.

“Another question,” she said, trying to suppress the huskiness of her tone, before asking Aviada a detailed one about the team logistic, one that was actually forcing her to talk, biting her lips toward the end of the question.

“I’m not - SURE!” Aviada tried to answer, only to explode into a cry as I sank my fingers to her plump breast, enjoying the treatment. I listened to the rest of the explanation amusedly, using that to suppress a particular frustration. There was no progress in her Companion tracker, meaning, it was being sourced from the same source, cutting the second most important source of growth for me as well.

It meant that the power I had been giving to the girls had been coming at the expense of my own personal growth, with an unknown exchange ratio, or whether the different stages of the Companion process had different costs. I almost hoped that it did, because otherwise, I had wasted quite a bit of potential by spreading it half-completed across several targets rather than focusing on a few.

At least Helga and Cornelia had completed, giving me the permanent perks in the process. My life would have been much more inconvenient without the permanent Mana Regeneration, multiplying my combat potential significantly.

It wasn't all bad, however, as the similarity between the Companion Process and the weird emotional suppressing aspect of Titania was rather similar. And since my Companions were powered with this so-called divine spark, chances were it was the same for Titania. Though, while having a strong clue was good, the destination it was pointing to was less so. After all, the headmistress already invited me to receive the 'blessing', meaning that the elusive item I was searching for was either in her possession, or she had a strong connection to someone that had it.

In either case, not the easiest target to pillage.

Aviada moaned loudly, interrupting my thoughts, which was a welcome interruption. "Sorry, I didn't get that," Carla said smugly. "Would you mind repeating it?"

"I said—" Aviada tried to say, but I squeezed her tits once more, cutting her explanation again.

"Really, Aviada," Carla said gleefully, enjoying Aviada's struggle as much as she was clearly enjoying the erotic aspects of our show. "You are almost strong enough to graduate, you should answer such a simple question easily," she added, amusement dancing behind her beautiful green eyes. "I can't even imagine the reaction of the instructors if you took this long to think during an expedition."

"You're pushing your luck—" Aviada answered, the pleasure making her needs too urgent to continue with their little challenge, but her argument got interrupted when I decided to change position, laying on my back before pulling her on, creating a delicious reverse cowgirl. Since it was time to change the pace, I let the blanket slip during the shift, revealing her delicious body, even as her weight pushed her down deeper onto my shaft. The change in the angle allowed my shaft to reach a different sensitive spot, which was the end of Aviada's —admittedly halfhearted — attempts to chastise Carla.

To be fair, Carla wasn't looked torn up about Aviada's sudden silence, her eyes locked at our midsection, where my thickness was disappearing inside Aviada again and again. Her expression of arousal was unmistakable as she abandoned any attempt to keep it hidden. She just watched, her legs rubbing against each other as she tried to solve her own arousal, too self-conscious to actually start playing with herself in front of me.

A minute passed, the room slowly filling up with moans and grunts. Carla watched the way our bodies slammed against each other repeatedly without blinking, the last scraps of her resistance slowly disappearing under the strain...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6600 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter Ninety-Eight

I waited until Aviada was reasonably aroused until I started pumping my mana inside her, triggering a flood of experience for her.

[-915 Mana]

Her eyes widened in shock, one that would have been suspicious even as she struggled under the growing throes of pleasure, but luckily, Carla was too focused on the location where our bodies were meeting with each other repeatedly to actually pay attention to Aviada's face as she looked at me questioningly.

Luckily, she proved to be a touch wiser than I had given her a credit to, and kept her mouth shut when I sent her a warning glare. Or at least, that was what I assumed was the reason, but considering her personality, I feared that it was more about the growing pressure of her orgasm. Only a few seconds later she let out a string of moans, suggesting that her not blurting what happened might be more about the rush of pleasure than any genuine sense of trying to keep things hidden.

Just to be safe, I grabbed her discarded panties and stuffed her mouth, continuing to pump into her vigorously.

And with that, the risk carried by Aviada's mouth was effectively disarmed, allowing me to focus on the other sexy martial goddess in the room, who was absentmindedly playing with her beautiful red hair as she watched us with a shocked expression, still having trouble believing what was going on.

I expected that state to last for a while, thinking what I should do, when she opened her mouth. "You look red," she said mockingly as she looked at Aviada, earning a frustrated groan, but when Aviada tried to answer by removing her panties out of her mouth, I was quick to prevent it. But true to her personality, she tried to push her hand, making me continue to grab her hand.

"She's a bit occupied," I said calmly even as I continued to pump inside her, enjoying the way she tightened as I exerted direct physical control over her. It was interesting to see just how similar the magical star of the school, Cornelia, and one of the more infamous martial students, Aviada, was similar despite all their outward difference, creating an alliance of submission, requiring forceful suppression more than occasionally. The only thing that differed was their preferred mode, Aviada preferring direct applications of strength while Cornelia enjoyed fanciful indirect displays of casting, especially in terms of explosive spells.

“Why don’t you entertain me a bit, then,” Carla answered, looking at me directly, no matter how much her eyes stirred toward Aviada’s tits.

Her words, if taken at face value, were filled with innuendo. But at this point, I was rather good at reading women —especially when it came to the matters of intimacy— and her words lacked that kind of intent. It was just an automatic response. She was just saying what came to her mind directly. Of course, that didn’t mean I would actually let that slide. “If you wish so?” I answered in a tone laced with erotic intent. Considering I was fucking her best friend in front of her mercilessly, it wasn’t exactly hard emotion to exaggerate. “Any preferred method?”

It took a second for her to realize what I meant. “N-no,” she stammered before continuing with a sharper, panicked tone. “Not like that! How can you say that, while fucking Aviada? Have you no shame?”

“I clearly don’t,” I said with a mocking smirk. “Also do you think Aviada looks like she would mind if I buried my face between your glorious tits,” I said, letting my gaze dip down her bosom, which was rather visible thanks to her nightshirt.

“She might not, but I’m not a pervert,” Carla answered, which might have been more convincing if she hadn’t been watching me as I fucked Aviada passionately.

“Oh, really?” I asked, the mocking edge in my tone intensifying. “Is that why you have been watching us from a corner while playing with yourself like a horny little slut? Or is that why you’re still here even as I fuck poor little Aviada,” I said, using the opportunity to flood Aviada’s insides with my mana once more.

[-1318 Mana]

“N-no,” she managed to stammer, her eyes wide open, too distracted with her own arousal to react to my words, especially since she was clearly feeling quite aroused. “T-this is nonsense, I’m leaving!” she managed to exclaim a moment later, standing up to leave.

Though, after getting up to her feet, she continued to stand rather than moving toward the door, spending a couple of extra seconds watching us like she was trying to etch it to her memory. It was a fatal mistake, I decided even as I grabbed her arm and pulled her back on the bed. Though, considering her lack of panic despite the yelp that escaped, it was hard to say she didn’t want that mistake.

Her reaction was understandable. It might be a bit vain to say, but my looks were hard to match. Not only I was a spectacular physical specimen, but also I had more than fifty points of

Charisma supporting me, giving me an extraordinary aura. Dominating such a spectacular beauty like Aviada while easily immobilizing her with one hand, just added another layer of attractiveness to a martial student like Carla. "Let me go," she stammered, but her voice was lacking conviction, trembling weakly.

"Really, that's what you want?" I asked mockingly.

"Yes..." she said after taking a deep breath, but despite her preparation, what escaped her mouth was a soft tremble, lacking any kind of conviction. She clearly said that just to play hard, her eyes glazing whenever it slid down, watching my hips as they continued to slam inside Aviada again and again.

Which was why she was surprised when I loosened my grip around her wrist. She looked at me, shocked, unhappy with the sudden change. "Is there a problem? I did what you asked?"

"Nothing..." she murmured, trying to process the sudden change, which wasn't made any easier by Aviada's muffled yet enthusiastic moans.

"Is that so?" I said even as I decided to finish our little game. I slipped my hand inside her pajama bottoms, which was already straining to cover her wide hips, dipping directly into her wetness, making her moan. "It seems that your body disagrees."

"What are you doing!" she exclaimed in shock before another moan interrupted her, but the movement of her body was much more telling. Rather than trying to pull back, she slid even closer, even widening her legs to give man easier access.

"What am I doing?" I said mockingly even as I slipped my fingers deeper without the slightest issue, making her gasp in shock. "I'm fingering you, just like you want, you dirty girl. Or are you going to say that you usually hang around people having sex with no ulterior motive?"

"B-but-" she tried to stammer an answer, her gaze falling on Aviada, realizing that it was rather presumptuous for me to finger another woman next to her.

"Don't worry," I said even as I decided to move forward in a more memorable manner, and ripped off her pajamas with a rough pull along with her panties, leaving her bottom bare. "It wouldn't be the first threesome she experienced," I added even as I slapped her ass, my other hand still around her wrists, preventing her from retaliating.

She opened her mouth to argue, but when my fingers returned to her entrance, she was quick to abandon those. "You don't need to talk," I said even as I let my fingers loose inside her,

ramming furiously. “You clearly want this, you don’t have to be a coward. Just admit it.”

The first reaction came from Aviada, who finally managed to get rid of her makeshift gag. “Wait-” she tried to argue, only to be silenced by a stiff spank to her ass, even though it forced me to abandon Carla’s fingering for a moment.

“Don’t be rude! You don’t have a right to speak, not before you can free your hands,” I commented even as I let my hand return to Carla’s body, but this time, grabbing her lush red hair, pulling her into a searing kiss.

Unsurprisingly, the insult and the challenge were more than enough to silence Aviada, while my display of physical dominance tightened her even further, earning another moan. Her submissiveness was such a convenient trait.

I pushed my shaft deeper into Aviada’s tightness while my lips launched a surprise assault to Carla’s unprepared mouth, attaining victory immediately, my tongue ravaging it freely. She just obediently accepted my assault, her body aching for my touch.

With both of my hands occupied —one around Aviada’s wrists, the other wrapped around Carla’s hair— I couldn’t rip off her shirt. Luckily, with my magic, I didn’t need to. A simple air spell was enough to shred it into nothingness, earning a shocked gasp from Carla, who didn’t appreciate the rather risky display of my magical competence, unaware of the limits of my magical capabilities. But with my tongue still buried in her mouth, she didn’t have the chance to vocalize her argument, and it wasn’t clearly important enough to pull back to deliver it.

So, I continued to kiss her aggressively even as her gloriously large breasts, big enough to rival Marianne’s, pushed against my chest, the hardness of her nipples rather noticeable against my chest.

Enjoying the lips of beauty while the other one continuously tightened around my girth made it rather hard to resist my body’s desire to explode, so I did so, filling Aviada with my warm seed, triggering another climax of hers. As she collapsed, I finally pulled out of her and let her hands go, turning my full attention to Carla.

The muffled gasp she let out as my hand found her breasts, sinking into the depths of her supple flesh, was rather spectacular. Maybe it was her body type, maybe it was the advantage given by her stats, but her tits were spectacularly sexy.

Carla’s sensual moans made things even better as I continued to squeeze her breasts, enjoying their texture to my heart’s content. Said moans finally exploded without muffling when my lips

trailed down, kissing down her neck, leaving aggressive hickeys behind.

She pressed her hips against my body, capturing my half-erect shaft between her thighs, though, in their embrace, it didn't take long for it to return back to life, squeezed between her meaty embrace.

Even if I hadn't been aroused before, the delicious gyration of her hips would have solved the problem, using her best advantage to a great effect. She might be a voyeur, but she had no problems in adapting my touch. And her juices slowly coating my already glistening shaft, it wasn't hard to guess where things were going.

Then, Aviada reminded one important detail, that I had forgotten her presence. She reacted as violently as I had expected her to, replacing my hand around Carla's hair, pulling her back with an aggressiveness that made her cry in pain. I was about to react to prevent violence when I realized Aviada's aim, and relaxed.

Meanwhile, Carla found herself forced down her lips inches away from my shaft which was hardened thanks to her efforts. "Open wide, bitch," Aviada gloated smugly even as she pressed Carla's head forward. "Do you think you can mock me without a cost," she added gleefully, but weirdly enough, her anger felt rather mischievous. Apparently, it counted as a friendly move in Aviada's dictionary.

No doubt she had problems making friends, if that was the way she could treat her best friend.

Carla opened her mouth, whether trying to argue or asking for a reprieve I didn't know, because Aviada didn't miss a beat before pushing her head forward, clogging her mouth with my thickness...

Apparently, things were about to have an unexpected —but no means unwelcome— turn...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6600 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter Ninety-Nine

Watching Aviada grab her friend's head roughly, pushing her forward without care even as Carla coughed and wheezed around my shaft was a rather great experience. I was fully in favor of Aviada paying back for Carla's earlier trick, especially Carla's already weak resistance melted rather speedily.

"Is she also going to receive-" Aviada asked without regard, only for me to silence her with a kiss.

"For the fucks sake, sweetie, keep your mouth shut about that unless I give you explicit permission," I whispered, glad that Carla was far too occupied to pay attention to our discussion.

"But-" Aviada tried to say, only for me to silence her with another kiss, this time aggressively, biting her lips in warning. She responded equally aggressively, her complaints forgotten. As we kissed, she continued to push Carla forward again and again, forcing her throat to widen despite the obvious signs of distress Carla was putting out.

"Tap my leg twice if you can't handle it," I said to Carla after pulling out of the kiss, only to receive a solitary pinch, signaling that she didn't appreciate my concern. Apparently, she didn't appreciate me intervening with her little game with Aviada.

I shrugged, returning my attention to Aviada's breasts, which, while smaller than Carla's monstrous ones, still beautiful enough to make an amazing plaything. But since Carla's tits were busy repeatedly hitting against my legs, I had to keep my hands busy somehow, right?

"Do you have any other ideas about the task allocation for the mission," Aviada said gleefully as she pushed Carla deep once more, making her gag and moan. "Maybe about the allocation of the rear guard?" she added even as she let Carla slide away.

"It's pretty much set," Carla answered immediately. Well, almost immediately, as it took a while for her to cough and wheeze as she tried to catch her breath. "I don't think there's a need for a reallocation, unless someone wants to admit she can't handle the mission assigned."

From the frustration on Aviada's face, it was clear that Carla had scored rather impressively. Rather than saying anything, Aviada pushed Carla deep once more, but the flicker of enthusiasm that flickered on her face a second before my shaft was lodged in her throat suggested that Aviada's strategy might not be as effective as she might first assume. After all,

Carla had been wanting to taste my cock for a while now as evidenced by her excessive voyeurism habits, and all Aviada was achieving was to give her an easy excuse to meet her desire.

It would have been much more effective if she had pushed Carla away to take her place, not that I would expect Aviada to think that. She wasn't stupid, that was for sure, but she had a very direct way of thinking, uncaring of the potential complications, confident to break through everything directly.

Somehow, it made her uniquely attractive, her raven hair dancing freely as she pushed Carla forth repeatedly. I leaned back to take her nipples while Carla's lips massaged the base of my cock, a considerable part of it lodged in her hot throat, her nose hitting against my stomach repeatedly.

After repeated personal attempts, Aviada had learned the proper points of a good deep-throat, and was using her knowledge to deliver maximum experience, making Carla's throat stay around my girth as she desperately gagged, her spit gurgling down. Luckily, my expertise in terms of physical affection delivery was unmatched, allowing me to give Aviada's breasts the proper attention they deserved, licking and kissing, even as Carla's throat did its best to distract me.

"Mmm, just like that," Aviada moaned in appreciation as she looked down, catching my gaze with a smug expression, no doubt enjoying her position of power just as much as she had enjoyed her earlier submissive position, proving that she enjoyed dominating just as much as she enjoyed being submissive.

Cornelia was similar to her in that aspect, and honestly, that was one of the more difficult things for me to understand. How could someone enjoy dominating and being dominated in such equal measures? For me, the best I could do was to feign weakness, but even such an act would only be enjoyable because of the subtle control I could exert on the situation. Actual submissiveness, whether sexual or political, was just abhorrent to me.

Maybe it was a female thing, I decided, shrugging as I abandoned that particular track, focusing back on Aviada's breasts, while Carla's depthroating finally gave the result it was seeking, making me cum once more, filling her mouth with my seed.

"Still no change of plans?" Aviada asked after letting Carla pull back once more.

"Of course not," Carla managed to answer between her coughs, trying to prevent my seed from

spilling out by swallowing, which was a nice surprise despite her lackluster success, spilling some of it to a humongous expanse of her pale tits.

“I don’t think your tactic is being as effective as you think,” I said with a chuckle as I looked down, catching Carla’s eyes, who managed to blush at being called.

Unsurprisingly, Aviada decided to take it a very different way. “You’re right,” she said as she sat on the bed, behind Carla, and pulled her on her lap. In the end, Aviada was sitting with her back against the bedpost, and Carla on her lap, her legs parted by Aviada’s hands on her thighs, pulling hard. “We should properly punish her,” Aviada said even as she created an inviting position.

As much as her wet lips shone invitingly, I met with Carla’s eyes first, waiting for her to nod excitedly, more than happy with how Aviada’s punishment was developing, allowing her to taste the pleasure while conveniently removing her responsibility in the process. I smirked as I crouched down, my shaft quick to return to life.

“Are you sure you’re ready?” I asked mockingly as I looked at her spectacular tits.

“Go ahead,” Carla said smugly, feeling rather confident. Since my earlier exploration revealed it wasn’t her first time, I wasn’t surprised by her confidence. Still, that didn’t mean she could handle my assault.

Of course, I would be lying if I said her confidence to handle me didn’t tickle my annoyance a bit. Luckily, she was positioned perfectly to be punished by a slight change of plan. A touch to her skin was enough for me to cast a spell to clean her backdoor entrance, and lubricating it just enough to turn a painful experience into uncomfortable, but not resolve any further.

“What are you-” she gasped in panic when she felt my shaft pressing against her puckered hole. From the way her eyes widened, I deduced that particular hole was yet to be touched by any kind of attention, be it a toy or male kind.

Aviada reacted quicker than I did. “I knew you couldn’t handle a proper fucking,” she laughed victoriously, though her grip on Carla’s legs didn’t loosen.

“Who said I can’t handle it?” Carla countered quickly, her pride proving to be stronger than her fear. Her legs sprayed even wider, and she even lifted her ass to give me better access. And what an access it was. Her tits almost rivaled Marianne’s, but her ass was a touch superior to my sweet healer, showing the advantage of her mobile lifestyle, adding just the right amount of muscle to her otherwise plump ass.

It was a unique pleasure to enjoy such a special booty, I decided even as I started pushing, her eyes closing in anticipation of pain, gasping in advance. Aviada looked frustrated at Carla's sudden acceptance, and loosened her grip on her thighs. But rather than surrendering, she decided to grab Carla's tits, twisting her nipples aggressively.

"Bitch," Carla gasped in shock, barely paying attention to the steady movement of my shaft invading her puckered hole, too distracted by the recent assault on her sensitive nipples.

Since Aviada was being such a good girl by helping me —even if it wasn't her original intention — I decided to reward her. I slid my hand under Carla's ass, finding Aviada's clit before I started to rub, earning a shocked gasp, one that was quick to turn into moans of pleasure as my fingers slipped inside her core, enjoying her wetness coating my skin once more.

Meanwhile, Carla's gasps of pained pleasure mixed with Aviada's purer moans, even as I pushed deeper and deeper into her tight hole. I turned my focus back to Carla's tight ass, grabbing her ass both as leverage, and sinking my fingers into their tight expanse. As her body adapted to my presence, I started to move faster and faster, intensifying her pained yelps as a result. Aviada's lips pressing against her neck, biting and kissing, didn't help.

It wasn't hard to see the signs of an impending climax on Carla's face, which was understandable. After all, she was struggling under quadruple assault, namely, my shaft invading her puckered hole, my hands molesting her amazing ass, Aviada's hands mauling her tits, and Aviada's lips creating a visible trail of hickeys on her neck. I decided to enhance her sources of arousal once more, and pulled my fingers out of Aviada's snatch, only to push inside hers immediately.

Therefore, after a few aggressive pumps, it wasn't a surprise when she started trembling under the effects of a spectacular orgasm. She was moaning loudly even as she moved her hips, desperately trying to increase the resulting friction. Her juices flooded desperately, drenching my fingers, while she tried to ride out the climax.

She desperately needed a break.

Too bad for her that neither Aviada nor I had the slightest inclination to actually give her the reprieve her moans were implicating. Aviada continued her dedicated assault on her tits while my hips sped up, making her moans even louder.

"Are you still sure about the plan?" Aviada said mockingly, though it was clear that she was making a point rather than expecting an answer. Which was nice, because Carla was barely

able to moan coherently let alone answering Aviada's question.

"I don't think she is in a mood to make complicated strategic decisions," I said even as I quickened my assault, enjoying her moans, which were getting louder and louder. "But you're such a good friend, helping your friend intimately."

"Aren't I?" she said mockingly.

"Oh, definitely," I said. "Why don't you help her clean up as well," I said, reminding her Carla's lips, still coated with my cum.

"I don't know," she said with a wild smirk. "I like to get it from the source."

"Oh, I know," I said. "Don't worry about that, as I don't think our little ranger would last for long. We have the rest of the night to handle that. Meanwhile, why don't you clean her lips."

Luckily, at this point, my fingers, once again returned to her wetness after Carla climaxed, mellowed her enough that she followed my suggestion without further argument, which was rather impressive considering her personality. Her lips closed over Carla's, their tongues swirling around each other while Aviada steadily cleaned up Carla's mouth and chin, getting the leftovers of my climax.

They kissed deeply for a few moments until Aviada pulled back for a moment to say, "Mmmm, it tastes so good."

"Slut," Carla managed to stammer, which was a rather uncalled, especially since she was quite enthusiastic about resuming the kiss once Aviada leaned once more, not to mention she was still being impaled mercilessly in the ass, the only thing preventing her moans from becoming deafening was Aviada's lips, suppressing her cries.

Carla was not in a position to comment when I grabbed her legs to pull them on my shoulders, allowing me to push myself to the hilt, stretching her ass properly. If she wanted to say something, that was too bad because Aviada was very effective in silencing her even as she continued to maul her tits simultaneously.

Squeezed between the combined assault, it didn't take long for Carla to climax once more, this time even more intensely. As she tightened, she earned another explosion of me, this time coating her bowels, which only intensified her climax.

Aviada pulled back, giving Carla the opportunity to declare her climax. However, she was barely

able to moan a bunch of hard-to-decipher mumbles, barely intelligible. She closed her eyes, falling unconscious.

“Well, that was fun,” I said even as pulled back, creating a popping sound, before I turned my attention to Aviada. Still, just to be safe, I cast a sleeping spell on Carla before looking at Aviada. “Now, let’s move onto your lesson, about properly keeping secrets and the consequences of loose lips.”

Aviada snarled as she slid under Carla, leaving her to sleep while readying herself for the struggle, despite knowing she would lose. But her smile suggested that she didn’t exactly mind losing...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6600 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred

“Oh, really, how are you going to do that?” Aviada smirked as she looked at me, her eyes flashing with a provocative kind of anger, one that needed to be extinguished properly to remind her of the place she deserved. It seemed that the domination she employed on Carla had been enough for her to forget what she deserved.

Or, she was deliberately pushing the border to galvanize me into action. Not that any problem with it if that was the case. Fucking her into submission again was a rather pleasurable activity, after all.

“Do you still need a demonstration?” I asked mockingly, but before she could answer, I lashed forward, not as fast as I could do, but still faster than she could react, and this time, I grabbed her shirt and used that to tie her hands, reinforcing its texture with magic as I did so.

[-23 Mana]

“Do you think that’ll hold me?” Aviada snorted in confidence, only to realize no matter how much effort she put, it was impossible for her to rip it off.

“I believe that it might work,” I answered smugly even as I grabbed her shoulder, preventing her from standing up. Of course, that little play wasn’t enough to break her desire to be the dominant one. She displayed her flexibility by managing to throw a kick from her position.

I grabbed it easily.

“Is that all you can do?” I asked smugly, which caused her anger to flare. “I can understand if you change your mind and ask for a reprieve. After all, how much can you handle as a weak little girl?”

“Never,” she countered swiftly, but her anger was unable to conceal her increasing desire.

“Really,” I said as I pushed her back and put her legs together, before using Carla’s discarded top to tie them up as well, effectively leaving her helpless. “Even if I decide to torture you?”

“Do your worst!” she challenged, her excitement impossible to hide.

“Really,” I said as I hovered over her. “Are you sure you can handle my worst?”

“Of course,” she murmured, but her eyes widened as she wiggled in her place. The reason, the

little Biomancy trick I cast her moments ago, enhancing her sensitivity greatly while preventing her from climaxing. Not the first time I was employing a similar trick on her, but since Aviada was an exceptionally rebellious submissive, it wasn't shocking that she had forgotten its implications.

But despite the impression her straightforward personality might give, she wasn't stupid, her eyes widening in remembrance as I caressed her inner thigh gently, injecting her with unbelievable pleasure. "Oh, are you really sure you can handle my worst? It looks like you're having second thoughts."

"No!" she exclaimed, her tone sharp despite her expression disagreeing with the message. She might have realized her mistake, but she was far too prideful to admit defeat this early.

"As you wish," I said as I leaned forward, letting my breath fall on her neck, which was rather unbearable with her increased sensitivity, making her tremble. "Domination is such an interesting concept," I murmured gently even as my hand explored her inner thigh gently. "It's not about strength or power, but control. A touch here, a caress there, and soon, it allows to unearth the true submissive in the heart of even the most willful fighter, don't you agree?"

"I'm not submissive," she rapidly answered.

I chuckled even as I let my hand climb up to her wetness. "Oh, really? Then, why are you so wet after being tied down, helpless and under my mercy?"

That triggered her rebellion once more, making her struggle to get out of her bonds, only to fail spectacularly. At this point, even a simple spell from me couldn't be resolved with pure strength, especially without any leverage. Moreover, the more she twisted, the more her pleasure built up thanks to her enhanced sensitivity. Soon, she was helplessly moaning even as she struggled, the objective of her struggle changing, searching for the climax.

I just stood back, watching her naked body writhe, which was a spectacular view. The naked body of Carla, exhausted after the spectacular treatment she had just received, made the view even better.

It took a while for Aviada to notice my other trick. "You didn't!" she gasped in horror. I just smirked. "You're a monster," she stammered in anger, her confidence replaced with horror.

"Didn't you just tell me that you can handle my worst?" I said with a sigh. "Such an unreliable partner. Still, I'm a merciful man. You can just admit that you can't handle it, and maybe beg for a while, and I'll dispel the spell. Alright?"

“Not a chance,” she answered. “You can never take me down with magic!” Still, it was proof of our growing relationship that she was actually getting aroused by the application of magic rather than just being repulsed, despite her believing that magic was weakness. Though, maybe it was about me already proving my strength, leaving no doubt about who was stronger, therefore making her more receptive to some magical seasoning.

“As you wish,” I said, and grabbed another piece of cloth, this time using it as a blindfold, which made her gasp in panic. It was a good sound on her.

Wrapped in complete darkness, her gasps of arousal were enhanced as I dragged my hand over her body, the sensation of arousal enhanced more than she could handle.

The naked, writhing body of Aviada was a delicious sight, tempting me to skip the treatment and take her directly, but I managed to keep myself contained, no matter how much her full breasts danced as she rocked her body while I caressed her tight stomach.

“Any change of mind?” I asked even as I let my hands climb higher, caressing the underside of her perky tits.

“Never,” she gasped, but I could hear that her tone was getting weaker, more indecisive, flinching every time my breath fell on her skin.

“It’s hard to resist without seeing, is it?” I asked even as I flicked her nipple before raising my hand, only to caress her neck a second later. “Trying to resist without knowing where the hit is going to come, leaving you helpless...” This time, she didn’t even answer, just let out a desperate moan, signaling that her arousal was quickly going of control.

I maintained the assault for another minute, teasing her sensitive spots in a random order, making her moan helplessly while she writhed against her constraints, desperately trying to get rid of her blindfold, getting more and more aroused as the time went.

“Can you still handle our little game?” I whispered into her ear, enjoying the way her back arched the moment my breath fell on her neck, making her twitch helplessly. “Or are you going to surrender?”

“Surrender...” she murmured softly, barely audible.

“Sorry, it wasn’t clear, would you mind repeating it?” I asked, even as I caressed her tits gently once more, pushing her arousal even deeper.

“Please,” she uttered, louder.

“Please, what?” I countered. “Be more clear about what you want, sweetie.”

She didn’t appreciate my intentional obstinateness, but that wasn’t enough to actually change her mind, not when she was hanging on with the skin of her teeth, with her only hope to release the tension blocked magically. “Please, let me cum,” she begged.

“And, have you been a good girl, enough to deserve mercy?”

“Yes,” she gasped, only to receive a hard slap on her breast, leaving a pink mark as it exploded loudly.

“Really? Even after almost letting my secret slip several times, forcing me to intervene,” I said, like the way I had intervened was a great sacrifice and not something that amused me greatly.

“You can trust Carla-” she started, only to receive another spank.

“That doesn’t mean you can just decide it on your own,” I warned her even as I twisted her nipple, enjoying her resulting moans. “Your sin is grave, but you’re lucky that I’m feeling merciful. One little punishment, and I will be ready to forgive you.”

“Thank you,” she gasped. “Please let me cum.”

“After the punishment,” I reminded her.

“That wasn’t the punishment?” she asked, followed by a moan as I twisted her nipple.

“No, sweetie, that was just the setup,” I said even as I climbed on the bed. “The punishment is just starting. Open your pretty mouth.”

“You can’t,” she started, which was exactly the opportunity I needed to push my shaft inside her mouth, but I stayed back to tease her back even more.

“Well, if you’re saying that you can’t handle Carla’s punishment-” I said mockingly, only for her to interrupt me.

“I can handle that, of course!” she stated. Her pride might allow her to be submissive to me due to her infuriation with my abilities, but the same didn’t apply to admitting to a weakness compared to her friend, even in significantly disadvantaged circumstances.

“Excellent,” I said even as I grabbed her body and lifted her up, only to slam her against the wall, earning a moan of shocked pleasure, signaling that she was approaching the point of no return. But she had no one to but herself, paying the cost of her loose lips.

I didn't bother kissing her, just pulled back a bit, and her trembling legs failed to carry her weight. I grabbed her tied hands and lifted them over her head even as I pushed my shaft against her lips, easily passing the first line of resistance created by her lips.

Keeping her hands up with one hand, I pushed my hips forward, knocking the entrance of her throat, earning a moan simultaneously. Meanwhile, my other hand was still exploring her body even if I had to reach down a little, squeezing her tantalizing tits.

She tried to mewl obediently, her combative instincts long disappeared under the torturous dominance of pleasure. That only made me hornier though. I started pushing forward viciously, getting savage satisfaction from her drunken moans that massaged my conveniently located shaft.

It felt good to have Aviada, one of the most unruly warriors in the school, and a veritable powerhouse, moaning under the dominance of my shaft helplessly. It was not without a benefit for her, of course, as I used the opportunity to deploy more and more mana into her mouth, leveraging the mana regeneration perk that was triggered earlier to increase the active count from two to three.

[-1542 Mana]

I looked down, enjoying her otherwise pale cheeks blushing further and further while her eyes lost their focus, to a point of unable to make eye contact. She even moaned when I pulled out to allow her to breathe, only to slap her cheek with my thickness, creating a delicious thumping sound. Miraculously, Aviada just moaned in response. Signaling that my delicious ploy of dominance was getting a bit too overwhelming.

It was certainly novel for her to accept whatever I was dishing without a complaint, obediently accepting it. Not wanting to waste such an opportunity, I guided it to her lips once more, this time to be gobbled with enthusiasm. Her mouth parted wide, allowing my invasion without the slightest resistance.

A groan escaped my mouth even as I pushed harder and harder, slipping a hand behind her head to prevent her head from hitting against the wall, while pulling her hair in the process. She accepted my presence deeper as I pushed, into her throat almost immediately.

Her eyes widened as her nose pressed against my skin, pushed to the limit, tears flowing out of her eyes. Despite that, her moans continued to escape —and continued to be suppressed by my shaft lodged deep in her throat.

Soon, she was choking, gagging, and gurgling at the same time, pushing her ability to resist to the limit. Which, admittedly, rather enjoyable to watch as well as to feel. With her wrists bound, she didn't have any chance to resist, of course, but the fact that she was yet to make any move toward that was the proof of just how far she had sunk into the throes of pleasure.

All the while, I continued to use the opportunity to transfer mana, both to strengthen her soul space and to bequeath her more experience.

[-3316 Mana]

I enjoyed her warm mouth and tight throat for several more minutes before I decided to show mercy. "Punishment complete," I said, enjoying the way her eyes widened even as I brushed her cheek gently, dispelling the spells on her, her bindings falling simultaneously with the spell that prevented her from climaxing.

Not that she was in a mood to pay attention to that, not when she was too distracted by the orgasm that hit her with all the strength of a rabid dragon. In a show of mercy, I pulled my shaft out of her, choosing to spray her face and her tits rather than forcing her to swallow, all the while, she trembled helplessly, the only reason she was able to stay upright was the presence of the cold wall behind her, preventing her from collapsing.

Still, impressively, she was physically capable enough not to collapse, though it was a near miss. I decided to give her an opportunity to catch her breath before starting another round, to help her level up with no ulterior motives.

We still had quite a bit of time until morning...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 3123 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred One

It was almost dawn when I left Avaida's room, leaving her exhausted in her bed, her arm wrapped around Carla, who had joined us later in the night, only to collapse earlier than Avaida, her experience and her lack of endurance showing themselves.

Aviada was rather competitive, after all.

She had a faint smile on her face as I closed the door, leaving her alone, not that it was a shocking thing. After all, not only she had experienced a spectacularly enjoyable evening, but also she had managed to gain four levels in one evening, which was a rather considerable boost to her strength, helping her to progress her swordsmanship potential significantly.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the luxury of sleeping for half a day, as I still had two girls to visit, Marianne and Titania, not to mention I still wanted to go and check up with Helga and Cornelia just in case.

Infiltrating the faculty to discover their mission location hadn't been particularly difficult. A simple disguise, assisted by a couple of illusion spells, and the domineering attitude of a commander, I was able to learn their location as well as some of the latest reports about the monster horde movements. Luckily, it turned out that they were in the same location, reducing my travel obligations by one, which, at this point, I appreciated quite a bit.

However, not all was well, because according to the reports, Titania had just managed to destroy a horde while they had discovered a second horde that was traveling toward her location. It didn't take a genius to understand their plan, trying to tire her before ambushing. However, despite being such a transparent ploy, it was likely to work due to her direct approach to combat.

With the air elemental mount, it didn't take long for me to arrive at the city Titania was posted in. When I came near the town, the sun was just rising, but it wasn't the only bright thing on the horizon. Occasional bursts of bright explosions littered the horizon as well, familiar applications of light magic.

The reason for it got clear the closer to the walls. The town was surrounded by a monster horde, one that was several times bigger than the one I had to deal with. Still, it wasn't enough to take down Titania when she had the advantage of a well-fortified location, not even if she had already handled a previous horde.

As I got even closer to get a better idea about the composition of the horde, however, I realized the enemies using a smarter approach than I had expected. The horde that was facing the city carried a mixture of elemental natures, but a great number of them were bulky animals, thick-hide elephants and rock rhinos in particular. I wasn't able to detect the leading monster, but the skewed nature of the horde suggested that it was planned. Very few of those animals had the ability to climb over the walls or take down the defenders, which made their initial assault less dangerous, but also, meant that exterminating them required a great deal of magical power.

It wasn't like ignoring them an option as well. Ultimately, those monsters could breach city walls —despite all the enchantments that protected it— in less than half a day, forcing the defenders to expand their full capabilities.

They were trying to tire Titania rather than trying to take her down, which meant they had already planned a tertiary assault to take her down, and just waiting until she was exhausted. A nice tactic, strong in its simplicity, because even if Titania noticed that, there was little she could do against it. She couldn't just abandon the town to her fate, as without her, there was no chance for the defenses to hold, and while calling reinforcements was an option, considering the distance between the town and the school, it would have been too late for the reinforcements to arrive.

Curious about a possible undead assault, I used biomancy to check the immediate surroundings of the town, only to find no sign of an undead presence. Unfortunately, that was far from conclusive. There was a limit to my biomancy detection, especially since I want to stay hidden, meaning I had to limit the impact. Also, the defensive wards of the town were fully activated, interfering with my spell greatly. If there were any undead inside the town, it would have been hard to detect.

Since there was no immediate follow-up assault waiting for the defenders, I was tempted to rush forward, a dagger in hand, calling infernos with every breath, but that would make our mysterious opponents abandon the last leg of their plans. Plans that I was yet to discover.

However, I couldn't just slip inside the town easily this time. While the defenses might be weaker than Silver Spires, it was rather hard to sneak into a city when the walls were filled with citizen-militia, armed with bows, javelins, and the occasional siege weapons, while the wards were currently at full activation.

Not impossible, though. Just hard.

A simple earth spell pushed me fifty feet below the ground, and I started traversing toward the

city —and destroying the tunnel behind me, as there was no need to alert my opponents— slowly and steadily, making no crack.

The walls were not the only protection of the city, of course, the defensive wards spread below the city as well, to protect it from the underground threats of giant worms and other underground threats. Luckily, while those defenses were strong, they were not exactly elegantly crafted, allowing me to bypass them after a minute of fiddling —and that was only because those wards were in full alert state, forcing me to expand more focus than necessary, mostly not to alert any mage that might be observing the performance of the wards.

[+1 Arcana]

The resulting improvement was rather welcome, confirming that the skill improvements were still not affected by the snag I had been dealing with. I didn't have a whole lot of skills to maximize at this point, but still, every single bit counted on the road to supremacy.

A couple of minutes later, I burst out in one of the basements after using biomancy to make sure it was empty. Most citizens were on the walls, doing their best against the horde, and the people with limited combat capabilities were in the emergency shelters, leaving most buildings empty.

The streets were similarly empty, allowing me to walk toward Titania with no issues.

As I moved closer to her, I was simultaneously using my biomancy to detect any possible undead presence. A hidden assault from inside the walls just as the defenders were on the peak of the exhaustion would have given the best result, but surprisingly, I could detect no undead presence.

However, they wouldn't waste a second monster horde to exhaust Titania if they didn't have any ulterior motive. The question was, what was their aim. Maybe they were trying to force me to come out, as after killing several death knights of Zokras the Eternal, I likely earned an important position in their list of people to get rid of. People who became lichs were not usually known for their saint-like patience and forgiveness, and I doubted that after staying in that state long enough to be titled Eternal, Zokras' mentality had developed in a positive direction.

The lack of undead was not a proof against their involvement either, as they clearly have more than one spy in the faculty, and the recent betrayal of the ranger I had watched was another evidence of their long reach. It was hard to guess their exact plan this time without knowing the

full extent of their tools.

However, as I walked closer, I started to feel the familiar presence of chaotic mana, giving me a familiar feeling, coming from a nearby building, even stronger than the one carried by the ranger that had been tragically killed by the monsters he had been summoning. I assumed that it was stronger because they wanted it to be effective through the walls.

As I paid attention, I could feel several subtle alert wards layered on every door and window of the building, even the ceiling, suggesting that they would be able to react if that was discovered. The wards they used were significantly more complicated than ones around the town, revealing the presence of at least one master arcanist among them.

Interestingly, the wards themselves were quite unfamiliar, most of them not matching anything I had discovered in the library. It might be a creative innovation, like Helga creating completely new work immediately, but that didn't seem to be the case. The more I examined it, the more structured it felt. It was hard to pinpoint the exact reason, but I could feel my brain itch, like a painter taking the first glance at a counterfeit painting.

"Hmm," I murmured even as I continued to examine the structure. A minute later, I realized the exact reason for my suspicions. While the individual nodes were built to perfection, all the flaws were concentrated on the merger points, suggesting that the mage failed to perfectly assess the environmental details of the building perfectly. It wasn't a huge flaw by any means, but compared to the perfection of the individual pieces, it was very noticeable.

The problem came from my utter inability to recognize the theoretical basis of the nodes. It didn't resemble anything I had seen in the library, or around the school even the slightest bit. And it wasn't just a slight difference. Some of the fundamental mana principles were completely different, to a level that I wasn't able to deduce their implications with a glance. I actually had to sit down and work for hours to decipher the structure if I wanted to slip inside those wards.

Considering my stats, it was rather impressive.

Moreover, none of the defensive wards in the necromancer base had anything that matched it, suggesting that whoever constructed it might not be directly related to Zokras and his ilk. After all, if they had access to better defensive structures, they would have used them in their base, at least to defend their most sensitive locations. If their ritual to destroy the dragon had relied on those arcana wards, I doubted that I could have broken them with the ease I had displayed.

I felt that I finally had the tail of the mysterious third party that gifted the necromancers with their monster hordes.

Since it was such a big issue, I decided to infiltrate the location. I moved a bit, sinking underground as I did so, a smile on my lips. While the defensive wards they had established were spectacular, it seemed that they stopped after touching the city's defensive structure, relying on it to defend the basement. A defense that I had bypassed with absolutely no challenge earlier.

I was more than willing to abuse their oversight...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 3123 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [95/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Two

As I slipped into the basement —which was thankfully empty other than a magically-reinforced cage, currently empty— the first thing I noticed was the suppressive aura of magic that somehow wanted me to throw up. There was a sense of wrongness in the air, one I had never felt before, not even I was facing against the necromancers.

Somehow, whatever was the source, it managed to feel more disgusting than the combined aura of an army of necromancers.

My first suspect was the cage and the unusual magical runes that surrounded it. But, as I walked closer toward the cage, I realized it wasn't the source. Like the wards that covered the building, the runic structure of the ward was completely unfamiliar yet complete in a way that suggested a great body of supporting research and practice. But despite the mystery it contained, it wasn't the source of my discomfort.

No, the source was radiating from upstairs.

I was rather glad for my great agility as I silently walked toward the stairs that led to the upstairs, doing my best to hide my presence. Luckily, the door to the upstairs was open, allowing me to peek inside.

Inside, I noticed three people, sitting silently around a table with faces of stone. One of them had a staff leaning against himself, while the other two were dressed like ordinary peasants — but my eyes were sharp enough to identify an impressive number of hidden weapons under their clothes. They looked ready to act. On the table lay another gem, driving the crazed monsters to attack the town.

However, I was more interested in the passive aura that was spreading out of them that made me queasy rather than their selection of the weapon.

They were dangerous, dangerous enough to trigger my instincts to the limit.

Almost an hour passed in silence as I watched them, trusting my instincts about the danger they represented. I was sure that they represented the danger against Titania, and I decided to wait until they decided to act, allowing me to ambush them. The way they were dressed suggested that the mage would stay behind.

Then, my prediction turned to be true as the assassin-looking types suddenly stood up without

talking and walked toward the door. Watching the way they moved, I was glad that I didn't try to attack them, because the grace they displayed suggested that they had a significantly high stat spread. I was lucky that I didn't attack them. Not because I was afraid of failing to take them down, but I was sure that I couldn't take them down without making a huge commotion, especially if the mage had the opportunity to trigger the wards.

Luckily, the assassins have left using the main door, leaving the mage alone.

I used the shadows of the room to close into the mage, grabbing a dagger reverse. The mage stayed focused on the wards, until I was behind him. The closer I got, the more disgusted I was getting. Something was wrong with the mage, though I didn't know what.

Then, without a warning, I slammed the dagger to his temple, trying to deal a blow that would take him down without killing him.

Unfortunately, after slamming, the response I received was not the one I was looking for. He stumbled a bit, then a flare of magic started to gather. His Constitution was much stronger than I had been expecting, especially for a mage. I slammed the dagger again, this time hard enough to slam him against the wall, and he responded with a flood of arcana magic missiles, traveling toward me in a scary manner.

I erected a shield to block it as I dashed forward once more, still determined to take him down without killing.

[-195 Mana]

Despite the hurried manner he let out of his magic, the resulting spells were much stronger than I had been expecting. His physical stats were strong, but his magical stats were much stronger. Not to the point of eclipsing me, but the simple fact that they were comparable carried many dangerous implications.

So, I used my speed to the limit, arriving in front of him before he could finish casting his next spell, and slammed my dagger to his heart, stretching my magic to the limit as I did so. The blow itself was strong enough to kill. The impact of the blow slammed him against the wall, a spray of blood spilling from his wound, while a second one spilled out of his mouth, suggesting a deadly blow.

I jumped forward as I raised my weapon again, ready to lash out. "Don't make a move, and you might just live," I said. I put my hand on his body, flooding his body with biomancy energy, but not the healing kind. Instead, I was forcing his body to stop, preventing him from reacting,

barely conscious.

[-912 Mana]

He collapsed. Then, I used my mana to slip inside his soul space, curious about his exact strength.

Only to meet with the most disgusting sight I had ever witnessed.

Soul space was an abstract concept, therefore hard to explain in terms of physical terms, but the easiest way to describe my target was food. A soul space was supposed to be like a lean steak, whole, pristine, colored with occasional marbling of skills and achievement that nonetheless looked natural.

The soul space of my target could be best described as a poorly-mixed vegetable meatball. It was a cacophony of pieces coming from different sources, barely clamped together with ominously throbbing magical links, crawling as disgusting as an insect nest trying to finish a carcass before hyenas could take their turn.

There were three things that I noticed immediately. First, the soul space was clearly artificial, and created by a sick mind. Second, despite its disgusting and unstable nature, it was clearly strong. With a glance, I could identify many skills and stats, definitely over level thirty, maybe even over forty.

However, the third point was more important. The moment my target noticed my intrusion, he triggered a complicated seal in the center of his soul space, and the whole thing started collapsing.

“Fuck,” I murmured as I took a step back, creating another, even stronger shield around the target to contain the inevitable explosion. He turned into a fine mist of blood mixed with mana, expanding outward while my arcana shield wrapped around, the second layer of earth shield to support. It started cracking, and I started pushing a lot of mana to keep it contained.

[-1614 Mana]

[+2 Arcana]

The explosion finally stopped, and I collapsed, breathing hard. That was closer than I had been hoping. Unfortunately, I didn't have a lot of time to waste. I had no idea whether the assassins could feel the demise of their teammate, and if they did, whether it would change their

strategy. They might try to escape, or even worse, they might decide to take Titania down permanently rather than imprisoning her. And, I wasn't willing to let her test herself against two assassins of unknown strength when she already exhausted herself against two different monster hordes.

On the positive side, it wasn't exactly difficult to follow the assassins. I just needed to follow the disgusting metaphorical sensation spreading from their mutilated soul space.

After taking the magical gem and dispelling the spell that was driving the monsters to attack the city furiously, of course. Not that it would change a lot of things at this point, every little bit helped.

As I followed the trail of the assassins, my mind was on the newest mystery I faced. What I had just seen in the soul space of the mage before his death was another huge mystery, one that I suspected that would have been rewarded with achievement if I hadn't already depleted the power of my unique system without meaning to.

Still, even without a clue, it wasn't hard to guess that it was a momentous discovery. There was a group present that was rather capable in terms of manipulating soul spaces. They were not exactly smooth, but considering they were able to send three people for a mission, each strong enough to be a mover and shaker even in the important places like the Capital, or Silver Spires.

And if they were sending three of them to a mission, combined with their artificial nature, it implied that they might have many more people in matching capabilities. Combine that with their dubious alliance with the necromancers and their courage to openly target both the princess of a royal family and Silver Spires at the same time...

The implications were not nice...

I managed to find the assassins as they were skulking in a corner near the walls, watching Titania as she used her light spells against the last few monsters that remained. Apparently, the battle was about to come to an end. No doubt they had moved.

Under different circumstances, I would have let them take action, but I was afraid of them having collaborators that might attack Titania while I dealt with them. Instead, I decided to be decisive, and once again tapped the city wards, extending the defensive structure around them.

A minute later, one of the assassins was suddenly alerted, but it was too late. I used a burst of elemental mana to fill the magical moat I created around them with flames, dumping as much mana as I could manage, the plume climbing to the sky.

[-2612 Mana]

The cries rose around from the defenders, shocked by the sudden burst of magic. Titania turned toward me as well, so I sent her a magical message. "Don't worry about the flames. I'll visit you after you go to your room," I told her.

"Focus on the outer defenses, the flame is from the wards," she cried, following my suggestion despite her shock at my presence, and pulling the focus of the defenders to the walls once again. Meanwhile, I turned my attention back to the assassins, who were having trouble handling the sudden ambush as they tried to get out of the trap created by the wards.

Unfortunately, it was too late as they were burned by the wards. I used Tantric to slip into the soul space of one of them, only to find a disgusting mess. And once again, it triggered another self-destruct, showing their commitment to keeping their nature hidden.

Luckily, unlike the previous explosion, I didn't need to contain it completely. Just channeling it toward the sky to mix the inferno that was already going on had been enough...

With the assassins dealt in, I left Titania alone on the walls and returned to the safe house, hoping to find some clue from the wards they left around the house...

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Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 4213 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Master Arcana [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Three

I stayed at the safe house for an hour, searching the place from top to bottom, but unfortunately, failed to find anything other than the cage itself and the unique nature of the wards. So, I dismantled them while taking notes about the way they came together, and destroyed the cage after taking some pieces as the sample. It was the only clue about their origin.

As a bonus, it finally completed my arcana skill.

[+3 Arcana]

Also, Helga would appreciate the gift of another magical project, especially it was based on a completely novel theoretical base.

Slipping the defensive guards Titania posted around the inn she had chosen as the temporary base for herself was completely trivial, making me shook my head at their incompetence. One of those days, I really needed to develop a solution to that, to defend the girls, if for nothing else.

When I arrived at Titania's room, I met with a pleasant surprise. She wasn't alone, but being tended by a healer for her wounds, her shirt removed for the ease of access. And to make things even more fun, the healer was extremely familiar as well.

"Hello, girls," I said as I slipped in from a window and established a ward behind myself.

"Caesar," Titania said stiffly while Marianne looked just shocked at my sudden presence. Then, she turned to Marianne. "You can go," she said as she reached for her shirt, trying to hide her blush while trying to make it look like my intrusion was normal.

I turned to Titania. "Don't worry, we're good friends with Marianne. Aren't we, sweetie?"

"Y-yes," Marianne stammered, shocked by the way I had been speaking to Titania, while Titania's face twisted with a sudden surge of jealousy, smart enough to realize the implications of my words, especially since I had previously taken Helga in front of her when she was still struggling with her emotional blocking. Now that she was free from it, she was struggling with the emotional aspects of it.

"Why are you here?" Titania said testily, her distaste clear as she struggled with the unfamiliar tinge of jealousy.

I walked closer, amused by her reaction. “To help you recover from the great exertion you displayed before you left for another battle, of course,” I said even as I leaned forward and captured her lips. Despite her frustration, she lacked the willpower to reject my lips, moaning as I slipped my tongue into her mouth, moaning as I let my mana fill her mouth.

[-381 Mana]

Lost in the kiss, she realized too late that I used her distraction to sit next to her and pull her on my lap. Only when our lips were separated, she realized the trick I had pulled, and looked at me with a cute frustration that would have left others in disbelief, that the famous librarian of Silver Spires could display an expression fit to a teenager.

Marianne was definitely one of those shocked ones, her blue eyes wide.

“So,” I said even as I hugged Titania’s naked waist. “What do you think about the sudden change of strategy?”

“Caesar,” she gasped as one of my hands slipped down. “What are you doing!”

“Hugging you, of course,” I said with a smirk as I turned my gaze to Marianne, who was watching us in shock, though a small smile was also worming itself on her face. She was too meek to feel jealous, especially after everything we had done together, giving me the chance

“Not in front of her,” Titania gasped.

“Well, you didn’t mind a lot when I was ...hugging... my other blonde friend in your room,” I said, reminding her of the time I took Helga together. “And we don’t have a lot of time to waste. Marianne, please continue healing her.”

“Of course,” Marianne said, managing to speak without a stammer, though that didn’t prevent her from blushing. She didn’t argue the slightest, which wasn’t surprising. She was the most submissive of my growing group of intimate friends by far, and the fact that she was in front of Titania, one of the scariest figures she had ever known —especially after watching her decimating two monster armies— made it much easier for her to accept it without the slightest complaint. She pressed her hands on Titania’s arm, flooding her body with the healing energies. Titania was mostly cured, with only a couple of bruises remaining, and even they were disappearing rather rapidly.

“So,” I whispered to Titania’s ear even as my hand slipped under her skirt, making her shuffle in discomfort, and with no little amount of arousal. “What’s your opinion about the sudden

increase in monster attacks.”

“Clearly planned, and if your sudden appearance is any indicator, they are targeting us directly. But I don’t know who. Maybe me, maybe you through me.”

“Not a bad assumption,” I said. Targeting Titania through me was the only viable strategy if they were after me. “However, even if that was the case, I’m a target of opportunity at best. After all, my presence is nothing more than a last-minute addition ruining their well-prepared plan. There’s still the question of what they want.”

“Any clues from the attackers?” Titania asked even as Marianne finished curing her.

“A few, but they raise more questions than they answered,” I said before turning to Marianne. “By the way, do you mind rubbing my shoulders, I’m feeling exhausted,” I said. Marianne said nothing, but she was quick to follow my request, her hands landing on my shoulders.

“Excellent,” I murmured even as I felt Marianne’s mana infusing my shoulders, forcing the tension off. Meanwhile, my hands climbed upward as Titania’s hips tilted upwards, accepting my intrusion in good humor.

My hand slid along her inner thigh, climbing upward, fingers massaging sensually. Without watching, my hand crept upward slowly, closer and closer to the hip crease until my little finger found her panties. At that point, I slid my hand up, trailing my little finger along the hem until I discovered her wetness, making her moan. Her own reaction made her blush, especially when she turned and saw a knowing smile on Marianne’s face. “About the attackers?” she reminded me in an effort to distract us from her reaction.

“That’s a bit complicated,” I said even as my hands continued their dance. “They are a complete unknown, and considering their strength, it’s really surprising. Three people over level twenty, with no clue about their identity,” I said. I undersold their strength a bit, not wanting to alarm them too much before I could discover the identity of the attackers. More importantly, I didn’t mention anything about the true nature of their power, keeping it silent until I could discover more. I trusted Titania, but I didn’t trust the headmistress.

“Who has the strength to deploy that kind of force,” Titania murmured.

“That’s the question, sweetheart,” I said. “It’s clearly a part of a much bigger organization. Not only they have clearly had the manpower to throw around, but also their coffers are quite full. Mana gems are not something to throw around the way they had been doing,” I said.

“Not to mention their ability to manipulate monsters,” Titania commented, though her tone was strained as my erection buried in her ass. And my fingers, dancing over her slit made it even more difficult to keep her voice down. “They are displaying a worrying power trend. It’s intimidating.”

“No doubt,” I said. “Does your boss have any idea about their identity?”

“She has some suspicions, but she’s yet to mention them to me. Apparently, their involvement is only incidental,” Titania said.

“I see,” I murmured. What Titania had mentioned seemed unimportant, but it suggested some stuff. First of all, it meant that our mysterious organization didn’t appear from nowhere. The headmistress was clearly aware of their presence enough to assume she was successfully predicting their objectives.

Well, considering they were targeting Titania, she clearly misread their objective, but that in itself was another clue. It was clear, I needed a detailed talk with the headmistress, to learn what she had in mind.

After I finish helping Titania and Marianne recover their mana, of course.

Titania continued to share her assumptions about the possible identity of the organization, and I listened, but I was more interested in the way my hands were exploring the surface of her panties, while her voice got strained. She blushed as I hiked her skirt around her hips, revealing her hips to my gaze.

She shivered as I dragged down her panties. “Marianne, do you mind helping me get rid of my shirt,” I said even as I removed Titania’s bra after letting her panties fall on the floor.

“We can’t,” Titania murmured gently, throwing a panicked glare to Marianne, acting even shyer. “Not with her in place.”

“You’re not thinking of the advantages,” I whispered even as I gestured Marianne to stop what she had been doing. Instead, I grabbed Titania’s legs and parted them, giving Marianne the perfect angle to show the abilities she had developed during the heated evenings she had spent playing with Cornelia.

“But-” Titania started, panicking as Marianne positioned between her legs, only to be interrupted as I caught her lips with another searing kiss, flooding her with another flash of mana.

[-284 Mana]

Even after I stopped kissing her, Titania failed to say anything, though it was more about Marianne's finger disappearing into her wetness while her tongue dashed out, caressing her clit. Titania let out a shocking moan.

Meanwhile, I allowed my hands to move, landing on her breasts, massaging them gently to push her arousal further.

"It feels..." Titania murmured, only to let herself fade halfway. Meanwhile, she missed one very important detail. One of Marianne's hands was busy with her entrance, but the other one was working aggressively to free my shaft from its confines. Then, after freeing my shaft and giving one long lick, she pulled back.

"You're overdressed," I said to Marianne even as I grabbed Titania's hips once more, and lifted her directly to my shaft. She gasped in shock as my shaft disappeared inside her.

Meanwhile, Marianne took a step back, shrugging off her clothes in a rapid manner. Since she was here for a mission, neither her clothes nor her underwear was particularly attractive, so she was quick to shed them. The same, however, didn't apply to the amazing curvy body that was hidden underneath, once again tempting me to take a bite to leave another mark.

Marianne smiled with pride as my eyes were inexorably drawn to her tits. "Anything you like?" she murmured as she took a step to dwindle the distance between us while she pressed her tits together. Meanwhile, I was moving Titania repeatedly, making her moan. Dumping a lot of mana in the process as well.

[-513 Mana]

"Definitely," I answered, kissing enthusiastically as she leaned forward to offer them to my hungry lips. I suckled her plump, juicy nipples between my lips, relishing every delicious second of it.

I continued to work Titania toward the climax, while I reached Marianne's poor, neglected pussy. I slipped a couple of fingers inside, and her walls clamped around aggressively, suggesting that she had missed my touch since our last adventure. "Someone is enthusiastic," I murmured.

"That's what happens when someone is neglected," Marianne murmured with a cute pout even as she continued to squirm around my fingers. Still, she was feeling adventurous enough to put

her hands on Titania's tits, her earlier fear disappearing quickly. The sight of her naked body, jumping up and down on my shaft, was hardly intimidating.

Meanwhile, Titania continued to clench around my shaft, doing her best to bring me to a climax. Luckily, I had more than enough willpower to delay my explosion. The same didn't apply to Titania, who was busy crying with ecstasy.

Things were warming up...

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Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Four

Impaling Titania until she climaxed while I prepared to caress the naked curves of Marianne was a spectacular feeling, but one particular fact made that moment much better.

It was just a short preview of the amazing break I had prepared.

While the sudden appearance of a dangerous mysterious organization who managed to create such formidable warriors and mages through an unknown method —not to mention a surprisingly strong reserve of knowledge considering their amazing spells— had forced me to adjust my time plan yet again, it actually forced me to stay here longer than I planned. I wanted Titania to be safe, and the best way to achieve that was to strengthen Marianne as much as possible.

Not that I was unhappy with the process, of course.

Based on my delicious experiments with Cornelia, I already knew that I could only help to push them to the edge of level twenty, which was my limit based on my level, which required a scary amount of mana from me. Luckily, before visiting Marianne, I had visited Aviada, which activated the third instance of my mana regeneration perk. After a quick romp with Marianne, I would have four instances of it active, which would cut down the required time considerably.

And with the mana I needed to spend on Marianne, the amount required to top up Titania was negligible. Though, just because her presence wasn't necessary didn't mean that I would kick her out. Tasting her brunette beauty was always a fun activity.

Unfortunately, despite her immense reputation, Titania was temporarily out of the game, collapsing against my chest listlessly after her spectacular climax. She might be an expert in facing hardship and resisting pain, but the same clearly didn't apply when it came to pleasure.

"Someone is a bit exhausted," I said with a chuckle even as I gently lay her on the bed, enjoying her murmur which was filled with shy acknowledgment. I turned to Marianne —after propping up Titania so that she would have a direct view of the show without straining herself— and said, "It seems that you need to take up the slack for a while. Do you think you can handle it?" I asked.

Despite her naked state, or the fact that she had been playing with Titania moments ago, Marianne was too shy to answer such a question. She just stood there, suddenly aware of her nakedness, blushing cutely. I couldn't help but chuckle, which helped her to gather her courage.

“I can,” she managed to whisper even as she blushed.

“Excellent,” I said even as I took a seat on the couch, making sure to pick the position that would provide Titania with the best view possible. Then, I curled my finger, calling Marianne closer.

The silent order worked much better than the question earlier. Her blush remained, but her body was invigorated as she walked closer, her plump hips dancing with each step like a barmaid trying to earn a fat tip from the adventurer with a full wallet.

Well, she definitely wanted a fat something.

Once she arrived at the front of the couch, she didn't try sitting. Instead, she fell on her knees without the slightest prompting, her blue eyes shining with enthusiasm as she looked at my cock, still glistening with Titania's juices. “I know, it's a bit dirty. Why don't you help me clean it?”

“As you wish,” she murmured, but despite what her words might imply, her tone lacked even the slightest hint of hesitation. For her, it might as well be a delicious meal after long fasting.

In her defense, it had been a while since I was able to pay her a proper visit, and even then, she had to share attention with Cornelia. She leaned down, her tongue darting out with enthusiasm as she gave a slow, lingering lick to the side of my shaft, while I enjoyed the way her huge tits negated the call of the gravity no matter the angle or the position.

I groaned in pleasure, though the sensation created by her tongue wasn't the only reason — though it was amazing. No, her enthusiasm to lower herself in front of me in a way a servant might feel degraded to follow without the slightest hesitation, instead of replacing with enjoyment, was the clear response.

Maybe it was the impressive power I had displayed, maybe it was the benefits I had offered, or maybe the impressive achievement of breaking Cornelia's pride without breaking her, an achievement Marianne was very aware of its difficulty. Regardless of the reason, however, I was more than ready to enjoy the fruits of my own achievement.

And what a naughty fruit it was. She enthusiastically licked every single bit of my shaft, moaning in appreciation as she did so like she was gobbling a gourmet meal. And as she did so, her fat tits pressed against my thighs, which was another delicious experience.

It was a beautiful sight, but after a while, I raised my head to check the condition of the other

beauty in the room, only to see her looking at the scene with a shocked expression. Her eyes widened even further when our eyes met, but then she flattened her expression, trying to act like she wasn't enthusiastically watching the show that was going in front of her.

I had to admit, her noble and uncaring expression was a thing of beauty. I might have even believed it, if it wasn't for her carelessly parted legs. Or more accurately, what her carelessly parted legs revealed. I sent her a mocking smile before letting my eyes drop down pointedly, enjoying the sight of her glistening arousal.

She said nothing, but by shamefully pulling the cover on herself and burying her face between her hands, she answered my question much better than anything she could actually say. I turned my attention back to Marianne, giving Titania space to calm down and get used to her new reality.

My appreciation for Marianne enhanced further when she pulled back to grab a nearby fruit, only to use her healing spells in a surprisingly flexible manner to convert the organic matter into massage oil, all while still staying on her knees. It wasn't a perfect transformation. Not only it happened very slowly, but it was also wasteful in terms of mana.

However, it was not something she could have done with her healing abilities.

"Someone is studying hard," I said in appreciation even as I put my hands on her naked shoulders, caressing gently. My words were not just precautionary words of congratulations. I was impressed because she had shown an improvement I hadn't been expecting in mimicking the wider abilities of Biomancy, all because I had coached her through a very different application of life energy. She wasn't very skillful in using such an ability, but that wasn't important.

The important part was she challenged her limits in a different way without my prompting. Such creativity was a pleasant surprise for me.

"It's just a little trick," she murmured shyly as she raised her hand, showing the massage oil she had created shyly.

"It might be a little trick, but you came up with it by pushing your limits. It's much more important than yet another ability given by your skills or taught by me," I corrected her thinking. Then, I smirked naughtily. "However, we can talk about your magical studies later. Now, why don't you show me what you have in mind with that pocket of oil? Should I lie down?"

"No need," she whispered shyly even as she raised her hands, but she surprised me by using the

oil she prepared on her breasts rather than applying it on my body. Though, when she put her hands on the sides of her breasts and hovered above my crotch, I understood what she was going for.

Understood and approved...

“An excellent show of initiative,” I said in appreciation as she wrapped her tits around my shaft. “You’re learning.”

She moaned at my words, either ignoring or accepting the hidden implications that positioned her as a servant. Admittedly, it was not a bad deal. Her family wasn’t especially eye-catching among the noble families, essentially serving other families. I didn’t doubt that I could take down every single combatant her family could field alone —without even receiving a wound if I could arrange the battlefield beforehand. For her, being my servant was a much better deal than taking control of her own family.

Especially since even if I failed to recover from my setback, I could easily level up to level twenty by bequeathing experience, and even help her level up further by the boring way by increasing her level limit and hunting together.

I neither knew nor cared whether she considered those details before submitting to me wholeheartedly, because I was far too interested in the way her tits stretched to cover my cock with the hot massage oil she had conjured, a moan of appreciation escaping my lips.

And apparently, her acceptance of her new role was also helping her to discover the truth about herself, because there was no sign of hesitancy in her movements as she leaned forward, drowning my shaft between her soft tits, moving up and down, her every move earning a soft gasp from me.

I didn’t stay idle as I received the massage. After throwing another glance at Titania —who was watching the proceedings with an enthusiasm she tried to keep hidden only to fail spectacularly — I turned my attention on the sexy blonde that was doing her best to suffocate my cock the best way possible, and let my hand fall on her shoulder.

She gasped beautifully, but didn’t disobey as my hand slid into her soft hair and pulled her lips closer to my shaft once more. She didn’t waste even a second before capturing my shaft between her lips obediently, her head bobbing back and forth as she tried to take me as deep as possible while keeping her tits on the base of my shaft, not depriving me of the gentle caress of her slippery, oil-covered breasts.

Still, just because her lips were restricted to a limited area didn't mean that Marianne couldn't deliver an amazing performance. Her tongue danced aggressively in her mouth, assisting her lips to a great degree. Her moans of enjoyment, making my shaft rumble beautifully, didn't hurt my pleasure as well.

After her earlier display, her submissive tendencies weren't surprising, though that didn't mean they weren't pleasurable. I was already a good distance into my climax after the short yet intense play with Titania. And with Marianne treating my shaft like a newfound treasure, I consumed the rest of the distance rather quickly.

I checked Titania once again, but this time, I did so through a fleeting glare without alerting her at my gaze, only to find her watching the show with a mesmerized expression. Her body was still covered with the blanket, but it wasn't enough to hide the suspicious movement underneath from my glare.

Even with the cover, it was obvious that her legs were parted, and the subtle movement of her shoulder left no doubt about what her fingers were currently busy with. Surprisingly, as I grabbed Marianne's hair and pushed my shaft deeper into her throat in the preparation of a climax, Titania's excitement intensified further than I had expected.

Delicious little detail, I noted before I turned my full attention to Marianne. I could have pulled Titania's covers magically, forcing her to face her own naughtiness, but why bother, when I could do so in a much more involved manner after she properly recovered from the previous time.

Marianne continued her task enthusiastically, uncaring of the little show that was going behind her. She gasped and gagged and heaved, but that didn't prevent her from swallowing the full length of my shaft.

"Excellent work, sweetie," I said even as I let my hand slip down to her oil-covered breasts, squeezing and grasping to my heart's content. It was an amazing sensation, one that I easily lost myself in for several minutes, while she continued to work on my shaft.

She let out occasional moans and whimpers, which were conveniently suppressed by my shaft lodged in her mouth. I continued to caress her body, reaching toward her stomach before climbing back and working on her shoulders, effectively covering her torso with massage oil even as I worked on her. As the time progressed, her moans were getting more and more enthusiastic.

However, the first climax came from an unexpected source. Titania, who was temporarily abandoned to give her time to recover, exploded in a sudden moan, surprising both of us. I even let Marianne pull back to look while I examined Titania, who was blushing furiously as she trembled with the aftershocks of her self-inflicted climax, doing her best to bury herself into the bed, clearly hoping to be invisible.

Marianne was about to say something, but I put my finger to her lips to silence her, not wanting to take the risk of her saying something that would tick Titania. I didn't want her to feel a grudge, which would be easy to resolve after my inevitable leaving. "Sorry honey. I was waiting for you to recover, and you clearly did. Give me a minute to reward Marianne for her amazing massage."

With that, I grabbed her head and pulled her once more, but this time, fucking her mouth furiously. Marianne's moans of appreciation showed that she was clearly enjoying the aggressive treatment.

I was already primed, and with the help of Titania's surprise show, it didn't take long for me to explode into Marianne's mouth, my seed accompanied by a spectacular gush of mana.

[-4258 Mana]

Her eyes widened as she did her best to swallow the deluge I created, surprisingly managing to swallow all of it without wasting any. Which was well, as every drop was drenched in mana, allowing her to take a huge leap toward her new level. I gave her a moment to catch her breath before speaking. "So, are you ready to attend our glorious head librarian, my dear little Marianne?"

Her enthusiastic smile was truly a beautiful sight...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 2315 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Five

“So, Titania,” I said lazily as I crossed my legs and caught Titania’s eyes, who was split between looking at the door like she wanted to escape the room despite her very noticeable nakedness and hiding under the covers, hoping that pulling the covers on her would somehow make her invisible. “You seem a little tense? Is there a reason for it?”

“T-the battle was difficult,” she managed to stammer, her shyness making her even cuter. In moments like that, it was hard to remember she was actually strong enough to eviscerate the whole town if given a reason. “Not the mention these mysterious hunters. It’s stressful.”

“Of course,” I nodded in understanding, but she shivered upon seeing my smile. Understandable, considering that my smile implied a lot of stuff, with every single one of them ending in with her collapsing into a quivering mess of sweat and ecstasy. “Actually, it’s my fault. I should have considered the impact of this horrible ordeal on you. You need to relax. Maybe I should let you rest.”

Her sudden panic suggested that despite her earlier panic, she was very much against me leaving this quickly. Luckily for her, I had no intention to do so even temporarily. I gestured to Marianne. “Marianne, sweetie, why don’t you help the most important pillar of our school to relax through a massage. She deserves a little pampering after the amazing achievement of defeating two monster hordes in a row perfectly.”

Marianne showed her cute obedience and nodded even as she jumped up to her feet—a move that had a spectacular impact on her curves, especially her delicious breasts. Her expression was calm, though it contrasted greatly with the shine behind her eyes. She was no less enthusiastic than me to properly help Titania get acclaimed with the real meaning of pleasure, it seemed.

Then, she pushed the envelope even more. The short walk between the couch and the bed extended into a short show that nonetheless felt like an eternity, every swing of her beautiful hips enough to inspire a poet for a lifetime. Every time her foot touched the floor, her body trembled lightly, starting from her legs until it reached her most attention-grabbing part, her oil-covered tits.

And if Titania’s shocked gaze was any indicator, I wasn’t the only one that was enjoying the sight. Though, unlike her, I didn’t have a growing panic as the said pair of tits got closer. “I-is this really necessary?” Titania stammered cutely, while Marianne took the last step and dwindled the distance between their naked bodies into nothing. “I can simply catch a short nap.

It would be enough to feel refreshed. I don't want to be a bother."

"Nonsense," I said, not waiting for Marianne to interject. Not that I needed to hurry, as she seemed to be perfectly happy as she perched on the edge of the bed, waiting for our talk to finish. "Marianne is a sweetheart, and she would enjoy helping you relax. Wouldn't you, sweetie?"

"It's a privilege," Marianne answered while she smiled demurely—at least, demurely on the surface, as she wasn't trying her hardest to hide her hungry smile. Though, her lack of effort was understandable. It didn't matter how perfect her expression was, when her hands were already betraying her true thoughts by grabbing Titania's blanket and pulling it off enthusiastically. Titania tried to hold her cover in place, but it slipped off her fingers.

"I don't..." Titania murmured, but when our eyes met, her complaint, which was already lacking in conviction, faded into nothingness. The cover fell to the floor, and Marianne grabbed another fruit to prepare more massage oil.

"Lie down, and let Marianne show her amazing skills on your tense shoulders. And believe me when I say she has great skills. I taught her myself."

That reminder broke through Marianne's confidence, making her blush as she no doubt remembered the initial parts of our relationship, filled with delicious tricks that were enjoyable in a whole different way. Meanwhile, Titania was too busy trying to minimize her exposure as she lay on her back. She even telekinetically pulled a towel to cover her ass as she lay on her face, but Marianne just chuckled as she threw the towel. "We won't need that," she said with surprising confidence, taking Titania's hesitation as a sign to exert her opportunity.

Luckily, she was smart enough to know her limits despite the extraordinary situation and didn't let her pretty mouth spill any statement that could be construed as a taunt. Titania might be shy enough to act like a chambermaid who found herself in the wrong bedroom, but that didn't change the fact that she had both the individual ability and the political position to make Marianne's life a living hell if she wished so.

Marianne pressed her oil-covered hands gently, only for Titania to gasp. "Wow, you really need this massage," Marianne commented offhandedly as she gave Titania's shoulders a squeeze and tested her tenseness.

I leaned back on my seat as I waited for my mana to recover, determined to enjoy the show. With Marianne's torso already glistening with a lot of oil and Titania's body slowly getting

drenched to catch up with her, it was a rather nice show, enough for me to enjoy until my mana recovered completely.

It started rather tame as Marianne gently rubbed Titania's shoulders in circles, though after a few repeats, she decided to cover her fingers a respectable amount of mana to help her. Healing wasn't my strongest forte, but it was easy to recognize the simple cantrip that healers used as a training tool, allowing them to manipulate the muscles. Seeing Marianne using that as a massage tool, my positive impressions got even stronger. She was really taking my half-hearted lesson about creativity to heart.

"How's this?" she asked as her hands slid down, enjoying the wild expanse of Titania's back freely as she worked to demolish the knots created by the siege they had suffered.

"Not ... bad..." Titania managed to murmur before she closed her lips hastily, almost quick enough to successfully confine the moan that escaped its confines.

Almost, but not quite.

It was a familiar moan, one that Titania let out whenever we started our little games. Only at the start, though, because as the time progressed, her moans would lose their hesitance, and become more honest. Still, the sight of her pressing her legs desperately to hide her wetness was a delicious sight.

"Happy to hear," Marianne murmured as she moved down, bypassing her ass to focus on her calves and thighs with the help of a generous slap of oil. Just like I expected, Titania's voice started to lose its shy quality as Marianne's fingers resolved the tenseness of her thighs. Instead, her voice was tainted with the familiar tone of arousal.

While I wasn't surprised by the ultimate result, I was surprised by the speed she was folding under Marianne's touch. Marianne was getting really skilled with her massage technique.

"How do you feel?" I asked after another cute moan escaped her mouth, barely thirty seconds after the first one. "Do you still think that the massage idea was a waste of time?"

"I feel - good!" she answered, her calm answer turning into a shocked cry as Marianne used the opportunity to caress her wet lips, using Titania's distraction to a maximum benefit. With that cry, her already-poor attempts to hide her arousal fallen apart, leaving only naked arousal behind.

Titania tried to keep her legs pinned, but that proved to be unnecessary as Marianne didn't

spend any more time on that sensitive area after her gentle caress, instead of climbing up to focus on the small of her back, drawing large, rhythmic circles.

As Marianne continued to deliver her teasing massage, Titania wasn't the only one that was getting frustrated under the insistent tickling of arousal. I was already sporting a full erection throbbing with enthusiasm as Titania moaned, and the sight of Marianne's naked body, wiggling and jiggling invitingly whenever she made a sharp move didn't hurt the sight any.

My eyebrows rose surprisingly when Marianne suddenly stood straight as she created another generous portion of oil, and this time, applied that on her body rather than drenching Titania's body. I was surprised, not that I was unhappy watching as Marianne covered her whole body with a fresh coat of oil, this time applying that on her thighs as well. However, I wondered what she had in mind.

Luckily, I hadn't needed to wait for long as Marianne climbed on the bed —and displaying her large ass spectacularly as she did so— and trapped Titania's body between the bed and her amazing tits. Titania gasped in shock, but Marianne didn't care as she moved up and down. It was a justified response. If Titania had any complaints about Marianne's touch, she should have complained when we started. Or at least, she should have said something while I was playing with Marianne.

Admittedly, after a brief gasp of shock, Titania's purrs of satisfaction mixed with Marianne, showing that she was too relaxed thanks to massage even deliver a fake complaint.

Those purrs were quick to transform into moans of pleasure under Marianne's repeated actions, her hips rocking reflexively under Marianne's attention, inviting a penetrating presence. Unfortunately for her, I found the show they were putting too spectacular to cut short. I decided to let Marianne play until my mana reserves were replenished.

Still, the desire to bury my face between her thick thighs was hard to suppress. Luckily, Marianne was distracted by Titania's intensifying moans to pay attention to me. I doubted that I could have maintained my determination to stay away if she turned her beautiful blue eyes on me, begging for my touch...

Titania said nothing, but the way her legs parted wider and wider as she abandoned her feeble attempts to ignore the sexuality of her experience. That addition made the desire to reject the call even harder.

Then, Marianne proved her enthusiasm as she suddenly pulled back, only to flip Titania. "W-

what-” Titania stammered, which was cut short as her face was buried in the amazing expanse of Marianne’s tits. A shocking yet interesting move. It didn’t last long, but even after Marianne moved, because her tits were replaced by her lips, silencing her with a searing kiss.

After a slight hesitation, Titania started kissing, adding enthusiastic moans to the mix, especially after Marianne’s hand slipped low and found the treasure between her legs. Her fingers disappeared through Titania’s entrance as their tongues fought against each other, creating an erotic sight.

Soon, Titania’s hands joined the fray, her fingers disappearing into Marianne’s generous bosom, much to Marianne’s appreciation. And Marianne wasn’t the only one happy about the sudden initiative Titania was showing. My heartbeat picked up speed as their dance turned into an oily wrestling match, spreading the glistening liquid even more.

“Amazing,” I whispered to myself, too soft to pull the girls out of their distraction. Understandable, considering Marianne had dedicated her full attention to make Titania squirm, and Titania was busy with moaning with an ever-increasing loudness. She accepted Marianne’s assault passively, enjoying the string of kisses Marianne had left on her body.

Then, I decided to check my status.

[Mana: 5421 / 6600]

With a sigh, I stood up. I had been enjoying watching the show, and I would have loved to watch them until Titania got used to her new reality and start retaliating, but unfortunately, I was being pushed by some external concerns. Still, since my mana hadn’t recovered completely, there was no harm in walking slowly, enjoying the show for a little while more.

As I closed in, Marianne’s hands were exploring Titania’s body aggressively. However, that was just a distraction to hide her general downward movement. Titania kept her eyes closed, moaning repetitively even as Marianne journeyed through her stomach, leaving a kiss for every step.

She only realized what was going on when Marianne’s breath fell on her wet core. Even then, she was far too gone to say anything but a simple word. “Please,” she whispered, her need for a release overwhelming her tone.

Marianne was far too excited to ignore Titania’s heartfelt request and pushed her head between her thighs, her tongue already out to caress her puffed lips. Titania moaned loudly, while Marianne’s tongue delved into her core. And just to make things better, her oil-covered

bottom rose up invitingly, almost intentional, though I could see that Marianne was far too distracted by Titania's delicious taste to remember my presence.

Luckily for her, I was more than ready to remind her of my presence...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 5583 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Six

I had been considering whether Marianne had actually forgotten my presence as I closed in the distance. I received the answer when I spanked her ass, only for her to flinch in surprise. Apparently, Titania's pussy was enchanting enough to make her forget my presence.

That earned a small punishment for her.

"Don't stop," I said even as I climbed on the bed, and pushed my fingers through her gloriously golden hair, keeping her pinned up to her task. Since it wasn't exactly a chore for Marianne, she continued her task with the same enthusiasm after a small break.

Titania looked at me, her expression reminding me of a cute bunny caught in a trap. I couldn't help but chuckle at her shocked expression. "Is there anything you want to say?" I said.

"No, nothing," she answered rapidly before avoiding my gaze even as she crossed her arms over her chest, trying to make the situation less revealing. Well, technically she succeeded, but in the same vein, chipping a couple of cubes from a huge iceberg would make it smaller.

Still, Titania was lucky that I needed to deal with Marianne first. Not only her oiled ass was still pointing upward, waiting for my attention, but also I needed to help her level up more. "So lovely," I murmured in appreciation as I used my empty hand to caress her ass while the other stayed firmly between her blonde locks, enjoying the sensation as her soft flesh swallowed my touch. "So big and soft, yet so shapely. You're a treasure, honey," I murmured in appreciation.

She had an amazing ass, almost rivaling her beautiful tits.

Marianne murmured an answer, though considering I was pushing her head against Titania's crotch, only an indecipherable murmur reached my ears. Still, the sight of her nether lips getting wetter gave me all the answers I needed. Apparently, receiving open compliments was able to trigger a deeper level of arousal even with everything that was going on. I noted that as a happy discovery before starting to act aggressively.

Still, I savored the softness of her ass for a while before moved to the next step. When I aligned my shaft against her wet entrance, she gasped softly, but that was nothing compared to one that she let out when I suddenly shifted my target and pressed against her puckered hole.

"Yes," she moaned in appreciation, this time barely audible even with the sexy barrier that silenced her, showing the effects of our extended anal relationship. Her ass quivered in

anticipation, showing just how much she had missed my thick girth in her ass.

I just chuckled, not bothering to comment. After all the times we had been together, her anal fascination was barely a surprise. I prepared myself to cast a spell to clean her entrance, but to my pleasant surprise, Marianne was faster, flaring her magic to cast a healing spell, both lubricating and cleaning at the same time.

She was getting very proficient in conjuring sex-related organic material, I noted with amusement.

“Excellent initiative,” I said as I leaned in, slipping the head of my shaft into her puckered hole, earning a sharp gasp in response. I didn’t push forward immediately, letting her getting used to my presence, but I didn’t exactly waste my time. I used the opportunity to transfer some mana into her, using some to bequeath her some experience, and the rest to reinforce her soul space, therefore increasing her level cap.

[-1639 Mana]

Despite her loud moan, she continued to lick Titania’s sopping entrance. Titania bit her lips, her eyes closed, her arms crossed over her chest, desperate to keep her moans inside, like doing so would have convinced me that she was just an accidental party to our threesome and not enjoying it even more than I was. Not surprising, considering I was still pushing Marianne’s face against her entrance to make her provide an amazing oral service.

Since one of my hands was empty, I decided to reward Marianne with that. I first caressed her ass gently, surprising her with the sudden intimacy, then shifting into a sharp spank that exploded on her ass, making it jiggle attractively. The muffled cry she let out was a thing of beauty.

Then, her kiss quickened further as one of my hands slid down over her ass and arrived at the treasure between her legs, caressing softly. I could have teased her, but considering the impressive effort she was displaying despite the intimidating presence of Titania—well, at least in the beginning, as the shortish brunette under Marianne, moaning helplessly under the assault of her tongue wasn’t exactly the most authoritative presence possible.

I pushed my fingers deep into her entrance aggressively, drenching them with her wetness even as I slowly pushed my hips forward, forcing her tight hole to widen slowly. As a side effect, her assault on Titania’s crotch intensified even further, making her let out a delicious string of moans.

Even as my fingers quickened, I didn't neglect to push my hips forward steadily, making her ass swallow an ever-increasing portion of my shaft, with rather great results. And Marianne channeled that passion to her tongue, until Titania suddenly let out a loud moan, once again trembling in a familiar manner, signaling yet another orgasm.

"She's still getting used to it," I said as I loosened my grip on Marianne's head, finally allowing her to stop licking Titania's wetness. Still, Marianne only pulled after another minute, clearly enjoying the way Titania was gushing.

"It's obvious," Marianne said after she pulled back, smirking at the trembling figure of Titania, no doubt replacing the supposed impenetrable pillar in her mind with a horny yet hesitant cutie with an extra-sensitive body. "I guess—" she tried to continue, but I interrupted her with a sudden push, making her moan. Partially because I didn't want her to say something to anger Titania, but mostly because I wanted her to focus on solely me.

The warm-up was over, and the real thing about to begin.

I could have pulled her to the couch to let Titania recover while I dealt with Marianne. It would have been a nice thing to do. Instead, I pushed her on top of Titania, their tits pressing against each other, creating an uneven yet spectacular view. Marianne sent me a smug look, proud of her curves, but that didn't last long, immediately replaced by a pained gasp as I pushed deeper inside.

"Damn, girl. You're tight," I gasped as I watched her plump ass hide my considerable length with nothing more than an occasional gasp, proving her amazing ability. Things got even better as she threw her head back and let out a delicious cry before she pushed her hips, quickening her delicious magic trick.

I couldn't help but watch transfixed as she slowly devoured my length, an involuntary gasp escaping the confines of my mouth as I watched the wondrous sight. Her back arched as she managed to swallow my whole length, putting all pressure on Titania. Luckily, Titania might be on the shorter side, but her supernatural strength meant the weight on top of her was nothing more than a horny blanket.

I pushed forth aggressively, enjoying Marianne's uncontrollable shivers while Titania slowly realized what was going on on top of her, her eyes widening in shock as I broke yet another milestone for her with Marianne's assistance.

She was jaw-droppingly marvelous, a state that was only enhanced as her hips started gyrating

as I moved back and forth, like she was delivering a dance show. It was a good show, but it could get better.

I caught Titania's eyes, which were busy radiating a shocked expression. "She's a bit loud. Why don't you silence her?" I asked, only to receive a stupefied look. I sighed. Normally, Titania was one of the smartest people I had ever met, but after three orgasms back to back, especially without her emotional dampener, it was getting difficult for her to process innuendo quickly.

Or maybe, she was just feeling hesitant to take initiative.

Regardless of the reason, I had no problems explaining myself further. "With your lips, sweetheart," I said. A brand new blush covered her body as she processed my order, but the final result was never in doubt. She just leaned forward and captured Marianne's lips, initiating a hesitant kiss.

That sight only made me pump more aggressively, enjoying Marianne's tightness. Meanwhile, each slam made her body shake, making her tits dangle beautifully. I used the opportunity to flood her body with more mana, even as I grabbed her hips tightly, stabilizing her before I intensified my assault even further.

[-2391 Mana]

She just moaned repeatedly —which were successfully muffled thanks to Titania's shy kiss— uncaring of the liberties my hands were taking. Though, admittedly, compared to everything else, what my hands were up to didn't really register on the scale of naughtiness. Even when my fingers slipped into her wetness, pumping furiously once more, her moans only intensified marginally.

Still, the sight of her sharing a kiss with Titania while their tits pressed together was an amazing sight...

Just like that, several minutes passed as we fell into a beautiful monotony, with me pumping her with a hypnotic rhythm while their tongues battled with a slowly increasing intensity. Marianne's back arched occasionally as the pleasure flooded her body, while I continued to stay behind her, happy with my entrenched position.

Titania's face carried the occasional hints of confusion, like she was trying to understand how things had devolved into a pit of depravity, but never longer than a fleeting moment. A caress of Marianne's tongue or a slip of my fingers were always more than enough to pull her out of such pointless pondering, and after each distraction, the distraction between her ponderings

extended further.

What we shared was pure, unadulterated fucking...

“For all that’s holy, fuck me harder!” Marianne cried the moment Titania left them unattended, her earlier controlling attitude long shattered under the pleasure brought by my aggressive impaling.

“As you wish, sweetie,” I said as I spanked her ass, and increased my speed even further, reacting to a pace that would have triggered a heart attack in a lesser man. She grunted as she suffered under my renewed assault—for a very special value of suffering—before I pulled out and ordered. “On your back, bitch, I want to see your slutty face as I cum.”

The sudden change in the nicknames didn’t stop her even for a second as she rolled, laying next to Titania, who was too shocked to adapt to the sudden change, her lips slapping each other like she was still searching for the delicious presence of Marianne’s lips.

Marianne parted her legs, creating an amazing sight as she did so. I slipped into her gaping hole while I pulled her hips toward me, the new angle allowing me to stretch her asshole even further. Her back arched, her amazing tits pointing toward the ceiling, vigorous enough to resist the call of gravity even from her current position. Instead, they swayed like ocean waves with every slam.

I couldn’t help but grunt in appreciation as I felt her legs wrapping around my waist, wordlessly asking me to fill her. I was a hero, meaning I could never reject the kind request of a damsel. With a loud grunt, I exploded, filling her bowels with both my seed and my mana.

[-4825 Mana]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 4. Duration, 8 hours]

I only pulled out after making sure I had dumped every last drop into her. Meanwhile, I could feel my mana reserves refreshing even faster with the assistance of my refreshed perk, the courtesy of my curvy blonde beauty.

With that additional bonus, I decided to skip rest. Instead, I pulled out, cast a convenient spell to clean my shaft and get rid of my sweat at the same time before sliding half a step on the side, essentially recreating the earlier position with two major differences. First, the beauty under me was thin and brunette instead of blonde and curvy. Second, I was pressing against her wet core rather than her backdoor.

“I hope you’re ready for the second round,” I said with a charming smile before sliding into her, enjoying the way her earth-shattering moan slammed to my ear, just like I slammed into her...

Seconds turned into minutes, which gathered a crowd big enough to create hours as I helped Marianne to level up and Titania to recover...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 1394 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Seven

Almost six hours after I had walked into the room, I had long collapsed on the bed next to Marianne's sleeping figure —as Titania had left a couple of hours ago to measure the defensive efforts— trying to push back temptation to sleep next to her, exhausted by the constant exertion, though not the physical side. It was not to say that the physical side of it was not exhausting, but my stats were more than enough to compensate for the particulars.

However, the mental challenge constantly enhancing Marianne's soul space and converting my mana into experience again and again for six hours. And the strain from constantly depleting and refreshing my mana reserves was not inconsiderable.

Pity that with everything going on, I didn't have the time to enjoy some after-sex cuddling.

I had a feeling that, if I dared to do something like that with a lower endurance, I wouldn't have walked out alive. Still, what a way to go.

After throwing one last glance at Marianne, deliciously naked except copious amount of cum covering her tits as well seeping out of her every orifice, still wearing a silly smile even as she slept, I pulled the covers on her and left the room.

Since I had already discussed a strategy with Titania —basically advising her to act like she over-exhausted her mana while staying in a warded location to prevent ambushes— I didn't waste much time in the town. I just walked around once to check the unique chaotic resonance the mysterious organization was using to create artificial monster hordes. Luckily, there didn't seem to be any, suggesting that, at least for the short term, they had reached the end of their little bag of tricks. Then, I conjured another trusty fake elemental steed, and left the town through the same tunnel I had created earlier.

[-1163 Mana]

As I traveled back to Silver Spires, enjoying the wind on my face while I considered the next steps.

The discovery of an organization of mysterious assassins just hours ago put a rather unwelcome twist to the challenge I was facing. First of all, it suggested that I was not the only one with the ability to manipulate the leveling system, but remembering the disgusting sight of their soul spaces, it was clear that they had a wildly different technique than mine. Whether it was the limit of their abilities, or I was facing just the tip of the iceberg, I didn't know.

But I had a feeling that I would learn.

However, their inclusion meant I needed to develop a better strategy to protect myself than just handling whatever they were throwing at me.

The simplest thing to do that would be to talk to the headmistress about the plot, including the existence of the mysterious organization to see whether she would prepare any insights about them. Considering that she was a crone that had been alive for centuries, her knowledge did seem likely. They were targeting Titania, who was one of her loyal supporters until I sunk my hooks into her —well, I did sink something into her, repeatedly, which was decidedly more effective than hooks— which meant there shouldn't be an alliance between the mysterious organization and the headmistress. As a bonus, openly talking with her would increase the defensive effectiveness of the school quite a bit.

Unfortunately, there was one very small problem with that plan. I didn't trust her.

Admittedly, I wasn't the most trusting person. Not that I had the luxury to extend my trust easily considering the challenges I had been facing, the potential worth of my unique system, not to mention the potential shady activities every single organization, official and illegal alike, might do to take someone that could actually manipulate the leveling system.

My distrust toward the headmistress was on another level.

First of all, for someone that managed the most important educational facility of the Empire, she was shockingly unknown, more of a scary ghost that perched on top of Silver Spires rather than an actual educator. And meeting with her directly didn't help any. Her mysterious ability to limit the effectiveness of the system was very scary, and the way she dressed didn't make her any more trustworthy.

Pity that I still had to collaborate with her to some degree.

I started to consider it a dangerous idea. "I need more data," I murmured even as I turned my gaze toward the spires of the school, shining silver from a distance. I needed to know more about her before I could make a decision. What she really looked like? How did she act when alone? What was her objective? Why was she hiding in Silver Spires without taking any action for centuries?

Something resembling a smile crossed my lips as I considered the best way to do so. It had been a while since I sneaked around when being caught meant mortal danger. It was hard to feel the same exhilaration lately, because the worst thing that would happen was to waste a bit more

time to get what I wanted more directly.

Sneaking into the personal tower of the headmistress was the opposite. Sneaking in through those expertly crafted magical defenses was hard enough, and the fact she lived in a self-enforced solitude meant that there was no convenient servant I could disguise myself to create an easy way to sneak in.

More importantly, getting caught had scary consequences, and just to make things better, I had no idea what those consequences would be. I didn't know how strong she was —though considering she had to use Titania as a regent, I had to hope that there were some limits to it. However, even if that assumption was correct, she clearly had a range of mysterious abilities, as implied by her ability to empower Titania and hamper my connection with the system just by walking in her room.

When I arrived at the school, I met with a total cacophony, squads of students leaving the school, led by the faculty members, while the others returned with obvious signs of battle damage, their highly varying numbers and haunted expressions implying casualties.

The strategy to weaken the school through the monster hordes was clearly ramping up.

However, I didn't choose to leave Silver Spires to hunt the hordes, because the number of students and faculty members that were preparing to leave the school was suspicious, as if almost someone was trying to leave the school defenseless. Considering the number of mana gems in the possession of the necromancers had to have a limit, it made sense from their perspective to launch all of them together to deplete the reserves before launching a final assault. Not to mention it was questionable whatever process they had to employ to trigger monster hordes had no other cost.

Of course, I might be completely wrong and they might be just using that to badger all those squads under endless monster hordes before easily marching against the school, but I doubted that. If they had that capability, why would they bother to actually gather a huge undead army?

The commencement of the attack would have given me an excellent opportunity to sneak into the headmistress' room. Unfortunately, I actually had to talk to her before the attack commenced. The involvement of an organization that could send three people over level thirty to a mission together wasn't an entity I wanted to ignore, even at the cost of violating the headmistress privacy despite potential violent consequences. Hopefully, she would be out, discussing some war matters with the rest of the faculty.

For my disguise, I chose a boring gray cloak with a hood, just enough to hide my identity without giving a clue about my affiliations. I doubted that it would be too effective if I got caught, but it at least soothed me mentally.

My real method to keep myself concealed was a complicated arcana array around myself, blocking any hint of presence. It wasn't a mana-intensive spell, but the same way juggling a dozen knives was not a strength-intensive task. It was a complicated mana structure that needed to be maintained and shuffled at all times to catch any scrap mana I radiated. It was only possible through my finally completed Master Arcana skill, and even then, barely.

[-45 Mana]

I could feel sweat dripping down my face as I stood at the entrance of her tunnel, shuffling my own personal ward to prevent any kind of mana or life energy from radiating out as I tangled with the defensive wards of the entrance. It took me twenty minutes even to bypass the outer wards, and another ten minutes to take the first step on the imposing stairs. I climbed them slowly as I constantly used little slivers of mana to assess the ward structure, taking the most challenging walk of my life.

Then, I arrived at her office, only to hear people talking from the other side. Apparently, she was actually having a meeting, quite an important one considering no one had walked in or out while I studied the wards.

Luckily, her office wasn't the only place I could enter using the stairs. One floor up, I could see another door, probably to her living quarters. I took a deep breath as I carefully climbed upward, afraid of what to find in her personal quarters.

When I opened the door, however, I met with a sight even more shocking than I had expected. Not because it was the scariest thing I had ever seen, but because it might have been the poorest personal quarter.

The room itself was quite large, however, other than a weird crystal in the middle of the room, and a huge shelf filled with books, I could easily convince myself that I walked into the servants' quarter. The bed was small and uncomfortable looking, there was a long pole with five hangers, one empty, the other four with dark colored misshapen cloaks, just like the one that she had been wearing during our meeting. Though, despite their misshapen nature, their inner lining was covered with an impressive number of runes, some familiar, some utterly foreign, suggesting they were not simple utilitarian garments.

There was no bed, but just a cot was thrown in. Other than that, there was a small desk in front of the shelf along with a chair, both looking supremely uncomfortable. On a corner, there was a small pitcher of water and a washbasin. The floor was bare stone, absent of any kind of carpeting.

Even my room when I was the mule was supremely better than this horrible prison place.

My attention turned into the crystal in the middle. Essentially, it was a platform, about a foot in height and four heights in diameter. It looked like a solid diamond, which was a ridiculous contrast to the poorness of the rest of the room.

The crystal was perfectly circular, and its surface, other than an impressive number of rune carvings that I no idea what it meant. However, they were written in the same script I had found in the book I had acquired from Titania's library when I started scouting her. Ultimately, the crystal was the main suspect for limiting my contact with the System.

Pity that I had forgotten to check about Helga's progress on that, or even bother to question Titania about it.

The shelf was equally impressive. Like everything else in the room, it was crafted horribly, but the number of leather-covered books, actively radiating mana stronger than most magic items, which I didn't think was possible. However, since their names on their spines were written on the same confusing script, I decided to examine the crystal first.

I walked closer, and touched it with my mana ... and suddenly, my mana calmed. The difference was like a calm lake and a typhoon. I had no doubt that, if I cast a spell-like this, the effects would be much more precise than I ever thought possible.

My mind flew through the possibilities, sharper than I ever thought possible. With every passing second, I was reaching a new understanding of magic regardless of the topic. My perception of the different topics started to merge...

It was a beautiful moment of enlightenment, so much that I felt very annoyed when the annoying click of the door distracted me from my musings.

Then, I remembered where I actually was! "Fuck," I murmured as I did the only thing I could do. I dashed toward the only thing I could hide behind, the bookshelf, even as I cast a weird spell that perfectly merged the concepts of air element and arcana simultaneously, creating an illusion to hide me from the sight. It granted me near-perfect invisibility as long as I didn't move.

Ironically, casting such an intricate spell was only possible due to the extreme calmness of my mana, given to me by the same item that caused me to be caught in my current circumstances. I watched with no little amount of trepidation as the hunched figure of the headmistress walked toward the middle of the room, my heart beating like crazy.

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 1394 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Eight

I had to admit, as I watched the headmistress walking toward the middle of the room after closing the door, I was afraid for the first time for a long while, though fear wasn't alone for long. Because, as the headmistress walked toward the hangers that held her spare cloaks, her back turned against me to display her horrifying hunch, I realized that in a few seconds, I would meet with the horribly-misshapen old crone that was hiding under the cloak, too horrible to be shown even her closest supporters.

I bit my lips to suppress the inevitable gasp of horror that would escape my lips as her arms moved toward the front of her body and started to unbutton her robe, glad that I was looking at her back, therefore freed from the disgusting sight of her body...

Then, with one rapid move, she freed her body from her robe and I witnessed her naked body. Shock invaded my body, like an absentminded part of my mind was glad that I was biting my lips to prevent a shocked gasp. Partially because of an unbelievable aura spreading out of her, thick enough to be suffocating, but mostly because of the visuals that resulted from the removal of her robe.

The sight that I met was as unbelievable as I expected, not just the direction I had expected. I was expecting nothing more than a horribly misshapen old crone, but instead, my eyes met with perfection itself.

The only thing that conformed with my expectation was the silver hair, and even then, it wasn't the murky light gray hair of an old person that was called silver just to soften the blow, but the actual color of the freshly-polished silver, together with the shine.

Her hair was the least impressive part of her. I just focused there, because it gave me a chance to adapt to changes. Then, I moved onto the other important details, her body, and ignoring the most striking part for the moment.

Her body was literally perfect. Her skin was utterly flawless. I knew that, because under her robe, she wore absolutely nothing, providing me an extended chance to examine her flawless body. She stood in perfect posture, which gave me the perfect angle to examine the perfection that was her ass. It was shaped perfectly, firm and tight, yet suggesting an amazing softness if I could be lucky enough to touch. Meanwhile, her inner thighs begged to be nibbled endlessly...

She turned and walked toward the crystal in the middle of the room, unknowingly bequeathing me with the privilege of seeing her beauty from the front. Her smooth, perfectly toned stomach

beautiful, and her collarbones and her elegant neck were flawless enough to make an army of poets commit suicide due to their inability to describe her perfection through words. And that was before arriving at her face, as flawless as the dawn of a cloudless day peeking over the most beautiful mountain range.

She was beautiful, but it was not a beauty that belonged to this plane of existence, disguised in an unnatural calm. The absolute stillness of her face, lacking even a hint of emotion, was a part of that perfection, yet it somehow made her less attractive at the same time.

Then, there were her breasts. Two globes of perfection begged to be licked again and again to break her smooth expression, to force the imperfection of arousal into her flawless face that looked like that was carved out of marble.

Of course, her unnatural beauty wasn't the most shocking thing about her. No, that honor went to a pair of silver wings on her back, matching the color of her hair, only even shinier. Even when gathered on her back, they looked holy, worthy of reverence.

She was a freaking angel!

It was certainly a surprise, because the general consensus had been that angels were just a mythological story, with no evidence of their existence. They were supposed to be the servants of the gods, carrying their wills and orders, but just like the existence of the gods, they were supposed to be completely fictional.

And, I watched excitedly as she took a step toward the washbasin, making my excitement peak even higher. From my hidden angle, I had a perfect view of her back, flawless with a pair of silver wings pointing out, stretching after a day being stuffed under her cloak, faking to be a hunch. I was guessing that it was an uncomfortable feeling.

I should be considering the best way to escape my circumstances, because I could feel the supernatural control of my mana was slowly fading back. Not quickly enough to make it a problem for the next few minutes, or maybe even the next hour, but just enough to tell me that whatever advantage that crystal bestowed was only temporary. However, I felt it was impossible to pay attention to the amazing sight of a naked angel, about to have a bath in front of me.

I watched as she filled the basin completely before casting a very intense light magic on the water, suggesting that it was more of a ritual than a casual bath. A set of previously invisible runes suddenly radiating on the washbasin suggested that it was a regular occurrence.

The risk of getting caught was considerable, and the consequences were hard to imagine. It wasn't impossible for her to try to take me down to hide her secret, which she had gone a long way to keeping hidden. Still, a part of me missed that. After all, ironically enough, hiding in a corner and watching as a woman that was much stronger than me, with a mistake enough to bring all crashing down.

Unsurprisingly, a certain part of my anatomy joined the game with great enthusiasm as I watched her finish infusing the water with her light magic before grabbing a tankard and used it to wash her body, her hand dancing on her body, and the water pooled around her feet before evaporating with a flash of magic. For a moment, I focused on the magical implications, because while the water was visually clean, from a mana perspective, it was dirtied with darkness and shadows.

It didn't take long to realize it was the aura of darkness that filled her room and surrounded the tower. It was clearly having dangerous side effects on her if it managed to infuse her body to such a degree. Which brought up the most important question again. Who the hell she was hiding from?

However, as she turned a bit and her breasts came into view again —large, firm, and tipped with rosy red nipples, this time being caressed by her soft hands as they were covered with a thin layer of shimmering water— my attention was fully commanded by them, and the question momentarily faded into the background. A fireball could have exploded in front of me and I would have paid it scant attention as I enjoyed the sight of their perfection. She was truly an angel, pure and perfect.

And very arousing.

Her hands continued to sweep over her breasts, lathering them with more and more magically infused water. With her every repeat, the trace amounts of darkness that infused into her body pulled away, enhancing her beauty even further. It was extremely erotic.

I wondered if she would caress her breasts with that tenderly if she knew she was being watched? When her hands moved south, caressing her stomach tenderly, it looked even more beautiful. Unfortunately, rather than playing with herself, she focused on cleaning herself tenderly yet calmly.

As a benefit, as she continued to caress her stomach, she turned toward me even more, displaying her beautiful breasts in full view. She leaned forward, creating an amazing cleavage while proving that her wings weren't the only way she was defying gravity.

Then, things got even better as she focused on her legs. At first, I felt a bit disappointed that her movement made her turn her back toward me, as while her ass looked amazing, her full-frontal beauty was even more overwhelming. Then, she leaned forward, forcing me to adjust that view. Because as she bent forward, she displayed her ass in the best manner possible, making my shaft harden even more.

Unfortunately, I was too afraid of actually pulling my shaft out to get a handle of my arousal, and suffered the tightness in my pants instead.

Instead, I watched silently as she used her magic to slowly dry herself, bending forward for a few times more as she did so, enjoying the tenseness of her lovely legs, as well as the little, peek into her smooth core. My shaft got harder and harder as I watched, almost reaching to a torturous hardness, especially with a part of my instincts begging me to stain that purity.

Then, she started walking, this time toward the crystal. When she headmistress stepped onto the crystal and a white bright light covered her body, making it look like she was behind a sheet of rainy glass, obscuring the view —yet somehow making her even sexier in the process, her eyes closed. Then, she sat, her eyes closed, and her wings opened.

I finally had the opportunity to move, but instead, I continued to observe her. The aura that covered her body was too familiar. It gave the same tranquil sensation Titania's little knot of light had been providing, just a thousand times stronger. If it wasn't for the layers of wards around her office, it couldn't have been felt from miles away by even the weakest mage.

Even more interestingly, it wasn't the crystal that was radiating the aura, but the headmistress. Instead, just like how it impacted my mana by calming it down, as the time passed, it was suppressing the domineering aura inside her. Whatever was the source of the aura, the headmistress was clearly having trouble containing it.

Then, before I could even consider the implications of such a thing, I had an unexpected help identifying the source of the aura.

[Divine Spark Identified! Please absorb it to continue to support the operations of the System]

The identification of the source of the headmistress certainly added another complexion to the already-complicated situation..

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6600 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Nine

As I watched the enticing angelic figure of the headmistress wrestling with an ever-growing pure aura of light as if she was trying to prevent herself from burning up. As the light aura grew stronger and stronger, I was able to detect the pull of an unfamiliar radiance that I actually sensed through my soul. It didn't take a genius to realize it was the call of the Divine Spark, something I was finally able to detect without the assistance of the system as the intensity of the power increased.

A potential power source was here, and the headmistress was clearly at her weakest, giving me the perfect opportunity to make a move.

Unfortunately, I was quick to abandon that tactic, even as a possibility, because as I absorbed a sliver of aura, it burned inside my soul space ceaselessly like it met with an enemy, forcing me to push it out, creating a mana flare as a result. Luckily, her out-of-control aura was enough to drown the small flare of mana that exploded.

The effect of the divine spark, even a sliver of it, was much more violent than I had expected, enough for me to abandon any hasty attempt trying to absorb that. I needed to get a better understanding of the nature of the Divine Spark as well as how to contain that.

However, that was a task for a later time. The brightness around the headmistress got stronger and stronger, to a point that I could barely see a silhouette of her.

It was the best opportunity to leave the room, and since she was clearly had other priorities, it also meant a small opportunity to visit her office. With the additional control given by the weird crystal—even though its effects already started to fade noticeably—I was able to break through the defenses of the office quickly. One interesting thing was that the moment I stepped out of the confines of her room, I lost my ability to detect the aura of light she was spreading despite the intensity.

The magical isolation in her room was impressive if it could keep that explosive aura completely contained. With that isolated, it was going to be an easy job...

... at least, that was what I had been hoping for, but the fates decided to give a different gift to me. The moment I cracked open the door, I came face to face with another hooded figure with absolutely no visible location. Her clothes and the cloak covered her body perfectly, not revealing even a hair. Despite that, however, it was very clear that she was a female.

A skin-tight leather suit was not particularly efficient in terms of hiding the delicious curves of the body.

The more important detail was her reaction. Even if the way she dressed hadn't been enough to reveal that she didn't have any more right to actually be in this place rather, her panic at seeing me revealed that she didn't have any more right to be here than I did.

Unfortunately, she moved even quicker than I could react—at least, not without summoning enough mana to risk being caught in the first place. So, I watched as the thief threw herself back, breaking through the window, triggering every single ward in the office in her hurry.

“Fuck my luck,” I murmured as I used the stairs to dash out before the headmistress could react. I had no idea how long it would take to suppress the Divine Spark and join the chase, but I certainly didn't want to get caught. Still, I didn't want to get away empty-handed, so before leaving, I arrived at the bookshelf, used my cloak as a bag to shove everything on the desk before treating the books on the shelf the same.

Then, I dashed away, undecided about whether I should be happy or sad about the sudden intrusion. While the surprise thievery prevented me from examining the office carefully, it also gave me a convenient scapegoat to steal everything from her desk. While the thief was being chased by the guards after her very noticeable escape through the window, I dashed to my room and put the cloak in a corner—warded it carefully to prevent detection in case the headmistress decided to rely on magical investigation methods—before leaving the room to join the hunt for the thief.

Whether to thank her for making my life easier or ruining my plan, I would only know after examining my accidental loot.

The moment I stepped outside, I was met with total chaos, with people running around like a headless chicken. Apparently, the extensive defensive preparations they deployed against a possible invading army weren't enough to catch a thief. I wondered whether it was because of the monster hordes forcing the school to deploy the elites out, or the effectiveness of the spies inside the school sabotaging the defense efforts.

Regardless of the reason, however, it didn't bid well for the survival chances of the school, even with the magical defenses updated. I really needed to come back and pay some attention to it.

But before that, I needed to catch a naughty thief and teach her a lesson. After sneaking out of the school, I was quick to cast a spell that was quickly becoming my most favorite one, and

summoned another elemental mount.

[-1183 Mana]

With the speed advantage it granted, it hadn't been difficult to catch up with the thief and a large group of guards following her. The headmistress was absent. Unfortunately, I didn't know whether it was because she didn't want to have the risk to act and get ambushed like Titania had been ambushed earlier, or the stuff I managed to steal wasn't important for her to bother acting.

Also, pity that she had used her cloak to wrap her body completely, not giving me another glimpse of her curvy body wrapped in a leather bodysuit.

I watched from a distance —with an illusion to cover my presence— as the guards attacked the thief again and again with a dangerous mixture of ranged weapons and spell attacks, only for our thief to dance between the attacks. It was an impressive combination of skills, stats, and endless practice, and even more impressive because I could see that she wasn't stretching herself to her limits.

I was wondering the benefits of intervening to look like I took her down to get some brownie points from the headmistress —but not actually catch her, as doing so would remove my convenient scapegoat. I didn't hurry up, because, despite the relentless attack, she was yet to attack back.

However, as she ducked and weaved between the attack with beautiful grace, I noticed a pattern in a particular direction the thief was driving the guards. I prepared myself to intervene. While my sense of belonging to the school was shaky, it wasn't shaky enough to actually let them be killed by a bunch of random people. I gathered my mana, ready to cast an inferno that would turn the thief and everything fifty feet around her to remove the even slightest hope of escaping —and also conveniently giving me an excuse about the lack of books and other trinkets in the possession of her body— when her dark figure delved through overgrowth and dashed out at the other side...

Or more accurately, a dark figure dashed through the other side of the overgrowth. It wasn't a disguise in the first place despite the advantages given by her cloaked body. The new figure was taller by a couple of inches, for example, not to mention lacking her natural grace when she displayed during her endless dodging.

But there was no hope for them to trick me, because, from the difference in their movement, it

was clear that the new figure was a man. Just the way he stepped was enough to reveal that.

The new figure dashed forward furiously, using pure speed to open the distance between him and the group, luring them away from the outgrowth. A rather impressive switch, I noted as I watched them disappear, satisfied with their lack of actual violence.

From what I could read from her abilities, the thief herself was alone to take a significant portion of the group down, and the man that took her place as decoy didn't look any weaker. They could have taken down the guards if the man had ambushed them, but instead, they were being really careful to handle things without violence.

So, I stayed back with a clean conscience, hiding myself —rather easily, as I was still under the effect of the weird buff I received from the crystal platform— while I waited for my sexy thief to step out of the outgrowth.

And she did so after five minutes, dashing forward at a decent pace. I followed her with a wide smile, because without the absence of a respectable horde of guards, she had finally loosened the cloak around herself, giving me a better view of her body, wrapped in tight leather, her strong legs tightening with every step deliciously, tempting me to unwrap her from that leather outfit like a gift, curious what I would find underneath.

I just needed to find her destination.

I hadn't had to wait for long, as barely twenty minutes of desperate dash later, she finally arrived at a caravan, and sneaked into it. It was a large caravan, surrounded with a well-armored guard regiment, clearly proficient. The first layer of the guards hadn't even noticed her presence, but I saw a guard defending one of the inner carts move slightly to allow her to pass easily. She clearly belonged to that caravan. I didn't follow her, because the guards surrounded the inner coaches looked too strong to trick easily. And if the damaged state of the carts and the guards were any indicator, things were clearly not

Unfortunately, it wasn't convenient for me to attack the group, because of one important detail. The caravan was flying the personal standard of the Royal family, which meant only one thing.

The crown princess had finally arrived.

I couldn't help but sigh as I decided to return to the school. The current situation was complicated enough with the necromancers, their spies, a mysterious organization with the ability to control monsters and create artificial warriors, the surprising twist about the true nature of the headmistress... Things were hard to navigate enough before adding a royal family

member who was supposed to be in the school just to craft a weapon, but turned out to be daring enough to steal stuff from the most secure room from the

And while technically it was possible that it wasn't the crown princess that sent the thief, that wasn't good news if that was the case. Because if there was someone in the royal caravan that could not only send such a capable thief out but also arrange a guard to ignore her presence but with a differing goal from the princess herself, that wouldn't help any in terms of a complicated situation. So, I really hoped the princess was responsible for the thievery.

I started traveling the same route, my mind occupied by the possible ramifications of the latest revelations, and whether I could turn them to my own benefit...

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Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

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Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

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HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6219 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Ten

After the frustrating discovery that not only the Princess's party was larger and stronger than I expected, but also their willingness to get involved in the chaos that surrounded the school in such a direct manner was much sharper than I expected, I wanted to nothing but a curse.

I was trying to deal with too many agents of carnage with only a few allies, and things were already difficult to handle before adding another layer of chaos to the game, especially since that supposed addition potentially brought a huge mess of possible Royal involvement.

It wouldn't have been that horrifying if the crown princess wasn't on the edge of being deposed—which meant I could actually try to ally with her without fear—or she had just come with a few bodyguards to get Oeyne to forge her a weapon and leave—instead of a group that was large enough to classify as a small army, with an unknown number of spies and enemy agents.

An annoying realization started to pickle my mind, that I probably should have pushed for a closer relationship with the headmistress, using Titania as the connection. At least, that way, I could generate a better understanding of her true objectives. The reveal that she possessed the same resource that was preventing me from getting stronger made that annoyance even stronger.

Admittedly, seeing what lay under her robes went a long way to make me revisit my initial decision to keep her at arm's length.

What could I say? I was just a poor man with a slightly overactive libido.

Luckily, I wasn't too late. The items I had 'borrowed' from her room would no doubt help me to get a better understanding of her mind. More importantly, I had the perfect gift to give her.

[-619 Mana]

I pumped some mana to my elemental steed to push myself higher in the air, using an illusion to hide me from the view. I stopped climbing only when I was almost two miles high, giving me a perfect view of the plains that surrounded the school, while being too high to notice the individual monsters even if they weren't trying to escape.

Luckily, the monster hordes were much easier to detect. Just follow the piles of dust that were struggling to reach the sky. Despite slow encroachment of the night, the plains were still bright enough not to miss such an impressive spectacle—and a pair of sharp eyes, enough to

challenge an eagle, helped.

Hitting the first horde was almost trivial, but before I delved into them, I hit a trio of robed figures observing the horde, one of them radiating the same chaotic magic that I had felt many times before about the mana gems.

“I’m going to be rich,” I murmured even as I jumped off my mount, diving directly down, not wanting them to notice the mana fluctuations of my mount. I didn’t want to waste my time, and more importantly, I didn’t want them warning others magically.

And admittedly, with my connection with the element of air was enhanced, falling down the sky with nothing to cut the sensation down, nothing but a sword in my hand, was quite fun. I closed my eye for a moment, enjoying the sensation as the distance between me and the ground — and more importantly, the distance between the people that were directing the horde and my sword— was getting smaller and smaller. Only when there were twenty feet between me and the ground I used magic to cushion my fall.

Draining all that momentum turned out to be an unpleasant sensation.

[-81 HP]

[-64 Mana]

“Fuck, I should have started earlier I murmured even as my feet slammed on the floor, while an expression of shock appeared on the face of the trio. Being ambushed was unpleasant, but being ambushed by someone dropping from the sky was doubtlessly worse. Unfortunately, I couldn’t have asked for a first-hand account, because a slash of my sword, followed by a rain of arcana bolts was enough to evaporate them.

“Weak,” I murmured in disappointment as I pulled my sword. They were barely level ten, maybe even lower, not that I bothered to check their soul spaces carefully. Instead, I quickly went through their possessions to find something unusual, either as a clue or for my own usage —but my findings turned out to be disappointing.

The horde itself wasn’t too challenging as well. A few surges of mana turning into fire and earth was enough to cut through the initial mass of the monster to leave the leading monster alone, and another surge was enough to remove the gem from it.

[-593 Mana]

The horde was weak. Suspiciously so, enough that Cornelia could have handled that alone — though not without exhausting herself to the limit, and certainly not strong enough to breach into a fortified settlement— which made me assume some interesting conjectures about their sudden change of plan.

Maybe, the organization that was supporting the undead horde with the magical items decided to achieve their aims without causing so much civilian death. Technically, it made sense, but after everything, I doubted that they were being held back by that.

Then, I noticed another horde spilling out of a nearby canyon, so I decided to handle that as well before continuing with my assessment. As I got closer, however, I noticed three shadows slipping back to the canyon, no doubt noticed the destruction of the other horde.

Wide-area fire spells weren't exactly inconspicuous, especially in the red dimness of the dusk.

Fortunately, while my martial expertise was limited to melee, I was more than happy to use magic to handle them, I extended my mana, and three jagged rocks jumped out of the ground, skewering them.

[-310 Mana]

Admittedly, it was a wasteful manner of casting, wasting a nice chunk of mana to kill three people on the range. I needed to develop better-ranged spells that couldn't be countered easily. A trip to their side netted me another mana gem, then, I started working on the horde.

[-483 Mana]

It turned out to be even weaker than the previous horde, allowing me to cut through them with great ease. Their weakness despite being so close to the towns revealed that it was not just an accident, but a real strategy. The question was, why?

A weird fluctuation from the gems pulled my attention. I turned my gaze at them, and sunk my mana, trying to examine their structure, only for a sudden mana surge to grow. "Fuck," I murmured as I threw it away, while I ordered my mount to move back as quick as possible. I had no idea why the gem was exploding, but the explosion of a mana gem should be extreme.

Then, it exploded, only to disappoint me. It was not nearly potent as I expected from a mana gem to be. Suspicious, I examined another one, but more carefully, hoping not to trigger the explosion. It eventually did explode, but not before I realized the source of their fragile nature.

They were fake.

Even better, it was impossible to use any of the usual detection magics and wards to actually discover their explosive nature, because, technically, they weren't explosives. They neither used fire to burn their surroundings, nor they used arcana to twist their surroundings in a way that was deadly to any living —or undead— being. They were simply artificial mana storages, which discharged after their outer layer was breached.

It was not an efficient explosive in terms of mana spent, not even slightly close, but that didn't matter much when their primary usage was to create monster hordes.

“Motherfucker,” I murmured as I changed my route back to the school. The plan was dangerous in its simplicity, because if they sent those weak hordes to the towns who had just successfully conclude their defense mission, only to discover a mana gem in the leading monster precious enough to make the defenders fight for it.

An explosion at that point would be the perfect device to remove a high-level combatant from the battle.

My lethargy had disappeared as I changed my direction toward the school once more, to have a proper meeting with the headmistress. She was the only one that could send the news about the plan to every defender simultaneously.

And maybe a chance to breach the topic of 'helping' the headmistress handle the weight of the divine spark...

[Level: 30 Experience: 447193 / 465000

Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 5491 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Eleven

After rushing back to school, I wasn't surprised to find the courtyard as a confusing mess, the guards and students running around to establish a secondary defensive line to prevent anyone else from escaping, but the lack of surprise didn't equal a lack of disappointment.

"It's supposed to be the strongest bastion of humanity," I murmured in disappointment as I watched the ineptness of the defensive force as they tried to establish a defensive force. Even the existence of the spies on the higher ranks wasn't enough to excuse this incompetence.

A sigh escaped my mouth, considering the relative merits of actually asking the headmistress to take control of the defenses. Making myself a target —even more than I already was— ranked quite low on the list of my priorities, but it was still ranked above losing my only effective power base.

Not to mention, the headmistress was important for more than one reason. Not only she was currently my only clue about the Divine Spark, she most likely knew much more about what a Divine Spark in the first place. I highly doubted that her true identity as a mystical angel and her possession of a Divine Spark was a coincidence.

And it would be a lie to say that I wasn't imagining bending her over against the window of the highest tower, pulling back her wings, and impale her repeatedly as I interrogated her...

I cut through the crowd, directly to her tower, cutting through the wards she had established around her tower. It was a nice change to casually cut through them rather than fiddling with them for several minutes while trying to stay concealed. I wanted her to know I was coming.

I found the headmistress in her office, sitting behind her desk, once again concealed with her dark robe, her wings gathered behind her to create an impression of a hunched crone. However, knowing what lay underneath —and the fact she wore nothing under that robe— I felt excited. The room looked pristine at first glance, but both her desk and her shelf were considerably poorer thanks to my restless fingers.

"What are you doing here?" she asked in a crooked voice, perfected to make her look like she was a woman that was battling the ailments of aging unsuccessfully, but now that I knew what to look for, it was easy to identify the artificial nature of her sound. The fact that she wasn't focusing on her acting made that even easier.

She wasn't paying attention to her act, because her attention was on her magic. As she spoke, a

wave of magic slammed against me, dark enough to suffocate me. She trembled as the threatening waves slammed against me, giving the impression that she was barely holding herself back.

Amazing performance, I noted in my mind. If I hadn't known the magic she was using wasn't the opposite to her true nature, making her even less threatening than her usual state, I might have actually felt scared. But considering her light-based magic, she was actually making herself weaker as she tried to intimidate me. Otherwise, she wouldn't have to cleanse herself from darkness through that ritual.

Of course, I could have acted like a craven visitor, like I was scared of her display of power, but I decided against it. I had enough leverage to push her buttons without courting death, unless she wanted to reveal her true nature to everyone on the edge of a crisis. "Hello to you as well," I droned calmly.

Her shadow magic staggered for a moment as she moved. It wasn't hard to imagine her cute face frowning under the shadows of her cloak as she tried to understand the implications of my casual response. "Speak," she ordered a second later, once again leaning on her mysterious headmistress persona.

"If you want to be a bitch about it," I whispered to myself, with the full knowledge that she would hear. But before she could even process that calculated disrespect, I pulled the remaining two fake mana gems and passed one to her. "Look what I had found," I said to her as I passed them.

She cast darkness magic to cover the gem completely before pulling it telekinetically. "Careful," I warned her, not because I expected it to hurt her to a significant degree, but I didn't want to be blamed for an inept assassination attempt.

She established a shield around the gem to protect herself before filling the said sphere with darkness. I acted nonchalantly as I examined the flood of magic, only to notice the distinct flare of light magic under the concealment of the darkness. She clearly didn't trust her darkness magic enough to cast detection through it.

Then, a few seconds later, the gem exploded —rather harmlessly thanks to her shield. I was happy to see the gem explode, because it implied that her magical detection capabilities weren't too much above mine, at least not when she was multitasking by duel-wielding magic of opposite natures.

Her posture stiffened as the explosion faded. "What's this?" she asked.

"It's the second wave of the monster hordes I managed to intercept. I managed to intercept two of them in twenty minutes. I'm willing to bet that they are sending them to every single location. You better warn the teams there that the gems they extract from the monsters might be trapped."

"All of them?" she asked, for once the crackling artificial nature of her voice disappearing as she pronounced the first word, instead of starting with a smooth, melodic tone, more beautiful than every single piece of music I had the pleasure to listen. "Explain."

"Your Highness," I said, adding just enough mocking edge to leave no doubt that I was mocking her. I wanted to remind her that I was not a subordinate of hers. "Whoever was behind the attacks, they seem to be determined to weaken your loyal forces further using the opportunity."

"Don't you think that it's the necromancers?" she said, her tone cracking once more, but despite that, she had made a big mistake as she tried to process the surprise. It was the first time she was asking my opinion rather than giving an order, which made an obvious attempt to distract me from the truth. Unfortunately for her, that deviation strongly suggested that she was aware of the mysterious organization's presence, and that awareness stretched back quite a while. Otherwise, she would have revealed their presence.

"Not really. If that power belonged to them, they would have used that before," I answered before smiling, with a slightly mocking edge to anger her further. Knowing that she wouldn't dare to reveal her true power gave me an edge in our discussions that I wanted to push to the limit. "However, wouldn't it better to continue this discussion after you alert the defenders about trapped gems. Unless you have too many soldiers and you want to use the opportunity to get rid of some of them, of course."

She took an audible breath, reflecting her frustration in a visceral manner. She clearly didn't appreciate my mocking an hour after her office was broken in. Despite her cloak, I could see that she had to struggle to keep her temper down.

"It's better to avoid jumping to conclusions," she murmured before she pulled a crystal from the depths of her desk, and used that as a focus to cast a spell, no doubt sending a magical message using one of the contingencies they had set up.

While she was busy with communication, I pulled a chair and sat across her without her permission, even crossing my legs and leaned back to show my relaxation. Even as she spoke, I

could feel the weight of her gaze. I managed to properly anger her.

As she spoke, I spent my time imagining the flawless body underneath her body —though I also set up a fake soul space to trick her once more just in case she started to feel jealous. The effect of the crystal was still working —through to a reduced degree— which meant the fake space was much more believable.

[-23 Mana]

It took five minutes for her to put down the crystal once more. I spoke before she could take the control of the discussion. “So, you were going explain this new organization supporting the necromancers,” I said despite being well-aware that not only she hadn’t slipped up enough to admit her knowledge, but also she was —or at least, should have been— smart enough to know that she hadn’t made a mistake of that extent. I was pushing my luck, which also suggested I had come across them during one of the missions.

It was a strategic move, both pushing her to give me information, but also simultaneously giving her the opportunity to strengthen the alliance between us. I was hoping that my arrogance would sell the idea that the imaginary organization behind me was strong enough for her to make such a move worthwhile.

She came to a quick decision. “There is a group called the Knights of the Eternal Vigil, or Eternals for short,” she started, and I put my whole effort to push a fake expression, like I tried to suppress my shocked expression, keeping my face calm except one subtle twitch, trying to sell the idea that I knew about them. If she thought that I was testing her by asking something I already knew, she would give me more information, thinking that she was converting a useless chip into goodwill.

It was a tricky line to walk.

“Their root goes back to ancient times, a time before the Cleansing,” she said, and I took a note of the term she had used. Cleansing was no doubt referring to the catastrophic event that changed the world, but there was not a lot of information about the nature of the event. But the term she was using for that was really specific, meaning, she likely knew what happened those days.

Maybe she was alive those days. After all, I had no idea how long an Angel could live, or whether they even have a natural lifecycle.

“They had been established by a group of Divine-touched, led by seven demigods, on the city of

Akhenaten, to protect people from the excess of the storm god,” she said, giving me another shock. Yes, the presence of an angel in front of me—in addition to the rather suggestive name of Divine Spark— suggested the legends about the old gods might not be as artificial as I had first assumed, but to be confirmed by her with such casualness was a different thing. I tried to process the blow while she gave a breakdown of the names of the demigods and some notable Divine-touched, without actually explaining what a Divine-touched was.

I couldn’t even guess from their abilities, as none of the events she mentioned meant anything for me. Smart, I thought. She was clearly testing the limits of my knowledge, maybe even slipping some fake information as insurance. So, I decided to act like I hadn’t recognized anything other than major references to the concept, like the nature of the demigods and divine-touched—hiding them behind the appropriate fake expression to make her work for that information, of course.

“A lofty goal,” I murmured, cutting her history expression short. “I’m going to guess that their nobility didn’t extent forever.”

“Not particularly, no,” she continued. “Their daring to stand against him enraged the Storm God, and he sent his own forces to destroy the city of Akhenaten. The battle lasted for a century, but much to the surprise of everyone, the battle ended with the Storm Avatar being slain, damaging the very soul of the Storm God.”

“Impressive,” I murmured, aware that the true fun was just about to start. “What happened after that?”

“Then, they got arrogant...” the headmistress said with her raspy tone, the darkness around her tightening. This time, the darkness felt less like magic, and more like a natural reaction. Much to my surprise, it didn’t even felt connected to Headmistress, but as a part of the aura of the room, independent of her control.

[Divine Spark Identified! Please absorb it to continue to support the operations of the System]

The presence of a second Divine Spark surprised me immensely. My little angel was naughtier than I expected...

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Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twelve

“So, what was the cost of their arrogance,” I asked, trying to ignore the fact that I had detected another Divine spark in the room, though I had no idea about the exact location. The confirmation about the existence of the gods —not to mention a tale of war between the mortals and immortals— was revolutionary enough to earn my full attention.

“Yeah, humans got arrogant, big surprise,” she murmured, giving a statement that would have surprised me if I hadn’t already discovered her true identity. “The Eternals decided that since they were able to banish one of the strongest demonic gods from the material plane, they thought that they could replicate the feat. They started to target the other gods...”

“And I’m going to take a wild guess and say that gods didn’t appreciate that,” I said mockingly.

“No, they did not, especially when they decided to weaponize the leftover divinity from the destruction of the Avatar and the Divine war began,” she continued, struggling to keep her tone even, but unable to keep a small hint of emotion infecting her tone, a certain wistfulness, leading me to take a wild guess that she wasn’t actually lived through the war. It was more of an instinctual guess than anything concrete, but at this point, I had learned to trust my instincts on the subject of female emotions.

The more important topic, however, was to decide how much I needed to fake. I could have acted as I knew about her historical facts like I knew about the mysterious organization, but there was one big problem in that. There were too many opportunities for her to slip an inaccurate statement to test me. One wrong nod would be enough to unravel my utter lack of historical knowledge.

“Interesting, and how does the System link to that,” I asked, not hiding my curiosity, basically admitting that I knew little about history. Also, I knew that doing so would have lessened the weight of my own organization greatly, but that was not all bad. If she reduced the threat level of my imaginary organization, she might push harder to recruit me. And as much as I was against being under her control, there was also some perks to it.

“You don’t know?” she asked, though, at this point, I was familiar enough with her fake voice to recognize the fakeness of her surprise. Apparently, she was already suspecting the limited nature of my knowledge.

“Not particularly, no,” I answered. “My organization is not really keen on the history, more focused on protecting our little corner of the world from meddling busybodies like the Eternals,

and a few other small groups,” I said. Technically, it was the truth. We, as in me and the girls, were trying to protect our little corner, Silver Spires, from the busybodies that fell under the flag of Eternals and Necromancers.

“I see,” she said, but this time, her voice smoothed out a bit. “And have you thought about my offer? I can give you power.”

I decided to accept, and started adding another small detail to my fake soul space. A copy of the Companion Node that I gifted to the girls, but one that was around twenty percent completion. My words, however, differed. “I have, but unfortunately, I need to say no?”

“What, why?” she gasped, this time, her shock completely genuine. Apparently, she was thinking that after all the effort I had put in, it was a done deal.

“Don’t get me wrong, I’m willing to fight at the same side with you. Between undead hordes and monster hordes, the enemy is clearly evil,” I said, but then, I paused as I gestured my surroundings. “But I’m not sure just how better are you, soaked in darkness. We both know that the nature of magic usage is not a one-way road. Being soaked in darkness for who knows how long, how could I be sure that you’re any better than the liches that sieging the school. How can I be sure that there’s not another lich under your robes.”

She said nothing for a moment, thinking my words, while I committed fully on my bluff. I made a show of gathering my mana, purest I could manage, fire elemental mashed with a generous serving of life magic, essentially the bane of undead, not only selling my hatred against undead, but it was also the most similar magic I could cast similar to light magic, at least in terms of the sensation.

Of course, the whole point of my fake standoff relied on the fact that I had learned about her true identity, something even Titania wasn’t aware of. I was essentially positioning myself as everything that stood against the undead and the fake personality she had created to hide her true identity. I had one objective.

To force her to reveal her true face to gain my alliance.

It wasn’t that I wanted to see her beautiful face rather than her cloaked body. While that would have been fun, the knowledge that what lay underneath those robes, while she thought that I knew nothing about the truth of it, had its own warped thrill.

She had been hiding her face for almost two centuries—at least—from everyone—possibly except a few select people, but even that was not a certainty. I wanted her to reveal her true

nature before speaking, because it would break a comfortable layer of subterfuge she had been relying on for centuries, making it much easier to take at least partial control of our discussions.

“Are you sure you want to make that decision just because of my darkness,” she said, the darkness suddenly intensifying, the aura slamming against me like a rabid monster, enough to scare me if I hadn’t known that she was pushing her limits to handle the darkness just to intimidate me.

My face stiffened as I flared my purest life energy against her aura, actively burning mana rather than just yielding it.

[-315 Mana]

If she had been an undead like her cover was alluding to, she might have reacted to that as an actual attack. Instead, she stood motionless as I pushed back the darkness to a degree that I started stirring the Divine Spark of Darkness once more. It was angry.

She must have realized that reaction as well, because the pressure disappeared immediately, and the life energy filled the room, her body as the only exception as her robes created an impenetrable barrier for it. It was easy to assume that her robe was reinforced against pure energies to protect her. Luckily, I knew that it was just to hide her true nature.

I slowly let my implied attack go, relaxing once more as she stood motionless, no doubt thinking how to handle my sudden hard stance. Just to push her even more out of balance, I once again leaned back and crossed my legs. “Do you have any tea?” I suddenly asked.

“What?” she gasped in shock, not even using her raspy fake tone properly, but I didn’t act like I noticed that.

“A cup of tea? At least a glass of water? Offering refreshments is a part of being a good hostess, you know. You might not feel the need to consume anything, but it doesn’t apply to us poor living.”

“I ... see,” she murmured, this time, her voice properly fake-scary. “If I’m understanding correctly, your whole objection comes from my nature as undead.”

“Well, either that, or a mage seeped in darkness,” I quickly jumped, like I was trying to plug a loophole. “Your status as technically alive wouldn’t change a lot, a living mind clouded with darkness is not too different from the rotten brain of an undead.”

The silence stretched once more. Then, she stood up as the room filled with the anticipation of power, hovering like a dark shadow as she walked around her desk, standing in front of me, but this time, it was not the suffocating sense of darkness. It wasn't the pure light I had watched her use either. The most accurate description would be the sensation just before the storm, thick and suffocating, replicating the calm before the storm, like she was giving me one last chance before evaporating me from the face of the earth.

I had to admit, it was an amazing ploy, one that would have made me retreat under any other circumstances. Instead, I raised my fist, and started gathering life energy, confident that it wouldn't trigger a panic reaction from her.

What kind of angel would be scared of pure mana of life, after all.

She confirmed that decision by stretching our standoff, trying to unbalance me as much as possible before the big reveal. "One last chance," she said with a nightmare-fuel voice.

I just smirked, but it wasn't my flirty smile. No, that smirk conveyed my desire to live, but also my determination to never bow to anyone else. Unlike my previous expressions, it wasn't a fake one. Since the first taste of power, I strived for my independence, and no amount of fake necromancer tricks could convince me to abandon my freedom.

Not even a sexy angel could... I was free, now and forever.

My dark smirk seemed to convince her about my determination, because she reached to her hood, and with a flick, she threw it back. Two beautiful wings burst open behind at the same time, shining with a thick wave of pure energy, similar to Titania's light magic, yet at the same time, utterly different.

Her pure magic filled the room, even infusing my magic, but surprisingly, not invading my soul space, not even the fake one.

"How about now?" she asked, the fake raspy tone abandoned in favor of her beautiful melodic voice, one that would have left me in awe and trigger my desire to worship...

"Wow," I murmured like I was dazed, and she stood confident, assuming that her amazing reveal was enough to guarantee my surrender. I smirked at her once more, but it wasn't the previous one that declared my undying will. No, it was my best flirty smirk, enhanced by the full weight of my charisma. "You're so cute."

I would forever cherish the memory of her expression sliding from perfect confidence into a

stammering mess, a sudden blush covering her cheeks. On the range of expressions she had expected, being flirted was clearly not a part of it. “W-what?” she stammered as her beautiful eyes widened, displaying their beautiful yet ethereal silver color, matching her wings.

Though, with her face blushing like a schoolgirl, she looked significantly less ethereal, even compared to her naked state.

I stood up, slowly reached and caressed her chin softly, and pulled back while she flinched in shock. “Well, you’re cute,” I repeated, not bothering the amused warmth in my voice. I wasn’t planning to push her that much, but also, I wasn’t expecting my flirting to work that effectively. The best I expected was a momentary flush which I could convert into a small advantage, not a complete collapse like an innocent girl kept away from people by an over-protective family. “I wasn’t expecting to find such a cute angel underneath those robes, color me surprised.”

“I...” she started, only to fade into silence, too flustered to say anything.

“You, what?” I said as I stood just a foot away from her, enjoying her moment of shy silence far more than I should have. After days of trying to get a handle on her, breaking her through flirting definitely wasn’t what I had been expecting. I decided to push her even more. “So, why don’t you get rid of that ugly robe and we can continue our discussion,” I said as I took a step back and took a seat.

“W-what?” she stammered once more, trying to process my words.

“Well, since you’re an angel, I expect you have more thematically appropriate clothes under that ugly black robe. Just finish your reveal and we can continue our very important discussion,” I said. “Unless you’re going commando and have nothing under that robe,” I added, making sure that it came across as a dismissive joke.

She said nothing, or more accurately, she couldn’t say anything, too busy trying to replicate a ripening apple as a blush covered her face while her shocking magical display came to a stop suddenly. She took a step back and stumbled over her desk. She didn’t fall, but not because of her legs. She actually flapped her wings gently to prevent herself from falling. She just looked at me, shocked.

“Okay, I wasn’t expecting you to be going commando, how naughty of you?” I said while she sat on her desk, a dazed expression on her face. “So, since we solved the issue of you being a necromancer, should we continue to discuss the terms of an alliance.” My smirk widened even further. “I vote for a close one...”

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Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirteen

Watching a mythical —yet innocently sexy— angel blush as I flirted with her was a unique pleasure, especially considering the said angel was the legendary headmistress of Silver Spires. I would have loved to spend the next half an hour teasing her.

Pity that her expression soon recovered into a smooth calm, showing the benefits of her centuries of experience.

“About the alliance,” she spoke with an inflectionless voice, without the slightest stirring of emotion. However, that actually entertained me more, because that specific way of speaking was very familiar to me. Titania had been speaking like that before I had suppressed the emotional suppression from her ability.

The difference, it seemed, our resident angel could clearly use that as she wished rather than constantly staying under it.

“I can’t speak for the rest of my organization, but we’re not a close-knit group in the first place,” I explained. “As long as we continue to fight against the destruction of the society, we’re free to work with other groups,” I said, basically selling her the opportunity to eventually pulling the rest of my group into her alliance despite poaching one of their members. It was a tight rope to walk, but hopefully, she was desperate enough to grab the opportunity despite the slight inconsistencies in my story.

She said nothing for a while, lost in her thoughts, before she finally spoke. “I need to examine your power in detail,” she suddenly said as she raised her hand, not even asking for my permission as her mana invaded my body.

I could have fought back. While her mana was potent and her control was strong, I wasn’t exactly a weakling. But why would I, when I could use my focus to reinforce my fake soul space, including the dummy Companion Node that I created based on the mark my power had left on the girls?

I had put a Companion Node despite the risk of making her more suspicious, because I had no doubt that, eventually, she would either check Titania or start spying on the girls around me. Either way, she would discover the Companion Node, and through that, my involvement. With that, I would at least have an excuse. So, as her mana explored my fake soul space, I put my whole attention on maintaining the facade... While I considered the opportunity to push back and explore her soul space, but after sending a couple of mana strings, I failed to discover even

the general location of her soul space, so I pulled back.

Then, she pulled her mana back without a warning!

I stiffened, fearing that she had discovered the fake, and decided to act. The last thing I expected was her to pull back with a disgusted expression before speaking. "You carry the mark of the Degenerate."

I didn't need to fake the expression of surprise on my face. When she pulled back like that, the last thing I had been expecting was an insult. "I'm carrying the mark of what, now?" I asked.

She explored my face for a moment, like trying to assess whether my expression was fake or real. "You don't know the source of your extra power?" she asked.

"Hey, I think we have already mentioned the limited historical information my organization carries," I said. Combining with her earlier explanations about the history of the world, it wasn't hard to guess the Degenerate was a historical figure. "What exactly is this Degenerate, and how does it links to my abilities?"

"It's about the rest of the explanation," she said, her tone once again attaining her earlier calmness. "We were talking about how the Eternals was using the remains of the Divine Avatars as a weapon."

"Yeah, and I'm assuming that's significant," I said.

"Very," she said. "In their own domains, every god is essentially untouchable," she murmured, though a twitch in her face as she said so made me suspicious about the accuracy of that particular detail. My instincts were telling me that she was hiding something about that, but it wasn't time to push her about it, so I let her continue. "However, to affect the material world, every Divine being needed to use their own essence, their Spark, to create a body for themselves."

"And therefore making them vulnerable," I commented, and she nodded.

"Yes, and not only that, losing the avatar is no simple matter. Depending on the power they had invested in their avatar, the consequences of losing the avatar ranged from a slight inconvenience to injuries that would take centuries to heal," she explained seriously. "And that's assuming they could recover their essence."

"And with the Eternals weaponizing that essence, I'm guessing that things had changed quite a

bit...”

“Yes, it did,” she murmured, the slight trembling in her tone despite her best attempts making me doubt that whether she had just read that in a history book, or had a more direct knowledge... Maybe even living through it... “It wasn’t something Gods had expected to work so well, so the initial attempts to punish them was limited to sending a few lower-level battle gods and loyal demigods. No one expected them to actually succeed in using the Divine Spark in a few months, so the attempts to punish them only strengthened them.”

“Still, the gods seemed to have such a strong advantage, how did they lost, assuming they have lost of course,” I added, though considering their absence, their loss was a given.

“At that point, the Eternals counter-attacked,” she explained. “Many gods had their avatars across dimensions, especially the weaker gods trying to establish their power bases, not to mention hundreds of demigods and an untold number of Divine-touched serving as priests and servants for the gods. No one expected the Eternals to hunt them aggressively. Before the gods’ counter-attack, many minor gods’ avatars had been slain and their divine essence pilfered, weakening them significantly.”

“How about the normal humans?” I asked. “I’m sure the gods and divine-touched were really strong, but I don’t want to believe that a group of high-leveled mage couldn’t actually counter at least some of it.”

“That’s the crux of the issue,” she sighed. “During the war, there was no system.” My eyes widened at her words. No matter what, it was hard to imagine a world without the system. Then, she said something even more interesting. “At least, during the first half of the war,” she added.

“Gods or the Eternals?” I asked.

“The Eternals, of course,” she said. “At first, the gods made their plans with the assumption that absorbing the Divine Spark of the gods was a difficult and time-consuming ritual, requiring impossible-to-replicate high-quality materials to initiate. It was too late when they had realized the Eternals had developed a special way of absorbing the Divine Spark from the slain Avatars, and that they were strengthening it as the war continued.”

“And that ultimately become the System?” I asked, frowning as I asked. The artificial nature of the System was surprising, but if that was true, it left the question of why the world wasn’t being ruled by the Eternals. I had examined the soul space of the assassins, and they certainly

didn't feel like created by someone with a good handle on their abilities.

"Not until the end of the war," the headmistress said, her wings twitching. "There's not much known about the actual war, only that at one point it was so heated that continents shattered and new mountains created while the old ones turned to dust. But I know that after the years of warfare, the gods were on the losing end."

"Isn't it weird," I asked. "I can understand that the system is a game-changer, but I expected the gods to be stronger."

"Certainly," the headmistress said. "Unfortunately, after their counter-attack, the Eternals had gathered just enough to Divine Spark to activate the most decisive feature of the System, and the System started absorbing Divine Energy from the material plane. The established avatars were strong enough to resist the pull, but the effect was strong enough to prevent the other gods from descending into the material plane. Before the gods could realize that, many attempted avatar had been absorbed, their powers stolen."

"However, it was only when the remaining gods and demigods had launched a desperate attack after discovering the to the headquarters of the Eternals, damaging the heart of the ritual that maintained the system."

"And I'm guessing that it didn't destroy them completely," I commented.

"No, but it destroyed their ability to control the system. Instead, it started running chaotically, empowering both the animals and the people in a completely random manner, pushing the continent to chaos even worse than before. And since the absorption effect continued, no gods can come down to fix it. The only hope for the survival of the world that before it was too late, we need to discover the location of the system, and destroy it, once again allowing the gods to descend and fix the world."

"Such a noble cause," I said, doing my best to sound enthusiastic about the return of a bunch of uber-powerful beings with a nebulous range of personal attitudes, and probably a grudge after being kicked out of the material plane for hundreds of years. However, there was no benefit in saying that to an angel who clearly belonged to the team of one of those gods. Instead, I chose to distract her. "And who is this Degenerate you have mentioned, and how does it links to my own status."

"She was one of the minor demonic goddesses," she said with an obvious distaste, surprising me with the details. I wasn't surprised to hear a possible divine link between my own unique System

and a possible Divine entity. Nor I was entirely surprised by the nature of it being called demonic by an angel, as their fame for purity would no doubt classify the sexual nature of my powers as demonic even though it clearly helped both parties—at least in my case.

However, the fact that it was linked to a goddess instead of a god surprised me.

“And does she have anything to do with the war?” I asked, curious about her distaste.

“Not to my knowledge, no,” the headmistress said with a dismissive attitude. “She was cowardly enough to disappear before the war, one of the first Divine to do so, not that she would have been a big help even if she had been around,” she continued, though I was interested to note a hint of jealousy in her tone along with dismissal, both too sharp to be anything but personal.

How interesting, I thought. Apparently, the—possible— source of my powers had a history with my headmistress. What a small world...

“So, how about the power-up,” I asked her. “Are we still going to do that, because a war is coming, and I won’t say no to some extra power?”

“It’s not a free power gift,” the headmistress immediately countered. “I’m going to mark you as the one of the Divine-touched, one carrying the power of a proper goddess rather than a useless wallflower, and in return, you are going to become a hero that would fight against the darkness. It’s not a game.”

“Whatever you say, boss,” I said, not bothering to act too submissive. After all, she needed me more than I needed her, at least in her mind, which gave me an opportunity to show a touch of arrogance. “So, when are we going to do that?”

“Tomorrow, at the first light of dawn,” she said even as she magically opened her door. “Now, go, I need to prepare.”

I left the room, my mind already churning about the interesting history lesson I had just received...

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SKILLS

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Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Fourteen

After the informative discussion with the headmistress, I was feeling overwhelmed. A system developed to counter the gods who had been locked out of the dimension for hundreds of years, The Eternals who had somehow lost control of the system they had developed, the possible source for my power as a goddess low-rank enough to easily dismissed by an angel who was clearly weaker than most gods, upcoming ritual to inject me with the light energy...

So, when, rather than doing the reasonable thing and visit Oeyne to strategize about the upcoming meeting with the crown princess before starting to work on her mysterious weapon, I started walking around aimlessly, I felt justified. I needed to calm down.

I sneaked out of the school once more, and started walking around the forests aimlessly, occasionally hunting the beasts too weak to detect the threat I had been posing to them. After talking about the source of the system and everyone's power, I couldn't help but examine the concept of level-up from a fresh perspective.

It was hard to imagine how the society would look without high-leveled individuals, restricted by the mortal limits of their deficiencies, limited. Likely not as limited as my own past status, of course, but still, extremely limited. Of course, while we haven't discussed that explicitly, it was not hard to guess that uncontrolled monster hordes didn't exist before the system —or more likely, after the gods' supposed the last stand that broke the control of the system.

However, it would be a lie to say that I didn't understand the motivation of the Eternals. After all, I had already lived through the torture of being an insignificant bug, living under the mercy of the people stronger than me. Living under the yoke of the gods with no chance to resist their power couldn't have been any easier.

"It's all so complicated," I murmured as I pulled my hair hard in frustration. All I wanted was to live comfortably with my girls without being threatened by the presence of the mysterious organizations, undead hordes, and other mysterious creatures... Was that too much to ask?

Since I had been already out, I created another elemental, and quickly searched for the girls. Finding Aviada was the easiest, as she was close to the school, still patrolling with her team. I quickly moved through their patrol route to make sure there was no undead ambush or other dangerous events, before replicated the same thing for Titania and Marianne.

Their state was a bit different. They were defending against one of the fake monster hordes, easily cutting through the mass, the corpses around the town indicating that the current horde

was far from the first one. Even when she was acting like she was tired, Titania was far too strong to even Luckily, they were following my suggestion —delivered through the headmistress — and avoided the temptation to loot the fake gems, preventing the potential disaster. Yes, defending against the weakened monster hordes was easy, but only when the walls were intact, and high-leveled defenders were healthy enough to contribute to defense.

The quick trip to the town Cornelia and Helga were garrisoning didn't reveal anything different —except the number of monster corpses under the town border, indicating that their priority didn't match the importance of Titania's defensive location.

Not a surprising find after the attempt to capture Titania by the mysterious organization —The Eternals, if the headmistress had been truthful in her explanation— which was supporting the necromancer invasion. I wouldn't be surprised if they made another attempt in a few days.

Or at least, I hoped that killing three members over level thirty would at least delay them would slow them a bit. To be fair, it was most likely the case. There was no reason for an organization that could treat such high-leveled characters as disposable cannon fodder not to be already ruling the world. Even if that wasn't their ambition, they wouldn't have been bothering to ally with the necromancers to distract the headmistress, or bother working together with the other princes to weaken the Crown Princess.

Of course, there was a chance that I was misreading their level of strength, and they were actually treating people stronger than me as cannon fodder, and in that case, I was utterly and truly fucked.

Still, that was a thought for another day, I thought even as I returned to the school, just to see the royal procession passing through the gates. I stayed on the walls, watching them as the members of her party slowly stepped out of their carts.

Then, the bodyguards gathered around the fanciest carriage before the door opened, and a woman stepped out, one that shared almost exact body size with the thief —almost, because her puffy skirt and shirt were making it hard to make a conclusive decision from that distance.

"I might have just found my thief..." I started with excitement, only for another, almost identical, woman to step out. Their faces were somewhat different, so were their eye color and other identifying details, but their body size and type were almost the same. Even their hair color-matched, a shining blonde, with a smoothness that suggested several maids had been working on the style for hours.

“Okay, it might not be that easy to identify her,” I murmured to myself as a third one stepped out... Then a fourth...

Only then the princess stepped out, distinguishing herself with the crown on her head—which was radiating magic thick enough for me to detect from the walls—and her even fancier dress. However, other than that, her bodily sizes were almost similar to her handmaidens. Their hair was color-matched, though the style was wildly different, their hair wasn't too different in size, making any possible disguise even stronger.

Smart, I thought even as I watched five of them—four handmaidens plus the princess—walk toward the guest house, each of them walking with impressive grace. It was clear that not a single one of them was below level ten, but the thief I had watched was clearly over level twenty, and maybe even closing in level thirty, with a decent physical stat spread to support her power.

Unfortunately, it was hard to get a more accurate assessment of their strength just by watching from a distance. “Smart,” I said with a nod. With five of them almost identical, it would be almost impossible to identify the thief from the body type and presence even when one tracked her identity to the group.

Even better, they couldn't just go and test the princess and her handmaidens easily, as without a doubt those five girls belonged to various noble families, which might take that as a political attack and retaliate.

It was genius whether it was the princess that arranged that, or it was a natural consequence of having handmaidens of similar builds to be used as decoys in case of assassination attempts.

Still, that answered one question. The princess was almost certainly aware of the movements of the thief—if she wasn't the thief in the first place. However, that didn't mean I could just pressure the princess to reveal the identity of the thief, because there was a likely chance that the thief wasn't a part of her official retinue but someone from a different organization, assigned to defend the princess in exchange of accessing politically sensitive locations.

Such as, Silver Spires.

As the princess and the handmaidens disappeared into the guest residence—a large, bulky building with its own defensive wards, only given to politically important guests. However, its own independent warding system wasn't the biggest defense the building had, as since a member of the royal family was occupying the building, for the duration of the visit, that

building was effectively an embassy. The princess could simply execute any unexpected visitor, no question asked, which made the risk of getting caught pretty high.

I certainly didn't want to infiltrate the building unless I was forced. It was different than trying to sneak around Silver Spires. Silver Spires' high population, thanks to the mixture of a high number of servants, rotating students, and visitors from the distant kingdoms made walking around in disguise a low-risk affair.

Unfortunately, the same thing wasn't applicable to the party of the princess, not when the number of the servants were a fraction of the number of the guards, and said guards were all extremely alert—which was understandable if even half of the information Oeyne had given me about their continuous defeats.

Of course, I wasn't afraid of death in case of capture. I trusted my abilities to perform a better escape than their little thief. Not only my agility could match hers, but also I had a range of magical abilities she could only imagine. Still, the news about an assassin—which they would naturally assume—walking around targeting the princess would make an already complicated situation even worse.

No, I needed an opportunity to delve into their secrets.

With that concluded—for better or worse—I turned my attention to the guards around the cargo carts, helping the servants to carry some of the heavier loads. I had to admit, they had an impressive number of guards, almost a hundred, and every single one of them was elites in soldier terms. Just like the handmaidens, even the lowest-leveled one was over level ten, though clearly on the lower end, as, unlike the girls, I could identify their levels easily. There were several guards that managed to hide their strength from me, however, making the situation slightly more challenging. And to make things even more impressive, every single one of them was carrying magical weapons along with their regular ones.

I would have been impressed with the number of the guards if I hadn't noticed one important detail. The amount of cargo they brought along was extremely excessive for a trip, even a long-term one. Thanks to a combination of my crafting and my magical abilities, I could make a general appraisal of their cargo, and the content of the crates made it even more impressive. Every single crate and chest was filled with magically active ingredients, but there was little rhythm or rhyme between them, except one important part.

Every single one of them was valuable, extremely valuable.

Combined with the impressively large elite force she had brought along and the size of her procession, I was confident to guess that she had essentially uprooted her power base completely from the royal palace and her own personal lands, committing everything she had owned to one last best.

I was starting to wonder about the nature of the weapon we were supposed to repair.

Luckily, I had the perfect person to talk about it, I thought even as I changed my direction toward the Hall of Crafting, to have a talk with my caramel-skinned blacksmith...

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Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [97/100]

Expert Speech [70/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Fifteen

When I arrived at Oeyne's room, I wasn't surprised to find her wearing her most formal clothing, walking around her forge panickedly. I would be panicked too if I was a blacksmith in a politically divisive situation, and a royal person came to my visit with a regiment that could be rightfully classified as a small, yet very competent, army.

It made failure a distinctly more dangerous situation, especially for someone like Oeyne with an already shaky political position. She was already enemies with the guilds, and while the school was willing to retain her services despite that, Oeyne was smart enough to realize that even her services weren't good enough to resist the combined pressure of the guilds, and a princess that conveniently brought along an army while the school was being sieged from multiple locations.

So, when she realized I had once again sneaked into her workshop without even bothering to knock, her first response wasn't anger or annoyance, but pure relief. "Caesar," she yelled as she dashed forward frantically. "I don't know what to do, they are here with an army and if I can't repair-" she started, only to be cut off by a kiss.

"Calm down," I murmured, keeping the kiss short, yet heated enough to steal her breath and distract her from her growing panic. "Flailing will not help you dealing with a royal or whomever they assigned to handle the communication with you."

"But whatever they are bringing is surely a difficult weapon to repair. What if I can't do it, even with your help? I can barely able to get a basement to myself using all the favors and connections during my career as an adventurer. There's no way they will weigh heavier than the order of a princess with her own army waiting at the back. They'll kick me out, then the guilds will be free to take their revenge-" she said, spiraling in panic. I could have slapped her, which was a recommended response to hysteria, but why would I do that, when I could use that as an excuse to steal another kiss.

"There's no point of discussing that before we even see the weapon they want us to repair," I said even as I caressed her cheek gently. "And I'm sure, between two of us, there's no weapon we can't repair."

[+1 Speech]

"You're right," Oeyne murmured as she snuggled against my chest, enjoying the safety of my arms, while I enjoyed the sight of my improving skill. It had been getting annoying that my skills hadn't improved in the presence of the headmistress no matter how challenging the situation

—though, after her explanation about the nature of the System, it turned out to be obvious that she was intentionally preventing the connection between the target and the System, probably a side-effect of her attempts to protect the Divine Sparks in her possession from being absorbed by the system.

However, that was a thought for another time. I focused on the sexy blacksmith in front of me, using me as a source of comfort. “We need to focus on what we can affect. Such as, how are you going to present yourself to them,” I said.

She pulled back with a frown and gestured her body. “What do you mean. I’m dressed in my best clothes, prepared the best refreshments I could afford, and cleaned my workshop to perfection, with my best works on display,” she said, pointing at a wall that was previously empty, but now holding a range of impressively delicate magical weapons.

“It’s your best, and that’s the problem,” I said.

“What do you mean?” she asked, confused. “It’s going to be a royal visit, of course, I’m going to do my best.”

“Under more usual circumstances, that would have been true. You would only gain from displaying such an honest reaction. But things are different now. The crown princess already lost a lot of power, which meant that she would have no problem pushing your willingness to give to the limit, then more, uncaring of her own long-term reputation.”

“Are you sure?” Oeyne countered. “I have seen her retinue with my own eyes. Maybe her situation is much better than we expect, bringing such a large army with her.”

Oeyne’s deduction wasn’t bad, considering she was working from a faulty set of assumptions. She was a skilled adventurer, but she didn’t have my unique advantages and a ridiculous Perception stat to accurately assess the strength of her team. For Oeyne, it was just a large regiment of bodyguards, showing off her strength, not every single elite under her control.

“No, it’s literally everything she has left,” I said as I gave a general explanation of the status of her party without going too much into detail, careful to frame it as something I had learned from someone else. I liked Oeyne, but we weren’t at the point of sharing my secrets, yet.

“That changes things,” Oeyne murmured, her fear intensifying further. It was one thing to support a royal in a disadvantageous position, but it was completely different to support one that had lost any chance of making a comeback. “Should I reject her?”

“No,” I answered immediately. “She might have lost her power in terms of the wider empire, but that means very little considering the difficulties of different cities working together. For all intents of purposes, except the small area surrounding the Empire, we’re a loose connection of the city-states, and the princess has collected her power base here. As long as she can maintain a good relationship with the headmistress, she would be in a very important position in Silver Spires. You can’t anger her.”

“I don’t understand,” she murmured. “If she’s still important, I should still respect her, right.”

“In a way, but in a much lesser degree. We’re going to sell her the idea that you’re working closely with the headmistress’s agents, meaning she couldn’t just force you to work for her carelessly, or threaten you without risking the headmistress.”

“But I can’t lie about that!” she said angrily.

“Who said it would be a lie?” I countered, and upon her shocked state, I brought my magical pressure to the fore, much stronger than she had ever assumed I was capable. After our last meeting, I was free to flaunt my identity as an agent of the headmistress, and there was no point in wasting such an easy political asset.

[+1 Subterfuge]

“You,” she gasped.

“Me,” I answered with a smug smile, enjoying her shock. “I’m an agent of the headmistress, one of the ones she keeps in the shadow,” I said before pausing. “Well, kept until the latest crisis forced me to take a more direct role, forcing me to reveal my identity,” I said, subtly lying about the extent of my tenure. After all, it wasn’t like she was going to have a discussion with the headmistress about the length of my service.

Also, it was far more believable than the truth, that I was working in the school for years, but gained phenomenal power during last month.

The last reveal likely would have been enough for Oeyne in her desperation even before our previous relationship. She just nodded with a growing smile, more than happy that her mysterious assistant came with such an important background. “What should we do?” she asked.

“There’s still sometime before the meeting, right?” I asked, and she nodded. “Good. First, let’s get you out of that dress and put in on something more functional,” I whispered even as I put

my hand on her shoulder.

I was surprised when she pushed me away, but that surprise proved to be short-lived when, instead of taking a step back, she grabbed her shirt in a great hurry, aggressive enough to send more than one button flying.

The arousal quickly clouded her beautiful brown eyes as she took a step forward, her fancy corset struggling under the weight of her huge breasts. Apparently, saving her at the last minute, combined with the simultaneous reveal of magical and political power, triggered her arousal in a way I hadn't seen on her before —at least, not without an extended foreplay session.

I was more than happy to let her take the lead as she ripped my shirt with even more aggression, destroying it so thoroughly that even with magic, repairing it would have been challenging. She threw it negligently as she smashed her lips against mine, her hands caressing my naked chest, tracing the contours of my muscles even as she pushed me toward her forge.

I let her do so. Fucking her in her forge, the center of her identity, was more appealing than another escapade in her bed. It felt symbolic.

She had proved that while her strength was her primary stat, her agility was nothing to dismiss when she somehow managed to slip out of all of her clothes excluding her corset, presenting her body in a very sexy yet accessible manner.

I was more than happy to follow her lead and kicked my pants and underwear, leaving myself naked. I didn't bother to remove her corset, just squeezed her amazing breasts over it, the soft texture of her corset making it even more delicious as their amazing proportions filled my palms in excess.

A moan escaped her mouth, pushing through my lips' ability to silence her, loud enough to fill the forge completely. I was glad to see that a few days without some close attention left her panting with desire.

Too much desire, even, I realized when I felt her biting my shoulder enthusiastically. Not enough to actually draw blood, just hurt, but considering my HP and constitution, even that was excessive.

“So, you want to play rough,” I whispered, which earned an enthusiastic moan. “As you wish, you dirty whore,” I whispered said as I grabbed her hair before pulling hard, enough to remind her that while she was strong, she was not my match when it came to physical domination.

“Take a deep breath,” I suggested in amusement even as I painfully pulled her hair, making her reveal her neck before I marked her with a bite mark, using a biomancy trick to make sure the hickey wouldn’t disappear easily through her natural regeneration.

Simultaneously, I pushed her until her chest was pressing against the table she used to do finishing work, covered with soot even after her attempts to clean it, immediately ruining her fancy corset. Paradoxically, its dirtiness made her even sexier.

I didn’t even bother asking her whether she was ready, as her wetness, thick enough to drip down her leg as she bent over gave me an answer much more accurately than her words. She moaned as I pulled her hair harder. I could have pushed inside her to enjoy that wetness, but I decided to take things slowly instead.

I walked to the other side of the table, aligning my shaft with her meaty lips. “Open wide,” I ordered, and she followed that easily, making it trivial for my girth to disappear into her mouth, forcing my presence into her throat.

She started gasping and gagging, but it only enhanced the enthusiasm shining in her eyes. I pushed my full presence into her throat repeated with no hint of mercy, knowing that she was more than tough enough to handle that. And she didn’t disappoint me by actually grabbing my hips to pull me even deeper into her throat...

There were certain perks of revealing the true extent of my power, it seemed, I thought even as I filled her throat with my seed, ready to do much more before the meeting with the princess’ envoys...

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Master Subterfuge [98/100]

Expert Speech [71/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Sixteen

As I pushed into Oeyne's enthusiastic throat as she lay on her forge, wearing nothing but a sexy corset that was getting dirtier and dirtier with each passing moment, I couldn't help but feel that despite all the bullshit I had gone through with the repeated battles and upcoming political crisis, it was worth it.

The way she clamped around my throat tightened as I pushed repeatedly was legendary, something that could never be achieved by the other girls due to the difference in their physical stats. Not even Aviada was enough to compete, at least, not yet.

Even as I was pushing into her delicious throat, however, I let my mana invade her soul space, examining her abilities. However, this time, I wasn't trying to quantify or assess her abilities. I was trying to examine her power from a fresh perspective after my lengthy discussion with the headmistress.

Even knowing the artificial nature of the System, it was hard to find actual evidence through actual examination. Maybe my abilities weren't truly developed yet —or maybe I shouldn't be trying to multitask between pulling her hair and ravaging her throat while trying to do such a delicate experiment— but I failed to notice anything that would truly support the headmistress' explanation.

It didn't mean she was lying to me, of course, just as it didn't mean she was being completely honest. In the end, it was a complicated issue, not something that could be validated immediately —and even validating meant very little unless I could start acquiring more details. So, I decided to turn my full attention back to Oeyne, who had been deliciously gasping as I invaded her throat repeatedly.

The way her arousal was increasing as I invaded her throat aggressively was a thing of beauty, her tendencies toward bondage showing itself. I decided to tease her a bit more, and grabbed a silver ingot, infusing it with my mana to soften before I started shaping it into a delicate state through my magic. I wasn't using my fire mana, however, but earth mana, forcing the metal to reshape directly without softening.

A costly trick that exchanged an excess of mana and structural integrity for showmanship and speed, but I reinforced the metal with the second flood of my mana to reinforce the metal to make sure it wouldn't just shatter with Oeyne's strength.

[-691 Mana]

After all, it wouldn't be proper bondage if she could just shatter her bonds with a pull.

Since her mouth was still blocked, she wasn't able to comment on my tricky blacksmithing display, but I was familiar enough with her expression to realize she was impressed by my progress once again. After all, while she could easily do a similar trick with better quality, she was a focused blacksmith with years of experience, and I was a hobbyist at best.

Distracted by my display, she didn't pay much attention to the trajectory of the floating handcuffs until they locked around her wrists, locking her arms behind her, rendering her helpless. She wasn't unhappy about it, however, easily displayed by the way her moans gained another layer of enthusiasm, her arousal flaring.

I decided to make things even more entertaining. Another flare of mana —this time much smaller— later, a cube of ice was slowly floating down, but she had only noticed it when it touched her neck, gently gliding down to caress her naked shoulders.

She flinched in surprise at the first contact, but her eyes grew as she understood the source. Pity that she couldn't comment on that as I slowly added a second one, this time dancing around her lips, the same lips that were tightly wrapped around my shaft to contain its girth.

"Is there something wrong," I said even as I grabbed her hair and pulled it hard enough to be painful. "You seem a bit tense." She couldn't stammer an answer, but her moans were sufficiently revealing. She was on the edge of an explosion.

Pity I had no intention of actually stopping there, not when it was just a beginning.

I pulled out without a warning. She opened her mouth to question, only to cry in shock as I moved my hands under her shoulder and pulled her over the surface, until she was on her knees in front of me, her corset ruined completely in the process. And since it was ruined, it was no great waste when I ripped it off from her body. However, rather than ripping it off completely, I let the ruined scraps pool around her waist, the stained white of the corset contrasting beautifully with her skin. The shine of the silver handcuffs just added to the moment.

She definitely looked like a desperate damsel, fallen under the lacking mercy of a warlord. I wasted no time before slipping inside her mouth, while another two ice cubes joined the fray, circling around her breasts to enhance her pleasure even further.

As much as I enjoyed repeatedly sliding inside her mouth, her beautiful mouth wasn't her only worthy quality, not when her caramel tits were waiting for my attention. I pulled out, only to

bring my hands around her tits, pressing them against each other to create a delicious valley for myself before I launched a merciless assault.

“Fuck my tits,” she gasped even before her wheezing subsided, showing that the pain and restrictions that had been applied on her were only making her hornier. After spending her life in a forge, her definition of rough certainly differed compared to other people.

“Oh, who are you to give me orders?” I said mockingly even as I twisted her nipple painfully enough to hurt even her. I didn’t waste much time before freeing my foot from my shoe before using my soles to gently caress her thighs, contrasting with my otherwise rough treatment.

She definitely noticed when her foot started to climb toward her core while teasing her inner thigh. It didn’t take a genius to read my intention, but she only moaned in appreciation before leaning down and capturing the crown of my shaft, the base still sliding up and down between her beautiful tits.

Not that I would have really cared if she was not on board. At this point, it was too late for her to stop me or change the balance. Until we call an end to it, she was my toy -unless she could get out of her bindings. Her strength was not sufficient, not that it prevented her from stretching to test that occasionally. She even tried to use her mana to manipulate the handcuffs just like I had done earlier. She could have easily removed them if it wasn’t for my intervention.

Her crafting skills might be much stronger than mine, but the same didn’t apply to mana potency. She had to spend all of her mana in a burst just to have a chance of success, but that wouldn’t mean anything when I could always craft another handcuff right after.

It was that sense of dominance that was making her obedient enough to accept the relatively demeaning position of licking my cock while I teased her wetness with my foot. Triggering the submissiveness of such an imposing beauty was not a simple task.

She still tightened her legs in an attempt to slow down the inevitable move of my foot, but she was shaking under the strain of an overwhelming build-up, not to mention distracted by the teasing random travel of the ice cubes and occasional twisting of her nipples. It was like her own impressive strength was starting to betray her, refusing to put their power behind her move.

What she didn’t know was her impending orgasm wasn’t the only reason for her feebleness. Even as I continued to enjoy the merits of her caramel body, I didn’t stop exploring her soul space. She was an interesting specimen, strong yet almost entirely unaffected with my

companion process.

Perfect for a little experimenting. My current trick was creating a magical cage around her strength stat, limiting the connection between her soul space and the stat. To my surprise, it was relatively easy to cut the connection between her stat, which had immediate adverse effects on her strength.

Pity that such a trick was practically useless in combat. If I could slip that much mana to someone's soul space, directly killing them was the much easier option. Of course, that didn't mean it was useless in other conditions. I could imagine it being used in many different ways.

Thanks to her enhanced weakness, Oeyne was helpless to resist my combined assault, and soon, she was trembling as the orgasm hit her, robbing even more of her strength.

"Please," she gasped as she tried to stand upright, only to lean against her forge. She was being extremely affected by the aftermath of her orgasm —which was because I had significantly reduced her endurance as well, and used biomancy to increase her sensitiveness for good measure. As I continued to rub against her wetness, it was nothing less than delicious torture.

"Yes, Oeyne," I said, amused by the begging edge in her tone, which didn't fit her usual characteristics even slightly. "How can I help you?" I added mockingly as my hand landed on her breast, squeezing absentmindedly like she was nothing more than my tone. My shaft started throbbing in protest as it was deprived of the delicious hug of her breasts, but I ignored that. A little denial was nothing much compared to the torture she was going through.

"Please—" she begged, trying to ask for a reprieve, but I didn't let her finish her sentence, by twisting her nipple without a warning, sending fresh waves of pain into her body, which triggered another wave of pleasure.

"Please, what?" I said as my fingers sank into her firm tits, her flesh reacting beautifully. The rhythmic movement of my foot making things even worse.

I caught her eyes, her brown eyes filled with pleasure, showing that despite her begging, she was enjoying the show immensely. I was considering how to progress when I heard a knock on the door, realizing that I had been wasting too much time in the process.

"Is it the meeting time already," I asked, only for her to nod sadly, no less enthusiastic about the need to stop? "Do you want me to handle the meeting completely, or do you want to be present?"

“Can you handle it alone?” she whispered, only to get punished with a slap to her tits.

“You shouldn’t doubt your own apprentice,” I said, which was a mocking reminder of how our relationship started, which long turned meaningless thanks to a combination of my strength and her submissive tendencies, even before I had earned a place in the inner circle of the headmistress.

“However, you should still listen to the meeting,” I said, and before she could even react, I grabbed another ingot of silver, this time using that to create chains for her feet, elegant yet strong, before showing her to a large cabinet under the forge. Then, I had put a complicated — yet useless— enchantment on the chains to hide the nature of my manipulations as I quickly blocked the connection between several of her stats to prevent her from using magic and her strength.

Her eyes widened in shock as she realized her helplessness was not just a ploy, but before she could even speak, a ball-gag appeared in her mouth, preventing her from speaking. Simultaneously, I pushed a magical dildo in her wetness, buzzing incessantly.

“You should make sure to keep your voice down, we don’t want to alert the envoy of the princess,” I said before I pushed the lid close and walked to the door to meet with the princess’ envoy, leaving her in the darkness, constantly teased, yet being forced to keep her voice down.

And most importantly, weak for the first time...

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Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6600 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [98/100]

Expert Speech [71/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Seventeen

When I opened the door, I was surprised to notice that there was only one visitor, a blonde girl whose body was hidden under a practical thick linen shirt and loose leather pants combo, like she was another craftsman. A figure I had seen from the distance as they were leaving the princess' cart, though that time, she was wearing a fancy dress.

One of the handmaidens.

A moment of silence stretched as we both processed the unexpected scene. She was clearly expecting to meet with Oeyne, and I was expecting to find a bigger procession than just one of the handmaidens, carrying a wrapped bundle. "I'm here for a meeting," she said, trying to look unperturbed.

"She's out for an emergency, but she should be back in a few minutes," I said even as I stepped to the side, allowing her to pass uninterrupted. "And I can help if it's an emergency."

"No, it can wait," she said. She stepped inside, her eyes examining the room in a systematic manner, but she managed to hide that behind a casual glance. That glance alone was enough to tell me that I was dealing with another infiltration expert. Her choice of clothing, clearly prepared to impress Oeyne at first glance, showing they had done their homework.

Too bad for them that my presence was not something they could have prepared for, which meant that they were playing from a significantly disadvantageous position. Just by sending an agent with such extensive preparation, they had given me one critical piece of information. Whatever they want Oeyne repairing was not just an excuse for them to bring an army to the school, but something they genuinely wanted to achieve.

It was critical information for me to determine my next steps.

Well, considering they came with a small army, and my attention was split between two other critical projects, the game board was already weighing toward their side, so I was happy to get every scrap of advantage I could.

While she prioritized examining the room first, I decided on a temporary personality to pick up, so, when she turned to face me once more, she caught me looking at her ass, only to jump back to her face with a blush, giving the impression that I could be easily manipulated through seduction.

It was intentional. I wanted to enjoy passively as a sexy blonde tried to manipulate me through seduction. It would be a nice change of pace.

She proved that she was a professional when it came to the game when she looked deeply into my eyes even as her posture shifted. It wasn't a major shift, but she leaned forward a bit more, her neck tilted vulnerably, one of her hands on her hips to accentuate the curves of her otherwise lithe body. With her blonde hair beautifully circling her innocent yet beautiful face, she was truly a perfect weapon.

"So, who exactly are you?" she said with a tingly tone even as she took a step forward, cutting the distance just a bit.

"I'm one of the special blacksmiths of the headmistress," I said even as I puffed my chest proudly, giving the impression that I was trying to impress her. "She had decided that a task assigned by the princess deserves the best attention."

"Oh, really?" she said, failing to hide a calculative flash going through her expression, and a slight amount of panic. They clearly didn't appreciate the headmistress knowing about the task, which was why I decided to steal another shy glance of her tits, selling the idea that I was easy to manipulate.

[+1 Subterfuge]

She might be good, but I was better, so it wasn't entirely surprising when, after sending a thoughtful glance toward the door, she decided to stay inside. "Of course," I said proudly, puffing my chest. "I'm the strongest mage when it comes to magical analysis and mana capacity."

"How impressive," she murmured, even as she relaxed even more. She wasn't completely convinced yet, but my excessive mana capability and magical analysis not only served their needs perfectly—their own capabilities in the area were clearly a mess—but also reduced the chance of having other abilities to trick her.

Too bad for her that I was playing in a completely different class.

"Thanks," I murmured even as I looked shyly. "And may I learn the name of such a beautiful lady?"

"It's Delia," she said, then continued without taking a break. "I have been fascinated by forging since I was a child. Would you mind showing me an example of your skills?"

“It would be my pleasure,” I said with an enthusiastic smile as I walked toward the other side of the forge, where Oeyne was still trapped in a cabinet, suffering under the tyrannical grasp of the buzzing spell. “Any preference?”

“Maybe a dagger,” she said.

“As you wish, milady,” I said even as I grabbed an ingot, a magically-treated steel block that represented a small fortune, showing that just how my poor decision-making had become as I was grasped by the desire to impress her. Then, I flared my mana, saturating the steel with my magic, the excess enough to blanket the room.

[-698 Mana]

Her eyes widened as the mana filled the room. The mana I had just burst out was enough to make someone a valuable mage, and I was clearly not near my limits. My hammer danced on the surface of the forge for the next few minutes, giving an impression that I was stretching both my mana manipulation and forging abilities to the limit.

Of course, it was impossible for her to know that my expression was less about the dagger I was forging, and more about the little game I was playing with Oeyne.

I had flipped open the cabinet door, and slipped my foot between Oeyne’s chained legs, drenching the top of my foot with her wetness as I caressed, turning her already difficult ordeal into the torture of pleasure. She groaned and moaned despite the gag, forcing me to establish a subtle silencing ward —which also confirmed that my current opponent might have some interesting subterfuge skills, but her magical abilities were clearly lacking.

Which meant the chances of her being the thief was very low.

With that, I split my attention between sending her lovesick glares and teasing Oeyne under the cabinet, sometimes directly through my foot, sometimes using a mage hand to caress her tits, turning her into a volcano ready to explode.

Five minutes later, I raised the dagger with a proud yet exhausted expression, having spent almost as much as mana I had spent in the beginning, giving her an idea about my mana capacity —a false one, of course.

[+1 Subterfuge]

From her expression, carrying a subtle tone of smugness, I was sure that she was completely

sold on my personality, just as I desired. “Such an impressive work,” she said as she walked to my side of the forge, forcing me to cast a quick spell to erase any possible smell. She grabbed the dagger —an elegant piece that would be perfect for a lady like her to carry— dragging her finger over its edge suggestively. “It will be a true masterpiece after it’s sharpened and polished,” she said. Her fascinated gaze dancing on the dagger was clearly begging me to offer to her —exaggerated to make sure I understood her intent.

“Oh, yes,” I said pridefully. “Just let me catch my breath for a moment, and your gift will be ready.”

“A gift, for me!” she said, her eyes far too wide to be a natural reaction as she put her hand on my forearm, squeezing my muscles. “You’re amazing!”

“It’s nothing much,” I said, shyly rubbing my head as I moved toward the large couch on the corner, far away from the forge. She walked along with me, keeping her hand around my arm, even after I had sat down.

“You must have a lot of stories about forging,” she suggested enthusiastically.

“Of course, like the time I was repairing a magical spear that was about to explode due to an unstable matrix...” I said before spinning a completely imaginary story that presented myself as an obsessive blacksmith whose attention split between his work and making sure he looked heroic, with a weak spot for beauties —though the last part was only implied to make it believable.

Thirty minutes, and two stories later, she was confident enough that she had deciphered my personality as an easy-to-manipulate blacksmith whose connection to the headmistress was through his production capabilities rather than any sensitive stuff. As a nice bonus, stretching my abilities in front of a diplomacy expert finally allowed me to completely mature my last remaining skill.

[+4 Speech]

“You’re so impressive,” she said as she continued to caress my arm, clearly not intending to do anything other than that. “Since you’re the magical expert, would you mind examining it first,” she said, before adding hurriedly. “Unless it would be a problem with Oeyne, of course. She’s the owner of the forge, after all.”

“Not at all,” I said quickly, too quickly even, showing that I didn’t appreciate Oeyne’s implied authority, giving the princess’ side an illusionary chance to play us against each other while we

worked on their mysterious artifact.

“If you’re sure,” she said. “I wouldn’t want such a handsome man like you to get into trouble, after all,” she said, easily removing the sting of her earlier doubt.

With my control over my body, fake-blushing was a trivial achievement. She passed me the bundle, which had a broken spear, one that was clearly ancient. While she continued to caress my arm, I flared my mana, examining the structure of the spear.

However, before the spear, I used the flare of magic to disguise a small slip of mana, exploring her soul space to make sure her magical capabilities were indeed limited. My earlier assumptions turned out to be true. She completely lacked any kind of magical capability. Even her combat-related skills were extremely limited. Other than a dagger skill, her stats were split between observational skills and speech skills, creating a truly impressive mixture of diplomat and spy. If our stats were equal, she probably could run circles around my attempts to be clever. Overall, she was slightly below level twenty, making her a dangerous powerhouse in the general standards of the world, especially with her interesting focus.

Too bad for her that even my lowest stat doubled her highest stat, making her hopelessly outmatched.

With the shadow of being noticed resolved, I finally turned my attention to the broken remains of the rusty spear, curious about its value...

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Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Eighteen

The spear she had passed to me was an interesting artifact, nothing more than a simple ruin at the first glance. Its wooden handle was broken halfway, turning the long weapon into something below two feet in length, the cracks of its head filled with rust even after all the dirt was cleaned carefully. The delicate decorations that were supposed to cover both the handle and head were ruined during the time it had spent underground, dust and dirt seeped deep into its texture so deep that it was impossible to clean it without ruining what was left of it.

Altogether, it was an easy tool to dismiss for anyone without magical sensitivity.

It wasn't that the enchantments that were embedded on the nature of the spear were in any better condition than its outward appearance. The magical matrix that was supposed to be in one cohesive structure on the core to power its magical functions had fragmented into many smaller pieces, yet, it was as beautiful as a shattered diamond shining under the sunlight, creating rainbows.

The individual pieces of enchantments weren't as fiddly as I first imagined. Oeyne could easily etch something more complicated, for example, but the sheer number of different parts and how they layered over each other was the real challenge. It was like a mathematical problem that only used first and second-order equations rather than more difficult equations, but with thousands of them at the same time.

And even from the aged fragments, I could see that the spear was created by multiple people, likely through a complicated ritual. Another interesting detail about its creation.

Ultimately, as I examined it, likening it to a diamond made sense. Like a diamond, the function of the main enchantment was deceptively simple despite its impressive potential. I couldn't exactly identify what it was supposed to store. I had my suspicions, of course, but nothing I could conclusively prove before working on it with Oeyne.

Their desire to use Oeyne to repair it became clear, however. Clearly, the enchantments were not added later to the spear, but forged into its core during the crafting process, a trick that Oeyne was famous for. Interestingly, its nature reminded me of the designs we had created for my weapons —but much more matured than our quick drafts— which were designed for durability and maximum capacity over simple surface enchantments.

"How is it?" Delia asked, pulling me out of my musings. Luckily, the personality I was selling to her was a genius yet socially inept expert, making my focused examination an acceptable part

of my disguise. "Do you think you can repair it?"

"Oh, definitely, but it'll take a lot of time," I said even as I summoned a piece of paper. "The first problem is the alignment of the fragments..." I started, quickly bursting into a complicated babble of magical terms that I deliberately made even more impenetrable by referring to a bunch of complicated magical theories and other stuff.

"Wow, really," she exclaimed, looking appropriately fascinated at my explanation, even as she slid closer, brushing her leg against mine. "You're such a genius? Can you repair it singlehandedly?" she asked.

"P-probably," I suddenly stammered evasively. "It's a bit tricky to handle the more menial parts," I clarified hurriedly. "I'm more involved in the magical aspects and the conceptual design. The actual forging is a more pedestrian part of it, not really my area of interest," I quickly added. That babble was not pointless. I was essentially telling her that I was overly proud of my own work despite my limited forging skills, and I was feeling self-conscious about that part, using bluster to suppress that sense of inferiority.

Essentially, I was selling the idea that my pride was another great lever to be used to manipulate me against both the headmistress and Oeyne, along with my lust.

"You're amazing," Delia said passionately, losing no time before grabbing the exact point of weakness I had presented to her. "I don't know how many experts we have talked about it, and you're the only one that could understand its nature in such detail in such a short time," she said, giving me a pointless compliment. Because I was absolutely sure that she lacked the capability to understand even a tenth of my explanation even if I hadn't been trying to make it intentionally impenetrable.

"It's my honor to serve the royal family," I said, pushing my chest proudly.

"So, how much time do you need to finish repairing the spear?"

"A few days, a week at most," I started, and her eyes shone with shocked excitement. She suppressed that quickly, but not quickly enough to avoid my notice. "That should be enough to finish the preliminary analysis phase, so that I could start designing the repair procedure. Optimistically, we should be able to start reforging the spear in less than a month."

"A month," she murmured, unable to hide the panic in her eyes. I was happy to take a note of it, because it meant that they actually needed the spear for something, and they needed that relatively urgently.

“Yes, a month, unless there’s something unexpected of course,” I added, with a matter-of-fact tone that was very natural.

“Isn’t there a way to quicken the process, maybe using the research we previously conducted on the spear,” she questioned.

This time, I didn’t need to fake the derisive snort I let out. “Yeah, I read those notes, they are not worthy to be used as kindling. I don’t know who was responsible for those, but I would be surprised if they can actually enchant something more complicated than a light crystal.” Not that I needed to work much to break their confidence to their own experts, after all, if they had any hope of actually repairing the spear with their own skill, they wouldn’t have bothered to arrange it with Oeyne in such a complicated manner.

“Is there really no way to make it shorter?” she murmured, her eyes widened in a way that enhanced her vulnerability, her lower lip trembling just the correct amount, creating a paradoxical combination of pitiful and sexy, enough to make a lesser man fall in love at that instant.

“Well, maybe…” I murmured, as I tried to decide the best way to leverage their need.

“Really?” she said enthusiastically as she grabbed my arm, pulling it enough to accidentally push it to her modest bosom. “As you said, you’re a true genius,” she said, essentially forcing myself to back my earlier statement to impress her.

“Yeah, but it’s tough to work, I need to cancel or delay a few more projects, not to mention I need to build a dedicated room to study it, which will be really expensive. Also, I need to keep the spear in my possession for the next weeks. Then, maybe I could do that.”

“Unfortunately, we can’t give the spear, not when there’s a war going on,” she quickly refuted, which was something I expected. “Who knows when a breach might occur.”

“You’re correct, but I need almost unlimited access to it to handle that any quicker,” I answered with a helpless expression, waiting for her to offer what I wanted in the first place.

“How about building the laboratory in our residence,” she offered, unaware that was what I wanted in the first place.

“That might work,” I murmured reluctantly. “But it’ll be really expensive if you want quick results, more than I could afford my own.”

“How much?” she asked hesitantly, smart enough not to sign to an open check.

“Well...” I murmured as I pulled another piece of paper and drafted a few quick plans, each with a list of materials underneath. “Essentially, we have multiple options, each with its own cost structure,” I said as I quickly explained to her, while her eyes widened as she processed the small fortune that was required for even the worst room I designed.

“Are you sure all of those is necessary,” she said.

“The most critical part of it is to isolate the resonance of the different fragments so that we can avoid a cascading overload...” I started, drowning any possible argument she could put in another pointlessly complicated theory debate. And, the best part, since she was faking her own capabilities in order to sell the idea that she was more capable than she seemed, she couldn’t just admit that she didn’t understand even a bit.

“I need to discuss that with the princess,” she murmured. “But is this the cheapest possible,” she said, pointing at the least complicated part of it.

“Well, not necessarily, but there are other drawbacks to building something cheaper, like the need to add too many wards, which would have the risk of interference with the protective wards,” I said, and seeing her panic, I quickly followed. “Nothing catastrophic, but it might slightly impair the detection capabilities,” I added.

Actually, the analysis phase before the repair wasn’t that long, nor it required a dedicated magical laboratory to successfully achieve. But since I wanted to have an excuse to visit the temporary royal quarters limitlessly, it was an excellent excuse. I was betting on their desperation.

The type of laboratory they would ultimately choose didn’t matter to me even a bit. All I needed was an excuse to establish a set of independent wards in their quarters, which could be used in a variety of ways depending on what I discovered about the objective of the princess, from infiltration to sabotage — even assassination if necessary.

“I see,” Delia murmured as she examined the paper I had filled with the schematics. “It’s not something I can decide on my own, I need to talk with the princess,” she said as she stood up.

“Aren’t you going to wait Oeyne,” I said, deliberately adding a tone of distaste as I pronounced Oeyne’s name, like I resented the necessity of her help in the first place. The existence of such easy leverage put a huge smile on Delia’s lips.

“I appreciate the help. I’m sure the princess would appreciate your help as well. How about if you host a private lunch tomorrow in our quarter, after we finish moving in,” she added.

“It would be my pleasure,” I said as I smiled excessively, following her to the door. I opened the door, only to see a pair of bodyguards on the far end of the corridor, waiting for her to reappear. They were clearly paying proper attention to the security of the spear.

I watched her walk toward the end of the corridor with an excessive sway of her hips, closing the door only when they disappeared at the end of the corridor.

Then, I dispelled the silencing wards that were blocking Oeyne’s voice, only to hear her helpless moans, suppressed by her ballgag.

I started walking toward the forge with a purpose. After that tease Delia, I was in the mood for a proper embrace...

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Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Nineteen

“So, where were we?” I asked even as I opened the cabinet. The sight that my eyes met was spectacular. Oeyne’s delicious caramel skin was covered with sweat, adding a nice shine to her already impressive beauty, while her chest was heaving helplessly.

But that was nothing compared to the amazing sight of her face, a mixture of pleasure, joy, desperation, and helplessness, to a level of perfection I had never seen before. She was reacting to her loss of strength after I blocked her connection with the specific nodes in her soul space.

Admittedly, it had some interesting implications, such as destroying the nodes to permanently depowering someone, but only under certain circumstances. Killing someone was still easier than depowering them, and that was before going into any possible backlash from the system for doing so.

The more interesting possibility was permanently enhancing someone’s power directly. The disgusting patchwork of power I had observed from the soul space of the assassins that were targeting Titania already suggested it was possible, not that I was interested in it other than possible academic implications.

I was more than happy with the way I was helping the others level up, thank you very much.

However, the theoretical applications of soul space manipulations were just a fleeting line of thought that occurred on the back of my head while I pulled Oeyne out of the stuffy cabinet and pushed against the work surface. After repeated orgasms thanks to the vibrator I added to the ensemble —and without the endurance to resist— she had already enjoyed several climaxes, forcing me to lower the suppression of her endurance to prevent her from fainting from overwhelming pleasure as I started caressing her wet lips.

“So,” I started lazily even as I freed her from her gag, allowing her moans to rise unimpeded while my other hand was still busy caressing her entrance. “Have you found my talk with the princess’s handmaiden useful?” Rather than a proper answer, I received a moan that was roughly positive. “Use your words, master, your apprentice can’t understand you,” I said mockingly even as I slapped her ass softly.

Even that was enough to trigger another helpless climax in her overcharged state. She tried to give a proper answer, but it failed quickly as her voice was flooded with endless moans. The treatment from my hands, alternating between caresses and spanks, didn’t exactly help her

contain her tone as well. It took almost a minute for her to utter a few words. "It was ... very good."

"Really," I said with a mocking enthusiasm. "Do you think I deserve a reward for my expert diplomacy," I said even as I slipped two fingers into her wetness, earning another desperate moan, this time even louder.

"Yes," she answered helplessly.

"Such a good master," I said even as I pulled out my fingers, and without a warning, impaled her wetness aggressively. It was a pity that I was temporarily unable to progress the companion process, because Oeyne was at the perfect point to leverage it. And the stat bonus he would have received from that would have come very usefully while repairing the staff.

It was a pity, but instead of lamenting the loss of opportunity, I focused on the amazing sight in front of me, her arms still handcuffed, her legs wrapped in silver chains, turning her into an amazing gift. A gift that I continued to ram mercilessly while she moaned, not giving her even a moment to recover.

Still, I occasionally loosened the restrictions on her physical stats to prevent her from collapsing, even occasionally relying on my healing to reduce her exhaustion. Otherwise, it was impossible for her to stay conscious under the flood of pleasure.

Her moans intensified when I slipped one hand between the work surface and her chest, squeezing her breasts aggressively. Her nipples were so hard that I was surprised they weren't scratching the work surface as she slid back and forth.

"So, you have a lot of time to think about the discussion. What's your opinion?" I asked, well aware anything more than a few simple words were impossible to create for her.

"What?" was all she could utter, confused at the sudden question, my repeated squeezing of her spectacular breasts not making it any easier. "I-" she tried to add, only to fade into a cry when I spanked her hard once more, making her huge ass jiggle.

"Try to be more articulate, master. It doesn't fit your esteemed self," I mocked her, only to continue to spank her whenever she opened her mouth, trying to answer, drowning her words in another moan.

Despite the rough treatment, however, when I pulled out of her, the only reaction she let out was a desperate plea. "No, please, don't stop," she gasped, impressing me with her articulation.

“Don’t worry,” I said with a chuckle as I cast a spell, conjuring another set of chains even as the handcuffs I created were flicked open. An arcana spell allowed the chains to move freely, wrapping her arms, forcing her upright. I walked around her a full circle, enjoying the sight of her voluptuous body that rejected the domain of time.

[-43 Mana]

“Such a slutty master,” I said as I spanked her softly, enjoying the way she gushed at the slightest touch. “The guilds were idiots to use threats and financial incentives to censure you. All they needed was a well-crafted dildo for you to fold,” I mocked her as I caressed her body softly, which, despite the great contrast with the earlier rough treatment, still worked wonders.

“Please,” she gasped desperately, ignoring my mocking remarks as she focused on my touch. It was just one word, but it perfectly conveyed her desperation.

“Such a desperate master,” I mocked her, which made her gushing even more intense. “You’re lucky that you have a merciful apprentice.”

“Thank you-” she tried to start, only for her words to fade when my hand landed on her perfect breast to leave a dark mark, turning into another harsh moan. Her pain tolerance was really impressive even with her limited stats.

I decided to reward her. “So, which way you want. Throat, pussy, or ass?” I asked.

Her answer came quicker than lightning. “Fuck me in the ass,” she spat out desperately, like she was afraid I would remove her chance to choose if I delayed even a second.

“As you wish,” I said as I added the required spells to clean, but deliberately kept the lubrication very limited, nor helped her to loosen magically. Despite the poor preparation, I impaled her with one sharp stab, making her moan desperately, her pleasure easily overwhelming the hints of pain.

“Harder,” she moaned as I impaled her rapidly, so I grabbed her hair and pulled back roughly, adding another layer of pain, one that she appreciated greatly if her tightening was any indicator. I continued to drill her mercilessly while my other hand danced over her curves, mercilessly exploring her sensitive spots.

Her ass tightened under my treatment, doubling the already significant pleasure I was getting from our fun adventure. I didn’t say anything, just continued to enjoy her helpless tightness. Her back arching beautifully as I steadily pushed her toward another climax, struggling to stay on

the bright side of the line that separated consciousness from fainting,

It wasn't just the amazing tightness of her ass that was giving me pleasure —not that it was anything less than amazing. The true joy came from turning another strong and beautiful woman into a member of my growing harem. Without her strength and achievements, the pleasure I would have gotten from her total surrender would have been significantly less.

“Look at yourself,” I ordered as I conjured a mirror in front of her, forcing her to confront her own slutty face.

She caught the sight of her body. Her eyes widened in shock as her mind registered the intenseness of her arousal, clear as a day on her beautiful face. Still, despite the initial shock, she embraced it easily. She started pushing her ass back to match my pacing, her tits jiggling in an amazing manner whenever our bodies hit together.

As the hold of the pleasure got even stronger, her breathing started to get out of control. She was nearing another climax, but this time, I wasn't too far away from an explosion as well. She was burning with a desire that was impossible to suppress. I considered suddenly pulling out to leave her on the edge, but I decided against it for two reasons. First, she had already gone through delicious torture locked in the cabinet while I was flirting with Delia.

Second, I was also about to explode.

“I'm going to fill you,” I whispered, which she replied with a delicious moan, not saying a word. Not that she needed any words at this point. Her desperate moans, combined with her body language, told her story much better than any word could convey. She closed her eyes as she focused on the sensation while I slammed with a renewed fervor.

Then, I exploded, flooding her bowels with my seed, which triggered a desperate moan in her as well. I unraveled the chains with a wave of my hands and dispelling the enchantments —the useless ones that I cast to trick her about the source of her suppression— and removed the restrictions from her stats.

Her phenomenal power returned completely, but that only helped her to stay conscious. She still collapsed against me, her body limp enough to force me to grab her waist to prevent her from collapsing. I chuckled even as I dragged her toward the nearest chair.

I sat down and pulled her to my lap, my shaft still in her ass, every throbbing making her moan softly.

I needed a toy to distract myself while I waited for her to recover. Luckily, I had a very convenient one. I grabbed her breasts and started kneading them gently while I waited for her to recover...

After all, we still have a lot of things to discuss...

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Strength: 41 Charisma: 53

Precision: 35 Perception: 37

Agility: 35 Manipulation: 40

Speed: 34 Intelligence: 44

Endurance: 34 Wisdom: 46

HP: 5370 / 5370 Mana: 6600 / 6600]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty

I was planning to start discussing the details of the spear and the best approach to repair it after Oeyne recovered from her most recent orgasm, expecting her recovery to be rather quick after freeing her from her stat restrictions, her impressive Endurance working again.

Unfortunately, I miscalculated. As she recovered, she shifted in her seat, ready for a second round. Who could have imagined continuously caressing her breasts as she recovered —or keeping my fully-erect cock in her ass, pumping lazily to stretch her ass even further— could make her aroused.

She grabbed my wrists, her hold once again strong enough to crack stone now that she was free of both the physical and magical restraints. “Fuck me,” she growled, drunk arousal dancing in the depths of her beautiful brown eyes.

“Such a needy whore,” I murmured, trying to sound playfully dissatisfied, which was harder than the entirety of the acting I had pulled against Delia. Sounding negative was particularly difficult with a sexy caramel beauty in my lap, grinding repeatedly to take my cock even deeper into her ass, pressing hard enough to shatter the pelvis of a weaker man.

“I’ll show you needy,” she grunted, feeling the need to show dominance after her earlier humiliation —a state that she clearly enjoyed immensely, but humiliation nonetheless.

I had no intention of catering to her particular wish to switch roles. Twisting my wrists, I freed myself from her grip, only to latch around her arms to mirror the earlier situation. With a grab established, it was trivial to stand up and dash toward the nearest wall, trusting her legs to wrap around my waist reflexively to maintain the balance. Not to avoid the fall — as something like that would even register to her as painful— but because she didn’t want to lose my presence in her bowels.

With my speed, it took only a moment for me to slam her against the smooth surface of the wall —which didn’t crack only because of the extensive magic that went to reinforce it during its construction, designed to contain magical explosions— using one hand to keep her both hands together despite her earnest struggle to free them. My strength, combined with the leverage of the position, allowed me to occupy both of her hands with just one, highlighting that despite all my magical talent, I was stronger than her.

She reacted beautifully to her new imprisonment, my flesh replacing the chains.

Her reaction wasn't shocking. After all, due to her political position, she was living under a metaphorical siege for the last several years, one woman against a horde of guilds that maintained a stranglehold on the economy. Yes, she was incomparably stronger than any single one of them maybe except some guild leaders and other high levels —or maybe not even them, as it was very rare for someone with a high-level cap to actually follow the path of crafting rather than combat— but with their numbers came to the political weight, so much that she was only able to hide away as she worked in her works.

At first, my presence was nothing more than an easy source of money for her to fulfill her material needs for experimentation —and to pay the sizable debt she accumulated through gambling. Even when I first revealed some magical talent, it barely enhanced my utility without changing the nature of the relationship, just adding mana to the things she wanted to extract from me.

But as slowly revealed the extent of my power —both physical and magical— her perception started to shift, starting to see me as an equal at first, then even more. However, even then, she didn't truly surrender until today, where I truly displayed everything she needed.

I had displayed my strength before by dominating her directly, but the ability to take her abilities to a point of turning her into a weakling —though she assumed the enchantments on the chain was responsible— was on a different level in terms of power differentiation, proving that not only I could defeat, but completely destroy her.

After effectively living under political siege for a decade, that fact was clearly a comfort for her. After all, if I could destroy her easily, I wouldn't be trying to seduce her just to sell her out later. I was fucking her, because I wanted to fuck her. Nothing less, nothing more.

It wasn't just my direct strength that impressed her, though. My connection with the headmistress —even though it was established quite a bit later than she might have assumed— was another reason for her surrender. Political power was not something she desired, or could manage due to her excessively direct personality, but that didn't prevent her from suffering under the political weight of the others. With my connections, I represented an umbrella to protect her from all kinds of inconvenient little political machinations that might target her in her comfortable little nest.

The show I put in with Delia just pushed that point further. Even though she couldn't truly understand the subtleties of my actions —she lacked the ability to do so even under the best of circumstances, and being locked in a cabinet while suffering from chain orgasms was certainly not the optimal mental state to appreciate the details of a counter-seduction operation— she

appreciated me taking control of a situation she had no chance of successfully managing.

She appreciated it in a very visceral manner, if the furious rocking of her hips was any indicator.

As I responded with an enraged slam, she moaned, testing the limits of the sound isolation of her workshop. She was enthusiastic about my roughness, and even if she hadn't been, she had no one to blame but herself. She was the one to tempt me to restart despite my intention to discuss the technical topics relating to the spear.

Still, as much as I enjoyed her moans, I enjoyed forcibly cutting them off even more. I slammed my lips against hers, invasion of my tongue cutting her cries.

With my body on hers, she was pushed against the wall with no hope of escaping, but that didn't prevent her from trying to reverse the situation, using her recently-restored strength to the limit. Of course, just because she occasionally tried to turn the tables, only to lose, didn't mean that she was unhappy with the position. After all, losing brought its own rewards. Her hips continued to rock but still maintained the perfect angle for me to invade her ass properly.

So, when I suddenly yanked her by her luscious dark hair and threw her on the couch, face first—the same one I used to entertain Delia— she barely resisted. I latched her from behind, but this time, I slipped into her wet pussy.

Neglecting such a wet welcome wouldn't have been gentlemanly.

She just moaned as I inserted into her from behind, leveraging the fact that her lips were free once again. With no ability or desire to contain the noise coming out of her throat, her howls and shrieks filled the room as my presence stretched her soft lips to the limit.

I delivered a relentless assault into her wetness, something she rewarded me with her dazed, pleasure-filled moans. I grabbed her hair once more, this time pulling hard to turn it into a makeshift ponytail, using that to yank her head back with every thrust.

With the addition of a layer of pain, her enjoyment multiplied, her moans once again without the slightest hint of control, just sheer pleasure. Her eyes were closed, her tongue slipping out of her mouth as the pleasure reached a completely new level, the battle of ecstasy and euphoria clear on her face.

Then, she cried even louder as she tried to say something, but it turned into an unintelligible mess between her wanton moans. It seemed that, even with her endurance renewed, she was quick to reach her limit.

It wasn't surprising considering the significant strain she had gone through, unfortunately for her, I had no intention of showing mercy just because of that reason. I continued to thrust without even skipping a beat, curious whether I could make her climax again before she could recover.

"Do you think I can make you cum again in less than a minute?" I asked mockingly even as I slapped her ass, watching her bountiful flesh create endless ripples.

"I-impossible," she stammered, barely able to speak as she tried to ride her latest climax, which was rather difficult with my continuous slams.

"Oh, really?" I countered, more than ready to take the challenge. I slipped two fingers into her ass, pumping furiously.

She opened her mouth, no doubt argue against that in our sudden bet, but before she could say anything, I added another finger, shattering her words into another moan, letting out a savage grunt to match her tone. It took several seconds for her to reassert control over her body, and even then, it was barely enough to utter two words. "That's cheating!"

"You should have put the conditions beforehand," I said mockingly as my fingers quickened their assault to match the furious speed of my hips, both pushing my physical capabilities to the limit. I used my other hand to grab the couch, using the leverage to move even faster.

Under the strength of my assault, the couch started to crack ominously, warning me to slow down. However, winning the bet was more important than the continued existence of a couch, so I pushed even harder.

My furious last-minute push paid dividends, as her body started trembling with a fresh wave of overwhelming pleasure before the aftershocks of the previous one could disappear. Unfortunately, as I pushed for the final time before her tightening triggered my climax, I managed to overwhelm the hardness of the couch, and its back shattered with a loud sound, forcing me to cast a spell to prevent its slivers from hurting us.

[-4 Mana]

Not that it would have been dangerous in any way, but I didn't like the idea of Oeyne feeling pain if I wasn't the one directly responsible for it.

We lay among the shattered remains of her couch as we caught our breath. "That was a gift," she murmured petulantly as she recovered enough to string together more than two words.

“Then they should have given a more robust gift,” I countered mockingly, aware that she was just reflecting her frustration of losing the bet. Though, considering we didn’t actually put a stake for the bet, and she got another amazing climax in the process, it was hard to point out how exactly she had lost. She grumbled a bit, one that immediately disappeared as I started caressing her breasts.

“So, what is my reward for winning the bet,” I said as I continued to enjoy the softness of her skin.

“That doesn’t count,” she countered immediately, her tone implying she was far more interested in repeating the process of the bet more than getting the eventual victory, not that I could blame her for it. It had been rather entertaining to cut loose physically to such a degree.

“Maybe we can repeat the bet later,” I sighed with regret as I raised my hand, creating a complicated pattern of magical formulas floating like stars of the midnight sky. “It’s time to work. We need to talk about the spear...”

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Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-One

My discussion with Oeyne about the spear consumed the rest of the day, as well as the majority of the night —though we did take several fun breaks that left us pleasantly exhausted in the process of studying.

All work and no play would make me a dull boy, after all. Not a particularly fun outcome.

Ultimately, our extensive study left us with even more questions than we had started with. Or, at least, in terms of the exact way to repair the spear in a way that would function its original function, storage, which sounded rather lame considering the weight assigned by the Royal Family.

Naturally, it was more complicated than that.

After that much studying, we were certain that the spear was designed to capture and contain some kind of energy source, and not let it out until certain stringent conditions were met. The requirements to contain the mysterious energy source left Oeyne scratching her head, as it was many times more intense than even the strongest theoretical mana construct.

I had my own suspicions about the storage target. Divine Spark seemed to be a perfect fit for it.

Though, the fact that I started to find much evidence of the existence of the Divine Spark the moment I started looking for it suggested something very important. They were clearly much more available than I had first assumed. The headmistress, the mysterious organization, and now, the royal family...

Still, the relative availability of it, along with the seemingly widespread knowledge, made sense under the light of the story told by the headmistress.

Since the Eternals were not currently ruling the world with an adamantium fist, there must be others possessing Divine Sparks as well —though, hopefully, not controlling them fully. Otherwise, even with their control over the system lost, the Eternals would have been able to dominate the other powers. And I certainly hoped that the control the Headmistress was displaying as a mythical angel was on the upper range of the scale of competence.

Of course, that raised even more questions about the princess' ultimate aim to be there, especially with the combination of the visit of her thief, whether she was aware of the identity of the headmistress and the fact that she was possessing two Divine Sparks, or that she was just

trying to do conduct and opportunistic fact-finding mission in a time it would be blamed to other enemies. Hopefully, after I establish my new research laboratory, I would get a better idea of the situation.

Still, almost every information I had was assumptions and suppositions, strung together from my limited experiences and a few scraps of information I unearthed from the stories. I needed more evidence before I could make a conclusion.

Conveniently, I was going to the Headmistress's tower once more, to finally receive the mark to turn me one of those Divine-Touched of the Light, not that I had any intention of turning into an emotionless, logic-driven little knight for her. Even if the worst happened and she established an overwhelmingly strong node that eclipsed the one Titania possessed, I just could suppress the emotional aspect of it, and that was only an issue if I couldn't trick her to establish the node in my fake soul space, with no connection to my real power.

I was enthusiastic about the opportunity, with the control she had displayed during the earlier ritual, my conversion wouldn't be a simple affair, certainly more complicated than my technique.

Unfortunately, it was likely not going to be as fun as mine as well.

When I arrived at her tower, a minute before the prearranged time, I found the door firmly closed. I waited silently, waiting for the door to open at the exact moment she promised. It did so, unlocking with a dramatic effect. I sighed at her subtle show of power and started walking.

The moment I stepped inside her tower, inside the protective wrap of darkness wards, pure, calming light filled my being, getting stronger as I climbed up the stairs. The walls, normally unadorned with any kind of mark, were filled with silver runes, visually supporting the holy feeling.

Then, a soft melody, one that reminded me of a choir, reached my ears, confirming my suspicions. I barely hid a smirk. She was clearly putting a show to impress me about the significance of the moment. Though the show might have some utilitarian purpose behind it just like my own Companion Process progressing only when a certain amount of trust and reliance developed between me and my beautiful friends, it still didn't change its nature. It was a show to impress.

So, I acted suitably awed, displaying proper amazement on my face. However, when I finally arrived at her room, I hadn't had to fake that expression, though not for the reasons she was

hoping.

Both the room and the headmistress had transformed completely from their usual understated manner. I was clearly more interested in the second part. Rather than her usual black robe, she was wearing white and gold armor that encased her torso. Even though the flatness of her plate armor hid the amazing lines of her body, it wasn't too much a deal-breaker, not when I had the perfect memory of her naked body in my memories to refer to. The fact that her armor was limited to a chest plate, but unfortunately she also wore a pristine white robe, hiding her arms and legs from the hungry gaze.

Her wings were fully raised, wide enough to almost touch the walls, shining softly with a silver light, the same color of her beautiful silver hair and eyes. Unlike their previous bare appearance, they had something resembling a weird mixture of armor and weapon loosely wrapped around, gold and silver, adding a sense of danger without hurting their holy appearance. Someone else might have fallen onto their knees and declared their undying worship at the amazing sight.

I imagined the magnificent sight it would create as I grabbed her wings from behind as I bent her over on top of the tallest tower of the school, her hands chained behind, being impaled repeatedly, her pure voice strained to shout as loud as she could manage. What a magnificent sight it would have been...

Compared to her striking appearance, the changes in the room took the backseat. Everything else in the room except the crystal runic platform was gone, replaced by more items made from the same crystal, covered in runes. Still, despite the wondrous sight they created, glowing with an inner light and reflecting the glow of the others at the same time, they faded against the awe of the angelic beauty that stood in the middle of the room, exuding an even brighter glow.

Though, the crystal platform grabbed my attention. Realizing that she was more focused on controlling her own mana, I decided to take the risk of touching the platform once more with a mana probe. However, after the previous time, I didn't let the platform connect with my mana completely, just examining its outer structure instead.

A cursory examination revealed that its nature was not too different from the spear. It was a very complicated artifact that would require days of effort to understand its proper functioning principles of course, but ascertaining its basic nature was simple after studying the spear in much detail.

It was like identifying a sword easily after getting familiar with a dinner knife. Not only was the strength and usage potential of the platform eclipsed the spear, but also its principles of design were much tighter. But ultimately, they were the equipment of the same nature, designed to contain and channel the Divine Spark.

As she looked at me, I expected her to launch an extensive, complicated ritual to sell the overwhelming holy expression further, but she chose a different part. “Kneel before the platform,” she simply said as she stepped on the platform, the glow filling her body.

[Divine Spark Identified! Please absorb it to continue to support the operations of the System]

The familiar notification popped again asking me to devour the source. Too bad that my earlier attempt almost resulted in my destruction, preventing me from acting hastily. After examining the design of the broken spear for a while, I had realized that I had underestimated the complexity of the process far too much. Divine Spark was far too volatile just to be controlled like mana.

“Are you ready?” the headmistress asked as she put her hand on my head.

I tensed my body, grabbing my mana tightly, my muscles tensed, ready to lash out in case she noticed my deception and decided to react violently. “I’m ready,” I said, not exactly needing to fake a worshipful expression, though she probably wouldn’t have appreciated knowing that it was not directed to the holy ritual she was conducting but to her beauty. Her serious expression hid the cuteness she otherwise would have displayed, but that just tempted me to make her moan cutely.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t the time for that.

Yet.

Then, her power slammed against my body, forcing me to focus on the moment to prevent a crisis. Her power outlined my body first, furious as a flood, threatening to drown me. If it wasn’t for my overwhelming strength, the power would have eviscerated me in less than a second, not even leaving a sliver of ash.

The nature of the power was interesting. It wasn’t pure Divine Spark like I had been expecting, but instead it was mostly her own mana, mixed with a dash of Divine Spark, though that sliver was enough to turn her calm mana into a furious river threatening to destroy everything in its path. More interestingly, she wasn’t actually spending the mana, but pushing out of her body to rotate in my body, only to pull back again, making it a repeated activity, grueling to resist.

Luckily, I wasn't weak, so that I could grit my teeth and ignore the painful sensation as her power invaded my body mercilessly, as if it was cleansing my body by fires, painfully sharp. Every inch of my skin burned as the fire slowly infused deeper, pain intensifying.

But it wasn't without its benefit. My sharp senses, working in conjunction with my Biomancy and Tantric abilities, gave me the ability to monitor my own physical condition unfailingly, and I could feel that despite the pain, my body was getting stronger. It was a subtle thing, but also it wasn't something that could be just copied by Biomancy. Mana was not something that could be used as that trick. The improvement was subtle, but permanent.

And, it was completely unrelated to my stats.

Then, before I could consider the extent and the implications of that transformation, the power finally reached the fake soul space. The power of her mana mixed with a sliver of Divine Spark, effective despite its small amount, filled my fake soul space to the brim almost instantly, cracking its borders dangerously before she could exert enough control to gather it into one glowing vortex, forcing me to spend a lot of mana to repair my fake soul space.

[-2186 Mana]

The intensity of her power was wilder I had expected, making it more destructive, but paradoxically, it made me feel safer. After all, I had more than enough mana to maintain the soul space and repair it continuously, and even if the worst had happened, its destruction would mean nothing more than a temporary inconvenience.

The implication of the aggressive power flow was much more interesting. The uncontrolled flow of power revealed just how little control she had over Divine Spark, so much that even the small portion she was trying to control rebelled against her touch. The best she could do was to act like a riverbed, allowing the power to flood into my body, and gather it into a self-contained entity once it arrived at its direction.

It was important, because it meant that she couldn't notice the tricks I might pull on it. I carefully extended a line of mana, creating an alternate route for the power to flow in, and several other mana constructs to separate her mana from the Divine Spark, and infusing the same spark into mine before rerouting her mana back into the main flow.

It was a complicated mana structure, inspired by the design of the spear I was tasked to repair, refined further by the way she manipulated the Divine Spark to tame it by her own mana, but it worked. It even worked more successfully than I expected, not getting the slightest reaction

from her.

[-316 Mana]

I started to feel my true soul space filling with the Divine Spark...

[Divine Spark Absorption Started! Please absorb it completely to continue to support the operations of the System]

My lips quirked with anticipation as I read the notification. Finally, my improvement could continue after the initial break...

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SKILLS

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Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Advanced Craft [50/50]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Two

The sensation of absorbing the divine spark was an interesting feeling, somehow a mixture of taking a soft, lingering sip from an excellent wine, and drinking a sip of water desperately after a week's journey through a desert, displaying both the soft comfort of the first and the desperation of the second simultaneously.

Still, it was an amazing sensation, overwhelming even without the fact that I would be able to level up again, and even progress the Companion Process as an excellent bonus. It was slowly absorbed being into my soul space. The system probably would have liked to absorb it immediately, but that part failed due to the interference of her wards, the same wards that prevented the proficiency increase for the skills and gaining experience... Still, as long as the amount of Divine Spark became too overwhelming in my soul space, it was not a big problem.

The process to steal some of the Divine Spark from her was complicated, but once established, it was mostly self-reinforcing, allowing me to focus on other things. I turned my attention on the headmistress, her beautiful face strained with the weight of the action she was doing, her focus impeccable.

It was the perfect time to examine her status. I carefully constructed a mana probe, weak yet stable, before pushing it into her body. Her own body was chaotic enough with her throbbing mana, making it impossible for her to detect my little trick.

It also made it difficult for my mana probe to survive, forcing me to recreate probe after probe to search for her soul space, only to fail repeatedly despite my intensive effort. She might be hiding her soul space, of course, but she was clearly straining her own ability to the limit to channel the divine spark. Why should she bother to hide her soul space so thoroughly? Even if she suspected tricks from me, reinforcing its defenses was much easier than hiding it completely.

I created another probe, this time much stronger, taking the risk of getting caught, pushing even deeper into her body to find the connection point with the system. Then, I plunged that probe into her mana flow, tracing it toward the source, the only location I hadn't checked.

Initially, I wasn't expecting to find anything, because I had assumed the flow was coming from the crystal platform rather than her, because I assumed the platform was holding the divine spark, and she was just channeling it. It certainly made sense when considering the ability of the platform. As the mana probe traveled deeper into the mana flow, deeper into her body rather than the platform, however, I was forced to rethink that assumption.

When I finally found a metaphorical space, reinforced by layers and layers of mana, my eyes widened in surprise for two reasons. First, it was clearly not a soul space, and combined with my fruitless search that checked every other possible location, it wasn't hard to conclude that she lacked a soul space altogether.

Shocking, but not as shocking as it would have been before listening to her story about the root of the system. Knowing that it was an artificial construct of relatively recent origins, developed by the enemies of her faction, her lack of a system was interesting, but not exactly enough to shake my worldview. Combined with her ability to block the system in her tower, it was something I should have guessed.

The second discovery was much more interesting. Inside her reinforced containment unit, I had found an energy source that was getting more familiar with each passing minute. She was holding the Divine Spark inside her body. Which was an interesting choice, considering she had a perfectly viable container in the form of the platform. I was yet to decipher the platform's full range of functions, but based on my work on the broken remains of the spear, I was absolutely sure that it could contain the divine spark inside her infinitely with no side effect.

Which left the question, why she was carrying it inside her despite the obvious disadvantages.

Unfortunately, before I could deepen my probe, the strain on her face started to strengthen, and her mana flow started to decrease. I dispersed my mana probe hurriedly before she could notice it.

Once the mana flow slowed down, she stopped mixing Divine Spark, and instead focused on absorbing her mana. The moment it stopped, however, her mana rushed inside me once more, no less intense, but with much better control. If she maintained that intensity while examining my body, I had no chance of hiding my real soul space if she used that to search for it, but luckily, she was panting in exhaustion already.

Not the best mood to do something that was completely unnecessary —from her perspective— just to be on the safe side.

Instead, she focused that mana on my fake soul space, examining the small core of transformed divine spark, much smaller than what Titania had been carrying. It was a difference that couldn't be explained by the small amount of Divine Spark I managed to steal.

"You'll visit me for the rest of the week, just before the dawn every time," she said, trying to sound impervious to hide her exhausted state. Since my own Companion node also required

repeated attempts to fully form, I wasn't too surprised by her words.

"As you wish, headmistress," I said as I stood up, trying to ignore the way her sweaty robe stuck to her body. The robe was too thick to make it an erotic sight, but the hints of curves were just enough to trigger the memories of her beautiful nakedness, making my mouth water.

Even then, I wasn't particularly broken as I left the headmistress behind, too interested in the amount of divine spark that filled my real soul space, still moving, unlike the Node that was created in my soul space. I could have still destroyed that node to recover the divine spark it went to its construction, but since it would make the headmistress very suspicious, I didn't follow up with that.

Luckily, it was too weak to affect me even if it hadn't been housed in a fake soul space.

With that done, I turned my attention back to the flowing Divine Spark, still waiting for the connection with the system to occur, relatively calm as it stayed mixed with my mana.

However, the moment I stepped out of the tower —and out of the concealment of the tower— I lost all hints of control over the Divine Spark, which was devoured by the system in an instant. Not expecting such a reaction, I was barely able to maintain my own soul space as the pain hit, forcing me to grit my teeth. It was a pain that transcended physical, hurting my whole existence as it shredded an escape route through my soul space.

"Okay, no letting it absorb all of it immediately," I murmured to myself even as I struggled to stand up, trembling badly. There was no HP loss warning, but that didn't change the fact that I had never been that close to death, not even I had been in the necromancer base, dashing away from the scary lich and his death knights.

Luckily, repairing my soul space was something I had significant expertise on. After spending all the time using tantric to reinforce the soul space of the girls to increase their level cap, repairing my own was a simple activity.

[-5491 Mana]

A simple, yet costly activity, I corrected in my mind as I dumped more and more mana into my soul space. Not that it annoyed me much. After all, if was one thing I didn't lack, it was mana.

I could have waited around in my room, and linger until my mana was completely recovered, reinforcing my soul space even further before the next ritual, allowing me to safely store more Divine Spark, but I received a notification that eased the process of recovery significantly.

The kind that I had been missing for a whole.

[Achievement: Devouring Divinity. Take the first step into recovering your divine power. +5 to all stats. +20000 Experience]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Tantric, Expert Craft, Master Speech]

Despite the significant increase in power it represented, I couldn't help but frown as I read the notifications. Still, before pondering on the implications, I first focused on the simpler part, namely, skill selection.

Selecting Tantric was tempting. Tantric was the only reason I was able to devour Divine Spark successfully, thanks to the extraordinary flexibility it granted while synchronizing with others, not to mention, stronger my Tantric abilities, easier I could level up my companions, and likely to a higher level. Extra firepower was never something negative.

The problem, it would block my skill selection for the next five levels, a loss of flexibility I couldn't afford, especially not before I could ascertain how much experience the Divine Spark would generate. So, I turned to the other options.

Speech was an inferior option, even with all the advantages it would grant me against the headmistress and the princess. Craft was the vital thing I needed before I repaired the spear properly. After selecting, I started thinking about the complicated structure of the spear even as I pulled a spare dagger, using my mana to reshape it.

[+9 Craft]

[-341]

A smile appeared on my lips as I saw the result. The current complexity I was dealing with was far above the skill accounted for, easily allowing me to gain more points —or more accurately, assimilating the skill node I had received from the system.

The significant improvement in the ease I was handling my mana was another beneficial perk, but even that wasn't enough to suppress the frown that appeared on my face as I read my latest achievement again and again, my gloom deepening.

If my assumptions were correct, the System had just told me a lie, a big one.

My information about the Divine, both in terms of the gods and their lesser counterparts were extremely limited, but even my limited interaction with the Divine Spark suggested that leveling up had little to do with becoming a divine. Ultimately, the System was an external source of power that could be cut off, manipulated, or destroyed.

More importantly, I started examining the remaining scraps of power in my body, the ones that were yet to be absorbed into my body. My soul space, rather than allowing them to settle and empower my body, started to devour them as well, running contrary to the claims of resurrecting my divinity.

It was even trying to devour the node that was created in my fake soul space, forcing me to reinforce its walls to prevent the System from succeeding. Explaining its disappearance to the headmistress wouldn't have been fun.

Also, the direct claim in the achievement, about being the resurrection of a god was another suspicious point. It wasn't the first time the System implied something in that direction, but it was the first time it confirmed it in such a direct manner. I had no idea whether it was true or not. The existence of the gods was something I had just learned just a couple of days ago, with absolutely no idea about their nature and their life cycle.

Technically, there was a possibility that it was the truth, that I was the resurrection of a god, and my System was something I had created before my temporary destruction to enable my rise to power.

The problem, it sounded too good to be true, especially in conjunction with the existence of the widespread System, designed to devour the Divine Spark of the gods. And suddenly, my own system was asking me to do the same, baiting me with more power, and the possibility of becoming a Divine being.

It sounded too good to be true...

Funny enough, the sudden burst of suspicion didn't change anything in my immediate plans. Whether the outlandish claim of my System was actually the truth, or it was just an excuse to force me to gather more Divine Spark, I would still visit Titania to push my level even more.

I needed more strength to survive the looming disaster first..

[Level: 31 Experience: 467193 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 1321 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [59/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Three

Another elemental conjuration later, I was freely flying on the sky, ready to visit Titania to test the limits of the Divine Spark injection. The repair of my soul space was already completed thanks to the latest stat increase from the —likely misleading— an achievement I had received earlier, which increased my capabilities significantly. Even in my current extreme stat spread, five points of stats across the board was not something to snuff at. Most people failed to gather that much in their whole life.

Since I didn't want to waste the traveling time, I decided to experiment with the divine light node resting in my fake soul space. Integrating it into my own soul space was out of the question, naturally. Even if my System wouldn't have devoured it immediately, it still didn't remove the requirement of tricking the headmistress.

Instead, I decided to use it as a focus, similar to an external magical item. A simple push of featureless mana later, created a bright explosion of light, even sharper than I expected.

“Not bad,” I murmured as I repeated it a couple of times, to understand the effect. Essentially, it worked as a static converter, adding an overwhelming light element to mana, though devouring some of the mana in the process. It took a while to get a better understanding of how to arrange the portions.

Then, I focused on testing natured mana. The elemental mana resulted in some rather volatile results, forcing me to stop that track rather early. It wasn't impossible, but it required a more suitable location —and maybe a few wards to prevent dangerous accidents. Still, I wanted to experiment on that, excited about just how much damage a light-infused fireball could inflict on a pack of bone dragons.

Arcana worked better. It didn't create any synergy in terms of damage like infusing it with other elements, but it allowed me to use the light element in a more nimble way. It wasn't as cost-effective as casting it directly, of course, but if there was one thing I wasn't currently lacking, that was mana.

Things started to get interesting when I started to use it in conjunction with Biomancy. It didn't work with healing magic, on the contrary, turning it into an unstable mess, too sharp to heal, but too soft to hurt anyone. The energy I termed as life energy, the kind I used to detect and destroy undead, however, mashed with the light magic perfectly.

To lack of a better term, the life energy was as soft as healing energy, making it difficult to

deliver it in range, both in terms of detection and damaging undead. I had circumvented the first part by dumping an ungodly amount of mana to it, and the second application was viable because of the excessive weakness of the undead. Still, life energy wasn't the most viable energy for weaponizing.

Mixing it with light mana worked perfectly. The light worked as a delivery mechanism, carrying the light energy to the distance without losing its shape and energy, increasing its ranged viability several times, both in terms of damage delivery and detection.

Enough to make me tempted to find Zokras the Eternal and his death knights, to see whether I could turn his title to an obsolete piece of history.

As I continued to play with the life magic and light magic, trying to find the best mixture for different purposes, I suddenly felt a muffled reaction, barely noticeable even to my sharp senses. With a frown, I repeated the detection magic, but this time as an actual spell rather than idle experimentation.

[-641 Mana]

With the increase of power, several dark presences popped into my detection range, making my eyes widen in surprise by the sheer amount. None of the groups I had detected was particularly strong, but the sheer number of small pockets I had detected in the range surprised me. Their presence was muffled, indicating that they were behind some innovative wards to hide their presence. Not to mention, they were quite deep in the ground, likely reached their position from an underground tunnel.

I would have been surprised, but considering the huge underground roads that connected the necromancer base with the various access points, established without anyone being aware of, establishing some small undead pockets wasn't too challenging.

After quickly destroying the detected ones, I started circling the school, creating huge circles, destroying every detected one immediately. As I destroyed them, I started cataloging the result.

The first important detail was their strength, or more accurately, a lack of it. None of them were particularly strong. Most of the pockets had an average of Class Five power or lower, with the occasional stronger one barely reaching Class 8. Still, considering there were hundreds of those little pockets, they were still a dangerous threat.

There were far too many to be placed around during the last month, not without being detected even with the assistance of their spies in the faculty. Most likely, even a year wasn't enough,

proving that the plan to take down the school had been going on for a long time.

I continued to destroy those pockets, despite the fact that I wasn't expecting them to attack the school immediately.

Their strategy clearly changed from an overwhelming ambush to an extended siege, forcing Silver Spires to either lose the surrounding towns to weaken it permanently —both in terms of logistics and reputation— before they launched a final attack from all directions, using the undead packets they had created.

Still, destroying them was the better idea. Since my latest assault on their base, they were aware of my presence, so enhancing my reputation wouldn't hurt, even though destroying them wasn't particularly difficult. And that was only the case if the necromancers had detected their destruction. There was a good chance that they wouldn't be aware of their disappearance until they tried to summon them.

Their concealment wards were that good, and there was no warning flare occurring after their distraction —no doubt to prevent their detection when the underground monsters discovered their presence and destroyed them.

I had a calm smile on my face as I destroyed the dormant zombies and other abominations, using earth magic to grind them into pieces with a leisure pace before injecting a dash of life energy to purify the remains.

As I continued my search to clean up a wide area around the school, I couldn't help but pity Zokras, or whoever was behind the complicated plan to take down Silver Spires. They went all that effort and came up with an amazing strategy. Even the last part was an amazing stroke of genius.

With disposable monsters hidden under an area that was assumed to be safe, they could have waited until the reinforcements that were sent to the surrounding towns started to return, attacking them with their main forces to threaten those forces to retreat faster, before suddenly launching the attacks of hundreds of small undead groups from the rear, utterly shredding the defenders in a deadly ambush.

Pity that my unique combination of skills destroyed yet another deadly plan. From an intellectual perspective, I couldn't help but pity them. After years of planning and effort, their contingencies were being destroyed by me one by one.

And to make things worse, it wasn't the first time I had ruined one of their plans. Even before

my latest achievement, three of their dangerous strategic ploys —surprise undead assault before the school could establish defenses, artificial beast hordes, and fake hordes with exploding gems— had been ruined through my involvement, a count that didn't even include many smaller tactical operations I had prevented, from saving the Dragon they had been trying to corrupt to saving Titania from two deadly ambushes, as well as finding their plans to break the defensive wards of the school and repairing them...

I was the sole reason for the current stalemate wasn't a devastating defeat.

At the first glance, a stalemate looked to their benefit. After all, due to their nature, necromancers could reinforce their armies endlessly while we could only lose ours in battle, but that didn't factor in the overwhelming advantage of our current defensive position.

As the many citizens, as well as some of the weaker students, took the walls to defend the towns against the endless monster assaults, a significant number of them would level up in the process. Hunting in the wilderness was significantly harder than shooting arrows from the walls, and a lucky hit to an already dying Class Ten beast could give enough experience to level up a peasant a couple of levels immediately, maybe even an achievement or two for overwhelming power difference if they were lucky. As a result, the more the cities survived against the monster hordes, the stronger the defenses would get. And if they dared to attack one with enough strength to raze the towns, they would open themselves to counterattack.

I doubted Zokras was enthusiastic about taking the field after losing five precious death knights in his own base, along with an impressive number of liches a huge chunk of the army. Combined with my mysterious identity, I was literally a weapon of mass destruction tailored to take down the undead, and to make things even worse, I could sneak attack. They still didn't know who I was, no one really did. Even if they identified me correctly, my previous reputation was so horrible that it looked like a badly arranged cover job.

I wondered how the headmistress would have reacted if she knew that a horny midnight adventure of two salacious students was the only thing that saved Silver Spires from a certain doom...

With a sigh, I continued to destroy all the undead pockets I could discover. It was a boring, grueling task despite my recently enhanced abilities, making me waste several hours in the process. It would have been faster if I could have burned mana freely to detect them, but that would have alerted others to my presence. Light-infused life energy wasn't exactly the subtlest magic one could cast, after all. On the positive side, it gave me enough time to completely repair my soul scape, ready to level up once again.

I started traveling in Titania's direction...

[Level: 31 Experience: 467193 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7595 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [59/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Four

It was past midday when I arrived at the town defended by Titania, delayed by destroying a few monster hordes I had come across. Therefore, I wasn't particularly surprised to find the town surrounded by an impressive number of weaker monsters, assaulting the walls without a break.

None of these monsters were particularly strong, meaning that after their latest explosive ploy was destroyed, the enemy was relying on the constant attacks to keep the pressure up, hoping to exhaust the defenders, both in terms of endurance and equipment.

And it seemed to be working. Even with weaker students and citizens showing a much greater combat ability compared to my last visit thanks to their level increase and the stat boosts from the achievements they triggered, the stronger fighters were getting significantly lesser benefit from the continuous assault of the weaker monsters. However, they were still unable to rest because they needed to respond to the breaches, preventing the monsters from cutting a swathe through the weaker defenders.

Titania was the one that best exemplified that exhaustion, standing on the most visible location on the walls, only using her magic when absolutely necessary, and even then, it was a use soft, the flickering blast of light that lacked her usual domineering vigor.

I might have even worried if I couldn't feel her current through our connection, much stronger than her weak blasts might suggest. Good, I thought. She was following my suggestion about faking exhaustion, meaning she was ready for an ambush.

The same applied to Marianne, who was healing only the deadly cases at the back of the line, keeping most of her mana in reserve. It wasn't the most efficient way for a healer to work, but after getting proficient with the life energy trick I had taught her, she wasn't just a healer. She represented a deadly hidden card against an undead assault.

I was tempted to pull her along to my time with Titania once again, helping her recover her mana while I once again enjoyed their combined attention, but unfortunately, pulling both of them from the siege would affect the defenses negatively.

After a magical message to Titania, I sneaked into her room, waiting for her to appear. Since she needed to organize the defenses before taking a break, it took a while for her to arrive, and I spent that time using magic to check the surroundings, both by checking the wards to get any hint of the agents of the Eternals, and using my new detection capabilities to detect undead presence.

[-482 Mana]

The security of my lovers was an important thing, especially with such a complicated siege going on.

When the checks resulted in no outcome, I turned my attention to the wards of the room. Just because I detected no enemy presence didn't mean that there was no enemy presence, or that they couldn't pay me another visit. Though, in the interest of multitasking, I started to reconstruct the furniture in the room by adding some magical resistance, both making the room safer and improving my craft skill. With my mana and stats, maximizing an expert-tier skill was trivial.

[-5981 Mana]

[+16 Craft]

It took fifteen minutes for Titania to arrive, a time enough to turn her room into a temporary fortress. Then she arrived, making me abandon those attempts in the interest of more interesting things.

"Hi-" she started, only to let out a cute little cry when I grabbed her wrist and pulled her on my lap. A cute expression appeared on her face as I leaned, ready to capture her lips, something that would have made people gasp in shock if they had seen her blushing like an innocent young maiden.

I started kissing her, and she melted under my touch immediately, her domineering attitude nonexistent under my touch. Technically, the aim of the kiss was to transfer mana, but at this point, even for her, it was a poorly constructed excuse for her passion.

[-319 Mana]

[+100 Experience]

A brief yet heated kiss later, I pulled back, caressing her cheek gently, happy about the kiss as much as I was happy about the experience gain. I had missed the addictive sensation of slowly growing stronger. Even with my suspicions toward the source of my unique system, more power wasn't something to be discarded.

"So, how were things?" I asked.

“Nothing unexpected, just continuous siege,” she answered before launching a summary of the highlights, none of them triggering suspicion. “Anything on your side?”

“A few,” I answered with a quirked smile even as my hands started to work on her robe, unbuttoning it with a teasing slowness even as I kissed her neck, rather than explaining.

“Caesar!” she warned petulantly, once again cute enough to irrevocably destroy her scary persona if there was an observer, earning a bright smile from me. “Don’t dawdle.”

“Oh,” I said even as I unlocked another button before slipping my hand inside, slipping under her blouse to caress her stomach softly, teasing a particularly sensitive spot. “I was under the impression that you enjoyed my dawdling, should I change my approach and make it a more serious meeting.”

“Caesar...” she repeated, but under the focused attention of my skilled fingers, her earlier teasing tone had long disappeared, replaced by a needy gasp. She said nothing else as my lips on her neck and my fingers under her blouse launched a dedicated assault, and when I made a show of pulling my hand away, she grabbed my wrist, keeping it in place.

[+300 Experience]

Even as the main instigator of her transformation, I was finding it hard to believe the things I was getting away with in terms of teasing her, from naughty threesomes to extended foreplays. It was so difficult to believe she was the same person that had scared me witless for so many years.

It was incredible.

I chuckled at her silent surrender before starting to explain. “The biggest difference is the arrival of the royal procession. The crown princess arrived with a literal army, either determined to link her fate to our school, or willing to invade.”

“Yeah, like something like that is possible with the headmistress’s presence,” Titania answered dismissively, utterly convinced with the headmistress’s power. Considering that she had also seen her angelic visage while receiving her own light node, her fascination was understandable. The headmistress displayed an invincible figure, even though I was starting to suspect that it might not exactly reflect reality. It wasn’t that the headmistress was weak, but she was housing the Divine Core inside her body rather than the platform. And considering the lack of ease she was showing in manipulating the divine energy, it significantly reduced her combat capability.

Unless she was willing to use it as an uncontrollable explosive, destroying both the target and the several miles of the landscape around the target. Not exactly the most useful to defend against a sneak attack unless she wanted to destroy the school along with the princess.

Still, just because I managed to dupe her about my origins and power didn't mean that she was actually gullible. If that was the case, she couldn't have maintained her position for a couple of centuries while a huge spread of enemies targeted her position. Even my trickery was through a unique combination of several outlandish abilities and circumstances, allowing me to escape her cursory examination, while the war prevented her from doing a deeper assessment and possibly alienating the imaginary force behind me.

Since Titania didn't seem to know much about the princess, I decided to skip the topic after mentioning that I was helping Oeyne with the spear, giving some details I had discovered, but ultimately underselling it both in terms of the effort it required and the eventual usefulness. I trusted Titania, but not to a point of forgetting she still trusted the headmistress completely. Until I could take the top place without a doubt or turn the headmistress to a trusted ally, revealing every single thing to her was not an option.

As I explained, I continued to caress her soft skin while slowly stripping her, making it even harder for her to focus on my words. Her robe was first to go, followed by her blouse and corset, allowing me to lean down to capture her nipples, teasing them by alternating kisses and bites.

[+500 Experience]

This time, she wasn't bothered by the cessation of my explanation. I slid my hands down to get rid of her long skirt, leaving only her panties to protect her delicious cheeks. I cupped them, and she moaned gently, happy with the treatment she was receiving.

A moan escaped her mouth as my fingers found the source of her dampness once more, teasing gently. A significant contrast to my lips, which was busy teasing her nipples with a surprising aggressiveness, making her gasp and cry repeatedly, destroying any chance of her asking me to continue with my explanation.

[+500 Experience]

As I enjoyed treating her, I examined the reaction of the system, in particular, trying to find any hints of weakening that might signal to stop receiving the experience. I wanted to be able to get a good sense of the link between the amount of Divine Spark and the potential experience.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to detect anything. I was starting to suspect that there might not be a link, but even if there was one, it was certainly not happening in my soul space, but at the other end of the mysterious connection that made something like the System possible.

With that determination, I turned my focus on Titania, ripping off her panties aggressively with a pull, then freed my shaft. But when she tried to impale herself impatiently, I stopped with a smug smile on my lips, just enough to convey without a doubt that I was delaying it intentionally.

"Do you have any news from the other towns?" I asked. "Any explicit move from the stronger liches?"

"Nothing yet," she answered, trying to keep her tone even, trying to counter my assault by feigning a lack of caring, but failing spectacularly. "Still, t-things are getting dangerous," she stammered, unable to prevent herself from moaning in between words despite the seriousness of the topic. "They are sending more and more monsters to stress the defenses, but they are yet to make a move to capitalize it."

"Yeah, the enemy has more cards than we were expecting," I said. "Only thanks to the new light-magic capabilities that were bestowed by the headmistress that I was able to discover hidden zombie army near the school, positioned for a deadly ambush."

Titania froze, displaying a shock that was significantly stronger than a group of undead deserved. After all, that ambush didn't even get a top-three status, even if we were limiting it to the events we were together. Certainly not when compared to the ambush that almost killed her, or the sudden appearance of the death knights that almost turned our ambush into a grave—or a lack of one, considering the enemy.

"T-the headmistress bestowed you the power of light!" Titania said, a huge smile blossoming on her face despite her sudden seriousness. "Then, you know her identity as well!"

"Oh, did I forget to mention that," I said with a mocking tone, acting like it was deliberate teasing from my end rather than genuinely forgetting to bring it up with everything that was going on...

[Level: 31 Experience: 468593 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7595 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Five

“H-how can you forget to mention that after seeing her identity!” Titania growled, her eyes wide with shock.

“Calm down, she’s just an angel,” I said with a considerably less amazed tone, which Titania clearly didn’t appreciate if her angry glare was any indicator. Though, it was important to note that her anger certainly wasn’t enough to make her leave my lap despite our nakedness, or stopping the gentle yet beautiful movement of her hips.

I didn’t find her anger at my dismissal surprising. After all, she had lived under the emotional suppression as a Divine-Touched of the Light for at least a couple of years, maybe more. While that suppressed her emotions, since the headmistress was a being of light, it might even work as an amplifier. And, even without that, the headmistress provided an amazing sight, with her golden armor and her impassive wings.

My case was different, especially after my first real glance was on her naked body.

“She’s an angel!” Titania repeated, even angrier, and I just chuckled, pulling her tighter on my lap. Since it wasn’t a direction I wanted to waste a lot of time, I decided to distract her with a shinier approach. I raised my finger, conjuring a small globe of light. At first glance, it didn’t look too different from a simple arcana trick, but with her own expertise in light magic, it was trivial for Titania to understand its true source.

“You can already cast it! It’s an amazing achievement considering you received it just hours ago,” she gasped in shock as she raised her finger, touching at the small globe. Light magic, despite its simple look, was extremely destructive. If someone else tried what she was trying, the smallest thing they would receive was a nasty burn, maybe even lose their finger completely if their level wasn’t particularly high.

With her own spectacular expertise, however, Titania had no such risk. Her smile brightened as her fingertip disappeared into the ball, before I felt her mana flooding, stealing control of the globe from me, changing shapes repeatedly.

“Show off,” I said with a chuckle, spanking her ass playfully as I said so, making her flinch cutely as she moved forward, a movement that left her entrance perfectly aligned with my shaft. And since I was already trying to distract her from the earlier topic, I didn’t miss the opportunity and plunged into her wetness.

The moan she let out in response was a thing of beauty.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 70%]

[+1000 Experience]

Ideally, considering my interest in understanding the assistance of my newly-acquired sliver of Divine spark, I shouldn't have been trying to enhance Titania's companion process, but the immediate benefits of such a thing were more critical than possible drawbacks. The experience burst was always welcome after each stage completion, but now, about to face a legendary lich that earned the nickname of eternal, skill share was a much better benefit.

Not to mention the stat boost Titania would receive, which would increase her power significantly. Two points increase for every mental stat was certainly nothing to scoff at, both in terms of extra mana it would give her, and the extra potency it would add to her skills.

"Since you're willing to show off, why don't you teach me a few of your skills," I suggested even as I grabbed her hips, pulling her even deeper.

"Caesar, not now," she gasped as the pleasure hit her.

"Not now, what?" I asked. "The teaching, or the fun?"

Despite everything, she was far too shy to actually answer such a question instantly. She dipped her head down, her raven hair hiding her blushing face, but the way her hips moved repeatedly was a better answer, so I didn't force her to speak. Instead, I leaned forward, capturing her lips in a lingering kiss.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 71%]

[+500 Experience]

I let her determine the pace, her head dipped down but her hips picking up speed. That didn't prevent me from leaning down to petter her neck with kisses, of course, which assisted greatly to destroy her hesitancy. I knew just how naughty she would get once her initial shyness was broken.

So, I continued to caress her body steadily as she danced on my lap, her movements getting sharper and sharper while I was once again felt shocked by the potential hidden in her tiny body, enough to destroy the town we were in bare minutes if she chose so.

“You’re so beautiful,” I whispered into her ear, making her tremble in excitement under the softness of my tone. She looked up, and I captured her lips in a searing kiss that made her moan helplessly, which helped quite a bit for her to get rid of her hesitancy. When I finally pulled back, her expression was firmly on the territory of desire, destroying the hint of shyness.

“You’re an evil man,” she stated even as she put her hands on my shoulder, her hips moving even more furiously thanks to the additional leverage. I moaned, enjoying the way she clenched tighter around my girth. Happy with the way she was taking control, I had no problem temporarily taking a passive position, especially since, unlike Oeyne, I knew she wouldn’t try to push her newfound opportunity to the limits.

I wrapped my arm around her waist, pulling her tight to enjoy the feeling of her hard nipples against my chest, my hands occasionally slipping down to cup her deliciously tight lithe hips. She buried her face to my neck. A minute passed, then two, then five, while she steadily closed toward a climax, her hips getting more and more furious.

Then, she finally tightened around my girth, signaling that she had passed through the finish line.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 73%]

[+500 Experience]

“It’s my turn,” I whispered into her ear even as she trembled in my lap, adding a layer of anticipation to her rush of pleasure.

Before she could recover, I had already grabbed her and pushed her against the wall, her breasts pressing against the smooth stone. With me skewering her, she was just short enough to barely tiptoe. But if the beautiful moan she let out as I used the advantages of the angle to push even deeper into her was any indicator, she wasn’t particularly caring of her helpless position.

She closed her eyes to enjoy the merciless assault I launched, her thin frame shaking with joy with every push. Her beautiful lips pursed, leaving me in a dangerous dilemma. Should I lean down and kiss, enjoying their warmth, or stay away, listening to her moans without interruption, getting louder and louder and louder.

After a torturous decision process, I decided to choose the latter, enjoying the way she clamped around me as I pushed deeper and deeper, her moans cheering for my success. Her silky smoothness enveloped me fully, renewing my decision to steal her completely from the headmistress’ sphere of influence, and not just because she was the only one that could

currently allow me to get some mana.

It was so tempting to steal her away and escape to a mountain, staying in a cave for the next week, away from everything else as I tested just how passionately I could make her moan under my control. Pity that, with everything that was going on, a week of holiday was not something we could afford.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 74%]

[+1000 Experience]

She managed to distract me from my thoughts rather effectively. She pressed her hands against the wall for leverage before she started rocking her hips wildly, managing to add her own movement to the pushes despite the limited angle. "Someone is feeling enthusiastic," I whispered into her ear, a sentence that would have sent her stammering away any other time. But now, in the throes of passion, she just moaned in agreement.

Happy with her ever-growing enthusiasm, I sank deeper into heaven, the pace of my hips best described as a merciless drilling, her silky wetness more than happy to envelop my presence deeper and deeper.

"You're a masterpiece," I whispered sincerely even as I grabbed her hips once more, moving even faster. She was far too gone to use her words to answer, but the change of tone in her moans worked just as well. Though this time, the temptation to feel the tremble of her voice on my lips felt more tempting than hearing them, so I closed her mouth with my lips, muffling her moans the best way possible.

Then, she started to tighten in a final manner, suggesting that she was experiencing another delicious climax. This time, I was sufficiently gone that her extra tightening put every single nerve ending in my body to high alert, signaling an eruption.

I exploded into her, which matched perfectly for the third stage of the companion process, along with a flood of other notifications.

[+2000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 75% - Third Stage Completed +15000 Exp]

[Companion Acquisition: Relationship not sufficient for the fourth stage]

I had to admit, while the completion notification of another stage of the Companion Process was always welcome, the same didn't apply for the following one. Even though, I wasn't really surprised. Not with the reverence, she was feeling toward the headmistress.

I didn't expect to progress into the fourth stage unless I replaced the importance of the headmistress in her mind, becoming the most important person in her life. That was what I learned from Cornelia and Helga.

Luckily, the notifications I had received were not limited to that. I had also received a nice batch of perk-related notifications.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 3. Duration, 8 hours]

[New Perk: Skill Share]

[Skill Share perk activated. Target Skill: Grandmaster Light Magic. Copied: Duration, 24 hours]

[Temporary Skill: Master Light Magic (100/100)]

I was happy to see skill share was working as intended, and even happier to see that just like fire magic, it was actually based on elemental magic, allowing me to start from such a high location. As long as I spent the rest of the day with Titania, being taught how to use the light magic offensively, I could get a qualitative improvement.

Or at least, that was what I thought until I heard a knock on the door, and a furious shout from the other end. "There's an incoming undead army!" an unknown voice shouted, destroying my plans of a day filled with leisure learning and leveling up...

Well, I thought spitefully as I gathered my mana. Teaching the undead army a lesson they couldn't forget through the light magic wasn't exactly a terrible alternative.

And maybe this time, I could teach them to stay away...

[Level: 31 Experience: 488593 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7595 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Six

“Such an inconvenient timing,” Titania murmured in frustration even as she grabbed my shoulder and stood up, her legs trembling despite her impressive physical capabilities, which wasn’t negligible despite her magical specialization.

“Why exactly is inconvenient,” I asked with a teasing grin. “I’m here, and your mana is full, that’s literally the best time for them to attack.” Then, I paused slightly, then my eyes widened in fake shock. “Unless you’re talking about something else!”

“I- you-” she stammered, her naked body blushing spectacularly. How she could feel self-conscious about desiring more after the rather spectacular moment we shared —not to mention the spectacular threesome that happened just a few days ago— I had no idea, but that didn’t prevent me from teasing her. “You!” she gasped in a surprisingly innocent fit of anger after she noticed the meaning of my ever-growing grin, and slapped my naked shoulder.

“You want to play rough,” I whispered gutturally even as I grabbed her wrist while standing up, and pushed her toward the nearest wall while locking her lips in a searing kiss. My tongue slipped inside her lips even as my shaft slipped inside her wet entrance, pumping furiously.

[+1000 Experience]

Despite the upcoming battle, she was no less enthusiastic responding to my aggressive touch. With her breasts pressing against my chest and my shaft invading her repeatedly, she was quick to react. “You’re so thick…” she moaned. “It feels so good.”

She hooked her legs around my waist to maintain balance as I leaned back slightly before leaning down and sucked on her nipples hard, making her wiggle and squiggle in seconds. I propped myself by putting my hands on the wall, allowing her torso to move as I pumped, her tits bouncing as I pounded into her. I wasn’t sweet about it.

I didn’t have time to be sweet.

It turned out that even that level of aggressiveness was not enough to make her shriek hard enough to shatter windows despite the way her slit was tight around me like a vice. Her muffled moans were tempting, but unfortunately, they didn’t have the priority compared to the furious knock on the door. “The army is about to arrive in two minutes!” the warning came with a desperate tone.

“Pity,” I murmured even as I pulled back, leaving her panting and moaning, leaning against the wall. I caressed her cheek even as I cast a water spell, a bubble of water appearing around our bodies to clean before evaporating.

[-21 Mana]

Even with my previous displays of magic, her eyes still widened, because while the spell wasn't power-intensive, the intensive control I had displayed suggested a lot of things about my power, especially since it was an element I hadn't used when I was with her, mostly leaning on earth and fire to deal with the undead.

“You're evil,” Titania murmured a moment later, her fascination about the display of yet another magical ability unable to match the frustration created by my latest move.

“It's good to be tense,” I whispered as I caressed her naked hip while she was busy putting on her underwear. “It'll help to finish the battle quicker and come back to visit me.”

She tried to act coy, but a playful step toward her was enough for her to abort that. “I need to leave before they panic and start to desert the walls,” she said, her distaste clear. Her attitude was understandable. Despite her power, she still forced herself to develop new skills constantly, and faced death on a regular basis. Most of the students, however, lacked the same attitude due to their sheltered forced growth, facing no risk, protected by the stronger groups.

Titania, as someone over level thirty, lacked that luxury. She had to battle for her experience, for every single measly point.

At least, she did before my appearance. I represented a much more interesting source of power for her as well.

Despite its reputation, the number of faculty over level twenty wasn't all that impressive, and most of them linked to the noble families one way or another, more interested in protecting the students of their own clique rather than improving further even if their level cap hadn't been reached.

I stood behind, examining her beautiful body as she hid it behind layers of clothing, slowly transforming from a sexy yet innocent brunette to the deadly head librarian of Silver Spires, her existence enough the enemies to modify their invasion plans several times just to make sure she was taken out.

I couldn't help but be nostalgic as I stared at her, remembering the times where I first

discovered my leveling ability, scared to be discovered by her. Just a month ago, I could have never believed I would stand in a superior position, standing in the same room, watching her beautiful body contort as she hurriedly dressed up after a spectacular sharing of joy.

I leaned against the wall and folded my arms across my chest, enjoying the show. That finally allowed her to realize unlike her, I wasn't getting dressed frantically. Her gaze met mine. I watched as her cheeks blushed yet again.

[+300 Experience]

The woman standing in front of me might have been the scariest mage they would ever see for most people, but for me, she was meant much more.

"Aren't you getting ready?" she asked with a small, cute voice.

"No need," I said, which made her freeze for a moment. "The same thing with the previous attack," I said. "Clearly, they are attacking for one of two reasons. They are either betting that I'm still here with you after dealing with the assassins, but wanting to confirm my existence through the attack before attacking somewhere else, or they are assuming I'm not here, and want to take you down while you're exhausted. Regardless of the case, if I reveal myself, it'll be of their advantage," I explained in detail. If there was one thing she lacked, it was thinking strategically, thanks to a combination of her divine-touched status making her act more straightforward, and the impressive power that allowed her to bulldoze most challenges directly.

"I see," she murmured. "How exhausted I should act?" she asked. "Maybe I should stumble in exhaustion.

"Try to look fresh, but don't use anything too mana intensive," I corrected.

"Why, isn't it better if they see me look exhausted?"

"Not necessarily," I corrected her thinking. "If you look too exhausted, it'll make them suspect there might be something amiss."

"But what if they think that we realized their plan and trying to counter it?" she asked. "Then, wouldn't it be better to look exhausted."

I shook my head, smiling in amusement even as Titania buttoned her robe, getting ready to go out. "There's no need to complicate it. After all, even if there wasn't a ploy, you would try to

look fresh to make the defenders maintain their morale. Sometimes, the best way to deceive the enemies is to do nothing. The more cards we hold in our hand, the stronger our position will be. There's no harm forcing them to make the first move when we hold all the advantages."

"I see," she murmured, no small amount of distaste in her tone. Still, it was proof of her respect toward my abilities that rather than trying to argue, she just nodded and accepted my recommendation.

"Just make sure to keep your eyes open for a sudden ambush from behind," I said to her before leaning in for one last kiss. I would be next to her, defending her from the shadows, but there was no harm in her being alert.

After the talk with the headmistress, I was even more vigilant about the mysterious assassins of the Eternals, especially since they didn't attack Titania immediately. They had two assassins that could deliver a surprise attack, and a mage that, while not as strong as Titania, was strong enough to counter her spells while the other two delivered their attacks. There was no one in the town that could prevent the assassination if they wanted to escape.

The fact that they didn't prove that they wanted to kidnap her, and my talk with the headmistress revealed a lot of reasons for such an activity. They might be just trying to get the Divine Spark that gave her her light magic abilities, of course. Or maybe, they just wanted her to use it as evidence to make sure the headmistress had a Divine Spark.

After all, the headmistress went a long way to hide the Divine Spark behind the wards infused with darkness, and I doubted it was just to prevent the System from devouring it. It would make sense for the Eternals to use Titania to investigate rather than invading the school directly. Even that was an assumption, however. Maybe they were already aware that the headmistress was in possession of the Divine Spark of light, but needed Titania's node as a sample to develop counter-measures.

I ignored these thoughts as Titania leaned in for one last kiss. There was no benefit to the spiral of assumptions I was forcing myself to make. In the end, their reason didn't matter, and not just because of my lack of reliable information.

Their reason didn't matter, because I had no intention of letting Titania be captured by a nebulous —and possibly nefarious— organization.

As she leaned my body to extend the kiss, I felt her body pressing against mine, her beautiful tits firm enough to make their presence known despite the layers of clothing in between. Her

bosom may be lacking in size, but it was certainly not inferior to anyone else.

The desire to rip her robe off was strong. It would leave the defense to the others, which probably fold under the aggressive offense of the undead army without Titania there to stabilize the morale, but was it really important compared to the feeling of caressing her beautiful breasts squeezing her nipples.

Pity that it was far too selfish, even for me, so I watched as she left the room, her hips with a sway that she didn't have just days ago.

After all, there was always a post-battle celebration.

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Seven

I left the room barely a minute later, the occasion far too important to neglect despite my desire to laze around after such a spectacular occasion of physical exertion. My power might have increased even further with the extra level and the additional divine light tricks, especially against the undead, but the enemy was still strong enough to deserve my full attention.

The delay we suffered as I teased Titania was already pushing the limits.

The first thing that got my attention was the chaos that filled the area in the walls. The town was understandably filled with existential fear, enough to overwhelm their courage developed by their rapidly-increasing levels. Understandable, as while the endless waves of monsters hitting the town were nothing more than a natural disaster.

The undead army that surrounded the town represented a planned action to erase the town. And the undead didn't get their scary reputation by failing such extermination missions often. Citizens run around in panic, hoping to find a route to escape, fear dominating their minds to understand such implications. It was weird...

Or not, I corrected my thought even as I extended my senses to feel the thin aura of death covering the city. I subconsciously ignored it for a while, because it was not an active spell, but a natural side effect of being surrounded by an army of necromantic constructs, their death energy radiating naturally.

After several times I had invaded their base, I barely registered it. But I was forgetting one thing. I was level thirty-one, most of the citizens were barely level five, and which meant the aura of death was much more domineering.

And the fact that people around Titania didn't show the same symptoms, her light-natured mana suppressing the effects of the death aura handily in a large circle. I quickly cast a couple of spells to destroy the miasma, radiating from Titania to make it look like she was responsible for casting it.

The more exhausted they assumed Titania to be, the sooner they would react.

When I finally stepped the walls, disguised as a common militia, keeping Titania in my field of vision in case of an emergency. However, she wasn't my only target to protect. I sneaked through the guards, my Subterfuge combined with my Arcana turning me into a ghost on the battlefield.

It was trivial to sneak into the room that was arranged as a temporary field hospital, piled with medicine and other supplies to help her healing efforts, but empty other than a few civilians wearing white robes, and a familiar curvy blonde with a tense expression.

I cast a spell to distract the civilians as I sneaked behind Marianne —making sure I could still watch Titania from a window through careful positioning, before hugging her waist. She flinched, but her tenseness was short-lived as I whispered into her ear. “How are you doing, my sweet bunny?” I whispered.

“Caesar,” she gasped in a relaxed tone. “You scared me.”

“Sorry, sweet cheeks,” I added with a chuckle even as I kissed her neck, though still watching Titania as she rained orders to the defense team. “I wanted to surprise you.”

“Well, you did,” she answered, trying to sound stern, but with my arms around her waist, she had a markedly difficult time maintaining her angry tone with her body melting against mine. Hugging her from behind, once again feeling her generous curves, was certainly a treat.

“How do you feel about the upcoming battle?”

“I ... I don’t know,” Marianne murmured even as her gaze danced in the room. “I’ll probably stay here, healing the more dangerous candidates.”

“I see,” I murmured even as I gently nibbled her ear. “How about joining the battle?” I asked even as I nibbled her ear. “Your new ability would make you shine against the undead?”

“D-do I have to?” she suddenly stammered, tensing despite the hug.

“It’s your call,” I countered after kissing her neck to calm her down. I understood where she was coming from. “You don’t have to put yourself forward unless you don’t want to be famous,” I said. “It’s an opportunity for you to show off, but it’ll also bring a lot of responsibility,” I whispered. Ultimately, I didn’t really care about the limited assistance she would provide. I didn’t teach her to have an additional combatant, but to make sure she could defend herself against a surprise assault.

“I ...” she murmured before falling silent for a moment. “I better stay hidden,” she decided even as the explosive flares started to happen outside. “I had watched Cornelia suffer under the expectations of the others, and it certainly didn’t help any. It’s better if I stay hidden.”

“As you wish, love,” I said even as I tightened my hold around her waist, punctuating that with a

kiss. “Just don’t risk yourself trying to keep your abilities concealed. I was tempted to slide inside her to help her power up even more, but two things kept me back. First, empowering her wasn’t the smartest thing I could do under the circumstances, when I might need my mana for whatever ploy they had in mind. It was similar for the Divine Spark as well. Unlike Titania’s light magic, the temporary skill she would provide me was not critical enough.

And since she was not a combatant, her achievement wasn’t really critical as well. It could wait a couple of days.

The second reason, the wounded finally started to flow to the infirmary, meaning she was busy trying to heal everyone efficiently.

“I’m going outside,” I said to her before leaving. Slipping out without being noticed was trivial, so was climbing the walls to examine the attacking army.

I scanned the plains that surrounded the city —and the army that blackened the grassy fields that were already drenched in endless monster blood. I examined carefully to notice anything out of order, but even with my perception, I failed to notice anything other than endless low-level zombies and skeletons, and the occasional necromancers to direct them. Using my light detection abilities were out as well, not unless I risked being noticed.

I was confident in hiding the detection trick from weaker necromancers, but not from the higher level lichs. Certainly not from Zokras the Eternal.

So, I watched as the endless weak monsters crashed against the walls, again and again, my frown deepening. They were wasting too many zombies, too many even to flush out Titania unless they had a very dangerous plan in mind. The more undead got destroyed, the more I started to worry...

“Honey, start showing your abilities,” I whispered to Titania, using a simple Arcana spell to transfer my voice.

“Shouldn’t I wait for more, they won’t expect me to actually intervene yet.”

“I know, but I have a bad feeling. Let’s make them think that you’re trying to intimidate them with your magic. I’m curious how they would react,” I explained.

It was a credit just how much she started to trust me when she followed my request without any additional question despite the fact that the defense of the town was in line. She started glowing as she raised her hand, and large streaks of light started to rain from the sky,

demolishing large swathes of undead whenever her magic touched.

She was a sight to behold when she wasn't already impaired by a deadly trap, even when she barely committed a quarter of her mana reserves.

Her spell had decimated large swathes of the skeleton army, reducing them from a real threat to target practice, achieving something in minutes where the rest of the army might have failed completely. She was a true undead killer.

Despite the impressive showing, the remaining dregs of the undead army gathering for another attack, proving that they had many other trump cards as I suspected. They simply wanted to extend more of their abilities.

Titania prepared to wait after that spell, but I sent her another message. "Repeat the same spell, and finish the army," I suggested. She followed my suggestion, and actually did so. It wasn't a logical thing that I asked her to, essentially removing a card to force them to act earlier. Now, they just need to reveal their next card a touch earlier to force us to reveal a secret. So, we would either reveal that Titania had more mana than we were trying to convince them, or I had to reveal myself.

But with the sudden worry gnawing my heart, I decided to trust my instincts.

It didn't take long for the next attack to occur, from a direction I wasn't expecting. Sudden darkness covered the skies. I looked up, only to see a veritable regiment of bone dragons falling from the sky, previously using a cloud to stay concealed.

Smart, much smarter than I expected them to, coming from the sky rather than the underground, which was their whole defensive structure.

So, I stretched my mana into the earth, not exactly caring about being caught at this point. My detection magic cut through the wards, only to notice a wild amount of earth mana being used, no doubt to rapidly create a tunnel where they could use to enter the town.

A pincer attack from both up and down. It was a good plan. The sky ambush to distract the defenders, while the land attack presented the real threat. Combined with the zombie attack outside, it would have been absolutely deadly. Of course, committing that many resources to a single town were absolute madness.

Unless they were launching their final assault, and throwing all they had desperately. But I had seen their armies, and what was assaulting us was around half of their whole remaining forces.

With the remaining half of the army, it was impossible to actually take down the Silver Spires before the reinforcements arrived unless the Princess betrayed the school... Certainly not impossible... Maybe it was what my worry was about...

Or maybe not, I suddenly realized when a sharp flare of panic bloomed in my soul, coming from the soul space. I turned inward, only to realize that sheer panic was coming from my permanent connections.

Cornelia and Helga!

“Fuck you, you moldy bag of bones,” I murmured even as I realized the problem. With both Helga and Cornelia defending the town —one an expert of destructive area spells, the other expert on warding, both with impressive stats after my latest assistance, along with a whole town to help them— they were almost impossible to be threatened.

Unless the rest of the undead army was there, or a dangerously high-level combatant was involved. And considering I could feel their panic from miles away, it was urgent... The kind of urgent that would force me to dump half of my mana to an elemental mount just to be on time.

But doing so would leave Titania alone for the danger that was coming. I trusted her to handle the pincer attack safely, but I had no idea what they had planned the next. She might take down one of Zokras' death knights from her advantageous position, but certainly not Zokras himself, nor any assassin from Eternals.

My strength had made me too arrogant, I realized with sudden bitterness, even as I tried to make a decision, my thoughts flying with the speed of light...

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Eight

I needed to make a decision, and I needed to make it fast, because the panic I could feel from Cornelia and Helga was getting more and more intense with each second. The problem, I didn't even know whether they were being targeted intentionally to pull me away, or that it was just another part of the undead strategy trying to shatter the towns around Silver Spires, and they were being targeted accidentally.

Ultimately, however, it didn't matter much. I could either summon an air elemental and dash away, hoping to arrive in time, but leaving Titania alone and vulnerable, or I would sacrifice the girls. Each option was worse than the other...

Or do I, I thought, suddenly remembering a particular unique perk I had received, the one I hadn't dared to experiment with because of the side effects of the Empowerment perk I had observed when trying to enhance Cornelia's power.

Teleportation.

I couldn't help but touch that perk, testing yet not activating. The presence of Helga and Cornelia intensified, like they were just a step away, but it was a dangerous step.

What was a touch of danger to face when it came to protecting my lovers?

That still left one problem, however. The defense of the town with Titania. "Stop acting, and retreat next to Marianne, and be ready to protect yourself," I ordered Titania immediately as I started putting together a strategy that I hoped would be useful, at least enough to delay them a moment. "There's an emergency and I'll be going away in seconds."

With a flick of my hand, a pair of wings appeared on my back, the kind that I based on the looks of the headmistress, but made from air, but surrounded by a thick layer of light. Another layer of light appeared above my skin, radiating as bright as the sun.

[-149 Mana]

"Enough!" I commanded, the full weight of my charisma behind my words, sufficient even to stagger the actual mindless undead for a moment.

That moment was all I needed for me to mold enough mana to meld my biomancy-based life energy with light magic, essentially creating the same unique energy I had used to detect the presence of the undead, only different in intensity, the same way candlelight would compare to

a roaring forest fire, threatening to devour everything in its path.

[-4293 Mana]

I breathed hard even as the spell left my hands as a cone, one targeting the sky, toward the large division of bone dragons, the other aiming down, decimating the hidden undead army underground, trying to reach the town in a surprise attack, both decimated completely, though not without leaving me breathing in exhaustion. Even with my reserves, spending over four thousand mana in one spell was not a simple thing.

The posturing wasn't completely useless, however, as I immediately connected the soul pieces that occurred after the destruction, funneling them toward Titania. Each barely gave her a few points of experience at maximum, but with the numbers, the army was displaying, they still helped her to cover a significant distance toward the next level.

Sometimes, it was easier to catch the opportunities than trying to hunt them.

"Zokras, I'm getting bored of your pathetic attempts. You're barely fit to fight against my minions, but I'll give you more respect more than you deserve and kill you with my own hands!" I shouted, my magically-enhanced voice echoing toward the plains.

That posturing was not pointless. Even as I shouted, I cast another spell, connecting the light wings and armor I was using to disguise myself so that it continued to glow in the sky even without my presence.

[-93 Mana]

"I'll be leaving now, be careful," I said to Titania through another magical message, before taking a deep breath and activating my teleport perk...

[-319 Mana]

And just like that, the world disappeared completely.

More accurately, I found myself out of the world, swimming in some kind of endless aether ocean, which was what mana was in its natural state. Or more accurately, the energy that we converted into mana through processing with our soul space.

Unfortunately, it wasn't something that could be described as safe. Not even close.

[-251 HP]

The pain radiated as the surface of my skin tried to disintegrate, something that was forcibly arrested with my power, despite my own impressive power trying to push the aether away. I had no doubt that, if I tried to do that ten levels ago, I would have disintegrated in an instant...

Even now, I barely had seconds with aether flowing wilder than the worst ocean storm, trying to disintegrate my being completely, both in body and in the soul.

[-217 HP]

I tried to heal myself reflexively, only for my mana to flew away hopelessly, dragged by the aether flow. With the chaotic flow, it was impossible to properly shape the mana outside my body.

[-192 Mana]

[-288 HP]

Luckily, the teleportation perk was buried safely into my soul space, allowing me to still operate that safely, without the interference of the aether storm. Without that factor, I would have died completely.

I ignored the pain —which was certainly not a simple achievement with all of my skin trying to disintegrate simultaneously— as I tried to focus on the direction. My stomach started to churn, because the distance wasn't exactly a linear vector in aether space I found myself in. I could feel the distance getting shorter and longer with each second, and not by small percentages. No, what might be inches away one second might get a thousand miles away the next...

[-319 HP]

I did notice one interesting thing, however. The chaotic distance was only happening in a limited area, which was surrounded by a complicated energy shield that was hard even to properly understand. It was pushing back and forth, fluctuating, but I was sure that one touch was enough to earn a deadly backlash from it.

[-217 HP]

No matter how fascinating such a structure was, however, I didn't have time to focus on that. Literally, not when I had less than ten seconds to save myself from the dangerous situation I found myself in. And to do that, I needed to find my way.

Luckily, even from the chaotic dimension I found myself in, I could feel the Companion nodes of the girls, Cornelia's and Helga's nodes particularly bright, both due to their strength and the distress that was radiating from them.

[-241 HP]

However, detecting them was one thing, aiming toward them without overshooting was another thing. Even knowing that the distance between in the material world was limited, actually targeting them was difficult. Because, the distance between the different points wasn't just shuffling in terms of linear distance, but also in terms of angular combination.

A second passed, my mind filled with formula after formula, trying to make sense of the chaos.

[-273 HP]

Then another...

[-216 HP]

And another...

[-230 HP]

And another...

Then, either I managed to make a subconscious connection about the formula thanks to my monumental intelligence, or I happened to be extremely lucky, and I managed to get a momentary understanding of the distance between me and the girls.

I pushed myself toward it hopelessly. I didn't know whether it would work, or whether I would somehow find myself merged with a wall or something else. But considering my life was literally counted in seconds if I stayed in the aether dimension, it wasn't a hard choice to make.

Covering the great distance between me and the girls took less than a blink, but the same didn't apply to the physical cost of actually traveling through the aether. Even as I was standing still — or at least, what I could describe as standing still, which didn't have a direct equivalent in the surreal location I was occupying— was sufficiently damaging, and it was even worse when moving —for a warped definition of it— toward the unintentional beacon created by Cornelia and Helga.

[-1893 HP]

[-1395 Mana]

The two notification that popped in my sight wasn't exactly helping me to feel more confident, but as I pushed through the barrier that separated Aether dimension and the material plane, it was a cost that I paid willingly.

Even if it left me very drained.

[HP: 2179 / 6324]

[Mana: 1294 / 7595]

My status was rather accurate, considering I was completely naked if one discounted the deadly glow of the chaotic energy still trying to worm into what remained from my skin, the touch of the wind enough to trigger agonizing pain on nerves, exposed into the air. The complete loss of my weapons, auxiliary items, and clothes was another problem.

Still, my status didn't scare me. After all, I barely needed several minutes to actually put myself together.

But, then, I managed to get a glimpse of my surroundings. The first thing that caught my attention was the huge fireball that surrounded us, radiating from the familiar figure of Cornelia, her robe in tethers. I looked around to find Helga, only to find her collapsed on the floor, several feet behind me, unconscious and bleeding, not too away from actual death.

Around us, there were only smoldering ruins, but it wasn't dangerous.

Certainly not compared to the familiar figure of the death knight, trying to push through the flames, forcing Cornelia to retreat despite her aggressive casting, forcing her to deplete the last of her mana. Through our connection, I could feel her inches away from collapsing.

Apparently, I arrived just in time.

Now, all I needed was to survive a death knight —maybe even more, as I was yet to use detection— with no weapons, a lot of wounds, and barely a sixth of my mana, while trying to keep two girls, one unconscious, the other inches away from the same state.

Definitely trivial.

Right?

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 2179 / 6324 Mana: 1342 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Twenty-Nine

At times like these, I was glad for my intelligence and perception more than anything, allowing me to assess and process the situation with an unmatched speed. I let a thin layer of my mana spread, reinforced by the light elemental, allowing me to detect everything around.

[-23 Mana]

As the results of the spell reached me a fraction of a second later, my frown did the impossible and got even deeper. The situation was even direr than I had expected. The death knight wasn't the only one that was attacking. No, he had two of his buddies hiding in a distance, hidden behind several layers of wards —boy, wasn't I glad for my enhanced detection capabilities— while an impressive number of undead was currently moving away from the city, chasing a huge group of people.

Interestingly, however, the stronger undead, bone dragons, enhanced skeleton warriors, and the majority of the necromancers, still stuck around, despite the fact that, if they had followed the escaping horde of civilians, they could have easily destroyed them. And even more interesting, their positioning and their even distribution suggested that they were ready for an attack from outside.

That answered one question. It was a trap for me. A trap that was designed to take me at my best, with a healthy margin of error.

It was a good trap, I had to admit. With the frequency I had been using my elemental mount, it wasn't entirely shocking for them to discover that trick. With that, the plan was clear. Have the girls captured, on the edge of death, forcing me to act immediately. I doubted that they were aware that I would feel the attack on the girls —as even for me, that was a surprise— but with the number of spies, it wasn't difficult to convey.

And with most of the necromancers hurriedly setting up a complicated ward to defend the city from the attackers, half-completed, suggested that they expected me to attack from the outside. It was comparable to the trick they had used against Titania.

Necromancers were not a particularly creative sort.

Unfortunately, lacking in creativity didn't mean lacking in deadliness, especially when I was far too close to death than I was supposed to.

The only thing that worked in my favor was that they were expecting me to arrive from outside, not to be already inside, an advantage I needed to use to my benefit if I had any chance of surviving.

Luckily, Cornelia's latest hopeless flame wall gave me the excuse I needed. Just as the death knight pushed through the flaming wall, I cast another spell, this time creating a thick wall of flame behind the death knight, to prevent it from escaping, and to prevent others from peering inside.

[-319 Mana]

Spending a huge chunk of my precious mana to keep a death knight together with me, rather than trying to push him away wasn't exactly the safest move, but I needed him to be on the same side. Then, just as it could swing its sword to Cornelia, I dashed forward, sliding next to her —and stealing a dagger from her belt as I passed her— before using it to parry the attack of the death knight. My fingers were fast enough to hide that move from both Cornelia, and the opposing death knight.

I parried the attack successfully, and even my weapon stayed intact, but only because the swing of the death knight was much weaker, confirming my earlier assumption. They were trying to capture the girls alive as bait.

"Caesar," gasped Cornelia even as I pushed forward, leveraging the unbalanced swing of the death knight, charging the dagger with the flame energy as I did so, punishing him with a debilitating wound on its right arm, cutting several tendons, and leaving a smoldering wound behind that started to spread to the rest of the body, though it affected its fighting capability only marginally.

High-level undead wasn't particularly affected by the condition of their body, as long as the spell that animated them was stable. They weren't particularly resistant to fire, but not being resistant and being vulnerable were two different deals. If I delivered the same attack with life energy or light energy, I would have probably wounded it significantly, if not outright killed it.

Pity that I couldn't use anything but fire magic to enhance the attack.

"Take care of Helga," I said to Cornelia even as I swung the dagger, hoping to deliver another deadly wound before it could react. Unfortunately, it reacted faster than I expected. I still left another wound, but unfortunately, it was weaker than I expected.

Facing a death knight was a difficult task. I had previously slain five of them together, of course,

not to mention that I had done that when I was weaker, but only with exploding an impressive number of magical traps that were initially designed to destroy a large swathe of the undead army.

Currently, I didn't even have underwear.

I swung my dagger again even as the flame forced into its structure, threatening to destroy it completely. The death knight dodged, but surprisingly, rather than attacking me directly, it pulled back, even it put it dangerously close to the wall of flame.

I realized the reason a second later, barely holding back a burst of laughter. It was scared of the pieces of aether that were still stuck on my skin, evaporating slowly —though not damaging, as, without the dangerous flow, I was able to use just a simple arcana spell to push them away.

Death knights were excellent warriors, but they were not experts of magic.

And that fact was underlined further by a tendril of arcana that appeared through it, mixed with necrotic energy, but still carrying the basic structure of a communication spell. Interfering with it without him being aware was almost trivial. It pulled to a defensive stance as it waited for an answer.

Pity that giving a fake response was much harder than actually blocking it. Giving it false information would

[-7 Mana]

Since each second meant more mana for me, I decided to allow its defensive stance. "So, how does it feel to fight someone in your own size," I commented lazily even as I swung my dagger once more. He parried, putting my dagger dangerously close to shattering.

The death knight didn't answer, lacking the personality to actually enter into a debate. They were sapient and acted independently from their creator, but their personality was completely erased.

I continued to attack it, but allowed it to dodge. Even as it did so, I started infusing a subtle structure of life energy into the dagger, mixing it with the fire energy, enchanting the dagger in real-time.

Craft was turning out to be more useful than I expected.

[-149 Mana]

It wasn't a perfect dagger, of course. It would be a miracle if it could reach double-digit hits, but that was more than enough to kill the death knight, as long as I channeled life energy through it generously.

However, doing so would drain my already limited reserves even further. Moreover, hiding the destruction of a death knight wasn't the same as blocking a simple message spell. Not only I had to block the flare of necrotic energy freed from keeping it mobile, which required an investment of mana I wasn't prepared to invest, but also I needed to copy the connection with Zokras to fake it.

So, I let the death knight stay defensive as I made a few casual attacks, weak enough not to hurt the integrity of my newly-crafted weapon, but strong enough not to make the death knight realize I was the one playing for time.

I liked that, especially with every second helping me regenerate mana. With three instances of the mana regeneration active, my regeneration was very significant.

"So, where is your boss," I said. "I'm really bored to wait for him to appear," I commented even as I waved my hand, sending a line of healing energy toward Helga, too weak to be noticed through the interference of the flame wall, but enough to stabilize her and wake her up.

[-45 Mana]

The girls started talking heatedly behind me, but I focused on the death knights, stretching my subterfuge to the limits to give the impression that I was very comfortable with the current balance of the situation. With all the mana I spent to create the defensive wall and other tricks, my mana was even lower than when I appeared. And since I appeared, barely fifteen seconds had passed.

[Mana: 1083 / 7595]

Each second was precious.

Unfortunately, while the death knights lacked emotions, that didn't make them stupid. They still had an impressive combat intelligence, and the only reason I was able to fool it into inactivity for about fifteen seconds was my extremely complicated set of abilities, forcing him to think that they were currently suffering through a counter-ambush.

Unfortunately, that assumption didn't mean it would stay obediently defensive and wait for me to recover. It soon realized that its magical communication efforts didn't reach their target, and rushed toward me with a furious assault.

It was a feint, of course. Despite its skills, I was able to read it, and with some decent effort, I could have prevented it from pulling back. But why should I stop it when he was willing to push through a wall of crackling magical flame to warn his allies, especially when they were probably already getting suspicious.

The death knight attacked me, forcing me to raise my dagger to parry, though I made sure to react a touch too slow when he suddenly threw himself back into the fire, pushing through despite the damage it would receive.

Admittedly, the wall of fire looked more impressive compared to its damage, allowing the death knight to retreat through the fire with little damage.

Or, more accurately, it would have been the case, if I hadn't chosen that moment to inject some light-natured mana into the flames, letting out a chaotic explosion.

[-419 Mana]

The flames turned white, their height rose several times, expanding both inward and outward dangerously. I could still feel the death knight escaping through the fires, though not without significant damage. And more importantly, perfectly primed to deliver some misleading information to the rest of the army.

The flames expanded both inward and outward as the additional light forced it to consume all the infused mana immediately, forcing me to dash back next to Cornelia and Helga, establishing a strong shield to protect them from the backlash of the flames, but I get signed during the retreat, depleting my already limited HP even further.

[-281 HP]

[-243 Mana]

"So, how are you girls since our last meeting?" I said with an intentional levity, hoping to prevent them from panicking, even as my mind was on how to save myself from the growing undead base around me, my only advantage being the orientation of the defenses, facing outward rather than inward. Considering my mana was almost completely depleted, it wasn't exactly a huge advantage.

And I still didn't know the location of Zokras the Eternal, whether he was hoping to use the trap to kill me, or hoping to take down Titania in my absence...

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 1898 / 6324 Mana: 513 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty

“What exactly happened?” I repeated the question again as I looked at Cornelia, this time with a much stronger tone, even as I put my hand on Helga’s body to send another wave of healing magic, the healing efficiency much stronger thanks to our physical contact. Not enough to actually cure her, of course, but enough to awaken her in a few seconds.

[-94 Mana]

Meanwhile, Cornelia managed to gather her wits enough to start speaking, enough to give a stammering report. “It was just another wave of monster attack,” Cornelia started even as she trembled, struggling to stay conscious, too exhausted by the latest spell she cast against the death knight before I managed to intervene. “Then, some of the experimental early-warning wards Helga had prepared triggered, alerting us for the undead assault, so we had a couple of minutes to erect some additional wards to keep them away.” She took a shaky breath.

“It was the only thing that saved the lives of the citizens. Iomene managed to create an elite force to cut through the undead defense, and most of the students defended the rears. I took command of the rear, with the strongest students supporting us. We knew that it would have been difficult to defend the rear, but...”

“But we didn’t expect a death knight waiting for us to commit on our strategy before launching,” Helga cut in, awake enough to take the discussion. Cornelia sent her an appreciative nod, and focused on her breathing, trying to stay conscious.

“Well, at least, there are some advantages,” I said.

“Like what?” Helga said, confused. Cornelia didn’t say anything, but her expression suggested that Helga was reflecting her emotions as well.

“Well, at least you girls stopped fighting,” I said with a wide smile. “Our next threesome is going to be so interesting.”

“Caesar,” they gasped simultaneously. “It’s not the time,” Helga continued even as she slapped my shoulder, but their resigned expression brightened. Not because it was an amazing joke, but the fact that I was confident enough to joke meant that I was confident in getting away safely.

I wasn’t really confident, but there was no harm in making them believe it.

“Their strategy doesn’t make sense,” Helga murmured even as she struggled to stand up. “With

the forces they committed, they could have taken down every single man in the town much easier. All they needed was to use the death knight against the Iomene's forces before they could create a breach."

"Their strategy makes sense, you just need to know their true objective," I said.

"True objective?" Cornelia interjected, shocked, like she was having trouble understanding the magnitude of the event. "You're saying that the lives of tens of thousands of people are just bait for their true objective."

"Not tens of thousands of people, just two people," I said even as I pointed at them.

Helga gasped. "You're the target."

"Right in one," I said even as I cast a subtle detection spell, expecting to be attacked immediately, wasting some more of my precious mana. Luckily, they didn't attack immediately, giving me some time to recover. Barely half a minute, something they didn't even factor in as useful, but my regeneration, even with what the last healing spell consumed, allowed me to more than double my available mana.

[-21 Mana]

[Mana: 1086 / 7595]

"But that doesn't make sense," Cornelia stammered. "A whole army, with a death knight," she uttered even as she looked at me with widening eyes, a sense of worship dancing behind them as she reassessed my strength again, going up even more.

"Three death knights, actually," I corrected her even as I used another detection spell, trying to understand their strategy based on the way their movements.

[-16 Mana]

The results of the second detection put a wide smile on my face. The hidden death knights still held their position, while the army was slowly shuffling, changing their direction inward, while the wounded one pulled back to join the rest of the army. The more interesting part was the rest of the army, surrounding us completely, which made me smile.

They were trying to use their cannon fodder first to weaken me before launching their deadly attack, unaware that each second that took to reorganize the hulking hordes of zombies was

making it harder for them to succeed in their objective. I also considered healing myself, but ultimately, I decided against it. With the army I was about to face, area effect spells would help me much more than a few extra points of HP. Missing skin was painful, but preferable to death.

“Three death knights,” Cornelia gasped in shock, well aware how she compared even one of them, spending all of her mana just to delay one for a few seconds.

“Would I be an evil person if I said I’m glad that the rest of the army is chasing the survivors of the city?” Helga gasped.

“No, you wouldn’t,” I said. “Unfortunately, however, you’re wrong about their target,” I said. A second later, the last embers of the flames finally died, finally revealing the rest of the city. The buildings in our immediate surroundings had been destroyed as a result of the spell, giving the girls a good view of the rest of the city.

Which included a huge army of low-level zombies, closing in like a dark wave, slowly but steadily.

“Maybe I can distract them for a moment,” Cornelia offered with a resigned tone. To her credit, her tone wasn’t filled with fear, making me respect her even more. She might be an annoying noble heiress in the safety of the school, but she was a true battle mage facing an unbeatable enemy.

Well, what looked like an unbeatable enemy.

“No need,” I said to Cornelia even as I raised my hand, to see whether I could bluff another undead army in the same day. Pity that I lacked the overwhelming force option, but that didn’t mean that I was completely out of option, especially since a previous trap of mine had managed to get rid of five death knights in the process.

“Is this all the army you can gather to face me, Zokras,” I shouted smugly, enhancing my voice magically even as I simultaneously cast a variant of the earth element, forcing lines and lines of complicated runes to appear from the ground, shining brightly? “Last time, we were in your base, and you lost five death knights in the process. Are you brave enough to face me mine?”

[-54 Mana]

It was pure bluff, of course. The complicated runes that appeared were just shining brightly, representing many dangerous explosions, but they lacked the proper investment of mana to actually work as advertised. They were just pretty lights.

Helga looked at me weirdly, realizing that it was just a bluff, but smart enough actually not to say anything. Cornelia examined them with a shocked expression, failing to understand it was just a trick due to her own overspecialized magical knowledge.

Their response gave me an accurate gauge of the response of the undead army. Cornelia was lacking in terms of wards when compared to Helga, but only because Helga was overspecialized in theory in a way few actually was, and could catch the inconsistencies between runes at a glance.

On the side of the undead, I doubted anyone other than Zokras could replicate her expertise. Meaning, if they called my bluff and sent the whole army, Zokras was there, directing the assault. If they believed it, he was not.

Then, a small group of zombies —well, small in terms of an endless undead army, easily in high hundreds— pulled away from the main group, but rather than targeting us, spread around, clearly aiming to erase the runes, forcing the trap to discharge early. “No!” I gasped in an exaggerated shock, stretching my acting abilities to the limit, like a staggering assault was the worst thing that could happen.

“Stay back, and defend each other, do nothing else,” I said the girls with a message, then dashed forward.

[-2 Mana]

Even as I rushed forward, I cast another spell, pulling large pieces of metal from around myself, fashioning myself a huge axe, larger than myself, glowing furiously. Though, rather than forcing it in the air, I pulled it from the ground, making it more mysterious.

[-85 Mana]

It wasn't a good weapon, both in terms of size, and in terms of the magic I invested in stabilizing its structure, but its huge surface was filled with glowing runes that radiated life energy. Despite its uselessness, from a distance, it looked amazing. “Come and taste the edge of the Undead Bane,” I shouted showily as I dashed.

The more I could delay them through my physical capabilities, the better...

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 1898 / 6324 Mana: 1629 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-One

“For the all that is holy!” I shouted as I dashed at a speed near my full limits while trying to look heroic —still leaving something in the tank in case the death knights decided to use the opportunity to intervene, whether targeting me or the girls with the hopes of distracting me— and brought down my impressive looking axe to the head of the nearest zombie.

And I cast an undead bane —which I decided to call the useful mixture of light magic and life energy I generated through the biomancy— as I slammed my axe on the nearest zombie, while the explosion killed several more, clearing out a small opening for me.

[-9 Mana]

After that, I started cleaving through the horde of zombies as they barely bothered to attack me, determined to reach the glowing lines of the wards I had created. I responded with another undead bane, forcing the zombies to spread further to avoid the explosions, but ultimately slowing their journey.

[-8 Mana]

I did my best to look disappointed in their strategy journey as I cleaved through the zombies, the axe swinging desperately with its momentum, leaving several zombies in its wake with every swing, their limited mobility making them an easy target.

My desperate defense confirmed the hopelessness of the situation for the necromancers that were responsible for the assault, it seemed, because it didn’t take long for them to add another large group of zombies to the attack, committing further to their strategy.

From the start of the attack addition of the second group, barely thirty seconds had passed, but for me, every second was gold. As my mana refilled, I started to feel more confident. At least, I felt like I had a fighting chance even if they realized my subterfuge.

[Mana: 2141 / 7595]

That didn’t mean that I abandoned my ploy, of course. On the contrary, I decided to commit even further in my desperate defense, feeling comfortable in investing some mana for better returns. I cast a fancy arcana spell on the axe before throwing it on to the army that stood between me and the wounded death knight, and cast another undead bane at the impact point, clearing a large group of undead in the process, and leaving several stronger ones hopelessly

wounded.

[-241 Mana]

Then, I dashed forward, grabbing the axe halfway, and reducing the glow of the fake runes that covered its surface, but leaving enough glow to convince them that it still had a few charges left.

For the observers, it looked like I had just spent an expandable ability to force a fight between me and the death knight. Technically, it was a risky move. If the two death knights had pulled out from their hiding place and ambushed me, but I was betting on the fact that Zokras cared more about the death knights than the rest of his army.

Just as I expected, rather than facing me, the wounded death knight pulled deeper into the army, leaving me to face against an impressive number of stronger undead minions, including skeleton knights, monstrous creatures made from disgusting flesh, and occasional bone dragons swooping from the sky, each destroyed with a swing of my axe —which might not be a good weapon, forty-six points of strength that were behind it, swinging it with a merciless speed, was no joke.

I didn't bother channeling the impact of my kills to Cornelia, as currently, my mana was far too precious trying to do something I could easily replicate with my mana later on thanks to my newest level up.

Just like that, another forty seconds passed as I cut through an impressive number of undead, but not without a cost, mostly in the form of an impressive number of wounds I had collected as I tried to push through the horde with apparent desperation.

[-193 Mana]

[-421 HP]

[Mana: 2716 / 7595]

Unfortunately, as beneficial as my ploy was, it was hard to continue indefinitely. Ultimately, necromancers might be evil, selfish, and reprehensible, but that didn't mean that they were completely idiotic. Even with their attention on my reckless assault toward the death knights, they soon noticed that the distraction of the runes had little effect.

Luckily, their hesitancy meant that rather than attacking with full force, they decided to send a

couple of low-level necromancers to test them from a closer distance —and having a small argument in the process— giving me even more time. Which was welcome, because as I cast another detection spell, I noticed the two death knights finally leaving their hiding spot.

[-14 Mana]

One advantage of having a huge army was that it created a convenient hiding spot for any high-level undead that wanted to reach their target without being noticed. Well, against anyone without a conveniently superior detection spell.

Ambushes were a curious thing. Delivered correctly, they were a strategic miracle, enabling the delivery of extreme destruction, far above the potential the attackers might carry. But paradoxically, once detected, the supposed multiplier turned into a deadly rug around their feet, waiting to be pulled.

And two death knights, hidden inside a huge horde of zombies to conceal their presence fitted perfectly to the situation. If they had been successful in their sneaking attempt, even if I was under the perfect condition, I doubted I could handle them without significant cost.

At least, when they had a perfectly disposable army to back them up.

Unfortunately for Zokras' precious death knight, the hypothetical was different than the reality. I waited until they were in the middle of the army, both away from any cover that they could use to blunt the damage, and the army around themselves crowded enough to actually prevent them moving efficiently.

“About time,” I cried in exultation even as I threw the axe once more, this time without bothering to charge the axe. More importantly, I started channeling a devastating, overcharged another undead bane spell, much stronger, but didn't let go immediately, because the wounded death knight stopped escaping, and stood its ground.

The army around itself pulled away, bestowing it with a movement range to dodge. From my previous experience with them, I was well aware that death knights were deceptively fast enough to dodge any ranged attempt from my part without obstruction, and it was preparing to dodge.

I raised my axe, letting the axe shatter as I pointed the remains toward the third one, giving every indication that I was going to aim at him as I used the majority of my mana, once again, at the risk of depleting myself.

[-1492 Mana]

But the spell went the opposite direction.

To their credit, the ambushing death knights reacted the reversal even better than I expected. Rather than trying to push away through the horde of zombies—which was something certainly in their power, but the fraction of a second they would lose in the process made dodging impossible—they got even tighter in a defensive pose, trying to maximize their defense.

Still, even with the defensive effort, their fate would have been sealed if it wasn't for the intervention of the other necromancers. They were smart enough to wait in preparation, and my sudden spell forced most of them to shield the death knights from the sudden rush of light energy. Due to the nature of their mana, it wasn't the most effective way of spending mana, especially in a hurry, but considering the number I was facing, it was still enough for the death knights to get away from my spell relatively unscathed.

I would have loved to take both of them with one spell, of course, but failing that wasn't the end of the game for me. Not even close. Ignoring the flare of mana behind as the necromancers tried to form an offensive spell to prevent me from attacking the two death knights as they recovered, I pushed forward toward the third one, alone and wounded, exposed deliberately to enable an ambush that was conveniently disabled. More than happy to educate my enemies against the perils of strategic commitment. The damaged death knight tried to retreat, but with the extensive damage it suffered earlier, it was noticeably slower.

I caught him before it could disappear into the rest of the army. Its sword whipped fast like the deadly threat it was, streaking toward me, leaving a dark afterimage, but I met it with a glowing sword of light forcing it to solidify.

[-154 Mana]

It was an expensive way of creating a weapon, certainly, enough to drain me in less than a minute even if I was fresh. Luckily, I didn't need a minute.

I didn't even need a second.

After parrying its sword, its momentum reversed uselessly, I plunged the sword of light through its armor, into where its heart had been when it was alive, but now, housed the core of the necrotic array that sustained its unnatural unlife. I forced the sword to explode, finishing the death knight in the process.

[-219 Mana]

I would have loved to watch as the death knight disintegrated slowly. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to do so, not when I could feel two other death knights rushing toward me, the damage they received relatively small, both still very much a threat.

Rather than facing them directly, I cast an earth spell, raising a huge wall between us.

[-21 Mana]

It was a pointlessly weak spell, one that could barely resist the assault of a zombie, but after an attack that delivered great damage despite their impeccable defense, they were naturally wary of my tricks.

I continued to retreat back, creating a dozen earthen walls between, but just as they started breaking through them, I injected the fifth wall with some light magic as well, forcing it to destabilize, making them retreat. Therefore, I managed to safely arrive next to the girls, most of my mana depleted once more, but most importantly, the undead army in total chaos.

They played their trump card, only to fail spectacularly.

"That was amazing," Cornelia gushed with a worshipful expression, impressed by the widespread destruction I committed with almost no visible cost. "Should we help as well," she offered despite her depleted status.

"Nope," I said even as I grabbed their waists and jumped with them, before spending most of my remaining mana to conjure a faux air elemental, forcing it to move as fast as possible before their spellcasters were too distracted with checking whether my earth constructs were trapped or not, too occupied to dispel it.

[-1229 Mana]

"I'm out of bluffs, it's time to retreat..."

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 1477 / 6324 Mana: 312 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Two

I wished that the necromancers didn't wear hooded cloaks, because I would have loved to see their expression of shock as we started to levitate with a great speed. "Be ready to cast a shield, even if it makes you feel unconscious," I advised the girls, even as I started gathering my remaining mana for the next step of our little adventure.

I only now tried to use an air-elemental to escape, because it was only through the necromancer's strategic mistake that it was possible. Most of them committed themselves to defend the remaining two death knights after I easily got rid of the third, unaware that I had depleted my reserves just to have that opportunity.

It was not something I could replicate, and even if some of them suspected it, I doubt it would help their determination to protect the remaining two death knights. With that, Zokras already lost six death knights that represented years —maybe decades— of work. Naturally, his henchmen tried to protect the remaining two.

Pity that it gave me the second I needed to work undisturbed to stretch my capabilities to the limit as I created a ward-breaker, slamming it into the wards, depleting my mana back to single digits in the process.

[-330 Mana]

Under normal conditions, the mana I had spent was far from enough to destroy a ward comprehensive enough to cover a city, not even close. But I had several advantages. The first was the distraction of their spellcasters as they hurried to protect the death knights.

The second was the fluid state of the wards. They were initially designed to defend an attack coming from the outside, only to try and forcefully change after my surprise appearance. And, considering barely two minutes passed since my arrival, they were barely halfway done, allowing me to cut through the wards.

We were barely out of the wards when an impressive number of ranged attacks started following us, from easily ignored arrows of skeletons to death bolts throbbing with necrotic energy. "Try to keep your shields closer to the elemental, I'm going to try to dodge the most," I said even as I tried my best to avoid their assault.

Thanks to the mobility of the air elemental, we managed to avoid the majority of the attacks in the first salvo, while the rest peppered against the shields of the girls. But before we could

leave the range, the second salvo followed, with even more impressive numbers.

And this time, things didn't go as smoothly. Some of the attacks were as easy to dodge as the first —skeleton archers seldom had the intelligence to position their attacks strategically to cut off my path— but for the second salvo, the necromancers relied on a different approach. Their attacks got bigger, and some targeted possible escape routes rather than targeting us directly.

I could have avoided them as well, of course, but only by significantly extending my escape route. “Try to hold on, it's going to be rough,” I said to Helga. Cornelia, unfortunately, was on the edge of the collapse after the first salvo. Funnily enough, Helga's earlier collapse under the assault was working for her benefit.

I grabbed Cornelia and pulled her behind as I turned to face the salvo, watching as every hit exhausted Helga visibly. When the third death bolt made contact with her shield, it flickered before disappearing, just as Helga collapsed. She would have fallen off the elemental if it wasn't for my reflexes, pushing her next to Cornelia.

And I was far too close to collapse than I wanted to count.

[HP: 1477 / 6324]

[Mana: 83 / 7595]

Despite my dodging attempts, the second salvo continued, forcing me to defend without any mana. A crackling black bolt came nearer and nearer, three others chasing it from a close distance, but moving the elemental would keep us in range for the third salvo, so I had no option but to take it to the chest. Unlike the girls, it wouldn't kill me.

Hopefully.

But when the first one made contact with my chest, it reminded me once again why the necromancers were scary enough to be hunted.

[-541 HP]

The damage was certainly significant, and that was with my vitality limiting the damage. I couldn't survive three others...

“Idiot,” I suddenly murmured as I raised my hands. I would have slapped myself if it wouldn't have cost me the precious second I needed to keep all of us alive.

[-14 Mana]

I transformed my mana into life energy before letting it coat my hands like a glove, just in time as the second bolt arrived in front of me. Then, I punched the bolt to the side, hopefully not about to receive another jolt of necrotic energy that might as well kill me.

[-119 HP]

[-21 Mana]

“Excellent,” I murmured even as I thickened the mana glove around my hands based on the feedback, just in time to bat the next two bolts, receiving even lesser damage.

[-61 HP]

Then, we were out of their range, and flying toward the school. I would have loved to go back to the town Titania was defending, but I wasn't convinced that the plan to hunt me was anywhere near its completion. But regardless of the time, I still had around fifteen minutes to arrive at the destination.

Just enough to refill my reserves, ready to meet any nasty surprise they might have hidden. However, before I could relax on my elemental mount, I noticed several bone dragons falling down the sky, ready to chase me down. It wasn't the domineering flying army I had defeated earlier when they tried to ambush Titania, but a dozen bone dragons, carrying necromancers on their backs was certainly not the easiest opponent to deal with.

Especially not when their aim was to slow me down before the rest of the army caught up with me.

The weirdest race of my life had begun as I tried to resist the combined assault of twelve necromancers with close to no mana, my hands moving faster and faster as I slowly get used to the technique, limiting the contact, so that each touch only consumed a few points of mana, and nothing else. Of course, the ease I was parrying their attacks helped greatly by the difference in stats.

I certainly couldn't replicate it against Zokras with such ease, for example.

The next minute passed in relative comfort as I easily batted down their attacks without suffering from any damage, allowing my mana to recover significantly.

[HP: 1477 / 6324]

[Mana: 683 / 7595]

So, I cast a detection spell just to be on the safe side, only to notice a lot more enemies than I was expecting. In addition to the bone dragon squad, the whole undead army left the city, charging toward my direction, though with a great distance between each element as they prioritized speed. The presence of the death knights surrounded by necromancers, was at the front, while endless skeleton armies were creating a long line, their maximum speed varying based on their bodily structure. Meanwhile, another, the smaller army was spreading in front of me, ready to cut my path.

It was the army that was chasing the refugees that managed to avoid their massacre, I noticed, happy that the problem was solved before I bothered to make a move.

“Impatient idiots,” I murmured even as I changed my plans. The only reason I escaped them was that I couldn’t deal with their cannon fodder and their elite combatants together in my current status. And they were not only giving me time to recover, but also an opportunity to retaliate.

Who was I to reject such a nice gift?

The first thing I did was to slow my elemental mount, which looked like I was out of mana, meaning it took me three whole minutes to actually arrive at the first ambush point, giving me around two thousand points of mana.

[Mana: 2542 / 7595]

I could have used that mana as an anvil to smash the army, of course, but where was the fun in that. Instead, I leaned forward and caught Cornelia’s lips, helping her recover just enough mana to defend herself in an emergency before repeating the same action for Helga, bringing them back to the land of consciousness. It took three-quarters of my mana, but it was a necessary investment to split the undead army further without.

[-1793 Mana]

“We’re alive,” Helga gasped in fascination.

“You girls did well, defending us against the attack,” I said. “We managed to get away.”

“We recovered quite a bit,” Cornelia commented, but rather than happiness, I could feel the desire for battle in her tone. She clearly understood that if I managed to get enough mana to help them recover, I had to have an offensive reason, and she was more than happy to join that battle.

“Are you girls up to play bait in another trap, but this time to flash-fry some undead?” I offered. Their matching grins left no doubt about their response. “Excellent,” I said. “You don’t need to do much, just stay out of the range of these nuisances for about five minutes,” I said, making a sweeping gesture toward the bone dragons that was trying to do their best to catch up, unaware that they were only able to close in the distance because I allowed them, “and after I give the signal, turn back and eviscerate them.”

“I like that plan,” Cornelia grunted, her eyes burning with a passionate fire as she looked for a way to make someone pay for her earlier defeat, even that was against a superior opponent with an actual army behind.

Looking at her passionate expression, her red hair wild with the wind, I was sorely tempted to stop the plan for a fun interlude, but after a second thought, I decided against it.

A fun celebratory fivesome was a better idea anyway.

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 1477 / 6324 Mana: 847 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Three

“Can you handle directing the elemental and maintaining an illusion of me at the same time convincingly while maintaining the distance?” I asked Helga. “It’s better if Cornelia focuses fully on defending in case the necromancers get too close,” I asked Helga. When she nodded, I transferred the control of the elemental to her.

“Now, drive through the ambush,” I said, pointing toward the small forest the bone dragons trying to direct toward without being too visible, then turned to Cornelia. “Cast a huge fireball, but don’t waste your mana. I just need the bright light and some smoke. I’ll do the rest.”

Before the undead hidden in the forest could lash out, the air elemental dipped low and the fireball exploded, followed by a light spell from me, creating a convenient corridor for the girls to escape.

I used biomancy to hide my life signature even as I created an illusion of myself, and when Helga took the responsibility of maintaining it, I jumped off to the ground.

[-63 Mana]

Another flare of mana allowed me to control the ground before I could touch it, turning it into a quicksand, no different than water. Before the smoke cloud of Cornelia’s spell had disappeared, I had already disappeared underground. Once I moved several feet down, I let out a relaxed sigh, aware that I was safe momentarily.

I started moving in reverse, glad for my connection with the girls allowed me to feel their status in great detail from the current distance once I properly focused on that.

Luckily, the girls were capable enough to drag the necromancers farther and farther without risking themselves, giving me a leisure opportunity to slowly move back underground, passing the necromancers and death knights and finding myself in the middle of the fodder army.

Meanwhile, my mana recovered significantly, and I even managed to heal myself significantly. All the while, the undead army was willing to play our game, because from their perspective, defending against their attack while maintaining an air elemental was a desperate last stand that had given the victory to them.

Ten minutes passed just like that...

[HP: 3141 / 6324]

[Mana: 5412 / 7595]

Not only I had recovered, but also their army had stretched further and further helplessly as they chased me. I let both the necromancers and death knights get away as much as possible, because under the circumstances, targeting the fodder army was the better idea.

I cast the first spell, another undead bane, focused on maximizing the area effect rather than direct damage, perfect in decimating hundreds of zombies at once.

[-128 Mana]

Light magic was making it very cost-efficient to get rid of weaker zombies. No wonder their first move was trying to get rid of Titania.

I repeated the spell twice as I ran toward the death knights and the necromancers, acting like I was trying to intimidate them once again. If I had done that the first time, they might have retreated, but after getting bluffed twice by the same tactic, they believed that it was just another trick from my end.

The army started to disperse, trying to avoid my area attacks, while the death knights and the necromancers changed their direction sharply, trying to catch up with me, or at least, forcing me to retreat and protect their army.

Pity that more than half of the army had been already decimated before they could get into range, but the rest were dispersed. More importantly, their approach took more than two minutes, more than enough for me to actually set up a field of explosive runes underground and charge them.

[-1421 Mana]

Trying to face a high-level mage with just an army was truly a suicidal affair, especially with the force multiplier of my ridiculous regeneration. "Come on, boys, let's finish this little game," I shouted gleefully, no different than a barbarian warrior, mostly just to confuse them.

Unlike the army, the death knights and the necromancers approached me in a modified diamond formation. Death knights were on the tip, necromancers stayed behind, fully focused to counter my spells to give enough time for their invincible warriors — or what was supposed to be invincible warriors — to close the distance and prevent me from casting. Some necromancers spread to the wings, ready to lash out with death bolts to provide cover fire. Overall, it was a simple yet effective strategy.

Too bad that I was much better at setting ambushes. Once again I cast an undead bane, focused on the range, forcing the necromancers to counter it. They did so, and the spell melted before it could reach the death knights. However, as they did so, they committed their focus to the threats from the sky.

[-613 Mana]

Then, the runes exploded.

Most of the necromancers evaporated in an instant, undead bane burning through their existence as efficiently as death bolts damaged living creatures. Some tried to defend themselves, but without collaborating with the others, they lacked the power to actually succeed thanks to their low level and weak stats — to be fair, compared to me, not many people could brag about their stats.

Realizing that they were once again played for the fool, the death knights tried to retreat. Unfortunately for them, while they were strong enough to resist the explosives — though not without further damage — their bone dragon mounts weren't as lucky, turning into dust under the explosions.

And without their mounts, they had no chance of escaping. Don't get me wrong, I would have loved them to actually try it, because picking them after demolishing the rest of the necromancers would have been much easier. Death knights might be strong opponents, but ultimately, they were designed to be the perfect swords and shields for an even stronger spellcaster, or at worst, to work as an overwhelming assassin from the shadows.

Facing me in an open field while their supporting necromancers struggled to stay alive — or maintain their unlife state — wielding a combination of light and life magic that cut through their spell resistance like a hot knife through butter, they were out of their depth.

If they weren't horrific constructs of unlife that probably spilled enough blood to fill a lake, I would have pitied them.

Instead, I raised my hand, and threw three consecutive undead bane, area effect spells centered on the death knights. Some of the necromancers managed to show an impressive ability and actually managed to dispel my first spell, but they were helpless against the second and the third, exploding among them.

Nor they managed to counter the sudden rain of light arrows, reaping them helplessly, burning their undead energy, and evaporating them completely.

And just like that, two death knights lost all their coverage.

I expected them to escape, trying to make contact with their master. Or, at least, launch one desperate defense to take me down.

I didn't expect them to fall into a defensive state, to limit the effects of my spells. If it was done by a living person, I might have assumed that they were doing one last irrational desperate attempt to stay alive, hoping to outlast me, but that didn't work for death knights. For all their power, they were little more than sentient weapons, working for their master.

A bad feeling rose in my heart. I had taken too much time dealing with the army. I was expecting Zokras to come back, trying to save his remaining death knights before retreating. After all, he was a centuries-old lich, so I would have expected him to pull back before things had become too bad.

The desperate attack of disposable armies was understandable. Using the death knights at an ambush was also understandable. It was risky, but it could have allowed him to hit a soft spot, at least weakening the school significantly before retreating.

Using the death knights on a chase made little sense, and using them just to deplete me made even less.

Unless he didn't want me to be anywhere else.

I decided to take them down as quickly as possible, without wasting any more of my mana. It was not the time to hide something, I decided, as I rushed toward them with full speed, and before they could properly change their formation, I was in front of them, with a glowing sword of light in my hand.

[-121 Mana]

The light sword trick might consume a decent amount of mana with every passing second, but it was certainly better than trying to pin them from a distance when they were trying to

Still, I was extremely glad for deciding to improve Titania's Companion process during our last time. The light magic had provided me with the distinction between victory and death.

The death knights realized that their formation against spell damage left them vulnerable for melee attack, but it was already too late. I swung the sword with a speed that surpassed the flaming eyes of the death knight's ability to follow it. It spun, avoiding a vital blow to its chest,

but it cost it an arm.

In the distance, I could see the squad of necromancers that was trying to pin the air elemental turning back, but it was already too late. The second death knight managed to move forward before launching a hastily coordinated attack. I ducked between them, avoiding their lightning-fast attack that would have decapitated a lesser warrior.

I swung the sword again, this time costing the second death knight an arm.

[-93 Mana]

They tried to counter-attack, but they swung above me as I ducked, missing my head by inches. The sword of light flashed again, this time costing the first one a leg, and as a bonus, its balance.

With the first one struggling not to topple, and the second one barely able to swing properly with one arm, the battle was almost over. I didn't even bother finishing them before wrenching the control of the air elemental from Helga and making them move toward me with full speed.

Then, I conjured a second sword before spinning mercilessly, and half a second later, two death knights collapsed in pieces, the unholy magic that was holding them together. The swords evaporated.

[-183 Mana]

It was ironic that their attempt to waste my mana enabled me to take them down much easier.

Before the elemental could arrive, I used another undead bane, destroying the flying necromancers with a volley of light arrows.

[-294 Mana]

"Is everything okay?" Helga asked even as I jumped on the elemental, forcing it full speed toward Titania's town, hoping that I had misread Zokras' intentions wrongly.

Or if not, I would be able to reach there in time...

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000]

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 1477 / 6324 Mana: 847 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Four

I was worried about the fate of Titania, but not as much as daring to replicate my earlier teleportation feat. I had barely survived when my health was full, and I wasn't ready to risk it again, especially without at least two complete Companion Nodes to guide me.

Luckily, I had made sure that Titania had her full mana, not to mention Marianne next to her, a hidden weapon ready to be unleashed against the weaker undead. I might have been still worried if Zokras had his death knights with him, but the last of them lost in the ambush, I wasn't too worried for them.

I still moved the maximum speed my air elemental allowed me to travel, covering the distance in less than twenty minutes — short enough for Titania to resist an attack from an overwhelming force as long as she was being careful, long enough for me to recover my mana completely, and even heal myself and let the girls recover their mana completely.

[HP: 2945 / 6324]

[Mana: 7231 / 7595]

I wasn't at my best of condition, but rather than delaying a bit more to heal fully, I would have preferred to arrive at the destination earlier, just in case.

"Are you sure that they have another ambush planned?" Cornelia asked worriedly as she looked at the horizon, feeling desperate. "It's so hard to believe that they still have more forces after that attack," she added, shivering.

"Unfortunately, building a huge army is not a difficult task for necromancers, nor it's too hard to raise lower-level necromancers," I answered with a sigh, which truly was the case. Unlimited availability of defenseless small towns and the huge number of monster corpses meant that they would never run out of material, and the long lives of the liches meant that they had the freedom to plan for decades and centuries while the other planned for days and months. "The only surefire way of dealing them is destroying the leadership, which is harder than it looks. The moment we destroy it, the lich's essence would escape away, to construct another body."

"Can't we just trap the essence?" Helga asked.

"It's definitely possible for weaker ones, but Zokras is certainly not one of those. I'm confident in destroying his physical shell, but catching his essence is much more difficult. I have no doubt

that he has many plans to secure his essence. Otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to attack himself," I said. At this point, I had no doubt about Zokras' plan, because I could feel the corruption of death energy spreading from the city, getting stronger as we got nearer.

Luckily, I could feel Titania's light magic flaring against the oppressive darkness, clearly weaker, but still resisting Zokras' oppression. Moreover, as we got closer, I started to feel Marianne's presence stronger the closer we got. If she was yet to join, the battle couldn't have reached a dangerous level yet.

"What if you have been prepared against him, and manage to ambush him?" Cornelia joined the discussion.

I was interested in the ease Cornelia rejoined the discussion, and the lack of reaction from Helga. It seemed that after the dangerous adventure they had lived through, they managed to overcome their enmity.

"That's a pretty different deal. If I had some preparation time, and if I could estimate his path accurately enough... But that's a difficult thing to do. I don't expect him to be gullible."

Before the girls could answer, the town finally rolled into our field of view. A pair of simultaneous gasps reached my ears, which was a justified response to the abhorrent sight in front of us.

The town was covered by dark clouds. Not just the sky, but also the walls, rolling repeatedly like a typhoon, threatening to break through the glowing walls, each second eroding the inner walls. The outer walls of the city had already fallen, along with most of the civilian buildings. Only the inner keep survived, and even that was alive because of Titania's light magic, infusing into the walls to resist the overwhelming dark magic, threatening to devour every living person and raise them as undead.

Still, even from a distance, I could notice there were scarcely few corpses in the city under the effects of the spell, showing that both the soldiers and citizens managed to retreat safely — though I had no doubt that Zokras let it be successful, as it was better for him that Titania exhausted herself defending the citizens rather than trying to escape his attack.

"What if we distract him," Cornelia offered, looking angry at the sight, no doubt remembering her recent defeat.

I said nothing, just turned to look at Helga. "It might work," Helga commented. "We might not have your explosive power, but as long as we burn our mana aggressively while attacking from

the air. And if the defenders join the attack as well, you will have some time to set up a defense.”

“Might work,” I said even as I looked to the city, the view getting clearer as the distance slowly dwindled. “I doubt I could completely destroy his essence, but wounding it enough to permanently damage his power shouldn’t be too much of a problem. But it’s going to be risky for you girls to distract him, even for a minute. Zokras is definitely not to be underestimated. Are you sure you want to take such a risk?”

“We can’t avoid danger,” Cornelia commented. “It’s war.” Helga said nothing, but her nod conveyed agreement.

I didn’t try to dissuade them, as, despite everything else, I shouldn’t ignore the fact that after the latest improvements, they were strong, not just in Silver Spires, but also in the wider standards of the Empire. Also, letting Zokras get away would put them in more danger if he decided to take revenge.

I waited until we were close enough to the city before casting a message spell to Marianne, asking her to coordinate with Titania and attack with their full power the moment we started our battle. An invisibility spell later, I jumped down the elemental, stepping onto the outer walls of the city, already starting to build a comprehensive ward.

I might not take Zokras down completely, but after everything, I had no intention of letting him go without my pound of flesh. And the best way to do so — due to an absence of actual flesh — was damaging his abilities permanently, meaning I needed to attack his soul space.

“Let’s try it like this,” I murmured as I conjured an earthen spear and started to etch it with runes. This time, however, I wasn’t relying on my Undead Bane spell. I wasn’t even using my biomancy or light magic, because while their deadliness against the undead was not in doubt, they were not exactly stealthy spells, especially against a master necromancer. And the number of times I had used these two types of spells only made sure that Zokras would be ready to their presence, ready to retreat.

And the only chance of doing something before he could destroy his own physical form and retreat — perks of being a lich — for me to ambush him with something stealthy.

Something new.

So, I decided to be exotic, and started to cover the spear with runes that would replicate my Tantric mana transfer trick, but in a much wilder, and much more destructive manner. Physical

damage might be easy to shrug off, but damaging the center of his power would have been much better.

[-1832 Mana]

However, as I continued to work on enchanting the improvised throwing spear, I moved deeper into the city, paying careful attention to the diving elemental, carrying Cornelia and Helga, casting a huge inferno as they did so, trying to envelop Zokras.

Unfortunately, a swipe of his hand was enough to create a dark shield to protect Zokras, though when Helga followed the attack with a rain of arcana arrows, trying attack from multiple directions. Another wave of his hand expanded the shield, only for the arcana spells to drill through the shield with a surprising ease thanks to her spell structure, showing the advantages of her academic capabilities. Through the breaks she had created, Cornelia's flames flowed in, aiming Zokras.

It was a clever strategy. Too bad that they lacked the power to make it successful. Zokras waved his hand once again, this time creating a wave of dark energy going back, swallowing everything in its path, be it his own shield or Cornelia's flames, forcing the girls to pull up to avoid, turning them into free target practice, especially with a good chunk of their mana already spent in their first assault.

If Zokras attacked them again, I would have been forced to abandon my plan and forced to intervene. Luckily, light magic and life energy came from the town in the form of two deadly waves, threatening to drown Zokras, forcing him to shield against it.

A complicated shield went up, one that was uniquely designed to deal with my Undead Bane, too complicated to be cast instantly. Apparently, I wasn't the only one that could innovate in a hurry to adapt to new conditions. It was a perfect design, more than ready to completely neutralize my Undead Bane. If I had tried to kill him with a deadly overwhelming spell, it wouldn't have ended well.

Luckily, Marianne's usage of life energy, combined with Titania's light magic, was enough to trick him about the root of my assault.

Too bad that all his preparation was wasted because of a perception mistake, allowing me to throw my spear from my hidden spot. I wasn't exactly a ranged expert, but hitting an immobile target from a few hundred feet was hardly a challenge with someone with my physical capabilities.

It was a pity Zokras was looking the other way as the spear buried itself to his back, because I would have loved to see whether its dead face would be enough to show an expression of surprise as my mana flooded his body through the connection.

[-3112 Mana]

Though, as the spear made the connection, and I forced my mana to invade his soul, trying to find his soul space to destroy, he wasn't the only one that was feeling surprised. He had no soul space, something that would have been completely shocking if it wasn't for the discovery of the morning with the headmistress.

Luckily, even without a way to directly destroying a soul space, having a flood of mana invading one's soul was hardly a healthy activity. I forced the mana to explode from inside. Still, with Zokras' skill, I had no doubt that he could have defended himself from that.

But he failed to do so, utterly. I was ready to assume that it was because he was distracted that he was that easy to take down, but unfortunately, that didn't seem to be the case. Just as its soul started to burn, I realized one very important thing, a connection with a distant entity running through the Aether dimension, far too thick to be his phylactery.

He was a fucking decoy....

The connection recreated as the soul sliver that was controlling its current body exploded, creating a perfect death scenario for Zokras the Eternal. Just like that, the question that was confusing me about his unnecessarily desperate assault was revealed. He was trying to hide his identity.

To make things much more fun, with the power shown by a mere decoy, I was absolutely sure that it wasn't me or the headmistress that drove him to this desperate show.

No, I had a horrible sinking feeling that it was about convincing his allies about his death, allies that threw our three thirty-plus level combatants just for a trick. Allies that, if headmistress' tales were even half-accurate, was busy waging a war against the full-fledged divine beings...

Allies that was inevitably my enemy considering we were competing for the same precious Divine Sparks...

But that was a problem for another day. Today, I had an amazing celebration to distract me from the weight of future problems...

[Level: 31 Experience: 489893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 2945 / 6324 Mana: 2131 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Five

I hid myself being a veil of illusion once again as I followed Cornelia and Helga into the inner keep, amused by the gaping mouths of the defenders as they looked at Helga and Cornelia in shock, trying to understand how two students could make such a difference — unaware that so-called lich was just a decoy, and even then, it was only destroyed due to my efforts.

I was more than happy to let the girls take the credit, of course. The stronger they were assumed, the less suspicious their eventual growth would become.

Most of the shocked gazes turned toward Helga, of course. Cornelia, with her explosive growth and reputation for an even more explosive temper, wasn't too much of a shock. Well, at least compared to Helga, who had been infamous for her chosen magical expertise, her lack of combat ability, and her commoner status.

As they walked through the gate, Helga's name had been whispered again and again until it turned to a soft buzz, but no one dared to walk toward her. How could they, when they created such an intimidating visage moments earlier. Cornelia just threw a dismissive glance toward the discussion, too used to such treatment even before her latest power-up.

Helga's walk turned stiff with shock despite her attempts to appear nonchalant, too unfamiliar with the spotlight to feel comfortable about it. Though, her observers were too distracted to care about such things, lost in their elation about the sudden end of what they thought to be a desperate last stand.

As we got nearer toward where Titania and the other teachers responsible for the defense efforts were, however, the direction of the gaze started to split, half of it gazing toward Marianne, who had just revealed an equally shocking power by delivering an overwhelming assault toward the attacking lich, revealing that she was much more than a healer.

As Cornelia walked closer to Titania, the rest of the teachers looked at their three students with shock, unable to believe their display of power, outclassing the threat they could output even if they had been working together. Some of them looked anxious to question them, but when Titania took a step forward, they stayed silent, aware of the hierarchy between them.

"Good work," Titania simply said as she looked at Helga, aware of her connection with me thanks to our earlier discussions about the school defenses, before turning back to other teachers and continued discussing the next steps of action. However, as she returned to circle, she made sure to leave enough place for two people to join, wordlessly elevating their position

from students to leadership.

With her silent acceptance about their place, the rest of the teachers were unable to say anything. After all, among them, only Titania had direct access to the mysterious Headmistress, meaning her decisions couldn't be questioned by the other teachers.

Not to mention, by apparently saving them from almost certain death, it was hard to argue that it was not an unearned victory.

With a chuckle, I disappeared toward deeper into the city, leaving Cornelia and Helga to deal with the fallout of their sudden power reveal on their own. After everything that happened, they deserved to have my trust about handling such a situation without me being ready to intervene, especially with Titania there as insurance.

I went deeper into the city, finally ready to cure myself of the annoying wounds I had received in the process of punching through the reality while teleporting, which continued to annoy me even after curing the surface layer of the wound I had received. Combined with the remnants of the decaying energy of the necrotic bolts I had faced against, it was truly a bother.

With that, I once again went to Titania's room, easily passing through the wards, most of it already established by me in the first place.

With a sigh, I quickly prepared myself a bath and jumped in, even as I filled the water with healing energies. A rather extravagant spending of mana all things considered, but with Zokras' attack failing spectacularly, I didn't expect the Eternals to attack. With everything I could detect about their strength, if they had any intention of actually doing so, they could have easily done without Zokras, or could have supported his attack with more than just a few tricks about monster hordes or a few assassins — though, admittedly, quite high-level ones.

[-649 Mana]

As the healing energies slowly infused into my body, I dozed off in the bath, waking up only when the healing energies starting to deplete, only to refill it again, repeatedly until I was once again back to my perfect condition, then I started napping.

Only the opening of the door awakened me from my nap. From the darkness of the room, it was clear that it was already evening. I sighed as I stepped out of the tub, using a simple spell to dry off completely. Meanwhile, I could hear the footsteps of four people walking inside, each familiar in their own way. Cornelia's sharp yet elegant steps were reminiscent of a dagger, Helga's soft, almost hesitant walk, Marianne's soft and elegant stride, and Titania's steady steps

are confident enough to lift the weight of the heavens.

The fun was about to start, I thought with a big smile even as I opened the door, not bothering to put anything. At this point, I had nothing to hide from any single one of them, nor I wanted to hide any single relationship from another.

I wanted my magical girls to know each other.

Properly.

As I walked inside, naked, four identical shocked gazes turned toward me, immediately destroying the ethereal and confident aura they had been wearing outside, their blush climbing upward as their gazes bounced between each other. The shyness remained in their gazes, but a competitive expression was added to it.

“I hope everything is in order with the rest of the faculty,” I said even as I walked toward the nearest chair, acting like my nakedness was nothing out of ordinary.

“As expected,” Titania said with a shrug, her attitude showing that during the tribulation we had just faced, it was definitely not one of her priorities, her abilities to intimidate the rest of the teachers a given even without her political strength in the school.

“We have just become professors,” Helga interjected, unable to prevent a hint of disbelief from infecting her tone, unable to believe the small miracle that had just happened. Her reaction was understandable, as while her power had risen significantly in a short period to allow her not only to match but surpass most of the faculty, before the latest battle, she had no opportunity to compare her strength with the other members of the faculty before the battle, and during the battle, she had more important priorities than trying to understand her own proper place in school’s power structure.

Well, with the crisis resolved, she had all the time she needed to understand the proper pecking order, and her own superior place in it.

“All of you?” I asked as I looked at Marianne and Cornelia.

Marianne just nodded, agreeing with it. Cornelia, on the other hand, shook her head. “It’s only an honorary position for me, I still need to go back to take my place as the head of the family,” she said, her anger apparent even discounting the ball of fire that appeared in her palm almost immediately the moment she spoke.

“Oh, yes,” I said, letting my smirk take a vicious edge. “We need to go have a talk with your uncle about how to handle the transfer of power,” I added, reminding her that I was ready to assist her in solving that particular problem. It shouldn’t take more than a day even under the best of circumstances with my current abilities.

I didn’t really care about the additional power Cornelia would receive in the process. At some point, her position as the head of a noble family, even one of the stronger ones, lost its importance between the necromancers, angels, and mysterious organizations determined to fight against the gods.

With everything, the power and the assets of a noble family were nothing. I was helping simply because Cornelia wanted it, and at this point, it was easy enough for me to ensure to keep one of my girls happy.

I turned to Marianne. “Any thoughts about your own position?” I asked.

“Not really,” she whispered back in her cute shy tone. It seemed that even after having a threesome with Titania wasn’t enough to break through her regular shyness, even when she was putting on an extremely amazing show once the fun properly started. “Being a professor in Silver Spires is a better role than leading my family,” she added.

“It certainly is,” I said, not bothering to highlight one important fact. It was not actually better for a regular professor, but Marianne suddenly found herself as a part of the most influential political clique with a lot of battle merit, which changed the equation completely.

Moreover, for anything except undead, her combat capabilities were utterly lacking, and as a healer, the stronger the combatants around her, the safer she was. At least Cornelia could defend herself against most of the threats — at least enough for me to arrive if I could find a better way to use the Teleportation perk, without nearly killing myself in the process.

I pondered about whether to tell the ultimate fate of Zokras, escaping successfully while paying a great cost in the process, but ultimately, I decided against it for two reasons. First, after making such a big show about his own fake death, I didn’t expect Zokras to act, as we weren’t his only enemy, not after disappointing the organization as well.

Second, I still didn’t want to reveal the full extent of my abilities when it came to soul manipulation, and if I revealed it here, there was a high chance it would find its way back to the headmistress. Titania’s loyalties were still on that side, at least for now.

I had asked a few more questions about the role Marianne and Helga would take in the

operations of the school, while they answered.

Then, there was a lull in conversation as the girls shuffled their seats, their gaze dancing worriedly between the different surfaces. The room was large, but not enough to comfortably house five people, not when girls tried to stay distant from each other, each feeling self-conscious with the implied promise of our situation, which was enhanced by my naked state.

It was time to stop with the trivial stuff, and focus on the important things. "So, girls," I said with a wide smirk as I leaned back, displaying my shaft for them. "How about we play a little game, to relax after such an exhausting battle?"

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HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7595 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Six

Cornelia was first to speak, which didn't surprise me the slightest. "What kind of game?"

"Nothing intense or exhausting," I said even as I conjured a piece of ice. "We just push the rock toward each other using arcana mana, and if the ice touches someone, or if someone breaks it, they lose the round." Essentially, it was a modified mana control exercise, too little power, and the ice touches you, too much power, and the ice would crumble.

It was a tricky play due to the competitive nature, but simple enough that everyone would have more or less equal playing field in terms of ability. Tactics was a different issue, of course. "And what happens when we lose a point?" Cornelia asked.

"Good point, we need to find something for point loss to make it more fun," I said with an exaggerated focus like I had no idea, my overacting enough to earn four matching smiles from the audience. "How about losing a piece of clothing?"

"Such an unexpected forfeit," Helga said in a deadpan voice, while a giggle escaped into the room, surprisingly from Titania.

"What about you?" Cornelia said, pointing at my naked state. "It doesn't look like you have a lot of clothing to lose."

"That's simple. For every loss, I would follow one order from the one that's responsible for my loss." That put a different shine on their eyes, though Marianne and Helga were less enthusiastic compared to Cornelia and Titania, who were less used to the submissive role in our weird little coven.

"Excellent," Cornelia murmured while Titania looked enthusiastic.

"Okay, some more ground rules to make it more fun before we start, then," I said. "No spells other than arcana energy pushing and pulling, and no direct casting on others, but blocking and interfering with the other's pushes are allowed." The rules earned a bunch of nods.

"Let's start, then," I said with a smirk, even as I flicked the ice toward the Cornelia the moment she nodded, scoring an early score.

"That's cheating," she gasped, her red hair flying as she shook her head in shock, though her gasp was buried in the matching giggles of the other three girls, even Titania.

“Really, he said we were starting, and you nodded. How’s that cheating,” Helga asked, her smirk still wide. The fact that Cornelia sighed in defeat rather than flaring in anger proved just how much their friendship had grown during the struggle. Before that, a mocking comment from a commoner would have sent Cornelia into a fit of fury, rather than earning a friendly surrender.

With a sigh, she stood up from her seat, removing her robe quickly, revealing a blouse and a skirt underneath. Not the sexiest, but considering they changed whatever they were able to find after a long battle, it wasn’t as bad as it could have been.

Not to mention, the beauty of the tight body underneath went a long way to display even the inferior clothing the best way possible, not extreme like a warrior, but just soft enough to leave no doubt about her exclusive magic focus, her terrific ass still visible through her ill-fitting skirt.

She threw her robe to the side, but before her ass made contact with her chair, the ice cube was already flying toward me, a victorious smirk on her lips.

Too bad for her that I was ready for the ploy, and gave a counter push. Not directly, trying to push back to her, instead of deflecting it, and it hit Marianne instead. “Good luck next time,” I said to Cornelia even as Marianne frowned, but the speed she jumped to her feet, and the erotic slowness of her removal, suggested that she was not really unhappy about suffering the crossfire.

I whistled at the show. Marianne had one advantage over Cornelia, that the city she was holding was still upright, meaning her personal items were safe and sound. And current blouse she was wearing was clearly there for a special occasion — and likely acquired after the amazing threesome, to make sure the next adventure was sufficiently fun.

I assumed she bought that later on, because it was not one of those expensive silk ones. Instead, it was a simple linen one, though simple didn’t mean ugly. After all, it was Marianne we were talking about, a slightly low cut that would have been looked modest on anyone else was enough to turn her looks into an erotic masterpiece, with an attractive cleavage.

So much, that I decided to double down. Before Marianne could ever sit down, I flared my mana, and the ice cube slipped down her top, into her cleavage, earning a shocked gasp. “Caesar!” she gasped.

“What? You need to be careful about the ambushes,” I said while Helga chuckled on the side.

Marianne frowned playfully, but that didn’t stop her hips from starting to dance as she grabbed her skirt. Unfortunately, rather than pushing it, she flicked her feet, removing one of her shoes.

“Stingy,” I said in mock disappointment, while Marianne flared her mana, and it hit Helga. “Hey!” she gasped as she flicked it back to Marianne, but she was ready to defend that.

And just like that, their supposed alliance shattered, and they started throwing at each other. The rest of us leaned back, enjoying two blonde sexy beauties attacking each other with a small ice cube. They managed to hit each other a couple of times, and accidentally shattered the cube a couple of times as well.

Their spontaneous battle lasted for a minute, and when their heated battle came to a lull, both parties had already paid a significant cost. Both parties had lost every single accessory they had on, no shoes, no socks, no other stuff. Helga was reduced to her corset at the top, though she still had her skirt. Marianne lacked that as well, limited to her panties and corset, both struggling to contain her assets.

And I wasn't the only one that was examining her cleavage in fascination, though the girls' gazes were split between arousal and jealousy.

I had a feeling that they were going to ignore Marianne for a while.

It was not to say the other girls weren't as beautiful as Marianne, but the sight of her only in a corset, her assets struggling desperately against the prison for freedom, was rather striking.

Enough to make the other three rather jealous.

Cornelia didn't surprise me, and attacked Helga, freeing her from the domineering confines of her skirt after three aggressive attempts, but costing her her robe and shoes in the process as she notoriously didn't care about the defense.

Almost like she didn't care about revealing her naked body! How wondrous.

However, Titania stood on the side with a slight frown. With her power and achievements, she clearly stood apart from the other girls, which was normally an advantage for her, but during the current playful state, it was enough for her to feel left out, with a slight frown on her face.

I decided to help her. However, just throwing a piece of ice toward her wouldn't solve the issue, reducing the game between me and Titania. No, I wanted her to mix properly with the girls.

So, I waited until Helga counter-attacked Cornelia once again, who was already freed from all of her accessories, relying on her skirt and blouse to cover her body. Helga was aiming to remove one of those as well, which Cornelia didn't seem very concerned about.

However, a subtle touch of my mana, sneaky enough to avoid the limited attention of the girls, was enough to strengthen Cornelia's half-hearted defense, not only bouncing the ice cube successfully, but also managing to hit Titania. For the others, of course. As the one whose spell was interfered, Cornelia noticed my intervention despite the subtleness of my touch.

Cornelia's gaze found mine before the cube even touched Titania. I nodded. It was a subtle message, but Cornelia was smart enough to understand that I wanted Titania to be included in their erotic game.

After all, it was hard to have a proper orgy if one of the participants was fully clothed.

Titania reacted just as I hoped. "You dare," she gasped, but her gasp was just too cute to be intimidating as the ice cube touched her skin. She flicked the ice cube back to Cornelia, which easily scored a hit.

"Don't forget to get rid of an item of clothing first," I said to Titania, giving Cornelia and Helga enough time to share a nod without Titania noticing. Cornelia removed her blouse in the process as well, but when the game started once more, Helga and Cornelia suddenly targeted Titania together.

Titania tried to defend, but her attempts were a bit too zealous, shattering the ice in the process by applying too much pressure.

"You need to be more careful, sweetie," I said mockingly to Titania, earning the target of the ire she generated through her failure. It might be a simple game, but Titania was famously perfectionist when it came to magic, and even a trivial loss was enough to frustrate her.

Unfortunately for her, by trying to attack me, she left herself vulnerable to a counter-attack. I deflected the cube in the middle, Helga and Cornelia immediately using the opportunity to score another hit on Titania, depriving her of another piece of coverage, bringing her closer to nakedness.

"Good luck for the next time," I said to Titania, but stayed fully defensive while the battle turned into Cornelia and Helga against Titania, with Marianne watching from the side smugly, happy with their jealous glances at her amazing cleavage.

Titania tried to attack me a couple of times, but after failing twice with dangerous cost, she temporarily abandoned that, focusing on Cornelia and Helga.

It was a heated battle, beautiful not only in terms of magical achievement, but also in terms of

the results of their beautiful battle. When they finally came to stop, even the most dressed, Titania, only had a skirt in addition to their corset and panties. Helga even lost another piece despite her defensive strategy, leaving her only in her panties, her beautiful breasts perkily standing out. Cornelia and Marianne still had their panties and corset.

[+500 Experience]

I even gained some experience from Titania's conservative stripping, as she was the only one with the level to do so.

"Maybe we should have a different target," one of them suddenly murmured, pointing at me. Interestingly, it was the last one I would have expected.

Marianne.

"It was always the quiet ones," I chuckled with an excited smirk even as I barely deflected the ice cube sent by the four of them.

[Level: 31 Experience: 490393 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 58

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7595 / 7595]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Seven

Defending against the combined assault of four competent mages was hard.

Defending against the combined assault of four competent mages, when the objective was to handle the floating ice cube gently enough to prevent it from shattering, was considerably harder.

Defending against the combined assault of four competent mages, when the objective was to handle the floating ice cube gently enough to prevent it from shattering, when said four mages were the incarnation of sexiness in the various states of undressing, providing an incredible distraction as I tried to go gather my mana, was possibly the hardest challenge I had ever faced.

And something really important was at stake. Every time I let that ice cube touch my skin, I had to follow one of their orders, a scary proposition, especially with four girls facing each other as well, each wanting to prove themselves to others in the twisted relationship they were dragged by me.

Still, it was a challenge I was more than happy to face.

It wasn't shocking that Cornelia took the lead of attacking, her fiery personality perfect for charging. It was easy to deflect her reckless attack, but before it could move forward even an inch, it was deflected back by Helga, ready for my reaction.

Meanwhile, Titania gave a push from the side, making it even harder to deflect, while Marianne stayed on the back, ready to provide a last line of defense if needed.

The formation was not a bad idea, allowing everyone to use their skills the way they were most comfortable, but also put Marianne, who was the least skilled one in terms of manipulating mana, to a defensive position, easy to be protected.

Unfortunately for them, their impromptu formation was less solid than they might have expected.

I could have scored a point through brute force — as the creator of the ice cube, I could assess its breaking point much more effectively — but while that would earn me a delicious naked show, it would only highlight my superior skills, not their limited tactical competency.

Considering the dangers we were facing, injecting a small lesson into our sexy times was not

exactly a bad thing. So, I let their counter-attack come very close to success, waiting to feel the radiating cold of the ice cube before deflecting it away.

Emboldened by their near-victory, they pushed even harder. Helga put her whole focus on helping Cornelia, but when I deflected it toward Titania, she was perfectly ready to deflect it, even if it came much faster this time.

Too bad for Marianne that it moved toward her. To her credit, Marianne was ready to defend herself. Unfortunately, at that speed, her attempts shattered the ice cube once more.

“Too bad, sweetheart,” I said with a wide smirk, very enthusiastic about the next part. Yes, I had seen Marianne naked before, but it was one of the things that never got stale. She was always beautiful, and the way her breasts jiggled as she unbuttoned her corset added a lot to her attractiveness.

“You girls need to work harder on your strategies, factoring everyone in properly,” I said with a smug smile, perfectly designed to trigger their anger. It was good advice, of course, but a patronizing delivery was enough to taint the goodwill of even the best advice.

And while they were busy trying to suppress their anger, I delivered a sneak attack, once again targeting Marianne. “Don’t bother sitting down, sweetie,” I said, gesturing for her to drop her panties as well. “And that’s why you need to be more careful about sneak attacks no matter the circumstances. High hit points could help you to survive an ambush from a weaker attacker, but every advantage is important on the path to survival,” I added.

As I said that, I let my gaze stay on Titania. After all, our first proper meeting had been born from those circumstances, where she recklessly pushed forward to recover a book, only to fall into a deadly trap of the necromancers.

Titania was unable to refute that point, which hardly helped her anger, especially since she was still relatively new to suppressing the touch of her emotions.

Unfortunately for her, her anger gave me the exact opportunity I needed to send an attack through the area she was supposed to defend. She was an excellent mage, enough to defend herself even distracted. But it was different when I wasn’t targeting her.

I sent a curved attack around her, and before she could react, and before Helga could realize my ploy, the cube already touched Marianne’s milky skin despite her nakedness.

“It’s time for play,” I said with a grin even as I let my gaze dance over all four girls, their

expressions flickering between different emotions. I first looked at Marianne, who had to follow one of my orders after being eliminated first.

I curled my finger, calling her close, amused by her frustrated puff as she stood up. Her frustration didn't come from needing to follow my next order, as our relationship had well past that point. No, the way her gaze danced on the other three girls suggested that she was concerned that she was the first one that was 'defeated' in our little magic game.

Before our relationship taught her about taking initiative, she might have just slunk down and accepted the defeat, but after some memorable times, she was much more expressive.

More importantly, she had the weapons to strike back from a very unexpected angle.

When she started walking toward me, following my order, her steps were slow, almost crawling. However, it wasn't hesitancy that was slowing her steps. If that had been the case, her hips wouldn't have displayed a sensual dance with every step, hardening my already impressive erection to a new level.

It was already an amazing show that deserved a great deal of my attention, but I made sure to keep my gaze on the way her hips were dancing like I was hypnotized, playing for the audience, earning a few jealous glances in return.

Cornelia didn't surprise me by acting in anger, sending the cube toward me, hoping to use my distraction to score a point, for it would have been no doubt a humiliating forfeit.

I bounced off the cube with a simple wave of my hand toward the other side of the room, not even bothering to counter-attack, which made their jealousy even thicker. For the moment, their own sexiness, like Cornelia's toned, sexy legs, or Helga's her own beautiful tits dangling freely was forgotten, dazed by Marianne's dance.

Halfway in, she bent forward, which enhanced the sight of her beautiful breasts — full and firm, big and juicy, topped with amazing pink nipples.

In other words, a total masterpiece.

I made a show of letting out an impressed sigh, which invited another ice cube attack, this time from Titania. I once again deflected that, quite easily as the girls were too distracted and frustrated to properly cooperate. Though none of them appreciated the effortless way I was dismissing their attacks.

When Marianne's slow walk finished, standing in front of me proudly, her hands running over my chest and arms. "What's my order?" she asked in a beautiful, throaty tone.

"Well, I'm feeling rather uncomfortable," I said, my gaze dipping down to my crotch to show what I was talking about. Marianne lowered herself without asking the question, but far too slow to be classified as immediate. Though, considering she spent that time peppering my chest with gentle kisses, I was willing to forgive her dalliance.

"Should we pause the game?" Helga asked, excited and frustrated.

"No need," I said, not bothering to hide my gasp as Marianne's hot lips touched my shaft. "You clearly need all the advantage you could afford," I added smugly, once again fueling their jealousy and competitiveness at the same time.

However, as they did so, I was already using our connection to transfer my mana to Marianne, not to recover her mana but to help her level up. I was still undecided between prioritizing her companion process and my own leveling —challenged by the restricted nature of the Divine Spark I stole from the headmistress — but increasing her level was an obvious target.

[-1239 Mana]

Marianne murmured in appreciation as the mana flooded into her body, showing her happiness by going deeper along the length, swallowing it greatly. Despite the great struggle it created for her little delicate mouth, she stuffed my whole length into her mouth, a considerable part slipping into her throat.

"Such a nice bet," I said mockingly even as I looked other three girls, all alternating between frustration and jealousy while they tried to attack me with the ice cube, trying to leverage my distraction. Admittedly, Marianne's lips combined with the challenge of converting my mana into experience points for her was considerable. If they cooperated properly at that point, they could have scored a point...

Luckily, I wasn't the only one distracted by the sight of Marianne's joyful fulfillment of the bet.

A gasp went through the room as Marianne grabbed my thighs before moving her head back and forth aggressively, helped by my fingers passing through her golden hair.

The gasp came from Titania, whose recent memories of a threesome with Marianne awakened by the sight, which caused her to be just distracted enough to receive another hit from the ice cube, getting rid of her skirt as well, making her the last person to be limited to her underwear

or less.

I could have leveraged the opportunity to bounce the attack to Helga to achieve another hit, but teasing them indirectly while giving them a great show in the process was much more attractive. So, for the next minute, I focused on defense while Marianne's enthusiastic moans got louder and louder despite the obstruction on the way.

I even helped her by bringing my foot between her legs, gently caressing her wetness while she shivered.

That lasted until Marianne, already on the edge thanks to the excitement of the situation, climaxed hard. She shivered and moaned helplessly, but I kept my hands on her head, still using her throat for a masturbation aid while she slackened under the rush of pleasure.

Then a surprising thing popped into my field of vision.

[Achievement: Sensational Show. Hold the attention of an invested crowd through careful measurement of activities. +2000 Experience, +5 Charisma]

It had been a while since I had received a proper achievement, not that it was not wanted. Especially charisma, which impacted the maximum potency of the offensive spells greatly.

Good, I thought even as I let Marianne go, and she collapsed on the floor, breathing hard. "Marianne doesn't seem to be ready to join back immediately," I said even as I called the ice cube, letting it float around my finger threateningly. "Shall we continue?"

[Level: 31 Experience: 492393 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 6932 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Eight

Three matching frustrated expressions told me that they were very unhappy about their failure to score a hit despite the amazing distraction Marianne had provided. They shared a glance, then shared a nod of alliance.

“Give us a moment,” Titania said, and they pulled at the other side of the room, whispering. Even Marianne joined them, though her legs were still trembling as she walked toward the other end of the room, her earlier seductive walk nowhere to be seen — not that it damaged her sexiness in any way.

They even set up a noise-blocking ward to keep their discussion hidden, something I was more than happy about it. Their sudden cooperation exceeded my expectations in a very positive way, so I let them break the rules of our little game, turning their implicit cooperation into an actual alliance.

I didn’t even break through their silencing ward to listen to their discussion.

Though, I watched them, enjoying the great show. In their various states of undress — Helga in her panties, Marianne naked, and the other two to their corset and panties — their heated discussion was a delicious show, their bodies stretching and shaking excellently whenever they shook their arms to make a point.

I licked my lips, enjoying the amazing sight despite the silence. About a minute later, they dispelled the ward, and walked back to their seats, Helga helping Marianne to walk without stumbling. “Are you ready?” I asked.

“Bring it on,” Cornelia growled, her competitive spirit renewed through the discussion, her passion as fiery as her preferred magic.

“As you wish,” I said, sending a probing attack to her.

She bounced that immediately, but, to my surprise, it hit Helga, too smoothly not to be intentional. Maybe their friendship wasn’t as solid as I assumed, I thought even as I looked at Helga, expecting to find frustration or anger.

I was surprised by her calm acceptance, so much that I barely managed to deflect when Helga immediately followed by an attack of her own, targeting my chest.

“Nice trick,” I murmured, impressed by their ingenuity. It was smart for them to lean on my

preconception about their rocky relationship, providing me just enough information to reinforce my expectations before going for the kill. "Too bad that it didn't work. Do you have any other tricks, or should we just call it a game?"

"Of course not, we're just starting," Helga said even as she dropped her panties, revealing her beautiful body completely. However, rather than taking her seat, she let Cornelia attack her once more, scoring another hit, meaning she was temporarily out, waiting for an order.

"Go and entertain Caesar," Cornelia ordered before I could even think of an order. I quirked my eyebrow at her, but she just smirked. "The rules say the one that makes the hit gives the order," Cornelia said, while Helga started walking toward me.

Her walk was different than Marianne's, moving with a determined intent rather than an extended, leisure walk. No less sexy, of course, but sexy in a different way. One that was more aggressive, the kind that I hardly saw her applying.

The friendship with Cornelia was helping her more than I expected, it seemed.

The room fell into rapt silence, broken only by the whisper of her naked footsteps. The girls stopped attacking for a moment, letting me focus on Helga's beauty. They were doing that to weaken my vigilance, of course, but it was a deal I was more than happy to take.

And I wasn't the only one that was enjoying it, their gaze following Helga's hips as they closed in the distance. I could have easily scored another point, but why ruin the enjoyment of the moment.

Then, Helga stood in front of me, her bosom flushed with desire, her breathing pushing it in a delicious manner, her wetness growing rapidly between her legs.

Winning the game was means for an end in any case.

"Enjoying the show?" she gasped as she leaned forward, her tits pressing against my shoulder, her hands immediately finding my balls, gently massaging. Her body was positioned perfectly to limit my field of view, so I started checking my surroundings with mana, expecting an immediate attack.

Surprisingly, there was no attack yet.

"Why so tense?" Helga whispered, pausing mid-sentence to bring her fingers along my shaft while licking my neck, perfectly following Cornelia's order to be a distraction for me.

Admittedly, she was filling that role excellently.

When she moved, I could see Marianne across the room, her fingers already between her legs, her heavy breasts swaying with the rhythm of her fingers. I would have assumed that it was the after-effects of our latest fun adventure, but the positioning of her body disproved that. The angle of her body was arranged perfectly to maximize the impact of her show.

Her moans were still genuine, though.

“Isn’t your task to make me relax?” I answered Helga as I leaned back, ready for the service. If she was going to distract me from the victory, I had no intention of doing her job for her. She had to work properly for it.

To her credit, she didn’t show even the slightest hesitation before leaning forward, capturing my lips in a searing kiss, her breasts crushing against my chest, her tongue doing wonders. I let her have unrestricted access, enjoying passively. And I used the opportunity to transfer some more mana to her, helping her to take a generous distance to the next level.

[-3192 Mana]

Her hands were all over me, caressing every inch of my back, arms, and shoulders, enflaming my desire further. Her fingers settled around my stomach before she pulled away from the kiss, but that hardly meant she stopped, or even took a break. Instead, she stood up straighter, and I found myself unable to breathe, when she pulled my head to her breasts.

Well, there were limits to my determination to stay passive. When her pink nipple slipped into my mouth, I bit it gently, just enough pressure to trigger a delicious moan.

Cornelia picked that moment to attack me, a timing that was almost succeeded as it approached from the right. I was about to deflect away, but I could already feel two other magic builds, one at the right, the other at the left, ready to counterattack.

So, I threw it toward the ceiling, away from those. Helga pulled back, her pleasure marred with the frustration of failure.

“Good attempt, both in terms of timing and tactics,” I said as I leaned to the side and caught Titania’s eyes. Then, I turned to Helga. “It might have even worked if I had been properly distracted,” I added with a chuckle even as I patted her ass, earning a frustrated moan.

“As you wish,” Helga growled, accepting the challenge as she started her assault once more.

This time, she started by kissing my collarbone, then started moving down slowly but steadily, each kiss timed perfectly with my breathing.

As she kissed, the rest of the team wasn't idle, however. They were attacking repeatedly with the cube, but it was a repetitive, one-dimensional assault, clearly trying to put me into a false sense of security.

Admittedly, under the circumstances, it wasn't a bad strategy, especially as Helga's kisses moved lower and lower, her soft body generously rubbing against mine, her perky breasts leaving the memories of their touch all over my skin.

When she finally settled to her place, she took a slightly different position than I was expecting. Her lips were still wrapped around my shaft, of course, but I wasn't expecting her to wrap her breasts around the base, subjecting me to double-pronged assault. Meanwhile, Titania used the opportunity to launch another attack, and when I bounced it away, Cornelia took control of the attack, but even Helga's beautiful breasts weren't enough for me to taste the defeat.

"Good attempt," I murmured as Helga's twin peaks injected warmth to my shaft while she covered the crown with her generous saliva, her moans of approval entirely honest, a statement that worked for both of them. "A little more creativity, and you might even be successful."

Titania didn't appreciate the subtle sting of my words, and reacted in a furious assault. If it was a part of a proper battle, I would have been scared. Unfortunately for her, her furious assault immediately shattered the ice cube. "Damn it!" she gasped in anger.

"Come on, sweetie, less haste, more speed," I said mockingly even as I flared my magic. "Let me help you on that," I added, ripping her corset off her body with telekinesis, leaving her naked. I watched her corset ripped into pieces, revealing her modest yet beautiful curves as her raven hair moved freely.

[+500 Experience]

"Hey, that's not a part of the rules," Titania murmured in frustration.

"Sorry, sweetie, I couldn't help myself," I said even as I flared my magic, caressing her breast telekinetically while creating the ice cube, earning another furious hiss. Cornelia stalled for a moment, clearly enjoying the way I was teasing Titania. Helga was far too focused on the delicious combination of blowjob and titjob she was delivering.

And Marianne was just playing with herself behind the two, her calculated attempt to provide a distraction quickly turning into a source of joy enough to make her forget completely...

[Level: 31 Experience: 492893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 5742 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 17/21]

Chapter One Hundred Thirty-Nine

With her anger properly stoked, Titania didn't even waste a second before launching another attack, though this time, she managed to keep her strength contained enough not to make it shatter. Unfortunately for her, deflecting it was still within my abilities, even with my attention split between many interesting activities that were going on in the room.

Despite her amusement at Titania's loss of control, Cornelia was quick to join the assault, even poking Marianne to remind her about her task, though her wandering eyes suggested that Marianne's distraction was working on her as much as it did on me. Though, Marianne looked a bit too distracted for Cornelia to be successful, she still made an effort.

A telekinetic field flared around to prevent their attacks from succeeding before I turned my attention back to Helga. My fingers dug through her hair, giving a tug hard enough to be slightly painful, much to Helga's moaning appreciation. Her torso started to move up and down with a renewed fervor, her lips working overtime.

Before I turned my attention fully to Helga, I delivered a few counter attacks, until both Cornelia and Titania lost all their remaining clothing, using their aggressive focus excellently.

"Aggression does not work without a smidgen of defense to prevent deadly counter-attacks," I said with an elegant manner, one that would have been fitting to a classroom, though Helga's enthusiastic moans as she rubbed her beautiful naked body against my shaft turned that statement into teasing rather than a serious comment.

"I'll show you aggression," Titania growled before she cast another spell, this time letting her spell touch Helga directly. Helga suddenly rose from her knees, no doubt following a prearranged strategy, though, if her sudden enthusiasm was any indicator, it was clearly not something she was having any problem with.

As Helga stood in front of me, I sent one last glance to the other three before turning my full focus on them. Titania was preparing for a renewed assault, while Cornelia was poking Marianne again, trying to bring her attention back to the game, but not attaining success at the moment.

Then, my full attention turned to Helga as she slid on my lap, her wetness rubbing against my erection. Her back arched, presenting her tits deliciously for my attention as she pushed her chest out at me.

Since I was a gentleman, I didn't leave them unattended, grabbing them aggressively, their presence heavy yet soft in my palms as my fingers teased her nipples. Her moans rose, far too genuine to be a part of their little plan to score a hit.

Titania continued to attack, but since Cornelia and Marianne were yet to join, I kept my attention on Helga. I leaned forward and put my lips on her neck, where one of her most sensitive spots lay, and started kissing and nibbling, the pleasure hitting her aggressively, particularly effective after a day filled with danger and adrenaline. Her hips started to move even more aggressively. It was yet to slip inside, but each moan echoed beautifully regardless.

I wanted to tease her a bit more before moving to the next step, but her urgent moans quickly built up to a degree that was quite arduous for me to bear. So, I let my hands slide down from her bountiful breasts to her thick hips, raising her up, only to slam her down mercilessly to my erection, her delicious puffy lips wrapped around my shaft desperately, enveloping me with her wetness.

"Harder," she gasped, showing that she had no problem with my aggressive intrusion. I tightened my grip around her hips to raise her up, only to slam her down even harder, the sound echoing in the room beautifully. For that moment, I ignored the defenses, focusing on the way I was invading Helga's beautiful core, her tits rubbing against my chest with each push while her face buried into my neck, desperately trying to add a modicum of suppression to her moans, yet failing spectacularly.

Though, as I invaded her beautiful body, the attacks I received lessened. I started ignoring my defenses. It was likely a ploy to defeat me, of course, but at some point, it was impossible to keep my focus up.

Also, fulfilling a sexy request from four beautiful naked ladies was hardly the worst chore one could imagine.

"Mmm!" Helga moaned as she grabbed my hair painfully, losing her muscle control as the pleasure invaded her body. I tightened my grip around her glorious ass in response, squeezing until her moans got even louder. A minute passed just like that.

Such a magical sensation.

Only when Helga's back arched once again while orgasm hit, I focused back again the game when the ice cube had a sudden trajectory change. It was surprising that they weren't able to score a hit during my distracted state despite their alliance, I thought even as I prepared to

defend...

Only to realize it was completely unnecessary, because I wasn't the target of the ice cube, Cornelia was.

And Marianne was responsible.

She was quite merciless, delivering a few hits in quick succession before Cornelia could even realize the sudden shift. The poor girl was still trying to convince Marianne to join back the game. The cube landed on Cornelia's body in quick succession, not only obligating her to remove all of her clothing, but also forcing Cornelia to follow her orders.

"Betrayal," Cornelia gasped in shock, though it was more playful kind, which showed her character development more than anything. Before she got involved in my tender mercies, even playful aggression like that would have been enough to trigger her dangerously.

"Lie down," Marianne ordered as she finally stood up. Cornelia followed her request, only for Marianne to sit on her face. "It's time to work," she ordered.

Poor Cornelia. She succeeded in her mission to pull Marianne away from her masturbation, just not the way she had been expecting.

As Cornelia's tongue started massaging her from under, Marianne was still having some fun on her own, her fingers dancing around her beautiful nipples.

I put my hands around Helga's waist, dipping her back so that I had an excellent view of the show of Marianne and Cornelia while simultaneously ramming Helga furiously. Meanwhile, poor Titania just stood there, lost, trying to process the sudden destruction of their plan. Her shock was understandable, as she was by far the least experienced one when it came to having fun.

Marianne started to moan, begging for my attention. I flicked my gaze in her direction, enjoying the decision immensely. One of her hands was still on her breasts, teasing their perfect surface while Cornelia's tongue labored aggressively to tease her. However, her other hand was slowly sliding down Cornelia's stomach, teasing and playing, but steadily moving toward its target.

Soon, they were touching Cornelia's wet heat.

Cornelia moaned under the touch. It was no doubt not the first time Marianne was touching her like that — as I had been a party to more than one myself in the near past — but it was the first

time Marianne was dominating Cornelia so aggressively in the process.

And Cornelia's obvious enjoyment once again suggested that her earlier demeanor as an aggressive dominatrix was not a facet of her true personality, but her way of dealing with the desperate pressure of her life. Ironically, the stronger she got, the more mellow and submissive she was getting.

Marianne certainly looked happy with the change of pace as her fingers curled inside Cornelia, provoking a long, stuttering gasp.

Unreal.

Admittedly, the show was distracting me successfully, but neither Titania — who was supposed to attack me with the cube — nor Helga — who was simultaneously enjoying the show as she bent herself back with my assistance — who was being repeatedly rammed inside.

My monotonous yet aggressive pumping didn't seem to be a problem for Helga, as her thighs soon tightened as she started trembling, her panting frantic. "Oh, yes," she gasped, cumming explosively, drenching my lap. I rewarded her with a generous dash of mana, helping her to gain another level, the euphoria of power mixing into pleasure.

[-4291 Mana]

I put my hands on Helga's back, caressing her spine gently to make her tremble even more beautifully while I deflected another attack from Titania, who was still focusing on the game, trying to get a victory, even though it was a bit too late to make a point.

Though, defining her level of focus as intense would be misleading, as her gaze was equally split between Marianne, who was fingering Cornelia mercilessly even as she forced her to lick, Helga who was desperately trembling on my lap, and the flight of the ice cube.

Cornelia was trying to stave off orgasm as Marianne added another finger into her snatch, forcing her to let out a muffled moan, while Marianne pushed deeper and deeper. Her tongue picked up speed to match the attack she was receiving, and soon, Marianne's free moans joined her muffled ones, her tits trembling beautifully.

"See anything you like?" Marianne suddenly asked as she squeezed her breasts with her free hands, catching Titania's gaze.

Titania's flinch of shame was simply too perfect to miss. I prepared to deliver a hit, but before I

could do so, the ice cube flew toward her, delivering a couple of hits.

Titania turned toward us, only for Helga to give a smug look at her shocked face. Titania's shock was understandable, as even I was shocked at her initiative.

Our game was starting to get even more interesting than I was expecting.

[Level: 31 Experience: 492893 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 2913 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 18/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty

Helga's sudden betrayal added an unexpected twist to the game, enough for Marianne to stall her aggressive treatment of her redheaded friend and share a smirk with Helga, reflecting camaraderie. A deserved one, as between them, it was clear that they were the meeker duo.

It was a testament to their incredible development since our first time.

I just sat lazily as Helga pulled out of my lap and walked to Titania, who was watching her like a cute deer facing a sudden fireball. Her shock was clear, so much that, if it wasn't for the arousal that was rapidly rising underneath, I would have intervened to stop her.

"Impress me," I whispered to Helga, a simple spell ensuring she was the only one that heard the whisper. The slight skip of her step was the only indicator she had registered my comment as she continued toward Titania, the head librarian, the scariest mage of Silver Spires.

Though, naked and shivering in arousal, she was having trouble radiating the field of intimidation she was famous for.

Helga stood in front of her, took a deep breath. "Don't move," she whispered, filling me with anticipation as she leaned forward...

Only to grab the ice cube that had been our focus for the last several minutes. My eyes widened as I felt Helga's magic wrapping around the cube, increasing the intensity of the cold, just enough to feel uncomfortable even with their supernatural resistance.

Titania gasped beautifully when Helga brought the cube around her nipple, tracing the lines of her rosy nipple. Unfortunately, I didn't enjoy the sight as much as I should have been, because it came with an annoying warning.

[+317 Experience]

[Warning! Divine Spark is depleted. Connect with more Divine Sparks to continue supporting the System of — — —]

It was frustrating, because I managed to get only get one level in the process, rather underwhelming compared to my expectations. It wasn't all bad, as I also received a few critical Achievements and progressed Titania's companion progress further, and almost completed a second level. Even if the Achievements and the Companion Process took less power than I assumed, a sliver of Divine Spark was enough to give me two levels.

Rather useful, considering the headmistress arranged approximately a week of sessions.

More importantly, the beautiful sight of Helga bending over Titania, her beautiful ass on display, went a long way to take the sting out of the unwelcome warning, suggesting the depletion of my energy, once again suspiciously close to another level up, like it was trying to tempt me to hurry up.

It was not impossible for it to be just a coincidence, of course, but after learning the history of the System and the abnormality of my own variant, a little paranoia might actually help me immensely.

Then, Helga brought the ice cube over Titania's nipple, earning another gasp, pulling my attention to the present violently. Helga was making a beautiful spectacle of herself even as she forced Titania to moan sexily, deliberately positioning so that I could see the way her beautiful ass shook repeatedly. She achieved the impossible, and somehow made my arousal enhance even further.

And that was before she leaned forward, pressing her lips over Titania's neck, kissing, licking, and sucking. Combined with the other show Marianne was providing, it was the proof of my patience that I managed to sit and watch rather than jump to join.

But that would be rude, ruining the heartfelt effort of my sexy blonde friends. I just sat, stroking my shaft gently while Titania's free moans mixed into Cornelia's muffled ones.

Whether it was the game, or her arousal, but Titania accepted Helga's overreach passively, without the slightest disagreement, even when Helga's kisses climbed up slowly, first to the edge of her chin, leaving small, hesitant touches, then to her lips...

Her hands picked a different direction. The hand that was holding the ice cube stayed around her breasts, teasing her skin with the direct touch of the ice cube, no doubt leaving swathes of cold on her otherwise burning skin. Her other hand traveled down, moving between Titania's legs, invading her core, defenseless after the forfeits of our little game.

As Helga's fingers disappeared into Titania, bringing the pleasure she was feeling to the next level, started to moan helplessly. It was soft, gentle, but above all else, deliciously aggressive. And it wasn't just her moans that turned aggressive. Her lips started to devour Helga's with a shocking passion, surprising Helga in the process.

Though, Helga didn't seem to be too concerned about the horny, desperate kiss she was receiving, immediately responding in kind. Lost in a fugue of pleasure, Helga tongue-wrestled

the domineering head librarian, all the while bouncing up and down, her assets shaking amazingly, tempting me to join them.

I managed to resist the temptation, preferring to watch their show to completion, but it was a difficult call, especially when Titania finally ignored Helga's order for her to stay still, only to grab her bountiful tits, her small hands overflowing with their presence even as she frantically kneaded them.

A glistening appreciation started to appear between Helga's legs, her wetness getting even more intense.

Soon, they changed position. Titania directed Helga to lay on the bed, next to Cornelia, while she knelt beside her. I felt the anticipation as she pulled the ice cube between Helga's fingers, dragging it over Helga's stomach, earning a beautiful gasp in the process.

It was a scene of intense sensuality, especially when the ice cube started to move down, teasing Helga's sensitive inner thighs, much to her aroused chagrin.

Still, her eyes closed under the rush of pleasure, and her legs widened invitingly.

Titania had been quite shy when it came to the matters of the flesh, but it was magical just how much one could change under a crash course on eroticism delivered by me. After all, it wasn't even the first girl-on-girl action Titania had lived through, and after pushing through the shock of losing, she was quick to adapt.

She leaned down further and pressed her lips to Helga's quivering core, her tongue already out to tease her knob. Meanwhile, her fingers still clenched around the ice cube, using it to deliver the occasional caresses of teasing to jolt Helga in shock.

The combination worked excellently, and soon, Helga was moaning deliciously, getting particularly intense whenever the cube touched one of her deliciously sensitive nipples.

However, Titania's domineering position didn't last long. Lost in her task, she didn't notice Marianne leaving her enjoyable seat. She slowly rose from her comfortable source of joy, her pale breasts swinging beautifully as she sauntered across the short divide between her earlier seat and Titania, her posture filling me with anticipation. She was like a beautiful song, echoing endlessly.

She sent me an alluring glare, adding another temptation for me to abandon my observer spot and join the main event. Somehow, I managed to suppress that, licking my lips to suppress the

desire even as she bent over behind Titania.

Titania didn't notice the movement behind her, too focused on her task. Well, not until a single finger slipped inside her, at least. It occurred gently, yet smoothly, her wetness already reached a crazy degree, reducing the resistance to zero, but that didn't prevent Titania from moaning in shocked pleasure.

Titania looked back, only to meet with Marianne's mocking grin. "You looked like you needed help," she said with a delicious shrug that made her huge breasts jiggle invitingly, but that detail was missed by Titania when Marianne quickly added a second and third finger to her initial invasion, pushing Titania's arousal to the next level. "Don't let me keep you from your task," she added even as she moved closer, grabbing Titania's beautiful raven hair, pushing it between Helga's legs.

I was seriously liking this new aggressive Marianne.

"Good work," Helga managed to say before Titania's tongue started working on her entrance, pushing her cries to a new level. However, her passionate dance didn't prevent Titania's hips from gyrating around Marianne's aggressive fingers.

It was a beautiful sight even before Cornelia managed to catch her breath and join the beautiful dance, sitting on Helga's face. Helga's tongue jumped out immediately, replicating the service she was receiving from Titania, creating the most beautiful chain I had ever seen...

My heart was pumping viciously as I drank the delicious view, struggling to stay in my place. I did my best to resist the temptation of the siren's call. Not permanently, of course, but just a while, giving them a chance to properly deliver their show. Watching them as they put a wholehearted show for me was the least I could do to pay for their great effort.

My hand clenched around my shaft, moving up and down lazily, hoping to provide some relief from the arousal the show provided. Which got considerably harder as Marianne leaned over Titania, pressing her beautiful tits to her back even as her fingers lashed in aggressively.

And her ass, her bountiful, inviting ass, shook with every pump of her fingers, inviting me to be a part of that beautiful chain, turning resistance into an overwhelming challenge.

Maybe resistance was overrated.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 5932 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 18/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-One

Watching the development of a beautiful chain of orgasm, starting with a voluptuous blonde and ending with a fiery redhead, temptation given form, was impossible to resist.

Luckily, there was no reason for me to actually do so. I was only delaying to watch the group dynamic between the girls — while enjoying the spectacular show developing in the process — and what I saw gave me hope that, even if I had to leave for a reason — reasons relating to the mysterious organization trying to save the world from the divine and dominate the world at the same time, mysterious angelic headmistress and her even more mysterious aims, or surprisingly sneaky lich Zokras that managed to escape with his unlife.

But with that concern laid to rest, there was nothing preventing me to walk to Marianne, positioning behind her shaking ass. Unlike Titania, she was very much aware of the sneaking presence behind her, but her only response was to raise her ass a bit more, presenting her puckered hole for me.

“Such a surprising request,” I chuckled as I dragged my finger along her tight entrance, casting the spell to prepare her entrance, only to earn a giggle that was suppressed by the endless moans of the other girls. When I pressed my shaft against her lubricated entrance, throbbing with anticipation after the lengthy show, her beautiful ass rose even further, allowing me to perfect angle to push inside.

And push inside, I did, sharply and mercilessly, only to earn a moan of strained joy as my invasion helped her to suppress her anal fixation. She didn't try to hide her reaction the slightest, as, by that point, we had nothing left to hide from one another. Everything was out in the open.

Literally.

I started pumping, slowly, but deeply, while my gaze bounced between Marianne's bountiful ass that was making my shaft disappear, and the panorama view of naked, busty females doing their best to bring each other pleasure, lost in their own little world. I decided to alert them to my presence, and my hand landed on Marianne's ass in a loud spank, echoing in the room, enough to stop everyone for a fleeting second, making them notice my presence.

They continued their own acts of pleasure, of course, but their gaze stayed on the show I was providing. Since I had been enjoying their show for a long while, I decided that they deserved a proper, amazing show as well.

I reached and grabbed Marianne's beautiful blonde hair, pulling back hard enough for her to gasp in pain, her spectacular breasts jiggling with the sudden movement. She had to put her hands on the floor to balance herself. It left Titania's beautiful folds unattended, but she didn't seem to care as she twisted her neck to get a better view of the show, replacing her tongue on Helga's entrance with her fingers.

Marianne opened her mouth, trying to say something, but that was quick to die when my hand landed on her ass once more, leaving a faint pink mark in the creation process of another cracking sound. However, the jolt of pain only made her push her ass back, increasing the speed of collusion between our bodies.

At that moment, I wished that I had a third hand to grab her swaying breasts, squeezing them until my fingers left their marks to match her ass, but with one around her hair, the other busy spanking her ass, it was impossible.

Cornelia came to my help at that moment, unbidden. She left her comfortable seat — and allowing Helga to watch the show without obstruction in the process — and knelt next to Marianne, her hands landing on her breasts, filled to the brim with the presence of Marianne's bosom as they sank into their heavenly softness.

Her expression of ecstasy was understandable. Marianne's tits were simply magical.

Marianne's moans gained another layer of beauty as Cornelia's fingers dug into her flesh, while I continued to drill her backdoor mercilessly. Her back arched beautifully as she angled herself to give me better access to her depths, tightening around me to milk me.

"Beautiful," I murmured. And she truly was, her body shining with an inner aura as she got nearer to a climax. It hadn't been long since we started, but she wasn't too far away from a climax in the first place, with Cornelia's tongue treatment followed by the joy of dominating Titania with her fingers.

And the pleasure I provided could not be easily ignored.

I spanked her ass, again, hard, earning another beautiful moan in the process. This time, it was enough to make Titania stop playing with Helga, giving her full attention to the show.

Helga went a step further and stood up, closing the distance in a couple of smoldering, erotic steps that managed to jiggle all of her assets simultaneously. She stood next to me while my shaft disappeared completely into Marianne's tight hole, grabbed my head, and buried my face into her beautiful bosom.

My tongue jumped out immediately, assisting my lips to capture and torture her nipple, making her moans melt into Marianne's. She just moaned, showing no desire to hide her arousal at this point. She just closed her eyes, and accepted the invasion of pleasure while my tongue reoriented itself to the contrast between the softness of her breasts and the hardness of her nipples.

Meanwhile, Titania decided to join the new situation in an indirect way. She climbed on the bed, opened her legs wide, and her fingers disappeared into her wet folds, giving me an amazing solo show to complete the set. Her other hand landed on her breasts, kneading them with an aggressiveness that overwhelmed Cornelia's. Her eyes stayed locked on the amazing show we were providing, however.

My hand landed on Marianne's ass again, but this time, gently caressing the curves of her ass, glowing red with my repeated slaps, rather than spanking her once more. The sudden contrast was more than enough to trigger the climax she was courting. Her ass tightened to a spectacular degree, which pushed me to climax as well.

I decided to give her another reward along with my seed filling her bowels, helping her gain another level in the process.

[-3965 Mana]

The combined pleasure of climaxing and leveling up was enough to sap her arms' ability to keep her upright. Luckily for her, I was quick to cast a levitation spell, floating her to the bed. She collapsed, her eyes fluttering as she battled the overwhelming desire to collapse unconscious.

At this moment, I had a difficult choice to make. Which girl to assist next. Helga, who was still trying to suffocate me with her beautiful tits. Cornelia, who was getting in the mood after assisting me in assaulting Marianne.

Or Titania, who was still playing with herself, watching from a distance, I added in my mind. The decision made, I dashed toward the raven-haired beauty. I put my arms around her waist, and a few quick steps later, she found herself smashed against the wall, pinned in place with my body pressing hard against hers.

"What-" she tried to say, shocked by the sudden change of pace, but her lips were already silenced by mine, muffling the following moan as I slipped inside her wet tightness. She clamped around, her hips responding automatically.

“Someone missed me, after our long break,” I said mockingly, considering it hadn’t even been a day since our last time together. She tried to give me a frustrated look at my teasing, but she soon learned that it was a difficult expression to achieve with my shaft repeatedly invading her beautiful core.

“Asshole,” she murmured a while later, though her intended insult wasn’t as effective with her legs wrapping around my waist tightly and her voice tinged with pleasure.

“We can do that as well if that’s what you want,” I said mockingly as I pulled out, pressing my shaft against her puckered hole, only for her eyes to widen in panic. “Just joking,” I said as I delved back into her wetness mercilessly, earning a beautiful cry in the process.

“I’ll make you pay,” she gasped, but once again, unable to gather even a playful amount of anger, drowned in moans of pleasure.

I chuckled as I continued to pump inside her, invading her whole being with pleasure once more. It was a pity that the Divine spark was depleted, preventing me from earning another level, though that hardly impacted the pleasure I was gaining from her beautiful tightness.

A glance behind showed that Cornelia and Helga decided not to waste any time waiting for me, and melted into a beautiful hug, exploring each other’s bodies intensely, showing just how far their acrimonious enmity had developed into a carnal friendship.

I turned my attention back to Titania, my hands landing on her hips before I cut loose, ramming repeatedly until her moans filled the room. Her legs, shaking and trembling, signaling an incoming orgasm, tightened around my waist further and further, imprisoning me in place.

Not that I had any intention of escaping, I thought even as I erupted inside. I was not strong enough to help her level up further — at least, not yet — but that didn’t prevent me from helping her recover the mana she had exhausted trying to defend the town against Zokras.

[-1318 Mana]

“Yes!” she moaned, my mana-laced seed working as a stimulant, making her legs tighten around me once more and her hips danced.

Luckily, with my supernatural constitution was more than ready to fight against her second wind.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 2931 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 18/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Two

I had been planning to move onto the beautiful dance of red and gold, but Titania's legs, tightening even further as she climaxed, showed that she had no intention of letting me go.

As far as impediments went, it was far from being unwelcome. I enjoyed the way she showed her passion, despite the overwhelming tremble that filled her whole being. I couldn't wait to test the limits of her renewed passion, still feeling the frustration of her loss.

My Endurance made sure that my shaft awakened back to life in quick order, so I didn't bother pulling out before letting my hands land on her alabaster skin, slipping under her to cup her bottom hungrily. She moaned in joy, though that was quick to be replaced with a flare of anger as I probed her puckered hole with my little finger.

"Don't you dare-" she gasped in a palpable aura of anger, but that was quick to fade as I pushed my hips forward, once again making her enjoy the invasion of my full length. Her hands landed on my chest, but rather than trying to push me away, scratched angrily.

Too bad that, even with her recent improvements, her physical strength wasn't enough to leave anything but a pink line. With a chuckle, I grabbed her hand and kissed her palm, the gentle touch working wonders to drain her anger.

"Don't dare, what?" I said with a chuckle even as I pulled my finger out, only to put my hands on her waist and raise her. Unprepared for the sudden move, she didn't react until she found herself in my embrace, my shaft still lodged inside, her answer cut short with a searing kiss on her lips, destroying her answer prematurely.

Not that she had any concerns about that, if her legs around my waist were any indicator, getting tighter as our tongues battled, her body moving up and down repeatedly in the process, her presence tight around my shaft.

However, it didn't take long for her to stiffen in shock once more, because I used the perfect opportunity to slip a finger into her tight entrance once more, already cleaned and lubricated thanks to a quick spell.

Magic was such a beautiful tool, both in terms of bedroom utility, and throwing deadly meteors to the heads of my enemies.

Titania, however, didn't seem to be appreciating that utility at the same level. She gasped in

shock as my finger slipped inside, even deeper — though, noticeably, having no effect on the way her body moved up and down to maximize the impact of our position. She tried to pull back, though it took a while for her to escape my domineering kiss. “Caesar!” she gasped in shock.

“Yes, honey, that’s my name, don’t wear it out,” I said mockingly before leaning forward, capturing them in another kiss. While silencing her, I took a couple of steps toward the wall, until she was locked between my body and the wall, cutting her escape route completely. There, I pulled back, but my hips moved with a vengeance, invading her core with pleasure. “You were saying?”

Under the rush of pleasure, and being squeezed, her words failed Titania for a moment. She just looked at me blankly, trying to overcome the rush of pleasure. It took several seconds for her to utter her first word, and my merciless slamming didn’t make it any easier. “I was saying-” she started, only to fall short with a shocked gasp.

The reason, the sudden betrayal from my fingers, two more joining the first, invading her tight hole to assist pumping. Her eyes widened in shock as she gasped, but this time, it wasn’t just pain that made her lose her words, but also pleasure. Already closing to the edge, the invasion worked wonders to help her topple over the edge.

“I decided to treat my favorite brunette to some fun,” I said, then pouted comically. “Am I wrong?”

“You - maybe,” she managed to stammer, her recent climax working wonders to soften her stance even more. I smirked cutely, to a level its artificial nature was obvious. Titania just rolled her eyes, giggling for a fleeting moment.

Yet another facet of the intimidating head librarian, I thought with a smirk.

However, since she was already in the mood for the next step, I saw no reason to waste any more time. I pulled out and twirled her. After her latest climax, she was barely able to stand up with the help of the wall, facing it as well. My fingers, trailing down to caress her wetness, hardly helped her to stand straighter.

She started shivering furiously under my fingers, and my lips, caressing her neck, hardly helped her to control her shivers. I pressed my chest against her back, listening to the furious thumping of her heart with my body. “Someone feels enthusiastic,” I murmured even as my fingers slipped into her wetness.

She let out a frustrated growl at my mocking, but her body relaxed under my touch, her ass pushing out in an effort to devour my finger deeper. Her frustrated growl was quick to turn into a moan, even when my other hand landed on her ass hard in a spank.

However, her response was to freeze, because she felt my shaft pressing against her puckered hole, startling her with the suddenness of my invasion. I stood still, letting her process what was about to happen.

Invading her tightness was an amazing feeling, tempting me to push with a sudden aggressiveness, knowing she would adapt to my presence in a few seconds. But I managed to hold myself back. I wanted her to take more action. “Why don’t you show me your determination, sweetie?” I whispered into her ear even as I stayed buried lightly in her tight hole, my fingers caressing her core.

“What do you mean?” she managed to stammer between her moans.

“Well, after your abject resistance, I’m afraid of hurting you, so it’s for the best if you take the lead,” I whispered, which earned a furious glare from her. Because as I said so, my body was still pinning her against the wall, imprisoning deliciously.

“Really?” she murmured in abject annoyance, but that annoyance hardly affected her actions. Her head turned back, catching my lips in a heated kiss. Her actions were heated, still carrying a tinge of resentment, powering the kiss even more. Her tongue slipped in, dancing with an aggressive passion.

I enjoyed the assault of her tongue, appreciating the contrast from her usual passive attitude in the bedroom — and many other fun locations we had some fun. The rest of her body didn’t take long to join the dance of pleasure. Her hips started it, moving up and down with a delicious subtleness.

At first, I assumed it was just a reflexive reaction, because she stopped instantly when that motion brought her hips back a bit, pushing my shaft an inch into her precious tightness. Despite her desperate pull, however, the motion repeated itself soon after, leaning back after a few rocking movements.

She pulled back once more, but this time, the delay was a breath longer.

After the same dance repeated a few times, her push getting slightly deeper, and her delay getting slightly longer, I realized that I had made a mistake. I thought I could have easily teased her, but I hadn’t factored in one very important detail. She had already climaxed several times,

which went a long way to blunt the edge of torture she was feeling, while mine continued to build up.

Of course, I could have just stopped the game and pushed forward, but that would mean accepting the defeat, even if only implicitly. Even worse, the way Titania's eyes shone as she pulled back from the kiss for a breather suggested she was very much aware of that particular detail.

"Oh, it's on," I murmured. Unlike Titania's expectations, however, my response wasn't to slam my hips forward and invade her bowels. No, I put my finger on her spine, laced with just enough mana to enhance the sensation of touch, dragging down gently, triggering her sensitive spots on the way down.

"No fair," she murmured even as a helpless moan forced itself out, but with her body imprisoned, she didn't have many ways of retaliating. I had no doubt that, if it was earlier in our relationship, she would have stubbornly tried to resist until the pleasure reached a furious degree.

Now, however, it took seconds for her to fold under the renewed teasing, abandoning her trick the moment it had been discovered. Her hips pushed back almost immediately.

I could have pulled myself back and foiled her plan, twisting the game, but she deserved some mercy for her quick surrender. Not to mention, my shaft was throbbing anticipation. I let her tight hole devour my shaft while she let out her moans.

Her lips found mine in another kiss, but the real surprise came with the movement of her hips, pushing herself back much faster than I had been anticipating, her tightness enveloping me. It was a small miracle that I didn't explode at that moment, especially with her pain-filled moans straining against my lips.

But the pain she was feeling didn't delay her ever-deepening pushes, soon swallowing my full length into her tightness. At that moment, I decided that she had earned her reward.

I pushed forward, meeting her push with a sudden aggressiveness. The resulting cry was beautiful and explosive, filling the room, enough to distract Cornelia and Helga from their embrace and look at us. I sent a smirk to their way before turning my attention back to the raven-haired beauty whose moans were echoing in the room, each push stretching her more.

It would be rude to ignore such enthusiasm, I decided, moving faster and faster, the sound of our flesh hitting exploding loud enough to suppress her voice. Each push was an amazing

experience, enjoying her tightness. And when my pleasure finally reached its peak, exploding inside her, she was already trembling with her own climax, and the explosion only added another layer.

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Count 4. Duration, 8 hours]

[-1843 Mana]

When I pulled out, she would have collapsed if it wasn't for my arms wrapping around her waist. "Have a nice rest," I said with a chuckle as I lifted her with a bridal hold, carrying her next to Marianne, joining her comfortable sleep.

Then, I turned to Helga and Cornelia, a smile already on my lips.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 2693 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 18/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Three

Our little game was developing amazingly. With two beauties collapsed, I only had two more to handle.

And seeing Cornelia and Helga wrapped around each other, their moans equally mixed as their fingers explored each other, was the perfect stimulation for me to ignore the opportunity to take a breather, and continue with my self-appointed yet glorious mission.

As I walked closer, I couldn't help but appreciate the show they were providing. Their beautiful moans, the way their fingers danced over each other's hard nipples, their back arching as their bodies rubbed together.

It wasn't purely the pleasure that drove them to provide such a beautiful show. It wasn't that they weren't enjoying each other's treatment — which was clear from the intensity of their moans — but it was clearly a secondary benefit. No, the way they positioned their bodies, angled perfectly toward me to maximize the visual impact showed that it was a deliberate ploy to entice me.

And the smile on their face was far too naughty for it to have an innocent reason. — though, in the context of an orgy, the word innocent was quite nebulous to define properly. And their deliberate attempt to keep that edge concealed — a desperate attempt against my Subterfuge abilities — made it certain that they had a different aim.

“Won't you join us, Caesar?” Helga said as she turned to face me properly, lying on her side as she did so, a move that had a spectacular effect on her beautiful tits, especially when they were not resting on the bed, but Cornelia's tight body, their hair mixing into delicious copper color. Her legs parted open, her wetness inviting me forward.

“Mm, how can I reject such a beautiful invite?” I said as I started examining their bodies. I took a step forward, only to feel the faint presence of a ward around me, being established very slowly.

I recognized Helga's handiwork, even as she was doing her best to lean forward and nibble Cornelia's earlobe to distract me. Cornelia's wiggling body and loud moans were excellent ways of distracting me, of course. If it wasn't for the great gulf between our stats, she would have succeeded in her task.

Good, I thought happily. They were learning.

I felt like a dominant lion, happy to see the females of his pack becoming stronger hunters. Even the rationale was not too different. Just like a male lion was equipped to fight against other predators at the expense of his hunting prowess, leaving the important task of hunting to the females, I had to trust the girls to hold their own against the ordinary political machinations of the faculty, nobles, and other threats that could be classified as ordinary.

The trick pulled by the Zokras had spooked me greatly. The stronger they got, the less likely a similar event would happen, especially if they could stay in Silver Spires, where the headmistress was a proper deterrent now that the undead threat had been resolved, providing security.

For a given value of security, of course. In a collapsing world, security was always a rare commodity. Though, knowing that the said world was under siege of literal gods while being manipulated by a shadowy organization, the collapsing state made so much sense.

Unfortunately, Cornelia was about to leave for her family, which worried me greatly, even with her strength boost. Yes, she was supposed to be strong enough to take down her uncle, but ultimately, she was a mage, weak against close-range combat. A home under the control of her opponent provided too many opportunities for pulling such tricks.

Cornelia's straightforward personality made it even worse.

I was planning to go with her, to protect her, but with the situation back in Silver Spires wildly evolving with the nature of the headmistress and the inclusion of the Crown Princess, there was no guarantee that I could actually go with her.

It was why I took another step, letting Helga wordlessly direct Cornelia to subtly summon the ice cube once more, ready to launch while she continued to set the ward. I had been impressed by the way they worked together against the undead invasion, but collaboration under immense danger was easy, while cold planning required much better alignment.

Their little ploy got my interest exactly for that reason. Not only the low stakes and the playful nature were the perfect way of showing their collaboration smoothness, but also Helga was the one leading their little ploy, while Cornelia was listening to her obediently.

Exactly the thing that Cornelia needed back in her family. Cornelia's initial plan, before their lives were inevitably interlinked by mine, was clearly taking Marianne along with her to support, both politically and magically. Even then, Marianne wasn't a weak caster, and healing talents could make the difference.

Unfortunately, Marianne had two big drawbacks to that role. First, her magical skill set was extremely limited, restricted to healing, a situation that barely changed even at the moment. More importantly, however, she lacked the strength of personality to blunt Cornelia's headstrong approach, making her an easy target for any kind of ploy her uncle might pull.

I took yet another step, curious of seeing the impact of their little operational duo.

Helga leaned to nibble Cornelia's ear, making a show of their closeness while using that to whisper directives to Cornelia. Cornelia followed her directives, the movement of the ice cube hidden behind the ward Helga had created.

Cornelia's legs parted open while Helga's fingers slipped inside, perfectly timed to the last part of the ice cube's trajectory.

I decided to encourage them a bit, and let the cube come almost within touching range before reacting, confirming the effectiveness of their team play. However, I didn't let it touch, because I didn't want them to be overconfident. Instead, I made a show of being shocked before deflecting the cube away. "That was close," I murmured, my Subterfuge helping to sell the idea I barely escaped their attack.

They pouted at their failure, but still, the glint in their eyes told me that it was a moral victory for them. Exactly what I had intended.

"So close," Helga murmured as she pulled away from Cornelia, though that was not a stop to their affairs. No, it was just to allow me to squeeze between their delicious bodies.

"Not bad," I said with a chuckle even as I put my hands on their bodies, enjoying the way they shivered under my touch. "You're getting better, Cornelia. You might even handle the challenge in your House without dying."

Helga looked at us, confused. Her reaction was normal. We have talked before about Cornelia going back to her family, but that didn't mean that she had known the full gravity of the situation. Especially since her commoner background isolated her from the gossip that might have informed her of that.

Cornelia looked at my eyes for a moment, asking for permission to explain, and I nodded, indicating that there was no problem sharing the details Helga. "It's my uncle," she said. "I'm the heir of my house, but my uncle is the regent, and also, the one that would take the reins of the house if something happens to me."

“But that’s horrible,” Helga cut in. “He’s your family.”

“That doesn’t mean much when it comes to noble families,” Cornelia answered sadly. “At least, not when rewards are easy pickings.”

“So, that’s why you didn’t graduate years ago, despite your power,” Helga said. “You don’t trust the members of your own house.”

“My uncle had years bribing or marginalizing anyone that’s remotely loyal to my late father, and the ones that didn’t obey his wishes disappeared mysterious,” Cornelia answered. “I have the legal right, but if I go back without overwhelming power, things won’t end well for me.”

Helga said nothing, shocked by the revelation. I was willing to bet that until now, even with their growing relationship, Helga had just assumed Cornelia was a privileged heiress, wasting time to enjoy her privileges before the reins of her family, unlike her, who was struggling to carve a place for herself in a school that was dangerous for her.

To her defense, Cornelia was far too aggressive and prickly to actually tell someone about her problems, leaving her isolated, making her uncle’s job much easier. It was no wonder Helga didn’t understand the implications.

“Thanks,” Cornelia muttered, appreciating Helga’s simple gesture. I didn’t know her reaction would have been the same before everything had happened, but I suspected otherwise. Despite the changes she had been gone through, Cornelia was still a girl who had been shaped by the narration of nobles being superior to common blood —admittedly, due to quirks of the system, it was more than an illusion. She was accepting Helga’s consolation, not because she had gained a new appreciation of the commoners, but in her eyes, Helga had elevated herself up through her skills and power, carving an exception for herself.

Not to mention, the help Helga’s position received from my status. I had established myself as Cornelia’s superior to such a degree that she internalized her forced identity as a maid. And she accepted that position smoothly, due to my overwhelming display of strength putting me above the other nobles, rather than lowering her position into a commoner.

Of course, none of those meant Cornelia’s and Helga’s relationship would be perfectly smooth, especially when Helga tried to limit her actions. Clashes between them were inevitable. Luckily, Helga was smart enough to handle the implications of a position.

All that was needed was for me to explain my plans about the next steps about Cornelia’s ascension. Plans that would no doubt make Cornelia bristle in annoyance, thinking she was

being treated like an unreliable hothead — even though she was certainly one.

Luckily, I had some interesting ways to smooth that message, a particularly fun version popping out immediately. One that would work wonders to strengthen them before pushing excellently with the need to strengthen them before a dangerous situation.

And I had all day to make sure they were properly equipped to face danger.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

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HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 2931 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 18/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Four

I didn't waste too much time before I moved on to the main topic. I looked at Helga. "I want you to accompany Cornelia on her journey."

Cornelia threw a glance at me, one that was unable to settle to a decision between annoyed and happy. She didn't appreciate the implication that she needed help, but she didn't reject that idea either. Her reaction would have been more explosive before her close call with the death knights.

"What about my new role at the faculty?" Helga asked.

I looked at Titania, who was gently sleeping while her face was buried in Marianne's comfortable breasts. "That might not be that hard to arrange," I said with a chuckle, earning a similar response from Helga, making her bosom jiggle.

I pulled the girls closer to my body, enjoying the warmth of their naked bodies. "I thought you were going to come yourself," Cornelia asked, reminding me of our previous deal. To her credit, her tone wasn't angry, simply questioning. "Why the change?"

"Things are moving too fast. There's no guarantee that I could get away from Silver Spires for such a long time without letting a very important thing slide," I answered with a frown even as I let my fingers travel down, caressing their breasts, while giving a high-level explanation about the Crown Princess' visit.

Just because we were discussing a serious topic didn't mean we couldn't have fun in the process.

"I see," Cornelia murmured, carrying echoes of a moan, my fingers still caressing her skin. "And how should we act?"

I was tempted to say Cornelia just followed Helga's every order, but even with her mellowing personality, that was a recipe for disaster. Luckily, Helga was calm and crafty enough to handle Silver Spires as a commoner, and she could handle Cornelia without triggering her completely. "The problem is the utter lack of information you're currently facing," I said.

"It's not too bad," Cornelia answered. "I still have some loyal servants back in the house, and they are keeping tabs at my uncle."

"And you know they haven't already been subverted by your uncle and feeding you false

information, how?” That was enough to silence Cornelia for a moment, her head dipping in disappointment. She clearly wanted to argue, but her position wasn’t the best. More importantly, she knew that.

“The first objective is to set up a defensible position. When you arrive at your house, find an excuse to stay in your quarters no matter what your uncle gives. Even if he claims that there’s a deadly emergency, say that you got ambushed on the road and exhausted yourself magically. Then, go to your private wing, take down every single ward, no matter how small, and establish brand new ones.”

“Wouldn’t that tell my uncle that I was lying about being exhausted?”

“That’s actually a part of the plan. Unless he actually tries to set an ambush himself, he would assume you’re not exhausted in the first place. By setting the wards, you’ll give the impression that you were exhausted in the aftermath.”

“I see,” Helga cut in. “And I’m assuming that we shouldn’t waste more than half of our mana while setting the wards.”

“Try to spend no more than a quarter,” I said, even as I grabbed Cornelia’s hair and pulled her down aggressively, until her lips were pressing against my shaft. Her gasp of pain was laced with pleasure, and her lips opened immediately, licking and sucking. Still, even as she enjoyed the fullness of her mouth, her eyes stayed on Helga and me, showing her attention to the topic of discussion.

What a good way to handle a strategy meeting, I thought.

“But it’s hard to set up a reliable defense with only a quarter of our mana,” Helga said.

“It’ll not be the case once I finish with you two,” I said, flaring my mana at the same time to fill Cornelia’s mouth with energy noticeably, turning that to experience. Cornelia was near the limit of my empowerment, but luckily, there was still a margin to strengthen Helga. Four levels is not exactly a simple power-up, especially when it brought the target from eighteen to twenty-two.

[-1493 Mana]

Interestingly, the jump between twenty-one to twenty-two wasn’t something that was directly enabled by the system. If I stayed limited to that, twenty-one was my limit at my current level, due to the so-called fifty percent level difference, requiring me to be level thirty-three to power them to twenty-two.

Only thanks to some of the tricks I developed by examining Titania's level structure and the headmistress' tricks to contain the divine energy, I managed to push the barrier a bit more.

Trying to make my girls even stronger wasn't the only reason for my experimentation, however. The more I learned about the system, the more my suspicions were growing, both about the system in general, and my own variant in particular, so learning to override some of its restrictions and developing some tricks wasn't the stupidest strategy.

"So, what's the next part of the plan?" Helga asked even as her fingers traveled down to wrap around my balls, massaging gently.

"If my guess about his personality is correct, he'll find some reasons to tire you out, either some kind of hunt, or otherwise, some dangerous activity. First, you need to make sure you never split up, no matter the reason he gives. Second, try to argue against his reasons to exhaust you, but ultimately give your reluctant acceptance."

"Why?" Cornelia asked, surprised at the direction.

"The same reason I asked you not to spend more than a quarter of your mana while setting up the wards. You want to sell the impression of weakness. He'll try to overestimate your mana reserves, but there's no chance that even his optimistic assumptions could gauge your true potential. Not after the enchantments, you two have worked so hard for," I added, the last part with a smirk even as I grabbed Cornelia's hair, sinking her back to my shaft, her throat wrapping around aggressively, working enthusiastically for some more enchantments.

"Right," Helga said with a chuckle even as she pressed her lips on my neck for a fleeting kiss. "We worked so hard for our power." After a few more kisses, she continued. "What's next."

"Actually, there's no more to it. I want you two to stay on the defensive all the time. I don't know what kind of challenge awaited me during this horrible mess, but I should be able to find an opportunity to visit you two in a week or two at the worst. You'll be far away, but with a full-power air elemental, I can still handle the travel in several hours, half a day at worst. Once I'm there, I'll investigate everything properly and resolve the issue."

Cornelia said nothing, but the speed of her throat swallowing my girth was more than enough to show her appreciation.

I intentionally neglected to mention one possibility. That I could teleport to them instead of using a magical mount. But the results of the first attempt were still clear in my mind, pushing me even closer to death than I had ever imagined it to be possible.

Another attempt was definitely out of question without some serious magical experimentation unless it was another life-and-death situation.

“Seems simple enough,” Helga murmured before leaning forward, capturing my lips in a searing kiss, and while I was distracted by her kiss, she pushed me back and climbed on me. Cornelia pulled back, allowing her to slide in easily.

I couldn't help but smirk remembering the last private time three of us shared, each second filled with their attempts to make each other pay. The last time, when Helga was able to take the first turn, she was busy sending smug looks at Cornelia, but this time, she was busy delivering a kiss to Cornelia.

I was really proud of their developing friendship.

Under different circumstances, I might have teased them together, trying to stress-test their developing friendship before they left for their dangerous mission, but after their latest display of cooperation, I decided to let it slide.

Cornelia's enthusiasm told me that she was more than happy with that decision, though her enthusiasm jumped a considerable degree when my fingers landed on her body, showing the happiness awakened by my attention as I explored her beautiful curves.

Helga was not to be ignored, however. Her hips rose, before falling down with a renewed passion, the sound of flesh hitting flesh echoing in the room, mixing into my grunt, enough to make Marianne shuffle in her bed. She continued to sleep, however, while I rewarded Helga with another flood of mana, while paying attention to her soul space to transform it.

[-1973 Mana]

[Helga - Level 19/21 - 1%]

“Congratulations on your new level,” I said with a chuckle even as I grabbed her hips and lifted her. A second later, she was on the floor, on her hands and knees, ready for my invasion.

She wanted rough, I thought with a chuckle. Cornelia recognized the nature of my expression, being a subject of it more than once herself, and chuckled in amusement.

I had no problems giving her exactly what she wanted.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 2931 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 19/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Five

My throaty warning didn't make Helga tremble in fear. She did tremble, but it was a display of passion rather than fear. Her widening smile was the distinction. The way she pushed her hips up, giving me the perfect angle to slip inside, just underlined the beautiful impression she was giving.

I pushed, her wet lips enveloping my shaft. A loud grunt escaped my mouth, which earned a reaction from Cornelia. But unlike before, rather than awakening her frustrated jealousy, it stroked her arousal further.

Luckily for her, dealing with her arousal was not impossible, especially not when she positioned herself in front of Helga, her legs widened in preparation before grabbing Helga's hair and pulled her down, inviting her to service.

Helga seemed more than happy to service Cornelia, though her efforts often interrupted by the moans as I pushed inside her, her body easily swallowing my shaft. And my hands weren't exactly waiting idle as I pushed repeatedly inside her. One of my hands landed on her bottom, making her plump ass giggle, while the other landed on her inner thigh, climbing upward slowly, almost tenderly, contrasting the aggressiveness of my hips with the sensual massage of my fingers.

My eyes met with Cornelia, whose beautiful green eyes were burning with desire and joy as Helga licked her. And I could see that it wasn't just the pleasure she was feeling — though it was definitely having a part on it. No, she was feeling happy because of the speed Helga had agreed to help her face, a challenge that could easily cost her life.

I smiled back to her while casting a little arcana trick to caress her nipples, adding another layer of pleasure to the tongue-heavy treatment she was already receiving from Helga, trying to make her climax even deeper.

My smirk widened as the nature of the shine in her eyes changed, gratitude replaced by pure ecstasy. Emotional catharsis was nice, but not for our current moment.

After making sure Cornelia was properly occupied by her moans, I turned my attention back to Helga. My hand on her thighs crept upward slowly, closer and closer to entrance, the softness of the sensation to contrast greatly with my merciless ramming. Her moans, even in their muffled quality as Cornelia forced her head down, loud enough to rattle the windows, making the silencing wards to work to their limit.

Under attack from both ends, it wasn't surprising for Helga to tremble helplessly a while later as the climax hit, making her collapse. Luckily for her, Cornelia was ready next to her, preventing her from hitting on the floor painfully.

"You're exhausted rather quickly," I said with a chuckle as Helga desperately tried to catch her breath. "Don't tell me you're out already."

Cornelia chuckled even as she stole a quick kiss of Helga, helping her to sit down. Then she stood up, her body tense in preparation. "Oh, I'm sure she'll catch her breath soon enough. Why don't I tag in for a moment."

"If you say so," I responded mockingly. I looked at Helga, matching her euphoria-filled exhaustion with a big smirk. "However, from the looks of her, you're going to take up the slack for a long while. Do you feel confident enough to handle it?" I asked.

I remember making a similar comment to Marianne not too long before, when we were having a threesome with her and Titania, though she was too shy to answer. Cornelia's response was equally silent, but the source of it was different.

Cornelia didn't answer, because she let her confident stance to answer. She stood up, her lithe body tense in preparation, each step bringing her closer to the monumental challenge she was about to face. Even after everything that happened, I couldn't help but feel impressed by the way Cornelia owned her nakedness, as if she was being radiated by the inner light of her fire magic, equally fiery.

I couldn't help but lick my lips, which widened her smile considerably. "I think I can," she finally answered even as she put her hand on my shoulder, and pushed me to a sitting position.

I allowed her to do so, more than happy with the change of pace after dominating three beauties, one after another — two into exhaustion, the other to near-collapse. After that direct aggression, it would be fun to be on the defense for a moment.

And Cornelia was the perfect one to deliver such an assault. She might be developing a submissive side, but that didn't mean that her aggressive edge had evaporated completely.

"Excellent," I murmured as I shuffled in my seat, enjoying the way her tight hips swaying with each step. Around her, there was a soft red halo, her mana moving with excitement, adding a flickering flame aura to the mixture.

Her magical capabilities had truly reached to a new, very impressive, degree.

Cornelia arrived in front of me soon after, looking down with desire burning in her eyes. For a moment, I thought she was going to extend her vantage point to tease me, as it had been a rarity for her to enjoy a dominant position over me — even if I was the one allowing that to happen in the first place.

But Cornelia surprised me by collapsing on her knees immediately, her eyes locked to my erection, still glistening with Helga's juices. Apparently, I had significantly underestimated the high her arousal reached watching me dominate her compatriots.

"Such an enthusiasm for cleaning," I said mockingly as her lips wrapped around my shaft, her moans displaying her joy. Her tongue darted out with great enthusiasm after she pulled back for a moment to give a naughty smile, following with a slow, lingering lick to the side of my shaft.

A groan of pleasure escaped my lips, but the distraction it provided wasn't enough for me to miss another ice cube flying toward me. "Naughty," I murmured, catching Cornelia's amused gaze, not diminished even when her attack surprise attack diverted completely. "Good attempt, but you need to have a follow-up plan no matter the viability of the success."

Cornelia showed her appreciation toward my lesson by swallowing my shaft once again, pushing her as hard as she could manage, her throat tightening around my girth spectacularly. I leaned back, enjoying her service as she struggled to take me deeper and deeper, her beautiful lips around the base of my shaft, her perky tits pressing against my legs. The flexible dance of her tongue in her mouth, creating additional shivers of pleasure, just added another layer to my enjoyment.

She was amazing, especially with her impressive display of enthusiasm. As she sank deeper, her magic flared even more to match her enthusiasm. The aura of flame reaching to a point that would have scared me if it wasn't for my own abilities to intervene if needed.

However, I said nothing, because the sight of a sexy redhead wrapped with an equally impressive flame aura even as she did her best to completely swallow me was too attractive to stop. I much preferred to stop an accidental fire to stop her halfway.

Cornelia continued her task enthusiastically, uncaring of the fire hazard she was creating, or the mana she was wasting. Though, why should she care about the mana she wasted when her lips were already clamped around a hose of endless mana, the best magical item she ever used.

She gasped and gagged and heaved, swallowing the full length of my shaft repeatedly.

I was considering how to properly finish the day, when I felt a delicious softness around my neck, one that I recognized easily.

Marianne was awake.

And she wasn't alone, Titania reminded, when she burst into the scene, grabbing Cornelia's head to push her down, her smirk suggesting that it was not just an erotic moment, but making her pay back for the failure of their earlier combined tactics.

I wasn't able to say anything, because Helga came back, pulling me in for a hungry kiss, her hands happily employed, rubbing my chest while her tits mashed me.

It was quite a show, I thought even as I flared my magic, curing my exhaustion.

Something told me that I would need it..

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 4671 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 21/25]

[Helga - Level 19/21]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Six

When I finally woke up, half an hour before the dawn, I was exhausted, and my mouth was dry as a desert.

Though, considering four naked women was snuggling against my body, spent after a very long night where we had gone through all the interesting permutations five people achieve without any scrap of clothing between us.

The perfect way to relax after a close call with the disaster, and certainly well-earned.

Though, I decided even as I stretched my agility to the limits as I tried to slide out of their delicious hug without waking them up, they certainly earned their rest.

Admittedly, I earned my rest even more, not only making sure that I satisfied four beauties burning with desire — though, to be fair, I did have their assistance in more than one combination — but also leveling them up to the limit.

Titania was exempt from that benefit, as her level was still higher than mine, though only two levels remained between us.

Which also meant I was about to lose my most convenient direct experience source, but that was unfortunately inevitable.

I had made sure to elevate Helga and Cornelia to Level twenty-two, though Marianne was only able to reach Level nineteen, an unfortunate consequence of her incomplete Companion Process. It wasn't as urgent considering she was going to stay at the school, while Helga and Cornelia would leave for her family estate at the first opportunity, but still...

Treating my girls as equally as I could manage was only fair.

I dressed quickly and left the room, no matter how much I wanted to stay with them.

I had an important meeting with the headmistress.

Slipping out of the city to create an elemental mount had been trivial at this point. As I felt the chilly touch of the morning weather on my face — I hadn't blocked it intentionally, to properly wake up — my mind shifted into more important issues.

Namely, the threat provided by the mysterious Eternals. Until I discovered Zokras' final trick, I

had assumed that their presence had been an incidental part of this siege, trying to score some easy victories for whatever they had in mind by supporting Zokras.

But Zokras' latest decoy had put a different spin on the things, especially since I had no idea just how committed Zokras had been to the siege in the first place.

He was obviously trying to destroy the school, of course, as some of his plans were perfect until they were unraveled by me, a factor that he could not have planned for in any shape or form. However, that didn't actually mean his main focus was against the school. Maybe it was a decoy from the beginning.

Which meant that I had never met with his real body, not even in his base — though, the real body was a complicated concept for a lich in the first place. When I first met him, I wasn't strong enough to properly assess his capabilities, nor my focus was on there.

I was too busy trying to escape his death knights.

The anger he displayed as I destroyed his death knights was certainly genuine, though that wasn't very surprising. Even if the attack was a decoy against the organization, he had to commit a majority of his assets — at least, the known ones — for his sacrifice to be convincing. He, without a doubt, hoped to save at least some of those Death Knights for future use.

The same was true for the magical ability he had displayed. His actual strength was definitely higher than his revealed strength.

Though, it was complicated. If I was approximating the organization's abilities correctly, it was difficult to hide things from them.

Which meant one good news and one bad news for me. Good news, even if Zokras had been using a decoy from the beginning, I had seen enough to get a good understanding of his power. Enough that I shouldn't be worried about him trying to target me directly.

And considering he was trying to hide his survival, he wouldn't have bothered with a pointless act like targeting Cornelia and Helga, shouting his survival.

Bad news that, even with everything I had discovered about the Eternals, I might have been underestimating their power and their reach. Zokras spending a decade of effort just to frame his death — albeit while achieving some other objectives, most likely stealing that dark Divine Spark the headmistress using for an extremely expensive concealment source, maybe even taking down the headmistress at the same time — told a lot about their strength.

Once again I was facing an enemy that over-classed me significantly.

“Damn,” I murmured, letting the wild winds devour my annoyed gasp. With the undead threat resolved, I was hoping that my desperate need to get even stronger would have disappeared.

It wasn't even that I was hoping for a holiday. The presence of the Crown Princess was a mess big enough to keep my attention even without the looming shadow of a huge organization that could make my life hell if they ever properly noticed my presence.

“I was lucky,” I murmured as I realized another critical detail. Almost every mass-destruction spell I had used during the battle had been light magic in some shape or form. It had some generous life magic mixed in to make it much more explosive, of course, but ultimately, for an outside observer, it wasn't nothing that couldn't have been applied by a secret mage raised by the Headmistress and kept in reserve for emergencies, acting in shadows while Titania played the more visible face.

That wasn't the case, of course. I was an accidental acquisition for the headmistress rather than a carefully-developed weapon, but it was the only reasonable conclusion a spy could make based on the data. Amusingly, the real truth was too absurd to be a part of the report for any competent spy.

Which meant, I still had a layer of anonymity to act around.

Unfortunately, that anonymity didn't come without its cost. To sell the impression that I was working for the headmistress, even on the surface, meaning I had to sacrifice a considerable amount of freedom, to reinforce the impression for any possible spy.

I didn't make the job any easier by introducing myself to different parties by different identities. For the possible spies of the Eternals, I was a mysterious spy with great competency in light magic, almost raised intentionally to fight against the darkness, his visage always hidden.

And, from the perspective of the princess and her party, I was an expert in crafting, focusing on esoteric wards and enchantment, yet with weak social skills. The overlap between the two identities was considerably low that any spy might think of these two identities as two different people.

Or not, considering their appearance in timing. It depended on the abilities and the connections of the spy.

Of course, whether the spies could guess I was the one that 'destroyed' Zokras or not, I had to

be careful in my interaction with the princess' retinue. It wasn't about me trusting her — and I certainly didn't — but something more fundamental. Her brothers had used the same monster horde trick the undead army suddenly added to their arsenal when they faced with a problem.

Meaning the enemies of the princess were in contact with the Eternals.

I didn't know about the level of connection between them. It might a straight transaction of services between the princes and the organization, or it could be a total surrender in terms of some of the royal family.

Regardless, one thing was clear. My involvement with the princess would make me a person of interest to the organization, meaning, I had to be very careful revealing my skills and abilities, especially when it came to forging weapons capable of storing Divine Spark.

One thing the Organization clearly hunting for.

If I had known Zokras was just a shell, using such a deadly siege that expanded most of the forces he gathered for decades just to fake his death, I wouldn't have gotten involved with the princess. Unfortunately, the die was already cast, and trying to pull back would just bring more unwelcome attention to my identity.

But I didn't have much more time to consider the political weight of my actions, not when I arrived at the school, even as the first lights of the morning smashed against the walls.

As I closed in, I noticed that the walls had suffered some damage, indicating that the surrounding towns were not the only ones that suffered the attention of the undead.

However, while the attack itself was not surprising, the damage itself was. Ironically, not because it was too much, but because it was too little. Other than a few spell damages on the walls, there was hardly a sign.

Which raised some dangerous issues.

The attack wasn't surprising, because even with most of his forces committed to the towns, Zokras needed to add another variable to the battle, enough to prevent the school from sending some rapid reinforcements. However, such a diversionary force needed to be convincing, more than able to leave a few broken walls.

The lightness of the attack was not the problem, however. That could have been easily explained by Zokras trying to hasten his death.

The problem was the lack of reinforcement from the school. It was impossible for such a light diversionary attack to convince the school not to send any reinforcement.

Unless someone high up enough was able to interfere enough to send reinforcements. Maybe it was the same spies that tried to take down Titania earlier. Unfortunately, despite it being the likeliest conclusion, I couldn't take that as an outcome. There was a chance the spies from a different organization — maybe the Eternals, or maybe completely unrelated groups.

There was even a chance that the Crown Princess was the one that interfered, hoping to get rid of the headmistress' most loyal assistant to increase her bargaining value. It sounded counter-intuitive to cripple a critical ally, but unfortunately, that was how politics worked.

Regardless of everything, one thing was clear. The higher management was still infiltrated with spies, fully able to interfere with critical decisions without revealing themselves as the culprit.

Which definitely didn't make my job any easier.

Still, the deeper I delved into politics, the more I was realizing that keeping myself hidden was the smartest decision.

With a shrug, I dispelled the elemental mount and sneaked into the school. I had more important things than theorizing about the definite existence of the spies and their possible intentions.

Like, another meeting with the headmistress.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7750 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Part Four

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Seven

As one of the loyal servants of the headmistress — a miracle I didn't burst into laughter as I thought that particular nugget — I stood in front of her door obediently, not making any sound, waiting for the exact time of the meeting to arrive.

Like the previous meeting, the door opened on its own in the prearranged meeting time, accurate to the second, revealing the dark stairs adorned with silver runes, inviting me to climb.

The more I learned about her, the more I realized just how inflexible she was. Or maybe sheltered was the better option. Trying to devour the Divine Spark without the interference of the system, evidence showed that she was essentially in self-exile, her attempts to hide her nature limiting the number of people she could honestly communicate.

Even if she had supporters other than Titania, they were clearly not around.

She was strong, there was no doubt about that. I still remembered the scary flow of her mana, enough to make her a dangerous threat even without the addition of the Divine Spark she had under her control, which was a spectacular amount.

However, that great potential was clearly wasted by her inflexibility. The only reason she was able to stick around was the great web of mystery that she drew around herself, but the actions of Zokras, the Crown Princess, and Eternals suggested that even that aura of mystery had been cracking from the perspective of their opponents.

She was so lucky that I suddenly appeared, helping her to sell the impression she had other weapons she had been hiding. Still, that didn't change the fact that she was squandering all her power and knowledge with a politically-inept mind and a horribly direct approach.

Unfortunately, her political astuteness wasn't my only problem.

Unlike the previous times, I enjoyed the metaphorical weight of the darkness settling on my presence, weakening the connection between me and the system. The more my trust toward the system dwindled, the more I appreciated the presence of the wards that could limit its

interference without blocking the power it granted.

Too bad those wards required a unique Divine Spark to power them. I didn't know whether only the Darkness Spark could do so, or there were some other Sparks that was a viable solution, but there was no doubt that the Light Spark — the only other spark I could access at the moment — was a horrible substitute for doing so.

Trying to use the light to create concealment would be like trying to make a fireplace out of tinder, not only useless, but explosively dangerous.

I continued to climb, the chorus getting louder and the silver runes shining brighter with each step. I wasn't impressed with them the first time, and the repeated exposure hardly helped me to develop a sense of awe I lacked.

Luckily, my acting skills once again came to the rescue, adding all the amazement and worship I wasn't feeling to my expression.

The room was once again decorated appropriately, with crystal pillars surrounding the crystal platform, and the headmistress once again dressed in her silver and gold armor, as well as her white robe, her glorious wings on the first display.

I was fortunate that she couldn't read minds. I doubted she would appreciate my fantasies about the alternative ways of using those glorious wings.

[Divine Spark Identified! Please absorb it to continue to support the operations of the System]

The system notification didn't come as a surprise, especially since my last visit already showed that even the wards weren't enough to suppress that aspect of the system.

Nor it was able to suppress the sudden sense of hunger inside of me, forcing me to go forward and devour as much as Spark as I could manage.

This time, it was much easier to notice the foreign nature of that sensation.

I knelt in front of her like a loyal knight, and she put her hand on my head. This time, she didn't bother asking about whether I was ready or not before letting her mana flow into my body, wilder than the last time.

I just grunted my teeth, accepting the flow of her sharp power. This time, I was prepared for the merciless deluge, easily isolating particles of Light Sparks from her mana.

Maybe it was the transformation my body had gone through during the previous time, but despite her mana containing more Spark, it hurt even less, my body getting stronger with each passing second.

Her mana flowed through my fake soul space, but this time, aware of the impact it needed to resist, I had built it much stronger, easily handling the flood of mana, while using the previous diversion trick to steal more Divine Spark.

With her choice to send a stronger flow, her control was even more limited, allowing me to steal more and more of the Divine Spark. Compared to the previous times, it was maybe ten times faster, meaning, if the headmistress maintained the transference process for roughly the same time, I would get ten times more Divine Spark.

And I had no intention of letting the system devour all of it.

My growing distrust was the main reason for such a decision. With my growing distrust towards the system, the last thing I wanted was to transfer all of it to the System, thus abandoning the initiative.

So, I split the Spark I managed to steal into three categories. The first, and the smallest, category, I isolated for the system to devour. About as equal to the previous time, a tenth of the total. Ironically, I didn't even plan the system to devour all of it at once, but fed to in quarters, to better understand the rate of conversion into experience.

Or whether it had any actual link in between in the first place, like I was starting to suspect!

The second piece, about double the size of the one that would be devoured, was safely packed into my fake soul space, converted into her equivalent of a Companion Node, to prove the headmistress her efforts were not in vain.

Her choice to use a much more intense mana flow was certainly a curious decision, the one that needed to be assessed. But regardless of her reasoning, if I didn't show her her strategy was yielding tangible benefits, she might not repeat such an action again.

However, the biggest part of the power I managed to acquire, almost three-quarters of it, was wrapped in several layers of my mana, in complicated wards I had created based on the workings of the Crown Princess' spear, to be absorbed directly into my body.

It was an important step for my search for power, even if the resulting power was much less than the System. Because, despite everything, the system was clearly an external source of

power.

I had already discovered a way to block the System from empowering — already tested on a fun way against Oeyne — its hosts, and if I could do that, there was no reason to believe the Organization couldn't do the same. And I didn't want to go back to being the Mule.

I would rather die.

Luckily, the empowerment of the Divine Spark gave me a more palatable alternative. Unlike the system, distributing its power from a center, it literally infused into every fiber of my physical body.

Yes, it empowered me much less than the System, taking a great more deal of effort to pull successfully, but still, compared to the alternative of utter powerlessness...

A little work was certainly more preferable, even if it was committing the sin of wasting Divine Spark in the process.

Pun intended.

The transfer continued, while I split my attention between trying to suppress the unfamiliar sense in front of me, trying to force me to devour all the Divine Spark I could manage, no doubt forced by the System, and maintaining the balance of the complicated mana structure I was using to steal Divine Spark from the mana flow.

A long while later, she finally stopped with the transfer. Her mana probe followed instantly, checking my soul space to the development of the Light Node, a smile appearing on her face as she checked the effectiveness of her new method, though exhaustion was clear as well.

It was a subtle thing, but it confirmed that, for some reason, she was in a hurry. Because she had chosen to apply a more intense method — one that was riskier for me, and more exhausting for her — despite not knowing for sure that it would work.

Unless there was a need to do so, it was a bad move.

I wondered what was her reason, because, from her perspective, everything should have been going excellently. The Zokras was defeated, and while two towns were destroyed in the process, most of the civilians managed to escape, turning what could be a huge crisis into a casual event.

Which meant, there was yet another thing that was pushing her to hurry up.

I hoped it was something related to the Crown Princess, because otherwise, it would mean we were facing a true crisis.

“Go and wait for me in the office,” she said, trying to sound impervious, but I could hear the exhaustion in her tone, further confirming the importance of the issue she was facing, at least from her perspective.

Important enough to put her extra effort to strengthen me.

“As you wish,” I said as I stood up, though, despite my somber tone, I made sure to replicate the stiff movements of a nobleman in the process, trying to sell her the impression of a royal knight.

She nodded in appreciation, and I left the room, ready for a difficult discussion.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7750 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Eight

My entrance to the headmistress' office was less spectacular than the previous time. One difference was I wasn't sneaking in but asked to be there, but also I didn't come face to face with a thief in the midst of burglarizing some of her most precious documents.

Pity, as unlike the last time, I would have been free to react. And I would have loved the excuse to capture one of the princess' secret agents for some pointed interrogation.

Instead, I sat down on the nearest chair, letting my gaze dance over the documents sprawled on the table, but otherwise not doing anything dubious. The headmistress could arrive any second, and I had no intention of ruining the trust I had earned through my spectacular victory — even said the victory was less impressive than the headmistress might think.

I didn't explain Zokras' latest trick to her, nor did I plan to do so in the future, because it would raise a lot of questions about the limits of my true ability. According to everything I had revealed to her about my abilities, it wasn't something I could achieve.

Zokras' continued survival had no immediate implication worthy of for me to abandon my convenient fake identity.

I turned my gaze on the documents that were sprawled on her desk. None of those had any huge secret. If they had, she wouldn't have left them on her desk carelessly while allowing me to enter without supervision. It was different for the books on the shelves, protected by layers of wards. Nothing I couldn't break, but she might arrive any moment.

More importantly, sometimes, unimportant details told a better story.

Naturally, every single report on her desk was about the recent battle. One of the advantages of high intelligence was to process information faster, so much that processing every single detail represented in the visible pages of the reports took me only a few seconds.

And the results were hardly amazing. Every single report on her desk was misleading.

Dangerously misleading.

Nothing inaccurate at the highest level, of course. It would be easy enough to detect. Anything too high-profile, meaning anything that might be double-checked by the headmistress directly, or might be followed up by a discussion with Titania, was flawless.

Well, mostly flawless. The way the conclusions were written included some interesting word choices, subtly undercutting the importance of the events that happened in the surrounding towns, and overstating the importance of the crisis at the school.

The details were even more inaccurate. I didn't have a full picture of the view, of course, but just comparing the numbers against the actual details I had observed directly while waiting for Titania, the disparity was clear.

The situation was even worse than I was expecting. The spies were not only adjusting the headmistress' orders or interfering indirectly, but actually feeding her garbage information.

And neither Titania, nor the headmistress had the personality to dig through that numbers to discover the subterfuge.

Turning those reports into another subtle, yet deadly wound on Silver Spires.

However, before I could delve deeper into the implications, the door opened, and the cloaked figure entered, though, unlike other times, she didn't bother pulling her hood, her beautiful face out in the open to contrast her black robe.

I recalled with some amusement how intimidated I had been of her when we had first come face to face. A mysterious hideous ghost that managed to control one of the most premier organizations of the world despite all the opposition.

The deeper I saw the supposed premier organization, the faster that fear and reverence dispelled — not helped by knowing the innocent beauty that lied under her scary robe. As I understood the power of the enemy, the veneer of strength Silver Spires was reduced into smokes and mirrors.

And not the kind that could actually trick the enemy, not if their latest moves were any indicator.

The headmistress walked forward with grace, her wings gathered under her robe, looking like a hunch. She didn't give any sign of greeting or other social niceties, just sat on her chair.

However, her robe was unable to hide her exhaustion. Her tense shoulders and trembling arms were evidence enough. She had been affected by the transfer process significantly, and the fact that she wanted to have a meeting despite that was another evidence of the seriousness of the situation.

I waited silently, doing my best to look even more exhausted than her.

Her gaze danced over the room before focusing on me. “Good work against Zokras,” she finally said. “He’s not someone that will be missed.” Her voice was slow, stuttering. Like she was not used to paying compliments, though her lowered hood hardly helped. Without its intimidating shadow, her aura was lacking.

“It was nothing,” I said. “I was just lucky.”

“It was more than luck. You adapted to your power faster than I imagined,” she asked, trying to sound casual, but against me, her interrogation attempt, which was clearly supposed to be subtle, was laughable. It didn’t alarm me, because if she was serious in her fears, she would have asked the questions before going all the effort to transfer a chunk of Divine Spark.

Or maybe not, I realized a second later. Maybe she was actually trying to use the effects of the Light Node to make the interrogation easier.

“Is it faster than normal?” I questioned, trying to sound neutral. After all, I wasn’t supposed to have any kind of baseline.

“A bit,” she answered.

“Is this about the spells I used against Zokras?” I asked. “Because it was mostly about the wards I set up. I only managed that effect after hours of preparation.” It wasn’t true, of course, but she definitely lacked the sources to validate it. Even Titania couldn’t really dig down to my magical tricks.

“Show me,” she ordered as she leaned forward, anticipation showing despite her exhaustion.

I raised my hand and started to draw several runes rapidly, creating a small ward that could use light magic in combination with life energy, for great explosive effect. I didn’t use it against Zokras, but that didn’t mean it wasn’t actually usable. I just didn’t have the time to do so. “It took hours to set the ward up, but the results were spectacular,” I answered.

She nodded after examining the ward for a long while, and from her expression, I could see that she was already convinced by my answer.

“Good work,” she said, suddenly falling silent, like she had something else to say, but failing to come up with a way to do so. The fact that she didn’t give a direct order was telling.

“What’s the problem?” I asked, giving her a chance to open up.

“There’s no problem,” she said, but that the answer came too quickly, and her eyes evaded mine. The exact reaction of a bad liar, trying to deflect. Her reliance on her magical aura and mysterious hood made it difficult for her to face someone near her power, yet not fully loyal to her.

“Sorry if I misspoke,” I said with a regretful expression. “With the undead threat gone, I’m sure there’s no emergency left.”

Her silence was beautiful. I could see her trying to find a preamble after my statement, without swallowing her words. Which was inconvenient when she was facing a threat important enough to hasten the transfer process significantly.

“I should leave you to your tasks, I’m sure you’re busy with a lot of things after a crisis,” I said, standing up like our meeting was already concluded.

“Not yet,” she said as she shook her head, but that didn’t prevent panic from infecting her tone.

She was completely unfit to lead with anyone that was not showing her extreme loyalty or she couldn’t fully dominate with a flex of her magic.

“As you wish, headmistress,” I said as I took my seat once more, not being difficult, at least, not directly.

“There are some mysterious sightings around Mount Dread,” she finally decided to say/

“Oh, that’s quite far away,” I said. “What exactly are we talking about?”

“A dragon,” she said.

I was glad of my acting abilities because inside, I was quite surprised. Not just because I was almost sure about where that dragon came from, but also the headmistress actually asked about her.

It wasn’t too shocking, because as I learned more about the System and its roots, it wasn’t hard to connect dragons weren’t just another group of monsters, their special trait of not giving experience made a lot of sense in the process.

I was interested in the headmistress’ priorities, however, because while the dragon was an interesting target, the fact that she was focusing on that in the middle of a crisis was quite

telling.

It should be too unimportant to the considerations of the headmistress. Unless there was another mystery around it.

“Is it too strong?” I asked, carefully asking a leading question.

“Maybe,” the headmistress answered, and she didn’t seem to be lying. It revealed one important piece of information. She didn’t have a connection with the dragon, at least not enough to know her strength.

Not that I had a true perception about her power level as well. I hadn’t been extremely impressed by her display of power as we escaped the undead base, but might be about the damages she had received in the hands of the necromancers conducting a ritual on her.

“Anything else I should know?” I asked.

“You need to capture the dragon alive, and if possible, without hurting it too much,” she answered.

“It should be done unless it’s too strong,” I said, which earned a soft smile from her, that made her even cuter than her beautiful features already did. “And it’s a priority mission, why?” I countered, choosing to dig into her explanation. It was clear that there was more to it than just capturing a dragon, or she would have just given an order.

Her delay was pointed. I waited for her to answer patiently. “There might be some ...” she murmured before fading.

“Let me take a guess,” I said, reading her hesitation. “There’s some members of our mysterious walking around.”

“Maybe,” she answered, which didn’t surprise me even the slightest.

“And I’m guessing that it’s very important, but for a reason you can’t tell me,” I said, stealing her initiative even further. She nodded. “And you don’t have any reliable information about the number of enemies or their powers,” I followed up, stealing the initiative even further.

“I know it’s a bit difficult,” she said before taking a deep breath.

“Don’t worry, I’ll do it,” I said with a smile even as I stood up. “Do you think they’ll be more interested in killing it, or capturing it?” I asked.

“Killing,” she answered with a nod, which unlocked another interesting set of questions for me, particularly why it was important to capture a dragon alive for the headmistress, but the organization preferred to kill it. Yet undead forces wanted to use her for a mysterious ritual.

But I kept my mouth shut. Playing the role of the obedient subordinate was much more important at the moment.

Especially with her change of attitude.

After confirming that my display of power was not suspicious, her orders were replaced by hesitant requests. I was willing to believe it was about my spectacular performance against Zokras, not only dispelling the threat but also saving her only subordinate — or at least, only one strong enough to matter.

But maybe, it had a different reason.

However, that was a problem for a different time. For now, I needed to find an old acquaintance.

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Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 7750 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Forty-Nine

Three hundred miles between Silver Spires and Mount Dread was quite a distance for most people. Luckily, I had long lost the right to be considered in the same category as most people. For me, it was nothing that I couldn't handle in several minutes.

But I didn't rush out immediately, and first visited the Hall of Crafting, to see my favorite blacksmith.

Unfortunately, not have some fun activities — as I lacked time — but ask her help to forge some new weapons. After the teleportation mishap, my arsenal was completely gone.

That plan went astray the moment I entered the hall of crafting, and realized, she wasn't in her room. She was in the main area, working with the other blacksmiths to forge a set of weapons. No doubt emergency orders from the school. I couldn't imagine her working together with the guilds under any other circumstance. Though, that didn't prevent guild members from watching her angrily, jealousy mixing with entitlement.

Understandable, as even when she worked alone while the rest worked in teams, her weapons were clearly superior. And to add insult to injury, she was considerably faster in her production as well.

Pity that meant I couldn't just pull her away. Well, that wasn't entirely true. I could have pulled her away, but that would mean invoking the headmistress' authority.

I wouldn't mind abusing that authority under better circumstances, but with the number of spies that clearly infected the school, it wouldn't nice for Oeyne if these spies realized she had a connection to the headmistress through a mysterious agent.

Things were complicated enough in Silver Spires before stirring the pot pointlessly.

Instead, I sneaked down to use Oeyne's forge room. With all the material accessible, it took me half an hour to forge a new sword, a dagger, half a dozen throwing knives designed to hold mana for my unique fighting style.

Also, most importantly, I crafted a large net, the kind that could capture a large magical creature without hurting it too much.

[-3419 Mana]

Not the highest quality of equipment, not in terms of the materials I had invested, and certainly not in terms of the time and energy I committed to them, but considering the time crunch I was facing, the best I could manage.

With the Eternals were already hunting for the dragon, the sooner I acted, the better. Failing my first mission from the headmistress, even a difficult one, wouldn't go too well in my mission to gain her trust. And her trust was critical, because she was my only source of information about the truth of the System.

And if the worst happened, and my weapons proved insufficient, I could always come back to forge new weapons. The travel took much less time than the crafting required. With the decision made, I summoned another elemental ride.

[-942 Mana]

Riding the air elemental, the distance between the school and my destination melted into nothing in minutes, and soon, I was once again looking at the misty peak of Mount Dread.

That close to a possible Eternal presence, I dispelled my ride. I could have ridden it further, but it was better safe than sorry. The mount was fast, but both visually and magically, it was hardly the sneakiest method to travel. Walking, especially thanks to the constant rolling mists ready to hide my presence, was much easier.

My plan was simple. First, I would arrive at the safe house, reinforcing the wards I had set up there during my previous trip, maybe establishing a couple more wards to enhance the security, before starting a deadly game of tag with the Eternals.

I started walking. However, my plans hit a little, almost minuscule snag...

In the form of a huge, rotating ward that covered the whole mountain without a warning, locking me in the mountain.

The ward was strong, stronger than anything else I had felt in my life. The closest thing for them was the defensive wards of Silver Spires when they were raised in war mode according to the plans, but I wasn't sure which one would win out.

"Not a great start," I murmured even as I pulled my dagger reflexively, but somehow, I managed to keep myself from gathering my mana for an explosive spell.

The reason for it, the shape of the ward.

If I was the target, they wouldn't have surrounded the whole mountain with the ward.

That didn't mean there was no danger. Of course not. Like that was even possible with my luck.

No, it just meant I wasn't under immediate danger.

"What to do?" I murmured to myself even as I forcibly suppressed my mana even below its natural condition. Not the most comfortable feeling, but it prevented my presence to be detected.

One silver lining about the strength of the ward was that I didn't need to actively use my mana to check its nature. As it glowed stronger than the sun to my magical senses, it was easy to understand its main functions without delving into it with my mana.

And while that implied a certain sense of weakness, the reality wasn't that kind. Huge walls of a castle were also something that could be seen from a distance, but that didn't make it any less effective in their job. Not everything needed to be hidden to function properly.

A quick assessment was enough to reach a few important conclusions.

First, the Eternals were clearly responsible, because their magical runes had come from the same tradition as the wards I had sneaked through when I had taken down three of their members.

Unfortunately, the current ward definitely didn't share the shoddy construction of the earlier defenses. Meaning, I was not only facing the Eternals, but also I was facing something stronger than a small, disposable team.

And considering their small, disposable team included two assassins and a mage over level thirty. I was able to take them down easily, but unfortunately, that was less about their battle potential than the excellent ambush I managed to pull while they were in their own base.

Hardly an achievement that could be copied easily.

Second, at least in the short term, for all intents and purposes, the ward was essentially unbreakable. Yes, its strength was comparable to full-powered wards of the school, and I had half a dozen ways to destroy or circumvent those wards.

Unfortunately, the current ward wasn't as simple.

The wards of Silver Spire were like a finely crafted mechanical toy, with many tricky bits

designed to allow passage, maintain the living condition of the students, and otherwise interact with its inhabitants. And that wide range of tasks was the thing that allowed me to find workarounds, allowing me to sneak through them.

Breaking a complicated toy was a simple affair.

This ward was might as well be a sheet of solid steel, designed to do one thing, and only one thing. To isolate an area. There was no trickery against a solid sheet of metal, only brute force.

Third, trying to break out was a horrible choice. Call me paranoid, but there was a small chance that the one responsible for the ward might decide to check it out if they noticed someone trying to break out of the wards. Which, considering my expectations about their powers, was hardly a good feeling.

Not only I was woefully under-equipped — how I regretted not stopping by Aviada's patrol to borrow her sword once more — against any foe, but also I had no idea about the number and composition of the enemy.

My only reasonable guess was that they had more than three members — maybe a few, maybe several — and I expected every member to be over level thirty, with no reasonable guess about the upper limit.

Not exactly the easiest challenge to face. Ironically, not the worst either. At least, unlike my first battle against Zokras, I wasn't ambushed by a superior foe supported by nearly a dozen undead machines of death.

The only positive thing was that my sixth senses weren't tingling the same way I had felt in my last visit, so whatever mysterious being that had been watching me during my last visit had better things to do.

It wasn't hard to think about what might be the distraction.

Seconds later, I felt another ward spreading out, its feelers spreading, forcing me to pull my mana even tighter into my veins. It was a detection ward, validating my earlier decision to dispel my mount.

The detection ward was merciless. If I delayed canceling the mount until the moment I had detected the first ward, the detection ward would have picked the mana remnants.

I wasn't able to analyze the defensive ward, because, unlike the first ward, glowing with all the

confidence of shining steel wall under the sun, it was a subtler ward. I could feel it spreading over the sky, impressive for a detection ward.

It was not impossible to analyze it, to understand its strengths and weaknesses more accurately, but to do that, I needed to stay under some wards of my own, blocking the feelers the detection ward was spreading. Ironically, the detection ward itself prevented me from erecting such a ward in its confines, while its defensive counterpart prevented me from escaping.

Luckily, I had already established a perfectly serviceable hideout, with wards designed to protect me from exactly those kinds of interference.

I started walking toward the hideout, my mind drifting toward the nature of the challenge I was facing.

The only positive thing about those wards was that they were established through some kind of artifact rather than cast directly. Technically, I didn't have any evidence to support that conclusion, other than the power required to erect those wards.

Even in my current strength, setting up a ward to cover up the whole mountain in seconds was impossible to imagine, let alone setting up two of them in quick succession, with no rest in between. Considering the Eternals were supposed to fight against gods and win, I wasn't ready to discount the possibility of them having someone as strong.

But sending someone as strong to such a mission was completely different. If I were to guess, based on not my own progress but the more usual progress I had seen on others, someone definitely needed to be over level hundred to instant-cast such a ward, with a stat growth to actually match their level.

Not exactly someone to send out to errands.

They likely had a c item to cast such wards. It wasn't the happiest conclusion either, showing the depths of their treasure vault, but certainly better than having an opponent that could snuff me with a flicker of their mana.

"Finally," I murmured even as I finally stepped into my safe house, my own wards enough to block the feelers of the detection ward, allowing me to relax the tight hold I had on my own mana, which was always an extremely uncomfortable sensation. Like trying to hold my breath, tense and uncomfortable. Almost like an itch impossible to scratch.

However, despite the temptation to laze around for a moment, I was already setting up a ward

of my own to properly analyze the opponent's defensive preparations. Because one thing was clear.

The opponent set up a deadly trap, one that was suspiciously excessive, almost overkill, to be applied against a dragon that could be restrained by a few measly liches.

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty

Under the difficult circumstances I found myself in — again — what I needed more than anything was information. And to do that, in such a large field, with mist thick enough to block anything outside a fifty-foot radius, the only reliable method to do was establishing a detection ward of my own.

A detection ward, under normal circumstances, was not exactly challenging, especially when done from an already secured base. Unfortunately, the situation was far from normal.

Most detection wards worked in the same principle, sending tightly-controlled strings of mana outside to analyze the surroundings and communicating with the main array. Unfortunately, the overwhelmingly-strong detection ward that covered the sky not only could detect anyone not actively suppressing their mana — or hiding behind a set of concealment wards of their own — but also they could detect the subtle mana from the detection wards.

They were ways to prevent that, based on the way the opposing ward was working. Unfortunately, the current ward I was facing was simply too strong, too over-compassing for those tricks to be viable.

Luckily, not all detection wards relied on sending out mana. Some of the more obscure wards worked passively. They weren't used much because their detection capabilities were significantly lower. They were usually placed in distant locations, as some kind of outer detection, and only then, passive structures were used because their mana consumption was much lower. They were also significantly worse in distinguishing the nature of different mana sources.

Luckily, their weaknesses didn't make them completely useless against the circumstances. Not with the potential of the people I was facing against. Especially since I didn't expect them to waste any effort trying to stay concealed.

Why should they, when they had conveniently surrounded the area with an impenetrable ward and a near-omniscient detection ward? These were not exactly the critical setup phase of a stealthy operation.

The moment I established the ward, I was able to detect two sources of mana that were passing dangerously close to my shelter, confirming my guess.

The way they radiated power passively suggested that they were strong, I tensed for a moment,

thinking that my concealment wards were not enough to block their detection capabilities.

Luckily, their route was incidental, and they had disappeared from my detection field after a few seconds. However, that left me another question.

The passive detection ward only covered a minuscule portion of the mountain, barely a sliver, due to its inherent disadvantages — and the constant glow of the defensive ward that surrounded the mountain, blanketing out the detection capabilities of the ward due to the constant magical glow it created, hardly helped.

Immediately detecting two opponents, strong enough to give me significant trouble, was not a good indicator of the number of enemies around. So, either I was unlucky, or there were far more enemies than I had been expecting.

Another flash power appeared from a different direction, tangentially passing my base before disappearing from the range. And then, from another direction, came yet another energy signature, this time two of them.

There were more enemies than I had been expecting.

Much more.

“Fuck it,” I murmured.

I had one day to rest. Just one fucking day, since I had to defend two different cities simultaneously against a coordinated undead attack — and almost killing myself in the process.

There was one positive thing, one little silver lining.

With their incredible investment and the number of warriors they had deployed was completely unnecessary to capture a dragon. The dragon actually being much stronger was not a likely possibility.

That might have explained the reason for the wards they had established, but the weird movement pattern of my opponents didn't make sense from the perspective of people trying to systemically search for one extremely strong target.

No, they had a different reason.

Of course, that raised an important follow-up question, whether the headmistress was aware of that detail and used the situation to send me to a dangerous situation, a remote execution.

Though, a bit of thinking told me that it was unlikely. I had no reason to think the headmistress could track me — if she could, I wouldn't have been able to sneak into her bedroom to peek at her — and my arrival to the mountain was too fast for her to rely on for me to be locked inside.

Not to mention, if she wanted to kill me, she had much more efficient ways of setting up a sure-fire ambush.

Unless I had any solid evidence, I was willing to operate under the assumption that it was my own luck that forced the circumstances. Considering everything that happened, the current circumstances weren't exactly unbelievable.

I needed to act, however. The Eternals were clearly going to move around a lot — whether they were looking for something, or for other purposes — and hiding in one location, hoping to stay undiscovered was not the safest strategy.

Not with my luck.

However, I couldn't just leave my hiding spot, hoping to stay concealed. I needed to find a way to move around without being detected.

Suppressing my mana continuously was not sustainable for hours, not because of the discomfort it would create — and it would be annoying — but because if I faced any danger, I would either have to rely only on my physical combat abilities to handle it, or I would reveal my position.

Not a good solution, since my whole melee fighting abilities were based on strategic discharges of mana to deliver explosive damage. Facing against a strong enemy without that trick was certainly not something I wanted unless I had no other option.

"Maybe an old trick would help," I murmured even as I stretched my mana directly on the ground, carefully creating a tunnel while making sure it was still under the concealment ward.

It took almost a minute for me to hit the glowing defensive ward, but that was not surprising. As much as I would have loved for them to forget covering the bottom of it, it wasn't exactly shocking.

Breaking through the ward was not an option, but luckily, it wasn't the reason I had come here. I was there to check one important thing, that whether the constant glow of the ward interfered only with my own wards, or interfered with their own as well.

And much to my happiness, I discovered that it actually did.

Maybe they didn't even think someone was crazy enough to set their presence so near to their wards. It wouldn't be the first time I abused a clear design mistake of the defensive wards.

"Finally something for my benefit," I thought even as I started creating a complicated web of tunnels — not neglecting to add small explosives, false turns, and many other tricks to make sure those tunnels wouldn't be tracked easily if they were discovered. However, unlike the last time I had pulled that trick in the undead base, I didn't cover every inch of the tunnel with explosive runes.

This time, it was about staying hidden and hiding my retreat, not leaving a destructive gift while I retreated.

Tactics needed to adapt when total retreat was not an option.

Of course, I wasn't just establishing those tunnels to escape. No, I was adding some passive detection wards, spread about a couple hundred feet away from each other, giving me a better view of what was going on. The radiating presence of the surrounding ward reduced their effectiveness, but luckily, not completely prevent it.

Unfortunately, a more complete view didn't immediately solve my problem, for one important reason.

The more I could detect, the more confused I got.

First, closer to the peak of the mountain, there were more enemies running around — and flying around — to a point that I had to update my estimations upward. Several dozen enemies were a certainty, and maybe there were even in low hundreds.

Hundreds of level-thirty and above combatants were not something that was easy to handle.

The second confusing thing, was that they were fighting against each other, sometimes suddenly starting to fight after traveling together for a while, for no direct apparent reason or rhyme. Though whenever they started fighting, it started with a weird flare of magic from at least one of the parties.

However, the most interesting thing was the total lack of skill they were displaying. Of course, it was hard to assess such a thing accurately from the limited perspective of a passive detection ward, but every single spell they used was simple, almost as bad as my first casting attempts. Pure telekinetic power waves, fireballs, and flying pieces of rocks.

The only thing that separated them was the huge power they were putting behind the spells, turning every attempt into a deadly danger regardless of the lack of skill in its nature.

How interesting, I murmured. I was about to retreat back into my own hiding spot, when I felt another flare of magic on the edge of my recently-expanded field of detection. I was about to ignore it, as it was yet another incompetent flare of magic, but it was immediately followed by a familiar type of spell.

A familiar spell that a situational ally had used before in my presence.

An ally with a certain scaly skin condition.

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-One

The magical presence of my target was nearby.

Unfortunately, my preferred method of flying mount was not an option. Not with the detection ward ready to catch the moment I stepped out of the little web of protection I had created under the shadow of its defensive counterpart.

So, I continued to move the slow way. Creating a complicated set of tunnels. And even worse, I had to create some of them much larger, just in case I had an opportunity to save my scaly acquaintance.

Saving her was a target despite the potential risks, because the headmistress needed me to capture the dragon. However, my motive was not fulfilling her order, or even selling the illusion of a loyal soldier.

No, I wanted to save the dragon — if I could do so without putting myself under certain danger — because the headmistress' request implied that the dragon was important for her. Which meant, the dragon either had some kind of link with Divine Spark, she had some information valuable for the headmistress.

Or she had a completely different significance, which might make her even more important.

Regardless, she was important for me, because her presence promised leverage that could be used against the headmistress.

The nearer I got, the more accurately I could detect the details.

As far as I could tell, there were eight distinct sources of energy, which would have been enough for me to turn back and retreat, leaving my scaly acquaintance to whatever unfortunate fate that awaited in the hands of a mysterious organization responsible for the ongoing disaster that was slowly destroying the civilization.

Luckily for her, I could also detect their formation and the current targets as well. And that told me one important thing. The battle wasn't a siege where seven members of the Eternals assaulted the dragon, trying to take her down.

If that had been the case, from the level of power I could detect, she wouldn't have lasted even a minute.

No, even from a distance, I could feel four parties spread around, each fighting against each other. The first party was, naturally, the dragon herself. She was away from every other opponent, several wards surrounding her in a desperate attempt to create a defensive bulwark, one that was being eroded aggressively.

The intricacies of the wards would be enough to prove that she was more than a mere beast even if I hadn't communicated with her before.

However, intelligence was not sufficient alone when being sieged by several high-leveled enemies, even when those enemies were lacking in skill. Power was also needed, an asset that she was clearly lacking.

She wasn't weak by any sane definition of the word. She was still strong enough to take down Cornelia, or one of the death knights of Zokras, in less than a minute — though I would pick Titania for a victory with a comfortable margin.

Unfortunately for her, that level of power was hardly enough under the circumstances. She was only holding on because of external factors. The relative lack of skill of her attackers didn't match their incredible power. And the enmity among themselves.

Her attackers were split into three factions, though these factions were not equal in number, or in power. The biggest group consisted of four members, three mages and a warrior. They were at the center of the group, their main focus on attacking the dragon. Even with their unskilled approach, they would have taken the dragon down with relative ease.

However, the second group was actively trying to prevent them from succeeding.

The second group consisted only of two members, one mage and one warrior, likely with a ranged specialization. They were staying quite a bit distance away from the first group as they did their best to interfere with the first group's attacks against the dragon. However, they were distant enough that, if the first group decided to attack them, they would be able to retreat. A simple plan, but effective.

That didn't mean they were on the side of the dragon, because they were also attacking the dragon whenever the dragon had an opportunity to sneak away.

Clearly, they shared the same objective, but they were fighting for the honor of taking the spoils.

However, the real interesting thing was the fourth party. It was a lone warrior, yet he was

attacking all three at the same time, without any rhyme or reason, completely berserk. I might have mistaken him for a monster in the middle of a blood rage if it wasn't for his distinct signature marking him as completely human.

Just mindlessly berserk.

How very much interesting, I thought even as I continued my laborious journey.

If there was one good thing about a chaotic four-way magical skirmish, the spells that were being thrown around with reckless abandon were the exact thing I needed to conceal my own magical signature, essentially hiding under the shadows of their spells to quicken the tunnel-creation process.

And it was a good advantage, under the assault of two groups — even with them restraining each other — the dragon was getting closer to defeat. Layer after layer, her wards were getting destroyed, with her speed to recreate unable to match the speed.

I started tunneling even faster.

[-231 Mana]

When I was finally able to poke my head, about a hundred feet away from the defensive cave the dragon had picked for her desperate last stand, only one detail about the battle surprised me, though not a big one.

The members of Eternals were wearing three different types of uniforms, though each had the symbol of a silver ankh on their chest, only the color of their shirt different. The small group of two was wearing a green shirt, while the large group had two different colors, three of them wearing black and one wearing blue. Interestingly, the one that was currently raging was also wearing a blue.

Maybe the Eternals weren't as unified as I thought. Of course, that was the best case, as there might be many different reasons for that difference in color, like operative teams, maybe even simple fashion preference.

I stayed concealed, watching carefully for an opportunity. I wanted to save the dragon, but not at the cost of revealing myself.

I cared about getting leverage over the headmistress, but not at the cost of directly opposing a literal army of high-levelled combatants.

Luckily, that didn't mean I was completely helpless. For example, when one of the mages dressed in black threw a huge fireball strong enough to destroy her remaining wards, I sent a concealed string of mana to destabilize it, making it explode before it even reached the halfway mark between them and the dragon, making them receive the bulk of the attack.

Admittedly, it hadn't been a particularly difficult job. Not when it was already getting more and more unstable as it flew toward the dragon due to excessive mana the caster pumped in its structure. And that was another indicator of their lack of experience, failing to cast even such a simple spell correctly, despite from a pure potential perspective, being able to put more raw power than Cornelia could display.

The spell exploded close to them. Unfortunately, they had their own protections — crude, but with enough power behind them to make them formidable — making the fireball barely an inconvenience for them.

It might have been different if the smaller group had been able to take advantage of the mistake, but they were equally clumsy, choosing to send a huge chunk of ice bolt after charging it fully rather than relying on a quick attack to leverage the opportunity.

They were not only incompetent in terms of using magic, but also they were tactically unaware.

As I watched them, the berserk warrior finally started to show the signs of mana depletion, and the next time he attacked the group of four — he had been bouncing between all three targets repeatedly — the group of four turned their attention to him, killing him quickly.

Interestingly, none of them showed the slightest hint of hesitance, including the one that was wearing the same color uniform.

However, even when they were killing a mindless and weakened opponent, their movements were lacking. Both in terms of spell selection and coordination, to a point that their spells interfered with each other significantly.

With that lack of skill on display, I was confident in taking all of them in a few minutes.

Unfortunately, it was clear that those strong but unskilled mages were not my only opponents. Not even close. The amount of skill they were displaying was too limited to establish the wards around us, not even if they had miraculous artifacts to help them.

Which meant that there were others with more respectable skill levels — like the ones I faced back in the city where they were targeting Titania, or even more skilled — responsible for

managing the wards.

And even that wasn't even the full extent of the challenge I was facing.

With my luck, there was always more.

Barely a minute after the berserk warrior had fallen, another complication joined the mix. A group of three just entered the range of my detection, moving with a great speed, uncaring of the magical expense. They were coming from the direction of the smaller group.

At the same time, the smaller group changed their behavior significantly, and stopped targeting the dragon, focusing their attack on the group of four, even slowly closing in the distance.

Another significant tactical mistake, which told me that not only they were not used to using strong magic, but also, they didn't have much tactical awareness.

They might as well just cry reinforcements.

Even the group of four, despite their limited tactical acumen, realized that. Their reaction, however, was interesting. Rather than trying to retreat, they intensified their assault on the dragon.

For some reason, they were trying to take down the dragon before the reinforcements arrived. Maybe they trusted themselves to defend against the five with the dragon taken down, or maybe they had another aim.

Regardless, with the inclusion of more reinforcements, I was ready to cancel my plans. Information was something precious.

My life was more precious.

However, before I could retreat back to the tunnel, another interesting development made me reconsider my plans. One of the four, the warrior wearing black, let out an explosive cry, and he started to act in the same mindless berserk manner.

A second later, he was attacking his previous allies in reckless abandon.

A crazed warrior loose between three mages in arms reach, a recipe for disaster in any measure.

Also, just the opportunity I needed.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 6192 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Two

I was curious about the sudden and unbidden transformation in one of my opponents. It wasn't the first time I noticed that transformation, but the other times, I was only able to observe it through the passive detection ward, making me miss the details.

It was the first time I watched the process directly, not that it made the mystery any easier to solve.

There were no spells targeting him, no great trap, nothing. One moment, he was fighting together with his allies. A second later, they lost all reason to the point of targeting allies and enemies without rhyme and reason, with no sense of self-preservation to limit them. And it wasn't just an alignment shift. They were literally fighting on reflex, with no actual objective.

However, with reinforcements on their way, I didn't have a lot of time to waste, certainly not enough for experimentation.

I needed to save my damsel, and escape.

The incompetence of my enemies came useful at that moment, especially when three unskilled mages were pushing as much mana they could to their spells in a desperate attempt to put some distance between themselves and a berserk warrior.

Unfortunately, with their lack of skill, they might as well try to use clouds as a shield.

Then, something even worse happened. Their spells entangled, about to create a dangerous commotion that would likely kill all of them.

They should really thank me, I thought even as I stretched my mana and took control of their spell — conveniently, their combined mess of a spell going chaotic was an excellent way of hiding from the omnipresent detection ward. Barely for a few seconds.

That was all I needed.

First, I melded my mana and reached for the chaotic spell that was about to explode. Trying to steal control of an opponent's spell was as dangerous as trying to grab the sword of a charging warrior. Luckily, it was considerably easier if the charging warrior was a three-year-old and barely able to lift the sword itself.

I didn't suppress the spell, or make it even more destructive. I shaped its direction, targeting the

dragon, and in the process, saving the lives of the three unfortunate guys trying to deal with the betrayal of their ally.

My aim wasn't to kill the dragon, of course. The moment the spell hit against her already-damaged wards, threatening to demolish them completely. And my scaly acquaintance had no chance but put her full focus on maintaining the wards, even as the raging fires covered the full range of her defensive wards, scorching the mist completely.

And conveniently, blocking both magical and visual detection.

Focused on her task, the dragon didn't notice the net flying toward her until it wrapped around her completely and turned her into an unlucky critter.

A shocked roar escaped her mouth, but that was all she could have done with the net suppressing her mana. Exhausted with her desperate defense, it was much easier than I expected.

Of course, that wasn't the extent of my tricks. I pressed my hand on a large piece of rock, and rapidly transformed it into a facsimile of a dragon that had been just burned under a deadly inferno, even using Biomancy to create some fake scales, burnt flesh, and cracked bones on the surface.

[-2352 Mana]

It wasn't my best work. Not only materials were missing, but I only had a second to create a work of art - a macabre one. Still, it looked convincing enough to pass ordinary muster, with people distracted in their little game, and their out-of-control spell still hiding my presence.

Just as one lasting touch, I destabilized the defensive wards remaining in the area, the resulting explosion mixing into the blast of the chaotic inferno.

Then, I rushed back into the tunnel, triggering the runes I had inscribed along to collapse the tunnel and erase my path, dragging the huge net, along with my prey.

I was prepared to attack the dragon — non-lethally, enough to make her fall into her consciousness, just to make sure she didn't make a commotion to destroy my attempts at hiding. Luckily, she turned out to be smart enough not to react when she had been saved from immediate mortal danger.

When I finally stopped at a hiding spot nearer the protective ward, supposed to work as a

defensive structure, the dragon looked at me calmly, silent, even her breathing even.

“Long time no see,” I said with a smirk. Not a lot of time had passed since our last meeting, but it certainly had been a busy period, at least for me. And if the number of missing and damaged scales on her otherwise shiny emerald body was any indicator, it hadn't exactly been a holiday for her.

She looked at me expectantly. Seeing she wasn't about to lash out, I loosened the net around her and let her go.

Her wings opened and she took a threatening stance, like she was about to lash out. But her magic stayed calm. It was a smart move, she was posturing in a way that leveraged her physically-intimidating qualities perfectly, but without being overtly threatening.

She was trying to equalize the playing field.

Too bad she was trying to play the game of posturing against an expert.

I was the king of posturing.

I just smiled and sat down, a chair that might even be classified as a throne rose from the ground and met halfway. Another exaggerated move, telling her that I understood her move, but was not particularly impressed.

A dragon ducking her head shyly, realizing her trick had been seen through in a second, was an amusing sight.

“We can posture some more, or I can heal you while you tell me what's happening here. Which one do you prefer?” I asked.

The way her threatening posture disappeared even as she stretched her front claw toward me was my answer.

I placed my hand on her scales, and sent a rush of healing energy into her body, healing the surface wounds, and even purging some leftover necrotic energy from the previous ritual in the process.

[-1032 Mana]

However, the healing only cured a portion of her wounds. She was in an even worse condition than I had expected.

Of course, even that surface-level healing wasn't entirely altruistic. I was also using the opportunity to examine her soul space, or more accurately, where her soul space was supposed to be.

There was no soul space. Though, after the lengthy history lesson from the headmistress — along with the detailed assessment I had managed to give her during the transfer process — the lack of it wasn't a shock.

For a moment, she was immobile, uncertain what to do. A metaphorical clock ticked in the corner, while the small cave I had carved with my magic was illuminated soft light of the glowing lights of the wall, shining beautifully on her emerald scales.

And since she seemed unwilling to start her story, I actually conjured a clock, ticking very pointedly.

The sigh of a dragon was an impressive show. But her apparent distaste didn't stop her from explaining. Not by speaking, but once again by drawing glowing letters in the air with her claw, using the same ancient language she had used in our previous encounter.

Interestingly, she had no problem understanding my modern speech.

'I was minding my business when suddenly, the Knights of the Eternal Vigil appeared, warding the whole mountain, locking me inside, before they opened many cages, filled with monsters,' she wrote.

I just nodded, gesturing for her to continue like I was aware of that particular fact, barely holding back myself from calling her an idiot.

The fact that she was able to detect the cages meant that she was using magic even after the detection ward was established, because otherwise, with the domineeringly-thick mist of Mount Doom, directly seeing them was not an option.

However, it was interesting that she had mentioned the Eternals with their full, correct name, casually like they were already a known factor. However, the implications of her history knowledge weren't as important as their immediate urgency.

"Do you have any idea why they are dropping those animals?" I asked even as I sent another wave of healing energies into her body. It helped to use the time more efficiently.

[-213 Mana]

And if the healing energy was making her warm and comfortable, and more likely to slip something carelessly before she could realize, well, it must be a complete coincidence.

'Maybe training,' she wrote. 'They were definitely not as strong as they were supposed to be. Maybe this is the way they train their new members.'

Another statement, that if honest, implied more about her lack of relative knowledge about the System in general. They certainly didn't need to make such a huge commotion to train their new members, not when a few weeks of practice would teach them all they needed to know.

However, the sudden berserk state they seemed to be suffering was a more interesting aspect. I remembered the soul spaces of the three I had ambushed back in the town Titania was defending. In particular, the jagged, damaged state of their soul space, with skills and achievements pushed almost in a haphazard manner.

Clearly, like me, they had a way of helping people to push through their level limit and level up at the same time. Considering the number of people that were flying on the surface, they clearly had a higher capacity in creating artificial high-leveled warriors.

Unlike mine, however, their approach clearly had some disadvantages. Maybe one of these side effects was a mindless berserk rage.

And if that was the case, it made sense for the Eternals to lock all of them in a huge ward, with a constant detection ward to monitor their movement just to make sure they didn't leave behind a berserk warrior once they departed.

While I had dismissed their combative capability, it was only in comparison to my capabilities. It didn't change the fact if let out, those men would turn into natural disasters, destroying towns and cities on their way, cutting their defenses like butter.

I didn't bother explaining my chain of thought to my scaly friend, of course. "Probably training," I said dismissively.

'After that, I tried to run away and hide, but before I could create a hideout, they managed to use their ward to find my exact location an hour later, and started sieging me.'

I nodded even as I continued to heal her, my mind on how to handle the situation.

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6324 / 6324 Mana: 4231 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Three

However, how to progress to the next step depended on the fate of the battle on the surface.

I turned my attention to the detection wards even as I continued to heal her, trying to understand the changes. The battle was still ongoing, but with a lower intensity.

The group of three tried to retreat, the group of five followed after them, and the berserk one split his attention between the two groups. With that, they moved away, leaving the fake body on the ground without even bothering to check closer, taking its fate as given.

Interesting development after putting all that effort to defeat her.

With them drifting away, but the immediate danger was gone. But I didn't hurry up to share that nugget with my guest.

"Well, it had been a good talk, but they discovered the tunnel and coming down. And I'm exhausted healing you. I should be going. Best luck to you," I said as I stood up, even taking a step toward the tunnel.

The tunnel was too small to contain her. I wanted to see what she would do under the risk of being left to her devices.

'Wait!' she wrote. 'Are you going to abandon me?'

"I don't want to," I said, stretching my acting capabilities to the limit to actually look sad. "However, healing you exhausted me. And you can't exactly follow me through the tunnel, can you," I added, pointing at the tunnel that was barely enough large enough for her head.

'Still, you can't!' she wrote.

"I don't want to, but after all that healing, I'm hardly at a point of joining another battle," I said, having no problem misleading her about my mana capacity. "Too bad you're too big to follow me," I said.

There was a point to the dilemma I was forcing her. The way she had explained her own situation, carefully skirting over the reason for her presence, both in terms of her capture by the undead, and her objectives in the Mount Dread, was enough to show that she had a good idea about the value of information.

I was trying to goad her into offering something valuable, enough to 'convince' me to rework the tunnels, enough to allow her to pass. I could have directly blackmailed her for it, of course, but that would set a tone I wanted to avoid.

She didn't say anything for a moment, before gesturing me to stop, her posture determined. I expected her to offer a bargain. 'Turn your back, and don't look,' she said instead.

I followed her order, and turned my back, my eyes closed. Amusingly, she thought that it would actually prevent me from watching her in a room covered with my own runes.

With my back turned to the dragon, I stretched my magic to see what was going on behind me. Partially because, even after saving her life twice, I didn't trust her enough to ignore the flare of magic that was going behind me.

Although, that wasn't the full explanation. There were many ways of detecting the nature of magic that was going behind me. Direct visual confirmation was hardly required.

My instincts — the same instincts that were telling me that the dragon was female despite having no real reason to think so — poked me to watch it to catch a show.

I watched as her magic covered her skin, turning her into a glowing silhouette of a dragon, before she started shrinking. It was not a spell I recognized. I forced my examination ability, trying to get a feel for the mana pattern, trying to understand what was the spell she was using.

It was certainly not elemental, and despite the glow it created, it wasn't light magic. Despite the way her body shrinking with great speed, it wasn't a Biomancy spell either. Not even close. I stretched my mana, letting it touch the glowing aftermath, trying to get a better feel.

Only to realize it wasn't a spell at all. It was hard to explain as I didn't fully understand what was going on. The closest I could categorize was a healing spell, and that was only because of the effect, rather than the working principles. She was using the unaltered nature of her magic to pull her real form.

Weirdly, that didn't make her dragon form any less real. The simplest analogy was like flipping a coin. The faces were different, but it was still the same object.

However, I abandoned that trail of thought when the glow abated, and revealed her other form. A regal beauty that would have fit perfectly in any noble event if it wasn't for her bright, emerald green hair. Her eyes matched the same emerald tone. Not her irises, but all of her eyes, glowing with an emerald glow, giving her an exotic aura.

And her nakedness, revealing a short yet deliciously curvy frame. Her hips were wide, almost to the point of being termed excessive if it wasn't for their glorious perfection, enough to reveal her extraordinary origins. Unfortunately, the treasure between those hips was hidden due to the way she had positioned her legs.

I could have changed the vantage point of my magical observation, but I let it slide. It was good to have mysteries. Instead, I let my attention wander upward, her smooth and inviting stomach at first, followed by equally huge breasts that dangled on the edge of being too big on her small frame, yet somehow, looked deliciously sexy instead.

Unfortunately, that nakedness didn't last long, as she easily conjured a spectacular dress to cover her nakedness. However, the dress wasn't the first thing she conjured.

She first conjured a pair of elegant shoes, ones with excessive heels, adding almost four inches to her height before she conjured her dress.

She said something which I failed to understand. "You have to use my language," I said. "I have learned that language from the book, and unfortunately, they don't come with a pronunciation guide."

The way she sighed somewhat reminded me of Cornelia, dismissive of anything she saw under her rightful prestige. "You can turn again," she said, her accent noticeable enough to echo her previous words.

I did so, only to meet with her expression shifting expression, a smugness that expected a big reaction from me — though the ease I could read her expression was interesting. It meant that not only she shared the classical human mannerisms in this form, but also she had little experience in controlling them.

I decided to tease her a bit, and the great care she had put in conjuring these elevated shoes before she even conjured a dress for herself gave me the perfect excuse to do so. "You're a bit short for a dragon, aren't you?"

And just like that, her smug expression shattered, replaced by pure fury. "How dare you!" she exclaimed, magic already gathering in her hand.

"You know the wards that preventing their detection has a limit, right?" I said with a dismissive tone, like I didn't even care about her growing attack. It was deliberate, and not just to see her cute expression. If she couldn't control her anger in such a situation, it meant that I needed to handle her more like a hostage than a partner of opportunity.

Luckily, she seemed to have some self-preservation, as her magic dispelled quickly, replacing itself with an angry stamping of her foot instead, which hardly made me take her more seriously. “Don’t call me short!” she threatened, her tone carrying the echo of a growl.

“As you wish,” I said as I took several steps forward, until I stood in front of her. She tensed, expecting an attack. Instead, I put my hand on my shoulder, before dragging it toward her, showing that she was not able to reach my shoulder despite her shoes. “I beg your pardon, your dragoness, you’re definitely taller than me.”

Her furious shriek was amusing enough to compensate for the sudden punch I received in my stomach, throwing me back several feet — though mostly because I didn’t bother to resist.

[-46 HP]

I received the blow to test her further. And despite the pain it created, I could see that she actually held herself back and didn’t hit as hard as she could manage.

“You pack quite a punch for such a ... tall person,” I said, with no intention of relenting. This time, it was purely to tease her, with no intention of assessing her. She didn’t answer, but the way she bit her lips as she raised her hand suggested that I might have pushed her as much as I could manage before she exploded completely. “We need to move, before our friends arrive,” I said.

“Do you expect me to crawl away like a rat just because of some rabble?” she said as she looked at the tunnel in distaste. But before I could point out that she was free to stay here and wait for the arrival of the enemy, she was already walking toward the tunnel.

Clearly, her pride wasn’t important enough to risk her survival. Not that I was surprised by it, as she had been against using the tunnels, she wouldn’t have transformed to her human form in the first place.

I shrugged. “Of course not, you’re a great, prideful dragon. The last thing I expect you to escape.” I smirked. “Feel free to stay and deal with that rabble,” I said with a widening smirk.

Her frustrated expression was simply beautiful.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000]

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 6831 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Four

“Maybe I shouldn’t be too critical,” she murmured, unable to hide her frustration. “After all, even for ... someone ... like you, you have worked hard.”

I was amused by her sense of entitlement, assuming herself to be my clear superior even after I had saved her life twice. “As you wish, your dragoness,” I said as I gestured the tunnel. “Please, ladies first.”

But before she stepped in, she gave me a suspicious look. “Shouldn’t you go first, you’re the one that knows the route.”

“If you can handle dismantling the tunnels without alerting the enemy as we move forward, making sure our enemies don’t catch us, all without actually triggering the traps I had embedded, I can go first,” I said with a smirk.

She clearly didn’t appreciate my glib answer. Frustration danced over her face for a few seconds, making me wonder whether I was pushing her a bit too much. But when I looked up worriedly — a fake worry, of course, as the opponents had long gone away, tricked by the little scene I had created — she decided that little digs or the sequence of the walk were not that important.

She started walking down the tunnel, and I followed, stretching my mana to slowly and carefully destroy the tunnels, making sure that not only I didn’t let out a flare of mana, but also making sure that if someone noticed the fake nature of my gift and tried to dig down, they wouldn’t be able to trace the path correctly.

Of course, I didn’t destroy every tunnel with the same skill, as if someone had already arrived down here, searching for a clue about our destination. I made sure to destroy the tunnels that were pointing away with much less care — or a different kind of care — so that if they had actually arrived at this point, them following a fake path would give us the time to retreat.

It was a boring, tedious task.

Luckily, I had the perfect view to give me some enjoyment. The deliciously thick hips of my new companion were dancing back and forth with each step thanks to the ridiculously high-heeled shoes she was wearing. And while she was short, her curves were just delicious enough to compensate for it.

And the rough floor wasn't helping any, making her stumble occasionally. She didn't fall down, of course, not with her supernatural agility, but the occasional stumble was impossible to avoid. Still, that hardly helped my enjoyment of the show.

"What a shoddy tunnel," she murmured.

"Sorry, your dragoness," I said with exaggerated seriousness. "The next time, I'll try to find some high-class marble to dig through."

"Don't call me that," she said, turning just enough to give me a stink eye.

"Well, I don't have your name yet, your dragoness."

"And you won't have it if you act like this!"

"As you wish, your tall and imposing majesty," I answered, even though I received another punch in response.

[-52 HP]

She let it slide with one punch, falling silent as she walked, while I smirked, happy with the short discussion. Her responses gave me a lot of clues about her background, and the levers I could push.

It would be nice to talk to someone other than the headmistress about the Eternals, especially since the dragon didn't hold any power on my only base, unlike the headmistress, who hold the power in my only power base.

She might be a dragon, but clearly, she was also some kind of noble, at least in terms of societal expectations, which guaranteed at least some kind of accuracy in terms of the information she might have. And despite that, her immature reactions were far too emotional for her to be any kind of dedicated agent, making her weak to subterfuge.

The skill she had shown against the combined assault of the Eternals was significant, of course, especially considering she lacked the extremely efficient shortcut provided by the system. However, her skill didn't have any implications in terms of her social status, especially since I had no idea about their power balance.

Apart from her magical skills, the ease she transformed, and the quickness she had changed into her dress and her shoes, implied that it wasn't a rare affair for her to use this form on

social occasions, which had an interesting number of implications.

However, I didn't waste too much time in the land of assumptions. Instead, I turned my attention to the results from the detection wards, observing the battle on the surface, which was going on with occasional frequency, people battling against each other, people fighting against beasts, even the occasional beasts fighting against other beasts...

"So, how are you finding your accommodations in our nice neighborhood?" I asked even as I pulled down another segment of the tunnel, timing it perfectly with a stumble, optimizing her frustration.

"It's the worst place I could ever imagine. Just a little accident, and I'm away from home, in a land filled with upstart barbarians who think themselves strong just because they could kill a few monsters, captured by a bunch of disgusting skeletons with delusions of grandeur, who dares to defile the bones of my ancestors. Then, I get away, and a few days later, I find myself in some kind of training deathmatch, hunted by those incompetent abominations."

She turned to face me. "Yes, I'm loving my new home."

"Sorry to hear that," I said, shaking my head, trying to hide my surprise. If I was reading her answer correctly, she came from a long way away, and if the dismissive tone she was taking toward killing a monster to get stronger, maybe far enough that the system didn't affect her.

Which meant, she came from the lands that were still ruled by the gods.

Without the power of the System, the only thing I had was the scraps of the Divine Spark I managed to steal from the headmistress. I doubted that was enough for a trip. That fact alone was enough to mark her as a valuable source of information.

It was easy to fall into the illusion of whatever was happening in the distant lands was unimportant, that the only thing that was important was what was happening under the control of the system.

An illusion that the training adventure I had accidentally stumbled upon destroyed completely.

I had no idea how many people would be pulled out as a consequence of the training session, but unless it was as low as one or two in a hundred, the Eternals, as an organization, was clearly stronger than I was expecting.

And with the way they designed the event, I would expect at least one in ten to survive, maybe

even going as far as one in two if my estimation was correct. And moreover, the cost of raising them was likely not that high, otherwise, they wouldn't be taking the risk of possible candidates dying.

To be able to treat the death of several level-thirty combatants as an acceptable casualty, they had to be strong. Really strong.

Of course, that forced me to revise several critical assumptions in terms of their involvement. At first, the support they had provided to the undead army and the rivals of the Crown Princess in terms of Mana Gems, rather than getting directly involved. I had assumed that it was because of a lack of power.

But all they needed to do was to deploy these wards around Silver Spires and conduct their test around the school to destroy the school-like aftermath.

I might have assumed that I had read their involvement wrong, but the presence of three assassins sent to capture Titania invalidated that track prematurely as well. If they had no care about it, they wouldn't have three warriors ready to capture Titania.

That still left one likely option. They clearly preferred not to interfere with the activities of the Empire for some reason — though, considering the slow collapse the Empire was suffering, it was definitely a questionable call.

However, it was also clear that some of them believed otherwise, intervening to help Zokras, the princes, even sending some agents to kidnap Titania.

Interestingly, that assumption also explained the sudden absence of a follow-up after they lost their three agents. The Eternals were clearly not an organization to be scared of that loss, but if a smaller faction of them was responsible for those activities, it made sense of them not sending a follow-up.

They clearly had a limited number of agents, at least the kind they could use for illegal missions.

However, I wasn't able to think a lot about that, because we finally arrived at my shelter.

We had a lot to talk about.

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 6831 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Five

“Let me go first, to make sure wards are working properly,” I said, even though I was able to feel the wards working perfectly. I wanted to prepare the room for someone in her ‘noble’ stature.

Her identity as a dragon clearly didn’t prevent her from enjoying luxury, and greeting her with something better than dirt floors might be the better idea. Luckily, the wards around my hideout allowed me to cast much stronger spells in the process, allowing me to make some radical home improvement at the cost of some mana.

[-1821 Mana]

Earth Elemental magic, combined with my craft skill, allowed me to work with surprising elegance, though my precision Stat certainly helped quite a bit as well. All that needed to decide was to pick the material.

After some consideration, I decided to go with a combination of marble and crystal. A part of that decision was the ease I could create those materials through elemental spells, but the other part was the way the headmistress’ room was designed.

Since she was also coming from a long way away, I hoped that the fashion was at least somewhat similar. It was a long stretch, of course, but at least it was decent a choice.

For the floor and walls, I picked simple white marble, though I made sure to put several scenes of battle and other pictures etched, copied from some of the older books I had found in the library, hoping that they would be familiar to her. Several candle-holders stretched out of the wall, but instead of having actual candles, they had simple flames, connected to nothing, floating freely.

For the ceiling, I used more crystal than marble, with lights hidden behind half-transparent crystal layers to create a subtle yet intricate light show while also keeping the room warm.

For the furniture, I relied exclusively on the crystal, keeping its general structure and the texture to the crystal platform the headmistress had in her room. And as a final trick, I created a nice pool at one corner, filling it with warm, bubbling water.

And as a final touch, I added the trick I had used after the battle against Zokras, and enchanted the water with healing energies and mana, some of it slowly vaporizing to fill the room,

creating a gentle, comforting atmosphere.

I paid the room one last glance, making sure it didn't resemble a battlefield safe house in any form, and satisfied with the result. It was a miracle, especially with less than a minute spent. Only then, I opened the door again, and inviting my guest in.

"This way, your dragoness," I said, giving a perfect butler bow. It was supposed to be a sarcastic bow, but the nod I received in response as she walked in, letting her gaze wander on the decorations seemed more genuine than I expected.

She was even more entitled than I thought.

"Hmm, not as horrible as I expected," she murmured even as she murmured, but I noticed her eyes widen as she walked closer to the pool, bigger than I expected. "Why can I sense that much mana here? Don't tell me that you have a Source here!"

I never heard what a source was, but from her reaction, it wasn't hard to guess it was some kind of natural or artificial location that radiated mana. Unfortunately, I had never actually heard something like that. The closest thing to it was the Mana Gems, radiating constant mana.

Clearly, it was important to her, enough to make her sound enthusiastic rather than her usual uncaring tone.

"Unfortunately, we don't, but I decided to make the room more comfortable by pushing some mana, to make it more welcoming. I hope it's not the case."

"Yeah," she murmured. "I forgot that you abominations receive your mana from that disgusting travesty against nature," she murmured, before continuing with a sharp tone. "Turn your back again," she added.

I did, but like before, it didn't prevent me from devouring the sight of her beautiful body as she kicked off her shoes and dress, this time water slowly devouring her body. Pity that the white bubbles hid her body.

However, once again, her offhand comment sent me thinking. The apparent lack of mana on the environment, and receiving it from the System — or at least, that was what I assumed by travesty and abomination — was another interesting thing. Maybe the system didn't only continuously devour the Divine Spark in its borders, but mana as well, before giving it back through the connection.

The system being responsible for mana distribution was not a surprise, as there had never been enough environmental mana around the environment to support my power. If there was that much free mana, there wouldn't be a need to use the magical reagents from the monsters to power the wards.

Of course, I hadn't thought about how the others received mana without the system, but from what she indicated, it was a resource that was available freely.

I wondered if that flaw affected the headmistress as well. Though, with the wards of the school under her control, it wasn't very likely. She could easily siphon some of the excess mana to have an advanced version of the bath my dragon guest was clearly enjoying.

"May I turn my back," I asked respectfully, like I hadn't been watching her, only to receive a hum.

She was already buried deep into her neck, humming in comfort, while the mana in the pool drained noticeably. Though, considering I had barely injected two hundred points of mana, it wasn't exactly an indicator.

"I can push some more mana into the pool," I said, surprised by her reaction, much more enchanted by mana than the effort I put on the decorations of the room.

"Really?" she asked, clearly enthusiastic, her eyes shining even more.

"As long as you don't mind me in the pool, of course," I added, never one to miss the opportunity to share a bath with a sexy woman.

"Is this necessary?" she asked, her enthusiasm clearly reduced.

"Well, the more contact I have with water, the more efficient it'll be. Of course, if you don't want an efficient service..."

She sighed, but her lack of an answer was good enough for me to take as an answer. Unlike her, I didn't warn her about my upcoming nakedness. And maybe, flexing my Charisma to look more impressive as well.

"What are you doing! Warn me first!" she gasped. Her face blushed as she exclaimed, which put an even bigger smile on my face.

It was good to know she was attracted to human males, at least enough to blush.

“You can always close your eyes, your dragoness,” I said, but that didn’t prevent her from keeping her open. She averted her gaze, but not enough to completely miss the sight.

A surprisingly cute reaction, even with her glowing emerald eyes.

However, when I slipped in the water, she was able to turn her gaze back to my face, suggesting while direct nudity was enough to fizzle her nerves, that didn’t extend to sharing a nude bath as long as bubbles were there to hide our bodies.

Luckily, I had the perfect way to distract her. I enchanted the water with some more mana, earning another soft moan.

[-182 Mana]

It wasn’t a great amount, but that didn’t prevent her from enjoying the sensation, suggesting that it wasn’t just power. Her reaction reminded me of someone that stepped into a warm room after working in the snow for a long time. Even if there was no risk of freezing, the warmth would give immense pleasure.

I was happy about it, as the more comfortable she got, the easier it would be for me to interrogate her about the life outside the System’s area of influence without making her suspicious.

“It must be a good difference after a long time of struggle without any decent source. How long it had, a couple months?” I asked as she enjoyed the treatment.

“Thankfully, not that long. Barely more than a week,” she said with a shudder.

I might have blamed her reaction for being spoiled, but considering the situations I had saved her from, it wouldn’t be a fair assessment.

Moreover, it was interesting the absolute lack of fear or paranoia after that dangerous events, implying that danger was a familiar companion. She was clearly not unfamiliar with battle, but her tactics could definitely use some benefit.

“I can imagine,” I said. “So, how did you get enough mana to still cast spells without the help of the System?”

“I had to hunt those crazed beasts, of course,” she answered, though the shudder she gave off suggested it was hardly a pleasant feeling. “That’s the only way of getting any mana in this

detestable place.”

“You weren’t lucky enough to find a Mana Gem?” I asked.

“Mana gem?” she asked, surprised. “Is this some kind of mana storage? Are they just laying around?”

It was an interesting reaction. Mana Gems were rare, but hardly something that would be a mystery to someone in her level if I was reading about her social status even half-accurately. Unless it was known by a different name.

Or there was no Mana Gem outside.

“Something like that,” I said, dismissing her question casually even as I injected some more mana to the pool, distracting her with pleasure. I didn’t want to explain more in detail, because it was a surprisingly dangerous proposition, risking revealing my lack of information, which would make her realize she had much bigger leverage.

I wanted to interrogate as much as I could manage before she realized that.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 5389 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Six

After the little danger with Mana Gems, risking revealing my ignorance, I decided to let her take the lead in the conversation. “So, what kind of accident caused you to be lost in here?”

“An unfortunate one,” she stated with a frown, though that frown didn’t last long as I filled the pool with more of my mana.

[-613 Mana]

She took a deep breath, the mana density of the artificial pool decreasing significantly. “There’s not much to talk about, I was flying around in the Desolate Outlands for a mission, when I accidentally came across a raiding party of those Eternals, and I had to jump into the dimensional rift that they came out, and found myself in this accursed place.”

Interesting, I thought, her words giving me yet another information, suggesting the Eternals was conducting more aggression than I expected, underlining my lack of information even more.

Therefore making the sexy dragon in front of me, busy absorbing mana, even more important. I slipped even more mana to the pool, curious of the speed she continued to devour my mana. How big was her mana capacity?

[-942 Mana]

So, while she continued her story — which, unfortunately, focused on the details of her fight against the undead rather than the details of her life — I decided to follow what exactly she was doing with all the mana.

I expected to follow the mana into a reservoir, similar to the core that held our mana together in our soul space, ready to be used, but that turned out to be a complete inaccuracy.

It wasn’t that she didn’t have any reservoir. She had many, spread around her body, but I doubted that even their collective reservoirs would hold a thousand points of mana. And she had already absorbed more than that, yet continued to absorb.

[-1282 Mana]

Curious, I let even more mana infuse the water, but this time, watching even more carefully, maintaining an active connection with the flow.

Distracted by her own story and the comfort of the bath, she missed that particular detail, and I was free to follow the trail of the mana. I followed it until her bones, only for it to disappear at that point.

My eyes widened at the sudden disappearance, though luckily, I was able to hide it as a reaction to a particularly exciting part of her story. Inwardly, I focused my full attention to the exact moment of disappearance, to see whether she was somehow sending it to a different dimension.

The answer turned out to be no. The more accurate definition was that her bones were absorbing the mana, but it was assimilated with such a great speed that I had almost missed it. Curious, I paid careful attention to the point of absorption, and after a while, I noticed her bones were slowly transforming under the renewing flow of mana.

The transformation itself was quite mysterious. While I wasn't free to use my Biomancy abilities directly on her to assess the problem more carefully, I could get a rough understanding of the transformation that was going on her bones, and whatever the exact nature of the transformation was, its magnitude was impossible to deny. The power they radiated, the potential it implied, impressively significant.

Interestingly, it wasn't a quick transformation. Far from it. All the mana she had absorbed barely allowed her to transform a fleck of her bones, making me question just how much mana she would require for the complete transformation. To properly assess that, I needed a better understanding of what was going on, or a deeper analysis — which was hard to achieve without alerting her.

Still, my guess was easily in the millions.

“So, you have no idea why the undead suddenly decided to ambush and chase you that aggressively?” I asked, after she had mentioned the fifth ambush she managed to defeat before her eventual capture. I had already assumed it was less about the ritual, and more about the deal between Zokras and the Eternals.

“It was probably for the ritual they were doing?” she answered lazily, confirming that she had no idea why the Eternals were showing a special interest in her. I believed her, because I doubted that, in her relaxed state, she could slip into a lie.

I hummed, letting the silence rule the situation even as I tried to decide what to ask next. It was a difficult one. Unfortunately, her lengthy explanation about the ambushes she had gone

through didn't really help me, not in terms of understanding her limits...

And certainly not to understand why someone was so determined to kill her.

I let the silence stretch for a moment before I asked the next question. "So, what was the mission that made you end in Desolate Outlands?"

"Just a regular mission from the tribe, trying to get some resources for a potion," she answered, then frowned. "The mana is getting a bit thinner, why don't you release some more?"

"Unfortunately, I'm at my limit," I answered, which earned a frown immediately, showing an explosion was not too far away as well. I rushed to finish the explanation, just to bait her. "Unfortunately, carefully imbuing the water constantly without making it explode is exhausting."

She was quick to take the bait. "So, that's the challenge of releasing that's difficult, not the mana."

"Yeah," I answered. "It's much easier to do through direct physical contact."

"Is it?" she murmured a question, tensing slightly, smart enough to realize the direction that statement could easily evolve. "Any special place, or just skin-to-skin contact?"

"Any skin contact is sufficient," I answered her. "Though the back allows the easiest process, hands and feet work just as well."

"I see," she murmured. I said nothing for a moment, just enjoying the lingering expression of careful consideration on her face, as she clearly measured the sudden nature of the offer. The innocent nature of my offer, however, went along to reduce alertness, especially with a lot more mana tangling on the other side of the rope.

"Just my hand, right?" she asked a moment later.

"A hand is more than enough," I said, doing my best to suppress my naughty smile that threatened to pop out.

"G-good," she said, unable to hide the sudden stammer in her tone, showing that, despite her general aggressiveness, she was not familiar with the casual physical contact. However, more mana was clearly an enticing prospect.

Whatever process she was using to power up instead of the System and leveling up clearly

required a lot of mana, and now that she had found a renewable mana source, she was tempted to compromise on her personal modesty slightly to get even more of it.

Just as I liked.

“Hmm,” she murmured. “You’re not worthy of holding my hand,” she murmured even as she scooted closer to me, the constant bubbling of the water still hiding her body, and soon, her foot pushed out of the water.

“As you wish, your dragoness,” I said with a smirk, amused by her forced insult as she tried to undercut the weight of the touch even more. She wasn’t the first haughty woman I would tame bit by bit, but her true nature as a dragon certainly made it the most daring one.

I said nothing when she glared at me, just grabbed a hold of her foot, pressing my fingers on her sole.

[-273 Mana]

“Mmm,” she murmured as I slowly infused not only mana, but also some healing energy through her skin, making the touch even more comfortable as I unleashed my massaging skills, enjoying the softness of her skin.

Having an alternative form to protect her human-like body from the ravages of the environment was certainly handy.

It wasn’t surprising to see her stiffening suddenly as the pleasure hit her. “Why are you rubbing it?” she asked.

“Well, it helps to infuse mana quicker, but if you prefer the slower way...” I said, keeping my fingers still, but deliberately limiting the mana flow in the process. I even transformed the mana a bit, letting Arcana-natured mana slip through, to create the sensation that could be described as thorny.

To her credit, she resisted the contrasting sensation a bit, almost a minute, before she relented. “If it’s easier for you, feel free to move your fingers,” she said, like she was making a great sacrifice for my benefit.

Well, she was in the process, but luckily, she was unaware of the full extent of said sacrifice. “As you wish, your dragoness,” I said, even as I let my mana flow more.

But fate saw to it that I couldn't have a comfortable break where I just seduced a sexy dragon, because just as I started to intensify my mana flow, I felt a disturbance on the alert wards I had left on the fake dragon body.

Someone had just discovered its true nature.

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 6823 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Seven

The discovery wasn't the best news to receive, but I continued to massage the foot of the sexy dragon I was determined to seduce rather than exploding in panic.

Just because they had discovered the fake nature of the body didn't mean I need to burst into panic, not when there were several layers of defense between me and my destination. And even if the worst came to worst, I had my escape tunnels ready, and the hideout was primed for a disastrous explosion.

So, I turned my attention back to the sexy, emerald-haired curvy beauty, whose eyes started to flutter as the pleasure from the foot massage hit her just the right way.

Just because she believed she was in control didn't mean that she was actually in control. On the contrary, my experience showed me that it was the best way to lose the initiative. The leverage I had due to her clear need toward my mana only made things more delicious.

I continued to imbue the waters with my mana, of course, but not enough to interest her to devour it actively, just to maintain a warm, comfortable bath for her, reducing her alertness even more. Under the skillful treatment of my fingers, her legs started to tremble beautifully.

Unfortunately, the smoothness didn't continue for the other challenge. I had received another disturbance in my passive wards, this time suggesting that four people had discovered the remains of the tunnel I had created downward.

The passive wards weren't the most precise measurement tools, but even with their clunky detection capabilities, I could sense that the four were much more competent than the people that were currently going through some weird combination of challenge and examination.

Whoever was trying to find our location, was clearly not accidental.

Still, their progress wasn't enough to change the current position. I might react if the only reason I was trying to seduce her was the pleasure, but she represented an important, independent source of information for me, and properly 'softening' her for interrogation before my next meeting with the headmistress was a critical requirement for my ultimate success.

I needed to understand why the headmistress was asking for her before deciding whether to report my mission as a success or a failure.

Instead, I let another flow of mana to her body, this time even thicker, enjoying the way she

trembled under the renewed flow.

[-513 Mana]

Her eyes widened as she processed the impact of the mana flow, together with just a lingering touch of arousal, but too soft for her to actually be confident. "Is there anything wrong?" I asked. "I can keep the mana flow weaker if that's what you prefer?"

"N-no, I can handle it," she murmured, even though a hint of frustration passed through her face, no doubt directed at her lack of control.

However, it wasn't as interesting as the sudden suspicious movement of her legs. The continuous bubbles were in place to block my view, but it wasn't hard to imagine her legs subtly rubbing against each other while trying to look normal, suggesting a level of familiarity with self-satisfaction even in her human form.

I licked my lips, trying to get rid of the sudden dryness, even as I let my fingers move outside the agreed spot, caressing her ankle for a fleeting moment before returning back.

[-692 Mana]

That earned a glare, but the intense flow of mana proved sufficient to keep her silent. Instead, she shuffled in her place in a more noticeable manner, her naked shoulders shining under the soft, crystal lights of my hideout.

I dimmed the lights slightly, making the atmosphere even more amorous, while my fingers danced over her skin.

The gentleness of my touch contrasted greatly with the aggressiveness of the Eternals that was currently busy trying to dig down the tunnel. Interestingly, they weren't being as aggressive as possible, which implied that they were trying to keep their actions concealed, but not to a level of keeping hidden from the main detection ward.

How interesting, I thought before shifting back to my main quest of taming a dragon, trying to face the question of how to handle her. The easiest option was to push her hard, aggressively, invading her body with a deluge of pleasure until her emotions turned into an endless whirlwind, unable to resist even the most liberal push.

Unfortunately, that strategy did not fit well with my long-term goals, especially with someone with a clearly explosive temper. I didn't want her to submit to me in a moment of passion

where she could easily blame me. No, I needed her calm and fully aware as she asked for more, not only to receive more mana, but to receive pure, adulterated pleasure.

Luckily, from her gaze under her fluttering eyelids, I could see that it wasn't going to be as hard as I first feared, suggesting that I either miscalculated her resistance to pleasure, or her familiarity with receiving massages — or at least, the expert kind that I was capable of.

Either way, a smile popped to my face as I let my fingers wander down, subjecting her calves to the same treatment, loosening her muscles under my expert touch even as I rewarded her with another flood of mana, trying to keep outflow high — but not high enough that my regeneration unable to compensate for the endless flow.

[-672 Mana]

However, when my fingers disappeared underwater, caressing her soft thighs underwater, it earned a warning glare from her.

“You're feeling quite tense,” I said even as I started caressing her lower thighs with the assistance of some healing magic, working great benefits. “I can stop if you want?”

“No, keep going,” she surrendered not too soon after, unable to resist the pleasure of the massage. And, to her credit, considering the adventure she had suffered through, from undead ambushes to near-death struggle against the Eternals, she had definitely earned her relaxation.

She was tenser than a newly forged sword.

Of course, even with that, I doubted that she would be this willing to submit herself to my touch if I hadn't saved her from certain death, twice.

Heroics still had its perks.

After some caressing, I returned my fingers back to the middle of her sole for an encore, earning a surprisingly erotic grunt of pleasure in the process. Of course, even as I enjoyed the displays of pleasure she was revealing, I didn't stop examining the process of conversion around her bones, trying to identify the exact mechanism.

Unfortunately, it failed again, forcing me to focus on her quickening breaths and twitching muscles, the relaxing presence of my ever-flowing mana making it much easier.

And more importantly, I wasn't above a bit of cheating, using Biomancy to convert some of the

water into special massage oil that would stay on her skin, softening her against my touch even more, and the reduced friction helping me greatly.

This time, I kept my attention limited to her sole and her calf, which threw her expression into a beautiful conflict. There was nothing she could say about my limits, but a part of her clearly wanted me to return to her inner thigh, boosting her pleasure even more.

I stayed limited there for another five minutes, enjoying her quickening heartbeat, noticeable through her skin, using it as an opportunity to get a better sense of her pacing.

And then, a subtle gasp escaped her mouth, one that was too soft to be heard without my enhanced senses. I smirked victoriously, even as I let my touch move to her lower thigh once more, challenging her bruised silence.

[-421 Mana]

Her determination to stay silent was broken under the flood of mana, faster than my estimation.

However, before I could take an action, my attention was once again grabbed by the invaders in my tunnels. They had finally reached the large cave where I had my talk with my newest acquaintance. Interestingly, it seemed I wasn't the only one that was happily using the presence of the defensive ward for more aggressive casting, as their mana intensity surged.

Soon, they had discovered one of the fake tunnels I had left as bait, and started traveling, luckily to the opposite direction to my base. That fake tunnel would eventually come to an end, of course, but it meant I still had time to stretch my time.

And I intended to stretch that time as much as I manage, I thought even as I turned my attention back to the beauty that was trembling under my touch.

I had a dragon to tame.

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Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 6692 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Eight

Determined to seduce the transformed dragon that shared a bath with me, I decided to move to the next step. I carefully slid my hands forward, once again caressing her calf before arriving at her inner thigh, enjoying her flawless skin.

I was tempted to part her legs, giving me access to the treasure that lay at the end of my beautiful journey, but I managed to hold myself back. After all, despite her cute looks, I didn't forget the dangerous monster that lay under it, making the push inadvisable.

Instead, I dragged my hands over her legs up and down, the rhythm broken by occasional circular movement as I did my best to awaken her desires even as I continued to feed.

[-832 Mana]

The whimper that answered as her tenuous control over her own voice started to slip, followed by purrs of pleasure as I explored her inner thighs suggested that I was on the perfect track, even though my gentle movements were bringing me closer and closer to the danger zone.

Considering her petite body, it wasn't exactly a long distance.

Interestingly, as I got closer, she started to move in comfort, raising her hips as if she was trying to fasten my treatment. It was an instinctual reaction, because the more mana I transferred, the more distracted she started to get.

Her transformation process clearly required her active attention, at least when I was transferring as much mana as my regeneration could supply.

I wondered how she would have reacted if I pushed aggressively. Would she have reacted with another painful punch, or she would accept my intrusion as long as it meant more mana. Pity I didn't have the luxury of testing it. Her cooperation was too critical to risk.

Of course, that didn't mean I was resigned to the situation. Instead of pushing my fingers forward into her inviting tunnel, I stopped. "So, how was the massage," I asked even as I leaned back, making a show of stretching.

"Why did you stop," she asked?

"Expelling mana continuously is a tough task," I answered with a shrug. "My hands are starting to hurt."

I barely held back a chuckle at her disappointed hiss, clearly unhappy about the sudden ceasing. "You can't be serious," she stated.

"Of course I am," I said. "My mana reserves might be limitless, but the same isn't true for the capacity of my skin. After a while, it starts hurting, and if it doesn't stop, my skin burns," I said. Which was technically true. It was also true that I could cure those burns easily with Biomancy, but since I wasn't an idiot, I kept that particular fact for myself.

"But I was just about to complete a stage in my transformation," she said, her tone petulant. Seeing her petite body buried in water, her blushing face contorted in a childish expression, it was impossible to believe that she was a mighty dragon.

I shrugged again, doing my best to hide my smirk. "Unless you're willing to sit on my lap to increase skin contact, so that I could transfer even more mana, there's nothing I can do."

I expected to earn an aggressive reaction by those words, maybe even a punch, though I assumed it was a worthy punishment to add the seeds of some future closeness.

The thoughtful expression on her face surprised me.

"It's... unacceptable," she murmured, though the delay between her words, along with their listlessness, was rather suggestive. It had a tone of disbelief, as she was clearly smart enough to realize that I might be stretching the truth for my own ends, and she was clearly not experienced enough in the matters of the flesh to accept that as a fair trade.

Under normal circumstances, at least.

When the same implied offer came from her two-times savior, especially after an extended soak and massage that clearly awakened some unfamiliar emotions in her body, it was a completely different story.

"If you say so," I said, deliberately not pushing for more. I just closed my eyes and leaned back, enjoying the bubbling of the water even as I let some more into the water.

[-93 Mana]

Much less, of course. And after the earlier flood she experienced, giving a touch of mana was clearly a better way to torture her than depriving her completely. Especially since it gave her a reason to stay in the pool.

After a few seconds, I felt the mana getting drained slowly. I cracked my eyes, watching her carefully. The frustration was clear on her face, clearly not enjoying the sudden change of pace. I stayed in the pool, slowly radiating more and more mana, just enough to keep my appetite whetted.

Pity that she wasn't weak-willed enough to actually surrender to the desire before another critical trigger sent a warning. Luckily, it wasn't the actual route I had picked but one of the fake routes I had established just in case, but even the fact that they had discovered it meant that they were looking for the dragon with more deliberation than I expected.

It also meant that they knew dragons had the ability to transform, but that wasn't too shocking.

"I need to leave for a moment," I said as I suddenly stood up, revealing my naked, glistening body to her gaze. I was happy to note that her gaze stayed on my body for more than a few seconds.

"Why?" she asked.

"I need to check the surrounding wards, to make sure everything is working properly," I said. I didn't tell her the truth, because, without her, I could ambush them much easier.

She didn't exactly give me a sneaky vibe.

With that, I dressed quickly — but not quickly enough to prevent her from getting a decent glimpse of my body — I was back into the tunnels. From what I was receiving from the detection wards, I assumed that there were five people in the tunnels, but luckily, they didn't stay as a group, but split into many directions, prioritizing time over security, assuming that in an area under their control, there was no risk doing so.

It was a bad assumption.

Reopening the tunnels I had collapsed earlier was the easiest way of reaching them, but if I had done so, I would end up finding, but if I did so, I had to retreat back, which would lead them directly into the safe house I had established.

Instead, I started creating a new tunnel even as I lamented the number of underground construction work I had to do recently, reaching a ludicrous level.

The detour that I had to take delayed me a bit, and when I finally got close enough to them, two of them were together.

“Any of you were able to find it?” one of them asked.

“Dead end. How about yours?”

“No, none of those tunnels reaches anywhere, are we sure she didn’t go back to the surface?” asked another.

“Not likely,” the second one stated. “Even if she had been transformed, it’s almost impossible for her to slip through the wards if she was on the surface. Dragons are not exactly sneaky.”

“Then, where is she? We have checked all tunnels, and we still can’t find her. Maybe we should stop?”

“Do you want to explain to the Elder that we have screwed up one task she assigned to us?” the first one asked, his voice tense.

“No way in hell, she’s scary,” said the second one. There was still a thick wall of earth between us, preventing me from seeing them, but I was sure that he was shivering in fear. Whoever they were talking about, she was clearly scared.

“Then what are we going to do, we don’t have a lot of time left. We can’t just disappear for hours without some very pointed questions.”

“We just need to continue searching until the Trial ends,” the other one. “And if the worst happens and we can’t return until the challenge ends, we just need to bribe them more to look away.”

“You’re right, we still have a day before the trial ends. That should be enough to find and kill her.”

Footsteps reached my ear, suggesting they started walking away to restart their search, though the second one stopped after a few steps. “Do you know why we’re trying to kill her, other than the obvious?”

“I don’t, and I don’t recommend you to start digging about the reasons for her actions, or for any elders for that matter. Not if you want to continue living, at least.”

With that, they started walking around, leaving me alone to search. With a sigh, I moved even deeper into the distance, trying to decide what to do next. The discussion I had stumbled on forced me to change my plans even more.

The fact that they were trying to kill her was not a surprise, but the fact that only a small fraction of them was trying to do was suspicious. It was a pity that the ones that were trying to kill her clearly knew little about her.

It meant there wasn't a lot I could do that right now, though that didn't mean the trip itself was completely a waste. I created two dragon simulacrums that could be triggered from a distance, in case they started to draw closer. Knowing that their actions were limited as they tried to conceal themselves from their allies gave me several more options to distract them.

[-2731 Mana]

Unfortunately, it also meant that killing them was a bad idea. Luckily, they were kind enough to inform me that their time was limited. After establishing some more extra tunnels to waste their time even more, I went back to my shelter.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 5322 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Fifty-Nine

When I returned, I found my dragon sitting on a chair, wearing a different dress. This time, it was an intriguing mixture of blue and white. Surprisingly, it had a large slit going through the side, revealing most of her beautiful legs, while the dress itself wrapped tightly around her body to display her curves excellently.

The view was too beautiful not to be deliberate.

“Was everything in order with the wards?” she asked, unable to hide her nervousness as she looked at me.

“No problem at all,” I answered with a shrug, not feeling the need to go deeper into the details. With our enemies solidly on the fake tracks I had created, there was no need to sour the delicious atmosphere I managed to develop.

I didn’t say anything as I walked to another seat, leaning back and closing my eyes rather than interacting with her, despite the clear invitation her dress represented.

Sometimes, you needed to pull back to make sure the hunt went without a hitch.

And she clearly didn’t appreciate the silence, if the frustrated hitch in her tone was any indicator. “What’s the plan? Are we going to just stay here and hide?”

“Exactly. It’s clear that they are not here permanently, and the wards they put are not the type you can maintain for weeks and weeks without having side effects,” I said. “If they wanted to stay, they would have used something more selective.”

“Are you sure?” she questioned. “Those crazy abominations can’t be really predicted by logic, they do things senselessly, like the raid that forced me into this horrible world.”

I opened my eyes, pinning her under my gaze. “Either we go out and kill all of them, or we wait. I don’t know you, but the first option isn’t really attractive for me, but feel free to go for a hunt if you want.”

Her silence was enough as an answer. Of course, I could have shared the little discussion I overheard, but for the moment, keeping her in the dark was the safer option.

Especially since a small faction in Eternals was deliberately hunting her, which made me question whether her presence was accidental in the first place. Maybe the raid wasn’t just a

coincidence, but an intentional ploy to drive her here.

That faction was determined to kill her. All that needed to be answered was how much.

“It’s a defeatist attitude,” she said.

“If it is, it is,” I said with a shrug, not reacting to her juvenile taunt. I was too experienced to fall to her transparent attempt to goad me into explaining the situation in a more detailed fashion. Interrogation, especially the subtle, unofficial kind that was going between us, was a game of calm minds and false fronts, where the cooler heads ultimately prevailed.

Nothing she had done gave me the impression that she had the nerves to handle a subtle dance like that.

After I shrugged off her taunt, she fell silent, unable to say anything. The silence stretched for minutes as I leaned back once more, enjoying the opportunity to rest. I didn’t have the luxury of sleeping, of course, and it wasn’t just about missing the opportunity to seduce my unexpected guest.

I simply didn’t have the luxury of stopping to observe the detection wards, in case they stumbled upon the correct route after their repeated failures.

“What if they don’t go away in a few days?” she decided to speak after a few minutes, disturbing my rest. “Are we going to stay cooped inside?”

“We can think that when that happens,” I answered, this time not even bothering to open my eyes even as I heard her standing up, walking toward me.

“Maybe you should continue transferring mana,” she suggested. “There’s more chance of us getting away if I get stronger.”

“You need to wait a few hours for my fingers to recover,” I said, deliberately not mentioning the alternative I had suggested earlier. I expected her to argue, but hearing her footsteps getting closer surprised me. For a moment, I expected her to sit on my lap as I suggested.

Unfortunately, after a hesitant stagger, she turned and walked back, showing that while the prospect of more mana was tempting, it wasn’t tempting enough to push her to make such a radical move. At least, not since she had the opportunity to cool down after the massage in the pool.

Fucking bastards, I thought. If it wasn't for their sudden presence, ruining the mood, she might have already decided to try the suggestion. Instead, she sat on the opposite side of the room, waiting for me to act.

Her silence didn't last long. "So, what are your combat capabilities?" she asked, barely five minutes later. I wondered whether it was a draconic trait, or it was more about her personality.

"Nothing too spectacular," I answered. "A little elemental, a little knife fighting. I'm mostly a warding expert," I said, underselling my abilities slightly. No need to reveal the full extent of my abilities, not when there was still a chance of her aligning herself with the headmistress tightly.

I had no idea about their relationship, and at this point, I didn't have the luxury of betting on it.

"You're not a combat mage?" she asked, but I could sense the way her tone flickered, her gaze turning dismissive. I barely held back myself from shaking my head dismissively. She was clearly one of those people — well, dragon — that dismissed anyone that didn't focus on front-line combat, even when my extraordinary abilities had saved her life twice.

"No," I said. "By the way, you didn't even tell your name yet."

"You're right, I didn't," she said, her smugness clear, like she had achieved a big victory. I might have assumed it was a great insult to ask a dragon her name, but the pedestrian nature of her smugness suggested that it was a childish snub rather than a big cultural taboo.

I had no intention of arguing about it with her, of course. Being underrated and dismissed was always a useful trait. Instead, I continued to release some mana, though much less than the earlier treatment in the bath.

[-53 Mana]

It was just enough to maintain the mana density of the room even as she devoured it consistently, using the lingering connection between me and the floating particles of mana to get an even better understanding of the transformation that was going on in her body. It was a slow-going process from a distance, but as the time passed, I was slowly getting convinced that whatever was going on was either instinctual, or practiced enough to turn something habitual to the level of breathing. She only needed to pay attention when she was dealing with an excessive mana flow, like my ear

Of course, her transformation wasn't the only thing that was occupying my attention. No, most of my attention was on observing the Eternals that were doing their best to handle the maze I

had created, their spells getting stronger and stronger with each passing hour, suggesting increasing desperation.

Too bad for them that the more forceful they were being, the easier it got for them to get lost in the labyrinths I had created for that exact purpose, their mana blanketing the background, making it even harder to notice the subtle traps I had established.

None of those traps were offensive in nature, of course. Killing them didn't work for my interest, not when it would give them and the mysterious elder behind them an excuse to stick around and search for it, maybe even bring more power from the mysterious organization after losing a few of their members.

Since they didn't know why they were tasked to kill the dragon in the first place, it didn't even make sense to take the risk of capturing one and interrogating them. As much as I would appreciate the chance of getting more information about the Eternals, I was trapped in the limits of two overwhelming wards they had established.

Not exactly the time to be adventurous.

Instead, I lazed around, saying nothing. My guest looked at me questioningly several times, clearly expecting me to push for more so that she could shut me off, but I decided not to give her the pleasure, even when she implied she might be willing to receive another massage.

Then, the wards disappeared, as sudden as they appeared. "Finally," she as she stood up, already starting to transform as a pair of wings shoot off her back.

"Wait," I said, and, to her credit, she did so, though her wings stayed on her back, suggesting she was capable of transforming halfway, which had some interesting implications for fun times. I took note of it for the future.

"What!" she said angrily.

"We need to wait for a few hours, to make sure they are gone," I said, not revealing to her that I could still feel two people still digging around the fake tunnels I had created.

"I'm not a coward," she said.

"Be my guest if you want to get caught for the third time," I said with a dismissive gesture, knowing it would sting her pride. She growled in anger, suggesting that if I dared to say those words in a time where the memories of her imprisonment weren't fresh in her mind, she might

have reacted much more explosively than her current mood.

She said nothing, but she sat back, which was all I needed as an answer. I sat down as well, even as I flared my magic, ordering two fake dragons I had created in quick succession, drawing our potential attackers away. I didn't inform her of that particular fact, of course, as the sight of her pouting face was too entertaining to miss, especially when it contrasted with her beautiful, revealing dress...

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty

I felt weird as I prepared to leave the tunnels, relaxed, which was a great contrast to my earlier feelings, especially when those wards suddenly appeared.

Sometimes, it was easier to avoid the combat than pointlessly seeking the challenge, even though it earned a dismissive glare from my reluctant companion. "Turn your back," she ordered.

"Why?" I asked.

"I need to transform."

"No," I said.

"What do you mean, no?" she said. "Do you expect me to walk?"

"An emerald dragon soaring through skies is hard to miss. So unless you want to get caught for the third time..."

She let out a frustrated growl, but luckily, she didn't continue with the transformation. Her confident expression, however, twisted when I started walking toward the entrance, not even bothering to talk to her.

I smiled when I heard her footsteps, hurried as she followed me. "W-wait," she stammered as I started to move away. I turned, doing my best to look surprised and hiding the satisfaction I felt. I needed her to follow me, but asking her directly would have given her the initiative, something I wasn't entirely willing to. Not because I wanted to succeed for the headmistress, but because a talk between the two would resolve a lot of my questions.

"Yes?"

"Are you going to just leave?" she asked, clearly surprised that I didn't offer to accompany her.

"Well, since the wards are gone, I can retreat," I said, acting ignorant of what she was implying.

"Are you going to leave me alone?" she said, crossing her arms in an entitled manner. It was an annoying attitude, but her arms crossed under her tits, pushing them to an amazing level, especially with her short frame.

“I’m not heartless, you can come with me if you want, I’m sure my employer would appreciate meeting with you,” I offered, though I kept my tone simple, like I wouldn’t be affected by her decision either way. Her eyes glowed even more with fury, clearly not appreciating my dismissive attitude.

She said nothing, but as I continued to walk, she followed, which was better than any acceptance.

Her silence didn’t last long as she noticed the direction I was taking, using the tunnels to go even deeper rather than going to the surface. “Aren’t we supposed to leave?”

“We will,” I said even as I reached to the edge of the tunnel, using my wards to make sure there was no one nearby, and I started casting a spell, summoning one of my fake elemental mounts, this time an earth elemental, to allow us to travel underground for a while, at least until we were reasonably away from Mount Doom, in case they had spies observing the mountain despite the fake dragons that flew away.

The reaction of my guest, however, was completely unexpected. “What are you doing, you madman!” she exclaimed even as she raised her hands, her mana gathering into a mana spike, dangerous enough to send shivers over my skin.

Interestingly, she was not targeting me, but my spell.

“Are you mad!” she gasped after my spell was destroyed.

“About what, exactly?” I said. “I was just creating us a mount.”

“And you decided to summon an elemental to do it! There are easier ways to kill yourself!”

“It’s just a fake elemental, what’s the big deal?” I said.

“There’s no such thing as a fake elemental!” she growled. “Any physical body you create is just an invitation for them to possess. Who even taught you it’s a good idea!”

Considering the number of times I had used that trick to travel, it was clearly not a problem, especially since no one that saw me commented on it. Meanwhile, her reaction suggested that doing so was a certain disaster. “I have used that trick many times,” I explained.

“Impossible!”

“It’s a difference due to the System,” I said, making a wild guess, though it was a confident

guess.

If the System could prevent Gods from appearing in its domain, why should it allow true elementals to appear?

“Really?” she murmured, her earlier fervor immediately turning into hesitation. “It even prevents intervention of Elementals? How?”

My answer was a simple shrug. I had no idea how the System worked despite my experiments, and I had no problems admitting it. “It prevents Gods from intervening. Is it too surprising that it blocks Elementals as well?”

“I guess not,” she murmured, looking thoughtful for a moment before her determination came back. Though, from her tone, I got the impression that Elementals weren’t too far below gods in the totem pole, which was a scary thought. “Still, I have no intention of riding an elemental back.”

However, even as she delivered it petulantly, I noticed she was having trouble suppressing her trembles. She was clearly having trouble suppressing her instinctual fear.

“As you wish, as long as you are willing to walk the distance like a peasant,” I countered, curious which one she would pick.

“I will walk,” she said, not even spending a second on the insult. Maybe she was afraid of the elementals even more than I assumed. What an interesting nugget of information.

“I was joking,” I said, quick to answer even as I conjured another vehicle, this time a simple arcana platform with two chairs. It was not only slower than the elemental mount, but also it cost much more mana.

[-2692 Mana]

Luckily, I had the luxury to waste mana.

“But it’s going to be much slower,” I warned even as I gestured her to take a seat after sitting, and started moving, without bothering to wait for an answer, the platform creating a brand new tunnel as it moved.

“Why didn’t you use it earlier?” she asked. “It’s clearly easier than creating the tunnels directly.”

“Platform has a bigger magical signature, so it’s easier to detect magically. If I tried to use that, even with the intervention of the wards, they would have discovered our location.”

She nodded, but said nothing as we continued to travel underground. It took several minutes for us to finally get out of the mountain, and since I wasn’t using the most direct route toward Silver Spires, I wasn’t afraid of having observers that would detect us.

I still send a wave of detection magic just to make sure, of course, but luckily, there was no one else around. “Ah, fresh air,” the dragon murmured as we pushed out, a smile appearing on her face.

As a dragon, she clearly didn’t appreciate staying underground. Understandable as she could fly with her own power.

“Yeah, it’s a nice change,” I said.

“Really, I could have sworn you’re part-rabbit, with the ease you are having underground.” I shrugged at her juvenile insult, amused by her effort more than anything. Silence stretched for some more before I sent a magical message to the headmistress — well, to her office, but essentially the same — saying to her that despite some challenges, I managed to save the dragon from a surprise Eternal presence, and we’re coming back.

“What was that?” she asked the moment I sent the message, not exactly trying to sound mysterious.

“I informed my employer about our unexpected guest, of course. It’s not something you want to surprise.”

“I see,” she murmured. “Who is your employer?”

Once again, her tone was calm, but I didn’t miss the undercurrent of hesitancy. Despite her attitude, she was smart enough to realize that meeting with the headmistress was an action that was hard to come back from, losing the initiative completely. So, she was trying to interrogate me subtly, without making me alert. The fact that she waited until I had sent the message, giving her an excuse to talk about it, was the best sign of it.

“Don’t worry, the headmistress is a nice woman, if a bit ambitious. I’m sure you two can come to an agreement,” I said.

“How nice?” she asked, trying to sound nonchalant, but after being captured twice, her

hesitancy wasn't surprising. The interesting thing was the casual attitude she was trying to force despite the importance of the question. Clearly, she prioritized her pride over her safety.

"Well, she likes to show off, but ultimately, she's a fair leader. Not to mention there's no love lost between her and the Eternals or the undead, so I'm sure she would appreciate helping another enemy of theirs, as long as you approach the cooperation with an open mind," I suggested, knowing that those stock words were completely useless.

I wasn't well-intentioned in my assessment, as a seamless cooperation between them was hardly to my benefit. I wanted both of them to dance around each other, hesitant, reliant on me to facilitate the cooperation.

At this point, the headmistress was reasonably convinced of my loyalty. And I had saved my current passenger's life twice, from almost-certain death, which should be enough for her to trust me more than the headmistress unless there was a much stronger connection between them — which I doubted, as if that had been the case, the headmistress would have given me a much more detailed assignment.

Manipulating two to maximize my benefits was not the nicest thing to do, but, considering neither of the two mysterious ladies respected me enough to actually tell me their names, I wasn't exactly concerned about it.

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-One

Using the platform rather than one of the usual elementals I preferred to use, the journey to Silver Spires took more than two hours rather than the usual minutes, but at least, it was a more comfortable ride.

Pity that my reluctant guest was not in a mood to experiment, and kept her mouth shut other than occasional attempts to probe me about my employer, and I didn't do anything other than deflecting her.

Then, Silver Spires entered our field of vision. "And we're at our destination," I said, even as I noted her distaste while she looked at the school. It was clearly below her mysteriously high standards.

Though, it might be also about the battle damage on the walls, still being repaired.

She said nothing even as I drove the platform to the ground before I let it dissipate. She looked at me questioningly. "I'm afraid we're going to cover the rest of the distance by walking," I said. "And before you ask, no you can't transform unless you want to shout your location to our lovely adversaries."

"I know," she growled in annoyance, the rumbling it created enough to remind her that she was a dragon.

The rest of the walk passed silently even as I led her to sneak through the defensive wards, their damaged state making it even easier to pass through. The moment I entered the school, however, a magical message from the headmistress arrived, telling me to bring the dragon to a special basement building, rather than her office.

Interesting, I thought even as I guided her toward the location the headmistress suggested. It was the first time she arranged a meeting outside her tower, which forced me to reevaluate a few assumptions about her location. Maybe I had misread just how dependent she was on the coverage of her tower.

With that in mind, we passed through the specified entrance, only to find ourselves in a dim tunnel going down, the route itself confusing.

"What a weird tunnel," the dragon murmured as we moved deeper. "Those wards feel familiar..."

I said nothing, though I could easily understand her concern. The sensation of the wards was rather irregular, making us lose the sense of direction as we walked. I had no doubt that, if I hadn't saved her life twice, my guest would have been rebelling against the idea of following deeper into a mysterious tunnel.

As I moved deeper, my sense of direction started to disappear, forcing me to stretch my Perception stat to the limit to maintain it. However, it was when I felt the partial block on the system, once again preventing me from communicating efficiently, I recognized the source of the ward.

She was using Darkness Divine Spark to create the ward.

Interestingly, while the tunnel had several twists and turns, ultimately, we ended up under her tower, forcing me to revisit my assumptions once again, including why she would spend all that effort just to hide the fact.

Unfortunately, it wasn't answered immediately when I finally reached the destination, directly under the tower. It was a huge room, with an unnecessarily high ceiling — unless one planned for a dragon to reside there in the first place.

However, despite being a basement, the room wasn't poorly furnished. On the contrary, there was a nice living room on the corner, mostly using the same crystal for the construction, but also using very expensive-looking blue and black fabrics. But that part was just a detail compared to a huge crystal pool, large enough for a dragon to rest comfortably.

One thing that surprised me was, however, was the mana density of the room. The air was thick with mana, and the pool was even thicker. Though, a glance at the wards that supported the process suggested that the process wouldn't deliver as much mana as I had been transferring, which was a benefit.

Of course, my guest didn't glance around, looking at the hooded figure that was standing on the other end of the room. "You can go," the headmistress said, gesturing me to leave.

The dragon glanced at me, but didn't comment, even as I turned and left the room.

Not permanently, of course, as I was far too curious about listening to the discussion. And since I was able to sneak into the headmistress' private room, sneaking to the basement was hardly a challenge. There was only one problem, that if I suddenly disappeared from the wards, the headmistress would have been suspicious.

Meaning, I had to leave the tunnel first before coming back. The process had been rather smooth, though it cost me several precious minutes, especially on the path to return, where I had to carefully sneak through the wards without alerting the headmistress.

When I arrived at the room, creating a tiny hole in the wall, the view surprised me.

The headmistress had long removed her robe, revealing her armored state, with a sword on her back. However, despite her pose, she was sitting on a chair. And the dragon, still in her human form, was sitting across her, a chair between them.

However, the interesting thing was their expressions. Considering the relative power balance of a headmistress with a school under her command, compared to a lost dragon that was cut all kinds of support, hunted by a faction of the Eternals.

Their expressions told a different story. The dragon leaned back, confident, while the headmistress was lost in her thoughts, her eyebrows creased. It was the most worried I had ever seen her, even compared to when she was alone.

“It’s not like you have a lot of options, little bird,” said the dragon, her mocking tone surprising me. “It’s not like you can just go back and ask the assistance of the God of Light, not after your little grubby fingers reached something you shouldn’t have.”

How interesting, I thought. There was no doubt about what she was talking about. There was only one reasonable probability considering the speed at which she had been discovered.

Divine Spark of Light.

I had already been suspicious of the headmistress’ attempts to absorb the Divine Spark, as it was clearly something above her power level, but, looking at their relative attitude, it was not only deeply forbidden, but also clearly not going well.

“Still, asking me to change sides...” the headmistress murmured indecisively.

“You should have thought of that before trying to devour something you can’t handle,” the dragon cut in, smugly. “But I shouldn’t be surprised by it. For all of your supposed loyalty, you little birds are always quick to rebel at the slightest opening. Just like-” she continued, only for the headmistress to cut her off angry.

“I’m nothing like her!” she shouted, power radiating off her in waves, Divine Spark mixing with her mana.

“Calm down, I’m joking,” the dragon said, taking the headmistress’ explosion in stride. “Though, with the ease you’re willing to use a spark of darkness...” she added, her words fading as the headmistress tensed like she was about to attack.

The dragon stopped, because, luckily, despite her arrogance, she was smart enough not to excessively antagonize one that controlled her current residence. Instead, she looked around, examining the mana in the room, including the small pieces of Divine Spark her opponent slowly pulling back. Interestingly, she didn’t make an attempt to devour them.

I wondered if it was just about her respect — or fear — or it wasn’t something she could handle in the first place.

The dragon continued talking after taking a moment to calm herself. “You don’t have a lot of time to decide. You’re already leaking Divine Spark. A year at most, and you’ll lose the ability to control it and it’ll burn you.”

“Are you sure your master could help me?” the headmistress said hesitantly, after a long pause.

“She has achieved much more challenging activities than that. And more importantly, she’s not a miser like that old codger. She’ll only ask for a very reasonable payment.”

I had no idea who the dragon was referring to, but I was sure that whoever she was, she wouldn’t be that generous. People in power never were, especially when one reached them was utterly helpless.

The headmistress must share my opinion, because rather than answering immediately, she decided to delay, though, the delay itself was enough to show just how big her need was, so much that she didn’t even try to threaten the dragon.

And, compared with the sudden change of her earlier ploy and her current attitude, it suggested that the dragon had an extraordinary identity, much bigger than the headmistress had been expecting.

“It’s a big decision, I need time to think,” the headmistress finally admitted.

“Take as much as time as you need,” the dragon answered with mocking laughter. “It’s not me under the risk of exploding a year.”

The headmistress stood up, like she was about to leave, but the dragon spoke again. “Not before arranging some amenities for me, of course,” the dragon added.

“As you wish,” the headmistress answered between her clenched teeth, barely able to spit out her words. “But we don’t have a lot in this dimension, not with the system constantly devouring any natural treasure.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it,” the dragon said with a chuckle. “You just need to arrange more mana flow to my residence.”

“I can do that, but there are limits. We can’t weaken the wards too much, or the defenses will fall, and you’ll be revealed,” she reminded.

“Don’t worry, just as much as you can arrange. And one other thing,” she added, her playfully vicious smirk giving me an idea of what was going to follow. “I just need a servant to handle mundane activities for me. Cleaning, preparing my food, and other mundane activities. The boy that helped me earlier looks like a good worker. Arrange that for me, please?”

“But—“ the headmistress started, only for her words to fade when she caught her opponent's expression. “I’ll arrange it,” she resigned, adding another role to my already complicated resume.

How fascinating...

[Level: 31 Experience: 493210 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 7750 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Two

I dashed out of the tunnel the moment their meeting concluded, as I expected the headmistress to send me a message the moment she was back at the office, and it would have been better if I wasn't under wards when she did so.

Especially since these wards were under her direct control.

It was good that I did, because, a few seconds after I had left the wards, I had received the message, a message that would have failed to pass the protective wards without triggering.

Close call. Unsurprisingly, she was asking me to visit her in her office immediately. Knowing the severity of the situation, I rushed. A minute later, I was knocking on her office door, the oppressive feeling of the wards not even registering after the repeated exposure.

The door once again opened wordlessly, revealing the headmistress sitting behind her desk, wearing her dark robe, but the hood was down, revealing her beautiful face that contrasted greatly with the rest of the dark decorations of the room.

She did her best to look impassive, but even without watching her fateful meeting, I would have noticed the panicked expression on her face. It was a pity that I missed half of the meeting, as I would have loved to see the exact reason why she had been unsettled to such an unbelievable degree, probably relating to the faction the dragon belonged to.

"I have another mission for you, a very important one," she said, fully confident that I would accept despite the mental crisis she was going through. It would be a lie to say that I wasn't tempted to reject her, just to see her confidence shatter even more.

Too bad that the cost of doing so was too heavy for momentary entertainment.

"As you wish," I said, accepting the mission before she even gave the details. Ironically, spying on my own boss was very helpful to sell an image of devotion.

She accepted that move readily, confident in my loyalty after observing a decent amount of Divine Spark, not aware that it was safely locked in my body behind several complicated, ever-changing wards, preventing it from even slightly affecting my mind.

"I need you to spy on her," she explained, once again economical in her words, though there was no doubt who she was referring.

“How, magically, or physically?” I asked.

“I arranged you as the servant for her. It’ll give you an excuse to stay close. You can observe her in detail, and record anything valuable,” she explained, acting like it was her own idea rather than a request she was unable to resist.

Her attempts to be sneaky were simply cute.

“As you wish,” I said.

She stayed silent for a moment, before adding. “It’s good that you survived,” she said, complimenting me about the mission. Since I had already included a report of the mission with the message I had sent earlier, she didn’t ask any follow-up questions.

Interestingly, her lack of follow-up questions about the move suggested an interesting detail. Because, while I had explained the challenges I had experienced during the event, I had deliberately avoided mentioning anything about my speculations about the Eternals’ movements, in particular to its possible function as some kind of training program, not wanting to reveal to her how much information I was able to collect under the restrictions of the wards.

The fact that she didn’t ask a single question either meant that she didn’t care about it at all — which wasn’t likely for someone that managed to last two centuries as the head of a political entity — or she had a good idea what was the point all along.

“Is there any specific thing you want me to do? Interrogation, maybe some torture—” I offered, only to be cut off, a beautiful panic appearing in her face.

“No!” she gasped, her face covered with emotion the second time — the first being the suggestion about her nakedness under her robe during her first reveal. To her credit, it didn’t take long for her to suppress that panic, and continue with her usual monotone tone. “Try to keep her happy. She is an important connection.”

“How nice?” I asked, deliberately pushing the headmistress a bit.

“Within reason, but check with me if she asks anything extreme,” the headmistress answered.

I nodded, barely holding back my smirk. I didn’t know whether she didn’t realize or she just didn’t care because she thought of me as a loyal soldier, but she had just given me a huge opportunity to do a lot of things, using my new ‘mistress’ as an excuse.

Before leaving, however, I decided to ask another question, one that was very important. “What if she wants that...” I said, looking up to where her room was, implying that she might ask for the Divine Spark.

“Don’t worry,” she said, surprising me with the quickness of her answer, so much that it showed on my face. “Dragons have no use for it. They only use pure mana.”

Another interesting detail.

“Do you think you can handle another transfer?” she asked.

“It might be safer to wait another day, the struggle to keep her safe exhausted my body too much,” I said, both selling an idea of loyalty that forced me to push my limits just to defend someone for her — and a struggle that was much harder than the actual events — but also subtly implying that, while I was strong, that strength wasn’t without a significant cost.

Being underestimated never hurts.

“As you wish,” she said as her gaze fell back on her desk, dismissing me without even mentioning it.

I left her office, and went back to the basement, to the room of my new mistress. I knocked on the door.

“Come in,” called a familiar voice, and I entered, only for my gaze to capture the beautiful sight of my new boss for a foreseeable future.

And what a sight it was. Unlike the previous dress, she was wearing a light green dress, half-transparent as it wrapped around her body, tantalizingly displaying her amazing curves despite her petite body. It was not a dress, but a nightie, the type a concubine might wear to seduce her Emperor.

Her pose was even more interesting than her dress. She sat on a chair, her legs crossed, showing a great deal of her smooth skin through the slit that cut through her nightie’s skirt, enhancing the eroticism even more. The subtle leaning of her body enhanced her cleavage even more than her nightie had done in the first place.

Yet, despite her seductive look, clearly, it wasn’t the message she was trying to give. She was partially facing the door, but not directly looking, even as I entered, like I wasn’t important enough to actually pay attention. The platform under her chair — one that was not there

earlier — elevated her seat almost like a throne.

Her words hardly disagreed with the impression. “My servant ... you’re finally here,” she said, hardly managing to hide the glee in her tone.

Ironically, the obvious glee in her tone turned what might have been an insulting attitude into something amusing. The glee she felt over having power over me was so obvious that, ironically, it weakened her hold.

Though, the fact that I had been fondling her naked body a few hours earlier hardly helped her attempts to look authoritative.

“Oh, yes,” I said, giving her a rebellious, frustrated gaze. It was fake, of course, but it was easier to fake resentment rather than looking impervious and forcing her to ramp up her attitude until she actually become annoying.

“Yes, what?” she said smugly as she looked to me, her earlier impervious attitude forgotten the moment she got the slightest victory, suggesting my — hopefully short — time as a servant wouldn’t be too difficult.

Her next order just reinforced that impression. “Wash my feet,” she ordered as she gently shook her crossed foot, which in turn moved her dress more, giving a short yet delicious glimpse of her beautiful inner thighs, with a tantalizing — but unfilled — promise of giving a glimpse of her core.

“As you wish, mistress,” I said with a defeated sigh, giving her the thing she wanted more than the actual massage as I walked toward her.

As I walked toward her, however, I did more than appreciate her sexy body. I started examining the room, in particular, the mana regeneration capacity of the room even as she happily devoured it. It must be another part of their arrangement, because the intensity was much higher than what I first saw, something that was about half of my regeneration.

Which meant it was more or less as intense as a dozen level thirty mages’ regeneration, hardly something to dismiss, even for something as vast as Silver Spires.

Though, it also highlighted just how ridiculous my power, in particular, my mana regeneration was getting.

As I arrived in front of her, I conjured a crystal basin, another spell filling it with mana-induced

water, costing me a significant chunk of mana.

[-2375 Mana]

Then, I crouched down in front of her, grabbing her foot, ready to give a massage, deliberately ignoring the amazing sight I would receive the moment I would glimpse up, at least at the moment, and instead, stayed deliberately focused on the massage the full extent of the duration, even though she started to let out frustrated growl repeatedly as the arousal clearly build-up while my mana penetrated through her skin.

Meanwhile, I was testing just how crazy I could drive her with another foot massage...

[-1394 Mana]

With great success. Yet, even as she started parting her legs 'accidentally' I resisted the urge to peeking, driving the impression even higher.

"Is there anything else, Mistress?" I asked when I finally finished and stood up, only to catch a beautiful expression on her face, a mixture of arousal and annoyance, accompanied by the shock that I resisted the implied invitation to push more — therefore depriving her the opportunity to slap me down.

"No, you can go, I want to rest," she answered as she waved her hand dismissively, chasing me away. "Make sure to be ready here in the morning to serve, though."

"As you wish," I said as I gave her an exaggerated bow, once again not reacting to the glimpse of skin as I walked away.

But when I finally left the room, the smile on my face was erased quickly. Playing with her was fun, but I had a lot to do with our royal guests.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 5197 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Three

As I walked toward the temporary residence of our Royal guests, my mind was already on how I could leverage the direct access to the artifact, to deepen my understanding of how to handle the Divine Spark.

Though, it was interesting a ruined piece of an ancient artifact, with its broken handle, cracks, and more rust than metal, had such a great impact on my development path.

However, when I found myself at the separate building assigned for the Crown Princess, I focused on the presence. “May I ask you to send a message to Lady Delia,” I said to the nearest guard. Interestingly, rather than asking a reason or an explanation, he just nodded before sending a message.

They were clearly instructed to do so.

Even more interestingly, rather than leading me inside to meet with Delia, the handmaiden responsible for arranging my services — and seducing me to a betrayal in the process — the guard asked me to wait.

A moment, I thought that to be a subtle power play, trying to keep me waiting at the entrance to remind me that I didn’t have the luxury to go around as I wished, especially this late. To my surprise, however, Delia appeared at the entrance less than a minute later, an apologetic expression on her face. “Sorry to keep you waiting,” she gasped as she came to a stop from her hurried walk — the speediest she could move without looking like a peasant.

“No worries,” I said with a wave of my hand.

She turned to the guard. “It’s a scandal, how can you keep such a valuable guest of us waiting,” she admonished.

“But ... the Princess ordered that —“ he tried to argue, only to be cut off.

“I know what her Highness ordered,” she cut him off. “That doesn’t apply to honored guests,” she added before continuing with several choice admonishments, mixed with warnings and threats.

Good show, I thought even as I watched them, barely holding back a smirk. She was a good actress, I had to admit, but not enough to fool me.

“Sorry about that,” she murmured after finishing the punishment of the guard, and gestured me to walk. For a moment, she was silent, her hands dancing on her hair to deflect anxiety, trying to fix it.

Another part of her little ploy, I noted as I let my attention wander on her dress, which was ruffled and skewed, like she had put the dress on hurriedly. However, considering it enhanced the cleavage of the dress more than intended, but not enough to actually reach a level that could be defined as obscene.

Her beautiful blonde hair, damp and slightly mussed to give the impression that she just stepped out of a bath, sold the impression even better — despite the fact that a simple spell would have dried it properly.

Altogether, combined with her attitude, she sold the story of an enthusiastic greeting.

I had to admit, I was impressed by her attention to small details. Manipulation was much more effective through subtle details than grand declarations, and I could always respect a consummate professional.

Not enough to actually stop my own manipulations, of course.

As we walked, I made a show of glancing down her enhanced cleavage, blushing softly as I did so — which was hardly a chore as I enjoyed the delicious walk of the busty blonde while she made small talk.

“You weren’t around for a few days,” she finally broached the subject, slipping the question like it was just another casual comment.

“The demands of my boss, unfortunately,” I murmured, with an enhanced focus on the distaste, making her eyes brighten for a moment. “But with the recent attack, I had a lot of other things to deal with.”

“So unfair, making you work that hard,” Delia said, probing lightly.

“Someone in this school has to, or the place would collapse,” I countered arrogantly, adding another layer to the fake pompous personality I was selling to them. “If it wasn’t for my great wards, this place would have long collapsed under the weight of the undead.”

“They are lucky to have you to put things together,” Delia said with a sigh, as she grabbed my arm thankfully, and ‘accidentally’ dragging my arm until it was momentarily buried in her

glorious bosom before letting it go.

Nice touch.

“Yes, they are,” I said smugly. Though, it was ironic just how close my fake personality was taking credit for my actual achievements, yet somehow managing to disguise them as fake in the process. She nodded in agreement, but didn’t say anything else.

Because we have arrived at our destination. The research room they had prepared for me.

“You guys decided to go with the most expensive option, nice,” I murmured, not bothering to hide my shock as I said so. The research room they had set up for me was definitely opulent, extremely so, which almost felt me guilty for asking such a detailed request. It was just supposed to be an excuse to allow me to create my own wards, allowing a more throughout the observation of the Princess.

Though, having access to a well-equipped research room was much better than the alternative, especially since I was confident to block any magical observation they might leave in place.

“Nothing but the best for the best,” she said even as she rubbed my arm suggestively. “Her Highness ordered that everything that you require should be readied for you immediately, especially if it might achieve our goal faster.”

“Everything seems to be in order for the moment,” I said as I examined the room, including the mana-laden forge, several tables with supporting arrays to make the analysis easier, piles of materials — both monster parts and minerals — carefully categorized on shelves, tools forged from magical metals, and even a small box including three Mana Gems.

A truly impressive preparation. Just the materials were enough to bankrupt most families. Ironically, it was also a statement from them, saying that, even diminished, Crown Princess had access to deep and mysterious resources.

“How much do you think it would affect your projection,” she said, unable to hide her nervousness.

“Don’t worry, with all this, I’m confident that I could replicate it no more than two weeks of work, especially since my work will keep me in the school for a foreseeable future,” I said. If it wasn’t for the sudden appearance of the dragon, adding much more interesting leverage to apply against the headmistress, I would have used the opportunity to highlight just how unreasonable the headmistress’ requirements were, trying to use the Princess’ weight against

the headmistress.

“Oh, such good news,” she gasped in happiness as she hugged me. Her happiness was real, though, the seemingly impulsive move was certainly not, especially when she was doing her best to rub her chest against mine as she rocked up and down.

A move that had rather radical implications on the movement of her dress, making it slip lower and lower, until it gave a glimpse of her nipple, giving me an amazing view, and a notification.

[+100 Experience]

I tensed the moment I read the notification, while she stumbled back, a blush on her face, assuming that was a reaction to her nudity, which wasn't.

It was the reaction to the fact that I had received experience without any reduction, proving that her level was higher than mine!

It was shocking, because, the last time I had checked, she was only supposed to be level twenty, which was too low to give me experience.

So, either she managed to gain more than twelve levels in a few days, or I had fucked up my initial assessment greatly.

Either way, yet again, I found myself in a much more complicated deal than I expected.

“I'm so sorry,” she gasped as she tried to fix her dress in fake panic, messing it even more in the process, giving me an even better view of her naked tits for a fleeting moment. She even managed to stumble toward me in the process, forcing me to hold her to prevent her from a painful fall — pressing her naked tits against my chest in the process.

Unfortunately for her, it also gave me an excuse to slip another string of mana to her, allowing me to examine her soul space. I was lucky that she was busy giving me a show, giving me an excuse to look shocked.

I was shocked, because her soul space was markedly different.

She was not level twenty anymore, but thirty-five, a huge difference from before. But compared to other details, it was not even important. The fact that she had several more skills, or some stats were markedly higher was not shocking as well. The selection of the new skills, most magical and some crafting, while curious, wasn't entirely world-shaking, though almost as

suspicious as her sudden power-up.

What was shocking was the absence of skills that was there the previous time I had checked, like dagger skill, or sense motive. Similarly, some of the stats, like dexterity, were lower, and the whole distribution was completely skewed.

Yet another mystery, I thought even as she managed to fix her dress.

Like the situation wasn't complicated enough with angels, dragons, and mysterious organizations...

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HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 7750 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Four

“So, what is your exact plan to repair the spear?” Delia asked, unaware of the groundbreaking, shocking detail I was trying to process after discovering her precious secret, or if she noticed, she had written it off as a reaction to her sudden hug. Though, when she kept her hand on my shoulder, her body close enough for my arm to rub against her chest, I started leaning toward the second case.

She was clearly using it to distract me further as I explained it.

Luckily, I had no problem using her strategy for my particular needs, especially with the System fueled by Divine Spark once more. I put my arm around her waist, equally casually, and pulled her closer against my body.

[+100 Experience]

“It’s going to be a complicated affair, are you sure you want to exhaust your pretty mind with such useless stuff,” I said patronizingly.

Considering she had acquired several magical skills just to receive a more accurate explanation, I doubted my deflection was something she wanted.

I had no idea the method she had used to increase her level in such a radical manner, even changing her skill configuration in the process, but I was certain that it didn’t have a trivial cost. If it had been easy, she wouldn’t have reduced her level.

“I know,” she murmured sensually, letting me hug her even tighter, showing her determination to use the seduction route, making it a delicious twist to my usual operating principle. “Still, Her Highness asked me to get a detailed explanation, and I can’t violate her orders. You wouldn’t let me get scolded, would you?”

“Of course not,” I said as I touched her chin gently, examining her pouty lips that formed a smile that begged for a long, lingering kiss. “It would be a pity for such a beautiful face to show sadness.”

My flirty sentence didn’t affect her in any way, of course, as I delivered it deliberately badly. A little pause between words and a slightly misaligned emphasis was all that needed to destroy the charm of a cute sentence.

She reacted as it did. “Thanks, you’re my savior,” she said, exaggerating even more.

Meanwhile, her fingers were dancing on my arm softly, selling the idea of closeness. I leaned forward just to test her, curious how far she would push herself.

She waited until inches separated our lips before turning her head, letting that kiss land on her cheek, a convincing seductive smile on her face, promising much more in a near future. Of course, I had no doubt that that near future would turn to a nebulous destination that would get far away more and more.

A true challenge.

“Of course I am,” I said, pushing my chest proudly, leaning hard on the pompous, vain personality I had created for them. “I’m always the best.”

“So, about the way you would repair the spear?” she asked.

“Well, it’s not a final strategy, as the new tools give me some interesting options I need to consider,” I murmured. “However, the core strategy is similar. First, I need to align the fragments of its internal arrays...” I started, giving a complicated explanation, once again relying on a lot of obscure theories just like I had done before, but this time, I tried to be as accurate as possible.

Unlike the last time, she had the skills to understand what I was talking about, forcing me to be even more careful. I didn’t have the option to blame her for misunderstanding some basic concepts, or lacking fundamentals.

Not that it was a big problem for me. It would have taken me less than five minutes to concisely explain every single detail, but one thing stopped me from doing so. I noticed a slight tightening on the corner of her mouth, suggesting she was feeling a strain.

Maybe maintaining those high levels was even harder than I assumed.

So, rather than going directly, I deliberately kept the explanation long-winded, mixed with long breaks where I bragged pointlessly about my own genius to kill even more time. She asked me clarifying questions, but they didn’t help her as much as she hoped.

Posing as a pompous, self-absorbed idiot with the sensibility of an unwashed piece of rock worked wonders in the current situation.

I didn’t waste that time, of course. Even as I explained, I started walking around the room, checking and testing the tools, though I avoided paying attention to the wards, not to her

presence.

However, even as I examined the tools, most of my attention was on her. I observed her throughout my explanation, watching the outward signals of her tenseness to understand how the strain was affecting her.

When we hit an hour mark, and she was still listening without an explicit attempt to stop me, I decided that whatever she was using could easily last hours, though whether she could last more than a day was hard to guess.

[+700 Experience]

Her occasional flashes of skin bequeathed me with experience kept the long-winded explanation entertaining, at least for me. I was tempted to push for more experience, at least more than glances on her intentional flashes and casual touches, as I had missed the sensation of rapid leveling,

“I think that’s enough,” she said as she stood up, declaring her surrender against my delaying tactics. I wondered whether the strain of the process or the boringness of my bragging finally broke her patient resistance.

“But I was just going to explain how I solved the interference problem between rotating arrays when —“ I said, doing my best to look disappointed. The expression of shock on her face was very amusing.

“No need!” she answered in panic, only to realize her mistake when she noticed my — fake — frown. “I mean, I need to talk with the princess, and your explanations are more than enough to satisfy her. We can talk later.”

And with that, she left, but not before hugging me one last time, and whispering her thanks.

I was tempted to follow her, curious about the mystery behind her sudden power-up, but I was surrounded by too many wards to make sneaking away from a viable option. Staying hidden was much hidden when people didn’t simply dismiss my presence as a servant.

Luckily, I had a lot of things to go, I thought even as I grabbed a magical chisel, using it to get a sliver of metal from the spear.

[-63 Mana]

I had enhanced the strength behind my hit with a spell, because there was no chance that wards in the room weren't examining my activities, one way or another. And even if there was none, there was no harm in acting safely.

Then, I threw the metal sliver into an alchemical crucible, throwing as much as fire mana the item could handle to melt it, so that I could properly analyze its material composition.

[-430 Mana]

Using almost a thousand mana in the process was excessive, aggressively so, but it wasn't something I had decided randomly. No, it was the perfect excuse to fill the room with my own mana, which gave me an innocent reason to directly interact with the wards without alerting them.

And just like that, I started a combined analysis session, splitting my attention between examining the nature of the wards that surrounded the room very thoroughly along with the alchemical analysis of the structure of the metal of the spear.

Neither task was simple, and together, they were enough to strain my Intelligence and Wisdom to the limit. Especially since I was analyzing the wards, again and again, to make sure I had missed nothing critical. Minutes turned into hours, and I started sweating.

[-1291 Mana]

For once, it wasn't a fake reaction.

Luckily, it wasn't a waste. In terms of analyzing the nature of the spear, I had made significant progress, especially identifying the nature of the metal that had been used. While it wasn't complete, I was confident I could create some more of that magical alloy.

Unfortunately, the same luck didn't apply to the wards around the room. It seemed that, by using the excuse of creating the best room I requested, they had used an impressive number of wards to check the room. Voice detection, mana sensitivity, movement... Some were there to make sure the spear was never removed from the room, the others designed to observe the movement of the occupants, each designed with several redundancies.

It didn't mean they were unbreakable, of course. I could dismantle them in less than an hour without triggering any of the embedded traps, but it wouldn't work if there was anyone that was actively observing the room.

Simply brute-forcing would have been easier.

When the end of the day reached, I felt a touch annoyed about the waste of time. The great number of equipment reduced the time I needed to analyze the spear, but not as much as it would have been if I was able to freely spend my mana without alerting my observers.

Especially since it was my request that forced me into this situation.

Still, it was not a complete waste, as the mysterious condition of my escort was much more interesting to resolve. I opened the door and gestured to the guard. "I'm almost finished. Can you call Lady Delia so I can give her a report?"

"As you wish, sir," the guard said and walked away, leaving me with anticipation. However, a minute later, the guard had returned, a stiff expression on his face. "I'm sorry sir, but it seems that Lady Delia has to join a very important meeting, but I had been informed that she would love to have lunch tomorrow."

I just nodded as I followed the guard outside, wondering whether it was just a seduction ploy, maintaining the distance, or she was dealing with the aftermath of her power-up.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 7750 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Five

With the little game with the princess over, I decided to pay a visit to my favorite blacksmith, not just to have a detailed discussion with her about today's findings and possible ways to optimize tools to store Divine Spark, but also to finally add her as a companion.

Our relationship had progressed significantly from the days I was afraid that achievement might alert her that I wasn't completely normal. At this point, even discounting the physical aspect of our relationship, I was her only reliable ally. Also, more importantly, I finally had enough Divine Spark to actually fuel the companion process.

I still had doubts whether Divine Spark was actually fueling it, or it was a complicated trick to force me to work for the System, but that was an issue for a future time.

At this point, sneaking through Hall of Crafting was trivial, especially since the place was crawling with unfamiliar faces, helping the usual workers. After the battle, the school required a lot of supplies, weapons, potions, and much other stuff.

When I arrived at the warehouse deep underground that Oeyne appropriated as her residence, I was already smiling with anticipation. With a flick of my wrist, I opened the door, revealing the beautiful, caramel-skinned beauty on the other side of the door, busy scribbling something on her work desk.

When she turned to check the door, she was alarmed. Understandable, as the feeling of losing the protections around one's residence wasn't a comfortable feeling, but her fear was replaced by a coy smile when she has noticed it was me who broke in.

I said nothing, just smiled as I walked forward, enjoying her enthusiastic expression even as the door slammed behind me.

"Hey," she murmured as I stood next to her.

I was planning to focus on her body, to jumpstart the fun process of improving the Companion Process, when the designs on the table caught my attention, one, for some reason, felt very familiar, but I failed to pin the exact source. "What's this?" I asked.

"Just another order from the Princess," she grumbled in annoyance. "They have a lot of harebrained designs they want me to work on. They have too much time and money on their hand if they want to waste my time with those."

“Are they that bad?” I asked even as I cycled through her designs, trying to pin why it was feeling that familiar. And the fact I wasn’t able to pin the source of the familiarity despite my System-boosted Intelligence was weird.

“Technically, no,” Oeyne admitted. “As far as I could see, the theory behind them is solid, but their initial assumptions for those designs are simply ridiculous. It simply assumes a very different environment. It’s like assuming rocks are replaced by air. Most of the designs are too fragile, simply leaking mana.”

“How interesting,” I whispered. “And do they want you to fix the leaking issue?”

“That’s the interesting part, no. They want me to ignore the leaking issues, and focus on other aspects.”

“And how many of those designs have you completed for our glorious princess?”

“A few,” she gasped, which might be about the sharp nature of my voice. Although, it might be also about my wandering hand, landing on her shoulder. A subtle, gentle touch, but I didn’t blame her for reacting with a gasp. Not with her previous experience, well aware of how it would progress.

“Be more accurate, sweetie,” I murmured even as my fingers slid down. “You’re an artisan, I expect you to be more accurate.”

She paused for a second, her breathing getting labored, though it was more excitement than nervousness, her impressive bosom swelling even more. While she considered the question, my hands cupped the fullness of her breasts, softly squeezing them.

“They have given me a lot of initial designs, hundreds,” she answered even as my fingers found her nipples, teasing them slowly. “However, most of those designs have similarity, a dozen or so categories if we group the similar ones.”

“Interesting,” I said as alternated between mauling her breasts and teasing her nipples, interrupting her explanation with moans. “And you have delivered any result to them?”

“Just the initial conjecture, nothing useful. Not that any of them could be used in the first place.”

“Never do that again without talking to me,” I whispered in a playful yet threatening tone. With the mysterious levels Delia gained, I would prefer to maintain control of the information flow, just in case. She nodded. “Good,” I whispered.

I could have asked her more questions about the design, but I decided against it. It was clear that Oeyne was treating them as a thought experiment, suggesting she didn't have any worthwhile conclusions. More importantly, I was on the edge of leveling up, which would make it much easier to analyze those designs.

And, speaking of leveling up... "Though, it still leaves your punishment..." I growled softly even as I waved my hand, once again creating a set of magical chains that wrapped around her limbs from the silver ingots lying around, and forcing her to fall on her knees.

[-782 Mana]

"You're a harsh taskmaster—" she gasped, unable to hide her enthusiasm before I silenced her, with the appropriate motion of sliding my shaft into her beautiful mouth.

The dance of her tongue around it was simply heavenly, especially since I was feeling backed up after the extended, yet ultimately fruitless sexy massage sessions with the dragon, my new mistress.

I watched in enjoyment as Oeyne started working on my shaft, well aware of how to handle it well after our repeated fun adventures. I wrapped my fist around the base of my cock, pumping up and down, giving her momentary help.

Not for long, of course, as my hand soon moved forward, sliding through her thick hair instead before I pulled her closer, forcing her to devour more of it than she could immediately handle. Her resulting groans were simply delicious.

Meanwhile, I pulled my dagger with my empty hand, using it to slice her top off. Someone else might have reacted in fear, but Oeyne reacted to my aggression with increased enthusiasm with growing excitement. When she looked up, her chocolate eyes shining with desire, I met her gaze with a roguish smile, even as I cast a spell to disintegrate her leather pants and boots, leaving her panties as the only piece of clothing responsible for hiding her busty body.

And with her growing wetness, her panties hardly a paragon of effectiveness.

Oeyne continued her devouring, her hips parting to the limit as she struggled to take the whole length, the crown invading her tight throat. Her eyes widened as she pulled on the chains that were holding her motionless, failing to react against my forceful yet welcome treatment, moaning happily as her throat was forced to take it completely.

"Take a deep breath, and just keep swallowing," I whispered, my grin widening each passing

second as the pleasure reached a new level. I could have continued until it reached a delicious conclusion, but that would mean I was missing a valuable opportunity to progress the companion process more.

[-64 Mana]

A simple spell was enough to change the alignment of the chains, until Oeyne was prone, floating at waist level as the chains held her up, providing me with the spectacular angle enjoy to partake the feast her beautiful body represented.

My grin widened further as I positioned myself behind her, ready to slip inside, her plump ass pointing at the ceiling. A stiff tug was enough to rip her panties, leaving her entrance naked.

She struggled against her chains, her moans mixing into the cracks of the conjured chains, forcing me to reinforce them to keep her. Once again, she was happy to be chained, but only if I could actually keep her chained with my own abilities.

[-591 Mana]

“Such a needy slut,” I whispered as I spanked her ass with my hand, earning a delicious moan. “Maybe I should punish you before the main event.”

“No —” she gasped in shock, desire dripping down her voice, only to be interrupted as I conjured a ball gag on her pretty mouth, silencing her complaint.

My hand landed on her ass in a spank once more, and she flinched in desire, her wetness getting even thicker.

“Feel free to tell me if you have any complaints,” I mockingly even as I grabbed another piece of metal before flooding it with my mana, converting it to a paddle, and impressing Oeyne with the increase of my skills in the process. There was no harm in impressing her with my abilities, especially since their fascination seemed to impact Companion Process progression significantly.

[-318 Mana]

The newly-created paddle landed on a beautiful, plump ass, leaving a small bruise despite her spectacular Endurance. Even as she moaned, she tried to use her own mana to break her chains, only to fail spectacularly against the potency of my mana. She might be more skilled than me, but in a direct magical confrontation, she had no choice of victory.

Though, if the excitement in her muffled moans was any indicator, she clearly didn't mind the rough treatment, enjoying her submissiveness. Not for the first time, I wondered she always had her submissive tendencies, or she developed them only after she had passed the level-twenty mark. It would have been ironic if the latter was the case, realizing that she had gotten off by physically dominated only after her physical abilities reached a point that made it nearly impossible.

After all, to dominate someone, it wasn't enough to just be stronger than someone. One needed to be stronger by a wide margin, especially counting her blacksmithing expertise, making most of the magical items useless as well — even if someone risked the destruction of an expensive magical item just for a night of fun in the first place.

“You're so lucky I'm here to give you what you want,” I whispered as I caressed her ass gently before another spank landed. “Are you ready for the main event?”

With her gag, she was only able to let out a muffled moan, but it was clearly a yes.

“Excellent,” I murmured as I positioned myself to her entrance, ready to slide in...

[Level: 31 Experience: 494110 / 496000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6226 / 6324 Mana: 6923 / 7750]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

Expert Craft [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Six

The sight of her beautiful, plump, heart-shaped ass, the light bouncing off from her caramel skin, was simply too beautiful to resist for a long time, especially for denying myself the pleasure for such a long time — a couple of days might as well be an eternity as well as my standards were concerned.

“Hmm,” I murmured despite the temptation, rubbing the head of my shaft against her entrance as I stretched that syllable. “Maybe we should stop. After all, you’re tired after working on the designs for such a long time.”

The gag in her mouth prevented her from saying anything, but it was impossible to mistake the need echoing in her muffled cry.

I was tempted to tease her more, but not as tempted to feel her presence around me as I enter. “Loud and clear,” I said with a chuckle as I rubbed my presence against her entrance once more, her moans rising unbidden to match, creating a delicious symphony. “It’s time for the fun to begin,” I said, warning her one last time as I plunged inside her, mercilessly hard.

Just the way she liked.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 12%]

My smile widened, though, as delicious as the way she tightened around me as I pushed, the physical aspects played a limited part in it. The sense of improvement was nice, dispelling the growing fear that things were getting too dangerous for me to handle.

With enough power, nothing was too difficult to handle.

My hips quickened, filling the room with the sound of our flesh colliding, each slam echoing against the walls. And since her body was still being held by the floating chains, each slam making her swing like a pendulum, her body dancing deliciously.

She moaned even as I slapped her ass, enhancing her moans even more, forcing the limits of the gag that was supposed to keep her silent. “So loud,” I said even as I quickened my pace even further, uncaring of the loudness of her moans. After all, we were in her room, which was safely reinforced the walls enough to act as a fortress if needed.

Even then, some of her moans were actually loud enough to make me wonder.

Not enough to actually make me stop, of course. I continued slamming into her delicious entrance, enjoying her absolute lack of struggle as she accepted my assault — which was a rarity in her case, showing she had missed my touch greatly as well, regardless of the little passed time. Even my spanks, getting hard enough to leave a lingering redness despite her endurance, were only earning louder moans.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 15%]

It was time for a change of position. I started walking toward her bedroom, a task that was much easier by the floating chains that tied her up, pumping hard into her with each step. Soon, she was shivering beautifully with every touch.

Only when we arrived at her bedroom I waved my hand, and her chains floated down, slow enough for her to position her legs, allowing her to balance herself on her knees rather than landing directly. I also loosened her gag, finally allowing her to speak.

“Yes, harder, faster,” she growled, showing that she was already lost in pleasure. “I’m so close!”

In another situation, I would have slowed down, torturing her with an orgasm that refused to arrive, but I was feeling too explosive to delay it, not when I was burning with a similar desire. I still pulled out of her, just enough to make her give a quick, burning whisper of begging before I plunged back, making her shift back to her wordless moans.

However, as I returned the task, I grabbed the remaining chains, which were connected to her arms, pulling back. It forced her body to rise even as her arms bent back, her tits jiggling beautifully with each pump of my hips.

“It’s fun to take the occasional break from work, isn’t it,” I asked even as I pulled her back even harder, her delicious cries quick to mix in.

“Only if — every break feels this way,” she managed to answer, but not without her moans interrupting her words.

“Well, that can be arranged,” I whispered. “Of course, it requires some more obedience from your end.”

“For what, exactly?” she managed to ask, showing that, even while drowning in pleasure, she wasn’t about to declare her unrestricted loyalty to me.

Not yet, at least.

“Nothing too exhausting or arduous,” I said even as I used my free hand to grab her freely-dangling tits, sinking into their large, generous expanse, triggering another beautiful moan in the process. “Well, for the other activities, of course...”

“That works,” she managed to main even as she started to shudder, the climax she was waiting for finally hitting her wildly. She gasped and moaned, shuddering under the effects of an earthquake.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 19%]

Still, just because I wasn't in the mood to torture her with a delayed orgasm didn't mean that I tease her the other ways. Before she could recover from the aftereffects, I untied her hands before flipping her, her beautiful tits pointing to the ceiling. Then, I slipped inside her once more.

“So, about what I need from you,” I said even as I started moving once more, enjoying her tightness even as I tried to come up with the best way to deepen our partnership. Luckily, I wasn't starting from scratch, which gave me a reasonable basis. We were already cooperating against the Princess and her mysterious requests — though, the latest visit had suggested we might need to adjust our strategy in that area — and I was essentially her supervisor as far as her dependency on the school was concerned, easily replacing the importance of the contact that arranged her stay in the first place.

“Yes,” she moaned even as I grabbed her legs and raised them to my shoulder, giving me an even more amazing angle into her core.

“I need a tighter cooperation from you,” I said, before adding with a chuckle. “Not that anyone could blame you for not being tight.”

“You're such a charmer,” she said, which was impressive as she somehow managed to sound sarcastic between her moans of pleasure. Her attitude earned a painful nipple twist, which she enjoyed even more.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 21%]

“I need you to coordinate with me much tighter, and don't do anything with the Princess without checking with me. She's very complicated.”

“More complicated than being a royal that was effectively deposed from her position, hunted by her family, and desperate enough to take very dangerous risks?” she asked.

“Yes,” I said with a stern tone. “There’s something mysterious about her, raising much bigger complications than I expected. Those designs and the weapon she wants us to forge is clearly a small part of her plan.”

“Do you know —“ she started before a moan interrupted her. “Do you know what’s her final objective?”

“Not yet. However, I had a feeling that whatever she’s trying to do, it’s not simple and pedestrian as just trying to take back her throne.”

I could see a question appear on her face, mixing into her pleasure, no doubt curious about my exact line of thinking, but instead, she chose to ask a simpler question. “Should I try to sabotage her?” she asked.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 24%]

“No,” I said. “While she has a hidden agenda, there’s no evidence that it’ll harm us, and she has a good relationship with the headmistress. Until I could discover her objective, we need to cooperate. Just make sure to inform me about everything they want, no matter how trivial it seems, like a few theoretical designs that could not be used at all.”

She nodded, showing her acceptance without even uttering a word, though her mouth opened for a fleeting second, signaling an aborted question. And I doubted it was because her curiosity was sated. Not with her body getting tighter and tighter around me.

She wasn’t the only one that was getting closer to the edge. One last moan of her was enough to trigger my climax as well.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25% - First Stage Completed +5000 Exp]

Level UP!

[Select one of the following skills: Grandmaster Arcana, Master Craft, Master Speech]

“And here’s your reward for working so well,” I murmured even as I tightened my grip around her hips, marking her insides. “Do you like your achievement?”

“H-how?” she murmured, the shock managing to find a place for itself even on her face, drowning in pleasure.

“A gentleman needs a few secrets to keep things interesting, ” I said with a smirk. “But did you

really think that I would leave your loyalty without a reward?"

"O-of course not," she managed to stammer, but I could see the shock dancing on her face, one that surprised me for a moment until I could process it. After helping Helga and others not only get achievements but also level up repeatedly, I was used to getting underwhelming reactions.

Even a miracle turned ordinary after enough repetition.

I gave her a moment to gather herself, allowing her to process the shock and maintain her shock at the same time, while I picked my newest skill. And since I was not ready to commit the next five levels to one particular skill, even one as useful as Arcana, I chose Craft, to bring my production to the next level.

After all, I still had to craft a lot of things.

I turned my attention back to the busty caramel beauty, panting helplessly in front of me, trying to decide between the merits of improving my newest skill and focusing back to her treatment, to see whether I had managed to impress her suitably enough to clear two more stages of Companion Process, which, combined with the experience reward, would bring me at the edge of the next level...

However, before I could make a decision, I had received a magical message from a certain scaly acquaintance, delivered by the wards of the school, asking for me to prepare a meal for her.

"That's enough excitement for today," I said as I looked at Oeyne, caressing her cheeks softly. "You should focus on using your power-up. I'll visit you again tomorrow," I said before turning and leaving.

I had a dragon to serve.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7921 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [75/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Seven

A touch of annoyance stirred in my heart even as I stepped into the tunnel that was under the control of the headmistress' precious dark wards. The fact that it was a part of my plan wasn't enough to completely dismiss the sting of being summoned like a servant.

The fact that it stopped me from enjoying the extended embrace of a busty blacksmith hardly helped to maintain my mood.

I knocked on the door, but there was no response. However, I could sense her mana moving behind the door, with no attempt to keep it hidden. On the contrary, her casting was more obvious than the usual, as if she wanted me to detect her behind the door.

Yet the door stayed closed.

A transparent attempt to exert her power. But like most direct applications of authority, or like sexy underwear, just because it was transparent didn't mean that it was useless. I waited silently for five minutes before a spell finally hit on the door, opening it.

When I entered, I found her still in her human form, lying on a reclining chair. Still short, with her emerald hair bright enough to get all the attention if it wasn't for her deliciously amazing curves, the only thing that was different was her clothing, wearing some kind of short nightie rather than a dress.

If it wasn't for her beauty, I would have been much less willing to play along with her little games.

"How can I help you, mistress?" I said, but made sure to add a slightly mocking tone, reminding her that, ultimately, I was just playing around rather than being intimidated into service.

Sometimes, it was easier to act truly servile, waiting until it was the time to lash out and defeat the enemy. However, the current situation was certainly not one of those, not with the power inequality of our initial meetings, saving her from certain death twice. The

She didn't miss that particular detail if her cute frown was any indicator. "I'm hungry, prepare some food for me," she said, her tone excessively dismissive.

"As you wish, mistress?" I asked. "Any preference? Maybe some steak?"

"Something lighter. After spending that much time in the wilderness, I'm not in the mood for

something heavy.”

“How about a salad, maybe some steamed vegetables?” I asked, only to receive a shocked gaze.

“What are you talking about,” she muttered in shock, and no small amount of anger. “Salad, vegetables? Do I look like a cow to you?”

I smirked sardonically, realizing that my menu idea was not exactly well-thought-out. Clearly, vegetables were hardly the most appealing food for a dragon. “Maybe some nice braised dire chicken, then?” I asked. “And some spices to give a nice aroma.”

“Maybe,” she said, then her smirk widened, like she was about to deliver a dangerous blow. “But I want you to cook it here, yourself, I can’t trust the servants here. What if there were spies, and use the opportunity to poison me.”

It wasn’t a particularly good reason. The existence of spies was not in doubt, but it was very unlikely for those spies to be aware of her presence. And even if they were aware of her presence and determined to take her down, I doubted that poisoning would be the first method.

I had a feeling that poisoning a dragon wouldn’t be a simple task.

I didn’t bother explaining that, of course, not when her smirk told me all I needed to know. It was clearly an excuse to force me to do some menial work.

Jokes on her. Of all the things she could ask me to do using the headmistress as an excuse, cooking wouldn’t even earn a place on the list of annoyances. It didn’t bother me at all, not when I had to prepare my own meals for a long while, especially after I started leveling up.

I didn’t tell her that, of course, instead of letting her think that she had pulled one over me. “As you wish, mistress,” I said with a resigned tone. “Just let me go and pick some supplies first.”

“Sure, go ahead,” she said, waving her hand dismissively, which did some nice things to her skimpy nightie. “But don’t dawdle too much, I’m feeling famished.”

The supply trip didn’t last long since I didn’t bother talking with anyone, but directly arrived at the storage and took all the ingredients and equipment I needed. I could have used the headmistress’ orders to get them officially, however, but it would be like shouting to the spies in the school that was something extraordinary going on.

And when I knocked on her door, once again, she kept me waiting, which made her tactic even

more amusing and childish, making me actually chuckle. And when the door finally opened, the sight that was revealed was certainly enough to compensate.

She was still wearing the same nightie, but her legs were crossed, her body leaning forward a bit to enhance her beautiful cleavage even further.

I still remembered the sensation of dragging my fingers on her soft skin.

“Mistress,” I said with a nod, making a point not to linger my gaze on her body, not giving her the attention she clearly desired.

Instead, I moved to the corner, a couple of spells and a ward enough to create a temporary kitchen. I started cooking, which was a smooth process thanks to my Craft skill, which didn't only help me to create very useful weapons but also prepare meals.

Once again, generalist skills for the win.

I started whistling as my knife danced over the meat, mixing the pieces with a spice mixture rapidly, even as the ward structure replicated an oven and started to warm up to the correct degree.

However, I wasn't just mixing the meat with the spices. Instead, I was carefully coating every single one with a great amount of mana carefully, not only increased the magic it contained, but also carefully enhanced the flavor packed in it, something that I was able to do before making the meat explode, only because my Tantric ability allowing me to keep mana smooth and calm even outside my body.

[-842 Mana]

A costly activity. Pity that the wards blocked the System from improving my skills, as it would have been a nice bonus along with the delicious smell that filled the room.

However, as I cooked, I heard the distinct sound of fabric being pulled off. A soft, suggestive sound, one that tempted me to look back, but I kept my attention on the preparation. The sound was too loud, too stretched out to be anything but accidental, a part of her teasing.

The sigh of annoyance that followed certainly confirmed that assumption.

She followed that with another spell, her mana signature distinct, before footsteps started to move toward me, sauntering slowly, until she was directly behind me. Still, I didn't look at her

until she actually leaned against my body.

“It smells nice,” she murmured even as her breasts rubbed against my back, her voice soft, suggestive. “You’re a better cook than I expected. Maybe I should actually take you back with me as my servant,” she added, teasing and mocking me at the same time.

And I had to admit, it was working despite the brief respite I had earned thanks to Oeyne. “That’s not possible, unfortunately,” I murmured, but only after a reasonable pause, one that implied that the determination behind my words wasn’t as strong as the words implied.

I had no idea to truly be her servant, of course, but giving her the impression that it was possible wouldn’t hurt. She would try to impress me, which would come with a lot of relevant information about the world that was not under the control of the system.

“I see,” she murmured as she shifted a bit, standing next to me. Only then did I let my gaze drop toward her, getting the first glimpse of her changed clothing. Her negligee was gone, replaced by a tight dress. It was longer than her negligee, reaching to her knees, but its tightness was more than enough to compensate for the loss of sexiness.

Together with the generous cleavage, she was very beautiful, but that prevent her from looking furious I barely paid her a glance before turning my attention back to cooking, carefully infusing more mana into the water I used to braise the meat.

[-381 Mana]

“You’re wasting a lot of mana,” she commented as she watched me slowly infuse the water with more and more, which, unlike directly reinforcing the meat, was going to be set aside as leftover, while the mana slowly evaporated away.

“That’s the quirk of cooking,” I answered. “If you want to make a delicious dish, you need to be willing to waste a lot of mana.” This was technically correct, but that didn’t change the fact that the mana-intensive cooking technique was my own invention, merging Tantric and Craft on the fly.

No one else had used such a technique before to my knowledge, which wasn’t as surprising as it might sound. First, I doubted there were more chefs that had a mana pool reaching four digits in the first place, which was requisite for the technique. Then, those chefs would require a significant Arcana skill, assisted by some very complicated wards to compensate for Tantric — which I suspected something unique to my own situation, as I failed to discover any similar skills in my studies.

Even if it wasn't a unique skill, it was likely rare enough that there was not a chef that had it.

Still, even more importantly, there were very few people that could actually eat such a mana-intensive dish without exploding, and even less that could actually extract the slightest benefit. Even most efficient mana recovery potions were little more than a wasteful luxury, dedicated for the usage of low-leveled rich scions rather than actually used in battles. Most of it was about people's inability to efficiently consume external mana.

The only exception, was the sexy dragon next to me, doing her best to get my attention without being too obvious. Her ability to directly extract mana from things she consumed, which, by her own admission, was the only thing that kept her alive without the System and the mana regeneration it provided.

She was the only one that could really appreciate the complicated dish I was about to finish preparing, after one last touch.

[-925 Mana]

Again, I had used a lot of mana, but this time, it wasn't just to maximize the taste of the meal I had prepared. I had used the opportunity to attach some of it to her dress, one that would allow me to apply some mischievous tricks.

"Your dinner is ready, mistress," I said. "Shall we move to the table?"

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 6139 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Eight

“Let’s see if the food tastes good enough to justify all the effort,” the dragon said as she turned, and walked toward the dinner table, not bothering to hide the seductive sway around her hips, creating a beautiful sight.

She certainly deserved some assistance, I decided even as I leveraged the stray piece of mana I had connected to her dress earlier, ready to unravel her magically conjured clothes. Of course, rather than destroying it immediately, I started examining it first. I needed to make it look like it was her mistake, and to do that, I needed to understand the nature of her magical craft. It was a simple affair...

Or at least, it was supposed to be, but the moment I focused on the details, I met with a completely unfamiliar magical structure. It was supposed to be a little fun prank, only to come to a hard stop as I took a deeper peek into the construction principles. It was a very complicated, elegant design, showing an interesting combination of crafting and mana manipulation, displaying an expertise that wasn’t often found in people who relied on the System.

However, the elegance wasn’t the source of my confusion.

No, it was the complete uselessness of it. The mana strings and wards that created the dress were impressively complicated, but there was a point in crafting or casting that such elegant detail stopped being helpful, and started being harmful instead, threatening the stability of the construct.

It was about the natural movement of mana. Similar to water, mana had a tendency to evaporate, and even tricks applied to the construction of the wards only slowed that down. Of course, it was not a challenge for wards, as their natural spending far surpassed the natural evaporation, but even with a source, going below a certain size was unsustainable. Yet, the mana strings of her dress were far below that practical limit.

Of course, it was just a dress with no magical benefits, no additional protection, or magical enchantment, creating such a complicated design wasn’t too magically intensive, and it could be refreshed easily. Not that it explained why she was deliberately using an inferior design.

I wanted to dismiss that track of thought, but it was making my brain itch, telling me that I was missing something obvious. It was a very unfamiliar sensation with my skills and stats. I was used to connecting discrete topics very easily.

Pity I couldn't just maintain the connection with the little mana I had left attached to her dress for long without making her suspicious. And despite the elegance of its structure, finding a core node that would destabilize the whole dress hadn't been too difficult. I destroyed it, and pulled my mana senses back.

The dress didn't immediately disintegrate, of course, that wouldn't be fun. However, I could see a few pieces of fabric losing substance around the skirt, getting slightly transparent.

Excellent, I thought even as I continued to follow her swaying hips, leaving the mysterious nature of the clothes to the side for the moment. Though, as her skirt got shorter, revealing more of her beautiful, if short, legs. When she arrived at the table, I was quick to pull her chair, which allowed me to get a glimpse of her beautiful cleavage.

Her back arched as she sat down, a movement that was too exaggerated to be accidental, enhancing her cleavage even more. "I hope you enjoy your dinner, mistress," I said as I pulled to the side, once again using the same exaggerated tone servant tone, not letting her forget that I was only playing around.

I was expecting her to enjoy the food I had created. My crafting skills, combined with a very generous amount of mana to serve the special preferences of a dragon, were not something to be dismissed.

However, I certainly didn't expect her eyes to close as a moan of pleasure, the kind that I was used to hearing in a different context, escaped her beautiful lips. She trembled erotically, which made her even more attractive, tempting me to abandon my role.

Her eyes jerked open soon after, showing that I wasn't the only one that was surprised by her reaction.

I could have teased her about that, of course, but with her dress slowly unraveling, I had a better idea. "Good try teasing me," I said, which was a touch excessive.

"Y-yeah," she stammered, happy to take my excuse. "I was just teasing you."

"I can tell with the way you're playing with your dress," I answered, pointing at the right side, where a piece had already gone. The way her eyes widened was beautiful.

"R-right!" she stammered even as her gaze turned down, noticing her dress was suffering smaller.

She raised her hand, but before she could cast a spell, I spoke once again. “Too bad you won’t be able to stay like that for too long. You’ll get scared and fix it back, making it pointless posturing.”

“I never get scared,” she said as she slammed her hand to the table — which only survived thanks to the numerous enchantments weaved into its nature. Her vehemence at the mention of getting scared surprised me. Maybe I had managed to touch a soft spot.

“Oh, really. Then why don’t you show it by not casting a spell until you finished the great dinner I had prepared for you.”

“That’s nothing, of course, but why should I let you do it.”

I could have raised the favors she owed me, goaded her into a bet, or start flirting. I chose none of those options. “Hey, if you want to be a coward, go ahead and be one. You don’t need an excuse.”

Her response was to throw a knife, which I deflected using a magical shield.

[-483 Mana]

“Hey, be careful,” I said, panicked. Of course, it was also fake, and I used such a strong magical shielding because I wanted to refresh my connection to her dress, and not just to quicken the speed of her dress’ disintegration.

I also wanted to continue examining the spell structure of her dress, trying to understand why I was finding it familiar.

“Don’t call me that,” she said, her eyes glowing even brighter, its green taking a threatening sheen.

“Sheesh, overreaction much?” I asked, but didn’t push her any harder on that aspect. Her strength certainly was not a joke.

She said nothing else, just took another bite of the food. I noted that this time, it was much bigger. Combined with the speed of her chewing, I could see it was less about her fascination with the food, and more about wanting to finish it quicker, so that she could resolve the issue with her dress without eating her own words. Unfortunately for her, there was a big flaw in her choice.

The orgasmic joy of eating.

As she ate her food hurriedly, it impacted her even harder. To her credit, she managed to suppress her shivers, and most of her moans, the remaining subtle enough to be disguised as the reaction for good food.

Unfortunately, her body decided to disagree with her decision to keep things hidden. Her nipples started to get harder, pushing against the tight fabric of her dress — a view not helped by the slowly disintegrating fabric of her dress.

I managed to control the disintegration partially, directing the disintegration to safe spots, arms, shoulders, stomach, and the lower sections of her skirt.

I wasn't onset by a sudden invasion of charitable feelings, certainly not against a beautiful natural disaster like her. But I could see that the safer spots were already pushing her limits, and I didn't want her escaping from the table before she finished her food.

"Make sure to finish your food," I reminded her. "Because the mana will evaporate in a few minutes?"

"Why?" she asked.

"What do you mean, why?" I asked, surprised by her question.

Her gaze was equally confused. "I mean why the mana would evaporate that quickly, of course," she said.

Then, something clicked in my mind. The weirdly flimsy nature of her enchantments that could only last for a few hours, her shock at the possibility that the food would not be able to contain that much mana for long. Even the designs I had noticed on Oeyne's room flashed in my view, more similar to her dress than anything outside.

"It's because of the System, naturally," I answered with a certain tone, even though it was more of a guess than certainty. My hands were bound by the fact that I couldn't be honest about my lack of knowledge.

However, it wasn't baseless under the assumption that the System wasn't just connected to people, but also this section of the world in general, somehow affecting it. Together with the clear difference of free mana that was available that she had been complaining about, and the fact that a magical construct she had created habitually was too flimsy to survive under the

mana evaporation — something I had written off as a natural phenomenon — I was pretty confident in my guest.

It certainly explained why the designs I found in Oeyne's workshop had been so weird that I was willing to write them off as impossible to work.

There was one important question. Why did it take me that long to actually connect the dots?

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7838 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Sixty-Nine

“How interesting,” she murmured as she tried to process my revelation. “I didn’t expect that abominable thing to affect everything to such a degree.”

I appreciated her mutterings, because it gave me a chance to gather my thoughts, in particular the System’s constant mana devouring and its applications to creating Enchantments. Not permanently, of course, as I had no doubt those implications were not just limited to wards and items, nor it was something I could treat as a long-term, theoretical question thanks to the designs I had noticed in Oeyne’s rooms.

All I wanted was a few days where I could tease a sexy dragon and a repressed angel for fun. Was that so much to ask?

However, I managed to pull myself away from those more complicated questions as she took another bite of the food, losing herself in a literal magical culinary bliss, trembling beautifully, her hurry to finish it faster leaving her even more vulnerable against the invasion of pleasure.

And since I had gone all that effort to reconnect with her dress, a flare of my magic ensured that its destruction quickened even further, to a point that it reduced her dress to a beautiful two-piece. The middle portion was gone completely, leaving her stomach bare for my eventual touch.

The top remained complete — mostly, apart from some fraying around her cleavage — but the skirt had suffered badly, getting considerably shorter and thinner in the process, forcing her to cross her legs to protect her the most important bastion of her modesty.

And that was not a move without cost. Crossing her legs while her skirt got shorter and shorter revealed all of her legs, along with a generous glimpse into her plump ass.

Her conflicted gaze, dancing between her own dress and the food in front of her was simply too amusing, especially since she was doing her best not to look at me while she tried to decide between protecting the scraps of her modesty, and the pleasure offered by the food.

She was turning out to be even more hedonistic than I expected, which was a great feat considering her reaction to the massage back in the safe house, though it was not without an explanation. After all, the safe house had been a dangerous place, preventing her from enjoying my services properly.

Of course, the principle of research lay in repeated testing, I decided as I took a step toward her without a warning, using the full extent of my dexterity to keep my presence subtle as I did so, timing it perfectly with another large bite of her, which made her close her eyes.

Before she could open them, my hands were on her shoulders, my fingers already laced with mana.

[-317 Mana]

“What are you—“ she started, only to be interrupted by a delicious moan as my fingers started to dance on her shoulder, caressing her skin with the great skills I had developed as I let my mana inject into her body.

The resulting moan had been spectacular, even better than I expected, suggesting the combination of the food and the massage was strong enough to blank her mind momentarily. “I’m massaging you to make your dinner more comfortable, mistress,” I said mockingly.

“I don’t —“ she started, but when I used magic to float another bite of the delicious dinner I had prepared for her, her lips parted open readily, taking it in. Together with the flood of pleasure she was getting from the massage, she was barely able to swallow her food as she moaned.

She was really weak against pleasure.

I chuckled at her reaction even as I continued to caress her shoulders, even as my view got better with each passing second, revealing more of her body. “I can stop if you want,” I offered, but only when I was absolutely sure of her answer.

Or more accurately, the lack of a one.

She said nothing as I continued rubbing her shoulder, her dress continuing to disintegrate, confirming the stories about the hedonistic nature of the dragonkind. Then, her top got even smaller, giving a glimpse of her areolas, yet she made no attempt to make me stop, focused on her food.

It was more erotic than our previous adventure. At least, she had the bubbles to hide her beautiful body then. Now, she only had a scrap that mostly displayed her breasts.

Until I decided to push things and grabbed that part, and ripping it without a warning.

The sudden movement managed to achieve what the slow disintegration of her clothes failed to

achieve. “Hey —” she exclaimed in panic, only to be interrupted by a moan when I pushed forward even more shamelessly and grabbed her breasts.

It wasn't a soft, gentle touch, not even something that could be mistaken by a massage even under the most permissive definition of the word. I was just mauling her breasts mercilessly, enjoying the smoothness of her skin. Maybe it was the sudden intensity of the pleasure, or maybe my daring as I abandoned the role of a servant, but she said nothing, just stayed in her place, receiving the pleasure of my treatment.

Even the rest of her food stayed on her plate, untouched.

It took another aggressive move to make her speak. One of my hands stayed around her beautiful breasts — two glorious globes too big to fit on my hand — alternating between squeezing her flesh and twisting her nipples. Distracted by the treatments of my fingers, she had missed the significance of my other hand moving lower.

Until I ripped the remains of her skirt as well, leaving her beautiful body completely naked.

“That’s too much,” she gasped as she jumped to her feet, but before she could make a move, my hands were already on her shoulders.

I didn't actually use the full extent of my strength, of course. All she needed to do was to push my hands away, and she could have escaped.

Yet, she stayed.

“No,” I said as I waved my hand, and every single dish on the table flew away, colliding against the wall. As their crashes filled the room with a unique symphony.

Before the pieces could even touch the floor, I touched her back, pushing her on the table. Once again, there was no brute strength behind my touch, but still mewling under the pleasure of my other hand, she just moaned as I pushed her down, her huge tits pressing against the crystal surface of the table.

For a moment, I did nothing, enjoying the sight of her plump ass, though it wasn't as important as her slightly parted legs revealing her glistening core. Her body continued to blush as she found herself helpless against the pleasure.

I didn't give her time to get her wits back as I pressed on her shoulders harder, stealing her breath in the process even with her tits acting as two beautiful cushions. Her gasp echoed in the

room even as my fingers caressed her ass, reinforced with mana once more.

[-781 Mana]

“What are you doing,” she gasped, her voice a mixture of shock and arousal.

“I’m serving you, of course, mistress,” I said even as my fingers danced over her perfectly-toned ass, enjoying the sensation. “You clearly like a constant flow of mana, and I chose to deliver it the best way possible,” I added before a chuckle escaped my mouth. “Well, technically the third best, but there’s no need to spoil the fun by skipping the sequence, is there?”

She didn’t answer, which wasn’t great harm, especially since her lips were busy moaning deliciously. It didn’t help the intensify of her voice when my fingers finally found her wetness, dancing around incessantly.

The gasp she let out was beautiful, almost as beautiful as the lack of protest as my fingers found her knob, teasing it aggressively. I could have taken it slowly, but the moans she was letting out were so urgent, so helpless that I didn’t dare to.

What if she collapsed halfway? That would be a great tragedy.

So, my fingers started to intrude around her entrance, enjoying the way she clamped around my fingers, her wetness only overshadowed by her tightness. “No,” she finally managed to gasp, but considering she was pushing her ass back, trying to take more of my fingers into her, it was hard to treat it seriously.

Her moans got more and more intense, inviting me inside her. And I doubted it was an exclusive invitation, just for my fingers. Letting out my shaft plunging inside her would have been easy and, without a doubt, rewarding, but I had a much more fun sequence planned. Why should I spoil the fun by hurrying up?

After all, where was the fun of vanquishing a dragon if the dragon didn’t beg for it again and again?

The dance of my fingers soon yielded the ultimate result, and she started clenching around them as her wetness flowed, her moans filling the room completely.

However, her climax wasn’t the only surprise. Two horns appeared on her head, not only adding another exotic layer to her already mystical beauty, but also giving me a very handy tool for the next step of the fun I had planned.

“How kind,” I murmured in amusement as she moaned.

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 6491 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy

I put my finger on one of the emerald horns that appeared on her head, enjoying their texture. “Hmm, they are surprisingly smooth,” I said, only for her to blush even more than I had been fingering her earlier, though it lacked the carnal aura her earlier blush carried.

I had a sudden inspiration. “How shameful, losing control of your transformation just because of a little massage,” I murmured. Her intensifying blush suggested that I hit the nail on the head.

I couldn’t help but smirk as I realized I had managed to identify the specific source of her shame due to the intensity of her blush. I was getting really, really good on the subject.

“Such a shame,” I murmured as I caressed her horns. “They are such beautiful accessories of you, why would you feel ashamed of them?”

“I’m not ... ashamed of them,” she managed to murmur, her breathing still quick, showing that she was having trouble handling the invasion of pleasure. “It’s about maintaining my transformation. Partial transformation shows ... weakness.”

I chuckled. “You don’t need to worry about showing weakness while you’re with me, mistress,” I said with a chuckle even as I grabbed both of them. “I’m just a lowly servant, after all. I can’t even imagine commenting on your power and performance.” Even in her state, still lying on top of the table, that earned an angry gaze, and she opened her mouth to answer.

Too bad that I had no intention of allowing her to succeed.

I pushed my hips forward, filling her mouth with my shaft even as I grabbed her horns. “And why would you hate them. Look just how convenient they are,” I said as I used them as leverage. And just in case she was dissatisfied, I used our carnal connection to deliver even more mana to her.

[-1290 Mana]

Facing a flood she hadn’t experienced, at least from me, the moan she let out was simply spectacular. Coupled with the pleasure she was feeling it immediately pushed her to the next stage, her angry gasps once again underlined with moans.

And as my shaft started to invade deeper into her throat, her gasps interrupted by her beautiful gagging, I couldn’t help but smirk. While her attempts to make me pay back had been amusing, it would be a lie to say they hadn’t been annoying at any point. Especially the last time, when

she interrupted my fun just as the things with Oeyne were starting to warm up.

Luckily, she was nice enough to compensate for it, I thought even as I pushed my hips forward.

“Try to wrap your lips around it tighter,” I suggested, and much to my joy, as I continued to pump, her lips tightened around my girth, making it more entertaining as I continued to push forward.

Her blush started to get more and more intense, a testament to the impact of pleasure on her hedonistic nature. Amusingly, however, her shock also suggested it was an area of pleasure she seldom indulged — if any. Otherwise, she would have reacted to my advances more smoothly.

I pulled back after an extended merciless pumping, allowing her to catch her breath, but when I took a step to the side, she surprised me with a moan of disappointment. “It’s ... finished?” she asked, ready to protest despite the roughness of the treatment she had been receiving, though it was followed by shock as she realized the nature of her own reaction.

How very delicious.

“Don’t worry,” I said even as I put my hand on her shoulder. “Sweetie, you have a lot of work to do,” I said as I pulled her off the table, her short stature making it very easy to lift her. Although, with my strength, I could probably try to lift it.

A trial for a later time, I decided even as I grabbed her shoulder and forced her to her knees, not trying particularly hard to limit the impact. I trusted a dragon to handle her knees hitting the floor easily.

It turned out that I was wrong. “Ouch,” she exclaimed, her pain clear. “Be careful!”

“Sorry, your dragoness,” I said even as I grabbed her horns once more, the somewhat taboo nature of that act enough to silence her until I could invade her mouth once more. Though, her lack of resistance to pain was surprising. I had watched her fighting against several people without the slightest hint of discomfort even when she was on the edge of death.

Though, on second thought, maybe her forms differed not only in looks but also in terms of physical resistance. Such a detail certainly needed to be used more, I decided as I roused my mana once more, some of it for her to be delivered through my shaft, the rest of it creating a nice, magical chain to wrap around her arms, pinning them in place.

[-1645 Mana]

The moment the chains wrapped around her arms, her eyes widened in protest. Unfortunately, her mouth was adequately filled, preventing her from speaking about it.

Her magic stirred, trying to dispel her bindings, but our bodies were too close, and with my mana inside her, breaking her attempts was trivial.

Or, it was supposed to be trivial, I thought even as I realized I had been forced to use more mana than necessary to establish the task, essentially bullying her spell with my excessive mana.

I continued pumping into her beautiful mouth even as I let my mind wander about the reason for the impact difference. Luckily, she tried to flare her magic several more times until she was discouraged by the repeated failures, allowing me to get a better understanding of the nature of her spell.

It was the complexity of her mana patterns, I decided. Just like the dress she had conjured earlier, her spell had been based on a much more complicated structure. Even less stable considering it was supposed to be an instant spell.

But once again, it lacked the instinctual understanding I had been enjoying with any other spell, making it significantly harder to truly understand. I needed a comprehensive lesson from her.

Naturally, it was a task for a different time.

Instead, I suppressed her magic as I tightened my grip around her horns once more, pulling her forward harshly. Her beautiful tits pressed against my thighs as my shaft invaded her throat, her emerald hair dangling freely.

Her head bobbed beautifully under my rough treatment, her moans getting more and more intense even with the obstruction in her throat. Yet, she didn't lose anything from her enthusiasm as she swallowed more of my shaft, even with her arms tied behind her back.

Pity, I thought. I liked when she was getting angrier, so I stopped grabbing one of her horns and slapped her breast, only to flare angrily.

"Hey," she gasped when I pulled back. "What are you doing?"

"Sorry, mistress," I said with a chuckle. "But they are too tempting. Maybe you should make them smaller."

“I can’t,” she said in a matter-of-fact tone, confirming my guesses about whether her human form was fixed, or it was something she had created based on her mind.

“Then you’re going to suffer through it,” I said even as I slapped her breasts once more even as I filled her mouth once more. Then, I grabbed her tits, squeezing her nipple, which made her moans even more intense.

Another flood of mana was her reward.

[-480 Mana]

It proved to be a good decision, as the reward she received, along with the additional mana I used to wrap around my fingers, worked wonders to calm her down even with my disrespectful actions.

Though, as the treatment lengthened, she started tapping my head, asking for me to pull back. “You didn’t earn it yet,” I said to her as I quickened my assault, enjoying the tightness of her throat. “But don’t worry, you will soon,” I added.

A cute moan and an angry glare was my answer.

It was as good as a sign as any to ask me to move faster. I grabbed her beautiful horns, invading her throat, again and again, smirking in satisfaction at the effectiveness of my strategy while the pleasure slowly invaded her hedonistic being.

And when she started moving in response, pushing forward along with me to make my pushes even more impactful in her own volition. Even her hips started to shake reflexively, tempting me to escalate my services to a point I hadn’t been planning to bring. Not this quickly, at least.

Her throat tightened around my shaft, making me focus on the present rather than trying to plan the next steps. Soon, the pleasure become unbearable, and I exploded into her throat, filling it with my seed.

And, since I was such a kind, helpful servant, my explosion was laced with a lot of mana.

[-1840 Mana]

Her moans as she tried to swallow every single bit of my seed, licking her lips to make sure nothing had gone to waste, was simply beautiful. “Such a hungry mistress,” I said with a chuckle as I lifted her in a bridal hold, walking toward the bed in the corner.

Yet, trembling with pleasure, the only thing she was able to do was to send an angry glare.

It was a good time to interrogate her.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 4820 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-One

I let the magical chains over her hands dissipate even as I took the last step toward her bed, laying her on the bed. My initial intention was to take the final step, teaching my mistress the true meaning of pleasure.

But, as she lay on the bed, her legs parted open readily despite her angry glare, showing that she was more than ready for the next step. Ironically, it made me change my intention even as I lay next to her.

“You deserve a massage after all the exhausting effort you have displayed,” I whispered to her as I flipped her, making her lay on her face, caressing her shoulders softly.

“That’s it,” she gasped, unable to keep her protest suppressed as not only a massage was not something that could answer to her burning need, but also I didn’t use any mana to coat my fingers this time, making her disappointed.

“I’m feeling tired after the great exertion. Can’t you just drain the mana the wards providing?”

That made her pause for a moment. “It’s not the same...” she murmured.

“Really?” I murmured, though it wasn’t hard to guess why she preferred my mana to the natural mana. The same skill that allowed me to achieve things that many assumed impossible.

Tantric.

“Too bad I’m too exhausted,” I said. “Of course, I can push myself, but...”

“But—” she started, only for a moan to interrupt her as I laced my fingers with some mana, teasing a sensitive spot on her lower back, one I had discovered earlier.

“I have a research project to finish. Of course, if you can help me answer my questions, I wouldn’t have to fear exhausting myself. Perfectly reasonable, right?”

At this point, she was not in a position to reject my perfectly reasonable offer. “What’s your research about?” she asked, showing that, despite her pleasure, she wasn’t fully gone.

For a moment, I was tempted to ask about the details of the deal between her and the headmistress, but I kept myself back, still afraid of revealing the lack of my knowledge at this stage. I needed her even more distracted before I touched that particular box.

“Nothing much, just a few questions on an area of magic I’m not very competent,” I said even as I thought about the best area to focus on.

Arcana was certainly out. Not because it would be useless, but I had already displayed a great competency in the area, making it hard to ask more direct questions. In a similar vein, most of the Elemental abilities were also not viable, as I had displayed a great competency in front of her. Earth to open tunnels, fire in combat, and air to travel.

“I need to increase my competency with water magic,” I said, deciding to focus on one area I was yet to display my competency in front of her, yet the magic was simple enough. Asking her help in more complicated areas, like healing, was also a possibility, but that would have too many variables for me to filter, trying to decide which part was about her personal knowledge, and what was about the underlying difference between the areas.

Water elemental offered a good balance between complexity and simplicity, all without making her suspicious. “It’s not a problem, right?” I asked, even as I improved my massage service.

[-295 Mana]

“Ooh,” she murmured even as my fingers danced along her spine, her moan more provocative than her nudity. And considering her beauty, it was an incredible achievement. “I can do that,” she managed to stammer. “I’m very competent using elemental spells.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” I answered. “Giving a massage to you is certainly a better alternative to spending my time in the library, wasting my time.”

Then, she froze for a moment. “Don’t you have skills to teach you stuff,” she asked, suspiciously.

It was a good question. Luckily, it wasn’t hard to deflect. “We have, but I didn’t receive a skill for water magic.”

“Why don’t you just kill monsters until you get one?” she countered, though it was more of a genuine question rather than a challenge, showing her understanding about the System was very limited. Certainly not deep enough to be aware of the trade-offs included.

At this point, I didn’t waste time talking about the details. “I have seen the spells you have used, and they are better than the ones the System provides,” I explained. It was not a fully accurate statement, but then, it wasn’t supposed to be. I wanted to coax her pride.

“Of course,” she murmured even as the pleasure continued to invade her whole being, showing

that pride was a lever was as effective as the pleasure she was feeling.

How convenient.

“Why don’t you show me a few water spells, mistress?” I asked even as my fingers continued to caress her naked back, making her purr.

“You’re lucky that I’m magnanimous,” she murmured even as my hands slowly slid toward the side, to start teasing her beautiful curves. Her chest was pressing against the bed, but that was woefully inadequate to hide her beautiful assets. Even facing down, her breasts still managed to shout their presence from the side.

She didn’t change her pose much as she raised her finger, a small ball of rotating water appeared on the tip of her finger, and she started explaining the basics of elemental casting. “The first thing about casting water elemental spells is the concept of fluidity. There’s no explosiveness in water, but it doesn’t support rigidity either...” she started explaining.

Interesting, I thought as I listened, even as I slid my hands toward her ass, enjoying their wide expanse smoothly. The main points of her explanations overlapped with my own knowledge, which was to be expected. After all, if the nature of the elements differed that much, she wouldn’t have been able to use magic here.

[-460 Mana]

However, while construction principles of her spells were the same, the actual design of them was significantly more elegant and efficient, through significant stability concerns were apparent even at a glance, once again confirming that the System significantly affected the environment.

Unfortunately, the excuse of teaching made sure that I couldn’t ask pointed questions about it, at least, not yet, so, even as I listened to her words, I focused on caressing her beautiful ass, the pleasure working excellently to distract her from the absurdity of our situation.

As she continued to explain, my fingers continued their naughty wandering, until they started caressing the edge of her wetness. Her explanation staggered as she felt her most treasured spot being teased again. “Is there something wrong?” I asked, faking exaggerated concern. “Maybe you want me to practice the spells,” I added as I pulled my hands away from her body.

“Not necessary!” she exclaimed as she half-turned, revealing her beautiful tits, her body still trembling in anticipation, her eyes glowing with concerns. Though, when she met with my

mocking smirk, her panic turned into frustration, realizing how her enthusiasm looked.

And the fact that she still cared about the impression such a reaction created after our earlier play...

Marvelous.

“If you say so, you’re the teacher,” I said, not bothering to hide my mocking tone as she lay on her face once more. But, before she could settle, I put my hands on her hips, and flipped her, her tits jiggling beautifully.

“What?” she gasped, shocked at the sudden move.

“Let’s work on your other areas as well,” I explained as I put my hands on her stomach, slowly moving upward. “Unless you want to stop halfway, of course.”

“N-no, please continue,” she answered, her body shuddering beautifully. “It helps you to focus.”

I said nothing, not even smirking at her words. Her paper-thin excuse didn’t even need that, if her rapidly spreading blush was any indicator. Instead, I focused on her beautiful body as I caressed her stomach, slowly climbing up as she did her best to stay still and not moan — though, not always successful.

Soon, I arrived at the border of her breasts, but rather than moving forward to their glorious expanse, I stayed on the edges of it, pushing her more and more, her out-of-control breath making the journey even more spectacular, inviting me for a stay. The excessive amount of mana I was using didn’t make things any easier.

[-1100 Mana]

Yet, I bypassed them, focusing on her neck and collarbones instead, each pass making her moan louder and louder, mixed with frustration. I could see that she was getting close to another climax, only to be stopped by the slowness of my hands.

The biggest evidence was her legs, rubbing against each other.

“As a teacher, you should provide an example,” I whispered as I parted her legs and put my knee between them, preventing that shortcut. As a bonus, it allowed me to hover over her body, my shaft dangling in front of her, which didn’t help her composure any.

Yet, I continued to caress her stomach and her shoulders softly, teasing her just enough to keep

her aroused, but not enough to allow her to reach climax, her expression tightening with each second.

At this point, I expected her to start begging, but she proved herself to be tougher, managing to keep her mouth shut. Clearly, despite everything, she had a limit, and that limit was actively begging for my cock.

It only made it more fun. I continued caressing her as she tried to explain water magic — ironically, helping me to understand more about the unique aspects more as she started to lose her concentration, and her lessons turned into spewing a lot of unrelated, random facts, giving me a better understanding on the differences the System created.

Yet, I found myself more enthusiastic about pushing her limits, curious when she would crack. My smile widened as she continued to moan in frustration, even her excuse of teaching forgotten as the pleasure and frustration danced. Then, her moans started to turn into growls, growls that reminded me that no matter how tiny and harmless she looked, she still had another form, ready to be unleashed.

Before I could consider whether I should stop, however, she exploded into action. She suddenly stood straight and grabbed my shoulder and threw me off her. I let her when I realized I would still end up on the bed, only for her to straddle my hips.

If this was her punishment, I was happy with my crime.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 4364 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Two

Being crushed under a dragon should be a scary concept, the kind that was supposed to make my heart explode in fear.

However, considering the current form of the little sexy dragon who thought herself to be my mistress, the current speed of my heart had little to do with fear, especially not when her hips started to dance over my lap.

The expression on her face was beautiful, a mixture of arousal and frustration, victory suspiciously absent. “You look frustrated, mistress—” I started, only for her hand to appear over my face, shutting me up.

“Don’t you dare to speak,” she growled, smart enough to realize the direction of the words I had prepared, and with no intention of allowing me to mock her. Yet, her current frustrations with my attitude could not be compared to the burning need of her unmet arousal.

Otherwise, she wouldn’t have climbed on my lap, rocking back and forth as her weight pressed against my shaft. She didn’t take me inside her, but from the way she was going, I guessed it wasn’t too far away.

So, rather than trying to coax her, I put my hands under my head, enjoying the show. “Stop it,” she warned.

“Stop what?” I asked, not hiding my smirk. “I didn’t say anything.”

That earned another growl, but rather than trying to push me on the issue, she put her hands on my chest, using the leverage to rock me more desperately. Though as her dance picked up speed, I was starting to feel tempted to call off our little game as I pushed her against the wall or bent her over the table once again, taking her freely.

Yet, I stayed in my place, obedient. As much as the idea of taking her roughly was fun, it couldn’t compare to the idea of my lust-filled dragon getting so overwhelmed to take me.

Being ridden by a dragon was a unique experience.

So, I kept my mouth shut even as her delicate hands caressed my chest, her nails sharp enough to leave actual bleeding wounds on my chest — though they recovered only after a moment. She was almost straight looking up at first, but the more her hips repeated their glorious movement, the more she leaned forward. Her tits soon started to rub against my chest, but she

avoided kissing me.

Amusingly, she wouldn't be able to kiss me without changing her position even if she wished to do so. A humorous drawback of her shortness.

I managed to keep my opinion to myself about her height, courtesy of her sexy ass, rubbing against my shaft repeatedly. Yet, she was determined not to sink my shaft into her sopping wet entrance, repeating the same motion again and again.

Unfortunately for her, I had no intention of allowing that to be the whole theme, especially since, I had the ability to change it without actually taking back the control.

First, I brought my mana to the surface once more, coating the head with a generous amount of it and leaving the rest to the shaft, before I chose the exact apex of her movement, and changed the positioning of my shaft slightly.

[-610 Mana]

When she moved back once more, she noticed the sudden change of alignment, but not before the tip sank into her wetness. "No," she gasped as she pulled herself back, only to stop halfway as I felt the mana around my shaft starting to be drained with an efficiency that surpassed her earlier attempts.

Sex was truly the superior way to deliver mana after it went through Tantric treatment.

I said nothing, just lay on my back, my hands crossed under my head, enjoying the sudden conflicting expression on her face. She said nothing at first, nor did she move, which was interesting because it left the tip buried in her wetness.

"It's wrong," she murmured, but her voice lacked confidence as she suffered a mental battle about the merits.

I could have whispered her suggestions that it was nothing, claimed that it was a step she had to take to get my mana, or even blamed her for cowardice. Any of those options would have made her move faster, taking us to the next step.

But I kept my mouth shut. None of those options were as entertaining as watching her struggle with her emotions, failing to come up with an answer. Why should I abandon her delicious conflict for a lesser entertainment?

Her plump ass started to tremble as she tried to come to a decision, going back and forth in her mind while her hips didn't move at all, which would have been disappointing if it wasn't for the crown of my shaft still buried in her entrance, allowing me to enjoy her warmth thoroughly, her wetness getting out of control.

She was a dragon, mighty, fascinating, and prideful, a combination that should have ensured the victory of her willpower. Unfortunately, she was also an unabashed hedonist with a weakness for finer things, not to mention her greed begging her to get more of my precious mana.

As much as watching her conflict had been fun, her decision was never in doubt. "Just the tip, there's no harm in that," she whispered. I suspected it was more about convincing herself than explaining it to me.

Her hands landed on my chest once more as her hips started to rock, making her beautiful tits sway to her rhythm, my tip slipping in and out. I expected her to be impatient, sinking deeper, but she showed incredible determination — for her standards — and managed to stay limited to the tip.

I was not above cheating, not when I could do it at the expense of some more disposable mana. I reinforced the mana coating my shaft, but this time, keeping the focus a touch lower than the tip. The perfect bait for a greedy dragon.

[-320 Mana]

It didn't take long for it to show results, as her hips picked up speed. At first, she managed to restrict herself around the tip even with the increased speed, but then, in one of her rockings, she moved deeper.

It was a mistake that was corrected quickly, making me doubt the success of my strategy. Luckily, that doubts didn't last long, as, after just a few seconds, the mistake happened again... And again...

Soon, she moved too far to define the situation as just the tip, even under the most generous descriptions. Not that I was complaining, not with my shaft parting her delicious pussy lips more with every repeat, even though it was a slow process, like she was trying to make me forget the previous limits by her rapid movements.

Suppressing the temptation to help her was extremely hard. Luckily, I had better control over my desires than her — when the said time was being measured in minutes and not days, if I

were to be honest — and managed to keep my desires to grab her hips and sank myself into her depths.

Luckily, she was a very kind dragon, and her movements continued to escalate, my shaft parting her tight lips more and more. Slowly, the tip moved deeper as she took more and more of my hard cock inside her, drenching it with her wetness.

She closed her eyes as the pleasure started to intensify, like closing her eyes would allow her to reject the situation. Normally, I would have mocked her until she opened her eyes, but the sway of her tits as she quickened while she took even more of my shaft inside her was a good way of asking mercy wordlessly.

Her moans exploded louder and louder as my shaft continued to disappear, the pleasure reaching a high level, triggering my temptation as well. I finally let my hands move, grabbing her swaying tits — just to make she didn't injure herself recklessly due to their extreme swaying, of course.

I was a nice boy.

As I squeezed her tits, the pain cut through the pleasure she was feeling, working as a reminder. Her beautiful emerald eyes popped open, looking down in shock, no doubt realizing just how far she let things escalate.

"I ... I think that's enough mana," she muttered as she started moving, freeing my shaft of her presence. The only problem: it wasn't the freedom that I wanted. Or she wanted, if her torturous slowness was any indicator.

I had no doubt that she would soon continue with her game even if she limited her actions slightly in the process. But I didn't want to go through the same repeat again, not when things were just getting fun.

So, I cheated a bit. A simple Biomancy spell, weak enough to cost only a single point of mana — though it only affected her because the mana was already helpfully devoured by her, preventing her from resisting the spell — to make her leg twitch.

And just like that, her reluctant rise reversed, and reversed hard as she slid down, devouring the full length of my shaft as she slid down, her cry of pleasure worthy of a dragon.

Well, almost full length, I thought in amusement as I felt the head pressing against her absolute limit, not moving more, yet some of my shaft was still out.

After all, she might be a dragon, but in this form, she was still deliciously tiny...

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 3942 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Three

My sexy dragon's eyes widened as she found herself filled to the brim after her accident. Her mouth opened, no doubt to complain, but her body had other intentions.

Like releasing another earth-shattering moan, showing that, even in this form, she had the lungs of a dragon.

"Careful," I said even I squeezed her tits, enjoying their softness. "Try not to take anything you can't handle."

The slight dig to her pride once again worked excellently even when she had found herself in a position far farther than she had planned for. "I can handle anything you give," she replied immediately, ready to defend her pride.

Though, she seemed less sensitive about where her pride was leading her.

With that, her hips started rocking once more, her movements much more enjoyable as she started to do her best to devour the entirety of my shaft. She failed, of course, but that didn't blunt her enthusiasm. She deserved a reward, I decided.

[-680 Mana]

Of course, as she did her best to make my presence in, the pleasure started to get more and more overwhelming for her, her moans rising uninterrupted. So much that, her passionate rhythm started to stagger.

So, I brought my hands down, landing on her hips to help her maintain the beautiful rhythm she had started, every push widening her beautiful tightness. "Move faster, mistress," I ordered, still emphasizing the last word to mock her for her daring to use me as a servant.

I was, as always, a vindictive bastard when the situation called.

That earned an angry glare, but nothing more, as she was busy moaning uninterrupted, pleasure long invaded her whole being. And her challenge to absorb all the mana I was providing only made it even more difficult to maintain control.

It was a good opportunity to examine her transformation process once more, I decided as I turned a part of my attention on the transformation that was going on in her body. I examined the layers and layers of construct she was building on her bones, slowly changing the nature of

it.

After a couple of minutes, I decided to stop. Unfortunately, even with the lesson I had received from her, and with the assistance of my Biomancy, I wasn't able to truly understand the nature of her trick, let alone create a viable copy for my own usage.

Whatever she was doing was either a special dragon ability, or something that required special training. Either way, I decided to shelve it for the moment, to be tested during the first feasible opportunity.

I turned my attention back to her reckless movement, enjoying her moans as she jumped up and down, doing her best to stuff her tiny pussy. With my hands on her hips, maintaining the pace, along with the tenseness of her slow approach earlier, it didn't take long for her to climax explosively, tightening even further around me.

She collapsed against my chest, her breathing out of control, her desperate moans begging for rest.

Too bad that she didn't earn the right to rest.

She failed to react as I grabbed her waist and twisted her, and she found her chest pressing against the softness of the bed once more. A soft murmur of comfort left her mouth, only to be interrupted halfway as she felt my hands grabbing her beautiful horns once more.

"What are you doing?" she barely managed to say between her labored gasps, still trying to throw off her latest orgasm.

"Continuing the massage, of course," I said even as I pressed my hard shaft against her entrance once more. "Don't tell me that you are too exhausted to handle it."

"Of course, I'm not," her answer came predictably, her pride ever-useful. "However—" she tried to continue. Unfortunately, I would never learn what she intended to say, because I chose that moment to push forward, replacing her words with an urgent cry of pleasure.

Despite everything, her eagerness to enjoy another round was never in doubt, and she replied with a moan, even as I pulled her horns back, forcing her to bend into a very special shape even as I pinned her under me.

She tried to push her ass back toward me a few times, only to abandon that when she realized just how hard I intended to impale her. "Too hard," she gasped.

“Why, mistress,” I said, once again mocking her even as I pulled one of my hands away from her horn to wrap around her hair, changing my hold into a painful pull, while using my free hand to slap her plump ass. “Don’t tell me that you, a great dragon, can’t handle a weak human?”

I loved her predictable her answer was. “I can handle anything you can dish out,” she gasped, even as her voice was strained. Since she was showing such kindness playing along, I decided to reward her with another flood of mana.

[-740 Mana]

As I picked up even more speed, I could feel that I was slowly getting toward an explosion of my own. The exquisite tightness and deafening moans of a sexy dragon were not easy to resist.

Of course, I had no intention of letting her succeed before I had thoroughly made her pay about her temerity to position herself as my superior. “Moan for me, mistress,” I ordered even as I spanked her ass again, hard enough to leave a red mark even with her physical resistance.

“I’ll make you pay,” she managed to growl.

“Oh, I’m looking forward to it, mistress,” I said even as I slapped her ass again, enjoying the way her plump flesh rippled. However, considering with all the strength and magic under her command, those words were the only thing she had used to dissuade me from it, I doubted she was hating the treatment as much as she tried to reflect.

I smirked as I started to enjoy the full benefits of my controlling position, slowing down and speeding up in surprise timings, increasing her pleasure even further, her body nothing but a toy under my command.

Another orgasm hit her, turning her moans into barely audible mewling as she tried to stay conscious. Even for a dragon, chain orgasms of explosive intensity were not that easy to handle.

For a moment, my gaze slipped toward her puckered hole, tempted to take her from there, but I decided against it for two reasons. First, she was already too far gone in pleasure. She was under the risk of collapsing immediately if I made such a radical move.

Second, dazed and filled with pleasure, it was the perfect time to interrogate her.

Without skipping even a beat, I leaned forward, my hands once again on her horns, pulling her back enough for her tits to dangle freely. “So, tell me about the deal between you and my boss,”

I ordered.

Normally, I would have tried to be more careful in my interrogation, but at this point, she was far too gone to mislead me, maybe even understand the political significance of my question, that I wanted to learn about my 'boss'.

"That upstart bird," she managed to whisper between her moans as I didn't stop my hips. Yet, despite that, she managed to convey the dismissal she was feeling.

"Yes," I said, unable to hide my amusement.

"You shouldn't work for that lowly bird, and instead work for me," she managed to murmur dazedly.

"That's a good offer," I whispered suggestively. "And we know that you can keep this poor servant satisfied," I added, unable to suppress the temptation to mock her, which made her growl angrily for a second before pleasure melted her annoyance again. "But how can I work for someone I don't even know the name of."

"Janelor," she responded immediately. "My name is Janelor."

I chuckled. "It's good to know, mistress. Now, why don't you tell me exactly that weak bird wanted from you."

"She wants me to save her from her arrogance, of course," she managed to whisper between her moans, her dismissal clear. I did my best to listen, and not explode in amusement as she blamed someone else for being arrogant.

"How exactly?" I asked.

"She's nothing but a lowly soldier of that annoyingly sanctimonious Host of Light, prancing around declaring their superior virtue, but the moment she found an opportunity to rise, she took it without blinking," she said.

"You're talking about the Divine Spark," I guessed.

"Yes. I have no idea where she had found such a substantial piece of it, but she had wildly overestimated herself when she tried to absorb it," she explained.

"Is there a special condition to absorb Divine Spark, or is it about her power," I asked.

“Divine Spark is more trouble than its worth,” she declared, which, unfortunately, implied that she didn’t have deep knowledge. I doubted she would miss a chance to brag. “There’s a reason no dragon ever lowers themselves to absorb one.”

Interesting, I thought, though not exactly willing to dig deeper into her statement about dragons not deigning to absorb one, as there were too many probabilities, from a potential incompatibility to her being wrong. It wasn’t really important, not at this moment.

“So, she had overestimated herself, so what? Can’t someone help her?”

She managed to chuckle between her moans. “That’s the funny part, the one that could help her easily is her boss, but the moment she dared to absorb the Divine Spark of Light, she become a heretic.”

“Interesting,” I murmured. “And she wants the help of your boss,” I said.

“My friend! I have no superior,” the dragon growled angrily, quick to correct my assumption. I doubted that was the case, but once again, it was semantic that was not interesting to spend any time on. I had already learned what I needed from her.

“If you say so, mistress,” I said mockingly even as I sped up, the sound of flesh hitting flesh filling the room, mixing with her moans and my grunts, my grip around her horns as tight as her nether lips’ grip around my girth.

With my desperate ramming, it didn’t take long for her to reach another orgasm, but this time, I accompanied her in the direction, filling her with my cum and my mana as she exploded in ecstasy.

[-1685 Mana]

“Yes, yes, yes...” she moaned desperately as the pleasure and my power filled her directly, infusing her whole being. But this time, she failed to resist the call of exhaustion, slumping on the bed as I pulled out of her, my release drizzling out.

“Such a beautiful view,” I murmured as I quickly dressed, leaving her in her bed, my cum staining her, a great proof of my selfless efforts to keep my mistress happy.

Now, I needed to have a talk with the other mystical being who was under the impression that she was my boss.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 2890 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Four

In my place, someone else might have spent several days interrogating Janelor carefully, creating a very comprehensive plan before finally challenging the angel with two Divine Sparks and one of the strongest factions in the Empire under her control.

Yet, I stood at the entrance of the headmistress' tower, knocking recklessly without her summons, and it wasn't just the — justified — confidence of my abilities to create a strategy quickly.

No, I was pushed by past knowledge.

I didn't know if it was paranoia, or it was some kind of sixth sense I developed after handling several disasters in quick succession, but I could feel another disaster in the distance.

Maybe it would be the Eternals, discovering Janelor's hideout, maybe it would be the Princess and her secrets proving more dangerous than the headmistress and the school could handle, maybe it would be Helga and Cornelia managing to put themselves in danger, forcing me to save them.

I had no idea which one of them would actually result in a crisis, but I didn't trust my luck enough to avoid all of those triggers. So, the sooner I started working on the headmistress, the sooner I could fix her misunderstanding about my employment status...

After knocking on the door several times, I had received a message from the headmistress, and I responded by saying it was very urgent.

I still waited five minutes before the door opened. "Come to my room," her voice echoed, and I started climbing the spiral stairs.

Her room contained the full range of decorations it had when I had visited to receive the blessing of light, interesting considering they were not out when I had sneaked into her room and watched her purification ritual. She must have put them on hurriedly to maintain the same impression.

The slight dampness of her hair, no doubt lay forgotten as she hurriedly put on her armor, confirmed that I had stumbled on her in the middle of her cleansing ritual.

Pity, she didn't invite me in immediately. I would have loved to watch her.

“What’s the emergency?” she asked, her expression as stiff as her voice, no doubt ready to bring out her fury if my interruption was unmerited.

“I have managed to get the dragon drunk,” I said.

“That’s it,” she said, her frown tightening as she looked at me. “That’s what you interrupted me for,” she added, her wings glowing as I felt her light magic flare, her aura of power blanketing the room, reminding me that she was not someone to be dismissed.

Luckily, she was quick to clamp on it. She didn’t have the luxury of using her powers casually, not if she didn’t want her Divine Spark to go out of control — an even bigger problem than I had initially estimated if her deal with Janelor was any indicator.

“She has loose lips when drunk, especially when speaking to a servant, and she had mentioned a couple of ways of suppressing the effects of Divine Sparks,” I said, then took a step back, like I was about to leave. “But if you don’t treat this as an emergency, we can talk about it during our next meeting.”

“Stop!” she gasped, her magic flaring once again, but this time with a chaotic feeling. “How do you know I need that urgently.”

“The dragon mentioned it, of course, while gloating about an unfortunate fate,” I answered. She looked at me suspiciously. “I told you, she has loose lips.”

“That ...” she started, only for her to swallow what was without a doubt an insult, her anger clear in her tone. Her anger was understandable, considering she had accepted every single request of Janelor, yet she still blabbed about her secrets.

Secrets that revealed her deadly vulnerabilities.

She was not unjustified in her anger. Janelor spilled those secrets when she was drunk, though she was drunk of pleasure rather than alcohol. I didn’t even know whether alcohol had that effect on the dragons, though luckily, the headmistress didn’t question me about that part, busy thinking more important aspects.

Like whether this mysterious technique slipped from a dragon’s drunk lips could actually help her control the Divine Spark.

A nonexistent one, of course, as I needed an excuse to poke and prod around the headmistress’ own reservoir, in the hopes of stealing substantially more than I could during her transfers,

hoping to discover something in the process.

“What’s the technique?” she asked after a long pause, which didn’t surprise me, not with the risks she was facing.

“She had mentioned several containment strategies, and one of those containment strategies was good enough to store the divine spark in your body, isolated from everything else,” I said as raised my hand, and a complicated, three-dimensional structure appeared in front of her, a variant of the little internal trap I used to store some of the Divine Spark after I had stolen from her.

In some aspects, it was better than that design, as working on the spear for a full day with no interruption helped me to understand its design principles more, making several improvements to my own structure.

“It doesn’t look very reliable,” she examined the structure carefully.

She was correct, it didn’t, because while I had made several improvements, I wasn’t showing her the full structure. “She showed it to me only for a moment, and considering she was very drunk at this point...” I said, not bothering to finish the explanation as I blamed it on the intoxication.

“Better than nothing,” she commented after she examined the structure for almost ten minutes. “Do your best to make her talk,” she ordered. “Getting the complete schematics is the priority.”

“As you wish, mistress,” I said. “Do you want to conduct a test right now, to see if it works?”

“Maybe,” she said as she raised her hand, and a similar structure appeared on the air, barely bigger than a fist. The difference, the oppressing amount of light mana radiating from it, her mana type determined by her angelic nature.

A glance was enough to show she had made several changes to the structure I had displayed earlier, a couple worthy of being copied into my own design to make some significant improvements, showing that she wasn’t exactly a slouch when it came to magic research and analysis — though it might be also about no doubt the extreme research she had sunk into the subject.

I felt her pushing some of her mana, barely worth a couple of points, along with some Divine Spark.

And the structure exploded immediately.

“It doesn’t work,” she said with a frown.

A genuine frown appeared on my face as well. “It should have lasted more than just exploding immediately,” I said. “Could it be about the nature of your mana too similar to the spark, making it create some sort of resonance?”

“Maybe,” she said, thoughtful.

“Let me try,” I said as I raised my hand, creating a copy of her storage spell, though a few small mistakes to undersell my magical ability.

[-130 Mana]

“There’s a mistake here,” she said, pointing the most glaring error I had included, and I changed. Then, she put her hand, injecting the same amount of mana. Once she stopped maintaining control, the Divine Spark went wild, smashing against the limits of the container, but it easily contained the spark.

She watched my success carefully for a while before she flared her mana once again. But this time, rather than using her mana directly, she created a ward, pulling power from outside reserves, making the construction a longer affair, though the ultimate result looked well.

Yet, when she put some of her mana, it exploded once again. She turned to look at me suspiciously before her gaze dipping down to my structure, which was still stable. She examined it carefully for a while before replicating the same thing, only for it to shatter again.

Her frown tightened as she gazed at me, unable to hide her distaste before she replicated the same feat again. This time, when she injected the mana, the structure stayed stable. “Good work. Your discovery solves most of my problems,” she said, though I didn’t miss the tenseness of her tone.

Nor did I miss the sudden calmness of the mana in her latest container. I would have exploded in laughter if it wasn’t for my Subterfuge skill, helping me control outward signs of my amusement, and even with that, it was a close call.

I was amused, because I was familiar with the behavior of the Divine Spark after my own attempts to contain it, and it was certainly not as calm as that when mixed with ordinary mana.

The most reasonable explanation, my dear boss didn't put any Divine Spark into her structure, trying to trick me that she was able to copy my structure.

I wondered why she was lying? Was she trying to look more competent than she actually was? Or was she trying to tell me that the vulnerability revealed by Janelor was not as bad as her words indicated?

Pity that her attempts were destined the failure the moment I noticed the changes in her mana.

"I'm happy to hear that," I said. "Is there anything else I can help you with?"

"Not for now," she said. "But you earned a reward. I'll have to think something for you when you visit me again tomorrow for the empowerment."

"As you wish," I said as I nodded respectfully before leaving, hoping that the nuggets of information I had revealed to her would be enough to lit a fire under her...

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7960 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (1/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Five

I had left the headmistress' tower behind with a purpose. Since I was going to visit her again in the morning to receive another infusion of Divine Spark, I decided to spend all I had been storing for a while.

I could have gone back to my room, but after staying inside for the whole day for some fun, and some not so fun, activities, some fresh air would do good. Not to mention, I was going to absorb several times more Divine Spark than my earlier experiments. Staying away in case of an unexpected reaction was for the best.

No need to inform the headmistress about my little naughty secret.

Once again I sneaked out of Silver Spires and got away using an air elemental, but I didn't go to one of my hideouts, not willing to hide underground in such a nice evening. Instead, I had reached a nice meadow, and after killing the beasts that used it as a resting area — a trivial effort with my power — I established a few wards that would hold for a couple of days, and sat down.

The Divine Spark was still locked in the storage I had created in my body, trying to burst out ineffectually. After my most recent studies, I could see several ways of improving the storage, not that it was necessary. Compared to what the headmistress was trying to hold, what I was holding was nothing more than a sliver, making it much easier to handle even with inefficient storage.

Of course, I would have no hope to a similar amount with the headmistress. The only reason she was able to do so was that she had achieved some kind of partial merger, aligning it with her pure mana.

With a calm expression, I crouched, letting my mana rotate, to let it dip into the storage during a part of its journey before rotating all along my body, slowly strengthening. However, I didn't start that at first, and instead just rotated mana in the same patterns I had seen Janelor had been using whenever she had excess mana, and did my best to replicate the pattern.

[-18 Mana]

[-290 HP]

"Fuck, that hurts," I groaned as I tasted the failure on a level I wasn't expecting from such a

little amount of mana. Luckily, I didn't try it with something more.

I healed myself before repeating the trick, only to end up with nothing but pain again.

[-13 Mana]

[-345 HP]

And again.

[-16 Mana]

[-490 HP]

And again.

[-8 Mana]

[-550 HP]

"Okay, I surrender," I murmured as I breathed hard, trying to ignore the unfamiliar sensation. Clearly, whatever I was doing wasn't going to work, especially with the pattern. The more successfully I replicated her trick, the more damage it created.

Maybe I was doing something inherently wrong, or maybe it was a vain act in the first place. Maybe it was something that could only be applied by a dragon.

Pity that I couldn't even use that as an attack, as after penetrating that deep into someone's body, there were easier options to kill them, and that assumed I could replicate such a complicated pattern inside them with their mana trying to fight against me.

Regardless, I took a pause to heal myself and refill my mana pool once again before starting to rotate my mana, this time letting it dip into the reservoir of Divine Spark rather than relying on just my mana, and letting the small sliver I had stolen to be absorbed into my body, losing its unique properties in the process. Since it was a process I had replicated earlier, I expected it to happen easily.

Yet, there was a difference in the process. My body absorbed it at the same speed with one very important exception. One of my fingers, was the same finger I had used as the target for my experimentation. That part absorbed the divine spark much faster, yet other than that, showed no radical change.

Interesting, I thought as I let my mind wander about the implications of it. Pity that the improvement I had received didn't justify the amount of mana I had to spend — or the excruciating pain I felt — during the process. And that was without considering the potential danger of replicating the same trick in a more vital location like my heart.

I focused on depleting the remaining Divine Spark, feeling it empowering my body. It took barely an hour, and only because I wasn't in a particular hurry. The rewards weren't particularly impressive. It was hard to quantify since it didn't react with the System, but I doubted the overall impact was more than a few points split among various stats. From a perspective of powering up, it was a total waste.

Yet, I wouldn't change it for anything. The more I learned about the System, the more I realized how unreliable the power it gives. Someone could block it the way I could block the others, leaving me powerless.

And I had no intention of finding myself powerless. Living two decades as the mule was more than enough.

After finishing the process, I was about to have a walk around the school, a mixture of relaxing trips and hunting beasts — as my reagent reserve was almost completely empty — when I felt a sudden mental flare. It wasn't mine, but coming from an external source.

It wasn't the first time I had felt that particular flare, a mixture of panic and loss of strength, but that hardly made me feel calmer, because the last time I had felt that, it came from Helga and Cornelia, and I had barely able to save them despite using Teleportation.

Yet, this time, it wasn't even an option, because before I could even consider that, the feeling started to weaken, making it impossible to use as a guide.

It was time to take a risk, I thought even as I reached my other perk, Empowerment, even though my first experience with it hadn't been any more successful than Teleportation.

Yet, it was better than the alternative, so, I threw it to the distance.

[Empowerment (0/1)]

Even as the counter of my skill dropped, I sensed the power of the Companion Node flare at a distance, turning into a flame from cinders.

Then, before I could do anything else, the sensation disappeared completely!

“No,” I gasped in anger as a sudden feeling of loss filled me. I conjured another air elemental, dumping as much mana as I could manage, and started flying at the full speed, making no attempt to stay concealed, uncaring the possibility of it being a trap.

It was reckless, of course, but recklessness was better than the sudden feeling of loss that filled my being.

I moved toward the direction of the flare. It wasn't an accurate one, but it was the best I had, and certainly better than trying to teleport without a beacon.

While I moved, I focused inward, trying to understand the source of the feeling. I could still feel five Companion nodes, split across many directions. The two brightest ones — Helga and Cornelia, the carriers of completed nodes — were still together, with no sign of something wrong.

In a different direction, I could feel two together, though not as strong. Titania and Marianne, I recognized easily. And since the other one I could feel at the direction of the school, it suggested that Oeyne was safe as well.

It only left Aviada, the one that was most likely to overestimate herself to take a dangerous task. “Fuck, please be well,” I murmured even as I tried to focus on the absence of a feeling, only to come up predictably empty. I continued flying, hoping to find something that would give me a better target as I flew even higher on the sky, cutting whatever beast stupid enough to think that I made a good target, not even slowing down to pick any material from them.

A few minutes later, I finally found what I was looking for. A huge forest fire burning with all the colors of the rainbow, creating an extraordinary view.

I didn't bother to slow down as I dived down, my perception allowing me to catch everything, in particular, a familiar redhead with a bow, trying to defend herself against the beasts, frenzied as they tried to escape the fire. I dispelled the elemental and dived down, already casting arcana bolts to kill everything that surrounded her without any risk of area damage.

She was my only source of information.

“You,” she gasped as she noticed me. “Help her, she's in the middle of the fire!”

“What happened?” I asked even as I cast a modified healing spell, allowing me to detect any kind of life inside the fire, only to come up negative. There was no one inside.

Unacceptable, I thought even as I gathered my mana...

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6241 / 6528 Mana: 6890 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Six

I stood still, looking at the out-of-control rainbow fire, my mind running wild as I tried to process what happened when Carla hugged me hysterically. Understandable, considering she had watched her patrol decimated, her allies escape to abandon her, her best friend lost in great peril.

“Help her,” she gasped as she tried to swallow her cries.

Although I understood her concerns, sympathized with that even, I didn’t have the time to cater to them in the middle of such an emergency. I put on her shoulder, calming her magically with a Biomancy trick.

[-43 Mana]

I simply didn’t have the luxury of doing it otherwise.

Then, I started speaking to her, bringing the full weight of my charisma to bear. “Carla, I need you to calm down and tell me what happened. That’s the only way I could help Aviada,” I said.

I wanted her to talk, because the fire was giving me a bad feeling, making me afraid of poking it. I would still do that, ultimately. I had no intention of abandoning Aviada, especially since I could still feel her companion node as I walked closer to the fire, but it was muted.

Like there was a curtain between us, preventing me from sensing her properly.

Unfortunately, I was under time pressure, because I had no idea what caused that muting effect, which meant I had no idea just how long Aviada would continue to maintain her state of living.

Yet, I waited for Carla to start speaking before taking an action, because it wasn’t an exaggeration to say the fire was extraordinary. It was burning trees, which was rather ordinary for fire. Burning the stones and earth underneath, less ordinary.

Instantly destroying the detection spell that I tried to use to see if there was a living creature, even more unexpected.

“I don’t know,” she murmured, her voice slurring slightly as the calming spell worked on her mind. “We were patrolling when a large fire falcon ambushed us, killing two of the members immediately. It was at least Class Twenty, maybe even stronger. Yet Aviada managed to defend

us, if only barely. If the others supported her, maybe we could have..."

"Focus on what happened, we need to save her," I reminded her. "Did something extraordinary happen? What happened to the beast."

"I don't know," Carla gasped. "It looked like the beast was about to win, but then the glow appeared around Aviada, and she somehow killed the beast in a slash... But as the slash hit, the fire suddenly exploded in all those colors."

It was probably my fault I decided even as I started to flare my mana again. The fire was too extraordinary to be created by just a monster, at least by a monster that Aviada could resist alone.

To extinguish the fire, my first reflex was to use water magic, which was the opposite element of the fire, which would allow me to suppress it, forming my mana into a huge water wave...

[-1690 Mana]

Only to fail spectacularly.

The moment the wave came in contact with the fire, an explosion occurred as I felt my mana being wrenched out of control, and similar chaos of color spread into the water. "Fuck," I murmured as the fire flared even worse, threatening to burn us to cinders even in the distance, forcing me to shield us with a spell.

Luckily, the indirect heat didn't create the same effect.

I was ready to pull back to find an answer, when the water wave rose as well, almost conscious as it slammed against the fire, making my eyes widen in shock.

Something extraordinary was going on.

I watched as the fire and water entangled, fighting violently, threatening to create a disaster, their rainbow colors cycling faster and faster. Unfortunately, the fight was not equal, and the water, despite the elemental advantage, looked like it was about to lose the fight.

So, I decided to reinforce it with another wave.

[-952 Mana]

My spell hit the wave from behind, only to melt into its structure rapidly, giving the water the

much-needed opportunity to fight. I watched carefully, trying to find an opportunity, but that was a slow process.

With the Aviada's echo weakening, I doubted I had the luxury of waiting until the fire resolved completely. It was time to take another ridiculous risk. At first, I thought she was weakening, maybe even dying, but after some concentration, I realized it was different. She was just getting away.

Yet, while that was better than her dying, it wasn't that much better, because the way she had been getting distant felt foreign. It was hard to explain without knowing the reason, but it felt much different than physical distance. Rather than just walking away, she was sinking underground.

I needed to understand what was happening. And for a quick result, I only have one option, the Arcana dimension.

Luckily, after my disastrous teleportation attempt, I had worked on some basic safety measures, like how to create a temporary beacon that would allow me to return to my own location rather than risking disappearing in Arcana dimension completely.

Pity I needed to work more to create one that wouldn't degenerate after a couple of minutes at best.

[-1320 Mana]

After making sure the structure was complete, I threw a glance at the chaotic dance of the elements. They were still in a stalemate, so I closed my eyes, letting my body fade in the material reality...

And step into the twisting nature of the Arcana dimension, the chaotic energies flowing wildly around me, worse than any tornado, threatening to destroy my whole being if I dared to rest there more than a few seconds.

Yet, all the twisting colors, the pain, and the threat of total destruction if I dared to dally too long managed to take the backseat, because of three new surprises.

The first, and the most noticeable, was the gaping wound at the giant dome that surrounded the Arcana dimension, giving me the glimpse of a show even more wild and chaotic. Unfortunately, even I had described the dome as surrounding all dimensions, thanks to the warped nature of the distance in this dimension, it was hard to say that it was far away.

“Fuck!” I gasped in pain as some kind of Arcana energy, yet more potent and wild slipped through the wound.

It didn't hit me, but even passing near me, the damage it created was significant.

[-1230 HP]

Even worse, the sudden flow touched the second problem. Two mercurial presences, fighting in the Arcana Dimension, one made from fire and the other made from water, and the mysterious energy empowered both of them, making them lash against each other with increased aggression.

It would take a total idiot to miss the extraordinary nature of the fire, but even then, I didn't expect it to only be a physical manifestation of whatever was going on in the Arcana dimension, much more overwhelming than the little mana-burning rainbow. Even worse, the water spell I had used had an equal echo...

[-281 HP]

It didn't make much sense, so spent another painful second to examine them despite my constantly-draining health, only to notice some kind of line connecting to the wound, one that connected both of them as if it was empowering them.

Hardly a detail to be dismissed, especially if my theory about the dome as the border of the System was accurate.

Luckily, not all was bad, because the wound on the dome was recovering with a speed that was noticeable to the naked eye.

[-247 HP]

So, I turned my attention to the third issue, namely, the location Aviada. I managed to find her easily, confirming she was still alive, but that was the limit of the good news.

I was able to distinguish her location sufficiently, which would have been good news if it wasn't for one very important detail.

Her presence was behind the Dome, and I was only able to feel her through the wound.

A wound that was closing in great speed, making it impossible for me to pass through even if I was willing to take such a great risk. She was somehow still alive, but I couldn't risk just pushing

forward to see whatever that was protecting her would work to save me as well.

I turned my focus on the battle of fire and water, and noticed that they were losing their vigor rapidly as the wound tightened.

It was time to go back.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 4523 / 6528 Mana: 4981 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Seven

I was already flaring my mana as I stepped back to the material dimension, afraid that crazy fire and water would have driven closer. Considering the impact they had on the mana, I had no intention of testing their impact directly.

Luckily, they were still tangling in the distance with all the intelligence and control of rabid animals, giving me a chance the focus on the more immediate problem.

The corrosive energies of the Arcana dimension, threatening to melt both my equipment and my skin.

I flared the mana I had gathered, dispelling the corrosive energies that could damage my body more. My clothing and the rest of my equipment weren't as lucky, I noted as tried to save my clothing once again, but only being half successful. Helpless, I had reinforced the gaps with mana and temporary conjured material replicating the trick Janelor was quite the fan of.

[-690 Mana]

Unlike her, I didn't construct the spell matrix excessively lightly, so the conjured material would hold a few days. And, luckily, this time, I wasn't carrying anything I couldn't replace easily — and only because I didn't have time to rearm myself after the previous teleport attempt destroyed my weapons.

I really needed to put some time to make my instantaneous teleportation ability useful. Not just because it was a very functional utility ability, but it was obvious that I had no hope of following Aviada's disappearance without perfecting it.

The chaos that was behind the dome, as revealed by the wound, was rather scary. I couldn't help but frown as thought about that. I had known that the next crisis wouldn't have been too far away, but I didn't expect it to arrive without giving me chance to get a full night's sleep.

Nor did I expect Aviada to be the source of it.

Apparently, I was still too optimistic.

"What happened, is Aviada well? Where's she?" Carla asked as she dashed forward to me, taking a step into the wards I had created without care.

I shook my head even as I pulled my gaze away from the battle of elements, turning my gaze

toward her, barely holding myself back from giving her a lesson about the perils of walking into mysterious wards.

I decided against it after a momentary consideration. “Don’t worry,” I started instead, wanting to calm her down. “I have discovered that she’s still alive and well.” My words were only partial truth, as while I had detected Aviada was still alive at that moment, I was having significant trouble feeling her as the wound continued to close.

I had no way of divining her fate once it was completely cut other than wishing.

But there was no benefit to Carla knowing that. Whatever Aviada was facing was not something her archer friend could help directly. And even if she tried to rouse the school, it was clearly not an issue that could be the rest of the faculty — at least not by anyone she could talk to.

It was a topic that even Titania knew precious little about, making the headmistress and Janelor the only reliable sources of information, neither a common student from the warrior department could access.

And that assumed she knew what to say in the first place.

“How can we save her?” she asked, her panic replaced by enthusiasm as she heard about her status.

I took a sigh as I turned my attention to the battling elements once more, noting that they were getting weaker — but not at a speed that would make me calm down. Moreover, the water was once again starting to lose against the fire, so I reinforced it with another flash of mana.

[-382 Mana]

“Unfortunately, due to a magical resonance, she had experienced a cascading teleportation failure, and it’ll take a while for me to go and bring her back, so, you should keep it a secret,” I said, not above reinforcing the impression with a judicious application of my Charisma, enough to ensure she wouldn’t go around trying to organize the weaker instructors to act.

The situation was complicated enough without others poking around, or worse, the spies in the school getting wind of the extraordinary nature of Aviada’s disappearance. I didn’t expect them to be able to follow Aviada, but it would be a problem once I successfully saved Aviada.

I steadfastly avoided any possibility of failure.

“I see,” she murmured as she fell silent, not knowing what to say, joining me to watch the dance of the elements. I was reasonably confident that even if the fire managed to defeat the water, it would fade away, but reasonably confident was markedly different from absolute confidence.

And the world was dangerous enough without introducing out-of-control fires with the ability to burn everything, including pure mana.

“Why is this fire still burning?” she asked, her voice calm. Too calm, even. Suppressing the shock medically made her effectively drunk, I realized. “Should we try to extinguish it?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll handle it. You should rest a bit after such a trying ordeal,” I said, and before she could answer, I put my hand on her head, sending her to sleep and healing her wounds simultaneously.

[-281 Mana]

The last thing I needed as I carefully examined a dangerous phenomenon was a functionally drunk warrior that might decide to poke things exactly at the wrong moment.

Instead, I spread my mana carefully, examining the ongoing battle, the elements reacting with a destructiveness I had never seen before. I observed them, not only to control the battle, but also to understand whether there was any trick I could learn from their destructiveness. Unfortunately, that didn’t seem to be the case, as before I could pole poke their structure to get a better feel, my mana evaporated with the aftershocks of their fight.

So, I focused on healing myself, which cost me a nice chunk of the mana I had managed to recover as the wounds resisted my attempts to heal them.

[-2890 Mana]

[HP: 6528 / 6528]

I had no idea what the turbulence that escaped from the wound, but there was no doubt about the danger buried in its nature. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have taken that much mana to erase a glancing hit, one that didn’t even connect with me properly.

Even with the system, the world was dangerous.

After that, I waited for the fire and water to slowly extinguish themselves, and once they disappeared, I even went back to the Arcana dimension to check the status of the wound,

though this time, I managed to step back before I could receive anything other than cosmetic damage, which was healed easily.

[-296 Mana]

Both the wound, and the elemental chaos in the Arcana dimension were gone. Only then did I dare to step into the area that had been utterly destroyed by the flames to do some magical tests.

Not that I expected much after the destructive battle, aftershocks enough to destroy the spells I tried to construct.

Unsurprisingly, the area was in total flux, the mana dancing chaotically before the System managed to absorb it back.

Yet, the remaining echoes were interesting. The fire had left, for the lack of a better term, its shadow behind, and the sensation was certainly not something I had come close to replicating by fire magic despite my significant expertise backed by my stats.

Yet, some things were clear. It was not something that could be easily replicated by a simple spell, as it had an animalistic feel to it. I would have assumed somehow the beast Carla had mentioned was responsible for that feeling, but I could feel the same echo from the water element, whose source was my spell.

Pity I had bigger priorities than delving into the exact nature of those interesting changes.

I didn't expect to find anything else, but I still continued to search, not wanting to miss a clue due to laziness.

It was a good thing that I did, because, after five minutes, I found something even more interesting. The residue of a new type of energy, familiar yet different at the same time, distinct enough for me to properly categorize it even if I couldn't identify its exact nature.

The Divine Spark.

Or, more accurately, A Divine Spark, because even if the residue that remained was too small to be properly interacted — more of a shadow than anything with a substance — it was clear that I wasn't dealing with the Divine Spark of Light or Darkness. It was something different, with some kind of edge that was lacking by both.

Sharp was the best I could describe the shadow it left.

And just like that, things got even more complicated.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7830 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Eight

The mark of existence for another source of Divine Spark was not exactly welcome, especially since it pushed an already-complicated situation to a new level, making Aviada's disappearance an even bigger puzzle to solve.

Like things weren't difficult enough with the elements acting wild and women disappearing behind the reach of the system.

Naturally, I didn't leave the area immediately after discovering the divine spark. I stuck around, spending the next couple of hours doing my best to discover some new evidence. I had analyzed the ground to understand how the out-of-control mana affected the area, did my best to take samples of the weakening shadow of the Divine Spark — which was particularly hard as the System had already devoured most of it — and recording other extraordinary details, no matter how insignificant they sounded.

I even took the risk to shift back to the Arcana dimension a couple of times to see if I could get any more clues — only after setting several guidance beacons to ensure I could return without a problem, naturally, no matter how much mana those temporary beacons burned — but the twirling magical energies was even worse in terms of retaining evidence.

Ultimately, all my extra work was in vain, yielding no new clues.

Aviada was gone, lost in a place where I strongly doubted the System didn't work, leaving nothing other than a bunch of clues too complicated to properly decipher, from wild elements to the ghost of a Divine Spark with a mysterious sharp nature.

Even worse, I couldn't even understand the weird reaction of the elements. The easiest assumption about their nature was to say they were real elementals, but that wouldn't be correct. First of all, elemental beings were denoted by their excessive purity, and those rainbow-fires and chaotic water were not exactly pure.

They were strong, far stronger than any elemental I had read about in the library, but they weren't exactly pure in terms of their nature.

More importantly, elementals were feared because of their great intelligence, even the weaker ones having the survival instincts of animals — particularly mercurial and disobedient ones, even — which made them very difficult to control.

There was a reason I had used faux-elementals that worked strictly under my control despite burning a lot of mana rather than risking to summon real elementals.

Unfortunately, even there, I wasn't able to come to a conclusion, because everything I knew about true elementals, I had learned from the books and notes of the other mages rather than my own experience — a direct consequence of lacking time to properly experiment with everything that was going on.

Yet, I also remembered the panic Janelor had shown when I dared to summon a faux elemental as a ride, which conflicted greatly with my direct experience until that moment. Ultimately, the existence of the wound in the Arcana dimension, together with the clear link between those out-of-control elements with the mysterious world behind the Dome, was a more reasonable reaction.

There was nothing else to be done," I decided, not in the mood to take yet another mystery about why elements might work differently under the control of the System compared to outside.

I had more than enough problems already.

With a sigh as I summoned another air elemental mount for myself — though not before summoning a much smaller one, just to test whatever that made the elements go crazy was certainly gone — grabbed Carla, and went back to Silver Spires.

[-1190 Mana]

With the meeting with the headmistress coming closer, there was no point wasting time. While traveling, I kept Carla unconscious. Only when I arrived, I woke her up.

"Huh, we're back," she murmured sleepily as she glanced around, realizing the danger was truly gone.

"Yes, we are," I said. The sleep clearly helped her after her close call with death.

"What about Aviada?" she asked, though this time, she didn't panic as much despite the worry tinging her tone, clearly encouraged by my display of skill.

"She's far away, so it's going to take a while for her to return," I explained once again rather than dismissing her. I needed her calm, after all. The last thing I needed was for her to go around, poking things unnecessarily.

“What should I say?” she asked.

“I’ll handle informing the school, you just need to explain the fate of your patrol. If they poke, tell them you were already too far away to notice anything. Try not to talk about the rainbow nature of the fire, though,” I said. If that was as extraordinary as I assumed, revealing that would only make things more complicated.

“But what about the other survivors. They had escaped quickly, but the flames were too big for them to miss,” she countered.

It was a good point. In the mess, I had neglected that part. I thought a bit about the merits of finding them and ordering them to silence using the authority of the headmistress, but after some time, I decided against it.

Unless I killed them, one of them would definitely leak it, and while it was something I wanted to keep secret, I didn’t want to keep it secret by killing several innocent people.

Even if they were cowardly enough to abandon Aviada.

“You can talk about it,” I finally said. After all, I had no real reason to put that much effort to keep that secret, especially since doing so had the risk of alerting the others to more than a few inconsistent reports from a lost patrol.

“What about the sword?” Carla commented. “Should I talk about how extraordinary it was?”

“The sword?” I asked, my thoughts coming to a halt as she mentioned it. “Why don’t you explain to me first what exactly happened, and why the sword is important?” I said, as a frown appeared on my face. Up until now, she didn’t mention the sword.

I wanted to be angry at her, but considering I had magically calmed her down before putting her to sleep forcibly as I dealt with more urgent things, it would be a bit hypocritical to do so. Ultimately, it was my oversight.

That didn’t prevent annoyance from rising, of course. It was just pointed inwardly.

“It happened when the creature attacked. When she first started fighting, it didn’t look like she had a winning chance, so the surviving members of our patrol started running away. I stayed, trying to support her from a distance, but the defeat seemed inevitable...” she said, trembling softly as she remembered just how close she had come to death.

“Then?” I asked, prompting her to continue.

“She shouted, and her sword started glowing. Just like that, Aviada started swinging her sword faster and faster, each swings pushing the creature back. But when the creature attacked her with some kind of flame attack...”

“And...”

“I don’t know,” she murmured. “That part is a blur. I remember Aviada swinging her sword, and with its glow, the sword managed to cut the flames. But when she cut the flames, it turned into an explosion. When the flames fell, Aviada was nowhere to be seen, and the place was covered by those rainbow flames. Then, you arrived.”

The sword had clearly reacted with Empowerment perk, I thought even as a frown appeared on my face, not sure whether I would be surprised or not.

In a way, it was not surprising, because I had used the sword, and knew it was superior to anything I could craft without improving my skills even further. It was a complicated weapon, with many mysterious enchantments limiting its usefulness to anyone but the designated wielder. For it to hide such a mysterious feature was not impossible.

Yet, I was also surprised, because the last time I had used and analyzed the sword, I was significantly lacking in terms of crafting knowledge, and assumed that while it was a very good sword, ultimately, its mysteries wouldn’t stay ahead of me.

Aviada had always been the focus. The sword had been just an afterthought.

However, Carla’s story, along with the evidence I had collected told me a different story. Aviada’s mysterious victory, the disappearance of Empowerment after usage, the wound on the Dome, even the existence of that wild elements...

If her story was accurate, Aviada’s sword somehow forcefully took the Empowerment, and somehow used that not only to kill the monster, but also to create wounds in the borders of the system.

A temporary one, but I doubted that trivialized the extent of the achievement.

It wasn’t the worst of it, however. It wasn’t hard to guess that the sudden ability the sword had displayed was tightly linked to the sharp Divine Spark I had managed to discover.

I had worked so hard to find a source, only to miss the one next to me.

Of course, there was no guarantee whether the sword itself was the source. There was much circumstantial evidence against it as well. I had examined the sword several times, and while I clearly missed several important details about the sword, both me and the System failing to detect Divine Spark hidden in the sword was a stretch.

Ultimately, however, it was impossible to make a decision.

“Do not mention anything about the sword, it’ll only make her a target,” I said to Carla. I had no idea whether the sword had the Divine Spark, or it was an indirect effect created by Empowerment that I was reading inaccurately.

Still, before I could delve into it, it was best to keep it secret.

Even if Aviada was currently lost in the distant lands.

Luckily, I had two sources I could subtly question about the mysteries behind the event. Conveniently, I even had a meeting with the headmistress a few minutes later.

I just needed to find a good excuse to question her without revealing the truth of the event.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 8000 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Seventy-Nine

When I arrived at the headmistress' room, I found it decorated with crystal pillars once again, glowing softly as they charged with her unique-natured mana, pushing the oppressive darkness of the wards she used to block the System.

She was once again dressed in her gold-embroidered armor, carrying a sword, her beautiful wings carrying an impressive sight with their soft glow. Unfortunately for her, I had already seen her dressed like that before, so I noticed other details. Like the subtle hint of blackness under her eyes, indicating a sleepless evening. One that also implied exhaustion as well considering just how strong her supernatural body must have been.

And, it wasn't the only extraordinary detail I had noticed. I could also feel the remains of a repeated spell, most likely wards, lingering in the air. A momentary focus had even revealed the type of wards she had been casting.

The storage ward.

Even with my exceptional Perception, I had barely been able to notice the lingering remains, but that didn't mean she had cast it only a couple of times.

After all, pure mana wards, unlike the ones that had been created with the assistance of physical objects, left next to no residual once destroyed. For me to be able to pick them casually meant that she must have created hundreds of them during the night.

And, if her frustration — which, unlike her exhaustion, was much easier to notice on her beautiful face — was any indicator, her repeated attempts to create alternative storage for the Divine Spark had failed spectacularly.

How fascinating.

“Good morning boss. What a great morning, right?” I said cheerfully, amused that I wasn't the only one that had gone through an extremely exhausting evening, though unlike her, I was able to hide it better.

Her twitching eyelid was enough to show just how much she appreciated my greeting. “Come on boss,” I said, pushing even more. “You're an angel, shouldn't you be more cheerful in the morning.” This time, it earned a growl, warning me to keep my mouth shut.

It was enough teasing, I decided as I took my position while she climbed on the platform

wordlessly, not even warning me as her mana flooded me, much stronger than the previous time, enough to be classified as ill-advised.

A cry of pain escaped my mouth before I could suppress it, surprised by her move. A punishment, I noted, unable to hide my grin as I once again created a magical funnel leading to my fake soul-space, stealing as much as Divine Spark as I could manage.

Despite the pain her sudden flood had created, it was hard to say there were no benefits. A stronger flood meant more fragments, and more importantly, it meant she could pay less attention to the sudden disappearance of some of them, allowing me to steal more without making her suspicious.

When it came to an end, I had almost stolen five times the previous amount despite a similar duration, most of it safely locked in my body — a perk of the improved storage I had managed to develop — isolated from the hungry fingers of the System, a sliver of it went to the fake soul space, improving the Light Node, showing the headmistress that her great effort hadn't gone to waste.

However, she seemed to miscalculate the drawbacks of her not-so-subtle punishment, because the moment she cut her mana flow, she trembled, leaning forward as she was going to fall.

Luckily for her, she was in the room with a perfect gentleman! I didn't waste any time before standing up and wrapping my arms around her. "Don't worry boss, I got you," I said cheekily.

"Stop hugging me," she gasped as she pushed me back, her face blushing much harder than I expected. "And stop calling me boss!"

"As you wish, boss," I said, smiling cheekily, enjoying her frustration as I acted significantly laxer. A cheekiness she could not push against too hard, not when I was her only way of keeping her important dragon guest happy, unaware that her guest was much more helpful to me than her, and I would have paid a great price for the privilege of accompanying her if she had presented the deal differently.

Especially since I had resolved the misunderstanding about the exact job description of a servant.

Still, watching the headmistress as she tried to swallow her anger at my playful jabs was beautiful, especially since she was even more uncomfortable compared to the subservience she had shown to Janelor.

Her thoughts were visible on her beautiful face as she weighed the importance of her problem versus admonishing me. However, ultimately, her needs won over her desire to reinforce her authority over my harmless rebellion. "Show me that storage ward again," she ordered.

"As you wish, boss," I said cheerfully as I created the storage, this time even simpler to make it easy for her to copy it flawlessly, watching as she forced another piece of Divine Spark. The storage held the Divine Spark in without any issue.

I expected her to repeat the spell after examining it a few seconds later, solving whatever that was preventing her from completing it, but she surprised me by injecting more Divine Spark into the storage, as if she was trying to break it.

Much to her surprise, it held on, even after she repeated the trick two more times. "How?" she gasped.

It was lucky that she was focused on the structure, because even I had a frown on my face. The capabilities of my storage had exceeded even my expectations. I was tempted to delve deeper into that, but I had more important questions for the headmistress.

Aviada's disappearance was more urgent.

"So, boss," I said while she started poking at my wards carefully with her mana. "Can you tell me more about the world beyond the System?"

"Why?" she asked, turning her gaze toward me suspiciously. "

"I think I can lead the dragon into spilling more important secrets during our discussion if I have more information to direct her, but if you think it's not important.."

"No, it's important," she said, her suspicion replaced by panic, enough to make me guilty about tricking her. At this moment, it was hard to imagine her as a mythical being hundreds of years old, astute enough to manage a complex entity like Silver Spires without revealing her true nature. "Ask me your questions." Though, as she said so, she pushed another sliver of Divine Spark into the storage, continuing to test its ability to hold Divine Spark.

"Let's start with something simple. How exactly is the nature of the lands outside the system."

Her expression showed that it wasn't exactly a simple question, but she still started to explain. "Before the System was established, the worlds were much more ordered. There was the central material plane, a complete world, and the domains of Major Gods surrounded the

material plane.”

“And where were those planes?” I asked.

“Floating in the aether, of course, but that’s not relevant for you. Aether is not something that mortals could step in. Even for the Demigods, it’s almost certain death. Only gods could easily travel in aether Dimension with the help of their avatars.”

I nodded in understanding, assuming aether was what I had been calling Arcana dimension. My attempts at teleportation had taught me just how hard was to successfully utilize it. I had only survived due to sheer luck.

“Can’t people just use teleportation formations,” I asked? After all, teleportation was not exactly a unique skill for me. It could be also done by ordinary mages, if one was willing to create two huge wards and spend an extraordinary amount of mana in the process.

Hardly something that could be used outside the direst circumstances, like reinforcing the capital during a disaster. And only then, it only made sense for some peak existences — at least, in terms of what the public defined as peak, like Titania — to use it.

“That’s only possible if both the target and destination are in the same plane,” the headmistress answered dismissively, not appreciating my interruption. “Without the shadow of the plane blocking the primordial aether flow, an errant wind would burn the wards easily,” she explained impatiently.

Interesting, I thought as I took note of it. I had no idea what primordial aether was, yet her tone implied it was something that was common knowledge, it was her distraction as she fed more and more divine spark to the storage yet it managed to stand, that was making her spill more secrets than she might otherwise explain.

Sometimes, even a word was more precious than gold.

Of course, it raised the question of how Aviada actually managed to survive such a deadly environment. I doubted my Empower Perk was enough to ensure her survival, especially with her absolute lack of magical ability. Yet, I had distinctly felt Aviada’s survival until the breach had closed.

The mystery behind her sword got even deeper.

“So, with the material plane blocked, does it mean the only other place is the domains of the

gods?" I asked.

"More or less," she answered. "There are some plane fragments big enough for people to live, but their shadows are hardly strong enough to establish a successful civilization. They might not exist—" she continued, only to be interrupted by an explosion.

My storage ward finally reached its limit, but the explanation was strong enough to force me to create a shield to protect us from the after-effects. While we were talking, she must have put much more Divine Spark than I expected.

"How can your storage hold that much Divine Spark?" she turned to me suspiciously.

I frowned. It was a question that I wanted the answer to as well. The performance of the storage surpassed my expectations as well.

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty

However, before delving deeper into the question of why my storage was better, I first needed to suppress the sudden flicker of doubt on the face of the headmistress.

Unfortunately, I had no option but to be honest. “I have no idea, ” I answered as I looked at her sharp eyes, doing my best to convey honesty. Though, amusingly, I used Speech and Charisma the same way if I had been trying to trick her.

The irony was hard to deny.

Luckily, the irony of my actions didn't prevent it from working. “How can you have no idea? It's your own spell,” she asked, delving into the operational details of my explanation rather than rejecting it.

I shrugged. “Hey, I have discovered it only yesterday. Pardon me if I don't have a working theory about the exact performance of my spell.”

She frowned, but considering the validity of my excuse — albeit a lie — she didn't have any right of pushing me on the subject too much. “Watch me create one, and see if you see any mistake,” she said with a frown, and created a copy of my simplified storage with great care, using her mana.

“It seems solid enough,” I said, frowning. Yet, the moment she put the smallest sliver of Divine Spark, it collapsed. “It should have worked, there's no difference I can detect,” I said. “Maybe you should try again using the ordinary mana. It might be clashing with your unique mana,” I said. It earned a frustrated glare, as it was clearly something she had tried before. Yet, she repeated, only to explode again.

“Explain,” she said.

I frowned. “May I use the external mana to create one,” I said.

“What difference does it make?” she asked. “The mana provided by the system is perfectly uniform, there's no compatibility difference.” Yet, she said nothing as I reached for the wards she had used, pulling some mana from the storage of the school, and fashioned another cage.

It also exploded.

“How,” she gasped, her frown much thicker, and she wasn't the only one that had that particular

expression. Because I had deliberately used nothing but pure mana to construct the cage, no Tantric manipulation, no Biomancy tricks, no Arcana enhancement. I didn't even push the mana density to the limit to allow it to be copied easily.

Yet, the external mana shattered like a dry leaf.

"I have no idea," I answered, though I had some suspicions, like the unique needs of my System and the constant demand for Divine Spark. Since I wasn't able to replicate it, it didn't seem to be a part of my abilities, but directly about the nature of mana.

A nature that was supposed to be uniform for everyone.

"Maybe we should experiment more to make sure we find the reason for it," I offered before the headmaster could, showing a sudden enthusiasm for the idea, more to convince her that I had no intention of hiding anything. "A few hundred experiments should be enough."

"We'll continue tomorrow," she said decisively, intimidated by my enthusiasm — though only with the help of her obvious exhaustion. And, since she had to supply the divine spark for every attempt, even if I was the one building the storage wards, it was more exhausting for her to test. "I have more important things to focus on first, we'll do it tomorrow," she said.

"As you wish, boss," I said cheerfully, doing my best to ignore the temptation to poke fun at her excuse, and left her, ready to conduct some experiments on my own.

Of course, the headmistress was not stupid, but from her perspective, I wouldn't be able to experiment alone, blocked by my lack of Divine Spark, unaware that I had managed to swindle her enough to conduct that experiment alone.

As always, the lack of information was the killer of sound decision-making.

The only frustration I had was that I needed to suppress the desire to question her more about the planar structure of the dimensions once more, but considering even if she had a method of easily traversing the primordial aether, which wasn't likely, she wouldn't just share it dismissively. I couldn't even rely on Janelor for that. If she had that, she would have used it to leave this plane.

And without a surefire method of traveling, I couldn't reach Aviada.

I decided to focus on the nearest problem. When I left the headmistress' room, I didn't dally around, and left the school as well, traveling back to the same spot I had absorbed the Divine

Spark to empower my body, once again riding an air elemental, ignoring Janelor's warning about the elementals once again.

I found myself on the same opening that I used to absorb the Divine Spark, the wards still in place to dissuade any monster that might decide to act adventurous — though, at this point, it was more about avoiding a momentary annoyance rather than trying to survive against the deadly threat they had consisted just weeks ago.

It was experimentation time.

The first thing I did was to create another storage, the simplest I could manage, with absolutely no unique mana involved, before using the headmistress' trick to inject some mana for it to contain. It managed to hold, which was not a surprise.

Nor was the notification I had received.

[Divine Spark Identified! Please absorb it to continue to support the operations of the System]

Yet, the difference with the notification I had received when I was with the headmistress was notable, burning with an urgency that lacked despite saying the same thing.

It was the difference between a dispassionate whisper and an urgent battle cry.

Interesting, I thought even as I created a larger cage around, using my own mana but keeping it connected to my soul space, not wanting it to waste by letting it evaporate. The ultimate destination was the same, the System, but one of them would be through my soul space, which seemed to be the smartest option.

After all, either my unique version of the System and the general System used the Divine Spark was completely independent, making the general system's consumption a waste, or they shared the same source, meaning it would make no difference other than crediting me with its collection and giving me higher level cap — at least that was what I assumed due to my limited inference based on evidence.

Either case, there was no point in not letting my soul space absorb the Divine Spark that would escape.

Of course, I could try to capture and stuff it back into the storage, but I didn't want to deprive of the System after it detected Divine Spark, just in case it had the ability to punish me for it. I had no idea whether that was possible, but it seemed smart not to poke that particular point.

It was one knowledge I was happy living without.

While my mind was idle, considering the implications of the System, I continued to feed the storage with mana, until it finally exploded, and my soul space greedily consumed it once the outer layer of my wards dragged those pieces back into my soul space.

[-682 Mana]

It took much less mana to burst the storage than the headmistress' attempt, which was interesting considering I had tried to make it exactly as strong, but it didn't take much to understand the difference. The System was once again trying to devour the Divine Spark, showing a much greater appetite than it showed toward mana without the headmistress' darkness ward there to block its detection capabilities.

No wonder she didn't go out casually. I doubted the added pressure would help her already-strained capabilities to contain the Divine Spark.

I focused on the experiment once more, this time creating the storage cage from Arcana mana, only for it to shatter instantly, not even able to contain the smallest spark, just like the headmistress' cage, or the one I had built up from the school's mana reservoir.

The result didn't surprise me, as if Arcana — the single most common magical proficiency — was the answer, I doubted the headmistress would miss the answer for centuries.

Just to make sure, I replicated the test, adding some elemental nature. I started with Earth, considering it was the one easiest to mix with ordinary mana due to its stable nature.

Yet, it failed spectacularly.

This time, it wasn't just the shattering similar to Arcana, followed by a containment failure, but a violent reaction, one that reminded me of the wild dance of the Elements — although not in nature, just in impact and explosiveness.

It would have been really convenient if those wild elements were a result of unlimited Divine Spark, but that was not really realistic. I doubted Divine Spark would have been such a valuable commodity if it could be just extracted from the wild.

Decisive, I had repeated the experiment again, this time trying to exert my craft skill, even though it was less of a mana nature, and more of a skill. It had worked, but not at a significantly better level than my initial attempt.

I had moved to the last part of my experiment. Tantric. Yet, when I created the Tantric cage, only for it to hold the Divine Spark without an issue, a sigh escaped my mouth rather than elation.

Success was good, but somehow, I couldn't help but feel that things got even more complicated...

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Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 6720 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-One

It was not without a reason that I was not glowing with happiness even as the first stage of my grand experimentation was a success, and I had identified why my mana had worked much better than the others to contain Divine Spark.

Tantric.

In a way, that was obvious considering it was only after receiving that ability I was able to help the ladies that shared my affection in many different ways, from easily refilling their mana in an efficiency that was impossible to copy to help them level up directly.

However, from a different perspective, it was dangerously damning. Because, until the Divine Spark, everything I had done was somehow related to the System. It was easy to write off the impact of the Tantric as a transitory success, allowing me to achieve something that could be also achieved by the others, just more smoothly.

The number of high-leveled combatants the Eternals were able to create in bulk certainly supported that conclusion.

Yet, as I looked at the Divine Spark of light smashing against the walls of its Tantric prison helplessly despite the power it contained, I couldn't help but think I had underestimated that particular skill.

Tantric was much more mysterious than just making mana softer and easier to control.

The question, I thought even as I looked at the fragment of Divine Spark, helplessly pushing against its special container, why I had made that mistake despite the obvious implications on the way. I should have noticed that sooner, I thought for a while, only to abandon that track.

Before I could delve deep, a more important detail distracted me.

The Divine Spark was calming down!

With a frown, I turned my attention toward the imprisoned Divine Spark, trying to understand why it was slowing down. For a scary moment, I was afraid it had some kind of consciousness, therefore realizing the futility of its escape, but luckily, that intimidating thought was invalidated easily, because the Spark continued to lose speed at a very steady pace.

Then, I noticed the brightness of the Spark was decreasing alongside its aggressive bouncing,

giving me another interesting probability. Tantric mana was somehow destroying the Divine Spark, which, interestingly, no less scarier than my earlier theories.

As I watched, I corrected my assumption once more. Divine Spark wasn't being destroyed, but transforming. Its brightness and aggressiveness were disappearing, leaving a much calmer concept behind, one that was much easier to transform.

It was hard to define the remaining energy. It was certainly not another source of mana, not even close. It was still an energy of the same intensity. It wouldn't be wrong to call it Divine Spark.

One thing was certain. It wasn't the Divine Spark of Light anymore.

Somehow, Tantric was able to get rid of the unique nature of Divine Spark, leaving only the pure energy behind. "So, that was why I could absorb Divine Spark to empower myself while the Headmistress is suffering for centuries," I noted after taking the risk of absorbing the transformed Spark, feeling a small yet noticeable improvement in my body.

I repeated the experiment a couple of times, only to notice the more intense the Tantric qualities of the mana I pushed, the quicker the transformation process was, removing any doubt whether the Tantric skill that was responsible.

Fascinating.

I would have loved to continue experimenting, but after a few more tests, I had managed to deplete all the Divine Spark I had managed to pilfer from the headmistress — though luckily, didn't let it go to waste, most of it going to my body to reinforce it further while the some consumed by the System, hopefully enough to avoid further embargo to my leveling. With that, I needed to stop the experimentation until the next day.

Unfortunately, that didn't mean I was free to do whatever I wanted until the next day. I still had to visit the experimentation room that was built for me by the courtesy of the Princess, not to mention I needed to reveal the mystery behind her aide's sudden level up and change of skills. Yet, as I summoned my air elemental once more, I couldn't help but sigh exhaustedly. I was trying to deal with too many different things.

Getting strong had its own disadvantages.

After another travel, I was back at Silver Spires, walking toward the temporary Royal residence once more, curious whether I could integrate the discovery about the impact of the Tantric

Mana on the storage artifact I was trying to create — though that would have been challenging to do without being caught by one of the many spying wards and spells they had integrated into the room.

“Please sir, this way,” said the guard, a marked difference from the way they had greeted me the day prior. Clearly, their instructions had been renewed. “Lady Dalia is waiting for you at her rooms for breakfast before you start working, sir.”

“Excellent,” I said, nodding to the guard before I walked inside, following a maid who led me to another corridor, until she opened a door, and revealing an opulent room — too opulent, even, especially considering that it was a temporary room.

“Please take a seat, sir, Lady Delia must be here in a minute,” she said, waiting at the door, waiting for me to get inside before she closed the door. Interestingly, she stayed outside, leaving me alone in the room.

Interesting choice, I thought even I glanced around the room, taking a more detailed record of the opulent scene. Yet, as I glanced carefully, at my Perception, it didn’t take long to realize the opulence was more of a foil than actual richness.

The golden statue on the corner was just gold-plated, the silverware that radiated a sense of magic, but it was not a permanent enchantment or enhanced during forging, but just a simple spell to fake value, though it was good enough to avoid my attention if I hadn’t been looking carefully.

And they were not the only detail. Every single painting in the room, every piece of furniture, every plate was enhanced with spells, spells that had been cast just minutes ago. To their credit, they were cast expertly, more than enough to trick anyone that didn’t have my phenomenal Stats and breadth of magical abilities.

They were fake nonetheless.

Luckily, the delicious spread of breakfast food that covered the table was not fake, filling my nose with its delicious smell. It was certainly a feast worthy of the Royal family. Interestingly, there was no maid to serve the food — not that I cared about it, but it was an interesting break from the image of opulence they were trying to reflect.

When another door opened, and Delia entered, I understood the reason. “Sorry for the delay,” the busty blonde said as she entered the room, wearing a beautiful dress, one that was far too revealing to be appropriate wear. It was a delicious red dress, with a cleavage deep enough to

reveal she wasn't wearing a corset, along with a deep slit that covered the side of the dress that implied the same for her panties.

Yet, despite the beauty of the sight, it wasn't the thing that caught my attention.

No, it was the notification I had received.

[Level Difference of five or more! No Experience]

What an interesting development, realizing that her level had changed once more, this time dropping below the target. I couldn't help but feel curious about which skills I would find once I tapped into her soul space.

"N-not a problem," I said, making a show of stammering as I let my gaze stuck on what her deep cleavage was displaying, deep enough to reveal the ghost of her areolas, my attention enough to deepen her smile.

With the way she dressed, her reaction was hardly a surprise.

"Still, my apologies," she whispered throatily as she walked forward, her hips shaking beautifully with each step, the allure radiating off her almost taking a physical presence, to a level that would have been impossible without significant assistance from her Charisma, one that was enhanced further by a few select skills. "I shouldn't have kept such an exalted guest waiting."

I couldn't wait to discover the exact configuration of skills she had to display such an aura of seduction.

I gulped loudly. "N-nonsense," I stammered even as I took a step back, doing my best to look shocked, curious just how far she would push in her little game, and whether I could ferret out the reason why she had escalated her seduction game.

"Whatever you say," she said, her smile confident as she leaned forward over the table to reach a plate, enhancing her already scandalous cleavage even more. "Let me prepare a plate for you..."

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Two

The sight Dalia created as she leaned over the table 'carelessly' as she put together a plate for me was beautiful even without factoring the way her dress failed against the attraction of the gravity. And the way her breasts continued to defy that attraction determinedly just enhanced the view further, competed by a momentary glimpse of her nipples, beautifully hard in anticipation.

Even as I enjoyed the sight, however, a stab of annoyance remained.

After all, with her level low enough to give me that dreaded notification once more, there was no additional experience to make the moment even sweeter.

I kept my mouth shut, ignoring that annoyance as I did my best to look dominated under her alluring assault.

Instead, I focused on the next issue. I had no idea about the exact skill configuration she had, which meant I had no idea exactly how accurate her observation was to catch the truth behind my actions. And since I was at a point that didn't require taking any big risks, I decided to act conservatively. Not that I expected her to actually succeed in her observations, as there was a limit to the number of skills she could take, and if her level was low enough, she could hardly get enough observation skills in place to catch me.

Not with the number of skills she already had to optimize her seduction capability.

"T-thank you," I stammered as she put the plate in front of me — and giving an even more impressive glimpse of her cleavage in the process. My mouth gaping, I did my best to give her the reaction she was working for, thoroughly enjoying being on the other side of such a radical seduction attempt.

As she pulled back, she dragged her finger 'accidentally' over my hand, unaware that she had given me the opportunity to slip a single point of mana into her body by doing so, giving me the opportunity I was looking for to examine her soul space safely.

A single point of mana wasn't enough to get a complete understanding, but since I was unaware of just how many magical talents she possessed at the moment, I decided to stay on the safe side.

And it turned out to be a smart thing to do, because her current skill set was roughly divided

into three distinct categories.

The first group was, quite predictably, seduction, which didn't come as a surprise thanks to her already displayed abilities. The second category was geared for magical ability, mostly Arcana with some enchanting support, making me glad that I didn't get too aggressive to analyze her soul space. The combination of magical skills she had would work well to catch a magical flare, especially combined with her remaining skills.

The last category was enhanced observation. Though, surprisingly, that part was not as strong as I expected considering her objective, leaving her very capable of catching magical tricks, but less capable of catching the mundane tricks.

Interesting, I thought. Maybe she was convinced that she had already seen my secrets. Or maybe, was more afraid of me using a magical trick on her. Yet, that thought wasn't enough to prevent a momentary frown, because that wasn't enough to explain her choice.

The limited observation, along with her magical focus, was certainly suspicious, leaving me with one important question.

Why she had decided to maintain such a high level of magical ability? Her still being afraid of me was an option, but it was certainly not enough. It was the case, she would have maintained at least one weapon skill and some physical stats to prevent a more direct attack, yet those were completely absent.

Another change in the already complicated game her boss was playing, enough to make me tense.

Yet, as I watched Delia taking the chair nearest to me, I decided to leave that question to a different time. It was impossible to get an answer to every single question, after all.

Luckily, the way she crossed her legs, enhancing her already impressive slit even further to was beautiful enough to compensate for the mission-related annoyance.

I let my gaze fall on the amazing length of her legs, enjoying the delicious sight, happy that the role I was playing allowed me to do so without bothering to hide my gaze. She threw a dismissive yet amused glare my way, thinking I was too distracted with her legs to notice it.

How amusing, I thought, enjoying her silence as I took the first bite from the delicious breakfast spread that had been prepared for me. "Amazing," I said after swallowing.

"I'm happy to hear that," she answered with a teasing slowness. The soft giggle that followed showed she had no intention of hiding that teasing intention.

Not that it was possible to hide that intention in the first place.

She said nothing to follow her words while I enjoyed the food, the fork occasionally freezing in place when she shuffled slightly to give an even better view of her beautiful body, the impressions enhanced further by her seduction-based skills.

Since I was supposed to be shocked by her beauty too much to actually speak, I said nothing else, not that it was too much of a problem with the perfect view of her entire leg peeking through the slit of her dress.

The contrast of her flawless skin against the crimson dress was simply mesmerizing.

My gaze danced between her amazing cleavage and her stunning legs, curves battling with smoothness, occasionally straying higher to get a glimpse of her slender neck.

When she spoke once more, I had been enjoying the sight of her deep cleavage for quite a while. She had raised her arms to reach something, 'coincidentally' covering her cleavage for a moment, and I leaned deliberately to catch a better view.

"Sorry," she said with a growing smile. "I'm not in your way, am I?"

"Uh... No," I said, once again making a show of stammering like I had been just caught reaching for the cookie jar. Yet, I didn't stop staring at her body, showing her that the temptation of her body was stronger than the shame her words generated.

I was really curious about what was driving her to such a thing, so I did everything I could do other than actually saying to her directly I was hooked.

Yet, she kept her mouth shut, not taking the opportunity to mock me, which made me even more curious about what was the objective of this surprise breakfast. Why was she delaying it that much when I was giving her all the indications that I was ready to eat out of her hand?

And when she spoke, it wasn't to unravel that mystery. "Have you tried the honey pastries, they are truly delicious," she whispered even as she stood, preparing me on another plate.

Since when she sat down once more, she pulled her chair even closer, enough 'carelessly' to extend her hand to my lap, I assumed that pastries were just an excuse.

Her playful smile was masterful, naughty, yet with enough innocence mixed in to convince a lesser man that her touch might not mean what he thought it would, keeping things in suspense, which was more difficult to manage than it sounded.

It was too easy to look condescending while trying to give such a complicated impression.

I leaned forward even as I took a bite from the pastries they had picked for me, following it with a gulp of tea. And just as she said, they were delicious, but that wasn't all that.

They were also poisonous!

What an interesting choice, I thought even as I carefully flared my magic internally to grab the offending liquid that had been in the heart of the pastry, one that was only started working when it was combined with the touch of the tea, wrapping it safely, all without Delia noticing.

Despite the subtle web of magic that started spreading from her a few seconds later.

That magic, along with the subtle tightening of her face finally revealed the reason for her magical skill selection, at least partially. She wanted to make sure I had been affected by whatever poison she had fed to me.

Too bad for her she had woefully mistaken about the limits of my magical skills. I had managed to trick people that were much more competent than her magically, both in terms of level and skill focus, and in terms of magical dedication.

[-94 Mana]

I was able to shield the mana flare even as I cast a Biomancy spell, amused by the fact that she was unaware that she had tried to poison a Biomancy master, which was, arguably, an even worse attempt to poison a healer, like Marianne.

Not that Marianne would have a problem negating the effects of the poison, but I doubted she could compete with me in terms of analyzing the poison. So, by a flare of magic, not only I was able to block whatever plan Delia had by poisoning me, but also I would understand how the poison would exactly to destroy her plan even further.

I acted like there was nothing extraordinary going on as I took another pastry, once again followed by the tea to understand how it was working.

Luckily, it wasn't a deadly poison, which gave me a reason to hold back any aggressive

response.

Although, not using a deadly poison wasn't a huge surprise. Even if they wanted to kill me, Poison was hardly a reliable tool to deal with anyone higher than level ten due to a combination of high HP — though due to low Constitution, mages were more vulnerable against such methods even in high levels.

Even for mages, however, there were very few poisons that could reliably kill a level twenty mage, especially ones that could be delivered without excruciating pain to warn about their presence.

Her lack of a reaction as I continued to eat calmly suggested that the poison she had used wasn't one of those destructive ones, confirming I had sufficient time to work on the poison.

For others, deciphering the nature of an unknown poison was difficult without any tools, I had two distinct advantages over other experts. One, my great magical abilities that included Biomancy, second, my high Constitution and HP, giving me the freedom to let the poison affect me slightly, testing the poison through its workings as well as its magical nature.

With that, before I even finished eating the second pastry, I was able to identify the nature of her trick, only to realize classifying it as the poison was pushing.

It was more accurate to define it as concentrated alcohol, mixed with some mild aphrodisiac, the dosage perfect to affect a caster with low Constitution and a high level.

The perfect combination to impair an already horny high-leveled mage's decision-making even further without turning collapsing them.

How interesting.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 6720 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Three

I was curious what kind of objective led her to decide that getting me drunk in the particular way she decided to employ was a good idea. She didn't give me any sign about the reason as she limited herself to leaning back, watching me smugly.

I continued to eat the pastries she had prepared with great 'effort', giving her the opportunity she needed to speak.

Though, I had to admit that, enjoying the carefully-prepared breakfast while she shuffled in her seat carefully to maximize the impact of her beauty was a pleasant affair despite her trick. She certainly had the instincts to cultivate an aura of seduction, and with the assistance of the skills she had picked, it turned into an amazing show.

Almost enough to forgive her attempt to manipulate me with some direct, adulterated assistance.

Almost.

I waited until our eyes met, and smiled. "The breakfast is delicious," I murmured, though I avoided slurring, not wanting to give her the impression that the pastries she prepared were too effective.

I wanted to enjoy the process.

"I'm happy to hear you like it," Delia said.

"Oh yeah," I told her even as I glanced down, getting a very interesting angle down the loose dress she had worn for my pleasure, the angle particularly spectacular.

Her smile promised me a lot of interesting things.

But, since she was yet to make a move to deliver one of those promises, I decided to act proactively. After all the effort, I deserved an advance. I leaned to the side, and before she could react, my arm was already around her waist, and pulled her onto my lap.

The slight widening of her eyes as I moved faster than she expected was beautiful, but when my arm was wrapped around her waist, she made no move to pull back, instead of giggling playfully. It was an artificial move, her hand already on my chest — giving her an excuse to push me away a bit while still maintaining intimate physical contact.

A beautiful attempt. Too bad I had no intention of allowing her to succeed. The exact nature of her trickery went a long way to prevent me from doing so, no matter how amused I was, dealing with someone else trying to use my tricks on me.

“So,” I whispered into her ear as I pulled her closer, a touch harder than necessary to suggest while I wasn’t drunk enough to slur, I was drunk enough to lose control of my strength slightly — the fake strength I had convinced her that I had, of course, as my real strength was not something she could handle, even playfully. “Tell me, what do you want?”

“Want...” she said, stammering, caught surprised at my sudden words, especially with my lips close enough to brush against her. Flustered, for a moment I had thought she was about to deny needing anything. She picked a different direction. “Why do you think I want something?”

A simple yet smart way to deflect. Not admitting anything, yet not committing to not asking the favor yet as well. Of course, there were many ways to bypass such an argument, but I decided to have mercy on her. “Well, the amazing breakfast you had prepared for me was one clue...”

Then, before she could say anything, I grabbed the front of her dress, and pulled. It wasn’t a hard pull, but it wasn’t a sturdy dress either, easily rippling to reveal her breasts. I grabbed one of the spectacular globes that were revealed completely, and whispered again. “And, the dress is not bad as far as the clues yet.” A smirk popped to my face. “Sorry, was.”

She tensed, but forced a giggle quickly to hide that tenseness. “Well, I need something...” she murmured, her voice turning beautifully seductive after the initial tremble. Clearly, whatever she had in mind was more important than the presence of my dancing fingers, clamping around her nipple.

“Oh, really?” I whispered as I twisted her nipple, using the opportunity to sneak some more mana into her body to examine her. And I kissed her neck, making her tremble, which allowed me to be even more reckless.

[-216 Mana]

The moan that escaped, far too melodic and soft to be fake, was delicious. Unfortunately, I had other things to focus on. Arriving at her soul space, I turned my attention to its unique structure even more carefully to understand how exactly she could change her skills that easily.

The first thing I checked was the authenticity of it, afraid that she might be using a fake soul space. Yet, examining carefully, I could feel the connection her Skills had with her soul space. Meaning, it wasn’t a fake.

At least, not the way I had created it, I corrected myself as continued to examine it, only to notice the skills weren't as static as they were supposed to be. Instead, there was a sense of shuffling and lessening.

Like an ice cube, slowly melting under the sun, melting, so was the mana that created it was melting slowly.

How interesting, I thought even as I continued examining it. It wasn't a quick process, one that required only minutes to complete, but even by a simple estimation, it was certain that it wouldn't last a week.

And it would certainly lose its effectiveness to work as a skill in a shorter time, though, on that, being more accurate was rather difficult. I tried to poke it with my own mana, but noticing it hardly helped the stability of the skill, I had to pull back.

I didn't want to risk revealing my hand just yet.

With that, I pulled back from her soul space, making a note to examine that later. But since my mana was already inside, it would have been a waste to let that mana disperse. Instead, I started to infuse that mana into her body carefully, to trigger her arousal.

After all, she earned her treatment with the trick she had tried to pull.

My trick sounded simple, but casting a spell on a mage's body while keeping them unaware was certainly not a simple task. It stretched my abilities to the limit, and even then, it was a task that would take a while.

Luckily, I had some proper entertainment to distract me. "Delicious," I whispered as I squeezed her breast once more, amused by the tightness of her moan, one that was much more honest than before.

Though, the intensity surprised me. Even with my mana beginning to assist, it was an intensity that I hadn't been expecting from an experienced woman.

Which was rather interesting, especially with the smoothness of her earlier flirting, suggesting that, despite using that as a strategy many times, she had never let things come to such a point. Which was, on the one hand, showed just how good she was when it came to seduction, getting whatever she wanted by just dangling the possibility without paying the bill in the end.

On the other hand, it showed just how badly she needed whatever she was searching for, even

more than the Divine Spark storage I had been developing for them if her commitment was any indicator.

“Tell me,” I whispered, feeling curious. “Is your princess is aware of what you’re doing here, or it’s just a freelancing request, only for you.”

Her eyes widened, displaying fear and panic. Pity her amazing acting abilities were not enough to hide their artificial nature, giving me the answer she had been searching for. She wasn’t afraid that her ploy had been revealed, which meant the princess was aware of it.

Or at a minimum, she was confident the princess wouldn’t care about it.

“It’s only for me, but it’s very important,” she begged as her hands landed on my neck. “Please don’t tell anyone, not even the princess.”

“Mm,” I murmured, my smirk getting wider. “And what if I need something to keep my mouth shut.”

“Maybe a kiss,” she murmured as she leaned forward, her tongue darting out to caress my lips before hers connected, her tongue slipping inside my mouth. I let her tongue dance according to her wishes before I retaliated, our assaults clashing for a moment before she found the situation completely reversed.

The kiss was delicious, though not enough for me to focus all my attention on it. Instead, I focused my attention on my mana, intent on triggering her mana even further, to use her distraction.

... only for my eyes to widen in shock. Luckily, I was better at acting than her to disguise my shock, and it survived on my face only for a fraction of a second before it disappeared.

However, the same didn’t remove the reason for my shock. I had noticed that, over her skin, there was a whole layer of mana, almost like a second skin. I couldn’t help but feel impressed, because it was subtle.

Subtle enough to avoid my attention despite our closeness.

I couldn’t help but frown at the impressiveness of the achievement. I was an expert on magic, and my stats allowed me to have unmatched flexibility. Yet, despite spending so much time with her over several days, I had failed to notice it.

Or did I, I suddenly corrected my thoughts. After all, I had failed to notice her disguise. What guarantee there was that I had been dealing with Delia on previous days...

Yet another mystery to solve.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7810 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Four

The sensation that immediately followed the realization that I had been tricked was an interesting feeling. A part of that was no doubt unpleasant, like being hit by a surprise water attack without the slightest hint.

Yet, just like water hitting one's face in the middle of a hot summer day, it was invigorating. With everything that was happening, I was starting to believe that, at least in Silver Spires, everything was under my control. And being wrong on that aspect was dangerous, but there was one thing certain.

It was not boring.

As I continued kissing her, I carefully examined the structure that kept her face hidden, careful not to disrupt the structure, trying to understand the difference it had caused.

The first thing I noticed when I expanded the energy was that her face wasn't the only thing that was behind that disguise. Her body was also affected. The good news was the changes were pretty minimal, just enough to bring me a particular memory.

The princess, stepping out of her carriage with four other handmaidens, each looking eerily similar.

Maybe there was more to the princess' choice of handmaiden than just aesthetics. It would certainly help to use them interchangeably depending on the situation, especially with the freedom to adjust their skills.

I wondered which of the four handmaiden's mouths I was currently ravaging mercilessly, before pulling back a few seconds later, giving her a chance to catch her breath. For a given value of pulling back, as one of my hands still lingered on her back, preventing her from moving back, while the other was still on her breast, caressing and squeezing in equal measures.

To her credit, even under the assault of pleasure, she managed to keep her objective in mind. "About my request..." she whispered.

"Yes," I murmured before leaning forward, stealing a lingering kiss from her neck. "About your request..."

"We need a little help, from a brave soul who's proficient in combat. Someone better than the average soldiers in our employ."

“Oh, I would have thought the Royal Procession would have enough elite soldiers to handle such a threat?” I said, though made sure to sound like I was making a dig rather than an actual question, while still forcing her to explain.

“We have good soldiers, but true elite... They are hard to find, and even harder to convince,” she answered, her voice beautifully gaspy, the way she gently caressed my cheek leaving no doubt about exactly what she had been talking about.

It caught my attention, leaving me curious about the reason for going that much effort into just asking for some military assistance. One thing was certain. The explanation she implicitly gave, that it was just a regular mission from the Princess, was a lie.

If I wasn't aware of their unique ability to change their skills, adapting to their need, I might have believed that they lacked a true combatant even after seeing the impressive performance of their thief, but knowing that they have a modular ability to adjust their skills, that was clearly not the case.

Which meant that the situation wasn't as simple as requiring a strong combatant. It could be a personal plan from Delia — or not-Delia, if we were being accurate — trying to use me for a personal project without asking the Princess, though I didn't believe that.

A part of that was the fact that she had optimized her skills before arriving. And while it was technically possible that whatever they were using to change their skills was something they could use without alerting the Princess, it wasn't very possible.

They wouldn't let such a dangerous strategical tool casually accessible.

And, even if changing her skills without asking the Princess was possible, she wouldn't have handled that operation in Delia's room, when all the guards had noted my presence here. Not the most concealed way.

Which meant the operation was approved by the Princess, and they wanted me to handle a mission that they could do themselves. I was sure they could do it themselves. I didn't have any indication that they were as strong as me, but they were certainly stronger than the strength and combat capability I had displayed for them as one of the ancillary members of the headmistress' team.

Maybe it was the danger, so they preferred to send a nominal ally than one of their members. Technically, I might have assumed the critical work they had assigned me would be enough to remove the possibility of a betrayal — but the more I learned about their interesting disguise

abilities and fake skills, the less I trusted that possibility.

Their ability was not limitless. If that was the case, they wouldn't have bothered to reach out to an expert for their crafting process. However, my own experience with crafting and magic gave me the reason why they did, coming up with a design from the scratch using a ruined artifact was not a simple affair.

Modifying a design from a working starting point, however, was much simpler.

Of course, sacrificing myself in a desperate mission was not the only possibility. There were many other possibilities, including the fact that the attack might be a perfectly ordinary mission, and they were using it as an excuse to pull me tighter into their faction, but without more information, it was impossible to determine.

Luckily, the source of information was too far away. "Hmm, tell me about this mission," I asked her, but rather than listening carefully, I leaned forward to catch her nipple between my lips, my tongue lashing out freely.

"It— it's a secret before you accept it," she whispered. "But it's not dangerous."

"Of course, it's not dangerous," I bragged as I pulled back to play the role of a drunk perfectly, leaving the task of teasing her nipples to my fingers momentarily. "I'm the greatest mage this school has ever seen. Nothing can threaten me. But I'm curious about the reason for it."

"Still—" she started, only to explode into another moan as my mouth returned to its primary task, this time with the assistance of my teeth, leaving a nice mark on her breast. "I can't talk about the mission before I get the approval of the Princess, and bring the news of your agreement. The mission is too vital."

"Hmm," I whispered. "Still, I'm sure there's no harm giving me a few details off the record, right? Like what kind of enemy that I need to kill. Monsters, undead, enemy warriors? Give me something, beautiful."

"I'm sorry," she managed to say between her moans as my fingers continued mounting their assault on her beautiful breasts, testing their spectacular sensitivity to the limit. "But my lips are sealed. I can't betray the secrets of the Princess."

Interestingly, despite everything, I managed to catch a hint of amusement in her tone. For some reason, those last words were clearly a joke, one that was impressive enough to get a place in her voice even as she was moaning repeatedly.

Pity I had bigger priorities than understanding that particular humorous note, such as interrogating her.

In an enhanced manner.

Suddenly, without a warning, I put my arm on the table, and swept all the dishes to the side. And as the crash of the broken porcelain reached my ear, I was busy pushing her on the table, the slit of her dress giving me an easy way to rip the rest of that beautiful dress off her body, leaving her completely naked.

“Oh, I’m sure I could get at least a small hint off you, enough to count as a favor to a good friend, at least,” I whispered even as I put my hands on her legs, parting her legs.

I felt a hint of panic off her, only to disappear when I leaned forward, bringing my lips nearer to her nether ones. She was clearly unwilling to take that full step for her mission, but had no problems with some oral assistance.

How cute.

“I ... can’t,” she murmured, but one that was tinged with tenseness and anticipation at the same time as I completed my small journey, my tongue touching against her knob, dancing softly. The moan that escaped her pouty lips was simply phenomenal.

“Come on, Delia,” I said after a few brushes even though I knew it was not her name. “Just a hint. A word of clue. A little gift between friends. What’s the harm.”

I glanced at her as she put her elbows on the table and propped up her torso a bit, allowing her to look for me. And, as an added benefit, it enhanced the already spectacular view her breasts were providing even further.

Yet, the sharp gaze she had displayed as she studied me through narrowed eyes and thick, long lashes was even more arousing. It was a challenge, a signal of rebellion, one that triggered my instincts to break that rebellion through pleasure, making her mewl for hours and hours until she had turned into an obedient servant.

Pity that was not an option with the character I was playing. Even my current actions were pushing the envelope.

The magical drunkenness was an excuse, but only up to a certain point.

I wondered if she was aware of just how attractive her gaze was, enough to make me consider abandoning my plans to play the overconfident patsy. If it wasn't for the latest discoveries about the disguise that suggested their faction was even more mysterious than their ability to modify their skill selection, I might have actually abandoned the ploy to test just how much effort it would take to erase that particular expression from her beautiful face.

The expression was attractive, because unlike everything else, it was not an act, but a reflection of her true feelings, her true core, making it a thoroughly maddening addition to our game.

Just the thing I needed to make our game entertaining....

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 8000 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Five

I acted like I missed the sudden sharpness not-Delia's gaze as I leaned forward, pressing my lips against her wetness. A guttural moan escaped her throat despite her best effort, throaty and rich, the kind that would have awakened my arousal if that task hadn't been already completed by her unlimited beauty.

When she looked me back again, after half a minute where she did her best to watch the ceiling, her face was marked with frustration.

Not the frustration of disappointment. Even if I was keeping my abilities restricted to avoid any pesky suspicion that might ruin my plan, her disappointment would have hurt my little fragile male pride.

Luckily, it wasn't that particular flavor, but a more familiar kind of frustration, the kind that a beautiful lady carried while she tried to keep her moans of pleasure suppressed despite her body begging for a release of the pressure.

An expression that I was intensely familiar with.

I had been thinking about pulling back to ask my questions again about the mission she was trying to push for me, but seeing just how decisive she was as she was trying to keep her moans down, I decided to stay once more. Teasing my mysterious adversary was just too tempting to reject.

And it wasn't like my current task was an unbearable chore.

Watching a beautiful busty blonde twist and squirm under my tongue was always a pleasure, so I let my tongue dance aggressively around her knob, each twirl designed to trigger a soft moan off her beautiful lips. Yet, she managed to defy that order for a time long enough to give me a surprise.

Yet, five minutes of dedicated assault was enough to finally break her determination, and a moan escaped her beautiful lips, signaling the perfect opportunity to ask questions about the mission.

I continued licking her delicious core.

Her moans continued, only to be interrupted by question a couple minutes later. "Weren't you about to ask me questions ... about the mission," she whispered, her voice tense with pleasure.

I raised my head, just enough to catch her expression, a beautiful mixture of anger and pleasure hidden behind a fake layer of confusion, one that she doubtlessly expected to trick me.

“Well, I was, but since you seem to be so determined keeping it a secret, I decided to respect your decision,” I said, though considering my hands were still on her thighs as I said that, pushing her legs wide, it was hardly the most convincing argument. Luckily, we were currently not in a position that required a flexible tongue.

A metaphorical flexible tongue, of course, as the literal flexibility was much more important as I leaned down once again to tease her wetness with maddeningly rhythmic brushes.

Pity I couldn't watch her expression simultaneously, though the way her body was trembling had given me enough material to imagine the way it flickered, her mouth open, her tongue flickering out to moisten her lips repeatedly.

Of course, I wasn't completely impervious of the effects of my actions as well. My cock was throbbing at this point, imprisoned helplessly in my pants, enough to make me consider freeing them. Yet, I suppressed that desire, as getting naked would make her think that I was pushing for the next stage.

A stage that she was clearly not ready yet.

So, I continued, amused by the plight I had forced myself in. I continued teasing her core, doing my best to push her to a climax. Under my skilled assault — even if it was limited enough to maintain my false facade — it didn't take long for her to start trembling intensely, providing me with the telltale signs of a beautiful climax.

The kind that rewarded my efforts with a sweet explosion.

Yet, even as she started breathing hard to get rid of the after-effects of her climax, I didn't give her any space to recover, my tongue continuing its assault with a renewed passion, almost reaching the point of displeasing. Luckily, I knew exactly where to stop to her torture sweet and beautiful, the discomfort staying the kind that would maintain its unique nature.

After all, I had the pride of an expert...

It didn't take long for her to realize that I had no intention of stopping, so, I watched as she raised her head, barely able to look me into her eye as she tried to limit the signs of frustrated pleasure behind a fake layer of euphoria.

“M-maybe I could give you a few clues about the mission,” she stammered.

Trying to watch her as she tried to hide an expression of pleasure behind another expression of pleasure was amusing, even though I didn’t underestimate the nature of her actions. She was doing her best to hide her frustration by a layer of euphoria, because she wanted me to believe that she was speaking because I had managed to extract that from her.

Meaning, she was already planning to share that information beforehand.

“Before we left the capital, a precious amulet of Her Highness had been lost to the sticky fingers of a thief, and she needs someone to retrieve it. It’s precious, because it’s one of the few gifts the late Queen had bequeathed to her before her unfortunate demise.”

“Hmm,” I said even as I pulled my head back, but still, I kept my fingers over her core, dancing at the entrance softly, not letting the assault lessen. “And should I assume the Princess wants me to travel to the Capital to find among the rats that skulk in the shadows.” I pushed my chest out proudly. “I’m a great mage, not someone that could suffer the insult dealing with that kind of rats. And if that lazy—“ I started, before forcibly correcting my words, suggesting that I was drunk enough to almost insult the Princess in front of her loyal servant before correcting myself.

“And if Her Highness thinks that I would do such a thing, she’s mistaken,” I corrected myself, trying to force a respectful tone, but deliberately adding a sharp undertone to show a wounded pride.

It was as intentional as her attempt to look lost in pleasure. It wasn’t the first time, but I wanted to remind both her and the Princess that I was too prideful, to the point of being easily manipulated.

Giving a false weakness was much better than letting them searching for a real weakness.

Who knew what they might find if they started skulking around?

“Don’t worry, Her Highness respects you immensely. You’re not only a great mage, but also a great blacksmith that could create miracles with nothing but his mana and his hands. How could she just send you deal with that kind of riffraff. No, her agents managed to track the location of the item.”

“Better,” I said. “Do you have any idea where? I can’t help her if it’s in a distant location. I have important tasks I have to handle in the school, and I doubt the Princess could convince the

headmistress to allow a leave longer than a day.”

“Unfortunately—“ she started, only for a moan to escape as I flicked her knob, my fingers steadily working on her entrance to push her deeper into the pleasure. “Unfortunately, I don’t know where it is, but I’m sure Her Highness would meet you to explain. May I—“ she continued, only to be interrupted by another moan as my fingers twisted beautifully.

“May you, what?” I asked mockingly even as I looked at her face, amused by the flicker of annoyance that climbed to the surface before drowning among the waves of pleasure.

There were certainly perks to the role I was playing, especially with the excuse of being drunk enough to be reckless.

“May I tell Her Highness that you accept the mission? I’m sure she would reward you immensely.”

“You may, as long as she can give me enough reward to make it worth my time, of course,” I said, seemingly dismissively as I leaned down once more to press my tongue against her wet core for a bit more, before pulling back.

“I’m willing to meet with the Princess whenever it’s convenient for her,” I said as I stood up, deliberately leaving her on the edge. A little punishment for her daring. It might have been constituted as out-of-character for my role as the arrogant mage, so I decided to add one last sentence before leaving.

“And if you want to continue our ... discussion...” I said, letting my smirk gain a salacious yet confident reflection. “Feel free to visit my room. I would appreciate the opportunity to take a break.”

With that, I left the room, leaving a sexy, naked blonde panting as she lay on the table.

Though, despite my words, I was yet to truly accept that mission. The reason, the subtle smile of victory that danced on her lips, reminding me of an assassin that successfully sank a dagger in the heart of her target.

A reaction that was more intense than I had expected from a servant.

Even more interestingly, even as that expression passed through her face, her eyes lost their focus, suggesting that it wasn’t me that she was stabbing.

I was just the dagger...

[Level: 32 Experience: 499110 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 8000 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [77/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Six

As I left the room, leaving the beautiful girl disguised as Delia behind, I had to suppress the temptation to swing back and see the mystery hidden behind the impressively-complicated magical disguise. It was out of character for me to leave such a mystery unattended despite the opportunity, but, ultimately, the time it took for me to discover her extraordinary disguise and changing skills stopped me.

They clearly had abilities that I was not privy to, so, any attempt to break through the veil of mystery was simply an unnecessary risk.

Instead, I returned to the room they had created for me for some more experimentation, curious whether I could create storage that could enhance Tantric mana's ability to somehow destroy Divine Spark's nature, to the point of weaponization. Although, with the number of magical observation methods they had integrated into the room, it was going to be a true challenge.

Such a waste, I thought even as I stepped into the laboratory. I had an impressive number of priceless equipment and materials to work with, yet I had to limit my research significantly because I was afraid of a surprise detection ward they might have placed. "What a pity," I murmured as I washed my face, the cold water giving me the jolt I needed to focus for a day filled with hard work, experimentation, and careful espionage.

The presence of constant observation was not doubtful. Even without any hidden motive, the room was like a treasury, only less defended. I could hardly blame them for trying to protect it, or their attempt to maximize the benefit they were getting from me.

It was time to work. First, I grabbed several alloy samples, and flooded them with mana, establishing some simple strengthening enchantments on them.

[-25 Mana]

Then, I flared my mana again, triggering the device that rested in the center of the room. A rotating magical field appeared in the center of the room, a chaotic field that promised only pain for anyone that dared to step inside. The alloys floated on the surface of the device, slowly corroding and disintegrating.

It was a simple and boring experiment. I was trying to understand how certain enchantments worked on different alloys. The process was dull, because after the first set had finally

disintegrated, I grabbed another set of alloys, enchanted them, and threw them to the device to be destroyed slowly. All the while, I was working on a scroll, rolled open in front of me, a quill on my hand as I took detailed notes, filling the rest of the paper with the calculations, my mind filled with numbers and formulas.

The only trick, the formulas that were keeping my mind busy weren't the ones I was writing on the scroll in front of me.

The formulas and calculations on the paper certainly looked impressive, the kind that would challenge a magical expert with an Intelligence of twenty. Yet, for me, it was barely more than doing the sums.

The same didn't apply to the notes I was keeping on my mind.

From a distance, it looked like I was testing the performance of the alloys under different strengthening enchantments, but in reality, some of those enchantments were cast using ordinary mana, while others had a different mixture of Tantric mana mixed into their structure. Never overwhelmingly, as I wanted to avoid the attention of any observer, but just enough to see if using Tantric mana was making any difference.

It was vital to test after my latest discovery about Tantric's impact on different applications. I didn't want to be ambushed by another miraculous feature.

I cycled through the different enchantments, materials, and spells to test, my mind filled with endless calculations as I tried to understand the impact of Tantric. However, after three hours of detailed experimentation, I was yet to discover anything other than Tantric was bad for casting enchantments, lacking the rigidity to carry the weight of the magical effect I desired to inject.

[+7 Craft]

When I heard a knock on the door, almost four hours after I started experimenting, I was yet to discover anything wondrous. Welcoming a break, I waved my hand and the door opened, allowing the guest to step inside.

A blonde woman, dressed in leather armor, with an exquisite sword that radiated magic on her waist. I recognized her instantly, as she was one of the handmaidens that had been accompanying the princess, but this time, she wasn't wearing a dress but armor.

Well, at least at the surface. Without checking, it was hard to guess whether she was another

disguised member sent to talk with me.

“I hope I’m not disturbing you,” she spoke, though unlike her words, her voice was sharp with a challenge. I suppressed a sudden flash of sadness as her tone reminded me of Aviada, my unlucky lover who found herself on a dangerous journey.

“I was just finishing an experiment, no worries,” I said, turning to her with a big, salacious smile, once again the reputation as a lecher creating an excellent cover. “How can I help one of the precious handmaidens of the princess? Is there an emergency, or would I have the fortune to accompany you for leisure activity?”

Her sharp frustration at being flirted with was amusing, even if I suspected it was more acting than her actual feelings.

“No,” she said, managing to keep her voice even except for a little growl that infected it, her eyes pinning me down. “I heard that Her Highness had selected you for an important mission. I just wanted to spar with someone who had been selected for such a beautiful honor.”

“As a warrior?” I said, letting a tone of dismissiveness infect my tone. There was a reason mages were valued much higher than warriors in levels as high as the twenties. It was really difficult for a warrior to compete against the sheer burst potential of a mage.

There were certain advantages of warriors, of course, particularly their extended battle performance, but in a spar without any trick, the victory was given.

“Yes, as a warrior,” she growled, doing her best to her anger at being dismissed. Unfortunately for her, it seemed she didn’t have too many acting skills, because the fakeness of her emotion was apparent. She looked angry, but it lacked the existential frustration many high-leveled pure warriors carried after being dismissed by a mage. “I want to make sure you can handle such an important mission.”

Not surprising, as with their skill modification, she wouldn’t feel that fundamental frustration of being limited by their selection.

“As you wish,” I said, enthusiastic at the opportunity. I doubted that her aim was to get an accurate understanding of my combat abilities. If that had been the case, they would have found an excuse to test them before asking me to take the mission.

Yet, considering it gave me an excuse to use unlimited magic on her to better understand their tricks, I welcomed the opportunity regardless of their objectives.

Especially since she didn't seem to equip any magical ability to catch my tricks.

"Follow me, then," she said as she turned and started walking, the sudden flash of satisfaction rather interesting. I wondered about the exact reason.

"So," I murmured as I quickly caught up with her. "Don't tell me we're just going to have a boring spar?"

My frivolous words didn't generate much goodwill, but they needed me too much to react to that explosively as well. "What do you have in mind?" she asked.

"Well, maybe we can have dinner together?" I asked, and it earned a sharp look, though that sharpness was nothing compared to the one that followed it after I finished my sentence. "Maybe the same kind your friend Delia had delivered in the morning."

She said nothing, too busy containing the flare of anger. The anger was intense enough to confirm that she knew exactly what had happened during the breakfast, no doubt feeling insulted that I would ask for a similar service from her as well.

Even better, she couldn't just admit without revealing she already knew what had happened. Her lips, staying closed, implied that she didn't have the intention of revealing that particular nugget.

"Maybe, depends on how long you can resist," she said, doing her best to hide her anger. "Manage to spar with me for fifteen minutes, and I'll personally feed you dinner."

"Deal," I said smugly, even though inwardly, I knew it was much harder to follow that request. A high-leveled mage could defeat a high-leveled warrior easily, but an extended spar was a different deal. Most mages didn't have my advantage of rapid mana regeneration, meaning that, in any extended combat, they were at a great disadvantage. It would have been even more pronounced in a spar, where the mage wasn't allowed to deliver a deadly attack that would finish, allowing the warrior to be even more aggressive.

Yet, I couldn't reject the offer without destroying the thoughtless and braggart personality I created for them.

However, as I continued to walk deeper into the building, I realized that I might have bitten a bit more than I could chew. The reason, was I had decided to kill some time by focusing on the sway of her hips, the view of them clad in a leather prison beautiful, only to receive a notification.

[+50 Experience]

Just a notification of experience. No penalties, no reductions, nothing, meaning that she had a higher level than my actual level, let alone the surface weakness I had been displaying.

It took a lot to suppress the moan that tried to force itself into my face. Clearly, a painful sparring session awaited me.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 8000 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Seven

My concerns about a painful sparring session didn't get alleviated when we finally arrived at our destination.

Mostly, it was a standard sparring room. A huge, open area with no impediment, the floor covered in stone, each inch enchanted carefully for extra durability to resist the aggression of the high-leveled combatants, and several wards ready to be activated in case of a danger to prevent death.

Yet, the details shouted to me that it was going to be a painful battle. The level difference between her and my fake identity was already a given, but apparently, that wasn't enough for her because she had pushed for such an unfair area of battle.

Of course, at a glance, an underground arena with no obstruction seemed like the perfect place to have a fair duel between two high-leveled individuals, but that discounted one important fact. Every small detail of the arena was designed to enhance the advantages of the melee fighter and chip away at the perks of magic.

The size of the arena was the first big problem. It was not exactly small with an area of several hundred square feet area, but for a supernatural warrior, even the longest distance could be covered in less than a second. Combined with the height of the ceiling, just below fifteen feet, a distance that she could easily jump with halfway decent Strength and Speed stats, any movement advantage a mage might establish was completely gone.

The thick enchantments that covered every surface were another challenge, basically ruling out most of the elemental tricks. The earth spells were out directly, but even a glance was enough to show that it would also weaken any water or fire spell that they came into contact with, removing most of the spells that a mage could use for zoning away from the fighter.

So-called security wards were another trap. Ideally, they shouldn't trigger unless overwhelmingly powerful magic was used, but I had sufficient magical expertise to catch some last-minute adjustments on them. They would go off much easier than advised, wasting the mana of the mage, after which no doubt my opponent suggest that we continue.

The last confirmation about whether it was intentional was the several bottles of healing potions, each brewed freshly as indicated by their magical aura, no doubt there to keep me in fighting shape...

So that she could torture me longer.

I looked at her beautiful face with admiration as she stood at the opposite side of the room, raising a wooden stick — the only thing that could be classified as an advantage for me, as it was much less deadly than a sword or an ax, but I had a suspicion that the only reason she picked was to maximize the pain she inflicted.

“Are you ready?” she asked, doing her best to sound calm, but unable to hide her vicious anticipation, confirming that subterfuge was not one of the skills she had picked.

“No weapon for me?” I asked.

“I’m sure a big man like you wouldn’t need a clutch like that,” she suggested, her smile widening.

“Oh, someone was talking to her friend,” I answered with a wink, watching as her amusement turned into fury.

“Let’s begin,” she growled, and dashed forward without even waiting for an answer.

Damn, I thought even as I started moving, doing my best to stay under the limits of what was reasonable for a high-leveled mage even as I raised my hand, conjuring an arcana shield.

[-128 Mana]

Its purple glow didn’t survive for long, shattering at the impact, her impressive charge more than enough to deal with it — even if I hadn’t designed it to explode in the first place.

It was a shaped explosion, all its strength connecting with her. Yet, it didn’t delay her more than a fraction of a second, which wasn’t enough for the limited version to pull back. Her staff connected to my ribs, hitting hard enough to send me flying, and I hit against the wall.

[-138 HP]

“Try to be more attentive,” she said as she swung her staff, yet, despite sending me flying in a very undignified and painful unassisted flight, she was still angry.

Curious, I thought even as I made a show of standing up very slowly, even as I carefully used my mana remotely to test her soul space, to catch whether she was wearing a disguise. It was the real point of my exploding shield, letting some of my mana stick on her skin, using the broken shield as an excuse in case she had equipped any magical talent.

Yet, a glimpse into her soul space showed she had absolutely no magical talent, making me much more relaxed. So, rather than dispersing my mana, I let it stay in her soul space, getting a more detailed glimpse of her abilities.

She had a very high level, I realized as I started examining her soul space.

Forty-two!

I couldn't help but feel like it was a waste just to deal with me, because even a casual glance was enough to catch the mana evaporating from her soul space, much faster than not-Delia had been losing it earlier today. Not-Delia probably could have lasted almost a week with her skills — assuming the evaporation rate stayed constant, of course, which was not a given — but I would be greatly surprised if my current opponent could last even for a day.

Either it was a difference between recipients, or their target level made a huge difference. And considering they weren't always walking around in level forties and fifties, I was willing to bet that it was mainly the latter.

I was deliberately slow in standing up, to give myself time to think, but my opponent clearly had no intention of allowing that. "Ready, big boy?" she growled even as she dashed forward once more, forcing me to gather my mana hurriedly, yet receive the hit before I could actually cast it.

Of course, my shield was too late only because I was hiding my skills, but that didn't make the tip of her staff burying in my diaphragm any less painful. Yet, it prevented me from using that as an excuse to check her disguise.

[-23 HP]

The attack itself was not too damaging, as she clearly held herself back, but she more than compensated for it by choosing the potentially most powerful point to attack.

... one of the most painful, I corrected as I shifted my leg to prevent her knee from burying into the most sensitive and most important location in my body. I wanted to play along with her revenge fantasy, but I had my limits as well, and that area was at the forefront of that limits. After all, when other men said that it was their most important part, they were talking figuratively.

For me, it was literal.

Of course, defending my crotch in a timely manner didn't come freely. She had used our closeness to deliver a backhanded slap to me, an insulting move that was also strong enough to send me tumbling away.

"What happened, big boy," she growled vindictively. "Are you too tired?"

"Kind of," I murmured even as I pushed myself up to my feet, putting a smile despite the pain I was feeling — even with my endurance, getting that kind of hit from a high leveled warrior, doing her best to deliver as much suffering as she could manage was not free. "Your friend had really exhausted me that morning, begging for more."

And just like that, her anger, already burning bright, flared even more. This time, she dashed forward even more aggressively, swinging her staff even harder, mixing in occasional punches and kicks as needed, with a particular focus on my crotch.

I didn't allow her attacks to connect where she was clearly targeting the most, but that left the rest of my body only more vulnerable to her attacks, receiving a great number of attacks. None of them were particularly effective in terms of delivering damage, yet in terms of delivering pain, they were surprisingly effective.

[-103 HP]

Maybe she had a relationship with Delia, or not-Delia, the kind Marianne and Cornelia had before my intervention, and appreciated my involvement just as much as Cornelia had appreciated it in the beginning.

It was worthy to test.

"Come on sweetie, don't tell me you're having appropriate relations with Delia—" I suggested even as I dodge, or more accurately, started to suggest as I tried to dodge, only to receive a hit on my face.

Yet, despite the swift hit, I didn't notice any sudden reaction from her, suggesting that comment had missed wildly. She didn't even react to my comment as she continued to beat me. I decided to have another try.

"I know you're trying to protect your friend, but it's not your fault that she's a whore—" I tested, only to be interrupted by a sharp hit of her staff.

One that was much stronger than her other attempts, sending me flying away even as a

threatening notification popped in my gaze.

[-216 HP]

And that was with my last-minute correction to reduce the damage. If I had been as weak as I had been acting, that hit had a decent chance of actually killing me — something she realized as well.

“Damn, girl,” I murmured even as I pushed my mana aggressively out to slow my flight.

[-391 Mana]

Or, more accurately, using that as an excuse to flood the room, to check her disguise. Her absolute lack of reaction to my insinuation, combined with her explosive attitude toward the offhanded insult was too suspicious.

Yet, as my mana wrapped around her, checking her disguise, I met with a bigger surprise than I had been expecting...

I was fighting against my dear friend, not-Delia...

[Level: 32 Experience: 499160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7659 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Eight

I couldn't help but smirk despite the pain as I realized I had been beaten black and blue by the same woman that had been moaning under the steady assault of my fingers after trying to get me drunk just hours ago.

The fact that her display of anger following her obedience in the morning gave an even more beautiful angle to it, especially since it suggested that the reason for her absurd reaction was less about the physical aspects of our adventure, and more about making my payback for her composure, thoroughly destroyed.

Of course, I had no evidence for the last aspect, but after the great number of encounters I had shared with several strong ladies with similar powerful backgrounds, I trusted my instincts to identify the exact nature of her feminine fury.

Pity that the sudden realization didn't prevent me from rolling to the side, panicked as she charged toward me, no doubt not appreciating the slowness I displayed as I stood up, still leaning against the wall to make it look like I was exhausted.

This time, I had been — mostly — successful in dodging despite the limits I was trying to display, because this time, her charge was deliberately slow, giving me the time to roll away. Yet, even as I got away, she continued to swing her weapon with her full strength.

Her staff hit the wall with a great crash, leaving a big crack in the wall despite all the enchantments woven into the structure to prevent that exact outcome.

"Maybe we should take a break for a health potion if you're going to swing your stick that hard," I said, pushing an expression of fear to my face as I looked at the dent it left, the presence enough to break some of the enchantments through brute force.

Someone was really angry about their earlier defeat.

"If you are not man enough to handle my strength," she said, followed by spitting on the floor, showing just how little she thought about me.

Admittedly, her attitude would have made me furious if it was the full extent of my capabilities she was insulting. Even now, it earned another big notch in the column that was keeping track of her eventual punishment. "Hey, don't insult my manhood," I fake-growled as I raised my hand, and a gesture later, one of the healing potions floated toward me.

I gulped it down. Its power started to stir — a particularly unpleasant mixture of fire and numbness — through my body, ready to cure my body. Their greater potential wasn't the only reason that people preferred healers over healing potions. The nasty after-effect it left was certainly a part of it.

I turned my magic inward, making sure there was no surprise addition to the healing potion.

[+143 HP]

There was no surprise hidden, showing me that not-Delia was determined to teach me a direct lesson rather than relying on trickery, confidence that her new skills.

Though, just because the healing potion was clean didn't mean the mana I gathered to check its content had nothing to do. Their short shelf life and their relatively limited impact compared to the healing spells wasn't the only reason for their rare usage. They also carried a lot of little impurities that could build up unless destroyed, though destroying them without any damage required a significant precision that most healers lacked.

[-9 Mana]

"Why shouldn't I?" she answered as I processed the healing potion, her smirk getting wider as she fell under the impression that she had gained the upper hand on our little competition.

An impression I was about to destroy with great enthusiasm.

"Because I'm exhausted," I said, my smirk getting wider. "You can blame your slutty friend if you want to blame someone. She really exhausted me during breakfast. She's truly insatiable, always asking for more—" I started, only to be interrupted as I threw myself to the side once more, forcing myself to avoid a thrown staff, one that buried itself on the wall.

My eyes widened in shock, this time genuine. Her move wasn't really dangerous for me.

For the fake level and capability I had been displaying, however...

"Come on, sweetie," I said as I rolled away, creating a ward around me, just in time to intercept her kick, one that held back her attack. "Just because your friend has loose morals doesn't mean you have the right to treat me with such aggression."

[-291 Mana]

That hardly helped her anger, delivering several rapid kicks that drained the strength of the

ward significantly — even though I cheated by casting the ward with a robustness that my fake identity shouldn't be able to display.

Luckily, the same anger prevented her from noticing that little detail, especially with the current skill configuration she had been sporting.

A chill suddenly hit me, though, this time, it was less about her sudden fit of anger, and more about her complete lack of ability to recognize the irregularity in my shield. She was a living example of just how much I had been depending on the System for power.

I needed to cut my dependency on my skills, and there was no better time to do that than now. As she swung her fist against the shield once more, I roused my mana and blocked my own skill temporarily — choosing elemental magic as my target.

Then, I tried to hit her back with a gust of wind to push her back, trying to force a distance between us.

[-218 Mana]

Using that much mana for a non-aggressive spell, especially with my stats strengthening the assault, was supposed to slam her against the wall hard enough to leave her silhouette on the wall. Instead, she took a few steps back, giving me just enough time to reinforce the shield I created.

The limited effect of the spell was interesting, especially since I still had a great understanding of how to cast complicated elemental spells. That part of my understanding hadn't been destroyed, yet I failed to cast the spell successfully.

It was like knowing the best way of traveling, optimal stops, the ideal pace, and the danger zones... Yet, if the ability to take a step disappeared immediately, all that knowledge went to waste, useless to apply.

I loosened the block, testing the rush of instinctual understanding that filled the gaps. With my Intelligence and Wisdom allowing me to pin the difference, I was able to identify several critical aspects.

And the rushing figure of not-Delia, ready to deliver another punch, was a perfect driver to learn. "You can't even cast your spell properly," she smirked violently as her fist connected with my ward once more.

The loss of instinctual learning was scary, I decided as I repeated the same wind trick after I blocked the skill once more.

[-196 Mana]

This time, I was happy to note that the distance between us almost increased to five steps despite her preparation and slightly lesser mana spending. “How about this,” I said with a smirk. “Much better, right? Maybe you’re not as scary as you thought you are.”

“Really?” she growled as she moved forward, attacking once more. We fell into a weird pattern, sometimes letting her attacks succeed, giving her satisfaction of making me hurt, sometimes deflecting her attacks.

[-2849 Mana]

[-619 HP]

However, after five minutes and a great amount of mana expenditure later, I was able to cast the wind spell with a satisfying proficiency. It was still below — if barely — the expertise I displayed when I had first completed the basic level of the skill, and that was with the great difference in the stats between the two periods.

Yet, the speed of learning I was able to achieve during the process was impressive, even if it came with wasting enough mana to kill her more than twice.

“That’s enough sparring,” I said after a while, doing my best to look exhausted in the process. With my regeneration, I had already recovered most of the mana I had expended, but we were reaching a point that, even with her current lack of magical ability to accurately assess my spells, it was getting suspicious.

I let the shield fall, only to receive a surprise kick that sent me flying.

[-85 HP]

The kick was a surprise not because I lacked the ability to react. With my reflexes, her skills weren’t advanced enough to prevent me from reading her moves even if she pushed herself to the limit. And, with her perceived success of beating me earlier, she wasn’t even pushing her skills to the limit in the first place.

Yet, I let that connect, because it was an excellent excuse to push back. “I see, you’re willing to

play it like that despite the consequences.”

“What consequences?” she said, a vindictive laugh exploding against the walls. “There’s nothing you can do I can’t handle.”

Unfortunately for her, my smirk was no less vicious. “As you wish,” I said. “You can tell Delia that you have ruined the cooperation that she had worked so hard to earn.”

The speed with her satisfaction melted away, replaced by a shocked expression, was a work of art. “W-what do you mean?” she gasped.

“I mean that our cooperation is over, completely. Not only I won’t help your princess in that mission, but also I’m going to stop working on the project. Have fun explaining that to Delia.”

“W-wait,” she gasped, her eyes wide. “You can’t do that!”

“And you’re going to ensure that, how?” I asked, enjoying the panic that was exploding on her face. And even better, with all of her skills geared for combat, she had no hope of reading that, or understanding the nature of my bluff.

“But...” she said, trying to find an argument, one that failed as I turned my back and started walking away. “Please,” she gasped. “I can apologize.”

I had to hide my smirk as she reached for the clasps of the leather armor she was wearing, panicked enough to reach the same solution that had secured my cooperation earlier, about to deliver the same thing that enraged her in the first place.

And, it would be a lie to say that I was not tempted to get that immediately, teaching her about the best way to take revenge. Unfortunately, that conflicted with my desire to resolve the mystery that surrounded them — especially since I didn’t dare to poke around in their residence, afraid of more surprises.

Luckily, there was a way to resolve both problems simultaneously. “Not like this,” I said with a shrug and continued walking, enjoying her surprise. “I’m going to take the rest of the day off, and tomorrow morning, I’m going to visit Delia for another breakfast. Either you be there as well, and both of you apologize, properly, or I stop working with the princess.”

I didn’t ask that just because I wanted a fun threesome where both girls worked hard to earn my forgiveness. It was just a nice bonus. I wanted someone else other than not-Delia to visit, so that I could work on deciphering their tricks with the assistance of a second person.

I smirked at her sudden silence, giving her a second to realize just how badly she had fucked up, before adding one last sentence. "And, feel free to go and complain to the headmistress if you want. I'm sure she'll be very helpful."

With that, I left her behind, confident that she would accept my request, my mind already on the best ways to handle the surprising freedom I had found myself enjoying.

[Level: 32 Experience: 499160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 4891 / 6528 Mana: 4910 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Eighty-Nine

I couldn't help but smile as I walked away.

Getting kicked around in a locked room was certainly not a fun process. However, as much as I didn't enjoy that part of the process, I appreciated the excuse to leave early.

Especially since I wasn't the one responsible for explaining.

No, explaining to the princess how badly she had fucked up was not-Delia's task.

And, as an added benefit, by taking time off from their project, I found myself a beautiful challenge. One that I hadn't been dealing with for a while.

Finding a way to kill my free time.

I had to admit, going back to my room to laze around was tempting, especially since I had been dealing with a lot of things the last few days, and earned a bit of relaxation.

Yet, that was nothing more than a fleeting fancy. With everything going on, I didn't have the luxury of resting, nor did I have the luxury of neglecting an opportunity to finally power up.

Soon, I was climbing down the familiar stairs of the Hall of Craft, easily staying out of their sight, ready to have a discussion with Oeyne. There were a few reasons for that decision. Progressing Oeyne's companion process would give me a decent chunk of experience, while she also had several interesting tricks to make me relax.

And, last but not least, she had a really comfortable bed, which could be used for a quick rest after I had completed my more important objectives.

Since I didn't waste my travel time, I cast a few healing spells to remove the marks not-Delia had left on my face while also refreshing my life force.

[-392 Mana]

[+1637 HP]

Yet, when I arrived at her workshop, I realized that I had forgotten to add a small detail. Oeyne was still sleeping — not without the assistance of a few too many drinks if the sharp smell of alcohol that filled her workshop was any indicator.

Well, no surprises there considering how we first met, I thought even as I looked at the caramel-skinned beauty in her bed, her skimpy nightie climbing high enough to give a proper glimpse of her body.

Someone had a fun night, I thought in amusement. Whenever I visited her, I faced one of the two equally likely possibilities, that she was working as a workaholic, or collapsed after a night of overindulgence as an alcoholic.

The only question was whether gambling was a part of her little game this time or not.

Since she was sleeping, I decided to take that as a sign and joined her — after removing my clothes and casting two spells, one to remove the thick smell of alcohol, the other to remove her hungover.

A little service to make sure she woke up happily wouldn't be remiss, I thought even as I slipped next to her, letting my hands slip under her nightie, enjoying the warmth of her skin even as I spooned her.

If her sleeping shuffle was any indicator, I wasn't the only one that found that comforting.

I set the sleep take me, not that I needed the rest, the combination of my Stats and my Biomancy tricks enough to keep me upright for much longer, but a touch of decadence wouldn't be remiss...

It was her shuffling that woke me up. "W-what?" she mumbled, starting with a flare of panic, but it was short-lived, replaced by a more pleasant tone for the second half of her whisper. I kept my eyes closed, not revealing the fact that I had already woken up, wanting to extend my decadence, hoping that she would return to my arms without prompting.

Her warmth was simply too comfortable.

Oeyne clearly had other ideas, though, carefully extracting herself from my hug, and disappearing into her bathroom. Pity, I thought as I shuffled in her bed, trying to find a more comfortable position to continue my nap, ignoring my earlier decision to focus on powering up.

As much as I wanted to tease her while powering up, the warm whispers of my sleep were too comfortable to be denied.

Yet, before I could return back to my sleep, Oeyne returned to her bedroom, her looks refreshed. She was still wearing a nightie, but this time a white and lacy one, the kind that was

far too fancy to be used to sleep ordinarily.

She climbed to the bed once more. I expected her to slide back into my arms, grabbing the opportunity to nap a bit more after the exhausting and alcohol-filled evening that she had — and more than likely, shocking amounts of gambling.

She didn't follow my guess, instead choosing to linger on the other side of the bed, her gaze dancing on my naked body, her eyes clear of any persistent annoyance of hangover, or a sleepless night.

Maybe I had underestimated the impact of my healing spell on clearing hangover, especially combined with the impact of her high Endurance, I decided as I looked at her eyes, shining with a surprising clarity considering she was as far away as possible from being a morning person.

Or maybe, she was simply too enthusiastic about keeping me happy after our last time had resulted in her gaining a nifty little enchantment.

Curious about what she would do, I didn't give any indication that I wasn't sleeping, even when she put her hands on my thigh and pushed me slightly, making me lay on my back. And with me in that position, she had no problems reaching her ultimate target considering my nudity.

Ironically, holding my chuckles back was harder than hiding any other emotion, because even as she leaned forward, I could see a certain awkwardness on her beautiful face.

It wasn't too surprising for her to feel self-conscious. It wasn't our first time, of course, but it was the first time she was taking action without any kind of prompting from my end, be it an extended erotic massage, or something much more direct...

Like chaining her hands and testing the limits of her endurance.

That novelty value was the reason for her awkwardness, though it wasn't alone on her face as her hands moved over my shaft, gently dancing around in an effort to bring it to life. Excitement and desire joined her expression soon, turning her awkwardness into an erotic masterpiece.

Admittedly, her lacy nightie that was barely capable of hiding her caramel curves — especially with her current angle — played a very important role in the erotic tale her body was exemplifying.

I continued to relax in the bed as her fingers wrapped around my shaft, moving up and down

slowly with a fluidness that sent pleasurable shivers across my body as my shaft started growing, soon thick enough to strain her fingers as she tried to keep them closed.

Her fingers climbed even higher, grazing the crown, but this time, my attention was on the way she was leaning forward, her beautiful lips already parted.

She gazed at me to see whether I was showing any signs of waking up. And since she was unable to see through me, she pulled back.

Yet, that move was nothing compared to her follow-up, a surprising move that tested my desire to play along with her little surprise. She stood up, only to open a nearby drawer, and pulled two pairs of handcuffs.

I suppressed several questions that tried to force themselves into existence while she quickly used them to lock me against her bedpost — though I wondered whether it was my growing trust in her, or my utter confidence in my own abilities to free myself from them if needed that allowed me to react with such calm.

Regardless of the reason, I acted like I was asleep while she took her earlier position, her hands wrapped around the base of my shaft. But this time, there was a big improvement.

The crown was trapped between her thick lips, adding another dimension to my pleasure. I watched as she started moving up and down. Choppily at first, especially without my hands guiding her with the aggressive manner she came to expect.

That state of confusion didn't last long. Soon, she adapted an impressive rhythm, alternating between fast and slow, driving me deeper into the pleasure, as if forcing me to admit that I wasn't sleeping.

I chose to enjoy it passively because watching her as she slowly developed a technique of her own was a unique experience. It would have been a pity to interrupt that.

It wasn't as simple as simply rejecting that, of course, as while the tone and position might be different, we had shared some very memorable events together, and, clearly, I wasn't the only one learning about the body of his partner. She had discovered several interesting tricks in the process, and started applying them with devastating consequences.

Curious just how many tricks she had managed to discover, I let her have free access to my body for the next several minutes, watching as she teased my shaft from every possible angle, her lips even occasionally dipping down to my balls, each second there renewing the flood of

pleasure.

Soon, I was not too far away from a climax. And while letting that come as a surprise was an option, it wasn't the most fun option.

Instead, I spoke. "What an excellent way to wake up?" I whispered softly even as I gave a tug to the handcuffs, acting as if I had just noticed their presence.

"I decided to be a good hostess," she answered as she raised her body, her throaty tone sending shivers across my body. Then, she put her finger on the cleavage of her nightie. She didn't pull it down hard, but her nightie wasn't the most robust clothing in the first place, and her finger deepened the cleavage significantly. "Is my services satisfactory?"

"I would be remiss to comment on it before you show your full abilities," I commented.

Her enthusiastic smile was very promising...

[Level: 32 Experience: 499160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 8000 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety

“So, how does it feel to be on the other side of the bindings for once?” she whispered as she leaned forward again, giving me another glimpse of her deep cleavage while she examined the chains that were keeping me in place.

“Can’t complain,” I answered as I looked at her, unable to hide the growing smile as I noted the careful way she listened to my tone, her smile getting wider. Without my phenomenal observation, I might have assumed that it was just the satisfaction of keeping her partner happy, but there was a certain urgency in her gaze.

She was too transparent for me to miss her aim. She wanted to ask for a favor.

I deliberately didn’t ask her about that. Not that I wasn’t curious about the reason. I certainly was, especially since with our relationship, she should be able to ask a lot of reasonable things of me. More importantly, it was clearly not a major issue, which would have driven her to a panicked state rather than her current impatient yet playful combination.

However, just because I wanted to learn didn’t mean I was in a hurry to learn about that, especially not if asking directly would ruin the mood she was doing her best to establish.

She leaned forward further under my appreciative gaze, bringing her lips against the crown of my shaft, a little gasp escaping her beautiful mouth as her tongue jumped out, licking along the length of it. “Mmm, delicious,” she moaned in appreciation, though her satisfaction a touch exaggerated.

It was clearly an attempt to enhance my satisfaction before she finally asked for the favor she needed.

Not that it was a great chore for me to stand on the other side of it, watching as Oeyne’s lips slowly travel down, the head of my shaft disappearing from the view as the warmth of her mouth hit.

I just leaned back, giving her the space she needed to work at the pace she desired. She did look a touch uncomfortable with the sudden freedom she found herself, expecting me to take back control at any moment, but that didn’t prevent her from going deeper.

The desire dancing behind her beautiful eyes didn’t allow for anything else.

It might be the favor that was making her push more aggressively than she might have

otherwise acted, but ultimately, it wasn't like she was committing a great chore that was anathema to her personality, not when our last time was too close for the memories of pleasure to fade away from her mind.

I obediently stayed chained while she convinced me to work on my shaft splendidly, her soft fingers — which was a miracle thanks to the System considering her job as a blacksmith — and her even softer breasts alternated around my shaft, continuously maintaining a tense warmth.

A tenseness that was slowly getting more splendid as she got more comfortable with the unfamiliar position, slowly building up experience under the guidance of my grunts. Though, if there was one drawback to my current position, it didn't allow me to grab her hair and pull it down, allowing me to leverage the tightness of her throat even more.

Luckily, she lacked the personality to continue teasing slowly and keep me on the edge, too direct to enjoy that aspect. I could only imagine how Cornelia would have reacted if I allowed her such power over me even for a fantasy.

Maybe I should visit her and try that...

As Oeyne pushed her head down, her throat clamping around my shaft, the pleasure that radiated worked wonders to bring my attention back to the present.

It was not exactly comfortable for her as well, indicated by her gags and gasps, but it was hardly the most uncomfortable position she had ever faced in our little games. She stayed focused on her task of bringing me to completion.

If I was a merciful man, I would have let it explode after starting to feel the stirrings of a climax, filling her throat with my seed. Yet, while I had many positive qualities, mercy was hardly one of those.

Keeping myself from climaxing was not difficult — though not trivial as well, not with the great pleasure her throat was providing for me.

It didn't take long for her gaze to rise — without even pulling back, making the view even more amazing — to catch mine. "It's your self-appointed task, sweetie," I said. "You need to work hard and finish it."

Even without angling for a favor, she wouldn't have rejected such an order, but the presence of that yet-to-be-named favor forced her to go even deeper. Framing it as a challenge forced her to challenge her limits even more. She grabbed my hips and pushed herself down, enveloping

my shaft even more spectacularly.

She moved even deeper, her throat around my girth much stronger than the chains around my wrists. She lingered there without taking a breath, going in and out, but never pulling back enough to allow herself to take a breath in the process.

As she continued bobbing over my shaft, I considered freeing my hands, to accompany her for more interesting tasks.

Before I could make that decision, however, Oeyne pulled back. "Surrendering already?" I said with mock disappointment. "Maybe I shouldn't have trusted you to handle it.."

"In your dreams," Oeyne growled as she looked at me, her determination to 'win' intensified even further with my constant mocking. Yet, even as she looked down, I could see her determination fading, her confidence damaged by her earlier lack of success.

I chuckled, which fueled her anger immediately. "I'll show you," she added as she shifted forward. But this time, she didn't lean forward but shifted her hips, sheathing my shaft with her wet core.

Another moan exploded off her lips as she pushed herself down, skewering herself with my shaft, another moan rising in response.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 27%]

I smiled at the notification. It was progress that was never unwelcome.

Oeyne's hips started to rock, unaware that she was working for another very useful perk for herself and strengthening me at the same time. Her hands landed on my shoulders for leverage, using her freedom to dance back and forth along with my lap as her warmth tightened around my girth.

My hands were tied, but that didn't mean I couldn't pull tricks in other ways. I cast a Biomancy spell, one that would block her from climaxing, making sure that she wouldn't be enjoying herself too much without a consequence even as I deliberately left her attempts fruitless.

Oeyne rocked hard on my lap, unaware of the trap she had already stepped in, too distracted by the pleasure to notice my subtle spell. Soon, her face started to darken, the pleasure making her skin flush to deepen her caramel tone.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 32%]

The rapid progress was rather impressive, showing the depths of her pleasure.

She didn't say anything as she continued her self-appointed mission, but that didn't mean she didn't make any noise. Her moans exploded against the walls.

Yet, it was the desperate quality in those moans that attracted me. It started slow, coming from subconsciousness, but for all her direct attitude and self-destructive ways, she wasn't stupid. It didn't take long for her to realize the unnaturalness of her explosion.

"What did you do?" she gasped in shock.

"Hey, don't go blaming me just because you're not as good as you could be," I murmured.

"You used a spell, didn't you?" she blamed, though her hips didn't stop even for a second even as she blamed me for that.

"Yes, but only on you," I answered smugly. "After all, it would be unfair to finish before your guest, wouldn't it be? Of course, if you beg for it, I might pity you and let it slide. What do you say?"

"Never," she growled, her passion renewed by the challenge as her hips moved even faster. I could have tried to push for more, but that meant that they could have a unique approach to the other aspects of the game.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 36%]

"Good," I said mockingly as her hips started moving once more, my teasing tone making her move even faster. "It's good that you have the discipline to finish what you have started. Otherwise, we would stay here all day, not having any opportunity to talk about the favor you're clearly about to ask."

"W-what favor," she gasped in shock, her expression beautifully twisted in panic while her hips stilled. "I didn't say anything about a favor."

"Oh, really," I said as I smirked. "So, are you saying that you don't have a favor to ask? If so, it's clearly my mistake."

She looked at me, her expression of panic would have been pitiful if she was a weak woman. But, considering she was a mid-twenty level blacksmith, strong in battle and in crafting at the

same time, it only made the moment more erotic.

It was fun to watch such a self-possessed beauty panic over such a small thing, especially since if she stopped even for a moment to think, she would realize there was nothing bad about asking me a favor after everything. Yet, caught in a moment, she froze helplessly.

“No wonder you always lose while gambling,” I said with a chuckle, which made her expression flare in a momentary frustration. “Don’t worry, I’ll help you. Tell me what I do I need to do?”

“I... I lost while gambling,” she said, followed by a number that made my eyes widen.

“Damn girl,” I said even as I waved my hand, breaking the chains that were holding me. “That’s an impressive number. Who the hell had that much money.” Then, combined with her hesitation, it clicked with me. “Don’t tell me that you lost it to someone from the Princess’ party, after my warning.”

Her expression of desolation was beautiful.

“Don’t worry, I’ll help,” I said, as I had no intention of abandoning Oeyne to their clutches. Then, I grabbed her waist and throw her on the other end of the bed, her back pressing against its soft fabric, her legs spread apart.

Then, I waved my hands, and her covers turned into chains, wrapping around her arms and legs. “But first, a little lesson about gambling irresponsibly...”

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-One

I couldn't help but smile in anticipation as I looked down at the caramel beauty in front of me, her legs parting readily as she pushed forward, more than happy with the punishment she was about to receive.

Not that I blamed her. Considering some of our earlier encounters in our relationship, it could be hardly considered a punishment, but I neither had the time nor the inclination to punish her for real, especially with the Princess' team waiting on the edge, waiting to latch on to the opportunity to actually convert her to their side.

I was confident in preventing that, of course, but that was under the condition that I was around to intervene — a fact that I could no longer take as a given considering the recent chain of events. I couldn't guarantee that I would be around, and it was for the better not to leave Oeyne's vulnerable to their political predations.

Of course, there was another, more primal, reason for my decision. It was hard to deny having such a beautiful and accomplished woman in front of me, parting her legs obediently to receive her 'punishment'.

I couldn't help but lean forward further and bite her shoulder, leaving a soft mark — one that I made permanent with a little application of a healing spell by modifying a scar-removal spell — to underline my ownership.

"You're mine," I growled as I grabbed her hips and impaled her, earning a loud moan. There was not a little bit of gentleness in my push, but she clearly didn't mind that the slightest of her moan was any indicator.

Or the notification I just received, the numbers working excellently to show the depth of her pleasure.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 41%]

Meanwhile, my hands tightened around her waist, enjoying the feeling of her supple skin while her back arched under the aggressive invasion, her body melding against my transmission.

Yet, just because I decided not to punish her didn't mean that I wouldn't use the opportunity to drive my message deeper. "So, tell me, what was your biggest mistake," I asked.

"Losing the game —" she started, only to be interrupted by a slap to her beautiful breast,

making it jiggle erotically, which was further enhanced by her beautiful moan.

“No, it wasn’t that. Try again.”

The pleasure invaded her body after my spank, but I was happy to see that, behind that, a thoughtful expression appeared as she considered my question again. “Betting too much —” she started, only to receive another spank, this time twisting her nipple in the process.

After the twist, it took a while for her moans to subside, her body tensing as the pleasure reached a level that would have triggered an explosion if it wasn’t for the spell that kept her on the edge.

I kept that spell ongoing, as it was the only thing that underlined the sense of punishment.

Even though it came with a reward at the end.

“Try again, but this time, try to think based on my warnings.”

She paused for a long while, trying to think, which didn’t get any easier with the steady rhythm of my hips invading her core repeatedly. “P-playing with them,” she managed to stammer after a while, her hesitant tone interrupted by moans, making it even harder for her to answer.

I leaned forward, softly kissing the bite mark that I left earlier on her shoulder, then moving to kiss her neck. “Good work,” I whispered into her ear. I rose back, once again focusing on the steady movement of my hips. “Don’t forget that they are not our allies, and they have nebulous objectives. The less involved you get with them, the better.”

“But... But what if they ask me for more.”

“Tell that the headmistress has an urgent request from you, and start working on the most complicated, the most nebulous research project you have, and say that you’re under orders not to stop for anything except helping me forge the item they need once my research is complete.”

“But...” she gasped in shock. “Faking an order from the headmistress is —” she started, only to be interrupted by another slap to her beautiful breast, this time hard enough to leave a mark.

“Who do you think you’re talking with. If I say the headmistress would send an order, it means that she’ll send an order. No question about that.”

As I talked, I let my hands wander, climbing up until they arrived at her spectacular globes. But

this time, rather than visiting for a flash, they stayed on their glorious peaks, digging down harshly.

She moaned as I kneaded her tits aggressively, her moans rising even more as her tunnels tightened, extracting a moan from me as well.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 47%]

“Then, the next question. Tell me everything that happened during the game, particularly about the Princess’ handmaid. First, what was her name?”

“D-Delia,” Oeyne said. Unfortunately, with their spectacular ability to change their looks, it was impossible for me to be sure whether what Oeyne said was accurate or she had been in disguise. Yet, it needed to be asked before going to the next stage.

“Good, now, tell me everything you can remember about what Delia said and did,” I added. Her expression of shock was understandable. While she had an impressive memory thanks to her stats and could remember her actions in great detail even if she hadn’t paid much attention to them during the game, her current position wasn’t exactly conducive for accurate recall.

Luckily, my aim was not to listen to her observations but to add another layer of punishment to our game. Unfortunately, with their ability to modify their skills, anything Oeyne managed to notice would have been under subject.

Yet, it worked wonderfully to increase her strain even more, with the added benefit of exerting my power over her even more, triggering her submissive nature.

I focused on her body as she talked, squeezing and kneading her beautiful breasts while my hips worked steadily into her core.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 50% - Second Stage Completed +10000 Exp]

[New Perk: Mana Regeneration]

[Mana regeneration perk activated. Duration, 8 hours]

It was always nice to receive another instance for mana regeneration, as if my recent experiences taught me anything, there was no such thing as too much mana.

Meanwhile, Oeyne was gasping in shock for a different reason. “A-another achievement,” she gasped in shock.

“Sweetie, when you’re with me, a measly achievement is the least of your rewards,” I answered as I leaned forward, interrupting her next words by pressing my lips against her busty chest, making her moan beautifully in the process.

With her arousal unable to come to full fruition thanks to my spell, her moans were getting more and more delirious. I smirked, but not just due to her amazing moans.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 55%]

It was amazing to see her passing another milestone without a skip, though I had a feeling that our earlier discussion played a significant role in increasing her trust in me, which, in turn, allowed her companion's progress to improve even further.

Amazing achievement.

I grabbed her tight yet bountiful ass, my fingers encasing her bubble butt in my merciless grip. She let out a beautiful gasp while I explored every single inch of her beautiful breasts with my tongue, each brush making her moan even harder.

“So, Oeyne,” I whispered when I pulled back for a breather, interrupting her chain moans. “Tell me. Are you enjoying this?”

Her answer was never in doubt. “Yes!” she cried loudly, her voice echoing against the walls, strong enough to deafen a weaker man. And, more importantly, it wasn’t the only action she displayed that had the potential to injure a weaker man. Her legs wrapped around my waist, carelessly applying her strength as she pulled me deeper, one that showed her growing arousal.

Not that I needed any other sign, not with the way arousal was dancing behind her lovely brown eyes...

“Do you think you earned a climax,” I asked, unable to reject the temptation of growing arousal?

“Y-yes,” she gasped in answer, though her usual confidence replaced by a hesitant tremble, successfully giving an aura of begging — one that was wrapped in a nice erotic package.

“How daring,” I growled, giving a menacing tone, one that made her gasp in fear, a fear that had absolutely no impact on her arousal. I replaced that with a smirk soon. “Luckily for you, you deserve it,” I told her even as I leaned forward to twist her nipple, while simultaneously canceling the spell that was keeping her on the edge.

The resulting explosion of moans and fluids was spectacular, especially with the speed she tightened around me, finally breaking my ability to reject the temptation of arousal, filling her...

Of course, that was not the end, not when I had been receiving such incredible benefits from our little dance. I let her catch her breath before we started again. For me, it was amazing from both perspectives, watching her moans intensify.

Though, as much as I loved her toned caramel legs wrapped around me, it wasn't the reason I was pushing her without break despite having so many things to deal with — including a dragon to interrogate.

The answer popped into my sight after almost three hours of intense lovemaking...

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 75% - Second Stage Completed +15000 Exp]

[New Perk: Skill Share]

It was good timing, because, under the endless rush of pleasure, Oeyne was on the edge of collapse already, and the fresh pleasure broke her resistance. "A...another perk," she gasped. "This time, even stronger."

"I know, sweetie. I want you to be stronger in case you face a threat," I added before leaning forward and stealing a kiss. "Now, why don't you take a nap while I go and work. And don't forget to stay away from the princess' team, and don't agree to anything before talking to me."

"A-as you wish," she murmured. "A nap wouldn't be..." she added, unable to finish her sentence before the exhaustion caught up with her.

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Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Two

After I left the workshop, it didn't take long for me to decide on my next destination.

I wanted to go visit Janelor, and not to have some fun with my petite dragon. Or, more accurately, not entirely for fun.

I wanted to question her more about the other planes and traveling in between. Not that I didn't trust the headmistress' explanation, at least in the general strokes as she had no reason to lie to me about those, but that still left the question of Janelor had a more recent experience in those dangers as she somehow found herself in here.

On the contrary, I didn't even know whether the headmistress even traveled, or was around since the beginning of the system, making her explanation about interplanar traveling not entirely reliable.

And I prioritized exploring that for one important reason.

I could still feel Aviada's presence through her Companion node. Her presence was weak, blunted, a faint flicker compared to the bonfire of Helga and others, yet, without a doubt, she was still alive. One that wasn't supposed to be the case if traveling between planes was as impossible as the headmistress mentioned.

I wouldn't abandon her while there was still hope.

Janelor represented an alternative source of information for me to validate.

But one didn't simply visit a greedy dragon without an appropriate tribute.

So, I first stopped by the kitchen, taking a considerable amount of ingredients — using the authority granted by my new role — before finding an unoccupied corner and creating a couple wards to keep me concealed before I started cooking a veritable late breakfast spread, from light cheeses to cooked meats, and even an impressive number of desserts...

Naturally, every single bite laced with an incredible amount of mana, enough to change the fate of an actual battlefield if used appropriately, though, luckily, my mana recovery filled my reserves before I finished cooking.

[-4680 Mana]

Not all of the mana went directly to the food, of course. A considerable amount of it went to create a temporary barrier around the food, forcing the food to keep that much mana in its confines and block the System from absorbing it back directly.

Only after that, I went to her room, once again putting myself under the suffocating sensation of darkness wards, weakening my connection with the System. Once again reminding me that, for all the power it had provided, the System was not something completely reliable.

The door was locked with an intricate ward, one that had been cast recently. The excessively delicate nature of the ward showed that Janelor was the party responsible for its existence. It would have been a strong ward if it wasn't for the deterioration it experienced as the mana evaporated easily from its structure...

Without the deterioration, unlocking it without triggering an alarm would have been challenging, but at the moment, it was as effective as a castle gate connected to broken walls. A momentary effort was all that was needed to bypass them.

I entered the room and found my cute 'mistress' sleeping, her petite body sprawled over her huge bed, still in her human form. Her beautiful body was not naked, but considering the thinness of the nightwear she was wearing, she might as well be naked.

I said nothing as I walked toward her bed with the tray in hand, wondering whether sleeping that much was the habit of all dragons, or it was just something unique to her due to her laziness.

She woke up before I could cover half of the distance, though the way her cute nose twitched suggested that it was not my footsteps that pulled her out of her sleep but the smell of the amazing food I had prepared for her.

"Good morning, mistress," I said, intentionally lingering at the last word while letting the smile on my face twist beautifully. "Did you have a nice sleep?"

For a moment, she just looked at me, beautifully dazed. Then, her gaze bounced between me and the door, no doubt trying to understand how I entered despite the ward — suggesting that she was yet to understand the full impact of the System on her spells despite the time she spent here.

While she dealt with her mental question, I continued to close into her bed. Distracted, it took a while for her to remember what she had been wearing, her blush intensifying as she glanced down.

The best part, her pride prevented her from asking me to turn, or even cross her arms around her chest to hide. The only thing she did was to cross her legs, and even that, she did with the excuse of shuffling. “W-why are you here?” she asked, unable to prevent herself from stammering.

“I brought your breakfast in bed, of course,” I said, with a tone that might be considered respectable if it wasn’t for my widening smirk. I took a step back and turned slightly. “But I can always throw it away if you don’t want it.”

To her credit, she managed to resist the temptation of my delicious cooking.

For three whole steps.

“Stop,” she gasped. If someone else heard the desperation in her tone, they might have assumed that I had been torturing her, and she finally shattered under my merciless assault.

Such a gluttonous little dragon.

“As you wish, mistress,” I said as I turned back, an exaggerated smile of satisfaction on my lips, intentionally big to make her notice. Yet, under the fascination of the food, she let that slide, her gaze carefully following the food.

Her eyes even momentarily flickered, turning slithered before gaining back their usual emerald quality, glowing whole with no whites. It would have been an intimidating sight if it wasn’t for her sexy nightie — or the memories of the same eyes forced to shut under the endless invasion of pleasure.

“You can leave,” she said the moment I put the tray on the bed. Yet, when she reached, I pulled the tray back, and climbed on the bed as well. “What are you doing?” she asked.

“I’m going to feed you, of course. As a good servant, the satisfaction of my mistress is paramount. You can’t be asking me to be a bad servant, right? It would make me depressed.” I paused for a moment, my smirk widening. “Maybe even depressed enough to throw away the food I had gone all the trouble of making.”

The beautiful expression of frustration on her face was amazing as she considered my threat. “Alright,” she accepted defeat with a nod, but then she raised her hand in warning, the attitude coming across quite clearly as her hand turned into a claw. “No funny business.”

“I promise, no funny business,” I answered. After all, there was nothing funny about what I had

planned to do, especially compared to her so-called threat.

Her threat amused me significantly because of one very important reason. It was a great contrast to earlier, when she had been feeling very uncomfortable showing her transformation next to me. Yet now, she was very comfortable, proving our growing closeness...

Even when my mind was busy with the implications of her threat, my hands started working, slicing a small of cheese and brought to her lips, even using the opportunity to inject it with more mana.

[-93 Mana]

She tried to keep her face expressionless as she swallowed the piece, but that proved to be a bigger challenge than she assumed. Her tastebuds rebelled, followed by her throat, letting out a moan of appreciation.

Her fascinating emerald eyes turned to a tornado of petulant confusion, unhappy with her performance. Though, not unhappy enough to reject the next slice I had prepared for her, her pouty lips parting immediately the moment I raised the fork.

Another moan escaped her mouth.

She closed her eyes, enjoying every bite fully while doing her best to ignore my presence.

That would not do.

After several repeats, the fork I was carrying trembled accidentally — as it was very normal for someone with forty points on both Agility and Precision to experience — dropping a big blob of jam on her nightie, right at the nice valley between her breasts.

“Oh, mistress, I’m sorry,” I gasped, using my ability of speech and charisma to the limit to make it convincing just to mock her.

“Don’t worry, it’s —“ she started, reflexively responding to the anguish in my tone before her mind caught up with the absurdity of it. Her eyes opened, catching my wide smirk.

“Nonsense, mistress,” I answered, this time using my exaggerated servant tone once more. “It’s my fault I had ruined your nightie. Sorry, let me help you handle it,” I said as I grabbed her nightie, and ripped it off her body.

“Yes, you definitely saved it from ruin,” she answered, unable to help her sarcastic tone even as

she shuffled, unable to resist the temptation of covering her breasts. After all, while the earlier nightie hid nothing due to its transparency, it still gave her a clutch to convince herself that she wasn't naked.

A clutch that I got rid of with extreme prejudice.

Yet, as I prepared another slice for her, she opened her mouth obediently rather than making me leave...

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Three

Watching the poor Janelor trying to look impervious and dignified even as she impatiently swallowed every little piece of food I brought to her was fun. She utterly failed in her task, not that it was too surprising.

It was very difficult to look impervious when one was completely naked, her petite yet curvy body even more appetizing than the buffet that was spread in front of me.

After getting rid of her nightie, I did nothing more than occasional caresses for the next few bites, just enough to arouse her memories of our last time, starting from a massage and ending up in an amazing, lengthy hug...

She said nothing, intent on enjoying the food, though a part of it was clearly about her lack of experience. Everything about her showed a lack of experience on the fun side of things. When it was time to act once more, I reached for a much more fun condiment.

Whipped cream.

I didn't miss the gazes she had sent toward its way, though I wasn't sure whether it was about her sweet tooth, or the incredible amount of mana I managed to trap in its gentle, fluffy structure. Yet, just as I put a generous touch on a sweet toast, to give her the first taste of it...

Another stroke of clumsiness hit me, and my hand trembled helplessly, letting the blob of fluffy cream fall. "How unluckily," I said as I smirked at her. "Luckily, I didn't ruin your bed, mistress," I added, as the white cream was firmly lodged between her glorious peaks.

What a fortunate coincidence.

"Not a problem," she answered quickly as she raised her hand, but I grabbed her wrist, preventing her from touching it.

"No, mistress. As a servant, I couldn't wait while you do the cleaning. It wouldn't be honorable." I raised my empty hand, and brought it to her chest. Unfortunately, my episode of clumsiness was yet to fade, and my attempts to clean it only spread it further. Soon, her breasts were completely covered with whipped cream.

Such an unfortunate disaster.

"I'm sorry, mistress, I'll fix my mistake immediately," I gasped even as I pushed her down,

enjoying the shocked gasp that left her mouth, one that turned into a moan as I leaned forward to lick her beautiful peaks.

Naturally, I didn't neglect to coat my tongue with mana.

[-258 Mana]

"W-what are you doing?" she stammered between moans.

"I'm just cleaning you, mistress. Completely innocent, I swear," I added, my smirk wide enough to make me a liar if she had any inclination of believing that in the first place.

"Nonsense —" she tried to say, only to be interrupted when I dig my finger into the whipped cream and slipped in between her lips, letting her suck the dessert off, which proved convincing enough to silence her. Meanwhile, I continued working on the great expanse of her chest slowly, sensuously.

Yet, under my hungry lips, even with the hunger burning in my gaze, it didn't take long for them for her breasts to turn completely clean. I pulled back, leaving her beautiful tits, glistening after my effort. "All clean, mistress," I whispered as I pulled back. "I'm sorry about my clumsiness."

"T-thanks," she murmured, though that didn't prevent her from looking dazed as she continued to lay, unable to process what had just happened, trying to process the invasion of pleasure. She pushed herself upright soon, which had a rather beautiful impact on her chest, making it jiggle erotically.

"Not a problem, mistress," I said, and without a warning, started leaning forward once more. "There's some left on your lips," I whispered, before capturing her lips in a searing kiss. Despite her initial shock and reluctance, her lips quick to respond against the kiss, her tongue joining the battle soon, wrapping tight enough to allow me to steal the taste.

"Delicious," I murmured in appreciation as I pulled back, not bothering to hide my great smirk as she panted obediently.

Her naked sight as she struggled to breathe, trying to throw off her daze was simply marvelous. Not enough to enter the list of the sexiest scenes I had ever seen, though, considering my experience midway, it was hard to gain a spot there without the assistance of at least another very sexy lady — the peak still occupied by our victory celebration following our battle against the undead.

Yet, while it might not play for the top of the list, the sight of a sexy dragoness out of breath, biting her lips idly like she was struggling to believe the feeling she had just experienced. "Open wide," I whispered as I grabbed a mulberry, coating it with some liquid chocolate before bringing it back to her lips, giving her mouth something else to be occupied.

She slowly bit the mulberry absentmindedly, clearly unaware of the sexiness she was displaying as she slowly chewed it. I carefully fed her a few more bites before another accident happened, and her beautiful breasts were stained once more.

I couldn't help but smirk as I watched her move, laying back without the slightest prompting from my end, ready for my cleanup, her eyes closed in preparation. Yet, I didn't lean down immediately, instead grabbed more cream and chocolate, creating a beautiful edible bra for her.

"T-that's too much," she gasped, but that was the extent of her complaints as I leaned forward, licking the edge of her beautiful new clothing item, one with an expected survival time even lower than her usual stuff. I had to admit, made by the full application of my Craft skill, the mixture tasted better than anything else I had the pleasure of eating.

Though the presentation certainly helped.

As I worked on her breasts, our closeness allowed me to see the way her beautiful skin gained a beautiful blush, the aura of cuteness not exactly damaged by the soft moans that she started to let out while her hands fisted around the bed covers. "Hmm, maybe I should use you as my plate for every breakfast," I whispered. "You certainly taste nice."

"I-impudent," she gasped. "I'm a dragon, how dare you disrespect me like that!" she shouted. Her shout was loud, though if she was able to push herself up to a sitting position without her trembling arms surrendered, it might have been more intimidating. Under the circumstances, it only made her breasts ripple, increasing my enjoyment of her beautiful body.

"I'm not disrespecting," I whispered. "On the contrary, I'm finding an excellent use for your petite body. Isn't it something you want, to prove your little stature is not an object of shame?"

"O-of course n—" she started but her argument suffered a premature death when my fingers slipped inside her wetness, silencing her beautifully, her words leaving their place to endless moans as I coated my fingers with mana.

[-690 Mana]

She just moaned while I continued to devour her temporary bra, once again turning her cleavage into something more obscene as her nipples peeked through its white clouds. Though, just because I had finished the cream was no reason for me to stop. "Delicious," I murmured as I continued to lick and kiss her breasts, the occasional bite breaking the monotony as it left a lingering mark behind. "You're certainly the best plate imaginable," I whispered.

She was likely annoyed by my comment, but that didn't matter as she struggled to process the waves of pleasure that resulted from my invasion, each flicker pushing her closer to the edge of a climax.

Yet, I had no intention of making her climax. Not before she earned it. I raised my head, though I kept my fingers inside her wetness, the pleasure it provided critical to making her keep her gaze closed. Meanwhile, I prepared another breakfast surprise for her, one that fit the theme of our little game much more accurately.

She stayed unaware as I shuffled, taking my new place, only realizing something was different once I pulled my fingers back. "What are you—" she started, only to freeze as she opened her mouth, only to find me above her, my shaft already out, covered with chocolate and cream.

"I realized I was being unfair, treating you like a kitchen item. So, I decided to allow you to take revenge for this huge disrespect," I whispered as my lips formed a smirk, my hips pushing forward. "Open wide!"

She did so, though I didn't know whether it was to obey my order or to raise complaints. Either way, she opened her mouth, allowing my shaft to invade her beautiful throat.

And our breakfast took a small yet important step forward.

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SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Four

A groan escaped my mouth as the tight throat of my tiny dragoness enveloped my girth, the passionate bobbing of her head, well-earned after all the effort I spent preparing her amazingly delicious and mana-filled breakfast.

Then, I pulled back, giving her a breather. “D-delicious,” she murmured as she took a deep breath, but her tongue was quick to jump out, giving a lick to the side of my shaft, getting the remains of the chocolate from the side while triggering a shiver for me.

Simply spectacular.

I smiled as I look down, no less hungry, though unlike her, it was less about the deliciousness of the food, and more about how tasty she looked with her lips stained with chocolate and cream, the black and white creating an interesting contrast with her bright emerald hair and even brighter emerald eyes.

I didn’t know whether the heaven existed — the existence of a sexy angel withstanding — but even if it did, I doubted that it would be superior to the current moment I was enjoying.

While my thoughts slipped toward the cosmology of the universe, she assaulted my erection once more, but not before grabbing the bowl of chocolate and coating my length with the black liquid once more, and started licking again. As her tongue moved, the chocolate quickly dwindled.

I expected her to pull back for another refill, yet she didn’t do so, which told me that, at this point, it was just an excuse for her.

I just watched passively as Janelor’s tongue danced around my length whenever she took a breather, even after the food that covered my length long disappeared, her stained lips looking excellent whenever she took a more aggressive stance in bobbing. And the angle was making the scene even more beautiful, especially when her breasts pushed against my thighs, changing their beautiful shape for a fleeting moment.

A moan of satisfaction arrived, knocking on the door, and I let it go, giving her an audio clue that her treatment was working excellently, curious whether it would make her more passionate, or reawaken her arrogance. I wanted to believe that the first was the case...

Yet, she pulled back, an arrogant smirk on her face as she looked up, confirming that she chose

the second path.

Confirming that fucking the arrogance out of a dragoness was not as simple as I wanted to assume.

Luckily, I hardly had the intention of stopping my attempts. “You missed a spot, let me help,” I said as I grabbed her head.

“Wait—“ she tried to say, but that was all she was able to manage before I pushed my shaft into her beautiful throat. A sharp sound escaped her mouth, between a moan of pleasure and a cry of distress.

Despite its mixed nature, it was exquisite.

I moaned in satisfaction once again, this time even louder, but with her head locked by my hands, she didn't have the luxury of escaping unless she wanted to change forms, and that was only viable if she wanted to stop completely. Yet, her muffled gags and moans suggested that escaping was not a thought that occupied her mind.

Happy with her performance, I continued to push her deeper, doing using her to bring myself closer to a climax. And, with her puffed cheeks and excited eyes, she was clearly happy with my assistance with her task.

“You have a beautiful throat, your dragoness,” I murmured, unable to hold back a compliment as I pushed her even deeper, but this time, a momentary change. The next second, I pulled my hips back and pushed her on the bed. “But, you have finished your mission of cleaning it. Now, it's time for the real event.”

She said nothing as she found herself lying on her back, nor that she needed to. The speedy way her legs parted open told everything I needed to know about her mood. “So, do you want to see my impression of a rampaging dragon,” I said as I moved forward.

“Don't get too arrogant—“ she started, but that was all she was able to say before I grabbed her hands and pushed her up, tensing her body to push her beautiful breasts even higher before I pushed forward, invading her warmth once more. The beautiful moan she let out was beautiful, my hands pinning her down making it even easier to handle things.

“Really?” I said as my hips started to move, invading her phenomenal tightness. She left my comment unanswered, though her moans were an acceptable substitute. Not that those moans surprised me as I sank into her glistening arousal, impaling her aggressively, without a hint of

mercy.

Much faster than I would use against the others — with the notable exception of Oeyne — but my arrogant dragoness clearly needed another lesson about who was the true master despite the amusing fiction I still entertained.

Her hands grabbed my hair, pulling hard enough to trigger a flash of pain as her fingers tightened around the strands, but that only earned a slap onto her beautiful breasts.

“How dare you!” she managed to say between her moans.

“How dare I, what?” I said, acting oblivious as I continued to spank her beautiful breasts with the same merciless rhythm of my hips, the explosion of the multiple sources filling the room beautifully, steadily destroying any hope of her establishing power over me, certainly not through the bedroom — or any other places I might enjoy her beautiful body.

Not that she had any chance of doing so in the first place with the way she fell into pieces under the rush of pleasure without the slightest hope of resisting.

With that trait, it didn't surprise me when she soon started trembling under the merciless assault of the pleasure, signaling a beautiful climax.

But certainly not her last one.

“Where are we going?” she murmured a moment later as she recovered from her pleasure, only to realize I had already lifted her in a bridal hold, walking away.

“To get a better place than the bed to properly start our fun, of course,” I said.

“But...” she murmured dazedly as she looked in the direction that we were walking. “But there's nothing there but the dining table.”

“I know,” I answered even as pushed against the table, her legs barely able to touch the floor as her tits smashed against the cold wood, resulting in a beautiful gasp in the process. “But, considering we were eating on your bed, it's only fair that we use the dining table instead of a bed,” I explained.

“But we already did that—“ she started to comment, only for her voice to fade halfway as she felt my shaft pressing against her hole, but not the one I had been invading earlier.

“Not this one,” I murmured even as I started pushing into her tight hole, only stopping for a

moment to flare my mana.

[-928 Mana]

Most of the mana was a reward for the pain she was about to go through, but a small portion of it went to create a layer of lubricant, allowing me to slip easily into her beautiful hole.

And her bubble butt — with a shape and tightness that certainly deserved the term — gripped my shaft with an iron grip, showing just how necessary was the lubrication.

“You can’t do that! Not there!” she gasped as my shaft invaded her tightness mercilessly. “That’s wrong!”

“Not particularly wrong,” I said even as I pushed even deeper, leveraging her dragonic endurance to invade her mercilessly, even spanking her beautiful ass in the process, adding another layer to her little pain. “It’s even tighter than your beautiful lips, and as an added bonus, it doubles as an excellent way of teaching an arrogant dragoness her lesson.”

“You—“ she tried to say, only to be interrupted by a spank.

“Of course, we can always stop if are too weak to handle it,” I commented as I slowed down, which was all that was needed to silence her.

Pride was an emotion easy to abuse.

I continued to push inside her bit by bit as my shaft slowly disappeared inside her. She managed to keep her mouth shut until halfway, even with the occasional spank that landed on her ass, but that proved to be her limit, as her grunts mixed into the sound of my spanks.

Against someone else, I might have waited for her to get used to it, but against a dragon learning a lesson, mercy was clearly not the greatest idea. I pulled back, but before she could complete her relaxed sigh, I pushed forward, invading her core more aggressively, her pained cry echoing in the room.

“Slow down,” she gasped.

“Only if you admit you can’t handle it,” I said, glad that my healing abilities allowed me to walk the line between mildly painful and actually damaging very easily.

“Of — of course, I can handle,” she answered rapidly, her pride leaving no place for another answer.

“Good, then,” I said with a smirk, and pushed forward.

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SKILLS

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Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Five

The roar of a dragon was famed to be legendary, impressive enough that, even with their extreme rarity in the System space, the stories about their roars persisted, becoming the material that would be discussed around the campsites.

Yet, as Janelor's voice exploded, it wasn't the stirrings of fear I felt, but a beautiful tingling that reinforced my arousal. Admittedly, that might be about the fact that her beautiful cry was not let out to convey her fury and willingness to slaughter like those legends of old, but a vessel for her explosion of pleasure, underlined with just the correct amount of pain and pleasure.

Not to mention shock, guaranteeing that I was the lucky winner of a special privilege.

As her delicious cries rang in the room, I pushed forward, my shaft disappearing inside her tight hole inch by inch, a process that she had managed to accept with a shocking smoothness, suggesting that her draconic endurance was certainly not only useful for battle.

Not too different from her cries.

I paused when my slow and steady push brought me halfway inside her, my girth slowly stretching her tightness even motionless. Her cries stopped after a second, then a weird silence filled the room. "W-what happened?" she asked in a tense voice, her curiousness battling with her determination to act aloof to maintain her pride — or at least, an illusion of a pride.

"I wanted to check if you were having any trouble, of course," I said. "If you want to say that you can't handle it, it's the opportunity to do so."

Her answer was predictable. "W-who can't handle it!" she stammered, the hitch in her tone showing her wounded pride. "I'm a dragon, and this is nothing!"

"Excellent," I said as I put my hands on her delicious bottom, enjoying her flawless skin. "Then, we can start for real."

I could sense her body tightening at the mention, realizing that my earlier words had goaded her intentionally, but it was too late. The same pride that forced her to give her challenging answer prevented her from changing her mind.

I could feel her body tightening as she prepared to resist to temptation to cry, trying to defend a scrap of her pride.

Yet, the same pride fell apart by failing to keep her silent as I pulled back quickly, the sensation it created enough to break all the determination she was able to accumulate under the circumstances.

Though, that cry was nothing compared to the one that followed as I used one hand to grab her beautiful emerald hair, pulling it back harshly to prepare her body for invasion, the other landing on her ass loudly the moment I pushed forward, earning a delicious cry in the process.

“Excellent work, mistress,” I whispered, my voice inevitably throaty as I pushed deep into her tightness, the pleasure radiating enough to challenge my supernatural ability to keep myself restricted as I started to impale her repeatedly.

Though, my reaction was nothing compared to my ‘mistress’, each push making her cries louder, even the limited sense of restraint she managed to maintain evaporating, leaving only a primal mixture of pain and pleasure for her.

In other words, a perfect time to interrogate her for some potentially-sensitive information.

“I was feeling curious about something, mistress?” I said, under the circumstances, not really bothering to put any emphasis on the word ‘mistress’ to make it ridiculous. The situation was more than enough to put that emphasis.

“R-right now?” she managed to stammer between her moans.

“Well, I thought you can easily handle it under the circumstances. But, if you’re feeling that you can’t handle it—“ I teased, only to be interrupted.

“Of cour—, of course I can handle it,” she said, trying to sound confident, though the loud moan in between went a long way to destroy the convincing nature of her words.

“Excellent,” I said. “I was curious about the lands outside the system, particularly how to travel there.”

“Of — of course, if you want to — commit suicide painfully,” she stammered, managing to sound mocking. Considering that she managed to achieve that effect while being rammed in her tight hole repeatedly, moans interrupting her every few words, it was impressive.

“Really, then how did you manage to arrive here if it was that dangerous?” I asked, not neglecting to spank her ass for her sudden arrogance. Just because I was amused by her reaction didn’t mean I wanted to avoid training her.

“Because I’m a dragon,” she said proudly, even trying to push her chest out proudly, though that hardly had the effect she was hoping for under the circumstances. I continued to ram into her, each push creating a more beautiful explosion of cries.

“And it’s relevant, how?” I asked.

“P-primordial aether,” she managed to answer. “We have the ability to resist — the corrosion of it much better than ordinary creatures,” she said.

“How interesting,” I said as I slapped her ass, not expecting to earn such an easy resolution to my suspicions that resulted from her success of arriving in the system space, and the Headmistress’ explanation about the near-impossibility of travel between different planes.

Maybe my secretive angel started to trust me more than I was expecting.

“Is this the reason you’re working for —“ I started, only to receive a growl to interrupt me. “Sorry, you’re allied with a goddess.”

“One of the reasons,” she answered, her tone more steadily as she managed to get used to my steady invasion. “Our ease to travel between planes is hardly the only advantage of our superior heritage. We rule every dimension,” she said, then made a dismissive gesture. “At least, ones that are not invaded by pathetic cheating abominations.”

I was tempted to say that she was currently being rammed repeatedly by one of those ‘pathetic cheaters’ but considering my own ambivalent feelings about the System, I let that insult slide.

Instead, I focused on the implications of the ability she revealed, about her ability to travel between planes. “So, can you bring someone else along when you travel between dimensions?”

“I’m not a pack horse,” she answered instantly, her voice sharp. Too sharp, with a sense of vulnerability underneath, which was even more reliable than a direct answer, admitting that she couldn’t.

And, considering the amount of sharpness it carried, I was willing to believe that her inability to help others travel between planes was a personal failing and not something that all dragons experienced. Her pride was too easy to read.

How interesting.

Still, even that gave me a lot of ideas about ultimately traveling to other planes and saving

Aviada from the predicament she found herself in. Especially since it was Janelor's personal failing to assist others to travel.

It meant she could be helped to overcome that particular failing.

But, that was a challenge for another day, when I had managed to learn more about the different planes — and more importantly, how could I use my abilities without the automatic instincts forced by the System.

And the current moment was a good method to test that as well. I used my mana to block the assistance of the Tantric skill, to see if I could easily copy that trick.

After blocking, I gathered a minuscule amount of mana, expecting a great challenge of manipulating that.

[-5 Mana]

Yet, surprisingly, I managed to coat my shaft with that easily, though that minuscule amount was beneath the notice of my dragon lover, who had been spoiled by much bigger rewards of mana. Interesting, I thought as I blocked Tantric completely as I repeated the earlier trick twice more.

[-94 Mana]

[-492 Mana]

Yet, despite repeating it with much higher amounts of mana, I managed to complete them with great ease, while earning moans of joy from Janelor, ones that were getting shockingly delirious, the combined effect of my mana and my ceaseless impaling pushing her dangerously close to the cliff of pleasure.

Under more ordinary circumstances, that display would have stolen my attention, making me watch with a smirk of satisfaction on my face, but under the circumstances, I had other things to focus on. Such as, the performance of my skill.

Maybe I was doing something wrong while blocking the skills while under the coverage of the headmistress' wards, I decided, and applied the same thing to my Arcana abilities, and cast a weak yet complicated light spell.

[-4 Mana]

Under that spell, what needed to appear was the five circles of colorful light dancing around each other, barely more than a cantrip, but instead, a flash of light exploded in an uncontrolled burst of light.

“What the hell?” I murmured, absentmindedly glad that Janelor was too far gone to care about the flash of light or my confusing whisper, as I certainly wouldn’t want to distract myself by explaining that to her.

Blocking certainly worked. I tried to block Tantric off the System again, and used my mana to coat my shaft.

[-793 Mana]

Yet, I once again succeeded without the slightest problem, annoyed by my own success. I released the block from the System and repeated the trick.

[-839 Mana]

Naturally, I succeeded again, but that success increased my frown even more, because that success was supposed to be considerably easier with my ability to access Tantric skill. Yet, it wasn’t.

It was just as easy, no more no less.

The repeated mana assistance triggered Janelor’s climax, her tightness gripping my girth, even more, triggering a climax of my own.

Yet, even the delicious explosion of pleasure was not enough to erase the frown off my face.

Something was wrong with my Tantric skill...

[Level: 32 Experience: 524160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 6790 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Six

As I collapsed next to my cute, naked dragoness who had been trembling softly as she did her best to process her explosive climax, tethering on the edge of unconsciousness as she mewled in dazed satisfaction.

If she didn't show the signs of exhaustion already, showing she wanted to go back to her sleep, I would have pushed her against the wall for another session.

Instead, I pulled her against my chest, enjoying her warmth as her arms wrapped back automatically. It was supposed to be a calming moment, but it wasn't. Not when I was trying to process the latest realization, one that threw everything I had managed to discover about the System into question yet again.

It was the reason I let her go back to sleep rather than bothering them. I wanted to think about the implications of the Tantric, and why it was different than my other skills.

Of course, before making an immediate decision, I first needed to make sure my earlier discovery was not just a misunderstanding of the root, or a mistake of blocking. Which meant, I needed to do more experimentation. I quickly applied the same blocking trick to every single skill I owned, but the difference for every single skill, from Crafting to Melee, from Subterfuge to various magical skills, was sharp enough to be apparent, leaving no place for doubt.

Yet, for Tantric, between blocking and not blocking, there was absolutely no difference in performance.

I was shocked. Yet, I wondered whether it was even reasonable for me to feel shocked. From its ability to help others level up to actually giving me the ability to strip its uniqueness from the Divine Spark, there was nothing ordinary about the achievements triggered by the Tantric skill.

No wonder I never managed to find any proper information about it in the library.

Yet, that only created more questions. I remembered the dismissal the headmistress had when I first displayed that I had the ability to contain her Light Divine Spark, which, when analyzed together with the shock she displayed when she realized the structures made from Tantric mana were able to contain Divine Spark much more efficiently.

It meant that I wasn't the only one unaware of the true potential hidden in my skill.

It also meant that I needed to be careful about the capabilities I revealed to her — in particular,

the ability to purify the Divine Spark.

But that was a decision for another time. Instead, I repeated the earlier experiment, this time focusing on the changes that occurred between blocking and not blocking the skill, to see if I could catch something more.

At first, I was not sure whether it was going to be successful considering I was still under the wards that weakened the reach of the system, but after some time, I realized that wasn't the case.

The subtle shadow of the darkness wards created a little layer between the skills nodes in my soul space and the System, and that created subtle friction between that link, allowing me to catch the existence of a flow I had never noticed before. It was subtle flow, hard to describe, and impossible to decipher — at least under my current level of ability. I doubted that I could feel anything more than a flicker that would have been mistaken by my body's natural flow if it wasn't for the assistance of the headmistress' unique wards...

Yet, the same connection between the System and Tantric was dead. No flow, not even a flicker, completely empty, existing only in form.

And that only made it more complicated.

With a sigh, I slowly extracted myself from the arms of Janelor as she slowly fell back to sleep, our little exertion enough to make her collapse even after she had just woken up. I was tempted to nap with her, but that latest realization about the extraordinary nature of Tantric was enough to overwhelm that particular desire.

I couldn't say that I was glad about that realization, but that was not due to any direct reason related to its application of it. On the contrary, it actually allayed one of my biggest fears, that, somehow, I would find myself helpless with the System blocked.

Yet, it was inconvenient, because it put a lot of things in question, particularly about how the System functioned. I didn't have the slightest idea why Tantric could function without the assistance of the System, and it put into question whether Tantric actually came from the System...

My unique nature of getting experience certainly added to that particular question.

It was an annoying feeling, discovering the truths about such a fundamental part of my being, only to end up with more and more questions.

Unlike the previous times, I didn't even have the luxury of going to the library to explore some ancient books, or interrogate a naughty dragon or a prude angel for some scraps of information, because it was getting riskier to reveal even hints of my discoveries compared to the scraps of information I might extract, especially since their actions already confirmed their information.

And since it was pointless to ask the headmistress, it was also pointless to go digging around the library. It was just vain to assume that the headmistress was unaware of anything in the books, not when she had spent almost two centuries ruling the place, her unique method of concealment making reading the best way of killing time in isolation.

Technically, there might be a book or two she missed, but it was not worth my limited time digging around, hoping to find something that she hadn't comprehended properly.

With a sigh, I sneaked out of the school, aware that, technically, I still had one important destination where I might find the answers I was seeking.

I closed my eyes, focused on a mental direction before creating an air elemental, and started flying.

[-1320 Mana]

Unfortunately, my destination was not where I knew I could find the information I was searching, for two reasons. First, technically, I didn't know the exact geographical location of the information, but that didn't prevent me from searching.

The real reason I didn't dare go around poking, I was afraid of the attention it might create.

I did not have the power to deal with the Eternals.

At least, not yet.

Everything I had discovered about them, every little detail that had been revealed, suggested that they had a veritable army, one that treated warriors and mages over level thirty as disposable items — not to mention their ability to apparently mass-produce them easily, considering the training event I had stumbled on during the encounter in Mount Doom.

No, I didn't dare to go around poking such an organization.

At least, not before I could reach a power level I would feel comfortable. Instead, I set my

direction to the mental pull of two companion nodes in the same direction. I chose to use another air elemental rather than traveling directly, because there was no urgency for me to risk using teleportation.

Moreover, the travel allowed me to train my skills without the intervention of the System. Tantric might not be connected to the System, but it was certainly not the case for the rest of my skills.

Even picking my target skill wasn't too difficult. I picked Arcana, which was, ultimately, the most flexible magical ability one might have, from ward creating to utility charms. It might give a weak offensive, but considering my challenges, I didn't have the luxury of sacrificing the utility to maximize my damage potential.

As I flew toward my destination, I blocked my Arcana skill, trying to cast a simple arcana bolt, only for it to fizzle halfway, before it could even reach its target.

"Frustrating," I murmured. It was impossible for me to ignore just how critical the practice I was doing, not with the ease I was having blocking my own skills to drive the fragility of the power granted by the System, but that hardly made the sensation of failing something that was as simple as breathing any easier.

It was like trying to relearn walking.

But sometimes, you needed to relearn how to walk, if the alternative was to rely on a pair of enchanted legs that might simply run out of power and fold in the middle of an adventure.

I journeyed even as the sun slowly set, covering the area in darkness, underlining just how long my journey was even with the assistance of the air elemental, hunting the occasional strong monster I came across to replenish my reserves.

Yet, even as the sun set, there was no uninterrupted darkness, not with the explosions of the light that was happening on the horizon.

I couldn't help but smirk as I saw the signs of Titania's signature spell.

[Level: 32 Experience: 524160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7592 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Seven

I dispelled the air elemental before I decided to close in, wanting to get a better view of the event. After all, surprises on any battlefield had the potential to be deadly, especially against two mages with little to no support.

The first thing I did was to cast a low-level detection charm, allowing me to get a real-time map of the living — along with the unliving — with no effort and no risk.

[-28 Mana]

Of course, in the past, using such a trick was risky enough to trigger every single alarm of the liches that was found in any area of decent size, but my current skill level was different. I was able to replicate the same trick using much less mana, which made it much harder to be noticed.

And it allowed me to get a sense of the layout, which was simpler than I expected. It consisted of a group of defenders behind several layers of wards, and attackers trying to break them through repeated assaults.

Though, as a nice surprise, Titania and Marianne were the attacking sides, while undead was the side that was trying to put together a desperate defense against the inevitable assault.

It was a nice change of pace.

I started closing in as I carefully focused on their mana signatures. Titania's incredible assault didn't surprise me, as I had seen her fighting before. While she had certain flaws — her direct approach to battle one of them — she had the capabilities to justify her fearsome reputation.

The achievements she had gained during our fun only made her scarier.

Marianne, on the other hand, surprised me greatly. The last time I had seen her, she was just a healer — an amazing healer, maybe even the best in Silver Spires, but a healer nonetheless. Yet, the closer I got, the more accurate my feel for her magic got, and what I found surprised me.

The life energy was formed into several complicated shapes, rotating in a self-sustaining space as they danced around the wards of the undead, ready to destroy any undead that dared to get out of the wards for a counterattack.

They even managed to avoid the oppressive bursts of light magic as they rained on the wards — a courtesy of Titania — each formed into thin spears, weakening the integrity of the wards without wasting Titania's energy in the process.

I had to admit, I was impressed with Marianne's performance, who was using my trick in a spell that I didn't even think off — though, admittedly, with my perks, saving mana was hardly the greatest priority for me. Still, the smoothness of her spells and the efficiency of her approach were amazing.

Though, even with Titania, I was impressed by the way she was methodically disassembling the wards rather than overwhelming them in one burst, showing that she had learned quite a bit compared to our first fateful meeting, where she had been trapped by much simpler wards.

I wanted to watch them slowly work on the wards, but, unfortunately, we had bigger issues to deal with, so I started walking closer, intending on helping them.

Yet, before casting a spell to resolve the issue, I repeated the earlier spell, but this time, putting enough magic to cover a much wider area.

After the earlier debacle, after my target turned out to be a decoy in the first place, I decided to treat the undead with more care, in case I met with another tactical disadvantage.

That turned out to be a smart decision, as, the moment the spell spread past a mile, I felt a ping at the distance. I had found a ward that was hiding a couple of presences, which, interestingly, were not undead. Too distant to launch an ambush, but not too distant to observe the battle.

I decided that it was not appropriate.

[-294 Mana]

An earth spell, combined with a furious dash, and barely half a minute later, I was under their location. There, I stopped for a moment underground, focusing my senses upward to examine the little group, consisting of four people.

The first thing I noticed was that they were not necromancers. It was possible to conceal the taint of their destructive spell-casting from a distance, but it was impossible to do so when it was just a few feet of earth that were separating us. The second thing, even more helpful, to note was they didn't belong to Eternals — at least, that was what I assumed considering their wards were both too weak to be cast by someone over level thirty, and they were not based on the mysterious structure they had used during every encounter I had with them.

With that, I had no fear as I let my mana radiate up, and invade their structure — something that was made much easier by their ward protecting the top and sides much better than the bottom.

Simple mistakes, but simple mistakes were no less critical than complicated ones once someone started to abuse them. I let my mana bypass their wards and slip inside their bodies.

They were all between level twelve and fifteen, which put a frown on my face. Not because they were strong, at least not by the standards that I was getting used to, but their lack of strength.

If they had been stronger, I might have assumed that they were trying to assassinate Titania, but that didn't make sense. Even before she started receiving the benefits of working together, Titania was strong enough to demolish such a group in seconds even if they had the opportunity to ambush her.

The speed of retaliation her light magic allowed was simply ridiculous.

Yet, their presence was not accidental either. If that had been the case, they wouldn't have been hidden in wards good enough to avoid Titania's detection spells, or my first, weaker, detection spell. And their levels were enough to qualify them above disposable pawns for every single force with the great exception of the Eternals — and I had a feeling that Eternals were not exactly a group that bothered to deal with such weaklings.

Interesting, I thought even as I invaded their soul space with more of my mana, and with a flick, blocked all of their Stats and Skills at the same time, the great power difference allowed me to do so.

When I pulled up, I met with the panicking party, each just barely cognizant enough to realize what they had lost. And, my immediate presence revealed the truth of my presence. "Tell me, why are you here?" I asked.

They didn't turn completely idiotic even without the System, but the difference with and without their assistance was significant — a fact that I was intensely aware of, hence the reason I was objectively wasting a resource like Divine Spark that even the System required, and the gods battled for it outside the System space, just to avoid that exact fate.

"Tell me who do you work for, or perish!" I ordered, not even bothering to tap into the benefits of my Charisma to enhance the intimidation value. I was afraid that I would trigger a heart attack if I did so.

“W-we’re working for Crown Prince,” the four-voice answered at the same time, unable to resist the sudden pressure without the assistance of the System.

I found their cacophony of voices as unpleasing as the answer. “You three, silence,” I said before I turned at the one at the center, who looked slightly more coherent than the others. “What do you mean by Crown Prince, I thought the Empire had a Crown Princess.”

“N-not for long,” he stammered, his coherency not making him any more courageous than his friends, at least not in a manner that was useful.

“Explain,” I ordered.

“E-everybody knows the Princess escaped the capital with her tail between her legs. With that, it’s only a time before the Emperor takes her title and delivers it to the rightful Prince.”

“And you work for that Prince,” I asked, only to receive a nod. “And are you here under his orders?”

To his credit, he managed to maintain his hesitancy for a fleeting moment, until I blasted him with the weight of my Charisma, which worked wonders to increase his intimidation value to a dangerous level.

“Yes!” he gasped as he stumbled back, his face flat white. “He wants us to give a report about the members of Silver Spires since the Princess retreated there.”

“And?” I asked, but he kept his lips closed. Which, I had to admit, was an impressive display of loyalty. Too bad it was wasted in a game he was little more than a pawn. He didn’t even see the blade of air that cut off his head, and as he was busy with the realization that his life came to an end, I turned to the next one. “And?” I repeated.

This time, the answer arrived quick. “He wants us to take down any target of opportunity to weaken Silver Spires just in case they allied with the Princess,” he answered. “But only if we are sure that it couldn’t be traced back to us.”

I made a note to inform the headmistress about that particular detail to pull the school patrols tighter. I might have complicated feelings about Silver Spires, but it didn’t change the fact that it was the closest thing I had to a home.

With my pressure getting tighter, I had asked them a few more questions about their numbers and distributions, but they knew very little as they operated as a cell, and they were sent

directly from the capital with no local connection, just with a communication item to send emergency information.

So, I used their communicator to send an interrupted message about a sudden undead attack before killing them, a few simple modified healing spells was all I needed to create the evidence of a successful undead raid before destroying the bodies — as necromancers would never leave high-level bodies lying around.

Then, I turned my attention to the undead fortress, and with a flick of my hand, I used my Arcana abilities to unfold a few critical nodes, causing a cascading critical failure in the wards to destroy the bulk of the forces.

Until I could arrive at their location, Titania and Marianne finished destroying the remaining undead, looking at the ruined hill with a sense of satisfaction.

“So, girls,” I said cheerfully, amused by the incredible speed they turned to face me with their magic flaring, only for it to fade as they realized the identity of the intruder, though as their mana calmed, their anger only got more intense, an expression that did nothing to their spectacular beauty. “Who’s in the mood for a party?”

[Level: 32 Experience: 524160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 7923 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [84/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Eight

“You!” growled Marianne as she took a step forward, her beautiful face, usually calm and accepting, contorted into a dangerous hint of anger. I was surprised that it was her that spoke rather than Titania. Clearly, the battle mission affected her personality. Though, whether that effect was a positive one was open to argument. “How dare you scare us like that?”

“What did I do?” I said with an innocence that was too smug to convince anyone.

Marianne glanced at Titania, and made a gesture to her, earning a small nod and a smile from Titania, a reaction that was no less surprising than Marianne’s angry reaction. Clearly, my blonde goddess wasn’t the only one that was affected by the mission. I could see that Titania had mellowed significantly.

After all, for her, this mission was not an excuse to learn the merits of aggression, but finally have a calm mission that she didn’t have to work alone. Not to mention, the weakening of the mental effects of the Light Node helped her to connect better with her feelings, allowing her about the reality of the situation.

Though, I wasn’t able to think about their transformation much, because they raised their hands simultaneously, and a complicated web of magical attacks appeared around me, a rain of light, and rotating blades of life energy that danced inside in a chaotic pattern.

“Impressive,” I chuckled as I rolled forward, though I had to abort my assault when one of the rotating blades took a turn sharper than I expected, forcing me to change my path to avoid damage.

Of course, the damage itself would have been negligible, as Marianne barely put any mana behind the rotating blades — and even if she did, the life energy might be the weakest weapon against anyone that was not undead.

Though, it was still violent enough to cause some damage — and pain — as it was still not a healing spell.

In contrast, Titania’s rain of light was both easier and harder to avoid. Unlike Marianne’s assault, it didn’t have the ability to change direction midway, but in contrast, they were both fast and numerous — not to mention, unlike Marianne’s like magic, those spears that rained from the sky very much had the ability to hurt the living.

Otherwise, she would never develop her fearsome reputation.

Light elemental had a unique destructiveness, able to slip through any other element, including Arcana, easily. Luckily, that was not a problem for me. I conjured a blade of light, using the same element to deflect her attacks.

I dodged, danced, and weaved through their combined assault, deliberately throttling my Melee skill until their assault had turned an overwhelming rain that forced me to retreat.

Trying to dodge Marianne's complicated assault while deflecting Titania's unpredictable yet merciless rain was good training. And as an added benefit, I was pushing their formation to the limit, making them notice the weak points of their assault.

While my plan was to get stronger in a different manner, I decided to play along with their game. After all, it not only helped me to increase my Melee abilities without the system, but it also helped them to perfect their own formation, making them safer.

Unfortunately, not everyone had my boundless mana, and even with their limited expenditure, barely ten minutes later, their attack lost its intensity. Still, it was an impressive achievement for two mages, especially right after taking down an undead fortress.

"Are you girls bored with foreplay?" I asked, earning matching blushes on their face.

A part of that blush was borne of frustration, showing their unhappiness of failing to deliver even one hit despite their combined assault, but I was familiar with their expression enough to know that the majority came from the implications hidden in my latest words.

"S-shut up," Marianne said, but with her blush invading her face, her earlier domineering attitude was replaced by her usual shyness.

I just chuckled as I walked toward them, summoning an air elemental halfway. When I stood between them, I presented my arms to them. "Shall we go, ladies," I said with a smile that was familiar to them on my lips.

They said nothing, not that they needed to, with their intensifying blush and the hurry they displayed as they stepped onto the air elemental and hooked their arms around mine. And then, with beauty on each arm, I floated away.

We didn't fly much. Before they could say anything, I had already stopped in a small meadow I had discovered when I was floating forward, beautiful and free from monsters and other

annoyances.

“So, girls, who want the first relaxing massage after your exhausting battle,” I asked.

“Me,” both girls jumped simultaneously, their earlier alliance quick to shatter in the face of benefits. I was amused by the way they glared at each other, both unhappy with the initiative the other showed.

I chuckled as I let my hands move lower and cupped their asses at the same time, Marianne’s wide and soft, Titania’s small and tight. “It looks like a tie,” I chuckled as I let the elemental land next to the water, and slammed my foot on the floor.

[-729 Mana]

[+1 Craft]

And two massage tables rose, both made of crystal and covered with complicated patterns as I once again used the architectural style I had deduced from the headmistress’ stash, as their unique nature allowed them to hold mana much better.

After all, since I was interrupting their mission, I needed to pay back them properly for such interruption, and a beautiful massage was certainly a good way to do so.

While also awakening their bodies properly for some post-massage fun.

“Jerk,” they replied soon, once again simultaneously.

I chuckled at their response before giving them another suggestion. “Well, we can skip it if you are not in the mood,” I whispered, but my suggestion had received no answer but a pointed silence. “I thought so,” I answered, not bothering to hide my smirk as I continued.

“Why don’t you girls lay down, and I start the massage to destroy all the stress that you accumulated during your adventures.”

They looked hesitant, mostly because they were annoyed by my teasing rather than a lack of desire for my massage.

so I decided to give a little incentive. “And I’ll start with who manages to lay down first, appropriately dressed for a massage,” I added. “Or...” I tried to continue, to add the words, appropriately undressed, but my little joke was ruined.

Admittedly, considering my little self-indulgent joke had been interrupted by two beautiful girls furiously undressing as they competed to be the first one to lay on the crystal massage tables I had conjured, it wasn't exactly the greatest loss I had ever experienced.

Apparently, their little moment of solidarity wasn't enough to survive the temptation of being the first one in line.

"Amazing effort," I murmured even as I looked at their beautiful bodies as they lay on the crystal surface.

Titania lay on her back, displaying her modest curves directly, her legs parted to give a glimpse of her core, getting wetter by each second in anticipation. Marianne, on the other hand, lay prone, which was supposed to be less sexy than someone laying on her back, but it seemed that Marianne's curves had never heard that fact. Her beautiful plump ass was as attractive as always, begging for my attention, and her breasts, squeezed between her weight and the massage table, created an amazing view to complement it.

I said nothing else as I walked toward them, standing between them. "Who's first?" Marianne murmured, unable to resist the temptation.

"I'm not sure, who do you think was faster?" I asked.

Marianne turned to look at Titania, who was already looking at her. To their credit, even distracted by their desire, they had realized that I had been teasing them, and refused to engage.

Yet, they also wanted to receive a proper massage — and much more — so, despite their frustration, they continued to lay on their massage tables. I chuckled. "I think it's fair to take it as a tie, won't you agree?" I asked.

I received a pair of hesitant nods and prepared myself to start some fun activity.

[Level: 32 Experience: 524160 / 528000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6528 / 6528 Mana: 8000 / 8000]

SKILLS

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Tantric [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter One Hundred Ninety-Nine

As usual, I started with a spell to coat my fingers with massage oil, once again leveraging the more utilitarian aspects of my Biomancy Skill, enjoying the convenience it provided.

[-281 Mana]

My mana consumption was much higher than that trick required, but that wasn't exactly useful. Most of the mana I had spent wasn't consumed by the oil spell, but carefully mixed into the outcome as I prepared for my next trick, ready to deliver a proper infusion of mana along with with the massage.

I wanted to do to test the tricks I had learned after working on Janelor.

Marianne and Titania wouldn't benefit from that as intensely as Janelor, but that didn't mean that it would be completely wasteful. Especially since I was carefully manipulating the mana into a warm sensation with the assistance of Tantric.

Marianne's moans rose, more intense than usual, showing her appreciation for my new trick.

"Well, this feels nostalgic," I murmured even as I let my hands dance on Marianne's back, couldn't help but remember how our relationship started, first through trickery, then through addicting her to my touch, making her moan more and more...

"S-shut up," Marianne murmured while I covered her back with the massage oil, clearly feeling self-conscious about the memories. Just not enough to actually ask me to stop, instead arching her back in appreciation.

I chuckled as I finished covering her back, then let the oil warm over her body while I turned to Titania, who was lying on her back.

"Someone is enthusiastic," I murmured with a chuckle even as I caught Titania's gaze, enjoying her blush even before I started working on her body. And, since she lay in such an inviting pose, I decided to take that as an invitation for a more aggressive start.

And started by squeezing her beautiful breasts.

Titania didn't answer, busy moaning as I squeezed her nipples.

"Damn, it just had been a few days, but I missed you two," I said with a smirk even as I let my

hands climb up to her neck, not wanting to push her too fast and too hard because just after a few touches, she was showing the signs of melting.

Yet, even as I slowed down the treatment, I was amazed at the speed Titania was folding, suggesting that, after getting used to the sensation of pleasure, she was developing a weakness to it.

[+500 Experience]

The notification that popped into my sight was certainly as welcome as her moans, giving me a little burst of power to push me toward the next level. I continued to work on her neck as I enjoyed her shivers, signaling her anticipation, filled with desire.

I let my hands wander on her body momentarily to cover the rest of her body with the massage oil before going back to her neck, applying the full range of my massage skills to her in a soft gentleness.

A subtle purr started escaping her mouth soon as my fingers destroyed the stress she had accumulated during her extended mission. Yet, I pulled back to attend to the other naked beauty that was waiting for me, terminated Titania's service momentarily.

Titania sent a fleeting glare toward me as I pulled my hands away, clearly unhappy with the early stop. "We're just warming up, sweetie," I said as I put my hands on Marianne's curvy body once more. "A little patience."

Titania didn't look particularly happy about that idea, but that didn't prevent her from starting to watch me as I started working on Marianne's body properly.

"You're right, a little patience—" Marianne tried to tease Titania, only for her words to fade into a moan as my fingers danced along her spine, finding one of her many sensitive spots to trigger a moan.

It was Titania's turn to chuckle as I continued to tease Marianne...

As much as I wanted to move to the main event, I wanted the girls to rest after their difficult mission as well, so I restricted myself to massaging them for the next several minutes, alternating between them, destroying the stiffness that had been accumulated during their tedious mission.

It was not without its benefits, of course, as playing with Titania gave me rather beautiful

rewards, which, while not enough to make me reach the next level, pushed me to the border of it.

[+1000 Experience]

It was time to push for even more.

I focused on Titania even more, grabbing her legs as I continued to massage her inner thighs, her eyes closed under the invasion of pleasure. Therefore, she didn't notice my spell to get rid of my clothes.

Marianne noticed it, but rather than complaining, she shifted her position to get a better view of the show, her eyes brimming with enthusiasm.

Titania's rumbling and mewling were interrupted when I slid inside her without a warning, the sensation of her warmth enveloping my shaft unmatched.

Though, the emotions triggered by the double-notification were a close second.

[+1000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 76%]

I let my gaze slip back to Marianne, catching her gaze for a fleeting moment, whose lips were curled in amusement as she watched Titania's spectacular moan in amusement. I couldn't help but feel that her amusement was more about the fact that Titania was more hesitant than her in bed than the pleasure she was deriving from the view.

Not that the pleasure she was deriving from the scene was not significant, evidenced by the way her fingers disappeared inside her, dancing around her knob mercilessly.

Watching Marianne was fun, but not as much as watching Titania who was busy gasping and moaning under my surprise assault, the calm yet steady invasion of my shaft working wonders to resolve the last scraps of the stress she was suffering under.

Rather effectively.

Her moans got only more intense as I slid my hands under her hips, raising them to a more convenient angle for my repeated invasions while my fingers dug into her tight ass.

"So, tell me, how was the mission?" I asked with a casualness that contrasted greatly with my

other actions.

“R-right now?” Titania managed to stammer between her moans as she opened her eyes.

“Why not?” I answered, trying to look calm, but unable to prevent an amused quirk of my lips.

Titania’s look of surprise was beautiful. “M-maybe Marianne can explain instead,” she offered.

I looked at Marianne, who was busy enjoying the show we were putting on in a way that kept her fingers very busy. “She is clearly busy, it would be rude to ask her,” I said. Titania sent me a frustrated glare, but that was all she could do, as before she spoke, I quickened my hips, the intensifying pleasure burning her words.

“Don’t tell me you can’t handle it?” Marianne commented from the side between her moans, followed by a chuckle.

Titania’s blush was simply beautiful. “Of course I can,” she declared with a dedication that reminded me of the times I had only seen as the scary head librarian that I could never touch. “The mission started by targeting several rumored undead presence, though we didn’t expect to find much,” Titania said.

“Let me guess, because of some internal analysis, discounting the possibility of a significant undead presence,” I said.

“Exactly, someone was clearly fiddling with the reports to make us underestimate the undead presence. The potential was much more than we expected, ready to invade the nearby cities once the initial armies sieged Silver Spires, making it almost impossible to reinforce the area.”

“Therefore forcing the headmistress to take personal action,” I suggested.

“E-exactly,” Titania said, agreeing with my conclusion before giving a more detailed report of their mission, including the distribution of the undead presence between different bases and the minor challenges they faced.

It didn’t take long for her determination to start fading, her words interrupted by her frequent moans. I had no doubt that, if we were alone, she would have folded already, but with Marianne watching with a smug smirk, occasionally supported by her teasing remarks, Titania persisted in her determination.

And I received my reward soon after.

[+2000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 79%]

[Level Up!]

I didn't even think before selecting my new skill, finally pushing Tantric to the next level.

[Grandmaster Tantric (100/110)]

On the one hand, it was not a good feeling to sacrifice my flexibility, the greatest reason for the chain of success I had been enjoying since that fateful day I had gained my first experience, showing that I wasn't a waste — at least in a world that measured success with martial might.

Not that I could blame them, not with a world rife with danger. I had lost count of the times I would have met an unfortunate end if it wasn't for my rapidly-growing strength, as well as the utility of my growing list of skills.

Yet, ironically, Tantric, despite its abject uselessness in combat, was the only option for me to select to increase my survival ability, for one simple reason.

It worked even when isolated from the System. I didn't know why or how, I didn't even know whether it could be actually relied on or was an illusion.

However, it wasn't the first time I was made to make a choice despite lacking information...

I put my hand on Titania's breasts, invading her Soul Space to reinforce it more, which took more mana than it took me to actually destroy an army with my current skills, but earning a welcome notification in return.

[-2129 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

"I think that's enough reporting," I said as I grabbed Marianne's hand and pulled her over to Titania, creating a delicious sandwich for my pleasure for my own enjoyment.

"It's time to start the proper celebration."

[Level: 33 Experience: 528660 / 561000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6732 / 6732 Mana: 6728 / 8250]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [101/110]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter Two Hundred

The smile bloomed on Marianne's face as she found herself in a new position, one that signified the massage was over.

"About time," she growled as she shifted in her place, trying to get comfortable. Titania said nothing, but that didn't mean her answer was more subdued. Her lips were busy with letting out a delicious moan.

Understandable, as Marianne's shuffle on top of her didn't exactly help her to get calm after her spectacular climax.

I paused for a moment, enjoying the scene of their beautiful bodies rubbing against each other, especially the beautiful sight of their breasts pressing against each other, dominated by the weight of the moment.

Yet, Marianne didn't seem to be happy about that pause. "Hurry up," she whispered, gasping loudly as she did so.

"Such impatience," I whispered even as I slapped her ass, enjoying the moan that escaped her mouth, particularly the way her flesh rippled. "Don't worry, I'll start working on you properly. But first, let's make sure that our dear librarian doesn't say anything. You know that I'm too shy to handle a sudden comment. What if she hurts my confidence."

"Yes. You're a walking embodiment of embarrassment, I'm sure you can't handle a little comment," Marianne said as she chuckled.

"Of course I am," I said, even with the Subterfuge, barely managing to sound serious. "Now, start working on silencing her."

"As you wish," Marianne answered as she leaned down, showing that while she enjoyed the banter, she didn't enjoy it as much as what she wanted to start.

"W-wait —" Titania murmured panicked, but, with the closeness of their lips, that was all she was able to utter before Marianne's lips landed on their target, burying the rest of her attempt rather efficiently. Marianne was more than enthusiastic as she launched her assault, enjoying the sweetness of Titania's mouth.

Though, considering the way their tongue twirled with great practice, I couldn't help but assume our after-battle celebration wasn't the only time they had been practicing that

particular move.

“Not bad,” I said as I twirled my fingers into Marianne’s soft blonde hair, giving just enough pull to extract a little gasp, but not enough to pull her back from the kiss. “You’re certainly benefiting from lots and lots of practice.”

Titania’s tongue stilled at the notification, but Marianne just continued to kiss. Seeing Marianne getting comfortable with some girl-on-girl action was not exactly a big revelation, not with how our little relationship started.

That didn’t mean that it was impossible to interrupt her, of course. There were several ways to do so, ranging in various difficulties and impacts.

I chose the most direct way and slid inside her, not that the simplicity meant the impact was limited. Already aroused from the show she had been watching, the sudden push triggered Marianne, resulting in a spectacular moan that forced her to pull back from the kiss.

One that she didn’t return, but Titania didn’t seem to mind, especially when Marianne started kissing her neck instead, occasionally alternating to light nibbles to trigger her pleasure even more. Titania didn’t respond, too busy moaning in pleasure.

And, keeping her included even gave me a little surprise reward.

[+1000 Experience]

Luckily for Marianne, I was there to compensate for Titania’s lack of response. I grabbed her amazing hips, enjoying their tightness even as I created leverage, then started pushing my hips.

Which came with its own reward.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 76%]

As my hips started picking up speed, Marianne’s moans started to get more frequent, to the point of neglecting Titania’s neck, allowing her to finally get a handle of the haze of the pleasure.

I managed to catch her eyes when Marianne’s back arched after a particularly hard push. “She’s being too loud,” I said to Titania. “Why don’t you help her keep silent so her voice doesn’t alert any nearby beasts.”

As far as the excuses go, that was a rather lazy one, considering that three of us were not only

capable enough to defeat a hostile army theoretically but literally had done so a few days ago, and no monster that could be found in the wild would have been a threat to us.

At least, not any monsters that would still need to depend on our voices to find us.

However, at the moment, with her mind blanked in pleasure, Titania lacked the mental alacrity to point out that fact. Not that she would have chosen to argue at that point even if she was in a better mental state, not with the rush she caught Marianne's lips like she was just waiting for an excuse.

I couldn't help but chuckle at Titania's attitude, impressing me with her shyness. It seemed that her habit of authority was still not translating to the bedroom — or the other places where we experienced our fun.

I decided to help her a bit. "Marianne is moving too much, why don't you help me with that as well by wrapping your beautiful legs around her waist so that she can slow down."

Her embarrassment didn't slow her response to direct order. Her legs, deceptively strong despite their thinness — a fact that I was intimately familiar with — wrapped around Marianne's waist, slowing her wild rocking.

Marianne let out a surprised grunt that managed to escape Titania's attempts to silence her, showing that she was not as intimately familiar with the strength hidden in her legs. Which would have suggested a lack of physical contact between them if it wasn't for the familiarity of her kiss, but with that, the real reason was clear.

Titania had stayed passive enough to keep that as a secret during their little carnal games, to the point that she had never employed her full physical strength even for the purposes of fun.

What a waste, especially with such a soft beauty like Marianne that enjoyed the other side of the little games of domination. Not that seeing my blonde busty healer taking the dominant role for once wasn't extremely entertaining.

[+1000 Experience]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 78%]

Under the double assault, Marianne's companion progress was paying dividends rather rapidly. I decided to give a little reward as well, the kind that actually impacted her combat ability.

[-2310 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

Her moan intensified as my mana invaded her body, but she didn't bother to comment on the sudden rush of experience, far too familiar with the phenomenon to bother even wasting a second on that.

I smiled at the relative ease Tantric had gained another small improvement — though I was aware that there wouldn't be a lot of people that would classify spending more than two thousand mana in a single burst as a trivial achievement.

I continued my urgent assault, but not in a steady manner. After all, with the great effort, she was showing, Titania had earned a more direct involvement. I pulled out Marianne — immediately replacing the resulting lack of attention with my fingers — only to slip right back into Titania, which changed their roles about who was responsible for silencing, and who was the one being silenced.

To their credit, their lips never parted even as alternated between them, lost in the pleasure of the moment.

It was a beautiful moment, I decided even as I tightened my grip around Marianne's hair and pushed her down, forcing her to intensify their kiss even as I impaled her repeatedly from behind.

"I'm sure you didn't work closely with the students, but as the head librarian, you need to learn how to take a firm hand with the students. You can't just assume you can intimidate them," I explained, even though I doubted Titania was in a state to process that explanation.

Marianne stiffened slightly, showing that she didn't appreciate my push, but under my merciless pounding, she was unable to comment even before I added a light sprinkle of spanks to the mix.

With no words, the beautiful meadow we were enjoying was filled with moans, spanks, and cries of ecstasy, their attention split between my alternating assault and the attention of each other.

My hips continued to move in an endless rhythm, the growing pleasure allowing me to get more and more

I continued pushing my hips, wanting nothing more than to get lost in pleasure as deeply as the

two beauties in front of me...

[+2000 Experience]

Unfortunately, I had another task.

Understanding what was going on with the Companion Process.

After all, with my growing distrust of the System, it would be a silly thing to continue to rely on the System in such a fundamental aspect of my power.

And, in that area, there were several questions to answer.

Why did completions in Companion Process was rewarding me with incredible bursts of experience? Why it was allowing me to gather mana one at a speed that reached the point of impossible through perks? Why it was giving me incredible perks that were several times more useful than levels — even at the risk of being dangerously explosive?

And, most importantly...

Whether I could replicate it without the assistance of the System...

[Level: 33 Experience: 532660 / 561000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6732 / 6732 Mana: 6728 / 8250]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [102/110]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

Chapter Two Hundred One

Luckily, while I needed to understand better how Companion Node worked, it was not one of the boring, joyless magical research projects. No, it was much more fun.

I continued to slide inside Marianne, enjoying the amazing way her warmth wrapped around my shaft, I split my attention toward the way the Companion Node was getting stronger, enhancing the connection between us.

Naturally, it wasn't the first time I was paying attention to this process, but my growing experience with Divine Spark helped me to notice a lot of details I had missed earlier.

In particular, a particular similarity between the Companion Node and the Divine Spark in its raw form — or what I deemed as the raw form after it had lost its elemental nature with the assistance of Tantric.

I had no idea whether that was actually the case, but I still received a reward in the process.

[+2 Tantric]

Focusing on the way the Companion Process was developing gave me a significant boost on Tantric, more than I had been expecting, especially with its already high attainment as my first Grandmaster skill.

It was supposed to develop slower, which only went further to confirm the link between Tantric and the Companion Process. Although, I couldn't help but wonder about the underlying implications.

Especially since I had learned that I couldn't block the connection between me and the Tantric, implying wasn't coming from the System.

And, if that wasn't coming from the system, maybe it was the case for the Companion Node as well. So, even as my hips rocked hard, alternating between two girls that presented themselves in front of me, each moment enhanced the subtle core of power that was hidden in their soul spaces.

With my current Tantric sensitivity, I could see that, even without the notifications, the Node was getting stronger. Only slightly, but still getting stronger.

Then, I started noticing other important details. There was a flow between the Companion Node

and the system, subtle yet unmistakable in its unique nature.

Divine Spark, in its purified form, reinforcing the girls after coming from the System.

If it wasn't for Grandmaster level Tantric, supported by my phenomenal perception, that might have been the only thing I noticed. But, paying careful attention, I could see that a similar flow of Divine Spark subtly flowed out of my body and mixed with theirs, before coalescing into their Companion Nodes.

It was harder to notice than the interaction between the Node and the System, because the interaction of the system came from a single, linear source, like a drip of water, while from my body, the same amount radiated from a wider area, with the soft consistency of a vapor.

Making it much harder to notice.

The amount was really subtle, not enough to have a noticeable effect on the amount of Divine Spark I had absorbed in my body.

Even then, I frowned at the realization, because I had been hoping that absorbing Divine Spark to enhance my body was permanent.

That would not do, I decided as I tried to exert some control on that flow.

Surprisingly, I had received instant success. Stopping my own Divine Spark flow had been rather simple, much easier than intervening with the System, still, Divine Spark was a more reliable source of power.

And, since I was able to slow down the process, I could use the same trick to quicken it as well. I closed my eyes for a moment and let the Divine Spark evaporate off my body faster, and channeled it to their Companion Nodes.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 86%]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 85%]

[+2 Tantric]

[+2000 Experience]

And received great success.

“Excellent,” I murmured as I quickened the assault of my hips, and instead focused only on Marianne, sending another wave of power, this time in the form of Mana, giving her more experience.

[-2910 Mana]

Even as I did so, I stopped to think for a moment, trying to decide the relative merits of quickening the Companion Process and wasting some Divine Spark — which was, ultimately, only a fraction of my current capabilities — versus letting the System handle it, saving some in exchange of time it would require to complete the last step.

In the end, I decided on the former. Not because spending several uninterrupted hours with two beautiful women who were willing to do everything to make that period pleasurable was a great chore.

But the unexpected interruptions to my plans were becoming a norm, and it was for the better not to push my luck to see whether I could do it. Spending my own Divine Spark was not the greatest thing, but it was not a good habit to be miserly.

And, the fun part had no problem as well. After all, there was nothing preventing me from extending the fun after the Companion Process had been completed.

So, I decided to change the pace a bit by focusing on Marianne fully. I grabbed her waist, easily lifting her, interrupting their little kiss even as I hooked my arms under her legs while I flared my magic to summon another crystal furniture, this time a chair for myself.

I sat down, with Marianne on my lap, her back pushing against my chest, her amazing breasts free to jiggle with each push, creating a spectacular view in the process.

“More,” Marianne moaned breathlessly while Titania looked at the sudden change of pace with a disappointed gaze.

“As you wish,” I whispered to Marianne’s ear, pulling back only after leaving a soft bite before turning my attention back to Titania, who was watching us with a barely-disguised disappointment in her gaze, not entirely welcoming the sudden change. “Come on, sweetie, what are you waiting for,” I said as I caught her gaze. “Marianne’s breasts certainly need more attention.” Then, I slapped Marianne’s ass. “Don’t they?”

“Yes, they do!” Marianne moaned beautifully, repeating the invitation, which was enough to break Titania’s momentary hesitance. She shuffled until she was sitting on the same crystal she

was lying on a moment ago, close enough to my chair that she could reach Marianne's tits while sitting on the corner of it.

I stopped for a moment to enjoy the sight of Titania's hands disappearing into the great expanse of Marianne's bosom before turning my attention — most of it — back to the changes going on in her soul space, her companion node getting stronger with each second.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 91%]

[+2000 Experience]

Even as the companion node continued to grow, I was getting a better sight of the details of the node. Interestingly, the process itself was less complicated than I expected — just not as simple as the headmistress' direct and violent method, not requiring such a pointless show.

Though, to be fair, unlike the headmistress, I had full control of the Divine Spark in my possession rather than constantly battling against it in an effort to prevent spontaneous combustion.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 94%]

I decided to reward Marianne's help with another burst of experience.

[-1902 Mana]

"Yes," she moaned softly, barely able to gather sufficient breath between her moans. "Another level!"

"Good performance will not go without a reward," I whispered, which earned a satisfied moan from Marianne.

Titania's expression was markedly more pointed, jealousy coloring her face. Yet, she didn't explicitly ask for it, showing her shyness was not an issue that could be cured immediately. "Sorry about that, sweetie, but your level is a bit much to boost easily, but don't worry, I still have a little achievement lined up for you."

That didn't make her give a verbal answer, but I was more than happy to take the way she leaned down to capture Marianne's nipple between her lips as a win.

I tightened my grip on Marianne's hips instead, quickening the assault, catching an interesting detail in the process. The more aroused Marianne was feeling, the more efficient the

companion node creation was going excellently.

Not that it was a shocking revelation at this point, not with the source of my power.

Instead, I let one of my hands slip forward, teasing her knob to enhance her pleasure even further, seconds turning into minutes.

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 100% - Final Stage Completed +20000 Exp]

[Permanent Perk Established: Mana Regeneration]

[Permanent Perk Established: Skill Share]

“Yes, yes, yes!” Marianne moaned repeatedly, but as the pleasure hit her, which was not exactly helped by the intensity of the pleasure combined with the rush of leveling. She collapsed, the pleasure and power mixing enough to push her to the edge of a collapse.

The sensation was amazing, but I still had a frown on my face.

There was no new perk, which was not exactly a good sign. Especially combined with the recent dearth of Achievements I was suffering.

I decided to file that to analyze later. It was unfair to focus on that fact while I had two beautiful naked ladies begging for my attention.

I conjured a bed for Marianne to lie on before I turned my attention back to Titania, who looked fascinated by the explosive intensity of Marianne’s climax. “She lost quickly,” she still managed to stammer.

“Yes, she did,” I said with a big smirk on my face. “But, if you’re feeling she underperformed, let’s see how long you would be able to handle,” I added as I grabbed her arm and pulled her onto my lap.

The same space Marianne had just vacated a second ago, my glistening shaft a sign of her presence...

[Level: 33 Experience: 556660 / 561000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6732 / 6732 Mana: 5863 / 8250]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [106/110]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Two

I couldn't help but smirk as I looked at the collapsed figures of Titania and Marianne, their exhaustion at the peak after a night filled with debauchery, though, considering the great benefits it had granted to them, I doubted they would mind the exhaustion.

I couldn't say I was unhappy about the results as well.

[Grandmaster Tantric (112/120)]

[Experience: 591170 / 595000]

Not only I had received another level after the completion of the Companion process, but also made decent progress toward another amazing level up.

Too bad the System chose to give me that annoying notification about lacking Divine Spark once again, one that came faster than I expected, invalidating my earlier calculations about Divine Spark and the experience gained.

Like I didn't have enough reasons to be suspicious of the System and its behavior already.

"Let's make sure you girls are secure," I murmured as I looked at the beautiful sight of their naked bodies, wrapped around each other, exhausted and defenseless.

I didn't have the luxury of staying there and protecting them until they woke up, and while a healing spell would wake them up, ruining their beautiful haze after everything we had done would have been equally rude.

I might need to go back to visit the headmistress at the promised meeting time, but I had no intention of sacrificing the security of my girls to do so.

Luckily, there were other alternatives, ones that came in the form of layers and layers of wards.

They weren't as complicated as my usual ones, but considering I wouldn't be there to control the wards, I needed to be careful of an accident. Of course, that limited complication meant the wards wouldn't be as strong, so I compensated by spending a scary amount of mana.

[-6720 Mana]

Then, I left after scribbling a note, leaving them to continue their mission. I didn't like them

staying away from Silver Spires with some of the royal forces trying to keep tabs on them, but summoning them back might be the riskier choice.

Especially since I was yet to truly understand the source of the conflict between the Princess and the rest of her family — and more importantly, the identity and the objective of the mysterious support of the other royals.

It wouldn't be too much of a problem for Titania, who not only had sufficient power, but also lacked easily manipulated levers. That didn't apply to Marianne, who belonged to a minor noble house, one that would only hurt her in such a conflict.

For her, it was safer for her to build a reputation first.

But that was something to be focused on for the future. After one last glance, I summoned another air elemental to go back, once again using the travel time to practice my abilities, to increase my casting abilities without the assistance of the System.

When I arrived, the sun was already halfway up on the horizon, suggesting I was late. Very slightly late, but still late.

Luckily, I was too familiar with the paths around the school to have any problem traveling around, and managed to arrive at the entrance of the tower without extending that delay too much.

Not many people would care about such a slight delay, but I found the door already open, giving me the impression that the headmistress was not one of those.

I climbed the stairs without wasting any time. At the top of the stairs, I found the headmistress waiting for me already, a disapproving expression on her face.

Technically, with her stern expression, supported by her impressive armor and her even more impressive wings, she was supposed to be intimidating. Yet, maybe it was my changing perception of her, driven by a combination of her attitude toward Janelor and the realization of how much she needed me, but I didn't find her threatening.

She almost looked adorable.

"I'm sorry I'm late," I said, still apologizing, even if my mannerism was a touch of perfection. After all, just because I didn't find her intimidating didn't mean that I could treat her without respect outwardly.

She was yet to learn just how much she needed me.

“Make sure it doesn’t happen again,” she said even as she gestured for me to take my usual place for another transfer of Divine Spark. Her tone implied that she would much prefer to send me away for my ‘disrespect’ but the pressure she was under prevented her from being heavy-handed in her punishments.

After all, I was still responsible for keeping Janelor happy.

Her torrent of mana hit me soon after, once again carrying a limited amount of Divine Spark. At this point, the method of pilfering Divine Spark was rather familiar, allowing me to take even more. Of course, it was also about my confidence in the advantages I managed to find, allowing me to be more greedy as I captured the Divine Spark.

Even if she noticed my trick, I could easily use my connection with Janelor to prevent her from punishing me, which would still leave my other cards hidden.

Yet, those thoughts turned out to be unnecessary.

She seemed to be in a hurry to complete my Light Node, as today’s transfer lasted even longer. When it finished, she was panting hard, giving me very visible signs of exhaustion.

I was tempted to show the illusion of a completed node, but not for long. With the System asking for Divine Spark once more before letting me get more experience — a cycle that seemed to shorten significantly with each repeat — I needed an excuse to get more Divine Spark.

And if it exhausted her, tough world. She still owed me for saving Silver Spires.

“Thank you, my lady,” I stood up as I made a very visible show of struggling to stand up, while I was busy locking the Divine Spark behind the storage the System couldn’t reach. I gave an impression of struggle and pain, because it wouldn’t be reasonable to believe I had managed to handle the wild infusion of Spark while it impacted her too much.

She waited silently as I put on a show of struggle. It was not due to kindness, of course, but she was using it as an excuse to hide her own exhaustion, acting like it was a rare display of mercy. She understood the value of posturing — though that shouldn’t be a surprise as she maintained her grip on Silver Spires for two centuries mostly through posturing. The nature of her mana might contrast with that direction, but it was impossible for her not to get at least reasonably competent on a subject after such a time.

Even without the assistance of the System in the form of convenient skills to significantly shorten the learning process, two centuries was sufficient to do so.

Only after finishing my little show and standing up, she spoke, but rather than acknowledging the impact of the transfer, however, she chose to move to the next topic. "Is there anything you need to share about your mission?"

"Nothing in particular," I answered as I put my hands on my knee, selling the idea of exhaustion even more. "She's quite lazy. As long as I prepare her food and make sure nothing interrupts her nap, she's happy."

"Good," she said, though while her answer was simple, her expression was more nuanced, the kind that would make someone with less control over their emotions curse. The fact that she needed to beg Janelor for her help must have been difficult.

Janelor's offhanded comments implied that the headmistress wasn't a particularly important part of her faction, probably equivalent to a middling student, but no matter how long one's life, two centuries were more than enough for a substance to be addictive.

Especially since the substance in question was power, the most addictive substance ever known to mankind. It was clearly not too different from other life forms, like angels and dragons...

"What should I do if she asks something excessive?" I asked, probing her a bit more on the subject.

"Like what?" she asked, though her frown tightened, clearly not enjoying talking about her blackmailer.

"Well, she looks happy for the moment, but what if she gets bored cooped up and wants to go out for a trip?" I asked. "Do I help her, or keep her inside?"

This time, her face actually showed a hint of emotion, an explosive one. "You need to keep her in, no matter what! We can't afford her getting caught by the Eternals, it would ruin everything. Do whatever you need to entertain her."

"As you order, milady," I answered, doing my best to keep my smile more hidden than her growing panic at the suggestion. Her word choice was enough to reveal that she didn't care much about Janelor's fate, but about losing access to the benefits Janelor represented. Otherwise, she wouldn't have mentioned anything about her not being afford such a condition. "I'll do my best to keep her entertained, no matter what."

“Good,” she said as she looked at me. “Then, we can focus on what’s important. Create a container.”

“As you order, milady,” I repeated as I gathered my mana, ready to create the storage she needed.

[Level: 34 Experience: 591170 / 595000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6936 / 6936 Mana: 8414 / 8500]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [112/120]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Three

While I created the storage the headmistress requested I had a tense expression, and that was not just a fake expression I wore to trick her about the difficulty of the challenge.

I wanted to mislead her, but that was not the reason for my true tenseness. I was tense because, even at the moment, I wasn't entirely sure the path I had chosen was the right one, and I revealed the correct level of information to her.

As I created the storage, the mana I used to construct it carried little Tantric mana.

Or, more accurately, it didn't carry the Tantric effect. It was hard to describe the effect of Tantric on mana, because it didn't work like the other natures, like elemental or arcana, which just transformed the pure mana into corresponding nature directly.

It took me a long time to understand but Tantric didn't just transform but somehow elevated the intensity of mana — though even that was an inaccurate definition, just the best way I was able to pin the process down.

It was not just a merger like one achieved by merging light and elemental magics. That process, while being extremely explosive, was much easier to understand. It was just that merging different natures, requiring a lot of power to suppress the necessary conflict between them.

Different natures, but the same hierarchy of existence.

The hierarchy of existence was certainly a difficult concept, but one that I wasn't sure I understood correctly. I certainly didn't remember reading it in a book or talking to someone about such a concept. Of course, such instinctual understanding was not entirely unfamiliar. I had received many skills, and every single one of them came bundled with such deep and integrated understanding.

And, that left me with another interesting conundrum. Which skill was responsible for that information?

I was inclined to believe that it was Tantric responsible for this portion.

After all, not only it was about how Tantric was different from other skills — a fact that was getting clear more and more as time passed — but also that realization came after I have just improved Tantric twice in a row, making it my first grandmaster skill. So, assuming Tantric was

the origin of that information was reasonable.

However, under the circumstances, assuming something was true because it was reasonable and fit together well with other circumstantial evidence might be dangerous, leading me to a tunnel of misunderstanding.

After all, we were living in an apocalyptic world that was built over ruins of a battle that included gods in destroyed planes.

Logic was not a rule but a luxury.

Luckily, identifying the source of that scrap of information was not exactly a priority with everything going on.

And, deciding on where Tantric fell under this hierarchy was much easier. It was clearly higher than ordinary mana, and belonged to some group as the divine spark. And even, considering its great effect on the divine spark, even on that scale, it clearly ranked high.

Though, if I asked the headmistress, I had a feeling that I would receive a different classification.

I still remembered her calling the presumed source of the fake companion node I created to trick her as the Degenerate — though, whether she was referring to another user like me or someone that might be compared to her God needed to be clarified.

Ultimately, lack of information was the problem I faced constantly, making it difficult decision whether to reveal the full extent of Tantric's effects or keep it hidden.

So, I decided to play it conservatively. I used only a minuscule amount of Tantric effect as I created the storage, just enough to contain the divine spark successfully while also adding a subtle calming effect, but nothing else. Because, ultimately, it was better to be on the safe side when it came to such matters, especially when dealing with someone like the headmistress, who was yet to earn the privilege of my trust.

Still, even if the effect was subdued compared to its full potential, it was a great improvement over the last display, enough to show that, without a doubt, my mana was superior when it came to containing the divine spark.

And, while my mind was busy with the tangent of Tantric and how it compared to other mana natures and divine sparks, the headmistress was busy examining the effects of my storage,

making a note of the improvement. Seeing the expression of astonishment on her face, impossible to be hidden despite her best efforts — not that her best efforts were particularly difficult to unravel when it come to subterfuge — suggesting that, even my conservative choice was already pushing the limits of credibility.

Dealing with the divine spark might be even harder than I had assumed despite my best efforts to put a safety margin on the concept.

“How...” she murmured as she continued to examine the storage, poking with her own to get a better sense of what was going on, only to fail spectacularly.

I wasn't surprised by her failure to understand its source. I was the one that cast the spell, which gave me a considerably better insight into the process behind it, and even then, it took several hours of repeated experimentation to understand the reason for the Divine Spark's reaction.

When she glanced at me, her suspicion was clear, but unlike the previous time, I was more prepared for that. “Any idea why it's able to contain it successfully this ?” I asked, throwing the problem back to her, like it was something I expected her to know.

“Probably a unique reaction as the power of the Divine Spark is getting settled on your body,” she said, trying to sound certain, but she was not a sufficiently good liar to reflect that — or the fact that she was trying to mislead me intentionally.

“Really, then Titania should be able to do it as well?” I asked, doing my best to hide my smirk as I poked a hole in her explanation.

“Not ... not really,” she answered, her speech slower as she tried to get herself time to find an explanation. “She's not as good when it comes to wards and crafting,” she added quickly.

“If you say so,” I answered with a shrug, amused that she chose to explain that way rather than spinning something about the interaction between my companion node and the new one. It would have been much more believable as an excuse.

It would have been much closer to the truth as well, but that was not really the issue. I was more interested in the fact that she just ignored the possibility of assistance from the companion node, like it was not even possible.

Admittedly, even for me, it took a while to accept that Tantric had such potential, and unlike her, I already knew that Tantric was the gateway to many suspicious things, from helping others

to increasing their level cap to giving more experience in addition to other, more mundane impact like a more fun time in bed and helping transfer mana more easily...

“Still, we need to study it more to make sure we understand its full implications,” she said, trying to look disinterested, only to fail miserably.

Trying to look casually disinterested was one of the things that inexperienced people fail miserably at, mostly because they misunderstood the complexity behind such a trick. That were many simple components to it, from how one positioned their hands to where their gaze pointed. They thought they knew, but the truth...

The hands were usually defined by a lack of action, standing unnaturally still at their sides or being busy with a trinket. The eyes, on the other hand, were either unnaturally still as they maintained eye contact lingering to the point of discomfort, or avoided that connection in the first place.

To her credit, the headmistress managed to show all these traits at the same time despite the supposedly contrasting nature of those moves, cycling through them with great speed.

It was amusing to see her relative competence of Subterfuge — at least one discounted the time she required to develop that — had fallen into pieces completely when she tried to tell a lie.

That, she clearly used very little in her long tenure.

How amusing...

“Try to create a storage in your finger,” she ordered, her explanation once again brief but her expression tight with concentration, unaware that she gave me another little decision challenge, especially with her deliberate wording. Creating mana storage inside a living being was significantly more difficult than doing it externally, and the cost of failure was much higher.

I was already using that trick for a long time, of course, but that didn't mean it was safe to reveal that to her. Yet, looking at her enthusiastic expression, I decided to show her I could do it.

After all, it was what she needed to solve her problem, and the casualness of her question — one that I could read as genuine — showed that she expected me to succeed, making it a safe choice.

[-931 Mana]

“Here,” I said as I pointed my hand to her, and she channeled her magic through it, storing some Divine Spark inside. Pity I couldn’t just take it and leave, as consuming it would have been suspicious.

I let it go after five minutes, giving her sufficient time to observe. “Sounds simple enough,” I answered.

“Good, now to the next task,” she said, her voice colored with enthusiasm, which was incredible considering her usual subdued emotions.

“Whatever you wish to do, I have nothing else important to address other than paying another visit to Janelor, she asked me to bring breakfast, but if you’re okay with me delaying that...” I said, doing my best to sound casual. It was not true, of course, as rather than visiting Janelor, I wanted to go and dig the little secrets of the princess — the team that was spying on Marianne and Titania was enough to show that was more urgent than I expected.

Yet, it was clearly not something she would care about. Such political tricks were dangerous, but if there was one thing the deadly undead attack taught me, that the headmistress was too passive against the threats that the school faced. Even if she didn’t want to act, she had many tools she could have leveraged before Zokras and his merry band of undead could become a threat too difficult to handle. Only sheer luck — in my peculiar form — prevented Silver Spire from getting terribly damaged.

I had no reason to believe she would be more proactive against the growing political threat. Luckily, I had Janelor as the excuse to act however I wished. And, right now, I deliberately wanted to leave after showing her that my little storage trick was more effective than she expected.

“No, don’t delay that!” she said, her panic clear. After all, my storage trick was only a possible solution to her problems, and until she could make sure that it worked, she wouldn’t dare to make Janelor unhappy. “Go and handle her, then come back.”

“As you wish, milady,” I bowed, giving a little obedient bow, my mind already busy on how to leverage my newfound leverage...

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6936 / 6936 Mana: 8163 / 8500]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [112/120]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Four

After I left the tower, I didn't waste any time resting and moved to my next target.

My destination, the temporary Royal Quarters, to enjoy the apology breakfast that was promised — well, promised was a rather liberal description of what had happened.

The more accurate definition was to say the one I extorted after not-Delia's poorly thought-out revenge attempt, thinking that her amazing concealment would hide the truth behind her transformation — which, admittedly, was not a bad assumption. Even with all my advantages, I had barely managed to discover the truth behind her disguise and her fake skills, an achievement that relied on a lot of luck.

Though, her fake skills were the reason I let the System absorb a decent portion of the Divine Spark I had managed to steal from the headmistress, preparing myself for the experience I was about to receive. Of course, whether their fake skills would be high enough to trigger was a guess, but I was rather confident in the guess I was making.

I didn't keep the rest of the Divine Spark in the storage either. I purified that through Tantric — a process that had gotten much faster now that I understood the principles behind it, absorbing the transformed Divine Spark, empowering myself. It was not very noticeable, eclipsed by the System, but I still liked the security of having a backup.

I walked slow enough that, when I arrived in front of the Royal Quarters, the job was already complete.

The guards opened the door before I even talked with them, bowing to me respectfully as I stepped inside silently, their bows exaggerated enough to make a clueless observer think that another member of the Royal family was visiting. Such a bow was certainly inappropriate to the point of counting as treason — but I doubted the princess would care much considering she was in the middle of a civil war, only lacking an official declaration.

Once again, a maid led me toward the familiar room, but this time, the maid was wearing a modified uniform, much more revealing than their usual outfit, creating an impressive view as her hips swayed with each step.

A small yet carefully thought little touch to put me in the mood, one that I had no problems enjoying even though I was constructing a spell simultaneously. Dealing with the great change in their attitude was fun, and the implication that they would comply with my demands rather

than do something more aggressive was rather obvious.

Yet it was better safe than sorry, especially since it might easily be a trick from them to make me drop my alertness. Not to mention, with their mysterious abilities challenging my detection capabilities, the need was very clear. Especially if they had some offensive techniques to match their disguise.

Though, hopefully, they were lacking in that aspect.

The maid had led me to the same room I had enjoyed the experience of being hosted for my previous breakfast, yet, this time, it was decorated much differently. The large table was still in place, filled with an even greater number of delicious-smelling delicacies, but everything else was different. The elegant furniture was gone, replaced with huge satin pillows, thin silk curtains, soft smelling incenses, everything in tones of red and purple.

Yet, as the maid closed the door behind me, I turned my attention to the smell of the room, a soft, beautiful incense that sent stirrings inside me. A stirring that was suspiciously strong, but luckily, my healing abilities were up to the task of analyzing its nature.

It was an interesting concoction, I decided as I examined it. Despite its nature to manipulate the body, it didn't trigger the innate resistance given by the Endurance. Understanding the reason for that didn't take long, as rather than trying to infect the body directly, it was replicating an external pheromone, letting the body react naturally to give the response it would, only exaggeratedly.

It was a good technique, one that had interested implications to be used as a poison, which would have bypassed the biggest reason for their relative rarity — the natural resistance of Endurance. Unfortunately, I realized after I analyzed the concoction a few seconds more, using the accelerated thinking provided by my stats, that even the fastest impact would have been measured in weeks and months rather than hours and days...

Which meant it was more or less useless for me.

Then, someone stepped behind the curtains, her body swaying as she walked. Delia, or at least that was her identity visually, but I needed physical contact to make sure whether that was actually the case.

Luckily, with the way she dressed — and not dressed — a few subtle touches were certainly on the table.

She wore a beautiful silk dress, the skirt long enough to reach the floor, and the topside wasn't exactly daintier.

[+500 Experience]

Yet, the sudden notification suggested two things, though only one was new information. The new information aspect was related to her power level. It told me that she once again chose a configuration with a higher level, with some interesting implications about her objectives. She clearly didn't just want to earn my forgiveness, but leverage the opportunity for something more.

The truth behind that objective, only time would tell.

The second part of the information, one that wasn't a surprise, was related to the supposed modesty of her beautiful silk dress. After all, it didn't really matter how much skin the fabric covered, not when it lacked substance enough to reveal everything that lay underneath, not hiding the slightest.

Things that her dress failed to hide included the level of arousal she was feeling, both her wetness and the hardness of her nipples showing it excellently. It was excessive even under the circumstances, suggesting that she didn't have a counter for the aphrodisiac she had set up for me.

How amusing, I thought even as I caught her gaze, enjoying her intense blush.

She might have been being supported by the System to an impressive degree thanks to her fake skills, but her blush clearly showed that it wasn't enough to resist the combination of my charm and her trick.

Certainly not when she still had the amazing memories I had left her with the previous time.

"Welcome back to my modest room," she said, her voice smooth and seductive enough to stir my heart — confirming that at least one of the skills she had chosen was related to her acting capabilities. Both her tone and attitude were too perfect to be natural.

Yet, her skills were not enough to hide the flicker of frustration as she looked at me, confirming her identity as not-Delia without needing to touch her — albeit an interesting way to identify her, suggesting that it was well past the time I discovered her identity.

How entertaining, I thought as I prepared myself for an entertaining struggle. Yet, as much as it

would be fun to play with not-Delia, it wasn't the only objective I had. I wanted to meet with another member of their little royal band of tricksters.

Dealing with the second one and comparing her capabilities with not-Delia would allow me to get a better understanding of the trick they were trying to pull under the circumstances. It would at least show me whether two could use their skill trick and disguise trick at the same time, a knowledge that would have a significant impact on my future strategies.

So, no matter how beautiful not-Delia looked in her Delia disguise, I turned toward the second figure that stepped from behind another thick curtain.

Outwardly, it was the same woman that had kicked me around the training room repeatedly, her body giving the same oppressive aura, her face contorted in frustration and anger, all enough to make me think that she was the same person.

The way she dressed was radically different than Delia, wearing scraps that were barely worthy of a slave. Two scraps of fabric, one wrapped around her waist, one around her chest, but neither piece was large enough to cover the area they were supposed to be covering — and that was before several strategic rips that further compromised its ability to hide her beautiful assets.

Of course, while they looked like scraps at the first glance, they were still made from very expensive magical silk.

Yet, the more impressive part of her outfit was not the fabrics, but the chain, connected to a collar on her neck, further increasing her impression of submissiveness, ready to be grabbed and dragged around, and the magic that was spreading from that item was strong enough to give some trouble to a high-leveled warrior.

And, she was certainly high-leveled, as the notification I received as I looked at her confirmed that conclusion.

[+500 Experience]

The notification was welcome and threatening at the same time. If it wasn't for her smooth, seductive walk, suggesting at a considerable portion of her impressive level had been occupied by seduction abilities and Charisma, I would have been actually afraid, considering the possibility of an ambush.

Still, there was no harm in being cautious. Before I turned my gaze to catch her expression, I let

a strand of my magic spread around the room, assessing the wards again, only to find nothing out of ordinary. The only thing that could be classified as out-of-ordinary was the several layers of isolation wards, making sure no one would be able to observe the room from outside. Yet, from inside, all it would take was a flex of my mana to successfully break it.

It seemed that there was no treachery waiting for me — at least, no direct one, as I certainly had many doubts about the mission they were trying to foist on me.

I smirked as I looked at the eyes of the warrior beauty, expecting to find frustration. Yet, even as I met her gaze, I found a familiar kind of frustration and arousal mixing. Too familiar.

It was the exact same impression the beauty next to her was wearing, implying that their secrets were even deeper than I expected.

[Level: 34 Experience: 592170 / 595000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 6936 / 6936 Mana: 7826 / 8500]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [112/120]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Five

I felt tense.

It was a kind of tenseness that I didn't face for a while, finding myself facing a mystery that I didn't expect.

I didn't let that distract me, at least not for more than a moment. After all, it didn't come as a complete surprise. I already knew that I was yet to understand the depth of their trickery, so facing something surprising wasn't an unexpected occurrence.

Naturally, I didn't expect both characters to look at me with the exact same emotional intensity, making it very difficult to identify who was the real not-Delia, and who was copying the other's expression to look like she had a personal problem with me.

There was something refreshing about the situation.

I smirked. It had been a while since I failed to use my sharp perception to discern a situation I found myself in. In a way, it was a fun challenge, especially since I still felt there was no risk of sudden violence — and was confident enough to defend myself if facing such a problem.

After all, if they wanted to take me down, with everything I had revealed them, they would surely prefer challenging me physically — only to learn I wasn't as physically deficient as the abilities I revealed first implied.

I decided to push them. "It's good that you know what's good for you, and decided to follow my orders obediently," I said as I looked at the warrior, determined to watch her expression to identify which one was one I had been working together with for a while.

The expression of the warrior flickered into a more intense form of anger at my mention — one that she managed to erase almost immediately — but that didn't help me to catch their true identity, the same expression appeared on the face of her diplomat version as well, lingering for the exact same time before getting erased.

My little trick failed, but luckily, I didn't have only one arrow in my quiver of trickery. I turned my back on them as I walked toward the table, showing my supreme confidence as I grabbed one of the pastries and took a bite — only to get the subtle presence of even more aphrodisiac, triggering my arousal even more.

Alone, it wouldn't be more than quickening my heartbeat, but combined with the airborne

version, the impact got much stronger, enough to trigger a flame.

A flame that turned into an inferno thanks to the seductive sight in front of me as they walked toward me. I looked at the warrior, and patted my lap. "Since you decided to be my slave for the day to earn your penance, why don't you start feeding me," I suggested as I patted my lap.

Meanwhile, the figure that was currently disguised as Delia walked behind me, only stopping near one of the pillows to pull a little crystal bottle. "You deserve to relax, after all the trouble she had given you," she whispered, her voice beautifully seductive, albeit completely artificial.

On the contrary, the warrior had a more honest expression as she stood in front of me, stiffening reflexively as I put my hand on her beautiful ass, caressing softly.

She was unable to keep herself from turning toward me, barely able to contain her annoyance. I smirked in satisfaction.

Annoying her was fun, but my little move had other benefits than just annoying her.

[+1000 Experience]

The rewards toward a new level were certainly welcome, especially since it gave me a chance to gain even more experience, which would improve my Tantric.

And under the circumstances, improving Tantric certainly had extreme importance, making that improvement as important as other requirements.

Yet, the real benefit of the casual touches was giving me an excuse to inject some mana. Not knowing their levels and their exact skill distribution, I didn't dare to inject mana rashly.

Instead, I let some gather underneath my fingers, a subtle layer that could be easily mistaken for a reflexive reaction.

That amount of mana was too little to use as a probe even with my control, but I opened my mouth to take a bite of the pastry that the warrior brought to my lips, enjoying its crunchy taste, not worrying about that part.

Meanwhile, I felt Delia's hands on my neck, her fingers, covered with massage oil, working on my neck skillfully.

It wasn't like I was in a hurry to leave.

For a while, I maintained my passive state, just enjoying the combined attention my two temporary servants were lavishing on me, each second another second of pleasure.

As they lavished their — reluctant attention — on me, I could feel my shaft growing. Though the sight of their incredible bodies, enhanced by their Charisma, had a big part in that achievement as well.

“Let me make you more comfortable,” Delia murmured as she grabbed my shirt as pulled it up, leaving me half naked, which was a more appropriate state under the circumstances. Yet, when she started massaging me once more, it wasn’t just her hands that pressed against my skin.

It was hard to mistake the certain round softness for anything else, especially when they were covered with massage oil as well.

It was a daring move, one that couldn’t help but make me feel suspicious about her identity. Just yesterday, she was much more reluctant about physical contact, making me doubt that she was the one I had previously interacted with.

Yet, as far as I could see, her emotions were not fake.

[+1500 Experience]

However, the steady flow of experience I enjoyed thanks to their double treatment was certainly a sufficient reason for me to suffer the mystery of unanswered questions for a few minutes.

“Well, you have a good point, but it’s not fair to do things halfway, right?” I said, slapping the warrior’s ass loud enough to echo. “Remove my pants.”

At our level, that much pain barely registered without some magical tricks to enhance its impact, but that didn’t prevent the warrior from avoiding my gaze in a failed attempt to hide her flicker of anger, no doubt not appreciating the indignity.

It was a nice opportunity to push for a bit more. “Do you have a problem with that,” I said even as I grabbed the chain that was connected to her collar, and flooded it with my mana, tightening the collar around her throat.

It was an impressive display of magic, but since I was selling myself as a crafting expert from the beginning, it wasn’t surprising enough to display. Interesting, as she caught my gaze, I felt plenty of anger, yet no fear, not even the reflexive kind.

Which was weird enough to make me struggle to keep a suspicious frown away from my face. Yes, the system provided significant protection thanks to HP, but there were limits to it.

And, a mage that was holding a magical item connected to their throat, an item that was already designed to restrict the target, was enough to bypass that.

Especially with the said item already wrapped around the throat. No matter how much one trusted the one on the opposite side, an instinctual fear rose from one's heart.

Even Helga felt that flicker whenever we experimented on the rougher side of the bedroom fun, and she trusted me enough to open her whole being to me — that instinctual fear was the only reason bondage was any fun.

Yet, the warrior in front of me just felt anger and annoyance, and lacked that instinctual fear, like it was impossible for me to hurt her.

It would be a lie that I wasn't tempted to tighten the collar and actually follow that implied threat, to see how she would react. Pity doing so would ruin everything I had spent days setting up, so I held myself back.

And the fact that she followed her flare of uncaring anger by unbuttoning my pants and pulling them down, freeing my shaft from the building pressure certainly helped.

Then, Delia leaned against my back even harder, her breasts deliciously soft against my muscles, tempting me to forget my anger even without a word. Then, she started whispering. "Please forgive her, she's a bit wild, but she has good intentions," she whispered seductively.

"Well, whether I forgive her disrespect would depend on her performance, and your willingness to cover for your friend, maybe even all the way," I whispered, yet didn't receive the expected sudden tensing from her as well.

Things were getting more interesting.

While the warrior didn't care much about the immediate threat to her life, she reacted to the sight of my throbbing shaft much more viscerally. Her eyes widened in shock even as she put her hands on my legs, clearly enjoying the sight despite the tenseness of the moment.

Distracted by her new view, she missed one important detail. My earlier threat with her collar was just not a show, but also an excuse to inject a great amount of mana into her body, finally allowing me to explore her soul space.

I was quick to send the first spike, which was not strong enough to break through the fake nature of her soul space. It just gave me a breakdown of her skills and level, which was more interesting than I had expected.

The lack of a martial skill didn't surprise me, other than confirming my earlier guess about them not trying to turn that into an ambush halfway in. Instead, more than half of her skills were there to increase her allure, some extremely specific such as dancing and massaging, while others were mostly magical, geared for detection.

A more passive distribution, one that was designed to keep me happy while making sure I didn't pull any trickery.

Smart, but destined to fail due to their assumption that I was an arrogant mage that flaunted his abilities, rather than one that hid most of his tricks.

The next stab of mana was bigger, one that was formed with the assistance of Tantric to allow me to pass through the false facade much more easily to see her real identity. I wondered whether I would find not-Delia under that, or someone else.

[+1 Tantric]

The indirect conclusions were rather inaccurate.

Yet, when I let that bypass the fake soul-space, I froze for a moment.

There was no one underneath!

[Level: 34 Experience: 594670 / 595000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

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SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [113/120]

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Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Six

I tensed as I processed the extraordinary information that my probe gave me.

There was no doubt about the accuracy of that outcome. I pushed the layer of disguise, and there was no one underneath.

It was supposed to be an impossible conclusion, one that I was supposed to dismiss as a crazy conclusion. Just to make sure, I cast a more ordinary detection spell. It was a healing-based one, essentially a variant of what I had been using to detect the undead, only geared to detect life rather than unlife.

The result told me that, other than the intensity of her life force — which was a very indirect indicator of her level — there was nothing extraordinary about the beauty in front of me.

Someone else might have been more inclined to believe the healing probe, but I had a different idea.

I was certainly more inclined to believe the results of Tantric

That didn't mean I stopped probing, of course. On the contrary, it was just an invitation to intensify my exploration. I repeated my attempt, but this time, I combined my healing spells with Tantric.

A subtle operation.

Well, subtle in terms of the real objective and the aspect of mana, as I also needed an excuse to get a sample to experiment on.

I reached forward and grabbed the deficient fabric she was using as a top. I pulled it off aggressively before she could react at the inversion, while I did so, I made sure to grab one of her hairs and pulled it along.

And, the experiment wasn't exactly without side benefits.

[+1500 Experience]

[Level Up!]

[Grandmaster Tantric (113/130)]

The improvement was certainly welcome, I thought.

Then I turned my focus on the experiment. Not the greatest sample perhaps, but more than enough to start. Despite her angry gasp, she didn't bother to cover her chest, which was an interesting choice that would have surprised me before the earlier conclusion.

But her possible non-existence put the dismissal of her nudity in a new light.

Interesting, not as much as the little mana invasion I directed toward that single hair, healing mixed with Tantric, which evaporated that tiny sample into mana.

Just like a conjured item would have done under attack.

It was not pure mana, I recognized immediately. It reminded me of elemental, but not exactly. It was not a type that I recognized immediately.

Unfortunately, I wasn't yet at a point to focus on that aspect, so I quickly created storage and pulled that mana inside me, to be analyzed later on in case I failed to extract more samples for any reason.

I certainly wasn't afraid of it escaping, as that storage could hold Divine Spark without an issue.

Mana, no matter its nature, was nothing in comparison.

I decided to distract them to focus on my experiment without getting afraid of their interaction. I grabbed the warrior's breasts, squeezing them hard enough to earn a beautiful breast. Their fakeness was unable to reduce the amazing sensation.

Even though the said fakeness reached a degree that was hard to comprehend.

Conjuring a full, working body was a great challenge, especially since it was not a mixture of biological and magic, but pure magic — at least, according to everything I could detect, as I used my connection to replicate the same trick a few times, stealing some extremely small samples from different parts, only for them to turn to be made from that unique form of mana.

[+2000 Experience]

Yet, the notification popped reminded me that, their little conjuration was real enough to actually trick the System.

Fascinating...

Delia distracted me from my thoughts as she leaned to my ear, her breasts once again pressing against my neck. "I'm feeling neglected," she whispered. "Maybe you should pay some attention to me," she followed, but even as she said so, her hand sneaked toward my stomach, caressing my muscles for a fleeting moment before reaching to my shaft, dancing up and down softly.

"Not a bad idea," I said as I turned slightly, capturing her lips in a searing kiss, my tongue invading her mouth aggressively. She accepted that, unaware that I was using the connection to send a similar spike of mana inside her to check her soul space while taking a tissue sample as well.

[+1 Tantric]

Both experiments returned with the same outcome, confirming that Delia was fake as well.

Amusingly, that outcome relaxed me a bit more, because it gave an explanation for two critical questions that were making me doubt my senses. Why they were so willing to turn things into a full sexual encounter rather than trying to minimize the contact, or at least trying to bargain...

And, why they were giving the exact same reactions, the intense reactions I expected from not-Delia.

I was yet to discover how they were being controlled, I was willing to make a very considerable bet on both were controlled by not-Delia.

Moreover, considering the speed of their reactions, their instinctual responses, and their inability to fully erase their emotions, I was willing to believe that the control was more instinctual than deliberate.

Of course, to understand the exact nature, I needed to discover the control method, which certainly wasn't a trivial task.

Luckily, I was not in a hurry to do so. Since not-Delia was kind enough to give me two magical dolls that could still give me experience, I decided to use the opportunity to achieve another level, maybe even more if the Divine Spark I allowed the System to absorb would allow me to go for more.

I pulled back from the kiss even as I wrapped my arm around Delia's waist, and stood up.

The warrior looked shocked at the sudden move — one that I could also see echoing in Delia's

gaze, giving credence to my assumption about both conjurations were controlled by the same person — but before she could react, I grabbed her chain and pulled.

“Stay on all fours,” I ordered as I tugged her chain, feeling much more comfortable pushing her limits more than I would have otherwise tried, knowing that she was just a magical puppet, indirectly managed by the mysterious woman behind it.

She growled in anger while Delia tensed in my arms, but neither followed their reaction with an action, obediently accepting my dominance as I dragged them toward a particularly large crimson cushion in the room.

“You can sit,” I said to Delia even as I grabbed her dress and ripped it off her body. It was already around her waist and wasn’t covering much, but I wanted to get rid of it completely to get an unobstructed view of it.

[+3000 Experience]

Since someone had gone through all the trouble of creating it, it would be a pity not to enjoy it properly.

The warrior growled in anger, only for me to flick her nose. “Bad girl,” I admonished, unable to keep my chuckle down as I saw her anger growing more, treating her like a pet angering her more than anything else I had done.

I acted like I ignored her growing tenseness as I walked her around the room. It was certainly fun, especially with eye candy like Delia sitting on the cushion, her legs parted open invitingly as she did her best to look seductive.

Yet, it wasn’t as effective as her skills would have otherwise allowed, because as the warrior tensed angrily at my treatment, so did Delia, showing the nature of the connection between the two.

And, as I dragged her around, I noticed two important things. First, as I dragged the warrior around the room, the smoothness of her movements was changing slightly. It wasn’t a great degree, one that would have been impossible to detect even with my observational abilities if I hadn’t been looking for it especially.

Yet, considering there was a noticeable difference even with a simple movement like crawling on all fours, the difference would have been much more intense if the magical puppet was fighting or casting spells.

More importantly, by using that performance change, I was able to identify the direction of the controller. It was just behind the wall opposite side of the entrance, in the direction where the girls first appeared, quite near to where Delia was currently sitting with her beautiful legs parted, her wet core begging for my attention.

The second important thing I focused on was the physical differences between Delia and the warrior.

Or, more accurately, the lack of it.

Considering they were magical constructs, I would have expected them to look wildly different. It would have been the smart thing to do to distract people from their nature.

Yet, there was suspiciously little difference between them. The lines of their faces were different, and their blonde hair was in a different shade and model, but that was almost the full extent of it.

Their naked bodies were suspiciously similar, the warrior was slightly more muscular while Delia had marginally bigger breasts, but that was the full extent of the differences. Examining them, I was almost completely sure that their creator was using her own body as the template.

I remembered the first time I had seen the princess and her handmaidens. At that time, I assumed it was something to protect her against assassinations through convenient disguises while using it as an excuse to hide an expert among them — an expert that almost successfully robbed the headmistress — but the recent details I had managed to discover certainly threw that into question.

Maybe they were similar because all of them were magical puppets, constructed from the same mysterious energy.

And, if that assumption was true, not-Delia was the only one that could create such constructs, and she was behind the wall, controlling the two puppets.

More importantly, I had a very good guess about her identity.

“That’s enough walk,” I said suddenly as I dragged the warrior to the large cushion Delia was sitting on.

It was treason to keep such an exalted member of the royalty waiting...

[Level: 35 Experience: 599670 / 630000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7140 / 7140 Mana: 8242 / 8750]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/130]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Seven

An enthusiastic smile invaded my face as I threw myself back, only to meet with the comfortable surface of the cushion, large enough to serve as a bed.

Albeit it would be difficult to fit all three of us, I was confident in my abilities to find a way.

I pulled the chain that was connected to the neck of the warrior, quickening her helpless crawl toward the cushion as the chain tightened. It would have been a cruel move if it wasn't for the fact that she was just a construct.

The fact that she was a construct didn't prevent signs of her intense anger, enough to bury her discomfort.

Delia was quick to stand next to me, her beautiful body on display, her amazing nudity and sexy pose almost enough to distract me from the intense, barely hidden anger she wore on her face, matching the one on the face of the warrior.

Of course, Delia's intensity of it was too personal, but knowing she was also a construct, just helped me to make sure there was only one controller.

Also, it was her own fault that she brought the warrior out with a chain. I was just a poor man.

"Why don't you sit down while your friend finishes crawling toward us, just like she deserves," I said, enjoying her impotent anger.

Ultimately, it was her fault for bringing her out with a chain...

She was quick to obey me and sat next to me. I shifted slightly, so that my shaft rested against her legs, my touch enough to awaken her desire, and join to her intense anger.

The best part, the arousal was not fake.

I used the distraction my touch created on the controller to stretch a string of mana and touched the wards that were protecting the room. Most of the wards were strong enough that it would take considerably more than a momentary touch to unravel, but luckily, some of the additional benefits were provided by additional layers.

One of those additional layers was the silencing ward, which took only a touch to modify to allow the sounds from the other side to reach my ear — and only my ear — to avoid the

attention of the decoys.

I had no doubt about that aspect. If there was one emotion I could distinguish easily, it was the ability to see whether it was genuine arousal. With the way I leveled, there was simply no doubt about that.

And Delia's arousal boomed without the slightest restriction, a great contrast to the last time we shared a breakfast where every move of hers was intensely guarded, and only the intensity of her need and my masterful manipulations loosened her defenses.

It seemed that the princess had a different approach to physical fun while not using her own body to do so.

She had shown that she wasn't exactly very resistant to the temptation of pleasure, both then and now. Of course, at this point, the identity of the controller being the princess was still a theory.

But I was confident in my guess.

Still, it was hard to argue the fact that, at this moment, knowing the true identity of the controller was just for my personal edification, and not a condition to enjoy the constructs that had been created for me.

And enjoy them, I did.

"Oh," Delia gasped as I grabbed her breast, squeezing hard to enjoy their amazing texture, my other hand still tugging the warrior closer. Once again, I decided to multitask, and filled Delia's body with my mana.

Not even bothering to hide.

"W-what are you doing?" she gasped in shock as she realized that, but despite the gasp, her tone lacked the fear someone else would have carried against such a move, nor did she try to defend herself.

Perks of interacting through a decoy.

That disconnected attitude didn't last for long, not when I cast a little biomancy spell, one that increased her sensitivity a few times, twisting her nipple as I did so.

[-62 Mana]

“W-what are you doing?” she repeated, this time with an urgency in her tone. I smiled, but it wasn’t Delia’s reaction that surprised me.

But a soft cry, unmistakably female, very similar to the voice of Delia, but with certain minor differences. It came from the other side of the wall, audible without alerting Delia and the warrior thanks to the modifications I applied on the silencing ward.

“Punishing you, of course,” I said as I twisted her nipple again, but this time, there was no gasp of pain from behind the wall. The reason...

The sudden flare of mana appeared from the other side of the wall before it traveled toward Delia, modifying the structure of the decoy.

The princess was cheating.

It didn’t annoy me, because that mana stream was useful to me in many other ways. It was a subtle manipulation, one that I would have missed if I wasn’t directly observing the termination point of the connection, but with that, I was able to identify the flow — one that I followed by sending a small flicker of mana back.

Trying to intrude on someone from such a great distance would have been difficult if I couldn’t use her connection as a pathway, using it as a track. Even then, I wasn’t able to do much through that trick. It just confirmed my earlier assumption.

It was the woman I named as not-Delia on the other side of the wall, managing the two decoys.

“Oh, it’s too much,” Delia moaned as I continued to squeeze her breast, but the earlier intense urgency was gone, replaced by a fake tone. A believable fake tone thanks to all the acting and seduction skills the magical puppet contained, but fake nonetheless.

I had to admit, the princess’ ability to adjust the feedback she was receiving ruined the pleasure I was receiving from the moment significantly, enough to tempt me to stop.

I would have done so if it wasn’t for the notification I received.

[+2500 Experience]

I might be aware of the fake nature of the view in front of me, but the same didn’t apply to the system. That failure had quite a few interesting implications for the limitation of the System.

And it would be lying to say if the free flow of experience was unwelcome.

I leaned against Delia, and without a warning, pulled the warrior on my lap, sheathing inside her mercilessly, using the same sensitivity trick to enhance her pleasure before the princess could adjust.

My reward, was another muffled moan from the other side of the room.

Compared to her moans, the moans of her magical puppets didn't entertain me as much. Instead, I turned to Delia and asked a question while squeezing her breast. "Tell me, what exactly is this mission, and why are you that desperate to actually make someone else take the blame for it?"

If there was one other benefit to the little show I was putting on, it sufficiently distracted the princess, which delayed the answer quite a bit. "T-that's not the —" she started, only for me to slap her breast, and the princess made a noise once more, this time moaning in shock, louder than the previous ones.

Of course, that was not the only trick I pulled. I timed that spank in an attempt to interfere with her connection with the puppet. Faking a completely new response would have been difficult, but enhancing an already existent communication was a much simpler trick.

And, since the princess didn't react it by attacking — or retreating — but trying to adjust the sensitivity of her puppet, it was also not as obvious as I feared.

I watched her adjustments carefully, my mana senses working in conjunction with the understanding given to me by Biomancy skill working wonders to understand her tricks.

It didn't take long for me to get a rudimentary control. Her tricks were certainly crude, little more than weakening or increasing all senses in a wholesale manner. And, since her mana manipulation abilities were smooth enough to achieve a more selective adjustment, I was more inclined to assume she lacked a healing-based skill to direct her.

Interesting, especially when considered together with her incredible ability to create fake skills. Pity the flimsy connection between us was not enough to explore the reason for that particular fact.

Still, it was good to know that there were limitations to such a scary ability.

With her controller distracted, it took a while for the puppet to give the answer — not that I minded it while the second puppet allowed me to fill the time by allowing me to get closer to another level up.

[+2000 Experience]

“But, the princess —“ Delia managed to say, only to be interrupted by another spank — with the feedback enhanced, making the princess moan once more.

I decided to tease the princess a bit more. “Since she sent you two here to whore yourselves, the princess clearly needs this mission. What do you think I would not only decide not to do it, but go have a talk with the headmistress and make sure no one else from the school is allowed to do it?”

“No, please!” Delia gasped, this time a genuine panic — as indicated by a gasp that came from the other side of the room.

“Then, speak. I want every single detail about it. For example, why this mission is important enough that the other princes already started sending their agents to observe Silver Spires?”

“T-they wouldn’t—“ she started, only to receive another slap to her beautiful tits, the impact once again enough to make the princess gasp in pain, yet she was distracted enough to realize I had fiddled with her ward that was supposed to keep her silent, her beautiful real moans mixing with the fake gasps of her puppets.

“Honey, just because I’m paying attention to this slut —“ I said, slapping her ass to highlight my point — once again enhanced to get a moan off the princess — “... doesn’t mean that I suddenly lost my ability to think. The princess suddenly decides someone working directly under the headmistress to a sensitive mission in the capital rather than one of her loyal and capable handmaidens,” I murmured, then smirked. “Like the one that was good enough to actually get into the headmistress’ office without being noticed if I hadn’t been there,” I added.

This time, her reaction was much more spectacular. Both puppets started to gather their mana, ready to attack, but I just grabbed the chain around the throat of the warrior, activating the spell I buried on it while putting my other hand on Delia, challenging her attempt to gather mana.

Interestingly, while I felt the princess also gather her mana, it was much less than I expected, probably as a result of the puppets occupying her capabilities.

“Calm down, the headmistress doesn’t know about that yet,” I said with a soothing voice, then grabbed Delia’s tits once again.

“And, she wouldn’t know as long as you continue to be a good puppet,” I added, unable to

suppress the temptation of throwing a little hint at the end.

They stilled, their mana calming down. I chuckled as I grabbed the hips of the warrior and quickened my invasion, using her to push toward the next level while they tried to get a handle on the latest revelation.

The visit was developing in a more interesting direction than I first expected...

[Level: 35 Experience: 604170 / 630000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7140 / 7140 Mana: 8561 / 8750]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/130]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Eight

Silence ruled the room, only interrupted by the clapping of my body against the warrior, drilling inside her aggressively.

Pity that the realization of her nature as a magical puppet reduced the pleasure I was receiving from her significantly. Luckily, not to the point of ruining it completely, especially after I had discovered a way to amplify their connection with the controller and enhance her pleasure.

It was possible only because there was no real distinction between her control and the feedback she received from them. She was able to reduce the impact somewhat, but blocking it completely was not an option.

And, I had already discovered the ability to interfere with that connection, increasing the feedback she was receiving despite her best attempts to muffle the connection.

It was not a move completely free of risk, and doing so was certainly different than my earlier actions, but finally penetrating the veil of mystery that surrounded her, I once again had the luxury of taking some calculated risks rather than playing save.

Albeit, the implication of her abilities was certainly interesting. On the one hand, they were certainly more impressive than I had expected. Creating both realistic puppets with their own levels and abilities had many potentials. Especially considering they could function as real people, to the point it actually tricked my detection capabilities.

Not to mention, tricking the System as well, as evidenced by the notification I received.

[+1000 Experience]

Yet, the more I learned about her impressive abilities, the less threatening she became. The reason was twofold. The first part was the clear limitation of the clone ability. I doubted that she would miss using her fake skills in such an important situation if she had other options.

Certainly not when skills like healing would have solved most of her problems.

Ironically, that little problem wouldn't have been a big drawback in combat. There were many spells that could be used to dull the sense of pain of the puppets, protecting the controller from the more unpleasant aspects of the deep connection.

The same didn't apply to a seduction mission, especially not when the target was an expert

mage. Using such a spell would be an excellent cause for suspicion.

It was completely redundant at this point, of course. The poor princess didn't know her secrets were already exposed, making her struggle against the feedback from her puppets her warrior puppet a vain struggle. Not for nothing, of course, as her moans certainly helped me with my mood.

Unaware of her situation, she continued struggling against the feedback. I didn't bother pacing myself, neither in terms of my physical effort, nor in terms of enhancing the feedback. The monumental reveal about her attempted thievery in the headmistress' office being discovered distracted her from focusing on why she started receiving such an intense flow of feedback.

That dilemma carried my thoughts to the second drawback of her abilities — thought that was less of a fundamental aspect, and more about her unique circumstances.

She was the only one that could use that ability.

Initially, I was reluctant to challenge her little group, because I was under impression that she had a small cadre of loyal followers, which, when combined with the ability to create fake skills and configure their stats based on the requirements of the situation, would have created an intimidating and dangerous challenge.

Yet, the fact that she was handling a task as unglamorous as a seduction mission — to convince the target to forgive her when she tried to take revenge for her loss of control due to pleasure — strongly implied that no one else could replicate her ability.

Either the ability was unique to her, or she didn't trust anyone.

It didn't matter which was the case. Either way, it significantly degraded the dangerous potential she represented, making it viable for me to finally start poking into the mysteries that surrounded her.

And, there were a lot of mysteries that needed to be unraveled. Important questions. Why was she suddenly fighting with the other members of the royal family? Why did a faction of Eternals decide to support the other princes? How could she actually create fake skills and magical puppets realistic enough to actually trick the system?

Compared to that, the exact nature of the mission she wanted to send me to the capital, and the nature of the so-called keepsake were certainly a lesser mystery.

But the lesser nature of it didn't make it any less important.

After all, one first needed to find where the yarn started before unraveling a mess.

"About the mission," I reminded the princess through Delia, even as I grabbed her breast for contrast while the warrior continued to jump up and down. "Tell me why your princess is desperate enough to make two of her most loyal supporters whore themselves," I said, then followed with a chuckle. "Not that you two seem to be minding," I added when Delia echoed the moan of the warrior.

The pleasure echoing between the two was truly making a challenge for the princess to stay silent, her own moans echoing between her puppets — still under the impression that the isolation wards she created holding strong.

"It's a personal mission, but one that was of utter importance to the princess," Delia started, launching a detailed explanation about the challenges of the mission.

I had to admire the princess' willpower and political acumen, as even with the constant distraction she was struggling under, she was able to deliver her expression perfectly, focusing on the tactical challenges of the mission more and more, doing her best to pull away me from the more important question.

Like, what was the item that she went all this trouble to acquire? Or whether the item carried any real importance in the first place, or the mission was there just to pull the headmistress into her political battle.

I didn't ask those questions, giving her the impression that her distraction attempt was successful. I did so, because I wanted to show her that two beautiful women working together on me would work wonders to distract me.

I certainly wouldn't mind a repeat the next time she wanted something, and there were other rewards to that.

[+3000 Experience]

As her explanation continued, I continued to ram into the beautiful entrance of the warrior while squeezing Delia's breasts, their supple bodies creating an amazing view in front of me. As I continued that, I asked some operational questions to Delia, reinforcing the impression that I was lost in the operational details of the mission.

Convincing the princess that it was a viable method of tricking me into doing what she wanted was the superior choice.

With my growing understanding of her abilities, I finally had the courage to sneak into her residence, poking around to discover her secrets. I could use a more direct approach whenever I wanted, after all.

With that decision done, I turned my attention to the two magical constructs that were doing wonders allowing me to teach the princess the meaning of pleasure remotely. Still, I marveled at the expanse of flesh sprawled in front of me, drinking the alluring sight of the magical marvel in front of me.

As the princess' explanation — through Delia — started to get more and more useless as she got lost in details, I focused my attention on the next challenge — that whether I could make the princess collapse through indirect pleasure.

For that aim, I cast a spell to make Delia float, and bring her above me, her legs on my shoulders, her core inches away from my lips. Once again, I dove into her delicious treasure, my tongue lashing out like a parched man stumbling across an oasis, enjoying her wetness.

Three sources of moans mixed — two puppets and the princess — into a beautiful symphony as I worked on my assault, my physical abilities targeting the puppets while my magical trickeries were busy enhancing the feedback those puppets were sent to the princess, creating a beautiful harmony.

Soon, the princess' attempts to explain the mission stopped completely as she turned her full attention to handle the intense assault of pleasure for several uninterrupted minutes.

[+5000 Experience]

Yet, as I cycled through positions, I noticed one very important detail — through my constant connection with the mana string she was using to control the puppets. Her control was getting rougher and rougher, and while the intense pleasure that made it hard for her to think was a factor, I also started to see the more ordinary signs of exhaustion.

Managing two puppets at the same time was clearly an exhausting challenge for her.

That wasn't enough to earn my mercy, not when she was ruthless enough to pull me in her political games — clearly hoping to plunge all Silver Spires into that endless pit — even as she continued to lose ground in other aspects.

I continued to show her the extent of my carnal abilities as our bodies wrapped and danced, kisses merging into blowjobs, spanks, and chains leveraged aggressively, feeling curious when the princess would finally ask for an end.

She managed to resist for almost an hour, but before it ended, I received several other notifications.

[+27204 Experience]

[Level Up!]

[Grandmaster Tantric (113/140)]

[Warning! Divine Spark is depleted. Connect with more Divine Sparks to continue supporting the System of ———]

Leveling up was certainly nice, but the pleasure it generated was quickly countered by the other notification about lack of experience, especially since I had fed the System with Divine Spark several times, only for its effectiveness to lessen significantly with each repeat.

The system was getting greedier.

“I — I don’t think I can last for more,” Delia gasped as I filled her again. Interestingly, through the connection, I could feel that it was the princess who was on the edge of a collapse. The endless pleasure, combined with the strain of maintaining two puppets proved too much for her.

“That was a nice apology,” I said as I looked at her, enjoying the way the connection continued to flicker. I was tempted to tell her that it was still not enough to earn a proper apology, but with the System once again asking for Divine Spark I had no practical reason to extend it.

Also, I was afraid that the princess would just collapse if I pushed her more, which would have likely caused her magical puppets to stop working, which would force me to confront her.

I would rather do that on my own terms.

I smirked at the state of her exhaustion — felt through the connection with her puppets — even as I quickly fixed my clothing and walked toward the door.

“W-will you do the mission?” muttered Delia.

“Sure, why not,” I answered. “You certainly worked hard to earn that answer.” Just like that, despite her exhaustion, anger flared on her face, tempting me to push a bit more.

Instead, I left the room, leaving them alone...

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 630000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7334 / 7334 Mana: 9000 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Nine

I didn't leave them alone for long, of course. The moment I was out of the guards of the royal residence, I cast a spell to erase my presence and returned.

The only reason I went through that in the first place was the number of maids walking in the corridors, and I didn't want them panicking about my sudden disappearance.

And, as I walked around the building and reached one of the less-defended spots — which was made easy thanks to several days of recon— I wondered whether it was appropriate to call them they. After all, there were not three people, but just the princess, and two of her puppets.

Two very realistic puppets.

It was a trivial problem, but not an easy one.

In comparison sneaking back into the residence of the princess was both trivial and easy.

The fake orgy — it was entertaining, certainly, but that didn't change its weird fake nature — I had just gone through had been beneficial in many different aspects.

It breached another layer of the mystery around the princess, one that significantly reduced the intimidation that came from the shadow of unknown abilities.

It also helped me to level up, which was always a welcome side benefit.

Yet, the benefits of the extended orgy weren't that limited. During the encounter, I had used a lot of mana, and while most of it was focused on indirectly observing the princess — who was on the edge of total collapse due to exhaustion and indirect arousal — quite a bit of it was directed to the wards around the room, leveraging her distraction.

Using the benefit of that interference, I managed to pass through the wards with trivial ease after I moved through the corridors and arrived at the destination, a combination of my agility and an illusion spell enough to keep me protected, now that I was confident that I wouldn't come across a random bystander over level thirty.

I still made sure to check the maids and soldiers I came across as I walked, just to confirm that. They were just ordinary people, none of them a threat.

I couldn't help but chuckle at the thought as the realization hit. Even the weakest maid was

higher than level five, and the average guard was well above ten, creating an intimidating group that could be extremely threatening.

There was a time, not too long ago, even one level ten warrior created an unsurmountable barrier for me.

I was entertained by the sudden realization and the changes in my own perspective, but not enough to stop my quick steps, until I arrived at my destination.

Just in time, as I managed to catch the princess in the middle of the room, in front of the half-dissolved conjurations of Delia and the warrior puppets, slowly unraveling them and storing the mana into a large metal vase studded with an incredible number of gems.

I only glanced at the metal vase, as it was not only a storage item, but also inferior to anything I could create in less than an hour. It could store mana, but not very well, and not for long.

I needed to focus on the mana flow, but my attention was stolen by the way she dressed. She was just wearing a half-loosened corset and panties, both drenched with sweat and arousal, showing that resisting my indirect touches — especially after I had elevated the reaction through her connection.

After working with her magical puppets that were created in her own image, her half-naked body was mostly familiar, but that didn't make examining her body any less fun. After all, no matter how beautiful, there was a difference between a magical puppet and reality.

Not to mention, seeing her hot and bothered after the show was much better — especially since she was still clearly at the edge, busy handling the puppets to address the challenge she faced.

As much as I would have preferred to watch the rise and fall of her beautiful bosom, I had magical issues I needed to focus on. First, I fed a minuscule amount of Divine Spark to the system, and received a little helpful notification back.

[Level Difference of five or more! No Experience]

At the moment, she was weak enough not to provide me with any experience, showing that her level was low. Of course, under my circumstances, low could mean anything less than thirty, but still, it allowed me to take the next step without much concern.

[-58 Mana]

I carefully extended my mana to the distance. Normally, it would have been a risky behavior, but luckily, regardless of her level, the princess was busy trying to reabsorb the mana that she used to construct her puppets back into the container. The task not only occupied her attention significantly, but also filled the background with mana, giving enough concealment to keep my string hidden.

As I got closer to the flickers of magic, I couldn't help but feel familiar with the nature of the mana that she was letting out. It was familiar to another type of mana, but since it was heavily modified, it was different enough to prevent me from pinning it.

It slipped into her body without an issue, then reached her Soul Space...

Only to make me freeze in shock as I took a note of her level.

She was below level ten.

What an interesting little detail, I thought, though I couldn't help but admire her, as achieving what she was able to achieve without significant assistance from the system was impressive, even if she had the resources of the royal family to assist her.

Yet, the enormity of her achievement soon lost its significance as I noticed something else, something more important.

Divine Spark was flowing freely in her Soul Space.

I couldn't help but focus on the way she was storing and using Divine spark. First, I focused on the storage aspect. I had dealt with Divine Spark in several forms, but every time, the only way to achieve that was to lock it behind strong storage. Both the Companion Node my system created and the Light node the headmistress created worked on that principle.

Even the way the headmistress kept the excessive amount of Divine Spark she was barely able to contain in her own body, using the nature of her body to keep it contained despite the costs.

I never even thought letting the Divine Spark flow freely in Soul Space was possible without the system devouring it.

I had to apply a considerable number of tricks to prevent the system from devouring it, even after locking it. And the headmistress managed that while using it because she not only didn't have a system, but also lived under oppressive wards that were fueled with oppressive Darkness wards.

Then, it clicked, as I managed to remember why I found the Divine Spark in her core familiar. It was the Darkness Spark. It just took a while for me to match that, because I didn't directly interact with the ward.

And just like that, a few things worked wonders. Considering the way both the headmistress and the princess were using, it was clear that Darkness Spark had the ability to trick the system — as evidenced by the puppets that could trick the system or wards that could block its detection capabilities without actually restricting the abilities coming from it.

It also explained why the princess had risked so much to breach the headmistress' office despite desperately relying on her goodwill for protection. It was about the Darkness Spark, although whether she just wanted to confirm its presence or wanted to steal it was still not certain.

There was even a possibility that she actually wanted to take down the ward to kill the headmistress, which would have worked perfectly considering the trouble she was having to contain her Light Spark, but that was not a likely case.

Viability aside, it required a very intimate knowledge of the headmistress' exact circumstances, and even for me, it took quite a bit to collect that information.

So, I was willing to write that part off as a coincidence, especially since she had made no follow-up in that direction.

I focused on the next part of my indirect examination.

The way the princess' soul space was interacting with the Divine Spark was interesting enough to get my full attention despite the amazing view in front of me as the princess continued to unravel her puppets — proving just how much of complicated it was.

The first great difference was easy to identify. The Darkness Spark was floating in her Soul Space freely rather than gathered into a tight clump. It was not something I could replicate that, at least not without the system absorbing it aggressively.

She was able to do that, because, for some reason, the System was unable to detect the Darkness Spark properly. Probably about the conceptual nature of the Divine Spark. Just like the Light Spark working wonders as a destructive weapon, the Darkness Spark worked amazingly to hide.

And to create puppets, I mentally added as I continued to examine her Soul Space while she was busy unraveling her puppets, her mana interacting with the freely flowing Divine Spark in a very

unique way, imbued with a unique nature.

While the process of doing so was more complicated than the Light Node helping the transformation of mana, it was also much more flexible. Compared to the flexibility she was showing, the nodes were much simpler.

Even with the potential advantages the Darkness Spark provided, I doubted that one could simply create fake soul spaces and magical puppets realistic enough to trick the System.

Of course, that flexibility was not without a cost, as the way she was using the Spark was significantly more complicated, which came with the cost of exhaustion.

So, as she finished unraveling the last string of mana from the puppets, her efficiency of storing the mana fell lower and lower, blanketing the room with mana — mana that felt the touch of her Darkness Spark twice, blanketing the room with enough energy to provide me with the perfect cover.

All I needed to do was to decide what I would do next...

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

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SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Ten

Some decisions were difficult, requiring hours of deliberate consideration, measuring every single advantage and disadvantage to give a nuanced and careful decision.

Some were not.

Luckily for me, watching a beautiful yet exhausted princess saunter toward the nearest pillow in a room blanketed by her own mana, enough to blind her to any kind of spell, firmly belonged to the letter category.

Especially since she sat down on the same pillow that I had been occupying moments ago. And, considering the amount of time I had spent on that pillow testing the limits of her puppets' endurance, I wasn't willing to write it off as accidental.

She was quick to confirm that when, rather than closing her eyes to sleep, to address her exhaustion, she parted her legs and placed her fingers on her panties, doing a familiar circular movement to address the aftereffects of her little subterfuge.

Though, considering the speed her fingers worked, I realized that I might have overdone the teasing aspect of my little trick a bit — or, misread her sensitivity to the pleasure.

Or, more accurately, I had forgotten it under the heat of the moment, I realized. After all, in the previous encounter I had with Delia, when I had first discovered her subterfuge, she was not using a puppet but was there physically under a disguise, and it didn't take much to take her down then.

And that time, she had her fake skills to help.

I slipped through the wards and walked into the room once more, relying on the excessive mana that still filled the room to make my approach even more unnoticeable as I slowly closed in the distance.

The thick blanket of mana helped me adjust my clothing, and soon, my clothes turned into a long, oppressive robe, one that was designed in the exact style the headmistress wore in her attempt to look like a dark abomination, though with three differences.

The robe is way gray rather than black. I didn't copy her fake hunchback. And most importantly, I didn't copy the oppressive fake aura of her that had first made me mark her as a potential undead.

No need to kill the mood.

Still, the costume was a good choice to give the best of both worlds. It would allow me to confront the princess — which was a viable strategy now that I had a reasonable understanding of her capabilities and limitations — but also, depending on how our discussion developed, it gave me the chance to keep my other personality intact.

There was no harm in insurance.

“I hope I’m not interrupting,” I said as I stood directly in front of her, letting the illusion slowly disappear and revealing myself.

She said nothing, just freezing as she looked at me, fear in her eyes. I realized my mistake a moment later. She had clearly mistaken me for an assassin, which was a big problem considering her position.

I fixed that misunderstanding, but not before letting that moment stretch for a couple seconds, letting her taste the fear, not reacting immediately. Even her mana was immobile. “I’m here about the headmistress,” I said, using a different, calmer tone than my earlier speech.

A small adjustment in cadence and tone, and it was impossible for her to realize we were the same person.

“The headmistress sent you,” she said in an attempt to get herself some time. To her credit, despite the earlier scare, she managed to deliver those words with an impressive calm tone. If I closed my eyes, I wouldn’t have guessed they came from a half-naked princess that just went through an assassination scare.

I had to admit, she had strong nerves, enough to push the fear back easily. That would have made me more annoyed if I was planning to rely on fear to unbalance her.

Luckily, she had already given me a much better tool to tease and manipulate her. “No, that implies I’m her junior,” I said even as I waved my hand and magically dragged a chair, enjoying the way she tensed even more. Not because of the spell itself, as it was simple enough for someone with just a novice Arcana capabilities to achieve, especially not under her wards. “I’m just here to talk about her.”

But doing so without leaking even the slightest bit of mana was more impressive, reinforcing the intimidating aura of my current disguise.

Not all threats need to be delivered directly.

As she tried to stand up, I gestured for her to stop, moving away from the intimidation to other aspects. "Please, don't stop in my account. Interrupting you is rude enough."

"N-not a problem," she stammered, her earlier confidence suddenly staggering as I turned my attention to her carnal nature as she repositioned herself, closing her legs to hide the most revealing aspect of her clothing, but noticing my teasing smile, she stopped her attempts to fix her clothing, thinking that I wanted to leverage her dressing process to weaken her position.

She managed to suppress the outward signs of her shame quickly as she adjusted her stance, straightening her back even though doing so enhanced her cleavage even more.

This time, I let a momentary frown appear on my face, which earned a small display of satisfaction from her as she maintained her revealing stance.

A frown that was the exact opposite of what I was feeling. In certain situations, I loved dealing with experts. Their instinctual expertise made it even easier to manipulate them. I just need to give the slightest implication of my strategy, and she already 'countered' it perfectly.

A response that not only locked her to a weaker and uncomfortable position, but also gave me an amazing view. And, to make things even better, I saw that realization in her gaze a moment later, realizing the absurdity of her reaction, driven by a combination of her political reflexes and her lingering arousal.

"How can I help an exalted guest, strong enough to refer her as his junior," she said even as she took a stock of the way I dressed. A light of recognition appeared on her gaze, showing that she didn't miss the stylistic choices I made on my robe.

Yet, she was still careful enough not to utter anything about that. After all, my appearance was sufficiently mysterious, and if her information about the headmistress was as limited as I assumed, it was not out of question for the headmistress to be a part of a group, at least not to a point of calling me out.

Her subtle yet growing tenseness confirmed that guess.

How interesting, I thought even as I rapidly adjusted my plan, which took only a couple of seconds, a time that worked wonders to increase her stress.

"So," I murmured slowly. "You're the little annoyance that was giving all that trouble to my

coworker, what a naughty girl.” I did my best to push a careless attitude as I turned my gaze on her cleavage, acting like revealing my identity was an act of distraction that could only come from supreme confidence, ‘revealing’ an important clue about my identity.

“Giving trouble to your coworker?” she asked with a trembling voice. “Sorry if it sounds disrespectful, but I don’t remember doing anything.”

“Oh, you’re saying that breaking into her office, or trying to suborn her employees for dangerous missions with extreme political consequences that would pit her against a mysterious organization that dismantled your power base completely is an accident.”

I loved the way she tensed despite her best efforts. She was good, but not good enough to completely hide the emotional weight of revealing two of her most important undercover activities at the same time, a combination that was enough to turn her into an enemy of Silver Spires — not exactly a welcome outcome in her current situation.

Our current level difference just enhanced the hopelessness of her situation.

And, the beauty of those words was the impact was not limited to it. I also confirmed that I was at the same level as the headmistress while also implying that both of us were a part of the bigger, more mysterious organization.

I wasn’t shocked by her willingness to believe that fact, considering her own powerbase was dismantled completely by a similarly mysterious organization.

Yet, as I waited, I could feel her shock getting more intense than I was expecting, though only when I noticed signs of fear, did I realize the nature of her misunderstanding.

I was tempted to let her simmer with that misunderstanding, but seeing her fear despite her resistance to it, it was clear that pushing her in that direction had the risk of shattering her completely.

And I certainly didn’t want to break my first royal ‘friend’. She had so much potential for fun.

I still waited a second before dispelling her growing fear. “No need to fear, I’m not from that organization that ruined your little sibling rivalry,” I said, not missing the opportunity to trivialize her political challenges.

Ironically, unlike most other things I managed to lie in quick succession, it was actually the truth. If the information I managed to collect about the Imperial family was even half-accurate,

barring an intervention of the Eternals, it would take me less than a week to put her on her throne, considering her brothers had to ask for outside assistance despite the restrictions of her power.

The potential intervention of the Eternals, naturally, complicated any precision significantly. Clearly, I wouldn't have a hope of resisting the full might of the organization, but the same didn't apply if it was only an undercover operation.

And, considering their strategies against Janelor, I was willing to believe that the latter was the likelier option.

However, as I watched the princess shuffle in discomfort, trying to process my daring reveals, I decided to focus on the present.

We still had a lot to talk about.

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Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Eleven

The silence stretched once more after my answer.

I let it linger, giving her the time to process that there was more than one mysterious organization that was interfering with the workings of her little Empire without showing the slightest respect to its supposedly-exalted nature.

“So, which organization do you belong to if not with them,” the princess said, doing her best not to give any information, but the great difference in our current skill configuration working against her.

The brute force approach was not just useful for combat but also for more political activities. My overwhelming speech and subterfuge allowed me to detect the undercurrents of the word ‘them’, loaded with hatred and fear, but no mystery.

It was clear that she was aware of the identity of the Eternals and their position in the world, at least to a certain degree in terms of their domination of the Material Plane. Whether her information included their dubious struggle against the gods was a mystery.

Yet, she avoided mentioning their name, clearly not intending to volunteer any information, no matter how small.

Interesting strategy.

Unfortunately for her, she was not the only one that could play that game. Rather than answering her question, I let out a soft, dismissive snort, which was all I needed to inform her that she was not worthy of questioning my origins.

I was happy to see that the first thing my reaction brought out of her was angry, even though she had managed to hide it behind the calm geniality that was cultivated by a lifetime of training. It meant that there was a fire to support her ambitions, the ambitions that forced her to fight against difficult odds rather than using her abilities to disappear.

A view that was enhanced by her improperly loose corset as she took a deep breath, enhancing her cleavage even further.

Yet, I felt a flicker of mana from her, one that was only possible as I was continuously observing her Soul Space. She pulled her mana to her Soul Space, letting it dance in her core before pushing outward, and started building her fake soul space once more.

I was impressed, both by her daring to create such an attempt against me, and by the subtlety of such an attempt. I might have missed it if it wasn't for my mana already lodged deep into her Soul Space, giving me real-time observation of what she was doing.

As the mana danced in her core, I watched as it transform. Mana was normally bright and filled with energy, but as it dragged in her Soul Space, it slowly lost its more noticeable qualities, turning almost invisible.

Between a shadow and a whisper.

It was a simple nature transformation, but watching it happen slowly rather than through a skill shortcut was interesting. Well, more accurately, it was through a different shortcut, as it was still much simpler than actually forcing such a transformation with the skill blocked.

The purity of it, however, looked even better than what could be achieved through the skills. Though I had no idea whether it was about her application method, or an illusion that was about the nature of the darkness mana.

Unfortunately, I lacked the ability to compare.

Yet, while both the process and the results were interesting, I couldn't say the same for the flexibility of her application. Despite the impressiveness of the result as she slowly built up her fake soul space, her ability could best be defined as fumbling in the dark — I thought as I forced myself to hold my chuckle back at the unintended pun.

She wasn't incompetent, of course. But her actions showed she lacked my ability to look inward and analyze her own soul space at the same time, yet she was familiar enough to be clearly checked it before.

My best guess was that she had used her fake skills to maximize her detection capabilities to examine it, until she developed a method to fumble in the dark.

"How can I help you, then," she asked after half a minute of silence, trying to reframe the situation once again. Extending unrestricted favors to strange men was hardly the smartest strategy, but still, it was a reasonable attempt for her to understand my objectives.

Especially since my barging implied that she couldn't exactly reject me if I pushed.

"Ah, the arrogance of the nobles. Do you think there's anything you can do that I would actually care about?" I said, followed by an extended sigh that made her tense, which made her focus

on the construction of her soul space even faster. Which was exactly what I wanted, as her speedy construction made the process even easier to decipher for me.

Just to extend the pressure a bit more, I removed my hood, though not before casting a spell to change my face, turning it into a generic man in his early fifties.

Though, even as I watched her fake soul space settle over her real one, obscuring the presence of the Darkness Spark — which was undiminished by the process, showing that Divine Spark was not an expandable resource like mana during the process — and her real soul space, and the fake skills started to appear.

Interesting, I thought as I took a note of the changes, including the expansion of her mana reservoirs, though the speed they filled was certainly underwhelming.

She lacked a perk similar to my Mana Regeneration. I wondered whether it was the lack of knowledge that was holding her back, or it was a limit to her faking ability.

While the process had been interesting, the same couldn't be said for the results. Her new fake level barely reached fifteen, which was hardly the greatest improvement, but that didn't mean it was a wasted effort. Her new skills were split between Speech and Subterfuge, and her stats shifted heavily into Charisma and Manipulation, giving her the ability to manipulate the conversation better.

Well, at least it would have if I didn't use the opportunity to throttle the effects of her skills and stats like I had done against Oeyne during our game.

The fun thing, since those skills and stats were much subtler than Strength and other physical stats, the princess didn't even realize that manipulation, still under the impression that she received the boost ability.

Leaving her overconfident in her new abilities.

To make things even more advantageous, pushing her into the perilous waters of overconfidence was just a side benefit. The real benefit was watching her create those fake skills, tricking the system.

The process was interesting, both easier and harder than I had expected. The first thing I noticed was the automatic nature of the process. She was the one that provided the mana to create the fake soul space and the skills, but she certainly lacked the ability to form the intricate nature of her skills, meaning that her rough control only created a seed for her skills, and the

System handled the rest.

No, I corrected it a moment later. Her mana didn't just use to create a seed, but also fed into the System, duplicating the effects of the experience, which clearly made it much harder for her to level up.

After all, leveling up had two fundamental aspects, the ever-growing experience requirement for higher levels, and — for the lack of a better term — the quality and the strength of the experience source, which led to the classification of beasts.

A fact that I had used my tantric skill to validate, confirming that a part of the soul space of the beasts had been devoured directly through the soul space of the slayer while most of it disappeared onto the air.

Of course, my knowledge about the system had been significantly limited at that time, and I had assumed the rest of whatever the beasts contained was dispersing back into nature. But, after the discoveries about how the System constantly absorbed the mana and divine spark all across the material plane, I had long realized that it was an inaccurate solution.

The system absorbed the Soul Space equivalent directly while a small portion was absorbed by the attacker, working more as a proof of achievement to record — hence the amount that was absorbed not exactly helping.

As far as I could see, her technique was using her Darkness mana to replicate the signature of monster kills, earning rapid reward from the System, creating her fake skills.

Or maybe, it was more accurate to define them as temporary skills, similar to my own perk-provided specialized ones. Still, their temporary nature came from the fact that they were created from her transformed mana, and required a constant feed of mana to maintain.

Which meant my earlier guesses about its usability were correct. The stronger the skills and higher the level, the more mana was required to sustain, putting a time limit. As far as I could see, she could use external mana — like the one that was stored in her complicated vase — to trigger her high level.

The same freedom didn't apply to maintaining. As its growth stabilized, the new Soul Space couldn't use its own fake reservoir or outside mana to support itself — though, based on my own tantric experience, I could see that it was mostly about her lack of ability to manipulate her own Soul Space rather than a theoretical restriction.

I was tempted to test that directly but I decided to leave that research project for a later date, giving myself more time to observe the princess first. I already had enough projects to deal with.

Still, that decision was unrelated to the chill that covered my insides.

Altogether, it was supposed to be a great discovery, but realizing the ease with the System could be manipulated by another Divine Spark actually scared me. Not because it meant Tantric was not unique in that aspect — a fact that I was already aware of — but because it only made me adjust my estimation about the Eternals.

Even if their control over the System was imperfect, how much power they could manage to gather after hundreds of dominance?

A tough question, though one that was best left another time.

I still had a tense, barely dressed princess to pay attention to. A barely dressed princess that was under the impression that she had just received a great boost to her Speech and Subterfuge to handle a dangerously political conversation...

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Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twelve

“So, tell me, why do you think I’m here, wasting my time with you?” I said, letting amusement infect my tone as I did so, leaning against my chair even more to enjoy my comfort.

It was a subtle and efficient power move even under the conditions where I didn’t have a barely dressed princess in front of me, leaning back on the giant pillow.

As I looked at her beautiful visage, I knew that defining the moment as disappointing was certainly unfair — even though the presence of her corset covered more than I would have liked even in its loose state, making me wish for a more provocative set, maybe with more lace or simply less fabric.

The cream-colored corset she wore was stylistic, but it was certainly not chosen to maximize the attraction but comfort — reasonable, as she didn’t expect to interact with me at all. Luckily, she had amazing curves that showed through even that boring corset — and the fact that it was loose created a cleavage where there was supposed to be none.

She shuffled slightly, savvy enough to catch the subtle tone in my words as she looked at me, letting me enjoy her changing perception. I didn’t push the erotic undertone in my voice much, and just uttered it enough to give her an option, curious whether she would be as enthusiastic to weaponize it without the disguises and magical puppets.

The answer turned out to be negative. “You want to see whether I’m a risk toward Silver Spires and your coworker,” she guessed as she shuffled, carefully stepping away from the insinuation in a way she thought as subtle — only to be sabotaged by the restrictions on her abilities.

She seemed less willing to use seduction as a weapon without her tricks to give her a layer of plausible deniability.

Yet, even more amusingly, despite her ultimate preference, the decision didn’t come quickly. She lingered on the question for a while — a deliberation process that might as well be an open book with her compromised fake skills — influenced by her body captivated by arousal.

Amused by her struggle, I let her answer slide without pushing back. “Such arrogance,” I said with a chuckle. “To think that you can actually present a threat to our organization, even to a junior peripheral member,” I said, reinforcing the impression that we were stronger than she might have thought.

A risky approach, but I needed her to assume that I was a threat, to create leverage I could use to slowly convert her to my side. My need for her was less about her role as a princess — no matter how inconvenient a battle for the throne — and more about her potential knowledge about the Eternals and the intricacies of her abilities.

Of course, even those reasons were secondary compared to the real reason I needed her. I wanted to learn where she managed to find the Darkness Spark and where to find more Divine Spark — a fact that she must know considering the research project she funded.

I hoped that it wasn't just preparation to rob the Headmistress and something more.

"Then, what?" she asked.

"I was just curious about the naughty girl that dared to break into my coworker's office and try to suborn her loyal followers through fake magical puppets and disguises," I said, enjoying the way she tensed as her tricks unraveled more and more.

With the sole exception of her fake skills, giving her the impression that it was still secret.

It was never a good idea to push someone against a wall — metaphorically, of course, as it was quite fun when done literally.

"You have seen it, now what?" she asked.

"Now, I want to understand why a little faction of the Eternals is bothering to slowly dismantle your organization slowly rather than getting rid of you directly. Do you think they believe your little handmaiden trick?" I asked.

"They must have been," she said, her voice carrying no hint of surprise, which confirmed to me that she had a reasonably accurate idea about the strength of the Eternals as she didn't even react when I mentioned it was a little faction that was bothering her. "Otherwise, they would have just swooped down and got rid of me."

I nodded as I heard the honest conclusion in her tone, abandoning that direction. Of course, just because she thought that was the case didn't actually make it so, but talking with her about that was not exactly the most efficient way of exploring that.

"Good," I said dismissively. "So, since I'm here, let me leave you with some honest advice. Your actions in Silver Spires are amusing," I said as I stood up, took a couple steps toward the door, and started to disappear, using an illusion that looked like Teleportation from outside. Yet,

before delivering that, I turned to look at her one last time. “Make sure that amusement doesn’t evolve into irritation.”

The sudden stiffening in her posture showed that she received my message perfectly, the worry on her face implying that her initial plans weren’t as harmless to Silver Spires as I might have hoped.

It seemed that a visit from the mysterious stranger was still my best trick.

I expected to disappear after completing my objectives, only for that expectation to be ruined by the princess jumping up to her feet and panicked a moment later. “W-wait,” she shouted as she landed on her feet — an ill-advised move that further challenged the ability of her clothing to hide her beautiful assets as they reacted to the sudden movement.

I followed that request and dispelled the illusion — though not neglecting the pump of some mana in the room that was similar to what would remain after teleportation to make sure it looked genuine.

In acting, details were everything.

“Was that an order,” I said with chilly anger as I looked at her, and she took a fearful step behind, mistaking that for a genuine one.

“N-no!” she gasped in fear, only relaxing after my expression turned neutral. “I have an offer for your organization.”

“You’re wildly overestimating yourself if you think you have anything that would actually work in a bargain.”

“I...” she whispered before taking a deep breath. “I’m willing to give my full loyalty to your organization if you help me take the throne,” she said.

I chuckled. “As I said, you’re wildly overestimating yourself if you think we care about a little carcass of an Empire, let alone who is actually saddled with the pointless task of ruling it.”

Interestingly, her expression made me glad that I had interfered with the skills she hoped to use, because it meant that, when I saw a lack of reaction, I could be sure it was a genuine reaction rather than an elaborate trick.

“What if I offer something better in exchange for helping me to get the throne?”

This time, I fully turned toward her. “I have a feeling that you’re again overestimating the value of your trinkets, but go ahead,” I said, but just as she opened her mouth, I interrupted again. “But start dancing as you speak, so at least it won’t be a waste of my time.”

Her sudden hesitant expression was beautiful, especially after the effective seduction attempts she delivered when she was disguised as Delia. Maybe she was relying on the disguise of a clutch to separate herself from her actions.

She wouldn’t be the first girl I interacted with that did so, albeit hard to that degree.

“Are you—” she started, only to abandon that question when my expression stiffened, and she started swaying her body to an invisible song. Her body moved smoothly, showing that her training as a princess definitely included dancing — that, or she had learned to increase Delia’s power of attraction.

“Good,” I said as I let my gaze drag along her body, pushing a mild amusement to my face rather than arousal, which helped her to forget her shame, replacing that with impotent fury.

She didn’t let her annoyance stop her dancing. On the contrary, she started swaying faster and faster, her movements getting more and more fluid as she struggled to change my expression — her state on the edge once again helping to keep her on the edge.

“I have discovered some ruins belonging to the Eternals,” she explained. I said nothing even as she paused, struggling to hide my reaction. It was certainly valuable information, the kind that she could never voluntarily reveal under better circumstances. Revealing her biggest secret was a mistake.

Not that I blamed her for her mistake. Her fear, arousal, and shock worked wonders to block her decision-making, and her compromised fake skills just pushed it forward more.

The existence of ruins was not a surprise, as the ruined spear was the evidence of such a discovery, but I had been assuming that it was the extent of their discovery — and with everything going on, exploring the origin of the spear didn’t get any attention.

Considering her words, it was clearly a mistake. “And I’m interested in that, why?” I asked, hiding my reaction.

“Because its defensive wards are still standing even after centuries, and other than the outer perimeter, it’s untouched.”

“Interesting,” I said. “And is your Divine Spark also sourced from there?” I asked, only for her to freeze in shock while her fake soul space trembled as her control slipped.

“Y-yes,” she managed to stammer as her dancing stopped.

“Good, you might have earned some assistance,” I said before gathering my mana, using my teleportation perk to send some air into the Aether Dimension while I hid my presence with illusions, and left the room through the wards while the princess was distracted by my display.

[-1829 Mana]

I didn't force her to tell me the location of the ruins, or promise help, because first, I needed to assess the risk.

Any ward that managed to survive despite the existence of the System, constantly devouring mana, was not something that could be tackled easily. And that was before factoring in the Eternals interfering.

After all, it was very likely that the only reason a faction of Eternals interfered with her was her knowledge about those ruins.

Risks all around..

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Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirteen

I didn't need to think for a long time about my next destination after I left the royal quarters, and turned toward the center of Silver Spires.

The target of my hurried steps was the office of the headmistress, who had been waiting for me for a long while.

However, my hurry had little to do with the patience she might have been feeling, despite the position she held or the magical power she commanded.

On the contrary, regardless of those factors, I had been planning to keep her waiting for some more. But, once again, I was forced to adjust my plans in light of the most recent information.

Which was something that I had been dealing with as a frustrating commonality.

It was the perils of trying to survive in a complicated world. Even as my power started to reach a point that encroached to a point that was supposed to intimidate others, I was discovering new heights to scale. I either needed to be flexible, or receive a painful lesson..

The latter was not exactly a fun option, so I adjusted my plans once more, sending a magical message to the headmistress once I arrived at the entrance of her tower.

Once again, the door opened once more, but this time, her office door was open rather than her living quarters.

After the short climb through the spiral stairs, I found her at her desk once more, working on a very thick pile of paper, one that was about the management of the school. She might be a hands-off manager of the school, but that didn't save her from the paperwork — especially since the latest undead troubles, teaching her that the number of people she could trust in her school was even less than she had assumed.

And while she clearly didn't care much about Silver Spires' general efficiency, she needed it to be still in working condition, at least if she wanted to still have her convenient concealment — one that clearly prevented the Eternals from meddling with that directly.

She was wearing her black robe, but her wings were out, which created a beautiful contrast. Though, it wasn't as interesting as the other contrast I could sense once I used my magical senses, dancing on her skin, the Darkness Spark from the ward occasionally getting free only to fly directly to her, like beautiful dark butterflies flying against her brightness.

Interesting reaction, I realized. It allowed me to see why she had to force herself to cleanse after every work day, although the reaction between the Light and Darkness Sparks was mysteriously confusing.

Though the flow of Darkness Spark was not a lot, and only at the center of the ward, it was a phenomenon that she needed to worry about. It was not something she could avoid, as the same interference allowed her to use her magic while avoiding self-immolation.

Trying to control an excessive amount of Divine Spark, especially one as volatile as the light spark, was a monumental challenge.

Luckily, she had me, her newest loyal servant, to help her!

“Sorry about that, she was picky about her food as expected,” I said, relying on her distaste against Janelor to keep the explanation short, which was all I needed to get a dismissive sigh.

She looked back with an annoyed expression that didn’t target me, showing that my excuse achieved its job excellently.

I expected her to stand up and lead me toward the upstairs, but instead, she just raised her hand and presented it to me. “Start working on creating storages under my skin,” she ordered, not bothering to remove her cloak, her tone sharp.

Too sharp, even, though the reason turned clear when I touched her hand, and a small blush spread to her face. For all her immense strength and authority, she was woefully inexperienced when it came to even the most innocent kind of physical contact.

A tempting detail, but after the latest discoveries about the princess, I reluctantly stayed focused on the mission even as I sent my mana into her body, one that had some tantric quality, but not to a degree that would make it noticeable for the headmistress.

[-691 Mana]

Luckily, the overwhelming yet straight nature of her mana helped immensely in that aspect, leaving her blind to my subtle tricks.

Most of the mana I had sent into her body went into building the storage I had promised her in the middle of her palm — something she trusted me to do after my success replicating the same feat in my own body — while a small portion went into her body, exploring the nature of the Divine Spark in her body.

It wasn't the first time I had the opportunity to assess her, but this attempt had several advantages. For one, she asked me to cast a spell in her body, which gave me an excuse for the obvious presence of mana in her body, allowing me to have a much better view than the fleeting glimpse I got earlier. Also, the extended study of the abilities of the princess gave me a baseline about how Divine Spark should be functioning without the assistance of the system — at least partially.

And, with that perspective, I gained a new appreciation of just how dangerous the headmistress' situation was.

The first, and the greatest, the difference was the nature of the divine spark. The Darkness Spark under the control of the princess was calm and obedient, soft enough that I had to stretch my detection capabilities to the limit even when she was using it.

The light spark under the headmistress' control — if we could call it that — was much more different. It was sharp and unruly, like a diamond with sharp edges, if the diamond could explode with the weakest accidental caress.

Yet, if the problem was limited to that, the headmistress wouldn't struggle to deal with it for years — likely enough years to be counted in centuries. All she needed to find was external storage to dump all of it outside, using physical storage similar to the ruined spear the princess made me use as a research project.

The next thing I noticed was a connection, this time only due to a combination of Tantric and Biomancy. The Light Spark in her body was connected to her life in a very intricate manner, deeply enough that I couldn't even imagine the consequences if she just tried to abandon it.

Or someone forcibly extracted it from her.

The scraps I managed to take off were nothing, of course, but the same didn't apply to the barely restrained bundle of light inside her, barely suppressed with all the focus she could put on the task.

And even then, it only succeeded because of her nature as an angel, and her mana was very similar to the Light Spark in the first place. Anyone else trying the same inefficient blunt force strategy would have exploded in seconds.

No wonder she was so enthusiastic about having storage in her, which would allow her to contain the Light Spark easier — which would finally allow her to act freely, maybe even to the point of finally leaving the oppressive wards she had been leaving for decades and centuries.

“Can you tell me about the differences between the chosen, demigods, and gods,” I asked even as I slowly worked on the storage. It was a good opportunity to have a more detailed explanation. “Is it just about the power and capabilities?”

Her gaze showed that she didn’t exactly appreciate the question. “Do you think it’s the time to talk about it?” she asked.

“Well, it might be relevant to the storage I’m creating, but if you feel that it’s irrelevant…” I said, not even bothering to finish my sentences.

After all, why should I after poking her greatest need.

“Yes and no,” she answered. “While, ultimately, each category has great difference in power, the kind that needs great numbers to surpass, it’s a reflection of their different natures rather than being measured in power.”

“And…” I said, prompting her to continue.

“It’s about how they handle Divine Spark in their bodies. Chosen, like Titania and you, could only contain a sliver of Divine Spark, and that spark had to be locked into a special form, crystallized. It could only be used as a spell focus, helping the caster to amplify the spell effects, but only after the spell is already formed, and nothing more.”

I nodded. Her explanation was more or less accurate for Titania, though the Companion Nodes, which technically qualified them as Tantric Chosen, was a different issue. In the past, I had assumed that it was limited to the achievements it brought, but the recent lack of Perks confirmed that it was not a rule, but another trick from the system, tempting me to create them for some reason.

I made a note to talk with Helga about experimenting with those aspects.

“Demigods are different. They have a more intimate connection with the Divine Spark, to the point of allowing some flexibility on how to handle its existence. It doesn’t have to stay locked as a crystallized node, instead staying in its free-flowing state, usually restricted to a portion of the body depending on the preferred method of usage. And even use it to transform the mana in different ways, increasing their magical and martial flexibility significantly while also empowering the impact.”

Interesting, I thought, wondering about my trick with the Divine Spark, melting it to empower my body qualified as such. After all, it did look conceptually similar. The princess, on the other

hand, was definitely on this stage, with her ability to create fake skills and extremely realistic puppets.

Of course, I doubted I would be able to find many demigods walking around with the System's ability to immediately devour the Divine Spark.

In that aspect, Darkness Spark was a great exception.

"And how about Gods?" I asked, as I realized the headmistress suddenly stayed silent.

Interestingly, the plight of the headmistress looked different from both explanations.

She took a deep breath rather than answering, confirming my suspicions...

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COMPANIONS

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[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Fourteen

I didn't push the headmistress about the subject immediately, letting her handle the intense emotional rush it triggered for a long while before she started to answer.

"Gods are ... different," she murmured. "I don't know much about them much other than they are intensely linked to the Divine Spark. Some believe that they came from Divine Spark and conjure an existence later on," she said.

"Like their avatars, only on a larger scale," I suggested.

"Yes," she said, not even looking annoyed at the interruption. It was clearly a difficult subject for her to think about.

"Considering just how much Divine Spark you have already merged in your body, I'm going to take a wild guess and say you're not a believer of that theory."

"No, I'm not," she said. "At least not for the current generation of gods," she said, but I could feel her tensing even as she did so, giving all the signals that it was not something she wanted to talk about, but slipped out.

I believed it to be an accident. First, I saw her trying to deliberately mislead me, and it was certainly not a topic she was particularly competent at. And, as much as someone spilling a critical nugget of information like that sounded unbelievable, she lived in isolation for almost two centuries, with limited contact with anyone, always struggling to hide her true nature.

It was not particularly surprising that she accidentally blurted critical information while talking to someone that she thought she could trust.

And in a way, she wasn't wrong about trusting me. Not the way she thought, just following every little order of hers obediently, but actively solving her problems.

Of course, those might arrive in the form of some intimate activities she hadn't been expecting, but he doubted that she would complain about that once they started.

The others were very enthusiastic participants.

"So, you wanted to replicate their achievement by absorbing the Light Spark," I said, not focusing on that aspect. I might extract more about what different generations of gods meant if I pushed, but that would come in the form of putting her into a defensive pose.

Instead, I treated that as an inconsequential phrase, and focused on topics she was clearly more willing to talk about.

She just nodded, her expression proud yet desolate at the same time, showing that, while she was not proud of the situation she found herself in, struggling to survive, that didn't change the pride she felt at her decision.

Admittedly, she had a lot to be proud of. I had no idea of the circumstances that led her to find that much Divine Spark while she was under the control of the system, but I was willing to bet that it was a singular event, forcing her to take such a monumental risk.

Yet, not only she did do so, but also she managed to develop a genius way to balance it with Darkness Spark that not only kept her Light Spark under control but also allowed her to hide from the System.

I admired her, though that only tempted me more to finally grab her wings and pull them back while I took her from behind, testing her angelic cries to the limit.

I used the opportunity to focus on the more practical aspects of the plight, and leave the topic of other gods to another day. None of her answers taught me anything I didn't know from my own sneaky tests, but it was good to have an excuse for my knowledge.

"I think it's doable to help you contain divine spark more, especially when combined with the techniques that I managed to steal from ... her," I started, the slight pause leaving no doubt about what I was talking about, and her frustration told me the exact nature of her feeling. Then, I asked a question that would bring the discussion to one that I had been searching for.

"Do you have any theory about why my containment spells are working better on Divine Spark?" I asked.

"It must be about the elastic nature of your mana, coming from the Degenerate," she murmured dismissively. "It's a problem for the impact of the rest of your spells, but coincidentally, it helps our circumstances."

I barely held back laughter at the ease she dismissed the solution, her tone reminding me of the nobles talking about their servants. It was not insulting, at least not deliberately, but there was a casual attitude in her dismissal, the absolute confidence in the assessment.

Whether that underestimation was earned or not, it was a different subject.

“Who exactly is this degenerate?” I asked.

“No one really important,” she said dismissively.

“As you can imagine, it’s not entirely true for my case,” I said, yet deliberately not mentioning why she needed to care about the Degenerate more in her condition. Her underestimation worked perfectly for my aim to hide the true capability of Tantric.

She seemed disinterested in spending time on that while she had bigger issues to focus on, but catching my determined gaze, she actually broke her habit of not speaking more than a few words and actually started talking.

“First, you need to understand, despite the power the name implies, not all gods are the same. There are strong gods, and there are weak gods. Then, there are bottom feeders, the kind that only technically counted as gods due to their nature of power depending on Divine Spark.”

“Is this about the nature of the Divine Spark, or just something about the user?”

“Both,” she answered, though not looking particularly happy with my interruption. “There’s a reason that Divine Spark is the greatest treasure of the gods, the kind that they are willing to destroy entire planes to get a Spark of correct nature. It’s the reason that, for most of the concept, there’s only one God.”

“Because they fight until the strong devour the weak,” I guessed, earning a nod.

“Exactly,” she answered. “The power and the potential Divine Spark represents is simply makes impossible for a rival god of same nature to appear.”

“And, I’m guessing that’s the reason about the origin,” I interrupted. “After all, fewer rivals would appear if they were unaware of the possibility in the first place.’

“Yes,” she answered, but the angry glare on her cute face showed she didn’t exactly appreciate my growing interruptions.

Too bad for her that I had no intention of stopping. “And, how about the nature of the Divine Spark, how does it factor in.”

“That’s more complicated,” she answered, her voice trembling just enough to display her lack of confidence in her statement. Not that I was surprised. Divine Spark didn’t seem like a topic that a lot of notes lying around, and I doubted the people that knew about it would be simply

sharing their findings.

Especially the gods who relied on their Spark for supremacy.

“How complicated?” I still asked, probing her more about the subject.

“It’s possible to talk about tiers between divine spark, but that’s usually about the range of the domain and the way it could be applied. Some, like Light and Darkness, restrict each other, and it’s hard to argue which is stronger than the other. Some, like Storm and Chaos, cover aspects similar enough to imply a hierarchical relationship. And there are some Divine Natures that are simply worthless...”

“And I’m guessing Degenerate is one of them,” I commented, only to receive a nod.

She left me with an interesting question. I wondered whether the Degenerate she was talking about actually used Tantric, or used something similar that she was mistaking. Not that it mattered much, as her theories didn’t include many facts. They were barely enough to provide a starting point.

“How about the four cardinal elements, fire, water, earth, and air,” I asked. “Where those four lie in comparison.”

“That’s the domain of elemental lords, and it’s best left untouched, especially when compared to Gods,” she answered, quick to squash that aspect. And seeing her fear, I decided not to push the situation too much. “As a mage, you can use it, but never in a location that can actually contact with Primordial Aether without the protection of the Planar Shadow.

I still remembered Aviada’s disappearance, and the elemental monsters followed it, making clear that it was something that was best left untouched.

“I understand,” I said as I looked at her. “Thanks for the explanation. Now, I feel much more confident in containing Divine Spark. Are you ready?”

She nodded, and I raised my hand toward her...

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Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

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[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifteen

“Be careful,” she murmured as I grabbed her hand. Her voice was steady, but it was impossible for her to hide her tenseness from me successfully.

“Don’t worry, boss,” I said, putting enough focus on the last word, enough to make it a mocking statement. Any other time, she would have reacted that badly, but this time, she didn’t even notice that, her attention on my fingers.

It was not hard to understand her. I was yet to learn the full details, but it was clear that she had spent a considerable portion of the last two centuries locked in the tower, and even the possibility of getting free from that was not so inconsiderable.

I was careful as I used Tantric to slowly imbue Arcana energy in a manner subtle enough that she wouldn’t notice, and started building a temporary container in her finger, paying attention to do so extra stable.

I considered deliberately failing a couple times before succeeding to further undersell my abilities. I would have probably done so without the presence of the princess and Janelor, their presence giving me a sense of pressure.

Both were enemies of the Eternals to a certain degree, though even without them, it was clear that the Eternals weren’t exactly a friendly organization, evidenced by the way they tried to use Zokras to take the school down.

After I completed it, she started circling her mana, once again using her clumsy mana flow to store Divine Spark into the storage, not too different from the way she used to create my Light node.

I would have been annoyed, if it didn’t give me even more chance to steal Divine Spark.

Most of the Divine Spark I stole, I just pushed into my body, cleansing through Tantric before letting my body absorb it — since the effectiveness of it helping me to level up getting lower and lower, I decided to prioritize absorption over letting the System devour it.

The next time, I would try to steal some from the Princess, to see whether the difference in Divine Spark would help.

The process took a long, and the waiting after that took even longer, so I decided to leverage the pause for something productive. I already had my mana inside her, and she was

conveniently distracted to examine the performance of the storage I created.

Perfect time for some experimentation.

I started to examine the relationship between the Divine Spark and her body, to see why she was failing to absorb it.

As I carefully examined her state, I soon realized that was not entirely correct. The best way to describe her status was halfway successful — as otherwise, she would have long died due to side effects regardless of the impact.

Though, the deeper I dug, the more I respected her solution. The simplest way to describe her trick was to create a giant Light Node for herself, compressing most of the Light Spark into an immobile mess, allowing her to survive despite a half-complete process.

Of course, the actuality wasn't as simple, as the Divine Spark was clearly resisting being compressed to such a degree, so she couldn't just compress the Spark completely and continue to use her mana.

She had to maintain a subtle balance of letting it liquify to get rid of the pressure, circling through her body before solidifying it into a node once more — while using Darkness Spark to suppress the process.

All the while, the way she had used the spark was diametrically opposed to mine, as even halfway successful, it was clear that she wanted to let it dance in her body freely. My trick was far more similar to Janelor's trick, though using transformed Divine Spark rather than Mana.

I didn't attempt to steal the Darkness Spark, as unlike the abundance of Light Spark she was suffering, she clearly had much less, enough that the disappearance of it might actually be successful.

Curious, I created a very small probe of pure mana, one that displayed the full capability of Tantric Node.

As I did so, I could feel my competency in Tantric rising, but I received no notification from the System, the partial block working excellently.

[-14 Mana]

The transformation itself might be complete, but the amount of mana was small enough to

avoid her attention, especially with the presence of the other, and I watched the process as it moved through her body.

It didn't take long for me to notice something very important. It occasionally collided with slivers of Light Spark, only for them to disappear almost immediately. At first, it made me frown, as while Tantric was able to purify the Divine Spark, it was certainly not an instantaneous process, not even for a sliver.

I turned my full focus into the process. I realized what was going on at the fifth occurrence.

Before I could absorb Light Divine Spark, I needed to purify it completely, stripping it of its nature — or transforming it into Tantric nature, but that was not a question I was yet to answer — before my body could accept it.

Yet, the same didn't apply to the headmistress, who was already halfway merged with Light Spark, with their nature mostly aligned. A simple touch of Tantric effect was enough to soften the rigidity of the Divine Spark, which then allowed it to merge with her properly.

As it merged with her, I understood why she was having trouble describing the interaction between Divine Spark and the gods. It directly merged into her body just like my featureless Divine Spark did, but unlike my featureless one, it also imposed its nature on the Headmistress, enhancing the nature of her light more.

It was a subtle change, impossible to notice if I hadn't been looking for it deliberately, but impressive nonetheless. I couldn't imagine how it would look once it was completed fully.

The best part, since it would fully merge with her, it would be protected from the absorption of the system as well.

I smiled at the process. I was certainly afraid of showing my ability to purify Divine Spark even with our growing relationship. But giving that little, almost indiscernible push to complete her half-completed merging was much less spectacular.

One that could be easily dismissed as a coincidence, just like she did the ability of the storage I created to hold Divine Spark.

Being underestimated was certainly useful.

There was no time like now, I decided as I tightened my hold over her hand, and pressed my finger to her palm, slowly infusing light energy that was infused with Tantric as I caressed her

palm.

I barely held a chuckle as I used the extremely destructive light energy as a massaging aid. It was not necessary to do so. On the contrary, using healing energy or pure mana would have been more useful, and easier.

Using the destructive and aggressive nature of the Light mana as a massage aid, on the other hand, was considerably challenging. Even with my stats and magical competence, I doubted I could have achieved without Tantric's assistance, which was, for the lack of a better term, softening the Light, making it gentler and more obedient.

"What are you doing?" the headmistress asked, quick to question as she looked at me, though it took a moment for her to react as she was still distracted by the monumental nature of my earlier achievement.

"Helping to fight against tenseness, just in case the storage somehow blocks your mana flow," I said. "Why, is it not working?"

"That's not what —" she started, only for her eyes to widen, as she doubtlessly noticed a sliver being absorbed in her body. Her shock was palpable enough that even she had no hope of hiding, so I reacted.

"Should I stop?" I asked as I slowly pulled back my mana.

"No!" she gasped, making by far the loudest voice I heard her making, not that I begrudged her for it. After all, what just happened represented a solution that plagued her for centuries.

"Are you sure?" I asked, acting shocked at her sudden reaction. "You don't have to lie to protect my feelings, I can handle it," I said, letting my smile widen.

"I'm s-sure, continue," she said, her face blushing in excitement, her breathing fast, once again highlighting just how cute her flawless face could be while showing emotions.

"Why did you react that way, then?" I asked, enjoying pushing her once again.

"I..." she muttered a bit, lost at the moment as she tried to find an excuse for her explosive reaction. "I was just surprised at your competency at manipulating Light. It's a harsh element, yet you're able to manipulate it other than a destructive force. That's impressive."

"Really??" I asked.

“Oh, yeah,” she said, jumping at the opportunity to change the topic. “It’s a great performance for a human that’s not even a demigod to show that kind of flexibility while using Light. The nature of the light is not a simple destructive force, but it was rare for a mere Chosen to manipulate it like that, using it as a soothing force. Even a demigod might have trouble with it.”

“Well, I can’t take all the credit, I’m applying some of the tricks I learned from Janelor,” I said, more than happy to give her a viable direction for her suspicions. It was for the better if she thought a combination of my mana manipulation abilities and the secret techniques of a dragon was responsible for it.

“Good, that pile of scales is finally earning her keep,” she murmured, her animosity showing even with the elation she was feeling. “Now, continue,” she said.

I slowly massaged her hand for a long while, letting my Light-natured mana invade her body more and more, using the opportunity to understand the unique nature of her body as well as the way her Light-natured body interacted with Light mana.

With such access, it didn’t take long for me to notice something specific in her body, one that was subtly changing the nature of her mana, making it more rigid than it needed to be.

Rigid enough to reject the merger of the Light Spark, responsible for extended failure.

It was clearly not a part of her true nature, but it wasn’t just some simple enchantment either. It was subtle, but woven into her nature subtly enough to be mistaken for one.

I wasn’t surprised by her not noticing it, because it was not only woven very subtly, but also it actually included a very subtle amount of Divine Spark, but it was used much more complicated manner than I ever thought possible.

The only reason I noticed that was as the Tantric energy infused her body, it flickered enough to earn my attention.

Just like that, the mystery deepened even more. Like I didn’t have enough questions to answer.

After some thinking, I decided to avoid that for a while. Instead, I stood up, catching her eye. “You’re still very tense,” I said. “Do you want me to work on your shoulders? It’ll be a bit exhausting for me magically, but you clearly need a proper massage.”

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Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixteen

The expression of shock on her face as I made my offer was beautiful, especially since I didn't try to hide my aroused expression.

On the contrary, I made a deliberate effort on the other side, revealing a carefully-calibrated sense of arousal, enough for her to pick up.

There were several reasons for that. The first was to give her a simple way to control me, one that she expected me to show considering the disdain she showed toward this so-called Degenerate.

I also wanted to test how she would react to the implied suggestion once she received the solution to the problem that plagued her for centuries. Would that make her pull back to protect her purity? Would she overestimate the strength of her authority and try to order me to continue without changing anything?

It turned out that, even for a beautiful angel living in isolation, the temptation could get too much. I felt like a demon as her beautiful eyes glanced down accepting my offer wordless. Though the sudden movement of her wings, spreading to the side to allow my approach, was a rather more impressive display of her acceptance.

If it was another woman, I would have acted silly and teased her until I earned verbal acceptance, but I could see that for her, even that silent approval was pushing her limits. Just like my earlier touch to her hand showed, she was not exactly used to physical contact.

Despite what my naughty smile implied, I was rather conservative as I put my hands on her, slowly rubbing her shoulders as I infused her body with Tantric-infused Light mana, stretching my manipulation to the limit as I used the energies begging to be released as a destructive force as a gentle massage aid.

I radiated mana from across the whole surface of my hands, the process of absorption for her getting almost three times faster — and that was with her black robe, designed to block light mana.

Without that, the process would have been ten times the initial speed.

She didn't seem to notice that fact, lost in the speed of transformation. Of course, with the speed I was displaying, it would have taken a long time to actually allow her to absorb all those

Divine Spark.

Long enough to be measured in years if I worked on her full-time.

Yet, she didn't seem to be particularly torn-up about the speed, not that I blamed her. After all, she had been dealing with that problem for a very, very long time, making even a decade a good solution.

Especially since her only other hope was the employer of Janelor somehow solving her problem — and considering Janelor confirmed that to be impossible later on.

I could have mentioned to her about the robe blocking the touch, and I had no doubt it would succeed, but I decided to create a little trick, one that would force her to take initiative.

What was more fun than seducing a pure angel who was far too used to her power and authority?

Tempting her to seduce me instead.

And, the first step of my campaign was a subtle one. I just let my finger drag along her neck, five minutes after I started working on her beautiful body.

A momentary contact, one that could be written off as accidental even by the most suspicious mind. She tensed, but I was getting familiar enough with her physical reactions — with my experience, five minutes was enough to get an excellent read on her reactions, especially since she was accepting a steady stream of mana into her body, which significantly enhanced the accuracy of the information I was collecting.

She tensed, because just as my finger brushed against her neck, I intensified the mana flow slightly as well, making sure she didn't miss the sudden change in the impact.

As I went back to work on her shoulders, however, she said nothing. I might have assumed my initial ploy failed if it wasn't for her tenseness, showing her inner turmoil as her initial patience was destroyed.

It was good to see the greed slowly digging its fingers into her psyche. After all, a decade to recover was an amazing period to recover after two centuries, especially for an angel with phenomenal longevity.

Yet, greed was an interesting sin, one that even an angel was clearly not free of.

Not that I wasn't surprised. She wouldn't have tried to absorb that Divine Spark in a desperate gambit to become a Goddess, even risking death in the process.

Not that I blamed her. It was clearly a good strategy, one that only foiled because of the subtle Divine Spark-based enchantment, carefully integrated into her existence to prevent that merger — my best guess, though unsupported, the God of Light, adding that to his angels, preventing them from replicating his feat.

Greed was not instantaneous like lust, or unyielding like pride. It was soft and insidious, like an itch.

And, unfortunately for her, waiting for it to slowly trigger her impatience was simply too delicious to be ignored. I continued with a steady pace, determinedly avoiding her neck.

Even as she shuffled a couple of times, subtly trying to direct my touch. But with each failure, the insidious touch of greed showed its head more.

"You're not that bad when it comes to massaging," she commented offhandedly, trying to casually lead the discussion.

Too bad for her that it was as stealthy as an explosive spell designed to take down castles, and the fact that it came after fifteen minutes of silence made it even more obvious.

"Yeah, it's a fun way to help my allies relax after a long battle," I said, once again playing coy as I said so, but without letting a suggestive pride from infecting my tone.

"It shows," she said. It was a statement that was strictly against her personality, enough to make a big smile bloom on my face. Her voice still lacked arousal, of course. She was having trouble asking me to focus on her naked neck rather than her shoulder, which was already her limit.

Her current limit, at least.

I was quite enthusiastic about redefining those, but just as greed was a sin, patience was a virtue, one that I was determined to show under the circumstances.

It was the thematically-appropriate move to seduce an angel.

I continued my steady caresses, ignoring the obvious thread of conversation she was trying to convince me to pick, the change of pace certainly entertaining.

Though, she finally surrendered that attempt as I let my hands drag down to the middle of her

back. “M-maybe you should stay focused on my shoulders,” she said, her voice hitching despite her best attempt to keep it steady. “M-maybe even climb up a bit more, focus on my neck.”

“Of course,” I said as I started working on her neck. “Although, I didn’t know that angels also had trouble on their back due to that problem.”

“That problem,” she asked, sounding lost.

“You know, big breasts,” I said, enjoying the sudden tenseness of her body.

“W-what do you mean,” she stammered in shock. “I have no such problem.”

“Oh, my mistake,” I said, quick to accept her explanation, but she stayed tense for a moment. Just as she was starting to relax under my touch, I let my hands drag down to her shoulder once more. “Then, there’s no point of focusing on your back so much,” I said.

“N-no, continue!” she said rapidly. “That’s better.”

All she needed was to tell me that the massage was helping to solve her problem, and she could have openly requested me to focus on her neck without making it weird. But that would also mean revealing that she needed me even more than she revealed through the storage creation process, meaning she had to cede even more power to me.

And, she was clearly unwilling to do so.

Unaware that she was only putting herself in a more tenuous situation by doing so.

“If you wish so,” I said, accepting her request, but using a tone that conveyed just how ridiculous I found her request. I brought both hands on her neck, letting my magic slowly infuse her skin and help her to fully merge with the Divine Spark.

As she did so, I was starting to get an even more accurate understanding of the merger process and what it included, and how wildly it differed from my process. At first, I had mistaken the process for simple absorption, but as the amount of Divine Spark under her full control increased, I could see that it was turning into a second layer of circulation, slowly spreading into her body, interacting with the free mana in her body in a surprising way.

Markedly more different than my blunt way of using Divine Spark, though I had no idea whether it was an option for purified Divine Spark in the first place.

Luckily, I had the opportunity to experiment properly.

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Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventeen

For the next ten minutes, I continued massaging her neck steadily.

Soon, her squirming stopped being only about her excitement about the potential implications of the process, saving her from the plight she had been struggling for a long, long time, and started being about the subtle yet effective betrayal of her own body.

I was not half-bad at giving massages, and the fact that she asked me to massage her neck made things even easier. There was no mystery about her decision. I needed touch to a naked part of her body to make the massage effective due to the special blocking nature of her robe, and the neck seemed innocent enough.

The key aspect, 'seeming' innocent.

Unfortunately for her, that choice betrayed her inexperience more than anything else, as the neck could be a surprisingly interesting location to focus on during foreplay.

Kissing and licking would have been much more effective, especially when interrupted by a few nibbles that left a lingering mark on her flawless skin, but my expert touch was still enough to awaken some of the instincts buried deep in her body.

Very slowly, of course, as the centuries that passed without a touch while combined with the emotional oppression of the Light node left those instincts buried deep, requiring a careful excavation.

Though, the emotional oppression of the light was certainly not as intense as Titania had been suffering due to her node. I didn't know whether it was partly due to the headmistress' natural light nature balancing the effect of the Light Spark, the constant exposure to the Darkness spark limiting its emotional suppression effect.

Or simply the fact that the construction method of the Light node was crude enough to trigger such an effect.

I could imagine a few experiments to test that aspect, but ultimately, I decided against it, instead focusing on the slow transformation of her Divine Spark, trying to understand the nature of the mysterious merger while I slowly awakened her latent desires.

She just accepted my massage, unaware of the danger it represented.

Another ten minutes passed before I pulled my next trick. I used my biomancy subtly to pull another trick, allowing it to build up a slow resistance at the area that I was touching, one that would dissipate in a few hours, so, all she needed was to ask for a break before letting me continue.

Or, ask me to touch somewhere else.

“We should pause,” I said, wanting to bring her attention to that fact. “The constant exposure of mana would awaken a natural resistance and reduce the effectiveness of the massage,” I said.

“Right now?” she said.

“I can always continue tomorrow,” I said, exaggerating the duration of the effect a bit, and she paused, her tenseness revealing what she had been thinking was rather important.

Of course, that resistance effect was barely more than a gimmick, one that she could display with a targeted flare, but that was under the assumption that she had noticed it. And, lost in the monumental nature of the situation, she didn’t even think about a deliberate trick, still operating under the assumption that I had no idea about the true effect of the massage.

The fight between her sense of propriety and her desire to finally get rid of her dangerous plight was obvious, especially with the nature of the simplest solution I left available to her.

“Maybe you should focus on my shoulders a bit,” she murmured.

Greed was taking hold of her beautiful heart.

“As you wish, boss,” I said, not bothering to hide the fascinated tone in my voice as she slid her robe a bit, enough to reveal her naked shoulders, beautiful enough to represent perfection.

I had seen her naked before, of course, but watching her slowly slip her robe enough to reveal her shoulders was even more beautiful.

Though, the fact that she had missed the easiest solution while she was busy dealing with the shock of the moment made the situation even more incredible. Her robe was creating an impediment, because it was designed to actually absorb her natural aura, therefore impeding my massage as well.

All she needed was to change into an ordinary robe, and it would allow the effect to occur without a problem. Yet, while I never doubted her intelligence — as the solution she developed

to suppress her Light Spark with Darkness Spark was simply genius — but nothing that I saw about her showed quickness to solve ordinary problems.

How amusing.

I let my hands land on her naked shoulders, repeating the same effect, using the benefits of increased access for my benefit. “Actually, there’s a way to enhance the effects even more,” I said, and before she could even answer, I used Biomancy to conjure some massage oil, one that worked wonders to enhance the intensity of my touch.

She bit her lips as she turned toward me, her face contorted in shock, but that was the limit of her reaction, because the oil also increased the effect of the light trick I was using.

Well, at least, that was what I was making it look like. I just increased the Tantric effect of the light a bit more, making it look like the conjured oil was helping to further focus the effect.

It only worked to increase the arousal she was feeling from my touch. My fingers danced between her neck and shoulders, occasionally even sliding forward enough to caress her collarbones.

The peak of my victory was a singular purr, barely audible, when I first touched her collarbone, the surprising rush of pleasure enough to break her determination to hide the effects.

Yet, that didn’t make her stop the process, not even ask me to slow down, even as the same resistance started to appear on her shoulders, significantly restricting the impact.

I could slowly feel her growing confusion, battling with the unfamiliar presence of pleasure, combined with her desire to ask me to undress her even further.

As always, I decided to be my usual helpful self and took the initiative to help her resolve her emotional conflict.

I gently grabbed her right arm, and started massaging her by slowly rubbing her hand, my fingers dancing on her naked skin as I slowly climbed up, revealing her delicate forearm, the dance of my fingers giving her a reprieve from the earlier rush.

For a given value, of course, as while her arm was certainly not as sensitive as her neck and shoulders, it was not without its own benefits as well. As my oil-covered fingers danced back and forth on her skin in a rhythmic pattern, her helpless squirms didn’t take long to return.

A sensation that increased even more as I rolled her sleeves and started caressing her upper arm, enjoying the beautiful contrast of her flawless skin and the hard muscles underneath.

Suggesting her preference for armor was not just a stylistic choice. Maybe one day I could ask her for a melee duel for some entertainment.

Ideally, one that would be followed by something even more entertaining.

Soon, I finished working on her arms, and returned to her shoulder, but not before fixing her arms. That helped her to calm down, which was a mistake, because the only reason I pushed her sleeves down was that, with them bunched, it would be much harder to push her robe down.

Then, I returned to her shoulder, once again intensifying the pleasure she was feeling. She stayed silent. Her only reaction was a twitch of her beautiful white wings while I resumed caressing the earlier areas.

But this time, that was not my limited starting point. My fingers started slipping lower and lower on her back. First, I danced on the edge created by her rolled robe, but that was just a start. With each repeat, I pushed her robe lower, until it was restricted by the little openings that she used to let her wings stay out.

Her deliberate silence as I pushed her robe was beautiful, but that was destroyed the moment I touched her wings.

“No!” she gasped in shock as she moved forward reflexively, though I didn’t miss the infection of her tone. It was a tone of desire, one that only happened when touching a particularly sensitive spot.

The sensitivity of her wings was shockingly interesting.

Yet, considering the nature of her tone was not the only thing I had done as she reflexively moved forward. If there was one advantage how high stats, was the enhanced reflexes it provided.

Those reflexes allowed me to grab her robe as she moved forward, and I pulled back. If that happened between two ordinary people, the worst that would happen was to turn a painful tug.

But between someone with my stats, and a supernatural being that was further enhanced by her incredible power, she magically enhanced robe didn’t have the slightest change, and ripped

with a spectacular sound, not only leaving her back naked, but also forcing her to grab the front to prevent a spectacular cleavage from appearing.

“You need to be more careful,” I said in admonishment even as I pressed my hands on her back once again, this time pushing her forward, my fingers dancing along her spine as she found herself lying against her desk.

“But, since the accident already happened,” I added, not bothering to hide the huskiness of my tone.

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PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighteen

The headmistress was busy processing her shock as she found herself against her desk, while I let my fingers dance along her spine, changing the undercurrent of the massage significantly.

Yet, her silence was not just about the sudden change the situation showed, starting with her accidental flinch, but also the intensity of the mana flow, doubling in impact as I increased the amount of skin connection as I also let my forearms brush, with a corresponding increase in the mana flow.

I also thought about increasing the effectiveness of the process, but I had to ignore that part despite its fun potential. It would be a pity to do so after I went all that trouble to disassociate the process from my Tantric — or from her perspective, the Degenerate's powers.

And, increasing the effectiveness through arousal was the best way to resurrect that point.

Instead, I enticed her silence with a simpler equation. The more skin contact, the more effective the massage...

And faster the process.

"I hope you're not unhappy with the pressure from my elbows," I explained with a chuckle. "But the constant flow through my hands was getting unsustainable, but since you clearly didn't want to stop..." I added, adding a mocking tone at the last part.

This time, she didn't miss the sexual implication in my words and my tone — which was impossible even for her after she was pushed against her desk, still trying to keep her ripped robe in place with her hands, too distracted to even try to use her magic — but that didn't change her silence.

Once again, her greed worked wonders to add some more confusion to the challenge she was facing, forcing her to consider things she would never have considered otherwise.

And, the arousal she felt more and more intensely as my fingers danced along her spine, adding more ingredients to the confusing elation she was feeling after finding a solution to the problem that plagued her for a time long enough that I struggled to comprehend.

"I can stop if you're unhappy with the service," I prompted.

Her silence was telling. Soon, her tenseness disappeared as she leaned against the desk more,

accepting my reckless overreach, making me wonder just how much she would accept.

And, with her mind plagued by the shock of my achievement, it was the perfect time to test that. My forearms and hands alternated against her naked back, increasing the intensity of mana flow more and more to increase her enjoyment.

It was reckless, certainly, but her silent acceptance and the sight of her trembling wings were impossible to resist, especially after I kept away from her for so long, afraid of the mysteries that were hidden behind her facade.

The state of those mysteries was not that different from the state of her body. While they were not completely revealed, I managed to rip through the curtains enough to give a tantalizing view of what was hidden underneath, with curves hinting more.

I certainly made riskier decisions than I had been doing at the moment.

That didn't mean I recklessly charged forward to rip the remaining veil — which applied both the metaphorical existence that hid her secrets, and the literal existence that hid her 'secrets'. Instead, I let my fingers dance freely over her beautiful back, each moment bringing her to a new height of pleasure.

A pleasure that she was reacting badly enough to make me doubt the frequency she was applying any self-care method.

What a great horror.

I let my thumbs climb back to her neck, pressing softly for a fleeting moment before dragging them back down along her spine, leaving a lingering warmth that triggered her pleasure even more.

The trembling of her beautiful wings turned into a roadmap for me, giving me a shortcut to reading her reactions as unlike her voice, she made no attempt to contain their trembling and occasional tensing.

She didn't stay silent forever. "Careful," she warned as I dragged dangerously close to her breasts, though that warning would have been more effective if a moan used that as an opportunity to escape from her beautiful lips, echoing against the walls.

"As you wish, boss," I said mockingly as I repeated the move deliberately, this time getting even closer, confident that the shame of that slip would be enough to keep her silent as I did so.

I was correct, as I repeated the move several times, she stayed silent, even when my fingers slipped under her robe to brush against the side of her breast momentarily, though I could feel her preparing to warn me again if I repeated that.

So, instead, I pulled back after that touch, leaving her with her aborted intent and the flicker of pleasure.

The resulting tremble of her wings was simply beautiful.

I returned to the task of caressing her back once more, the intense flow of mana getting even more intense, enough to make me question my magical strength.

[-683 Mana]

Luckily, she had other concerns than keeping a tab on the amount of mana I spent, like trying to deal with the unfamiliar touch of pleasure. I focused on her back a few more minutes before making another pass near her breasts, the pleasure delaying her prepared response sufficiently to make it obsolete once more.

Though, she could have warned me regardless, but I wasn't unfamiliar enough with the female body to miss the signs of a held-back moan.

"Tell me if you feel uncomfortable," I said, using her momentary silence as a chance to enhance the pleasure she was feeling even more by pushing the limits, though this time, vertically rather than horizontally.

My fingers drifted down to the small of her back, a location that was arguably less obscene than the sides of her breasts, which was enough to keep her lips silent once more as the special mixture of my mana invaded her body and helped her Divine Spark to transform more and more.

I might have limited our first massage experience to that, if it wasn't for a sudden tremble that exploded all along her body intensely, along with a swarm of moans that was louder and more intense than I had expected.

"Wow, you're certainly loud," I said, unable to keep the mocking statement off my lips as her cries exploded without restriction.

"W-what's going on?" she muttered softly, showing that, despite all her power, she was tethering on the edge of unconsciousness.

“You’re having an orgasm. It can’t be that long ago you have forgotten how it felt, right?” I said as I leaned down to catch her gaze, only to see that along with the invasion of pleasure, there was a shock, its deepness surprising me.

“Of course, that assumes you have orgasmed before,” I added, her reaction confirming that while she was familiar with the concept, she had no first-hand experience with it. “Oh,” I said, unable to keep my chuckle in. “No wonder you’re so surly all the time,” I said.

That earned an angry glare, one that would have been followed by a much more intense reaction if she actually had the strength to move, or could give her lips any order other than the endless moans that exploded off her beautiful lips.

“Come on, boss, you can’t still think that it’s not a tragedy, living that long without experiencing one of the greatest pleasures of life,” I commented, and she trembled. “But you’re clearly not in the mood of walking. Let me help you to your bedroom,” I added as I grabbed her in a bridal hold, and started walking out of her office.

“L-let me go,” she stammered.

“As you wish,” I said, only for her legs to tremble badly the moment I let her connect with the floor. Reflexively, she grabbed my shoulders. Her body was still trembling with the effects of her first orgasm, enough to make it impossible for her to actually stand on her feet. “Do you want me to let you go?” I said.

The glance she threw at me, anger battling with arousal made her look the cutest I had ever seen, though that was not without sexiness, as her inattentiveness allowed her robe to slide down, creating a crude cleavage — crude as in the shape of it, as it was certainly not a comment about the celestial beauty of her breasts.

“Did you change your mind?” I asked, unable to suppress my desire to tease her. She decided that being carried was less humiliating than collapsing.

I chuckled as I lifted her to a bridal hold once more, enjoying the way she trembled in my arms, with no signs of subsiding anytime soon, suggesting that, without her supernatural endurance, she might have fallen unconscious — which would have been a great pity.

Though, just because she didn’t fall unconscious didn’t mean she was unaffected by her pleasure — above and beyond the obvious physical impact. For example, she missed the very obvious implication of being carried into her bedroom after an orgasm...

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PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

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[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Nineteen

The headmistress said nothing as we climbed the spiral stairs. As I did so, I couldn't help but compare the amusement I was feeling with the tenseness I did as I climbed for the first time, expecting to meet an undead monstrosity under her cloak, unaware of the extent of her deception.

Yet, as I carried her upstairs in a bridal hold, her beautiful wings twitching as she tried to keep them collected to avoid hitting the walls, only to fail repeatedly, showing that her legs weren't the only part of her body that she was having trouble controlling.

"Wow, this place is very different when you're not expecting any guests," I said, mentioning the noticeable absence of the crystal pillars that helped her to channel her mana. Instead, the room was in the same configuration I had observed when I first stumbled.

She blushed at the comment as I glanced around like it was the first time I was seeing this layout.

A wooden bed with a thin cot that even a servant would turn their nose to, a similarly shoddy wooden wardrobe, the crystal platform in the middle.

And the bath in the corner, one that she used to cleanse herself and reabsorb the Darkness Spark — which moved much more obediently than the Light Spark, enough to be cleansed by the ward before getting absorbed by the ward.

The bath might be a critical component of the balance she had been maintaining for a long time, but I was in the process of solving that problem, which meant that it was time to explore alternative usage methods of the bath.

"Let's see if we can use your light-infused bath water to enhance the impact of the massage," I said. A thoughtful expression appeared on her face rather than the panic I was expecting, suggesting that, she actually took it as an actual input rather than just a teasing remark I used before I undressed her.

But then, I corrected, why shouldn't she. I had done everything I could do to obscure the link between Tantric and her transformation, shifting attention to my relatively elegant way of leveraging Light mana.

And if that had been correct, the bath would certainly enhance my capabilities significantly, by

allowing me to infuse mana all over her body without the need for a direct touch.

I wondered whether it was more of her naivety or her newfound greed in play as she missed the most obvious reaction behind her situation, but I was sure that, regardless of the reason, the pleasure that blanketed her mind played a big role in her omission.

That omission didn't survive for long as I let her step down in front of the bath, one of my hands on her shoulder, stabilizing her.

The other grabbed her robe, and after one harsh pull, ripped it completely. "Wow, you really don't like wearing anything underneath that robe, do you?" I muttered as I enjoyed the beautiful sight of her flawless body from behind, her heart-shaped ass on display without any pesky interruption, the soft shine of her wings just adding another shadow to the state.

"W-what are you doing?" she gasped as her wings moved to cover her ass, with them lowered, I was able to get an amazing view of her breasts, large enough to easily spill out of my hands, yet just as perfect and firm.

"No bra as well, very naughty," I commented cheekily, which earned a beautiful gasp as her hands jumped up to cover her breasts. Unfortunately, they were much less adequate coverage, her small hands leaving most of her flesh free for my enjoyment.

I couldn't help but chuckle at her ineffective attempts of covering her body even as I gave her a gentle push, allowing her to step into the bath.

I followed her, but not before matching her in the state of dressing, but she was too occupied by her own nudity to notice that before I stepped into the bath after her, and hugged her behind.

Her wings were between our bodies, but considering the sensitivity she had displayed, it was hardly something that reduced the impact of the hug for her, and even if it did, my hands were on her naked belly, caressing softly.

"So, are you ready for the real massage," I whispered.

She whimpered in shock at my daring, but, just to make things fun, that whimper didn't survive for long.

The reason, as I cast another biomancy spell, this time pulling some of her bath water to fly, covering our bodies with a thin layer of water. It didn't work to erase the traces of darkness from her since she wasn't channeling her magic. Instead, I used it as a kind of focus to further

intensify the flood of light magic.

Of course, it was just an excuse to slightly increase the effectiveness of Tantric, further tripling the speed of the process, bringing the required time to complete the process from years to months — assuming constant dedication, of course.

And, just like that her greed, aligned with the unfamiliar touch of pleasure, worked wonders to destroy her complaints, once again making her fall silent.

“Let’s start by focusing your back, move your wings,” I whispered into her ear, this time my voice reflecting my arousal without the slightest attempt of concealment.

She didn’t follow that request, but considering she made no attempt to move forward to separate herself from my naked touch, it was less of disobedience and more of indecision. “Or, I can start from the other side,” I whispered into her ear, my lips close enough for my breath to caress her skin.

I had been planning to let my lips linger down her cheek before focusing on her neck, kissing and nibbling cutely to push things further, but she managed to thwart that insidious plan with a very clever solution...

Near-instant obedience.

Before I could even lean down to place the first kiss on her cheek, her wings moved, freeing her body from the protection of her wings. “Good girl,” I said as I pushed my hands through her wings, caressing her feathers softly.

It might be the single most conflicting yet comforting feeling I had ever experienced. The light mana invaded my body as I touched her wings, almost instinctively, her mana dancing with mine, giving an ethereal feeling to my touch.

Of course, I could feel that there were two reasons for that reaction. The first was her aroused state, one that was flailing her control. And the second was the current nature of my mana, a soft variant of light, almost wrapping around herself.

“N-not my wings,” she whispered, needy, but this time, it wasn’t just panic that I was hearing in her voice but a carnal tremble, one that reflected need, showing it wasn’t just simple sensitivity.

“As you wish,” I said, but only pulled one of my hands from her wings, and used that to put her belly.

“Y-you were supposed to work on my back,” she whispered.

“Oh, I am,” I said as I used my hold to pull her tighter against me, one that buried my shaft between her beautiful ass cheeks. Surprisingly, she reacted less than to my continuing caressing of her wings, whimpering helplessly.

It was not fair for her to be the only one enjoying it, I decided as I started moving up and down, using my muscular chest as a tool of massage.

Of course, that amazing work was shadowed by the impact of my shaft moving up and down in the beautiful valley created by her perfect ass...

But one couldn't get anything.

At that moment, there was nothing preventing me from pushing forward. Well, nothing but her delicious whimpers and her lack of complaint, showed that she was not too far away from acceptance in the first place.

Ironically, that just tempted me to tease her more. I took a step forward, pushing her with my body until she found herself pinned against the wall, while I moved up and down repeatedly.

The constant flow of light mana under the guise of massage, slowly helping her to properly merge with the Light Spark, worked wonders.

Though, as the process continued, I could see the difference between my process and hers even more.

After the slight softening, the nature of the Divine Spark was aligning perfectly with hers, slowly taking shape over her body, the subtlest shadow that even she would have trouble noticing. But still, it was almost independent of her, but aligned at the same time.

Maybe that was how the avatars of the gods worked.

In comparison, I could see the way I used Divine Spark definitely butchered any potential of leveraging that.

Because, I could feel that, the only reason she was able to achieve that was the extreme alignment she had with the nature of the Divine Spark — and while I had little idea about what exactly such nature meant, I could see that it was not just a mana trick, but something more.

My strategy was much similar to what Janelor had been doing with Mana to empower her

abilities directly, only using Divine Spark as fuel rather than mana.

But, as a needy whimper escaped her mouth, I abandoned that track and focused on the present.

“Please,” she whimpered, and I was more than enthusiastic about understanding what exactly she wanted to think.

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Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty

I wanted to follow her implied request, but not before teasing her a bit first.

“It’s rare for you to be so kind when giving an order,” I whispered mockingly even as I continued to rub against her body, enjoying the sensation of her flawless skin, each second driving the sensation higher. “What do I owe this change?”

Another whimper escaped her lips, one she let out in response, showing just how much the pleasure she had been enjoying loosened her attitude.

Not that I could blame her, as she had been dealing with the weight of her Divine Spark for a very long time, and I could hardly imagine the extent of the stress such a problem caused her without any hope of resolution.

Add that to the responsibilities of managing Silver Spires, the royal politics that seemed to be determined to include her, undead attacks, and most importantly, the constant presence of the Eternals...

Yeah, neither her initial stress, nor the elation she felt as the weight of her biggest problem disappeared was entirely surprising.

“No answer, huh,” I whispered. “What a rude action. And do you know what happens to rude headmistresses?”

She flinched, but that might be more about me suddenly ceasing my flow of mana, stopping the slow binding process she had been enjoying. “W-what happens?” she found herself muttering reflexively, the shiver she let out as she said so impressive.

Especially considering she was tightly locked between the wall and my body.

“They face a choice,” I whispered, stretching the limits of Speech to the limits as I extended the cadence of my tone, wanting to elicit a reflexive response from her. Of course, even with my Speech and Charisma, it was not exactly a simple trick to pull.

I only dared to attempt it because of her current state.

“W-what choice?” she whispered.

“They either stop getting massages, or receive punishment,” I whispered.

“Punishment,” her answer came immediately, her determination beautiful. I felt her body stiffen as she realized the nature of her words, but before she could rethink her stance or take back her statement, my hand rose, landing on her ass.

The cry she let out was beautiful. It was certainly not pained, as to actually hurt her, I needed to hit hard enough to ruin the moment.

Luckily, that was not necessary, as the indignity of being spanked was much more impactful for someone in her position. For better or worse, she had ruled the school with a distant yet unyielding fist, enough to fall into the habit that even the simplest of her comments couldn't be violated.

The lack of pain was actually better, leaving her bereft of an excuse she could rely on to explain her shocked yet beautiful cry.

After the first spank, she had enough time to change her mind, but chose to stay silent as I used the opportunity to deliver another mana flood, just enough to make her consider suffering the indignity.

After all, what were a few spanks compared to finding herself pinned naked in her room, obediently giving up her body just for a massage...

The number of spanks slowly piled up as time passed, each arriving with a cracking sound, and leaving a soft, stinging sensation behind — one that I cast a reversed-healing spell to leave on her ass, making her flawless skin redden.

The other continued to caress her wings, their spectacular sensitivity not exactly helping her to recover from the conflicting physical feelings she had been enjoying.

Just as she was starting to get used to the new state, I pushed her limits once more, this time letting my hand slip low after the spank, dripping to a dangerous part of her anatomy.

A part that was sopping wet.

“N-noo,” she gasped in shock as my fingers danced around her clit, finally breaking the silence she maintained during the spanking. “That’s too—” she added, but her voice died halfway as my fingers continued to dance around her sensitive spot, the pleasure building once more.

“What part of punishment you don’t understand?” I asked even as I finally let go of her wing, letting that hand slip between the wall and her body. Her gasp only intensified as I captured her

nipple between my fingers, twisting hard enough to trigger another flood of pleasure, another touch of Healing magic perfect to add a layer of a shock to the equation.

“I don’t—” she started, but as my fingers sank into her shockingly large breasts, she was once again betrayed by her own body, the flood of pleasure coalescing into a beautiful moan. It was a tense, throaty one, showing she was not too far from another climax.

The perfect thing to take as an implicit reaction to push further.

“You don’t, what?” I asked as I shifted my hands to her waist and pulled her as I stepped out of the bath, once again in the bridal hold, her beautiful wings flapping in trembles.

Yet, as she found herself lying on her bed, all she was able to achieve was a needy whimper. I grabbed her hips and pulled them up momentarily, preparing her for the real event, earning no complaint as she tried to deal with the invasion of pleasure.

Her hips stayed up as I pulled back, making no attempt to change her vulnerable position. Yet, I didn’t slide instantly. No, there was still one thing I wanted to do. Something I was being tempted for a long time. Since I had discovered her true nature.

I grabbed her wings.

It wasn’t a gentle touch, nor it was a violent move. The best word to describe it as I grabbed them was firm. As I pulled them up, she let out a shocked moan.

I paused a moment, enjoying the feeling of utter control as I grabbed her wings, her hands flailing helplessly as the invading pleasure ruined her coordination.

To make things even more fun, it wasn’t the greed that was keeping her obedient, as I had ceased using the mana flood as I carried her.

No, it was an even more beautiful sin that kept her in place.

Lust.

“Such a horny angel,” I said as I tightened my grip around her wings, and slid inside her, accompanied by a spectacular moan.

And just like that, I took the virginity of a beautiful angel.

As her warmth tightened around me, I paused, properly enjoying the changes in the nature of

our little warped relationship, from the days I had treated her as a distant scary figure, to the days I had treated her as a strong yet naive boss...

Now, she was just a little horny angel, squirming under the invasion of unfamiliar pleasure as I continued to enjoy her phenomenal tightness, each second driving my intense pleasure even higher.

She might have an issue with my sudden pause, but if she did, she was too busy moaning with the constant invasion of pleasure to deal with it properly.

I didn't stay motionless for long, of course. Regardless of how monumental the moment felt, it wasn't enough to actually make me disregard the spectacular moment I was in — though, even if I did, she was ready to remind me with the sweetness of her moans, the rhythm of her dangling breasts, and the beautiful contrast of the color of her hips, still carrying the mark of my spanks.

I pushed forward, something she enjoyed rather well if the way her back arched was any indicator.

My hold over her wings tightened as my hips started rocking back and forth, pushing forward as her tight body remodeled around me, her moans exploding loudly enough to deafen a weaker man.

For a while, I did nothing other than moving back and forth, just enjoying the relentless invasion of pleasure, her tightness getting more and more. There was no banter, no teasing, no order.

Just a steady rhythm of our bodies as I pushed her toward the second climax of her life. One that didn't take long to arrive, hitting her with all the strength of a collapsing building, pushing her toward the land of unconsciousness...

Only for me to prevent that by casting a simple healing spell.

The utility of magic was hard to overstate.

However, the spell was not there to wake her up directly. Instead, I cast that to temporarily block her natural pain resistance. Waking her up was a task for my hand, stopping and grabbing her beautiful wings for a moment as I spanked her beautiful ass.

The jolt of pain was perfect to make her open her eyes despite the incredible flood of pleasure. "Do you need a break, or can the great headmistress of Silver spires continue without a pesky

break.”

It was proof of her pride that even under the circumstances, it made her twist her neck and catch my gaze, her expression beautifully tight, showing hints of anger — hints only because it was being drowned in a sea of pleasure and trembling.

“I’ll take it as a no,” I smirked even as I pressed my hand on her back, pushing her down for another session...

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[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-One

The sensation of slipping inside her for a second time was just as amazing, though even as I slipped inside her, I realized one very amusing detail. A little oversight — one that wasn't happening for the first time.

“By the way, sweetie, before forgetting,” I started even as I skewered her halfway, enjoying her moan. “I remembered that you're yet to bestow your beautiful name to me. Would you be so kind to deliver that?” I said.

Despite the invasion of pleasure — and some more material things, she found the power to twist her neck to catch my gaze, her face colored with an intense surprise, enough to suggest that she was sharing the same surprise.

She might have had some choice words about the circumstances we found ourselves in another time, but, still trembling after her last orgasm while a new wave of pleasure invaded her body, a lone stammer was all she was able to handle.

“M-Mariel,” she managed to whisper.

“Mariel,” I repeated, testing the cadence of her voice, enjoying the cadence of her name. “A beautiful name,” I added, intersecting it with a slap to her ass, adding to the rhythmic sound of my hips. “Almost as beautiful as the way you're tightening around me.”

“S-shut up,” she managed to say even as she shifted her head and buried her face to the pillow, earning a chuckle from me at the intensity of her blush, even at the moment, the slightest attempt to dirty talk enough to break her confidence.

“How amusing,” I said, not bothering to keep it to a whisper, and she buried her face in the pillow even deeper.

Her pillow did more than just hide her shame. It also helped to suppress her boundless moans that displayed the capabilities of her supernatural lungs. Not exactly a development that increased my enjoyment.

At least, not before her moans got even more intense as my impalings started to invade deeper and deeper, her moans getting loud enough to make the muffling of the pillow rather redundant.

“Before forgetting, the reward of your obedience,” I added as I reached to my mana reserves.

[- 318 Mana]

The sudden addition of the earlier Light-based massage trick worked the opposite direction I was expecting, and rather than pushing her delirium deeper, it actually made her act.

Well, if I counted the act that was limited to her neck twisting to catch my gaze once more, while the rest of her body stayed under me obediently as I pulled her wings to ram inside her again and again acting.

Interpreting her gaze was not too hard. Once again receiving the reward that allowed them to slowly bind with her Divine Spark allowed her to cut through the pleasure, reminding her that just an hour ago, we were in her office, having a deep discussion about the nature of the Gods.

Even more amusingly, I caught a beautiful sheepish expression on her face, suggesting that, as she lost herself in pleasure, she didn't even realize that the flow of mana from me had ceased.

Which robbed her of the only excuse she could have for the situation she was suffering. If I continued, she might have at least justified the position she found herself in for herself. Yet, unless the person in question was delusional enough to count as sick, they required a strong excuse to function as a pillar for their self-deception.

The effects of my massage were certainly such a pillar. Such a pity that she didn't even notice its absence, making it essentially useless.

Her expression cycled between expressions, ranging between abject shock and pure arousal, before settling in a grudging acceptance. Grudging, because she clearly didn't appreciate the indignity she found herself in.

Acceptance, because her expression told me that she had no intention of stopping halfway, not with a pleasure she had never felt before invaded her body.

I decided to test that determination for a moment. "I can stop if you—" I started, only for her to freeze in abject shock for a fleeting moment before interrupting me.

"No!" she gasped.

I chuckled even as I spanked her ass. "Try listening to my questions completely, Mariel," I said, pausing after I said her name, enjoying its cadence like a particularly tasty piece of dessert, its delicious aroma lingering on my tongue.

“Mariel,” I repeated, enjoying the tone, yet, even as I did that, I realized that that taste wasn’t as theoretical as I assumed.

She shivered with something more than just pleasure, showing I wasn’t the only one that was feeling that. I turned my attention to her magic even as I repeated her name once more, feeling her magic flaring subtly and mixing with my mana even more efficiently.

“P-please, slow down,” she whispered, showing she was being impacted by that.

“Why do you say so, Mariel,” I said, enjoying her trembles getting even more intense as I uttered her voice.

“B-because it’s my ...” she started, only to slow down.

“Your what, Mariel?” I said, enjoying her tremble even more while I felt a fleeting connection between us, more than just her mana merging against mine. But I failed to understand the full extent.

“Because it’s my ... true name,” she admitted.

“Oh, really?” I asked, feeling curious enough to ask. “And why is your true name having such an effect?” I asked, feeling important enough to pause for a moment — but not important enough to actually pull out.

The reflexive gasp she let out as my constant drilling stopped for a fleeting moment was beautiful, showing just how much she didn’t want the pleasure to stop. “I ... I don’t know,” she whispered, which might be the single most obvious lie I had ever heard.

I was too used to drawing conclusions from half-formed pieces to fail to read her complications. The true name was clearly something magical about her nature, enough to be treated magically important, but considering the shock, she was displaying about the effect it triggered, it was rather obvious that it was more about her changing true nature as she successfully absorbed Divine Spark and slowly progressed into the rank of the goddess.

Regardless, it also implied that, if I asked her about her name anytime but at the moment, as she was deep into the throes of pleasure, I might have received a different name.

Of course, that left many questions unanswered. The exact definition, for example. Or whether it applied just angels, all supernatural creatures, or all beings including humans — maybe excluding people connected to the system.

It also raised questions unrelated to my sexy headmistress Mariel, such as if it applied to the dragons, whether Janelor was actually the true name of my sexy Dragoness, or if she gave me some kind of daily name.

However, all of those questions for another time, I decided as I restarted the movement of my hips once more, her spectacular tightness once again testing my abilities to stave off a premature explosion.

“Let’s leave the question of your true name for a moment, Mariel,” I said, enjoying the shiver of her mana, one that reflected in her body immediately. “Instead, just answer my question. Do you want me to stop...” I said, pausing for a moment to see whether she would explode in a panic once more.

To her credit, she didn’t.

“... distracting you with my mana while we’re enjoying our special embrace?” I asked, enjoying the way her head dipped down.

“No,” she muttered, but her beautiful voice was subdued as she said so, somehow feeling self-conscious about her earlier reaction. It didn’t survive for long before the moans of pleasure stole the show once more, of course.

“Such a greedy little angel,” I said teasingly. “Wanting a massage and a proper fucking at the same time...”

Unlike the earlier euphemistic phrasing, the more explicit word was once again enough to push her into a near-catatonic state, making her bury her head into the pillow once more.

Yet, her hips stayed raised, allowing me to repeatedly ram into her beautiful body without the slightest pause, showing that, her extreme reaction toward dirty language was not a barrier to her pleasure.

I said nothing else, once again letting the time fly, measuring it by the light sheen of sweat that started to gather on her skin, a little sign of impurity that I had never seen on her before, showing the depths of pleasure she lost.

As time passed, the pleasure started to get too intense, challenging my ability to contain myself, so I decided to surrender to the pleasure. But not before one last attempt to tease her beautifully.

“I’m about to come,” I said, which made her tense beautifully.

“N-not inside,” she stammered, showing that, while she might be woefully inexperienced, it clearly didn’t include not knowing the basic mechanics of the process and the implications.

“Not even if it would arrive with an amazing flood of mana, enough to fill you to the brim?” I asked, which was enough to make her pause in indecision for a while.

Once again highlighting her lack of knowledge when it came to the applied side of the carnal business, because froze long enough to make her answer irrelevant.

“Too late,” I said even as I let my control over my body loosen, filling her with my seed explosively.

“N-nooo, that’s too much!” she cried, but that was all she was able to say before a spectacular tremble hit her body, triggering another climax, this time even more explosive than the previous one.

Since I promised her, I let my magic infuse my explosion. And, as a reward for her spectacular obedience, I even made sure to intensify the impact of Tantric to quicken her merging even more.

[-4728 Mana]

Such beautiful obedience needed to be rewarded, I thought, my mind already busy with many interesting things I could apply to her.

Unfortunately, as I looked down, I found her already collapsed, the intense chain of orgasms she experienced without a break, when combined with the intensity of the mana flood, proved more than enough to break through her supernatural physical resistance.

“Well, that was a fun start,” I murmured, spending a moment to think whether I should go and work.

But, the presence of her beautiful soft wings was enough to change my mind. Instead, I lay down next to her, smiling as her wings reflexively wrapped around me protectively.

I fell asleep, not before one last spell, changing the nature of her bed from a simple cot to a large, four-poster bed, decadent enough for us to bury ourselves.

And, just as one last joke, pure black..

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Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Two

Sleeping in a decadently comfortable bed was certainly an enjoyable experience, something that I had enjoyed greatly since my experience had reached a point of great success.

In comparison, the current bed I had been sleeping in, which was more of a bare cot that even a servant would feel insulted to use, was supposed to be an annoying downgrade. Clearly, the spell I used to transform it had been dispelled.

I guessed Mariel was responsible for it. Not intentionally, but the integration of her Divine Spark resulted in occasional flares of her mana, and dispelled it.

Not that it disappointed me. The enjoyment of a soft bed was nothing compared to the great warmth of Mariel's beautiful wings.

Which was why I woke up immediately as I felt those wings shuffling around me, pulling back halfway, too smooth and deliberate to be just a sleep reaction.

My dear headmistress was awake.

Not only I kept my gaze shut, but also applied my extensive abilities to give her the impression that I was still sleeping — which was not unbelievable considering just how much physical effort I had expended and how much mana I spent in the process of keeping her happy.

And kept her happy, I did even as I finally broke her centuries-long dry streak in a very memorable manner.

I was curious how she would react while thinking I was still asleep.

Without the mind-numbing pleasure that impaired her sound decision-making capabilities, I expected her to slide away, and thought that the question was whether she would maintain enough presence of mind to do slowly, without 'waking' me up, or she would pull back with enough speed to force me to abandon my fake-sleep ploy.

She had just the virginity that she had been maintaining for centuries. An exaggerated reaction was not exactly unexpected.

Yet, she surprised me by not picking either of those options.

At first, her wings continued to pull back, giving me the impression that she would pick the first

option, yet, that movement was soon arrested. And even better, after a few more seconds passed, it reversed, once again tightly wrapping around me.

The warmth and comfort radiation from them as they slowly wrapped around me was beautiful, tempting me to go back to sleep. I fully intended to follow that temptation, but soon, a contradicting message arrived, arresting my slow descent to unconsciousness.

It was her finger, moving on my chest.

It wasn't a hard or painful touch. On the contrary, it was a weak one, soft enough to be written off as nonexistent, as heavy and permanent as a dream, existing only for a second before disappearing.

That disappearance didn't last forever, and a minute later, her finger landed on my chest once more, this time staying a little more before pulling back.

I lost count of how many times she repeated that, but with each repeat, the time between her touches got shorter, and her touches lingered more.

The duration wasn't the only thing that changed. The pressure her finger generated increased accordingly, from lighter than a feather to a noticeable caress as she traced my chest muscles, her fascination impossible to be mistaken.

I still had a lot of things to do, but wrapped in the wings of an angel, I was feeling rather decadent — not to mention curious about just how far she would push. Considering her hesitant start, I guessed that my abs would be her limit.

The answer turned out to be more than that. She first climbed to my shoulders then shifted to my arms, continuing to trace my muscles, then slipped down to my abs. There, she spent less time than I had been expecting, continuing to slip lower.

Dragging along my erection, shocking me with her daring. I didn't expect her to leverage the benefits of her new situation that quickly.

Though, the moment she touched my full erection — as it should be considering I was sharing the bed with a naked angel — I felt a great shock, though it was not as great as when, rather than pulling back, she stayed on, moving back and forth.

Soon, her finger was joined by a second one, and a couple seconds later, her palm joined the fray.

My acting ability was my savior as her hands moved up and down on my shaft, allowing me to hide the signs of both the surprise I felt and the arousal that was steadily growing.

Admittedly, it was not exactly the best handjob I had received, with its uneven pacing and unnecessary tightness, but that didn't prevent me from enjoying it immensely — and her fumbling that highlighted her lack of experience gave me much more pleasure than a skilled handjob.

Opening my eyes and greeting her was tempting, but not as tempting as just how long she would stay there, exploring the unfamiliar texture of my length.

I stayed there, waiting until she stopped while I enjoyed the amazing warmth of her wings, enjoying the soft nature of the light that infused my body — though I had to maintain a thin layer of light mana inside myself to prevent that from turning into something more painful.

Even in its calmest state, the light was destructively burning.

Her hand stayed in place for several minutes. Soon, I realized her movement getting even choppy, but the only struggle that was created was to make me feel the challenge of forcing it down.

I felt curious about her actions. I needed to keep my eyes closed, but with my magical sensitivity, it wasn't as big of a problem as it would have been a couple months ago. Especially since Mariel was an intensely magical being, her natural light mana radiating off her body without her robe to block it.

And, by focusing on the radiance, I could 'see' her movements without opening my eyes. Of course, it wasn't a perfect view, as, ironically, the intensity of her glow made it very hard for me to pick the details, but I could still notice the broad strokes.

Like the fact that her hands were dancing on her breasts repeatedly.

Holding back my smirk was an even bigger challenge than hiding my challenge to her clumsy handjob — especially since, unlike a blowjob, enthusiasm was definitely not a replacement for actual skill — but I managed to keep it down.

Curious how she would follow.

Her hand soon pulled away from her chest and landed back on mine, caressing my skin once again, treating exploring my body more important than enhancing her own pleasure.

Soon, her free hand slipped down to my thighs, but then she chose to push them to the side. I didn't want to wait for long to learn about that. The familiar weight of her breasts pressing against my legs was indicative enough that she wanted to get a closer look at my shaft.

As she waited there, I assumed that it was the extent of her ambition. But then, her fingers wrapped around once more, this time dancing gently as if she wanted to see its reaction rather than giving a handjob.

It was a much more pleasant feeling, especially with her tits pressing to my legs. I took the risk of cracking my eyes, only to see her face scrunched in intense concentration. It would have been just cute if it wasn't for her wings, spread on her back, twitching with her every move — yet the way they throbbed with magic was more than enough to remind me that they were not just nice-looking accessories, but the representation of her power.

The power that just enhanced significantly after the last night's adventure where I helped her to finally bond with her Light Spark. Yet, interestingly, she was more fascinated by the process she attained rather than the result, considering she preferred to molest me rather than wake me up so that she could ask some more questions about how that was possible.

I wouldn't have answered them, of course, but her preference was interesting nonetheless.

I didn't keep my eyes open, but I managed to sneak occasional glances without alerting her, each repeat showing a growing excitement as she started to abandon her awkwardness and embraced the erotic nature of the situation.

It was nothing compared to what we had been doing the previous night, but the fact she was taking initiative made it even tastier...

Soon, she started moving up and down with surprising fluidity, suggesting she was not aware of her own movement, especially since the exaggerated movement would have been enough to wake me up if I had been actually asleep.

I continued to relax in her bed, the comfort of my blanket more than enough to compensate for the lumpy coat underneath. Meanwhile, the movement range of her fingers got larger, climbing high enough to graze the crown, dipping down to touch the base, and even leaving a lingering touch on my balls.

Just as I thought it would be the end, she managed to surprise me once more.

In the form of her beautiful lips, parting in preparation...

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7334 / 7334 Mana: 9000 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Three

I barely managed to close my eyes as she glanced up, no doubt testing the signs of waking up. With her little test giving a negative result, she started leaning down even as her hands wrapped around the base of my shaft.

Her lips followed a moment later, repeating the same effect around the crown of my shaft, adding another layer to my pleasure, especially when she started moving up and down. Her movements were choppy, but not completely unfamiliar.

She might not have done anything like this before, but clearly, she had lived far too long to never stumble on others doing something like that. Soon, she reached a simple, yet effective rhythm, her natural grace helping to compensate for her lack of experience.

That didn't mean her hesitancy was gone, of course. However, her taste for pleasure was finally awakened, and it was a good combination when it was mixed with her curiosity.

I just watched, happy with the pleasure. Her technique — if it could be called that in the first place — was lackluster at best, but one of the advantages of a blowjob was enthusiasm was more than enough to compensate for a lack of skill.

And she had lots of enthusiasm. Her wings, still sprawled, twitching beautifully, only enhanced the inherent view of the moment.

I let her play freely without any intervention as she teased my shaft from every possible angle, her lips going deep enough to reach halfway mark. I was tempted to grab her head and push her down, curious how her wings would react in such a circumstance.

Pity I was too curious about how far my naughty angel would push while thinking that I was still asleep.

I limited myself to watching. Luckily, she was too distracted to keep her eyes open, allowing me to watch her rapt concentration as her expression constantly cycled in a wide range, from shame to arousal.

She pulled before I could reach a climax, and I prepared to stand up, to teach her why it wasn't a good idea to wake me up in such a teasing manner and stop halfway.

Or, a rather excellent way, as it depended on the way one looked at the issue.

However, before I could stand up, I noticed her magic flaring, and she cast a spell on me. Ironically, it was a credit of my trust that I didn't retaliate reflexively and instead checked the spell structure curiously, only to see it was a sleep spell.

A weak one that would have certainly failed against a woke target, even if I was as weak as I led her to believe.

However, it was an excellent way to make sure a sleeping person wouldn't wake up.

Which had some beautiful implications.

So, I wasn't surprised when she turned her back to me before climbing on the bed, her legs on both sides of my body. One perk of the position, it allowed me to open my eyes without fearing getting caught.

Which was excellent, because the sight of a beautiful angel from the back, her glowing silver wings spread wide as she hesitantly lowered herself was a memory I would cherish for all eternity.

I bit my lips as she finally lowered herself enough for our bodies to connect, her warmth phenomenal as she wrapped around my girth, and the fact that she stopped her blowjob just as it was starting to get amazing helped to carry the pleasure to the next stage.

It would have been an amazing trick even if it was intentional, and its accidental nature only made it more amazing.

I watched in appreciation as she slowly lowered herself with a speed that surprised me, showing that my forceful education had taken root excellently. Her back arched as she easily passed halfway mark.

A loud moan rippled in her mouth, showing her confidence in her sleeping spell trick. Too bad for her it was completely unfounded, leaving me a desire to move and pin her down to teach her about being more careful.

Yet, as she sank deeper, I decided on the lesson and focus on enjoying her beautiful treatment. She moved up and down, experimenting with the pace until she settled to a furious up and down, her wings waving in the same pattern in reverse to balance her momentum.

A rather inventive way of using her wings, one that I enjoyed greatly.

I waited, curious just how far she would leverage her freedom.

Quite a bit, as it turned out as she leaned forward, putting her hands on my thighs before her hips started to move even faster with the leverage, the sight of her devouring my shaft, again and again, creating a rather excellent view for me to occupy myself.

And that occupation helped me to suppress my desire to flip her and start her next lesson.

Her hips moved both back and forth and up and down, her wetness enveloping me greatly, her natural elegance once again helping to elevate her movements greatly. Another moan escaped her beautiful lips, making me curious about her expression.

Pity, she didn't have a mirror in the room, and casting a spell to do so would have alerted her that I wasn't as sleepy as she assumed me to be. Her hips continued to work, making me feel a slight pity that she didn't get the benefits of the system.

Such steady work would have already earned her my first perk.

However, just because she wasn't able to get the benefits of it, didn't mean she couldn't receive the benefits in another way. I let my magic rise slowly, coating my shaft.

It made her stop and throw a panicked glance back — at least, that's what I assumed as I had to close my eyes to fake sleeping. Her body stayed twisted for a while, her posture suggesting she looked at me, no doubt trying to see if I had woken up.

But she stayed impaled even as she did so, showing she didn't want to stop receiving the pleasure she had been sneaking. I gave no reaction as I did so, but let my mana calm slightly.

Selling the idea that it was just a reflexive reaction, one that overlapped with the pleasure I was feeling.

She said nothing, but even as her presence disappeared from around my shaft, I didn't react, remembering the earlier situation with the blowjob. It turned out to be the correct decision as she settled around my girth once more.

This time her hands pressed against my chest.

It was a risky decision, but I found myself opening my eyes after her hips started moving, this time even more heatedly. But not before letting my mana rise once more, tainted with Tantric energy, slowly filling inside her.

[-381 Mana]

It turned out to be a good decision. When I opened my eyes, I found hers conveniently closed, which allowed me to take the view she created fully rather than trying to steal an occasional glimpse.

Which was good, as the view she created easily took a spot in the greatest views I had ever seen. Her wings were spread fully open, their glow even more intense as my mana invaded her body. And, that silver light contrasted against her body, highlighting the slight sheen that covered her skin in the best way possible.

Her beautiful breasts jumbled pleasingly with every desperate movement of her hips, begging for me to grab them and tease her hard nipples for eternity. Her face was contorted with pleasure as her core devoured my shaft repeatedly, her lips open as endless moans started to escape her lips.

I wondered whether she was that confident in her spell, or she had forgotten the dubious nature of the start of her morning exercise.

Either way, I said nothing as she rocked desperately on my lap, too distracted by the pleasure to pay attention to such nuances.

Her moans exploded against the walls as they started to gain a desperate quality, tempting me to use the trick that I had been fond of, blocking her arousal with magic to keep her on the edge.

Tempting, but after some thought, I decided against it. The poor girl had spent centuries without knowing the touch of a man. It would be plain mean to test her with such a radical edge play.

For now, at least, I decided, shelving the idea for later, when she got a more useful sense of what was ordinary and what was not.

While I was considering the appropriate time to pull some interesting tricks, she finally reached the peak she had been searching for. Her body tensed as she started trembling desperately, each second enhancing her pleasure even more.

As her moans subsided, she looked down, only now noticing my eyes were wide open. "Good morning, boss," I said with a chuckle as she froze in shock. Which I leveraged by grabbing her waist and flipping our positions, trapping her under me in a missionary position, still firmly

inside her.

She was done with her morning exercise.

It was my turn now.

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7334 / 7334 Mana: 8826 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Four

“You have — you have awakened,” Mariel found herself muttering with a palpable shock, but even then had been interrupted by a moan halfway as I slid inside her.

“What do you think?” I said with a chuckle as my hips started to pick up speed. Since she had kindly completed the necessary foreplay — and more — I had no problems rushing forward at full speed.

“I ... Right now?” she asked, her hopeful tone rather obvious, which meant she had realized I had been playing with her a bit.

“Oh, sweetie, I’m a light sleeper,” I said, which earned a gasp of shame from her. Which was misguided at best, but I let that slide, as I had enjoyed her juvenile reaction. Not as much as I enjoyed the way she was tightening around me downstairs, of course, but to be fair, there were very few things in life that could match the way an actual angel wrapped around my shaft.

“I need to go and start working,” she managed to stammer, which would have been more convincing if two things weren’t true. First, she was the boss, one that scared everyone enough that no one would dare to even visit her office without being summoned, let alone ask her why she was late.

The second piece of evidence was more direct. Her hips started to move even as she delivered her excuse, displaying the abilities she had learned during her earlier adventure in a different way, showing that she was not as committed to stopping me as her words implied.

If someone else was using that excuse despite clear desire, I might have actually followed it to teach her a lesson. But my poor angel had been dealing with an enforced puritan lifestyle for centuries, and it would have been too cruel to do so.

Instead, I teased her with a spank. “You can always take a sick leave, sweetie,” I said as I let my hand linger on her ass, caressing softly, making her tremble in anticipation, temporarily stopping the rhythm of her hips.

“M-maybe —” she whispered, which turned into a wordless growl as I used the opportunity to push forward, triggering an explosive moan as I touched her depths once again.

“It’s clearly justified,” I said even as I tightened my grip and pulled out just enough to flip her, making her balance herself on the bed on all fours.

Allowing me to grab her wings once more as I slid inside her, flaring my mana to caress her feathers, leveraging its softness in the process. And that was not the only way I was using my mana. I gathered a thicker flood and filled her insides with each push, once again assisting her to assimilate her Light Divine Spark.

[-3183 Mana]

She certainly deserved a reward after her naughty morning adventure.

Her moans got even more intense as my mana invaded her body, once again efficiently working on her bonding process with the Light Spark.

The process wasn't complete, far from it, but even the development was enough to progress it significantly.

"Good," I said cheerfully as her hips started moving once again, responding to the mana flood rather intensely, my teasing tone making her move even faster. I had several words to tease her about the situation, but she was still reasonably sensitive, and I didn't want to push her too much in any case.

No matter how self-possessed she looked in her role as a headmistress, she was a fragile beauty, and it made teasing her a dangerous proposition. Especially since she was already overwhelmed by getting caught during her morning trickery.

Instead, I pulled her wings back as I started impaling her even more aggressively, enjoying her repeated cries.

Under the pure invasion of pleasure, it didn't take long for the last vestiges of her little adventure to disappear completely, leaving her to moan and gasp repeatedly, her words long forgotten.

It wasn't the first time I had seen her like this, as she hadn't been different the last night, especially during the later half, where the unfamiliar pleasure blanketed her mind. Her delirious moans suggested that just a night of experience was not enough for her to generate familiarity as well.

I managed to hold back my desire to explode inside her for a while as I quickened my invasion, doing my best to give her an even more explosive experience — at least, as much as I could manage without doing anything creative, which would, at this point, shut her down completely.

Still, that didn't mean I had nothing else I had in mind, I thought even as I flipped her once more, but this time I stayed straight, which left her torso free from my view.

She noticed my gaze, her wings folding immediately to hide her face and her torso, which, at this point, was simply amazing. "No need for that sweetie," I whispered as I grabbed her wings and slowly parted them, which required no strength as she didn't resist.

But she whimpered beautifully in shame as she covered her face with her hands, her expression simply an incarnation of cuteness.

"Honey, let's put those hands to better use," I said as I grabbed her wrists, slowly pulling her wrist forward until her hands landed over her breasts. "Now, squeeze," I said even as I directed her fingers, teaching her how to explore her own body.

Her expression cycled between shyness and arousal as her fingers clamped around her nipples, while I still played with her wrists, making her twist them slowly.

Soon, I pulled back — well, let my hand slide lower to caress her stomach — and let her hands handle their task independently. Her hands stayed in place, dancing over her beautiful breasts, the effects of it clear as she started moving her hips thirstily, proving that the pleasure was stronger than the vestiges of shame she was dealing with.

I managed to keep my lips shut despite my desire to tease her, not wanting to interrupt the growing show.

An amazing decision, it turned out, as soon, she pulled one of her hands away, only to follow the direction of my hands and reached lower.

I grabbed her wrist, leading it toward her clit, our fingers tangled together as we teased her most sensitive spot together, rubbing against her softness, the pleasure growing for her.

Then, I noticed a flare on the wards, and her eyes widened. "E-emergency," she whispered in shock. "There's an attack!"

"Where?" I asked even as I started cursing at the inappropriate timing of the attacker.

"One of the outposts at the south," she said, which was clearly communicated by the wards. "A big one, they need reinforcements immediately."

"How immediately?" I asked, quickly recalculating the distance.

“The monster tide is about to reach the destination, maybe twenty minutes,” she said.

“Good,” I said with a sudden wild smirk. “It’s enough for me to finish my job and reach there,” I said.

Her eyes widened in shock. “W-wait—“ she gasped, which was all she was able to say before I leaned forward once more, trapping her under my height. Our lips latched together as I let my hips go free, invading her drenched core with an absolute lack of mercy, the clapping of flesh filling the room, loud enough to overwhelm her suppressed moans.

Facing a sudden time crunch, I abandoned every sense of restraint as I wanted to teach her about the true meaning of education.

When I pulled back from the kiss to impale her even more aggressively, her only response was to moan, even more, an impressive delirium coloring her tone, suggesting she was slowly losing all connection with reality.

An expected outcome under my reckless invasion, which was good, as it was a much better way to use her amazing lips than trying to deliver useless arguments.

“Now, let’s open those beautiful legs more,” I whispered as I pressed my hands to her thighs, parting them for the next stage. Which came as I changed my alignment slightly, drilling her down.

“Too ... much,” she managed to gasp, but even that took half a minute for her as her moans interrupted her several times, her body rebelling against her. But even as she said so, she couldn’t help but keep her eyes open, watching me disappear into her core again and again without a hint of mercy.

Yet, she found herself opening her legs, even more, allowing me even better access.

Her flexibility was simply phenomenal.

I would have asked her to stand up to explore another position for a fleeting moment, but the way her legs started to tremble suggested that it would take a miracle for her to stand upright. And while I had several means to achieve that miracle, with the sudden invasion forcing my hand, I didn’t have the luxury of dealing with those.

So, I continued my simple yet effective assault until my body decided it was time to stop, exploding inside her, filling her with both my biological marker and my magical touch.

[-975 Mana]

I would have rewarded her with even more mana, but with the upcoming fight, I decided to play it more conservatively. Though, it was still sufficient to break the last vestige of her consciousness as she collapsed against the bed, muttering softly...

“Rest well,” I whispered as I leaned down and left a lingering kiss on her temple. “I’ll be back for the second round soon enough.”

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SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [114/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

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Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Five

At this point, I was familiar with the operation of Silver Spires to know exactly where to look to get a comprehensive view of the situation, and it was not the commander's office.

My destination was not one of the command rooms, but a less important location. The communication room.

Responsible for collecting and aggregating every single emergency message the school received from the surrounding towns.

I did so, because while accessing raw information was time-consuming, it was certainly not as time-consuming as trying to unravel the warped reports of the ones responsible for analyzing that information.

I needed to spend some time to get rid of all spies there, but it was one of the tasks I was procrastinating repeatedly, more important — or more entertaining — tasks taking priority.

I cast a sleeping spell on the people that were manning the room to keep my intrusion hidden. The spell was ingenious, not only sending them to sleep, but also ensuring that they wouldn't realize that they had a five-minute gap in their memories.

It was a good idea to keep the source of my information hidden.

Of course, that didn't mean every single message was reliably correct. Far from it, and not because the ones that sent those messages were actually enemy agents. No, they were ordinary guards defending their town, which probably assumed exaggerating the threat would allow them to receive help quickly.

"Not all of them, at least," I murmured as I went through the first few messages, seeing exaggerated action reports, describing monster hordes attacking from the north and west that was far too big to be believable. Then, I moved to the next one, which described a fresh undead army attacking from the south.

My frown was already deepening at this point, then, I read one report in the South, about a great forest fire with supernatural origins, forcing the town to evacuate.

I started going through the reports even quicker, but my earlier disbelief was abandoned. My stats allowed me to go through all information easily, but the results didn't help my mood the slightest.

I realized the Silver Spires were under siege once more, and, if even a fraction of the information I could read here was accurate, it was a far bigger threat than Zokras had ever presented, even with the assistance of the beast hordes.

I didn't even bother speculating about the source of the attack before I burst into action, sending magical messages. Two of them went to a great distance, utilizing the teleportation trick — as I had managed to understand the mechanics enough to send a small, sealed package without going myself as long as there was a beacon — to Titania and Helga, warning both of them to be alert for an attack.

The risk of a coordinated attack was simply too great.

With that warning, both teams knew what to do.

The third message went to Oeyne, asking her to drop everything she was busy with, arm herself, and go to the headmistress' tower, ready to intervene in case of an ambush, and ignore every order that didn't come directly from the headmistress.

Another message went to Janelor, asking her to be ready for any potential intrusion.

Then, after some pause, I created another lengthy message to Helga — too big to be safely teleported — and hid it in my room, in Helga's favorite book, with a small ward to alert her once she entered there, explaining the important facts and developments I had managed to discover, the secrets of the Eternals, the Princess, the headmistress, and the dragon, giving her the chance to keep things under control in case of an emergency.

I had a bad feeling about the intensity of the situation, and I wanted her to be ready in case I had to pull away from the school temporarily.

I didn't send a message to Mariel.

I went back to her room directly, and find her still lying on the bed, but she had several reports in hand, and was reading through them with a serious expression. The moment I entered, her wings furled around her body, hiding her nakedness from me while her blush intensified further.

Tempting. If the crisis that I was facing was any simpler, I would have loved to spend twenty minutes enjoying the benefits of her shy reaction.

Pity the situation felt far too dangerous to enjoy such a delay, not when several sources of attack had been triggered.

“The situation is grim,” I said.

“It seems so,” she said, but her intensity certainly didn’t match mine. I would have loved to assume it was about the mood she was in after my extended efforts to keep her happy, but I knew that it wasn’t the case.

“Let me check those reports,” I said as I pulled them off her hand. I had no doubt that, just yesterday, that would have created a great negative reaction of her, maybe enough to make her attack me. This time, she just blushed as our fingers touched momentarily.

Pity the situation was too urgent to tease her about that.

Instead, I focused on the report. The contents were horrible enough to justify my quick trip to the massage room. The threat was undersold greatly, the unquenchable forest fire reduced to a simple fire, the undead army reduced to just an accidental remnant, and the monster hordes diminished.

Oh, they did so in a way that would keep them safe, mentioning the same aspects that initially made me doubt their validity, but they carefully avoided mentioning the number of messages from different sources that drew the same picture, which increased their reliability significantly.

As expected, they were offering a conservative action plan. I had no doubt that they would change the recommendation in a few hours, once it was too late to intervene with most of the armed forces.

Forcing the real elites to leave Silver Spires.

I frowned, wondering who was the target of the plan. Titania, Mariel, Janelor, the Princess?

Or maybe me, which would make my next action rather idiotic, but sometimes, it was best to react immediately.

I pulled a quill toward me and started doing corrections on the page, before passing it to her to read. She did so, her expression getting tighter, which didn’t help when I passed the next few reports.

“How sure you are about its necessity?” she asked, her voice grave as her nudity momentarily forgotten.

“I’m sure enough to be actually afraid of the consequences,” I said.

“Maybe I should go and —” she started, but I didn’t miss the enthusiasm in her tone under her seriousness. Understandable, as our ‘treatment’ told us that for the first time in a very long time, she was free to act outside the suppression wards without directly imploding.

“No, there’s a chance that you’re the target. We can’t afford it.”

“I don’t think that they would do so after all that time —” she said, but I used the opportunity to kiss her lips, using the opportunity to cast a spell on her, a Biomancy spell to enhance the daze she was feeling.

She would have easily resisted it if she wasn’t far too occupied by the way my tongue invaded her beautiful mouth, moaning softly. As much as I enjoyed her sound, it wasn’t just about the pleasure.

[-2830 Mana]

I used it to deliver a great amount of mana in a flood, and unlike the other attempts, it carried the maximum amount of Tantric effect I was able to manage, hastening her Divine Spark transformation significantly.

Enough that I was confident she could operate outside the wards for several minutes without a significant side effect. But that was the limit even if I didn’t want to save some of my mana for the upcoming conflict, as the Divine Spark I transformed still needed to actually bond with her body to be useful, which was not instant.

I cast the spell to make her dazed, because I didn’t want to reveal just how much control I had over the process. When I pulled back, she was still gasping in pleasure.

“I don’t want to risk you,” I said, and she nodded shyly, still under the effect of the searing kiss. “I even arranged a trusted bodyguard warrior for you, you can trust her to block others until Titania return.”

“W-what should I do, then?” she asked.

“Give the order to evacuate all the cities, and pull the population back to Silver Spires, I don’t think we can defend against the attack otherwise. I have a feeling that it’s just to the first wave.”

“We can’t just house all of them here, we don’t have the facilities,” she said.

“Then, we set up a city outside the first one. It wouldn’t take too long to set up a secondary set of wards, I’ll create the basis before I leave,” I said before I pulled the map, and pointed several towns to the North as we started discussing the evacuation efforts.

I wanted to target the ones that were too far away from Silver Spires. Those towns were critical to establishing a trade line, but I had a feeling that trade wouldn’t be a priority concern for a long while.

“Those towns should receive the first orders to retreat,” I said.

“But they are too far away from us, the reinforcements won’t be there on time.”

“I know,” I answered. “That’s why I would go there personally to make sure the evacuation works as intended.”

“Alone!” she gasped in shock. “It’s too risky—“ she started, only to be interrupted by another kiss, but this time, without the mana infusion.

Under the circumstances, I didn’t have the luxury to waste time, so I pulled back after silencing her. “That’s better than the alternative, don’t worry, I know how to defend myself,” I said to her.

It earned a hesitant nod from her, and we turned our attention back to the evacuation plan, and how to arrange setting up the refugee areas.

Luckily, Oeyne was not only a bodyguard. As an accomplished blacksmith, she was a good candidate to handle the communication between the Guild Members and the headmistress despite the bad blood between them.

Especially once Titania returns to take the role of a bodyguard.

Five minutes later, we had a beginning of a plan.

I would have loved to stay and direct the organization myself. Unfortunately, I had a trap to set at the north.

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SKILLS

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Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Six

As I left the headmistress's room, my first direction was the walls, and saw soldiers and mages, trying to mobilize for battle.

Though, if I didn't know better, I would have thought that they were trying to reenact the actions of a bunch of headless chickens as the mobilization efforts failed utterly. Even as I watched, one soldier carried a bundle of food to a pile, but the moment he put it down, another soldier arrived and carried it back.

Yet, not even for a moment, I attributed that to incompetence. The guards of Silver Spires were not the greatest, but they were far from the level of casual incompetency they had been displaying.

There was one thing that could easily explain the situation. Conflicting orders.

Guessing the source of those conflicting orders was even easier. The spies were acting even more brazen.

I sighed even as I leaned back against the wall, pinching the bridge of my nose as if the pain would help me come to a decision faster.

It wasn't the existence of the spies that surprised me. I knew of their existence for a long, long time, but I didn't focus on cleaning them. A part of that decision was about the lack of time. I always had more important things to focus on.

Yet, another part had been the use of their existence. I was confident to hide my own actions and the full extent of my power from those spies, and in that case, those spies actually turned into a liability against the enemy.

As long as they survived, the enemy was under the impression that they knew what was going on. The moment those spies were lost, they would know the existence of an unpredictable factor, and start reacting accordingly.

It was that fact that was troubling me even at the moment, making it a difficult decision.

I paused a moment, letting my mind focus on all the attack reports I had collected, trying to factor in the spies acting without the fear of getting caught.

"What's the point of trying to keep the cards hidden," I decided. I wasn't sure the enemy was

finally using their full capabilities, but without a doubt, they were using enough force to reveal a considerable portion of the capabilities I had been hiding, enough to show them their spies had been useless for a long time.

Cleaning the spies was not hard, but it was time-intensive work, especially doing it in a way without creating a big crisis. It would have ruined my plans...

If I didn't have a convenient assistant, with abilities and capabilities that were perfect for the task. I paused for a moment to change my outfit to the mysterious man, then I stopped by Mariel's office to take something that would help immensely during my next step...

Before I moved toward the Royal Quarters.

With my growing familiarity, passing through the wards had been trivial, just as it was trivial for me to avoid the soldiers moving in hurriedly. Unlike the soldiers outside, they were moving with speed and precision as I saw Delia incarnation of the princess raining orders on them.

A soft caress of mana showed that it was not the princess that was disguised, but controlling remotely.

They were mobilizing, but it looked like the princess was preparing to leave rather than defend. She clearly saw what I saw with the spies, and decided that the smartest thing was to draw her own path.

It was indeed smart, but directly against my objectives. I decided to give her a better option.

The connection between the puppet and the princess was subtle, but not subtle enough to make it difficult for me to actually track her. I quickly moved, and found the princess alone, her gaze shut.

I stood in front of her, easily avoiding her wards to stand in front of her, and tapped her head. "Wake up, sleepyhead," I said cheerfully as she jerked in fear, which was justified, as I could have easily killed her.

She was able to suppress her fear quickly as she noticed the identity of her attacker. "G-good morning, sir," she managed to say, delivering it perfectly after the slight hitch in her tone at the beginning. "How can I help you?"

Her eyes were interesting, reflecting anger and fear in equal amounts, with a dash of arousal sprinkled in. Clearly, my earlier visit had left a mark.

“I’m here to offer you a deal,” I said, which made her eyebrow quirk considering my word selection. “Yes, you are free to reject if you want, with no consequences,” I added.

“I trust you, sir,” she said, though I could see her disbelief, which was not entirely inaccurate. Luckily for her, I was actually telling the truth, and actually wanted to entice her rather than forcing her.

After all, I didn’t know just how long this struggle would take, and it was much easier to trust her if she was fighting for an amazing reward rather than being forced. Especially with the delicate nature of the task, I was going to assign to her.

“Good, I’m sure you noticed the little scuffle that was going on outside as those annoying flies decided to target my cute junior,” I said, then reached to caress her cheek, making her tremble with the sudden pleasure, the small trick I used letting her skin flare with pleasure.

“Yes, I did, sir,” she said, but didn’t comment further.

“That is giving me a bit of a problem. You see, I don’t want to intervene directly and show her my lack of trust, but I also don’t want her to fail.” I made a show of shuddering. “You see, I don’t want her to get sad.” She nodded. “That’s where you come in. You’re going to help her to the best of your abilities, and make sure the school doesn’t collapse under attack.”

She stood still for a moment, giving me a chance to continue before finally speaking. “And, since you said that you’ll give me an option, I’m assuming there’s a reward,” she said, softly yet confidently.

Just not confident enough to hide the fear she was feeling. Still, I was impressed. It was not as easy to actually challenge someone with such a power imbalance, and it was even harder to do so with the soft manner she had done.

Her political instincts were truly impeccable, which made me confident about the next task.

“I’ll have two tasks for you, and as a reward, I’ll have two rewards,” I said as I put my hand on her shoulder. “The first task is the simple one. I want you to stay in Silver Spires, and help my junior direct the defensive efforts, and the resettlement of the refugees,” I said.

“Refugees? What refugees?” she asked.

“There will be a general retreat, but it’ll probably take a while to be declared officially, but start preparing for it. As a princess, you have the reputation and required the ability to actually

command that many people,” I said.

“And the reward?” she asked.

“The thing you want,” I answered.

“The throne,” she murmured in fascination.

“Exactly, the lesser reward is the throne,” I said.

“L-lesser reward,” she stammered. Her emotions started from anger, which I didn’t take seriously considering my words could easily be taken as an insult to her family. Then, it clicked with her that, when someone as strong as I was displaying had the qualifications to position that. “And, what do I need to do for the greater reward?”

I looked toward the window with obvious distaste. “This place is infested with annoying cockroaches that are constantly troubling my junior, and management is not her forte. I want you to get rid of all those annoying bugs that feed information to others, no matter which organization. Guilds, other princes, royal family ... and most importantly, those annoyances that dare to call themselves Eternal, even if they spawn like frogs and die as easy as flies,” I said, deliberately letting my tone fill with emotion.

Yet, I deliberately showed annoyance rather than hate, showing that it was just the numbers that troubled me, and not the power they represented. It wasn’t true, of course, but the more the princess believed my power, the more committed she would be to proving herself.

“I can do that, but it would not be easy. I will make too many enemies,” she said, but this time, she didn’t mention a reward. Smart.

“Second reward is very simple. I’ll give you power enough to make it very problematic to actually exact revenge,” I said.

She looked at me, clearly unconvinced. But even as she opened her mouth, I leaned and captured her lips, flooding her body with mana.

For some of it, I used my simple trick and gave her as Experience. It was enough to make her eyes widen, as she was already at her modest level cap of six, which was particularly bad for someone in her position.

Of course, her abilities with the Darkness spark allowed her to compensate for that, but if there

was no need to compensate, things would have been much more different.

[-1380 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

I didn't have the luxury to spend mana, but it had been a long while since I had been leveling up someone that weak, and the efficiency was simply impressive. In a moment, she had climbed to level ten, gaining four levels.

"I-impossible," she gasped as I pulled back.

"Oh, if you think that's impossible, I wonder what you'll say about this," I said as I leaned again, amused that, this time, she had jumped to meet me halfway. But this time, my mana didn't target the borders of the soul space, but the little corner that was hiding the Darkness Spark.

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7334 / 7334 Mana: 7821 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [115/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Seven

The princess was enthusiastic enough for her tongue to invade my mouth aggressively, which was to be expected after she got a taste of the reward, and expecting even more leveling. Unfortunately, it was not what she would receive. Not because I wanted to ration my mana — as the regeneration helped me immensely on that aspect — but I had seen the risks of leveling too quickly.

While my method was not as barbaric as the Eternals had been using, it was still enough to make quick leveling a bit of danger. Her soul space needed to settle to make it safe.

Luckily for her, I had an even better reward. I reached a small internal storage, and pulled the little present I had picked from Mariel's room.

A little flicker of Darkness Spark, beautifully treated with Tantric.

[-450 Mana]

[+1 Tantric]

A gasp escaped her mouth as the Darkness touched her, which was much more strained than I expected. Luckily, I was aware that it was an experiment, and used a very limited amount.

I wondered whether it was the difference between an angel and a human that was the source of the difference, or it was the fact that Mariel had been much more aligned with the nature of the Divine Spark after carrying it with her for two centuries.

Either way, I clearly needed to make it more malleable. Luckily, it was the whole reason I was experimenting with her.

“Focus on the way you have been using your Divine Spark,” I ordered, curious whether the mindset would have any impact on it. I didn't do that with Mariel, but she was already strongly aligned with Light, making that redundant at best.

She tried to say something, but considering I had stolen her lips once again, the only thing she let out was a soft gasp. But I could imagine her trying to say my actions were not conducive to focusing on darkness.

I didn't care about the intensity of her success. At this point, I was more interested in understanding the nature of Divine Spark than empowering her — for empowerment, I had

easier options.

I just waited to see if the difficulty of the absorption process was changing.

Her mana started to cycle inside her. At first, it was smooth, but soon, she started to sieve her mana into her own Divine Spark reserves, letting it gain a shadowy quality while she tried to focus.

The result was not earth-shattering, but promising. As her mana started to gain Darkness nature, but not fully. In parallel, the difficulty of absorption started to reduce, but it was noticeable only because of my sharp senses. Maybe meditating for hours and days would have worked much more efficiently, but I didn't have the time to do that.

Luckily, I had my own cheat tool. I used Tantric to dilute the darkness effect more and more, until her body finally accepted it, the minuscule Darkness Spark melding into her quickly.

It wasn't a lot of Divine Spark, not enough to give her an actual power-up, which was nice since that was not my objective in the first place.

But, as a nice bonus, somehow it made an impact I hadn't been expecting. Not directly, but somehow, it worked like a skill, and the ease of using her own darkness multiplied several times.

Fascinating.

Too fascinating, even. If I didn't have the ability to examine her soul space to know the exact skills she had, I might have actually thought that it triggered a skill. The similarity, combined with my unique system's constant demand for Divine Spark, raised some interesting questions about the link between the Skills and Divine Spark.

Pity we were facing an emergency, which prevented me from whisking the princess to a three-day retreat filled with experimentation and debauchery.

"How's this as an advance payment," I said, acting like I hadn't simply multiplied her capabilities several times, making her a much more formidable and dangerous opponent.

"Enough to make sure I succeed," she whispered. And, considering she was already capable enough to grab the Crown Princess position strongly enough that other princes needed help from the Eternals to push her out — and failed to attain complete success even then — it was not hard to imagine what that power up meant in terms of effectiveness.

“Good, but since I don’t want to show my face around, let’s make sure you will succeed,” I said as I captured her lips once more. I didn’t want to spend more mana, but since I was facing such a convenient experimentation opportunity, I decided to do so.

Especially I could feel the small pull of the System, trying to absorb the Divine Spark her body absorbed.

I needed to solve that.

[-382 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 1%]

[+2 Tantric]

Ordinarily, Companion Process wasn’t supposed to start with just a kiss, but at this point, I was capable enough to trick my own System by using trickery.

Amusingly, it still required a mental component, which I had achieved by pushing her toward the

Yet, the results were on the negative side of my expectations. It slowed down the absorption, but only because it was generating a reverse pull. Still, while I was unhappy with the result, I wasn’t surprised by it.

Not when my system had been subtly blackmailing me for more and more Divine Spark.

Yet, that didn’t mean it couldn’t be used for my benefit.

First, I reached that companion node, and absorbed it back. Then, I flared my mana even as I let my own Divine Spark take its place as we kissed.

[-1280 Mana]

[Companion Acquisition: Progress 25%]

I didn’t receive any notification of experience gain or stage completion, but considering I had been using my own Divine Spark, it wasn’t shocking. However, while I didn’t care about my own experience, I was slightly frustrated by the lack of achievement at the Princess.

Yet, the benefit of it was clear. The companion node was still pulling the Divine Spark toward

itself, but with a lesser intensity. And, when it brushed against the node, it bounced back.

It was another advantage of creating the node myself. I was able to create an inverted storage around, blocking it from actually absorbing the Divine Spark, while still pulling enough to prevent the System from absorbing.

It wasn't the most elegant solution, but it worked well, which was all I could hope for at that point. I pushed another sliver of Darkness Spark inside her, noting the absorption process. It still took a great deal of Tantric cleansing, but a sliver less than the earlier attempt.

A piece of evidence toward the existing Divine Spark helping assimilation, but ultimately, not conclusive, requiring much more experimentation.

When I pulled back, her eyes were wide in shock, easily distinguishing the smoothness of her darkness mana flowing with surprising smoothness.

"I'm sure you can feel the improvement in your capabilities," I whispered as I pulled back. Earlier, she was barely able to maintain two puppets, but I was confident that, after my improvements, three wouldn't be out of the question, maybe even more if she could use her increased flexibility as an advantage.

"Yes," she said, trying to sound confident, but unable to suppress the fascination in her tone.

"Don't forget I expect a good performance. I won't be happy if I find myself forced to act," I said as I pulled back. It was another subtle trick, it worked as a threat, but also a promise. I was implying that I would punish her if she failed, but I was also saying that I was ready to intervene openly if things got too bad.

Which conveniently removed the dilemma of a possible last stand and the merits of an early retreat from her. Why would she retreat even if the worst outcome of staying was better than retreating.

It was not true, of course, as I was weaker than what I had been reflecting her, but I didn't feel bad about that, after she made the choice of doing the same to Silver Spires, involving the school with her political realities.

Also, she was a politician. Lies were basically foreplay for them.

Looking at her, still trying to catch her breath after our latest kiss, I was tempted to lean forward once more, but delaying my arrival at the border was not a good idea. I didn't battle to

start immediately, but it was not a bet I was willing to take.

I disappeared from the room with an illusion trick before leaving the school, hoping the princess wouldn't waste the trust I had laid in her...

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7334 / 7334 Mana: 7126 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [118/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Eight

I didn't bother hiding as I summoned a fake air elemental, not too far from the school. It looked counter-intuitive to do so while the enemy this time was clearly doing their best to pull the forces outside the school.

[-2190 Mana]

Otherwise, they wouldn't have started attacking the towns farthest away from the school. Even the involvement of their spies preventing the guard force from gathering supported that, despite looking contrary to it at the first glance.

I spent quite a bit of mana on the construct, more than necessary, giving the spies the impression that I prioritized speed over anything else.

And if they believed that I was already suffering from a lack of mana after such spending and it was a good opportunity to ambush me, it was even better. A miscalculated ambush was often more dangerous than a direct battle.

A strategy that I expected them to launch at some point. Especially since their aim was to clearly render the guard force unable to send out a functional expedition, which would force the headmistress to send her elite forces instead.

Forces like a mysterious mage that singlehandedly prevented Zokras' invasion.

It was the reason I made a spectacle out of my departure. I wanted the spies to inform the mysterious enemy that the first stage of their plan was a success, so that the enemy would reason the first stage of their plan was a success.

The only problem, I didn't know what would be their next move. If I were them, I would have attacked the school directly without bothering the peripheral attacks, but the problem was I had no idea of their priorities. I only knew they wanted to target Mariel and Janelor ultimately, but I had no idea other than that.

I still left the school, because I was ready to return. I had prepared three hidden teleportation arrays I could use to return — which was not permanent, but would last for a few days — and both Janelor and Mariel had magical means to communicate with me in case of an emergency.

Not to mention, I set Oeyne as the bodyguard, and the companion node she had would work wonders to alert me if she fell into danger.

And the same applied to Titania and Marianne, as well as Helga and Cornelia, their proximity giving me a useful teleportation destination in case their target wasn't limited to current warriors stuck at the school.

I continued moving toward the destination, but not without another little detour. Rather than pushing directly, I moved in a spiral for a while, casting a wide number of detection spells to see if there was any buried surprise near the school.

I still remembered the buried undead armies that had been prepared as the last step of a deadly trip, one that would have been enough to force Mariel between defending the school and letting it fall — which would have been a dangerous choice with the struggles she had been having with Divine Spark at that time.

I shook my head after three spirals and started moving toward my destination directly, wondering whether they didn't bother setting a similar trap, or they prepared one but managed to hide it well enough to keep it away from my attention.

Risky, but I decided to trust Mariel after the great boost she received as she started to sublime her Divine Spark, especially with all the hidden cards I arranged for her — both Janelor and the Princess.

Not to mention I could already feel the girls moving back to Silver Spires, giving her another impressive weaponry she could raise.

She had all the weapons she needed to resist anything less than the full force of the Eternals — a full force that I certainly didn't expect to come at this point. After all, why would Eternals push forward aggressively when they had the perfect tools to maintain their position.

But, soon I realized that assumption wasn't correct.

Pity that little lack of information was reached in the form of a huge, oppressive ward with a rotating structure, locking me in place.

A familiar ward structure, one that I remembered vividly from Mount Doom, when I worked hard to save Janelor.

"Okay, I might have miscalculated," I murmured even as I checked my mana.

Mana: 8422 / 9000]

Luckily, it was already mostly recovered, enough to give me a fighting chance. More than enough to punch through the wards, especially since it was only the blocking ward I could feel, and not the detection ward that had been accompanying it earlier.

Unfortunately, rushing toward the wall and breaking out was not an option, not with the presence I could feel all around me, their mana flaring to show their willingness to fight, their numbers as impressive as the strength they displayed.

“Not a great prediction,” I murmured even as I pulled my sword, waiting for them to get closer even as I tried to come up with a way to escape. The presence of the fake elemental was nice, giving me the necessary mobility, but I wasn’t willing to rush toward the edge.

Despite being confident that I could break the wards faster than they could hit me, I waited for them to approach.

I needed to understand why they were targeting me, which I had no idea about.

Or, more accurately, I had many ideas. They could be targeting me for a myriad of reasons. Maybe revenge, as they had many reasons to hate me. I had destroyed their plans with Zokras and apparently killed him, I saved Janelor from their ploys, I intervened with their plans with the Empire by saving and empowering the princess, and I directly assassinated their members.

Together, they created compelling reasons to make me pay, but the problem was most of those were supposed to be hidden, with no way to trace them back to me.

But revenge wasn’t the only reason to target me. If they got a true sense of my capabilities and my growth trajectory it would make sense for them to target me as well. Just my incredible leveling speed might be enough to mark me as an anomaly.

Yet, it wouldn’t be enough for them to target me considering their own capabilities. But my ability to level up others, without suffering from the obvious horrible side effects they had been dealing with in terms of going berserk, was a different story.

And, I realized despondently as my opponents flew closer, not impossible to deduce if one explored the great change in Helga and Marianne.

Of course, there was also the biggest reason, the true nature of Tantric and its capabilities on Divine Spark, but I hoped that wasn’t the case. Because the others marked me as a target of interest...

While that one marked me as a great trouble, one that needed to be either controlled or destroyed.

Ironically, I didn't expect that last one to be the case, because of their limited assault — even though terming an unbreakable ward and dozens of high-leveled combatants, each strong enough to be an absolute overlord outside as limited was ridiculous.

But everything I learned about the Eternals suggested that it didn't even count as a true response from their true forces.

And I was confident that freely manipulating Divine Spark certainly earned a greater response from them.

Still, even a minuscule response was dangerous, as I was the target. I could escape successfully, but it would be nothing but highlight me as an even greater threat against Eternals, to be hunted down with their full force.

A force that I certainly didn't want to face at its full potential.

But fighting and defeating them was hardly better. It would awaken an even stronger response, though there was one great advantage, as it would keep my full strength a mystery for the moment, making them hesitant.

As the auras came closer, I faced a dangerous choice...

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Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7334 / 7334 Mana: 8753 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [118/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [85/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Twenty-Nine

Fight or flight, those were my hard-to-choose options, I found myself thinking even as I turned my attention to my closest enemy, a warrior decked in full armor, carrying an ax larger than himself, running toward me with a shocking speed.

A speed that was impossible for me to replicate even with my admittedly incredible stats.

Yet, as he got close enough to avoid the overwhelming presence of the wards, enough to get me a sense of his mana. It was still too far away to actually get a glimpse of his soul space, nor I wanted to spend the necessary mana to break through at such great distance — especially since I wasn't confident in keeping that hidden — but the sensation of his mana left no doubt about the state of his soul space.

It was a raging disaster, almost like a beast. He was not berserk, like the other recruits I watched while I was saving Janelor, but he wasn't too far away from getting that point either.

At a distance, I could see two other warriors, their status not particularly superior as they rushed forward, marginally slower.

Their rush was desperate, lacking any kind of coordination, which contrasted greatly with the excellent timing of the initial ward.

"Fight, it is," I murmured as I watched their reckless assault. The ambush required a certain amount of planning, which was impossible to be delivered by the three I could see. I didn't want to try to escape, only to be blocked completely.

There was always teleportation as the last resort, especially since I was confident enough to punch through the wards blocking it — but that was literally my last card. If they didn't know I could teleport, I didn't want to reveal it, and if they actually discovered it — as I used it against the undead — I didn't want to use it before making sure they didn't have a strategy against it.

Either way. I preferred to keep it hidden for now.

As soon as the first warrior moved within my effective casting range, I cast a wall of fire to block his path. Not the strongest or most damaging spell, but damaging enough as an opening spell, flashy enough to look impressive, without spending much mana.

[-181 Mana]

The warrior swung his ax, the resulting wind destroying the ward easily, resulting from the weapon he was carrying flaring with magic. His chaotic mana wasn't enough to activate such a trick — as his stats were clearly focused on the physical side — but the handle of the ax was glistening with a shocking number of Eternal Gems, giving a good idea about the power source.

The Eternals were certainly rich, I noted, remembering how happy I was when I acquired a few, a treasure that I was yet to use.

I was impressed by their richness, but not enough to let the warrior approach freely. I responded with another elemental spell, this time a rain of icicles, rushing through the air.

[-130 Mana]

Another weak spell, but surprisingly damaging against a single target as the icicles were perfectly shaped thanks to my extraordinary control and constant practice — not to mention, replicating a rotating effect to enhance damage.

The disadvantage, it was easy to dodge, and even easier to block. All my attacker needed was to take a step back to avoid the trajectory. He certainly had the speed to do it.

Yet, the only thing he did was raise his ax to protect his face, letting the ice rain on his armor without skipping a step. "Maybe he misread the spell," I wondered even as I waved my hand again, sending another, stronger wave of ice.

[-310 Mana]

Yet, he repeated the same move, ignoring the destruction of the armor and his own blood. His berserk status was not limited to his mana state.

Ironically, that reckless assault, which would have been an amazing development against a weaker candidate, made it harder to fight against them. It would have been easier fighting against a berserk warrior if he was alone, but the other two were about to join, and I could feel more than a dozen following.

And there were still nearer to the ward, but the interference of the ward prevented me from detecting it.

If they were perfectly rational, I could have controlled their attack by showing my ability to destroy the initial attackers, forcing the rest to consider it slowly. It would have given me the time I needed to regenerate mana.

Unfortunately, that strategy was ineffective against a bunch of berserkers.

Of course, their recklessness and their clear willingness to take damage opened many other ways to deal with them — but it would require me to both spend a lot of mana, and reveal a lot of my magical tricks.

Tricks that I needed against whoever would follow the first wave.

“Melee it is,” I murmured as I draw my sword, ready to meet with the attacker physically despite his physical superiority. I rather reveal my physical abilities than my magical abilities this early into what was clearly a siege.

The moment he arrived in front of me, his ax swung with a shocking speed, one that I would have no chance of reacting to if I tried to react to his speed.

But that didn't apply to reading him. Before the ax could cover the distance halfway, my sword was already on its path, covered with earth mana to enhance its endurance. Even then, I didn't dare to meet his swing halfway, and parried carefully.

Yet, with his full weight behind the swing, the soft parry was enough to imbalance him, giving me an easy stab through his eye, pushing the blade hard enough to dig into his eye, but before I could push in fully, a kick hit my chest, pushing me away.

[-13 HP]

The elemental I had been riding showed its advantage, as a mental order was enough to pull me back, preventing the damage from a kick that would have killed a level fifteen warrior with one touch.

All the while making it look like I had received substantial damage — one that I reinforced by using Biomancy to show my HP depleting — to give the impression that their plan was working.

Unfortunately, while a sword halfway into his skull would have been enough to kill almost anyone, a warrior in his high thirties — or maybe even forties — with some monstrous stats to support, was one of those rare exceptions.

His HP energy rushed to the wound, quickly reducing the blood loss as the wound disappeared, though the eye stayed destroyed.

Even at that level, HP had its limitations without healing spells to assist.

Yet, the loss of an eye didn't delay him more than a second as he rushed forward, his ax cutting through the air once more, forcing my prediction to the limit as I parried once again, delivering another counter-attack that would have been deadly for a weaker opponent.

I wasn't surprised that my opponent didn't fall after my move, as even if they didn't have any additional trick, I calculated his HP to be well over ten thousand, likely breaching twenty thousand.

It required more than a couple well-placed sword hits to actually die, probably in the range of dozens, maybe even hundreds. I wasn't annoyed by it, as if I truly wanted to kill the reckless warrior with no apparent magical defenses, I had better options.

Such as tricking him into a ward to lock his movement, and bombarding him with fire spells.

Or, if I was feeling particularly merciless, using Necrotic energy.

If there was one benefit to my confrontation with Zokras, that it taught me how fragile was HP against necrotic energy. Even those little pesky liches were enough to destroy hundreds of HP with one hit. And while they wouldn't have the same effect against the man in front of me due to his stronger Endurance...

I wasn't as weak as them either.

Yet, it wasn't just the disgusting sensation of copying that energy that prevented me from relying on that. I didn't want to reveal my trump cards that easily.

His HP might not be a real barrier, but I still made a show of disbelief while leveraging my Subterfuge to the limit. "How are you still alive," I gasped in disbelief, showing any potential observer that I was far from truly understanding what I was facing.

Yet, before I could deliver another stab, the other two caught up to us, and joined the attack. They didn't coordinate at all, showing that they lacked even the instinctual battle sense of beasts. I didn't need to check their soul spaces to know that they were about to go completely berserk.

Unfortunately, with their abilities, their lack of coordination didn't matter as much as I would have liked, especially with their recklessness that made them perfectly willing to take damage to deliver one in turn.

Even with my perception and martial abilities pushed to the limit, I was overwhelmed quickly,

and forced to rely on the mobility of the air elemental to avoid the bulk of the damage, though I still received some simple wounds

[-84 HP]

Wounds that I exaggerated in appearance with an unusual application of healing magic to give the impression that I was already pushed to the limit, hoping that it would allow revealing whoever was responsible for the ambush.

But, whoever they were, they stayed silent even as the other warriors reached me, their numbers reaching half a dozen.

It was time to push the situation a notch.

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Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7153 / 7334 Mana: 8284 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [118/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty

However, before cutting loose, I first wanted to make sure I had an actual observer.

Luckily, the increasing number of warriors gave me the excuse to make a 'mistake'. One of the new warriors charged from behind while I was busy parrying the ax of the first warrior, 'failing' to notice his presence until too late.

I jumped off the air elemental to avoid him, but that only made me lose my mobility while I rolled on the ground, making the six surround me.

"No," I shouted desperately, with a beautiful acting that would have earned me a leading role in a theater troupe even as I pointed toward my fake elemental mount.

[-182 Mana]

I didn't spend much mana, but with all of the elemental mana already in the structure of my mount, the results were still truly spectacular. A storm exploded, dispersing the ones that surrounded me like the leaves in the wind.

I wasn't an exception.

[-72 HP]

Rolling on the ground was not a pleasant feeling, though the damage it created was little more than a mosquito bite for me. Of course, the same applied to my enemies as well, showing they received a negligible damage and a temporary mobility effect.

What a waste of three thousand mana I sank into creating that elemental.

Luckily, damaging them was not my aim was in the first place. The reckless explosion was just an excuse to disperse my mana, and three thousand mana was enough to create an ever-expanding circle until it reached the barrier.

Enough to turn it into a detection spell as I maintained my connection.

Yet, the result was enough to put a frown in my face. I sensed almost another two dozen warriors rushing toward me, and another dozen that felt like mages were already closing in from south.

They were really prepared to take me down.

Yet, the presence of that impressive army didn't alarm me what I felt from Northeast side. Or, more accurately, what I didn't feel.

There was absolutely no feedback, like my mana suddenly disappeared. It wasn't that they were strong, as the other dozen mages had the sufficient strength to accomplish that as well.

But they didn't care about that, uncaring of the outcome, while the unknown at the Northeast didn't share their lack of concern, suggesting something more than a near-berserk warrior.

I couldn't help but frown even as I started building the initial nodes of a defensive ward. It was clearly a trap to push myself to my limits, and I needed the time given to me by the wards.

I needed to decide which abilities to reveal first, and I needed to see if I could save myself without confronting the others. I hoped that, if I could display a sufficient level of ordinary ability, they might decide that I was harmless.

Was that likely? Certainly not, but compared to revealing my more dangerous abilities, like teleportation, it was still the better option — at least, as far as I could contemplate while constructing a ward that could temporarily hold back two dozen warriors around level forty.

Even the speed of thinking boosted by Intelligence and Wisdom had its limits.

The first warrior had already arrived at the edge when I managed to establish the first layer of the ward, and it was the same warrior that initially charged forward, putting his speed advantage to great use.

Since the environment was already blanketed with my mana, I decided to take a risk and reach to his soul space, though I kept the mana stab very weak.

[-9 Mana]

Only to be rebuffed, finding their soul space protected. Maybe I should have been surprised too much by the result, as I knew for a fact the Eternals were aware of the full potential of Soul Space. It only made sense for them to try and protect it.

I ignored that, and focused on the dangers of his immediate rush, and its dangerous tactical implications.

Or, from a strategic view, a terrible use, as it once again left him alone without support, though

that didn't change the fact that every swing of his ax was damaging the ward greatly.

I was considering the best way to handle him when my gaze fell down to his weapon, its handle filled with Eternal gems.

Delivering me the perfect excuse to set up a truly impressive ward.

He swung his ax once more, hitting the ward squarely, breaking through its protection with a single solid attack as I stopped shifting the ward to minimize the damage. Yet, as he toppled forward, he didn't expect the ward to close on him, immobilizing it.

Meanwhile, I flared my mana once more, enhancing my sword to the limit with earth mana well past its limit, enough to ruin it completely.

[-1307 Mana]

Yet, it gave me one empowered swing, which resulted in a devastating effect with my opponent's overextended state.

When he pulled back, he didn't have any arm.

I smirked as I kicked his arms away, and grabbed my real target, his ax. I let my mana invade the ax, giving myself a second to examine the weapon, expecting it to be the most exquisite weapon I had ever touched.

[+5 Craft]

It was wondrous, the complicated yet robust at the same time, showing many enhancements that was actually above my current capability to even understand, let alone actually replicate.

At least not without months and months of effort.

It was filled with many intricate abilities that made it a legitimate threat against me if it had been used by someone that used it as a club — which was an exaggeration, I admitted, as while my enemy was berserk, he still had enhancement of at least one legendary skill.

But without strategic thought behind to leverage some of the situational abilities hidden in its structure, it wasn't enough to truly threaten me.

Amusingly, I still felt that it was somehow lesser than Aviada's sword, which was rather interesting. Unfortunately, since I had been lacking Craft when I last used that sword, I wasn't

sure whether it was the fault of my memories.

I would have loved to spend days examining intricacies of the weapon, confident that it would bring me to a new height of understanding with craft.

Which was the reason of my feelings of pity as I destroyed it with a flare my mana, dislodging all the Eternal gems studded along its structure. Destruction was always easier than creation, especially when it came to such a weapon.

[+10 Craft]

The great boost to a master level skill it generated just by dismantling it showed the true intricacy of the weapon, which made its eventual fate an even bigger pity.

As I destroyed it, I felt a flare of mana at the Northeast, one that carried tinges of anger, which contrasted interestingly with the non-reaction when I managed to cut the arms of his soldier. His sense of priorities was rather interesting.

Of course, it wasn't a huge reaction, one that I could never feel if it wasn't for my mana, still dispersed along the field covered by the ward, giving me superior detection.

I wished that I had the time to focus enjoying my mysterious ambusher's misfortune, but I had a more important thing to focus on first.

The ward around me. I was reluctant to push for a more defensive strategy, but I noticed my attackers slowing down after the initial burst of anger I felt from the distance, showing sudden signs of organization.

I didn't need to wonder about the reason, as I could feel the subtle connection extending from the Northeast.

Breaking the weapon was clearly a bigger deal than I had expected.

As I started constructing the first ward over the initial protective layer I created, I paid attention to the unlucky warrior with no arms, expecting him to join the rest. Although he had been harmed greatly, he just required the assistance of a healer to join the battle fresh.

Yet, he didn't join, as there was no thread of mana toward him. I wondered whether my mysterious enemy just wrote him off.

Or maybe, I thought as I turned to the distance, and noticing the mana strings didn't connect

directly to the warrior but their weapons instead, he had a different reason for that anger.

I decided to pull another trick, and took the risk of reaching to the soul space of the unfortunate warrior.

I didn't find anything I didn't expect. His soul space was strong, filled with many achievements, and skills, all exclusively focused on melee combat, but the thing that took most attention was the borders of his soul space.

Tethering on the edge of a ruin, about to collapse, and actively degrading, showing that the weapon was not just protecting the soul space, but possibly healing.

No wonder my mysterious enemy didn't care even the slightest about their lives. If left unattended, it was inevitable for their border to crack in a few months, if not in several days. And, everything I had seen from them suggested that they lacked the ability to repair it.

I wondered if they suspected my ability to repair it, but I let that doubt fade.

The situation in front me showed that it was a great problem for them, and I doubted that they would send such a small force — though even thinking them as small gave me a sensation of abandon — if they even suspected that part.

Which made my next move risky, but I needed every second I could get under the situation.

[-16 Mana]

With his attention weakened, and bereft of the protection of his weapon, it was easy to for me to give the necessary push to hasten the inevitable collapse, triggering his berserk.

And, with my ward reducing my presence, he rushed toward his previous allies to distract them.

Giving me the precious seconds I needed to establish my ward.

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000

Strength: 46 Charisma: 63

Precision: 40 Perception: 42

Agility: 40 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 39 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 39 Wisdom: 51

HP: 7022 / 7334 Mana: 7631 / 9000]

SKILLS

Grandmaster Tantric [118/140]

Master Melee [100/100]

Master Biomancy [100/100]

Master Elemental [100/100]

Master Arcana [100/100]

Master Subterfuge [100/100]

Master Craft [100/100]

Expert Speech [75/75]

PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-One

I had never felt such an intensity of pressure while setting up a ward, not even back in the days I was still weak, saving Titania from a dangerous necromancer ambush, or the time I had to go and reinforce Cornelia and Helga during the sudden undead ambush.

During the time I saved Titania, I was the hunter, giving me the freedom to strategize however I wished, in a sense, making it even a relaxed affair.

And, while saving Cornelia and Helga had been a much more tense affair, bringing me closer to death than I had ever thought possible until that time, at least I wasn't in a position to hide my abilities.

Here, it was the worst of both worlds. Not only I was in a dangerous situation, facing a threat that was likely enough to overwhelm me, but also I had to pick and choose which ability I could use, afraid of revealing the wrong thing — all without not even knowing what my mysterious enemy was searching for in the first place.

The difficulty of the ward I was setting up didn't help anyway.

From a purely technical perspective, it was not a ward, but a combination of a ward and a weapon. I used my mana to put the destroyed material of the ax to good use, the unknown metal flexing easily under my intense magic flow and creating two intersecting circles around me, and ten of the Eternal gems I had just acquired went there, embedding themselves into the structure.

Of course, even for that great number of Eternal gems, the amount of mana they could provide had limits, but it was still measured in thousands. More importantly, the interference they generated was enough for me to use my own mana secretly to support the structure without raising questions about my dangerous mana regeneration.

[-2890 Mana]

Under the great flood of mana, some external and some internal, the ward started to take shape. The great construction, appearing layer by layer, taxing my mental abilities to the limit as I applied every single trick I collected to optimize its impact.

Even then, the recent boost in Craft had been terribly critical in ensuring everything worked as it was supposed to.

It was exhausting, but I couldn't afford to pull back on that aspect, not when the attackers were already finished dealing with the berserk warrior, taking him down in a few seconds. But, it was still enough to ruin their formation, giving me several precious seconds as they gathered into a formation, and started moving forward.

More than twenty warriors, supported by half as many mages. Ignoring them took a lot of effort, but watching them approach was less important than finishing the ward.

As the inner structure solidified, a mana connection with the remaining four stones appeared, each radiating with pure mana, ready to transform into whatever nature I wished.

Just in time, as the first rain of magical attack hit me, courtesy of the mages hidden behind the formation. Four floating spheres around me danced rapidly to meet the rain of fire and lightning, intense enough to destroy a city.

Controlling four floating mana spheres independently was not difficult, even for a novice mage.

Controlling four floating mana spheres tightly packed with rotating mana, acting as a vortex was harder, but it could still be done easily without assistance. I could have done so easily even without the gems to stabilize their structure.

The real challenge started when the first spell hit, a fireball, the vortex immediately devouring it and taking it to the core, pressuring the foreign mana until it lost its attacking nature, turning it back to its stable state.

Though it was still elemental mana, which made it very difficult to control and contain.

Containing that mana was the main reason I had gone through that crazy design. It was not only a defensive tool, but it also empowered my abilities to counter-attack.

I was still tempted to teleport out, but I didn't dare to do so without getting a better idea of what my enemy was searching for. Only then, I could accidentally reveal my true secret — one that didn't require them to chase me at full strength.

Of course, I doubted that, even if succeeded in that, they would just stop chasing me, but I doubted someone that strong only had me as a concern. I had many ways to escape easily as long as I was treated as a nuisance.

I wasn't as confident in hiding if they actually wanted to chase me, especially if the next time, they didn't come with the dregs of their organization.

Another spell rushed toward me, this time a huge wave of water threatening to devour me, but before it could reach halfway, another orb rushed forward and cut through the center of the spell, absorbing enough mana to destabilize its structure, but before I could even finish that, other spells rained over me, forcing me to use all four rotating balls of mana at the same time.

Against another mage, it would have been impossible to succeed. Even as I used the orbs to absorb their attacks, I could come up with dozens of ways to destroy my own arrangements. Hitting one of those orbs with a sharp, armor-piercing would have half of the job by disrupting its movement, making it temporarily useless.

A few more, and I would deal with an explosion worse than what my enemies throwing forward.

But my magical attackers were no different than the warriors, showing that their near-berserk state was enough to wipe whatever benefit given to them by their stats. They just rained their spells recklessly while they closed together with the warriors.

Even more beautifully, they restricted themselves to four elements, which, under the simplest look, was the correct move. They were the most destructive ones, and shockingly effective against wards, in a way that couldn't be replicated by Arcana spells or other disciplines.

Yet, it only made it easier for me to handle it. I targeted each type of element with one orb, making sure each orb only contained one type of energy.

I remember the violent results of mixing different types of energies, and I certainly didn't try to replicate it. If they had used different types of energies, I would be facing the option of letting them score a hit, pushing another gem from the inner ward matrix to create a fifth external node, or letting out the energies hidden in one of the nodes to keep it empty, using it to deflect multiple types of energies.

And none of those options was preferable. The first would bring unnecessary damage to the inner structure, and while it was inevitable, I didn't want to start receiving damage, especially since its main objective was to resist the melee damage represented by the warriors, one that would turn into a trap if everything went well.

The second option was equally unpleasant. The inner nodes were there to help me to contain the pressure of the external orbs as the mana they contained grew more and more. Trying to balance more orbs with fewer focal nodes to support would make it more difficult.

Just like juggling, adding another element made it exponentially difficult.

Technically, third was the most tenable option, but it would not only make me waste all the mana I stole, but also risked to alert my mysterious enemy about the true nature of the trick.

I wanted them to believe that my stance was a reckless last stand of a hopeless man, not a dangerous trap.

They moved forward steadily, seconds turning into minutes with no change in their pattern as they continued to rain spells, their pace slightly faster than walking, though they were barely more than soft silhouettes with all the dust and smoke filling my surroundings as the siege continued, the pressure increasing as the mana hidden in the orbs increased.

Yet, even as time passed, there was no change in their pattern as they continued to rain their spells. I felt something warm dripping down. For a moment, I thought it to be sweat, but the iron taste that accompanied it showed that it was not the case.

It was blood.

[-47 HP]

Things had been getting overwhelming. In each orb, the amount of mana that was hidden was more than ten thousand points, and not by a small margin.

A number that was significantly greater than my own reserves, and I was trying to contain that without the assistance of the System. Some, I already absorbed back into my reserves to fill, but the amount was still incredible.

“How much mana do they have?” I found myself murmuring. My own technique of destroying their spells was far from perfect. I would be lucky if I was able to get five percent of the mana they had invested, while the rest was dispersing, consumed by the spell effect after the core of the spell was destroyed by the orb.

Meaning, they had already wasted more than five hundred thousand mana! It had great implications for their mana capacity and mana regeneration, yet, even as the pressure reached an overwhelming degree, I couldn't help but focus on one thing.

What a waste!

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PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

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Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Two

I continued to defend against endless rain of spells, blood continuing to stem down my nose as the challenge of containing the mana I stole started to get overwhelming. I had both the mana and the skill necessary to cure myself, but I couldn't spare the attention.

Not when the squad was still approaching steadily, close enough for the distance to be measured in feet, the warriors standing in a formation to protect the mages. Ordinarily, the presence of the warriors would mean little in a mage battle — courtesy of area-effect or other indirect spells.

But things were different with their weapons more than capable of destroying spells, and their incredible HP reserves made it impossible to take down with stray spells and ordinary tricks.

And then, they arrived at the border, one of them, armed with a long spear — its heft once again studded with enough eternal gems to trigger a world war, supporting the weapon with enough mana to rival my regeneration — probed forward.

The floating orbs ignored him, still busy trying to block the spells of the mages that were raining without a pause. The tip of the spear hit the ward, but that was the extent of his probing, pulling immediately, trying to protect themselves against a possible trap.

Yet, even that casual probing was enough to damage the ward that required hundreds of mana to fix. I did so, making it look like it cost me a dangerous portion of my reserves, while I just used some of the mana I stole from their spells, actually reducing the pressure I was feeling.

But, the mysterious enemy still didn't act, nor he acted in a way that would kill me. The spells that the mages were throwing around were extremely strong, but at this point, it was clear that they were not working.

I could come up with a hundred better formations to actually kill me, but the current pattern was perfect for increasing the pressure I was feeling.

Especially that, rather than attacking directly, the warriors surrounded me in a circle, with the mages behind them, creating incredible pressure...

The mysterious enemy still stayed hidden, letting me feel the pressure of his deadly tactics, yet to reveal his true objective, content in keeping me in deadly danger.

Whatever he wanted to see, he was yet to see it, which meant it was not about my magical

capabilities. That aspect didn't surprise me much, as even the ward they used to trap me showed that they had resources and capabilities that could easily eclipse me.

I decided to lean on it more to anger him, in a way that would pull his attention away from Silver Spires. Luckily, I had an excellent scapegoat for this, one that had already gone through a lot of trouble to avoid the attention of the Eternals.

Zokras, the unlucky lich.

"Enough. I can't believe I have to abandon this identity because of a bunch of rabid dogs," I shouted as I reached to my own mana, and used my own mana to replicate the undead energy, letting it dance over my skin, even as I cast an illusion.

[-1306 Mana]

[-481 HP]

The pain was bad, but not impossible to resist. The important part was to make the trick look convincing, and I was aware that my mysterious enemy was simple. I let the necrotic energy infuse my body.

Yet, the enemy stayed silent.

So be it, I thought even as I reached one of the four nodes, and transformed into necrotic energy, followed by a smirk.

I finally felt a movement in the Northeast direction. Necrotic energy was truly the bane of living creatures, and HP was not a good barrier. That much necrotic energy was enough to cause a threat.

And the reaction was intense, coming in the form of a huge spell, one of familiar energy.

It was a spear of light, with an intensity that Titania couldn't hope to match even in her wildest dreams. Even Mariel would fail to match that despite the recent help I had given her to assimilate her Divine Spark.

The spell was enough to give me a good guess of what had triggered the sudden ambush. They were clearly observing her more closely than I had been expecting, enough that her sublimation of Divine Spark was enough to trigger a great trap.

Yet, I was clearly just a suspect, and they weren't sure whether I was responsible for it. If they

knew for certain, they wouldn't have worked so hard to bait me.

The instant spell was enough to show me that the enemy was strong. Far stronger than me, and not just in pure power — as it would hardly be something new, every single enemy I was fighting against had enough raw power to eclipse me — but also in control and application.

It was time to retreat, I decided, preparing myself to teleport. But, I needed a ward to protect myself first, and my enemy was kind enough to give me the necessary tools to do so.

His spell was fast, and under normal conditions, it would have arrived to me before I could cast a spell. Transforming the nature of more than ten thousand points of mana was not a quick affair even when that mana was in my reserves, ready to be used. Outside, it was even slower.

But I had Tantric, which helped me to transform nature much more easily by increasing the malleability of mana, and the mysterious enemy was sufficiently away that even a spear of light was not instantaneous.

Their attempts to stay hidden were not without their cost.

The necrotic energy exploded, delivering a dangerous amount of damage to every single one. Since it was not a targeted spell but an intense flood of energy, their ability to block didn't work as well, especially since the mages didn't react in time.

Yet, against them, even that was not enough to kill them, or even wound them seriously.

But it was enough to give me an opportunity as they pulled back. I focused on the warriors even as I directed the now empty rotating mana toward the spear of light, using it to block it, sacrificing the node in the process, triggering a great explosion.

I didn't even try absorbing it, as it was a trick that was only possible because of the ineptitude of the other mages, using extremely simple spells, their structure obvious for my gaze, allowing me to identify the correct point to destabilize it.

Against the spear, even destabilizing it enough that it self-destructed was a great achievement, though the cost was equally steep.

An eternal gem.

Just like the mysterious enemy was mocking my achievement, he cast another spell, this time sending fourteen spears of light at the same time, with the same ease, showing that he was yet

to show his true capabilities.

Luckily, the thirteen eternal gems in my possession were not the only ones I could get. After all, they weren't the only ones that were hiding their capabilities, and I wasn't stupid enough to let them surround me without an ulterior motive.

I reached for the second orb, transforming the mana into necrotic energy as well, but this time targeting the hands of the mages, who were too distracted to resist.

The mages weren't weak, but they also didn't have the endless HP of the warriors. And, with the warriors still distracted by the pain of the necrotic energy. Especially I directed some of it to their soul space, the conflict against the barrier that protected their soul space strong enough to disable them in pain for a second.

A second without their protection was all I needed to deal with the mages, their HP was nothing against necrotic energy, once again reminding me that it was not without reason necromancers were hunted the moment they were detected.

The protection of HP was nothing against it.

"No!" came a monstrous shout, one that reminded me of a monster, though distinctly male, though what scared me was the energy that accompanied it. It was a fiery energy, hard to describe, destroying everything in its path.

It reminded me of light, and fire, but even at a distance, I could feel that it was only a superficial similarity, not something true.

Yet, his anger was unmistakable. It was not anger that come from a loss, but came of warning. He wasn't in despair because I killed ten of his soldiers, but what would follow.

At this point, I wasn't interested in his threats. His strength was enough that I had to run away from Silver Spires for a long time, and my show of necrotic energy was hopefully enough to mark me as a spy rather than a member.

I could only hope that it would be enough to keep him away from targeting the school in revenge — especially since he was hesitant for some reason.

I ignored the threat in his tone as I tapped into the ball of energy once more, once again using the external energy for my objectives.

Enough to target ten weapons at the same time, disassembling them in an instant. With hundreds of eternal gems under my control, sacrificing thirteen of them was not a big deal. Especially since I still had exactly twenty-three untouched weapons, each promising me at least ten eternal gems.

The angry shout of my enemy was beautiful, I thought, but the satisfaction didn't last long.

This time, it didn't come in the form of a distant attack, but a familiar distortion.

Teleportation.

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PERKS

Mana Regeneration

Skill Share

Empowerment (0/1)

Teleportation

COMPANIONS

[Titania - Level 35/38]

[Cornelia - Level 22/26]

[Helga - Level 22/26]

[Marianne - Level 21/29]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Three

The telltale signs of teleportation were enough to make me glad that I still had one of the nodes filled with enough mana, and even more glad that I was already set up my ward modularly, and all I needed was to flare my magic, and half of the eternal gems joined the ward, while the rest stayed with me.

I still needed them to breach the main ward that was imprisoning me.

Even before he appeared in front of me, I triggered the explosion of necrotic energy, afraid of waiting for him. The necrotic energy filled my immediate surroundings, but unlike the previous time, it wasn't an explosion, but a tornado, one that would stay until it was dispersed.

The warriors were too quick to stay in there for long, retreating back, but I didn't care about them. At this point, I only cared about the mysterious enemy.

Then, before waiting for him to appear, I started gathering my mana once more, ready to breach the ward as I teleported.

[-1271 Mana]

Just as the air in front of me breached, and a suffocating presence stepped forward, I triggered my teleportation. Still, the delay was enough that I caught him stepping back into the material plane. The first thing I noticed was wings.

Angel wings.

Yet, they were not the same as Mariel. The greatest difference was not the color, but it was a good sign of the difference. They were a dark red, like dried, dirty blood, and the feathers felt dirty and sharp rather than soft and pure.

But the real difference was the feeling. Rather than radiating light, they were radiating that same suffocating energy that reminded me of killing and slaughter, awakening a fear from the bottom of my whole being.

Then, I get a glimpse of his face, which was a weird mixture of monstrous and pitiful, like his skin had melted rather than burning, which got only scarier with the intense fury that covered his face.

Maybe angering him to understand his true objective was not as clever as I first thought.

But, with my teleportation already half-complete, my surroundings turned Aether, the thin shield of mana enough to protect me.

Yet, that was not enough, as the ward surrounding me extended into Aether, preventing a quick escape. I prepared to breach through the ward with my full strength, hoping that he wouldn't be able to come back with a few seconds' delay.

That hope proved vain, as I felt a sudden flare in Aether, the already chaotic structure turning even crazier as his presence appeared near me.

The distance was not a simple thing in the Aether dimension, but with our surroundings restricted by the ward, it was less confusing than my other attempts, not that it worked to my benefit. Yet, it wasn't just Aether who started to get wild, they started to get that chaotic red nature, surging toward me.

I was too familiar with the concept to fail to identify the impact of a Divine Spark — one of unknown nature, but with the feelings it awakened, I guessed it was certainly not the Spark of Sunshine and Happiness.

I threw myself back to the material plane before that energy completely suffocated the area, feeling the chill of death.

Yet, I was still glad that I didn't try to escape when the ambush first started, as it would have been completely impossible if I had been surprised by his abilities.

Even now, I had an uphill battle, but it was always better to target an angry enemy.

I noticed I appeared quite a bit distant away from the warriors, but I was also away from the border of the ward, which was bad. If I was closer, I might have tried to breach it.

I immediately pulled Eternal gems, using seven of them to instantly create another faux elemental, dumping a great amount of my mana as well.

[-4122 Mana]

Mobility was important, especially since I feared teleportation was not an option anymore. Whatever he was doing with Aether didn't feel easy to shrug.

The rest of the stones turned into another pattern, ready to provide mana for the deadliest strike I could manage, but he didn't appear.

But the oppressive feeling got stronger. And since he already proved that he was much more capable in teleportation, I feared he was strengthening his hold on the ward.

"I can't afford to give time," I murmured. The worst thing I could do was to give him time to set up the situation further, destroying the advantage I managed to collect thanks to his arrogance.

I couldn't afford a fair fight.

I instantly created the scariest ward-breaker I could create in less than a second, and threw it toward the ward. I used the term scariest rather than strongest, because of the magical presence it created, Arcana mixing with necrotic, extremely overbearing.

At the same time, I created another ward, buried underground, this time using an even more special ingredient.

Tantric Divine Spark.

[-1921 Mana]

Too bad it was completely useless. If it hit the ward, it would crack and splash, roughly as useful as an egg thrown to a wall.

I was betting that, from another dimension, it was hard to distinguish a bluff and the real thing.

That proved correct, as he appeared in another fiery burst, casting a huge shield between the fake ward-breaker and his ward. And, his anger, even more intense, proved my assumption correct. He was anxious to keep the ward intact, even more than he was interested in keeping the weapons intact.

And, since the abilities he displayed were enough to show that he wouldn't be caring about their true potential, I started to get another feeling.

He borrowed those items, and he didn't want to explain their loss. Just like the trap for Janelor, whatever he was doing, he was trying to keep it hidden from the rest.

Good, I thought. Since I managed to anger him, I needed to find a better way to keep Silver Spires safe. And, the more problems he had, the less time he would have to poke around for me or my secrets.

I had already prepared the true surprise in form of the buried ward, working with the full principles of Tantric, but since I used only a minuscule amount of Tantric Spark, afraid of getting

noticed, required almost half a minute for it to work.

Not a great time, but almost a lifetime under the circumstances.

Luckily, I knew exactly how to distract him, even at the risk of giving a clue of my true secret. Using my conjured air elemental, I rushed toward the warriors, almost as fast as one of his light spears, his furious cry making me smile despite the intense circumstances.

Yet, even then, I knew that I wasn't fast enough to avoid his attention, and used forty eternal gems I had to create a ward, triggering continuous radiation of necrotic energy.

An eternal gem was a dangerous treasure, enough to elevate a noble house. A few of them were enough to get the notice of the whole country.

Forty of them, all tied in a necrotic array that reflected my full abilities, was a local apocalypse. The area under the ward was huge, measured in miles and miles, but it filled with necrotic energy in an instant. If that ward stayed active for a few days, it might destroy the whole empire.

Yet, even for a moment, I didn't expect it to hurt him. It was just a bonfire, one that, with every second it stayed active, could gain the notice of the other eternal, one that would force him to teleport there to extinguish it.

And as an added benefit, that much necrotic energy was a perfect way to hide my spells.

Twenty-three arrows of Tantric energy, each covered with necrotic energy, camouflaged in the wave, hitting the warriors before they could react, triggering their berserk state.

All the while, I continued to rush toward the other side of the border.

Or more accurately, my mount continued to travel, with a simulacrum on top. Normally, creating a copy was hard, but since faked being an undead, I just needed to create a bunch of bones radiating with necrotic energy.

I threw myself to the ground, another, much subtler ward to hide.

All of those tricks barely took five seconds, expanding most of my mana, and almost all of my trump cards.

Yet, he had a dangerous necrotic ward to block the apocalypse, a fake lich riding an empowered elemental toward the wall, and twenty-three berserk warriors to deal with.

I was confident that it would be enough to delay him, especially since I just needed to delay him for just twenty-five seconds.

Yet, it turned out, I was wrong.

He raised the goblet, which evaporated, turning into a weird mist that exploded, filling the area under the ward.

And, just like that, the System stopped.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Four

The sudden absence of the System was the single most unsettling thing I had felt in my life.

I had long tried to prepare myself for the possibility, since the day I realized the System wasn't exactly a benevolent force, but a tool. Not to mention, as I deepened my understanding of Soul Spaces, I could easily give others levels, or take them away.

It wasn't unexpected for the Eternals to have a similar method.

Still, I was glad that it wasn't as bad as it could have been. Thanks to the Divine Spark I had absorbed, I didn't find myself in that accursed state of idiocy, maintaining a little power — but even the lack of numerical measurement of my strength was unsettling.

My best guess was, currently, I could barely rival the state I was at level ten with my relatively overpowered stats, or a more ordinary fifteen level.

But, there was one great difference. I had no HP, which meant no convenient energy automatically healing my wounds, or mana I could simply use to cast the spell.

If it wasn't for the fact that the spells I had cast earlier survived, I wouldn't even have the shield against necrotic energy, and would die to my own spell.

Or worse, get discovered by him immediately.

I first turn inward, getting a glimpse of my own soul space, hoping that it would allow me to find a block, but I failed. Everything was perfectly normal and stable, including the connection. However, there was no flow from the connections. They were dry like a river during a drought.

It took only a second. With the two seconds, I wasted trying to process the shock, I still had twenty-two seconds for my trap to activate completely.

Unless it was discovered, of course.

I first decided to look around, trying to get a better understanding of the trick, as I didn't have the ability to do anything at the moment in any case.

The rest of the situation was different than I expected. Some parts, like the instant death of the warriors, were not surprising. With the system gone, and without Divine Spark to empower them, they didn't even last a second with the necrotic energy filling the space.

Some aspects, however, were different than I expected. The ward I had created to radiate necrotic energy was destroyed, and while the elemental still moved toward the ward, it did so with a much slower speed, showing signs of dispersion.

I realized the reason when I noticed the weapons of the soldiers collapsing into a pile of rust, losing their integrity as the mana embedded went wild.

It wasn't hard to notice their commonality. Each of those was empowered by the gems, which stopped as soon as the system was gone.

Looking back, it wasn't particularly shocking, whether in terms of infinite mana generation.

Or the name...

I just didn't have time to examine them in my busy schedule, always chasing something else.

I noticed the corrupted angel starting to fly even as he shouted. "Your fate would be legendary," he declared, his voice still radiating the same type of energy, but lacking the earlier intensity.

I tensed as I watched him teleport, ready to burst into action, even though the speed he was teleporting gave me hope. Rather than disappearing in an instant, it took him five seconds to step into the Aether.

Showing that, unlike my dear headmistress, he actually had access to the System, and was empowered by it considerably. A good thing to learn, but not entirely amazing, as even if he was just as strong as her, it would mean he could easily rival my overpowered state of level thirty.

Not something I even hope to delay.

If I had access to my mana, I could try to pull a trick with his Divine Spark, which was clearly not fully absorbed yet, but to do that instantly required a lot of mana.

Mana that I lacked, and while I had some tricks that I could use, none of it was instant without my own mana as a primer.

Or the assistance of my skills to multiply my capabilities significantly.

I just hoped that whatever he wanted to learn was more important than his immediate need for revenge, at least enough to delay him for a quarter of a minute, enough for my last desperate trick to work.

I had no hope of survival if that trick failed as well.

I waited anxiously for him to appear. If he appeared next to my ward rather than me, I was dead. If he appeared next to me, I had a slight chance of survival.

Yet, when he appeared, I met with an unexpected challenge.

Holding back my laughter.

He burst into existence, with an aura of destruction that was crackling on the surface of his wings. His appearance was the single scariest thing I had seen in my life, especially in my powerless state, but the location of his appearance was enough to turn that into a ridiculous excess.

He didn't appear next to me, nor did he appear next to my ward. He didn't even appear next to the air elemental, which was halfway into dispersing.

No, he appeared next to the bones I had conjured in a desperate gambit, radiating necrotic energy as they lay on the floor, motionless since I didn't even bother adding a movement charm, broken after falling down from the back of the elemental as it halfway dispersed.

What a ridiculous thing to save my life, I thought mockingly even as he opened his mouth. "You have no idea just how many plans you have ruined, you worthless bag of bones," he growled as he raised his hand, his anger radiating from the energy he gathered.

And his unique brand of fiery energy prepared to destroy the bones, I was glad that I wasn't trying to buy my life with my secrets, certainly not after angering him that much.

I wasn't surprised by such an impulsive decision, as I had long realized Divine Spark was inherently linked to mood and mental state. And, his own brand of crimson energy certainly contained a lot of anger and other dark emotions.

Still, it didn't make the sudden explosion of dust that filled the area any less chilling. Just one little mistake, and I was dead.

Not that I was still saved, of course. There were still ten seconds for my trap to activate, which was more than enough for him to discover and kill me.

Luckily, rather than searching, he stood still, his wings parted. His wings slowly lost their color, turning into a pristine white — but even at a distance, I could see that it was the effect of some

kind of disguise spell similar to Mariel using Darkness Spark rather than a genuine transformation.

Whatever his position was, he was clearly trying to keep that red energy hidden from the rest of the Eternals.

Still, it didn't make his transformation from a monstrous corrupt being to a glowing holy angel, radiating trust and kindness, any less shocking.

Yet, lost in his transformation, he noticed the flare of my ward too late, and an elemental arrow, a dangerous mixture of all four, exploded from my ward, toward the sky, and slammed against the ward.

Mixing elements was a recipe for chaos. It only worked because of the Tantric spark I mixed, keeping the incredible mixture stable for a moment, the explosion mixing into a ward, corrupting its structure.

Turning it into the greatest spectacle.

"No!" he shouted, but I didn't have time to enjoy his fear and shock, because I noticed the impact was worse than I had planned. All along the border that was initially covered by the ward, the space was rending in a familiar manner.

I either miscalculated the impact of Tantric on the outer bounds of the system, or it somehow interacted with whatever he had done with the Aether. Or maybe, whatever that goblet had impacted the border already, and my spell only compounded the effect.

Either way, I had another beautiful problem to face, and do so without the System, as the connection was still cut.

Busy with my own thoughts, I didn't even have time to enjoy the sudden horrible position my enemy had found himself in as he got slammed in the back by a true air elemental as he tried to escape.

To complete the irony, the true elemental was possessing the half-dispersed remains of my elemental mount.

Yet, I had other problems, like rapidly collapsing space as the elementals started fighting against each other. But before I could do anything, I found myself floating in an indescribable emptiness, even more, chaotic than the Aether Dimension.

I could still see the border of the material plane, marking the influence area of the System, recovering rapidly despite the elemental invasion.

There was only one problem.

I was outside of the dimensional barrier.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Five

The sudden change of environment was difficult, difficult enough that I didn't pay anything more than the slightest attention to the Material Plane in front of me even as the protective energy around itself closed to push away the elementals.

That was all I was able to do as the chaotic energies of the Primordial Aether invaded my body. And, with the System still unreachable, I didn't have HP to counteract the impact, giving me very little time to respond.

It didn't even take a second for every single item I had been carrying to turn to dust, and for the Primordial Aether to invade my body.

I didn't even have any mana to resist with the System still gone.

For a moment, I expected immediate death, before I could even try to come up with a solution. After all, both Mariel and Janelor explained the destructiveness of the Primordial Aether in great detail.

Yet, for some reason, that turned out not to be the case, I realized as a second passed, and I found myself still alive. The Material Plane was gone, of course, as the concept of distance meant very little in the great disaster I found myself in.

It went against every single instinct in my body to actually close my eyes, ignoring the great threat represented by the environment, but I forced myself to do so. The pain was intense enough to tell me that, unless I discovered the reason for my immediate survival in the next few seconds, I would end up dead.

However, closing my eyes was only the beginning of my focus. With the Primordial Aether filling my body, I first needed to ignore the downpour of the heavy burning energy that pressed against me like mercury.

The space around me distorted as I turned my attention inward, glad that, unlike my other skills, Tantric was a part of my body, allowing me to check my own body.

Only to see the Divine Spark fighting against the invasion of Primordial Aether. I bit my lips in shock.

I wasn't shocked to see that it was the Divine Spark that allowed me to survive. My shock came from a different angle. Particularly, the way my Divine Spark was battling against Primordial

Aether, breaking down with each touch.

Soon, some of it had been reduced into a similar state to the Aether I had dealt with while teleporting. And, more importantly, some of it turned into mana.

Giving me a chance to survive.

At least, some kind of mana, I corrected myself even as I did my best to use my fledging Arcana abilities to create a shield, glad for all the times I had tried to cast spells while blocking the System's assistance.

My attempt was even harder than I expected. Some reasons were predictable. For example, I didn't just lack the boost of the skill but my great stats as well, which reduced my mana control capabilities greatly. And, the environment that I was casting was hardly optimal, resisting the spell I was trying to cast.

Yet, the biggest difference was the mana itself. The mana provided by the System was pure and smooth, just like fresh spring water, glistening under the sun. The mana that my body managed to break down from my environment, however, had many impurities in it, like I had filled my glass from a muddy stream.

Still, it was not the worst, I thought as I was forced to maintain the energy around myself, glad that the impurities in it didn't prevent me from channeling it — even at a greatly reduced effectiveness.

Such greatly reduced effectiveness that, creating a simple round shield around me to block the Primordial Aether even for a moment took all I could achieve. A pathetic shield that could easily be cast by a first-level mage.

In its pathetic state, it didn't take a second for it to shatter, the mana was immediately lost in the chaotic waves of the Primordial Aether, but it gave me enough time to get some more to my body.

As the shield shattered, I turned my attention back to my surroundings as well, getting a glimpse of the show. The magical space in front of me danced and shattered, tempting me to cast a more substantial protection.

An elemental shield, supported by some mana might have worked better, but I didn't dare to rely on elemental magic — not with the memories of real elementals possessing those spells. Even experimenting was out, as not only I was dealing with the constant erosion of the

Primordial Aether — which was, thankfully, still blunted by the Divine Spark in me — but also impurities in mana, which was clearly dealing a significant amount of damage.

Maybe purer mana would help, I thought even as I tried to grab some of the mana inside my body, channeling against the only skill I could currently access.

Tantric.

Shockingly, it worked even better than I had expected, easily grinding down the impurities and giving me some pure mana for me to control.

It wasn't much, barely a couple hundred points by the count of the System, but luckily it was enough to be channeled into a spell, creating a much better shield around my body.

Well, better as in it had hoped to resist the intense flow around me for a time that could justifiably be referred to as several seconds, giving me a chance to observe.

I was surrounded by nothing but Primordial Aether, dancing around me recklessly as if even the concept of the space was shattered, the turbulence threatening to shatter my shield and turn me into shreds even with the unforeseen advantage of the Divine Spark.

Still, there was no sense of distance or direction. I lost the ability to even feel the presence of my companions, making me feel extremely lonely. Though, considering I stopped all of their presence at the same time, I was confident that it was about my lost connection with the System rather than something happening to them.

At least, I hoped so, but even if it was worse than I expected, I could do nothing before solving the predicament I was facing first.

First, I needed more mana to prevent my shield from shattering.

I turned my attention to the pieces of Primordial Aether pushing against my mana, focusing on their shattered remains with the scraps I could still control with my Tantric. The process of transformation wasn't particularly fast, but I still managed to gain enough mana to feed the shield and keep intact as I steadily worked to destroy the Primordial Aether that was inside my shield.

I was glad for the teleportation mishaps I had encountered, because, without them, I would have had no reason to develop such a shield in the first place. And while its performance was significantly worse against the Primordial Aether, it was not a problem.

After all, I had all the mana I could use.

Yet, that didn't mean I didn't understand why the others treated Primordial Aether with such fear. Without Tantric's ability to break down the Primordial Aether into mana, there was no option but to die. With the exception of Janelor, the headmistress, and that mysterious enemy, every single person I met would have died in seconds.

And, even amongst those three, I suspected only Janelor could replicate my achievement — as evidenced by her ability to travel. But even she lacked my newly-discovered ability to breakdown Primordial Aether into mana if her words were accurate.

I might have been surprised by the performance of the Tantric, but after seeing it efficiently break down many types of divine sparks, it was much easier to register.

With my internal check-up complete, I turned my attention to my next challenge, to get some Primordial Aether without breaching my shield. I still had almost a thousand mana in storage, but repairing the shield constantly was devouring that storage rather steadily.

If there was an accident, I preferred it to happen when I had the means to fix it. I reached for the shield, identifying one of the more stable points in the matrix, waiting for a crack to appear — which didn't take long under the constant bombardment of Primordial Aether.

When that happened, rather than repairing it, I widened the entrance, letting some Primordial Aether inside before plugging the gap with a second shield — allowing me to repeat the process much easier by creating a functional tap.

“Not bad,” I murmured as I processed the Primordial Aether as quickly as I could manage. As I did so, I could feel my Tantric abilities actively increasing, but there was no notification, which just confirmed the current unreachable status of the System while I drifted in Primordial Aether.

I thought about reinforcing the shield even more, but after some consideration, I decided against it. The stronger the shield, the more attention-grabbing it would be. I had no idea if any being actually treated Primordial Aether as their home.

But I was reluctant to find the answer to that question. I doubted I would be happy with my discovery.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Part Five

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Six

With my surroundings covered with an indescribable flux of energy that defied every rule of nature, I didn't have a hope of finding my way back — and even if I did, I wasn't confident in breaching the dimensional barrier.

Another long round of experimentation awaited me. But before I could start that, I had two things to achieve.

First, I ignored the constant pain dancing on my skin. While my Divine Spark was successful in pushing back the Primordial Energy for a short while, it was a close call to permanent death, and left its mark, leaving my skin burned horribly.

And, without system-provided HP to automatically cure it, it stayed without being healed, painful. I wanted to cure it, but not at the cost of my shield suddenly shattering.

I focused on my shield first, creating a three-layered shield, the first layer soft and porous enough to allow some Primordial Aether to pass, while the second and third ones had access points that worked like taps, but they didn't overlap to make sure a sudden flare directly broke them down.

It was a simple yet effective layout, only made frustrating by the fact that it took almost an hour to set up successfully, with several spectacular failures that would have turned into a deadly disaster without the backup mana I was keeping in the storage.

Without the boost of my stats and skills, my ability to come up with genius structures was simply gone. What a horrible loss, and particularly frustrating that, all along the crafting, I had to force myself trying to ignore the constant pain filling my body.

“Now, to healing,” I murmured even as I pulled some mana from the storage, trying to cast a healing spell.

Trying, and failing horribly.

“Fuck,” I gasped in shock at the extent of my failure. I didn't fail to shape the spell, or cast the spell appropriately. No, I had failed at the simplest stage, transforming the mana into life

energy, the raw state that was required to cast that spell.

It seemed that, even while blocking the assistance of the system, I had misunderstood the amount of assistance that the system had been providing. I closed my eyes, using my Tantric to look inward.

Luckily, with Tantric still working, I didn't lose the ability to look inward, but the clarity of vision I had been enjoying was gone. I could see the skill and stat nodes sitting in my soul space, immobile, but with no reaction.

Even Tantric was immobile, without any improvement, but unlike the other skills, I could still use the abilities granted by it.

Other than Tantric, however, everything was immobile. The same applied to achievements, perks, everything... There was not even a spark in my soul space, just like the fake soul space I had maintained to trick the headmistress.

Fake soul space, including the fake companion node that hid a small Light Divine Spark, yet to be absorbed. "Let's see if you work," I murmured as I channeled just a couple points of mana, the purest I could manage, and watched it transform.

I nodded in satisfaction, even though despite transformation was far from being usable. The light spells were always unyielding and harsh, but with the assistance of the system, they were easily formed into various shapes, even integrated into wards, making it an excellent offensive option.

Without the elemental control to assist, it was like trying a red-hot sword as a weapon. Damaging, certainly, but more damaging to the wielder than the opponent.

"Still, better than nothing," I murmured. Arcana magic had its limitations when it came to dealing damage, a factor that was compounded by my limitations of shaping mana, and having the ability to add some Light Elemental would give me the edge.

And, luckily, light elements didn't just summon true elementals as basic elements did. Remembering the carnage the elementals were dealing with during my disappearance, I didn't dare experiment even with the weakest pure element spell.

"Maybe I need to try something else," I murmured even as I transformed another point of mana into Light energy, but this time, I immediately used Tantric on it, softening its structure.

The first attempt was a failure. Under the effect of the Tantric, the mana lost all of its quality, turning back to pure mana, which was hardly the greatest effect. The second and third attempts weren't any better, one not affecting it at all, the other once again completely purifying it.

"It's hard," I murmured as I continued repeating. Technically, it would have been easier to find the correct ratio if I was willing to convert more than a single point of mana with each repeat, but that would mean risking self-damage in case of an accident.

And, without HP, I was not willing to suffer any Light damage. It would have been humorously tragic if I died to my own spell after managing to find a way to survive in Primordial Aether.

Patience was the key, which only got truer the more challenging the situation got. And, my own situation was as challenging as it could get.

It took a long while for me to get even elementary control over light magic. Something between half a day and a day, but that was my best guess — I had no idea how the time worked in Primordial Aether, it might as easily have been a few hours or a couple days as well.

It was hard to keep track when the only thing I saw was a swirling mess of colors that were not colored.

"Still, it's time to go back to healing spells," I murmured, hoping the discoveries I had made while playing with the Light mana would still benefit me. Another half a day had passed, mostly fruitless as I tried to force mana to transform, just like how I once transformed the ordinary mana into heat, before I gained my first Elemental Magic skill.

Unfortunately, life energy was something much more complicated than the simplicity of heat, cold, or other fundamental elements. In comparison, healthy energy required a much more careful balance. Miss, and only pain awaited...

"It's not working," I groaned as I looked outside, catching a sudden solid presence outside, at the distance, but it was gone before I could react.

Still, it was a sign that I wasn't destined to float in emptiness hopelessly. I just needed the luck that the next one had drifted nearer.

Meanwhile, I continued experimenting, trying to create healing energy, but I failed to achieve what I had been searching for despite the endless repeats, leaving me hopeless. Still, I wasn't bored because...

“Shit, not again,” I murmured as I suddenly found myself in a chaotic tribulation of energy as the outer layer of my shield shattered, and the second layer cracked threateningly, forcing me to reinforce, even then the weak patch I was using as a tap shattered.

I recreated the shield in a hurry while I considered the merits of creating a fourth layer. The more I stayed in the Primordial Aether, the more I understood why it was treated as such a life-threatening environment.

I lost count of how much mana I had spent, but by the measurements of the system, I wouldn't be surprised if it eclipsed a hundred thousand. It was still not as impressive as the reckless rain of spells I had experienced while under siege, but it was close.

“Maybe I could approach it in a different manner,” I thought with a sudden stroke of inspiration. I pulled some of my Divine Spark from my body — and immediately felt my body weakening despite the relatively little I had pulled — and channeled some of the mana through it.

The mana lost its pure state, transforming into something that was hard to describe. Soft as clay, and equally as useful. But, it allowed me to play around with it, and after sufficient enough attempts, it turned into something approximately close to HP.

“Let's try,” I murmured as I let some of it touch my body, watching anxiously as my body slowly absorbed it.

“Success!” I gasped in excitement. Well, in a way, I corrected myself as I let my body absorb it, my burn wounds slowly fading away. My technique simply had a horrible conversion rate, almost requiring a thousand mana points to gain enough energy that could function as one point of HP.

It took hours to gather about a hundred HP equivalent that was required to cure my wounds, and it forced me to spend another hundred thousand mana points.

Luckily, neither time nor mana was things I was in short supply. Having some kind of method of recovery was more important than anything else, with the sole exception of a method to find my way, but even that was less urgent.

But, with my protection and recovery handled, that was my next objective...

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Seven

Unfortunately, finding my way proved to be even more difficult than the recovery, I discovered after a day of fruitless work.

The problem was that the Primordial Aether was both too chaotic and too confusing, stymying my attempt to find my way. In comparison, the confusion created by Aether was nothing, and even then, I had the advantage of feeling the direction of the other companion nodes.

Which didn't work while the System was unpowered — I knew it was a problem with my connection rather than the planar barriers blocking the connection, because I was feeling Aviada's faint presence up until I had been banished, but I couldn't feel any of the girls right now.

Still, I didn't lose hope, as I had occasionally seen the familiar presence of a planar wall in the distance, giving me a chance to once again step on the ground rather than floating in the emptiness of Primordial Aether.

I had long prepared a mana chain, waiting for one of the planes to get close enough that I could somehow hook myself, and spend my time practicing the throwing motion. Even as I waited, however, I wondered just how many planes there were, floating in the emptiness, because I was yet to see the same plane twice — the type and shape of energy that surrounded the place to create the planar wall were more than enough to indicate the difference.

It was also the reason why I had ignored the first real opportunity to actually get in, just treating it as a practice, because I could feel very familiar energy radiating.

Necrotic energy.

"Fuck no," I murmured even as I let the chain disperse, finally catching enough of a sample to identify its nature. The Primordial Aether worked excellently to block my senses to identify the nature of the energy, and only after I pulled myself halfway, I got a clear perception.

And immediately dropped the connection.

Dealing with Zokras had been enough of an adventure, and that was when I had the System to help. The last thing I needed was to fight through a world filled with those monsters without my ability to cheat.

I had to admit, that my determination was tested when I repeated the attempt twice during the

next day, only to end up finding two planes filled with necrotic energy. Was I that unlucky, or the planes were dominated by undead monstrosities, that was a question I had no answer to.

But, considering the chain of events that led me to my current situation, I wasn't willing to write off the unluckiness as a factor. Maybe I was just near a part that was near a region that was ruled by the undead.

It was certainly possible. The other option was that neither Janelor nor Mariel mentioned the greater world had been ruled by undead, which would have been a dangerous omission.

It had to be a bout of misfortune, I decided, but as the days passed while I floated, every attempt hit another undead plane, but either way, it was convincing enough that, when I finally hit one plane that was only partially tainted with Necrotic energy, I actually pulled.

It had already been more than a week, and I didn't have the luxury of delaying more.

Worst case, I could breach the planar barriers and throw myself back to the Primordial Aether. I continued to spend mana to pull toward the planar wall, squeezing my teeth.

The reason, the closer I got to the planar barrier, the stronger the sense of tribulation. As I pulled toward it, I had the opportunity to watch the show. Waves of Primordial Energy hit against the barrier, and most of it reflected back, creating a deadly turbulence that threatened to crack the shield and snap the chain, tugging me from all directions.

"I'm lucky that I had already stored some mana," I murmured. I certainly didn't have the opportunity to transform any mana under turbulence, even forcing me to repair the patches I used to get Primordial Aether.

Either that, or it would have shredded my shield into pieces, I thought grimly as I trudged my way through the great mess, ignoring the patches of void and shattered space. I had no doubt that, without the shield, it would have destroyed me in seconds, even with the assistance of my Divine Spark.

The difference between calm — if a word like that could even be used to that mess — Primordial Aether and turbulent Primordial Aether was that great. The difference between a lump of metal and a sharp sword.

Both were deadly, but one even deadlier.

It took all my preparation to even successfully approach, but luckily, right at the edge of the

barrier, the turbulence left its place to a certain calm, enough to allow me to crack open the shield and start working on the planar barrier.

I paused a moment to identify the mana flow, trying to understand its nature. I could sense that it was little more than raw mana, with little rhyme or control, but it rotated around the plane strongly, with all the strength of a raging river, still achieving a successful blocking effect.

It was weaker than what was around the Material Plane, but considering the intensity of strength, it didn't mean much. I could have still shattered it easily if I had the full range of abilities granted by the System, but that was not a possibility with my current abilities.

No matter how much mana I stored in my shield, because it was impossible to establish a ward in the chaos of the Primordial Aether.

Luckily, breaching was not the only way. I carefully reformed the shield even tighter before letting it swallow me, and I slowly sank of the dimensional walls, letting it swallow me just like it was swallowing the Primordial Aether.

And I started moving even faster than I did with the assistance of my fake elemental mounts, the sensation particularly horrible with the chaotic nature of the movement, which granted me an unexpected challenge.

Motion sickness.

I wanted to curse, but despite the emotional release such a thing would bring, I decided to hold my breath and split my attention between keeping the shield stable and keeping my stomach in place.

What a ridiculous challenge to deal with, I thought, though as the journey continued, I was aware that without the boost of the Divine Spark, the sudden turns would have been enough to kill me.

Inertia was not a joke.

Though, I welcomed it even as it intensified while I got closer and closer to the center, the intensity increasing a corresponding rate. It was a sign that the rules of physics were established once more.

Welcome, even as one strip of mana suddenly breached the shield, leaving a badly bloody laceration on my body. I bit my lip, ignoring the wound, as I didn't have the ability to actually

cure it. Unlike purified mana, the primitive HP I managed to copy was too sensitive to be stored.

Luckily, Divine Spark still increased my body's ability of natural recovery, the blood slowly stymying slowly.

I focused on the shield not wanting to experience another such mistake. If that mana flare hit my neck... I shivered, not even wanting to think about it.

I missed the protective sensation of HP badly, any wound, no matter how bad, recovering rapidly under its flow.

If there was one advantage to pain, however, the queasiness I had been feeling was completely gone. Nothing like a mortal danger to cure motion sickness...

I squeezed my teeth and continued deeper into the chaos, doing my best to ignore the constant, painful drain of mana, unable to be replenished — technically, I could steal from the barrier itself, but not without hopelessly shattering my own shield.

Luckily, my preparations proved sufficient, and quite a bit before my stored mana had finished, I had felt the trajectory of my movement change, throwing me into the sky like an arrow, before ultimately slamming on the ground.

I let the shield disperse, pulling its mana back to storage, a wide smile appearing on my face.

The sensation of the ground under my naked feet never felt that good.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Eight

“Finally, the ground once again,” I chuckled even as I enjoyed the sensation of standing, the wind on my skin, the great sensation of dominance.

So much that, even the subtle smell of decay couldn't ruin my mood. Nor could the state of the forest in front of me, lifeless and dead, clearly affected by the subtle necrotic energy in the air.

One problem at a time, and I had one problem that was bigger than everything else.

I was, once again, fully naked, and bleeding.

“First, the wound,” I murmured even as I pulled some of the stored mana from my storage, and carefully processed it through my own Tantric. After several repeats, the efficiency wasn't as horrible as before, though the difference between a thousand to one versus eight hundred to one wasn't exactly a great chasm.

It still cost me more than three thousand mana just to stem the bleeding completely, enough to resurrect dozens of near-death victims back when I still had the System.

I shouldn't be ungrateful, I decided even as I felt the sting of the wasteful operation. No matter how bad my situation, relatively, it was still leagued better than the times I had lived as the mule.

With healing done, I turned to my other survival challenges. “Should I try conjuring my clothing?” I murmured, but after a pause, I decided against it. Conjunction was not a simple spell, and I didn't trust myself to succeed without the system's assistance. I could experiment, but I didn't want to do so without creating a ward to block the resulting mana flares.

I was not in a safe location.

I walked toward the nearest dead tree, and broke off a large branch, tainted with a subtle yet persistent necrotic energy, more intense than the subtle energy in the air.

“What an interesting difference,” I murmured. Back in the great area of the material plane, such mana would have been long absorbed by the System, leaving it bare. Here, the mana stuck around persistently.

It wasn't only necrotic energy I could feel. I could also feel a great amount of ordinary mana, though its purity was significantly lower than I had expected, enough to make even the simplest

mana bolt a great challenge.

Regardless, it was an interesting challenge to have a great amount of free mana, floating freely. I could even identify floating particles of other types of mana — forms that were different from anything I had seen up to this point.

“Still,” I murmured as I let some of my mana dance across the surface, easily purifying the necrotic energy back to pure mana, “the difference between here and the System lands isn’t enough to justify calling that place material plane, maybe other than the size difference.”

I received the answer sooner than I had been hoping, before I could finish even crafting my spear. The dimensional barrier was miles and miles away from my current location — thanks to the violent throw of the barrier — but even with the distance, the sound of cracking was clear....

Maybe because it was not exactly a physical sound, but a physical effect.

At a great distance, a string of Primordial Aether started to invade the plane, distorting and disintegrating everything nearby. I shivered as I watched the scene, everything disintegrating into nothingness with the slightest touch.

The view itself wasn’t shocking, as I had watched the Primordial Aether invading the Material Plane, but back then, the Primordial Aether only spread for a moment even with the assistance of an elemental.

This time, maybe because there was no immediate basic elemental mana in the immediate vicinity — as there was no mage relying on that to cast spells, or any mage nearer than me, period — maybe because of differing elemental interest, there was no Elemental trying to widen the gap. So, the breach itself only lasted a second.

But even without constant flow from outside, the strand of Primordial Aether continued to spread, even growing stronger as it disintegrated everything it touched.

I was tempted to go close to breach, but I held back. With the rotating nature of the barrier, my own breach was unlikely to be the reason. If there were others responsible for fixing it, I would only come across them while trying to help.

Reckless assistance was not the smartest thing in a completely unfamiliar situation. Instead, I created a shield around myself, geared to block detection spells. It wasn’t perfect enough to avoid a dedicated search by an expert mage, but it was enough to hide my presence, especially since I stopped my crafting process.

I stood in place, watching the Primordial Aether slowly swallow anything in its path, but soon, I felt a magical presence at the horizon, before it was close enough to have a visual presence.

Considering the said presence was radiating necrotic energy, I decided that hiding was the most prudent option.

I crouched behind a tree to reduce my visual presence as well, getting even smaller as I saw a flying creature appear in my field of view. It wasn't a bone dragon, but it rivaled them in size, and on its back, several cloaked figures cast repeated spells.

A ward was around them, its intricacy clear even with the great distance, radiating a mixture of pure mana and necrotic energy.

Soon, they arrived at the breach, and used the ward to control the Primordial Energy. They threw the ward like a projectile weapon, and the ward settled around the energy, imprisoning it, though it smashed repeatedly against the ward, doing its best to break it.

I expected them to store it, or at least break it down using all the mana they had. Even if they lacked my ability to break it down rapidly, surely they were not entirely incapable of doing so.

They solved it differently. A flare of mana covered the ward, and suddenly, it disappeared in a manner that I found very familiar.

Teleportation.

They literally dumped the energy into Aether dimension, which was an interesting solution. "Can a great amount of Aether grind down a strand of Primordial Aether?" I asked, though the answer was probably yes.

The necromancers looked far too interested in maintaining their control of the plane to risk destroying it completely. I stayed concealed for a while as they moved away, even after they disappeared from my senses for a while.

I didn't know about their detection range, but I wanted to play safe. I was facing a completely unexpected reality.

I turned my attention to my spear once more, first making sure that I had erased any hint of necrotic energy — which I was much more reluctant to touch without HP to block its effects. I had invented my own energy that could technically be classified as proto-HP, but it wasn't exactly up to the challenge of necrotic energy.

A challenge for another time, I decided as I finished cleansing the spear, and started reinforcing its structure with my mana, applying all the crafting abilities I had in mind.

It worked much better than trying to copy the healing abilities, because there was no need for nature transformation to craft a good weapon. Of course, some clever implementation of different types of mana would have given the impromptu weapon a lot of extra power, but ultimately, that was extra.

What was fundamental to crafting was to understand the nature of the materials, and, enhance it appropriately based on the requirements. I missed the intense clarity of the vision granted by Perception, which would have allowed me to comprehend every little flaw in its structure, allowing me to reinforce its nature as needed.

Still, after spending ten minutes fully focusing on its nature, I had enough sense to understand its nature.

“Now, to enhance it,” I murmured, feeling excited. It was the first time I was crafting anything without the constant intervention of the System, hungrily draining mana from every single thing constantly, forcing us to focus on durability across all of the structure.

I started by creating a simple yet intricate scheme to ensure durability, doing my best to create a strong outer shell. Even without the System constantly devouring the mana, it was a rather necessary requirement.

Then, I turned my back to the internal structure, thinning the purified mana as smoothly as possible as I created a bunch of enchantments inside. My biggest focus was the sharpness, but I also added some spells to enhance ranged accuracy, and some tricks that could be used to trigger an explosion.

“Not bad,” I whistled as I twirled the spear, listening to the whistle it created. It was not the finest item I had created, not even close, but it took nothing from its impressiveness considering I used nothing but a tainted piece of wood to create it.

Then, I flared my mana, pulling some leaves and connecting them, creating just enough to cover my modesty.

“Now, it’s time to explore,” I murmured, determined to find a source of water. And, if I was lucky, even something to hunt.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Thirty-Nine

I paused for a moment to expand my senses, trying to measure the thickness of the necrotic energy surrounding me, intending to pick a direction opposite of it. I didn't like venturing into the unknown compared to taking a known quality, but I was willing to make an exception when the known factor was the undead.

Whatever the unknown party, it couldn't be worse than the undead.

Or, I hoped so.

With a sigh, I started moving, deciding to trust my luck once more. After all, it was only a sign of my luck that I managed to survive after that deadly ambush — though it was easy to argue it was my bad luck that I ended up outside of borders.

I was tense as I walked forward, the limited range of detection making it a struggle to detect what was going on around me. The sudden loss of my Perception didn't only impact my crafting abilities, but also reduced the number of details that I could detect in my surroundings, like I had fallen into a dark pit while looking at the sun.

The difference was remarkable, and not in a good way.

"Maybe I should be glad for the undead," I muttered mockingly. After all, it was thanks to their efforts that there was foliage to block my view, giving me a relative sense of security in this unfamiliar environment.

I moved perpendicular to the dimensional border, still remembering the glimpse I had gotten from outside, with most borders already covered by necrotic energy. I wasn't completely sure, but it was safer to assume that whatever non-undead beings would have been found deeper into the landscape.

Fifteen minutes of walking later, I was yet to walk out of the dead remains of the forest I found myself in. Even when I climbed the remains of a particularly tall tree, I failed to see anything but the dead remains of a forest, with no hint of life.

But, the lack of life once again worked to my benefit, allowing me to notice a small stream that would have otherwise been concealed by the hulking trees. I climbed down and dashed forward, anxious to quench my thirst. Technically, I could stay alive for a long time even without water, relying solely on the proto-HP I could generate from mana for weeks, but it would have

been an uncomfortable sensation.

However, the closer I got to the stream, the stronger my frown got. The stream was radiating necrotic energy, thick enough to drown me even without touching.

Enough to force me to cast a shield. Luckily, while the radiating energy was strong, it was undirected, easily pushed away by a bubble of Arcana mana. I walked forward, undisturbed, and soon, I was at the riverbank, examining the stream.

It was cloudy and unappetizing, and not just because it was filled with necrotic energy. With every single living it touched dead, there was nothing to hold back the earth, allowing the water to pull enough particles to be technically defined as mud.

Yet, as I examined the water, I could easily feel that the thickness of necrotic energy was not accidental, or just a natural occurrence. The mana inside was packed too thick to be accidental. “The question, is it cast actively, or a ward is responsible,” I murmured.

The difference was not just technical. It was clearly weaponized to kill the forest — which was a task that had been accomplished with great effect — but it was still continuing. It didn’t matter much if it was just a ward that had been left intact, but was different if it was maintained actively.

It meant that they had something to destroy downstream, which would give me a potential direction.

Or a location to avoid.

Either way, I had a lot of time to examine the flow as I fashioned a large bottle out of the earth, using Arcana and my hands — which was considerably harder than just casting an earth spell to create one, but I was rather reluctant to rely on elemental spells after what I had experienced during my escape.

I didn’t know if the fragmented plane hold the same intense attraction for the elementals as the main material plane, but it was certainly not something I wanted to test at the current juncture.

After I crafted my earth bottle, I created a complicated ward, consisting of several layers alternating between Arcana and pseudo-HP, Arcana layers were responsible for getting rid of the mud and the dust particles, Tantric mana responsible for binding and breaking down the necrotic energy, with one last layer of pseudo-HP to keep it clean.

It was not a cheap structure, but I wasn't exactly trying to keep the mana spending minimal. The air was filled with mana I could catch easily, and the taint of necrotic energy was ultimately unable to resist the purification. I even tested pulling some Aether from the Aether dimension and breaking it down to mana.

It was harder to break down than the necrotic energy, but after dealing with Primordial Aether, it still felt particularly easy.

I had faster ways of cleansing the water, but I didn't use them. First, it was better to have a tool that I could use continuously rather than a one-off. Back in the material plane, the little delicate structure of interlocked wards would barely survive a few minutes without any external reagents, but here, I expected it to survive for days easily.

However, the real reason was my time requirements as I observed the river carefully. It turned out to be a useful decision, as after ten minutes, I noticed a sudden dip in the density of necrotic energy, which lasted a few seconds before returning to the earlier intensity.

I might have assumed that it was just a ward, but the shape of the necrotic energy changed. The function stayed the same, but there were enough structural differences to guess that the caster had changed — just like a letter, changing handwriting halfway.

It might be a ward, but they were clearly replenishing it, meaning there was a high chance that something interesting was downstream. Leaving me with the question of avoiding it or following it.

I was tempted to avoid it, and if my earlier lookout gave me any safer clues to follow, I might have done that. Unfortunately, I had no idea just how long I had to walk randomly, and time was precious.

While I hoped that the weird corrupted angel had bigger priorities than targeting Silver Spires, I didn't expect that to last forever. The sooner I could find a method to go back, the better.

I decided to follow the stream, which was the better of the two clues I had. The other was going reverse, and confronting the undead, which was hardly something I wanted to do as anything but the last resort.

I continued moving, my senses sharp, hoping to catch any kind of wildlife, failing continuously for several hours even as I walked forward. As I moved, the sun had set, leaving its place to darkness...

Which didn't exactly help me suppress the sense of discomfort I was feeling. I continued walking, using the spear as a walking stick — more of a distraction than a habit, though lessening the energy every step took was not a bad idea as well.

Not when I had no idea when I would have my next meal.

I wasn't exactly idle as I walked. I used my power constantly to tap into Aether, getting more and more mana to purify and store in the wards, until I had more than ten thousand mana in various wards. I could technically store more, but it was the most I trusted myself to control in combat...

I could just eject the extra, but a huge flare shouting my presence was hardly something I needed intensely.

The first sign that I was finally going to meet a difference was the changing thickness of necrotic energy, floating aggressively, searching aggressively for living beings, only to fail — with the sole exception of myself, but I had the ability to block it successfully.

It took another hour for those particles to float toward anywhere but me.

The target, a large tree, which was, for all intents and purposes, dead, yet the rush of the particles continued.

I walked to touch it, using my mana to dispel the thick necrotic energy that filled its trunk, to see if there was any sign of life, but the best I could find was remnants of flickers, showing it had been a while since its death.

Though, the tenacity of the energy showed that the size of the tree was not its only exceptional feature — which was towering over every other tree by a considerable margin, even as a naked trunk. The fact that even a flicker of energy managed to last despite the intense flow showed an intense magical presence when it was alive.

I wished I could see it then. No doubt it would have created a fascinating view.

I continued walking, but not too long after, I noticed the first sign of wildlife, charging forward.

Though, I quickly amended my thoughts as I looked at the rotting corpse of a wolf. It was certainly wild, but the life part was rather doubtful.

"Again, zombies," I thought as I raised my spear, preparing for combat.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty

I didn't even bother casting a spell as the wolf zombie charged at me, ruled by the echo of its worst instincts without control, not even a hint of control. I didn't even bother casting a spell, just waited until it was near, when my spear flashed.

The zombies were famous for their abilities to shrug simple damage, but after all the enchantments I had loaded, my spear was far from being counted as simple. An accurate stab into the thickest part of necrotic energy was enough to disperse the cloud, finally sending the beast into the afterlife it deserved.

"This feels familiar," I murmured as I continued, aware that, as I continued, I would only face more and more such creatures. As I moved forward, the necrotic energy in the air got thicker, giving a suffocating feeling of oppression, the darkness further enhancing the feeling.

Luckily, I had my shield to disperse the energy. A gust of wind hit, moving reverse downstream, carrying much thicker death energy. My senses crawled, a deep feeling wanting me to avoid the repulsive necrotic energy.

Sensible. Too bad the situation forced me to ignore it and continue walking. My skin continued to crawl as I continued to walk, the routine occasionally interrupted by the same type of huge trees, still maintaining a sense of life after death, more than the initial tree I had stumbled upon.

Maybe it was because of the differing strength, but I was more willing to believe a moving invasion force, using the river as a magical battering ram to repeatedly slam against some kind of magical defensive line as they moved forward.

It wasn't hard to imagine those trees as a part of some defensive line — though whether it was natural or by design, it was another question. I lacked even the slightest information to actually guess that.

I prepared myself for another war, though luckily with enough mana to give me the confidence to escape even against what was supposed to pass as a strong opposition in a random fragmented plane. I was confident to escape Janelor or someone equivalent, and from what she had described — even discounting greatly her arrogance — she was supposed to be a peak combatant.

At least, she was important enough to be actively targeted through an inter-planar conspiracy,

which confirmed that.

The quality of one's enemies always gave a good understanding of their capabilities. Of course, the existence of gods and Janelor's respect toward them meant that while she was a peak combatant, she was far from the true ceiling.

But such a being would have created enough commotion that would warn me of their presence.

Hopefully.

Lost in thoughts, I had paid little attention to the zombies that continued to find my location, taking them down with a stab each. Some wolves, and others were even smaller critters. One thing I paid for about them was their quality, which didn't change.

But more importantly, their numbers stayed limited. Which, ironically, made me tenser than the alternative. With the density of the necrotic energy, I expected to find far more zombies, yet there were none.

Nor I could find any corpses, meaning someone either pulled back the beasts before the wave, or a necromancer actively raised and controlled most of them, only leaving a few lost scraps behind.

Either case, it was a sign that I would soon meet a more organized opponent.

It would be better to meet the opponent of the undead rather than the alternative, but not decisively so. I wasn't naive enough to think that they would be my allies just because they were fighting against the undead, especially when I was a completely unknown quality.

No, either way, I needed to stay hidden.

The denser the necrotic energy got, the slower I started to move, the shield taking more of my attention. It wasn't an issue of capability, but I was forced to reduce it to a thinner structure, afraid that it would be detected by another mage.

The stronger a shield, the brighter its presence shone against the senses of a mage, which was less dangerous than the occasional necrotic energy slipping through the weakened shield.

Then, I felt a flare in the distance, the thing that I had been hoping, for and was afraid of at the same time. The distinct flare of magical combat.

"Once more onto the breach," I murmured as I continued to move, suppressing my magical

presence even more as I moved forward, leaning down, a tense frown invading my face once more. Luckily, this close to the battle, there were no wandering zombies.

They weren't scary, but fighting against them would greatly increase the chances of getting caught, so their lack of presence was good. I was ready to fight against the enemy if they noticed my presence, but I certainly had no complaints about their failure.

And, as I got closer, I was able to get a better sense of the conflicting energies, the life energy battling against necrotic energy — through the life energy was different than I was used to.

It had a different feeling, green and immobile. It felt more like plants than animals, but with some difference than a simple biomancy trick I could pull off — could have pulled off when I had access to the System, I corrected myself as I suppressed the reflex of casting it to compare.

The differences were interesting, but not as interesting to delay me as I moved forward, more interested to see the scene of combat. Though, I first got away from the stream, where the fighting was clearly centered due to the thickness of the necrotic energy, allowing any necromancer to have an easy source of transformed mana.

A great strategic tool, but also makes their strategic deployment rather predictable. I walked away almost two minutes before I came across a convenient hilltop — the signs of a recent battle showing that I wasn't the only one that noticed its convenient location.

The side that was looking at the river was marked with signs of battle, mostly blood and broken pieces of enchanted wood — but absolutely no metal, which was rather interesting. Maybe they had recycled all of it.

There were no bodies as well, but that was less surprising. Either the defending forces had taken the bodies with them — which was the simplest strategic choice in fighting against the necromancers — or they failed to do so, and their comrades joined the enemy in their battle.

In either case, nothing outside the expectations.

I continued climbing, avoiding particularly dense points of necrotic energy until I neared the peak, and looked down.

Right at the battle.

The distance was significant yet not too great, almost about a mile, and the high vantage point gave me an excellent view.

The first thing I noticed was the fact that the stream was split into two, creating a small delta. I noticed that first because of the contrast. The upstream was still filled with necrotic mana contrasting with the delta, filled with that variant of life energy, with two sides filled with fighting figures.

I first focused on the mana sources first rather than the combatant — because one side was necromancers, which was rather similar to what I had been used to, while the other side was far too distant to get any proper details other than the fact that they were mostly using bows and cloaked thickly, their numbers few.

Also, the situation with the mana was much clear, enough to be resolved in a few seconds. The source of the variant of the life energy I was feeling was not hidden. Along the riverbank, there were a great number of those huge trees — far denser than the occasional dead ones that I had come across, radiating that life energy, which then tried to overwhelm the necrotic energy.

Too bad it was a desperate battle. One of the trees, the one that was planted right at the split, was almost two times as tall as others, easily a hundred feet, but most of its leaves had already blackened, showing the desperate battle it was giving. Other trees — guardian trees, I decided to call them — further along the bank were in better condition than the vanguard tree, but still, about a quarter of their leaves were tainted.

Their fate was not too different from the occasional guardian trees I had stumbled on my way.

Interestingly, there were no trees I could see on my side of the riverbank, but there were several huge holes, like several trees had been just pulled out several hours ago.

Maybe they had been uprooted and replanted on the other side to create the dense outlook I was seeing — making the small delta an intentional point of defense.

Not for no reason, as the guardian trees were still desperately pushing their mana out to fight against the necrotic wave rather than trying to cure themselves — which the energy seemed to be capable of if I was reading the collusion of free mana in the air correctly — which implied a certain strategic thought rather than just instinct.

It was likely that the cloaked figures were responsible for that, but technically, it wasn't a certain conclusion. A sapient tree would have been unexpected, but not technically impossible. After all, there were plant monsters back in the main material plane.

I could have concluded that if I were closer to the battle, or the constant flares of mana blocking any potential spell, but they were rather efficient barriers to my curiosity. Whether it

was the decision of the trees or the cloaked figures wasn't exactly the most urgent issue.

The imminent victory of the necromancers was much more urgent, inevitable unless I intervened.

Yet, rather than doing so, I first decided to waste a few seconds examining the cloaked figures, casting a spell that would replicate a working spyglass.

Curious about what I would find.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-One

As I used the simple Arcana spell to enhance my vision several times, the first thing I focused on was the cloaked figures, or more accurately, their physical natures, ones that looked human, with one great difference.

Their ears.

“Elves,” I muttered, though my shock was not particularly intense after facing another race that was supposed to be a part of the stories and legends. After all, after angels and true dragons that could transform, the existence of elves was not particularly ground-breaking.

Though my lack of impression was more about the unimpressive battle performance they had been displaying. There were almost fifty of them, trying to put a ranged resistance against the horde of undead that was trying to pass through the river, while about thirty necromancers — in various states of rotting — were sieging them with a number of spells, increasing the speed of the corruption.

Maybe I was being unfair, as lately I was used to fights of much higher caliber even by the standards of the System-empowered people, but still, I expected a better performance from one of the races that were supposed to be mythical.

They were barely good enough to be compared to an average level five warrior, with no apparent casting capability — though whether it was an actual lack of capability or strategic concern, I didn't know. The only reason they were able to resist the necromancers was the constant life energy emission of the guardian trees, battling against the necrotic mana invasion.

Their luck was that the necromancers didn't have a significantly higher display of ability, limited to galvanizing and empowering the horde of zombies — a mixture of animals and humanoids, mixed with various skeletal monstrosities impossible to identify — occasionally mixed with sending poorly crafted but overpowered bolts of necrotic energy.

However, it wasn't their skills that looked like it would determine the victory and defeat, but the difference in intensity between the energy carried by the river, and the amount of mana generated by the trees. Each second, the central tree lost more of its vitality, and it didn't take much to guess it would go down.

Elves had barely an hour, maybe even less.

I wanted to go and save them, even though their language represented a difficulty in communication. All I needed was to use create an offensive ward slowly from my battle position and take down the necromancers in one spell, before they could react.

Pity that it represented a great risk to me. I had already seen the lich that had responded to the dimensional breach, who was leagues stronger than anything I could see in this battle.

And, since the undead was sending a disposable army and set up a complicated mana delivery system to do so rather than just sending the lich to get rid of the threats, it was only reasonable to assume that what I was seeing wasn't the peak combat capability of the elves.

Intervening directly in a complicated conflict was not a good idea, especially since I might end up being hunted by both sides.

"Luckily, intervening directly is not the only way," I murmured with satisfaction. I might have lost my access to the Subterfuge skill, but at this point, I didn't need it to have dozens of plans competing in my mind, giving me different ideas to interrupt the battle to the favor of elves.

The decision to help elves was not a huge overreach. I wasn't certain that elves had the potential to be allies, but there was little doubt about the stance of the undead. Though, that didn't mean I would reveal that particular assistance to the elves.

First, I had created several wards on top of the hill, enough to hide my presence, as well as moving a few stones to create something that would keep me from being noticed. An illusion spell on top of it, and I was confident that it would keep me from the attention of anything but the most determined seeker.

Only then, I moved toward the river once again, staying quite a bit away from the battle, and started creating a ward. Essentially, it was a more complicated version of the purifying water bottle, but one that took almost half of the reserves I had collected, as well as some of the mana I had collected.

The real difference came from the last layer, which was not a ward but twin storage. One storage was filled with light mana, slowly adding some light mana into the water, converted by using the fake Chosen node I had created to trick the headmistress. The other was filled with proto-life energy I had managed to create.

The results were worthy of potentially revealing my hand. Not only the ward suddenly stopped the flow of the necrotic energy, depriving the necromancers of their fuel to cast spells, but the particles of light also hampered the necromancers. Not particularly efficiently, as the amount

was not enough to significantly damage the undead.

But enough to make it useless for necromancers to use — unlike pure mana, which I expected them to weaponize. And, the light mana made it much harder for them to focus destroying the proto-life energy I had slipped into the mixture, which was even more fragile than the energy the trees were radiating.

I retreated back to the hill as fast as I could manage once I activated the ward, not wanting to be on the range of detonation — a little gift I had added to the mixture, ready to go off at the first touch of an undead, both to get rid of any necromancer that might come to understand the sudden change in their battle, and to get rid of any evidence of my intervention.

If no one touched it, it would disperse on its own in five minutes, which I hoped to be enough for the elves to counterattack. Five minutes might as well be an eternity as far as a battle was concerned, and there was little hope for them if they couldn't convert such a great advantage into victory.

I preferred to keep my presence hidden as much as possible, especially since there was a risk that the explosion could get the attention of the higher rank combatants of the elves and undead, which was something I was reluctant to face until I could get more information and get used to the magic more.

Maybe even craft something more useful than a wooden spear.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the time to play absolutely safely. I didn't know how far the next defensive line of the elves was, but the undead forces looked determined to continue — why wouldn't they, when they had no concern for their lives, nor had any logistic concerns.

And, the deeper we went into the elven territory, the higher the chances of stronger combatants joining the fray, making the situation much more challenging to face.

Luckily, when I reached my hiding spot, the battle had already shown signs of turning. The sudden lack of necrotic energy had hampered the necromancers' attempts significantly, their magical bombardment ceasing immediately, their full attention to keeping their zombie horde intact.

The amount of life energy I managed to add into the water wasn't enough to demolish the zombies — limited both by the amount, and the purity I could manage without the assistance of the system, which was handling the conversion part.

The more I stayed away, the more I understood the true challenge of magic outside lay in having access to the correct type of mana.

And, with the ability of Divine Spark to forcibly convert mana, no doubt the gods ruled anywhere but the material plane under the System.

That left an interesting question, I thought as I ignored the elves' developing counter-attack, instead looking at the guardian trees, each drinking the mana I provided almost instantly. And the largest one, right at the edge, took the most mana, its leaves showing signs of recovery, even as it radiated a great amount of its own unique brand of plant-like life energy.

The trees could convert my own mixture of diluted life energy and pure mana with much greater efficiency than necrotic energy, it seemed.

Enough to actually arouse my attention, tempting me to take another risky action. I moved toward the river, though rather than the center, I targeted the edges that were far from the battle, where I could see the tree with little battle that was going around it.

A few measly zombies were hardly a problem, especially since the attention of the elves was grabbed by the breach they achieved at the center, necromancers falling one by one.

While they were distracted by their assault, I quickly dashed through the zombies. I didn't like wielding necrotic energy, but pulling enough around me on top of my shield to temporarily trick the zombies was still within acceptable limits.

I passed through them, putting my hand on the tree, sending a trickle of pure mana, doing as detailed of a diagnostic as I could manage, compressed in a few seconds.

Not the most detailed one, but enough to be a treasure trove. The first discovery was simple, yet expected. The tree was a magical entity, though the way the mana infused their nature greatly differed from the nature of the monsters. A looser and more delicate, but it might be about the lack of an entity dedicated to recycle every single scrap of magical energy from the environment.

Yet, the limited reaction to the mana that was penetrating its trunk was enough to confirm that it was not sapient — or even if it was, it was alien enough for me to catch immediately. Though, I still sensed a certain ... awareness, it wasn't enough to be called sentience.

Interesting, but not as interesting as my next discovery. At the center of the tree, there was Divine Spark.

Used to treating Divine Spark as the highest level of treasure, I had expected the guardian trees to be something similar to the river, a relay to transfer their transformed mana. The fact that the trees had Divine Spark was a surprise.

Enough to force me to redraw my plans completely.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Two

It wasn't bad that my plans were ruined. I wasn't inflexible enough that a sudden change of circumstances that forced me to throw away most of my plans would leave me helpless.

Though, that didn't feel me from feeling a deep annoyance, one that I forced myself to ignore to the best of my ability. Redrawing my plans was not a big problem, but redrawing my plans while I was leveraging my short action window was much more annoying.

Especially since half of the necromancers had already fallen, and their reduced numbers made it even harder for the rest to defend. As they got defeated, elves would return, and I didn't want to trust my illusion capabilities to hide completely without the assistance of the wards.

I ignored the temptation of stealing the Divine Spark from the tree. The amount was not as important compared to my reserves, barely as much as I had put into the ward. And while the more Divine Spark was helpful, I preferred to keep the tree intact.

I had a feeling elves would react negatively to any harm to the tree, and it was not impossible for them to somehow discover I was responsible. After all, I had no idea about their magical capabilities, especially since I could see no mages as a part of the group.

It was a toss-up whether it was about the rarity of the mages among them, or the intensity of the battle they were suffering.

Instead, I started examining the Divine Spark in the tree, trying to understand how it was used. As far as I could see, the way the guardian tree used it somewhere between a solid node and a limited free flow, which positioned it right between a Chosen and Demi-God in terms of usage. It was not supposed to work like that, but clearly, being a semi-sentient plant had some impact on it.

I continued to examine the nature of the tree, measuring the merits of taking at least some of it, to try to create something similar to the fake Chosen node I had created for Light Divine Spark, which had come much more useful than I had been expecting.

I had no idea just how it could be used, but having options wouldn't have harmed me.

Yet, I was about to take the risk, when I felt the tree starting to feed its mana into one of its branches. A branch that was holding a fruit — one that had the smallest, weakest flicker of Divine Spark I had ever felt.

Still, much better than harming the tree for the first layer of experimentation, I decided as I pulled the small fruit with a simple magical tendril, which looked like an overgrown hazelnut. While I was busy taking that fruit, another three necromancers decided to do particularly convincing renditions of porcupines, telling me that my temporary adventure was over.

I retreated before elves could return to handling the zombies, but I avoided the hill I used as a vantage point. I wanted to do some experimentation, and no need to potentially waste such a strategic observation spot for that.

Pity that, with my limited observation abilities, I wasn't confident enough to establish a teleportation beacon, or it would have been very useful.

I left the elves behind as they gathered around the largest tree and shouted, which was no doubt a celebration of victory, traveling back the path I had taken — taking a few seconds to disperse the wards I had created, as the undead didn't have the chance to pull back after that, and I didn't want to leave a trapped ward for my potential allies to find.

Instead, I traced my steps back upstream, staying near to water, wanting to see if there was any undead party that was willing to follow. For a moment, I was split between prioritizing an ambush and experimenting, before I noticed my folly.

I could do both, especially by creating a very convenient target.

First, I put my hand on the ground, sending arcana mana underground, using it as a detection. My trusty detection trick wasn't as useful here, the natural mana interfering with the detection capabilities, but after several attempts, I discovered a natural cave, large enough to be temporary housing, yet close enough to the river to allow me to intervene or observe as necessary, and dug a tunnel.

It was a frustrating affair that took a few minutes, the Arcana much less useful than Earth mana to do so, but it was nothing compared to my other aim.

Creating several tunnels that would allow me to escape without being noticed, deep enough that the interference would keep me from being detected as well. It was supposed to be the priority, but I could feel the throbbing under my fingers.

The seed hidden in the fruit was slowly losing its life.

I didn't want to ruin my only tool of experimentation, so I decided to handle it the moment I finished the emergency escape tunnel. It was the first, and shortest among the tunnels I

prepared — opened right under the river, allowing me an express escape path — I turned my attention to the seed.

I used the original entrance to travel to the surface, warded the entrance for concealment, and then, I planted the seed, right at the entrance, directly on top of the cavern. A risky proposition, but I had a feeling that if my experiment was successful, the seed would show its presence, working as a beacon for both elves and the undead.

Giving me a chance to observe whichever arrived first from my heavily warded location. And, while it was risky to do so without completing all the escape tunnels I wished, once again I had to choose immediate results over perfect safety.

First, I purified the ground from any necrotic energy, not wanting the seed to die the moment it touched the ground. Then, I pushed a tendril of Arcana mana into the seed, maintaining tight control over it not to affect the way it worked, but enough to allow me to observe the changes slowly.

The seed worked even faster than I expected, a flicker of life appearing in its core as the surrounding protective layer cracked, and a thin tendril, the beginnings of a root, sank into the ground, searching for water...

And mana, I realized, as it pulled a very minuscule amount of mana from the ground, directing it toward its very small Divine Spark. For the seed, the Divine Spark was much more like a Chosen than a Demi-God, a crystallized core, inefficiently processing the mana.

I decided to help it a little bit, using my own abilities to purify mana, softening its structure to the point of uselessness.

It proved to be a good choice, as the seed devoured that over-purified mana easily, transforming it with much greater speed, the growth of its root hastening rapidly, and soon, another tendril appeared on the opposite side, determined to breach the little layer of Earth that prevented it from receiving any light.

Though, I doubted that they required light as much as an ordinary plant, especially when compared to their clear need for mana.

Unlike its grown counterparts, the seed didn't radiate any of its unique life energy, clearly using it for its own growth instead. Barely minutes later, it pushed its head through the surface.

I was carefully watching the state of its Divine Spark, hoping that it would get bigger. It wasn't a

big hope, but despite the limited probability, the potential implications were significant enough to make hope.

With my unique ability to break down Aether and Primordial Aether, I could easily imagine creating an amazing farm. Pity that turned out to be not possible.

“Even if you can’t give me infinite Divine Spark, you’re still good bait, I suppose,” I muttered as I prepared to move down the cave while continuing to feed the tree from my concealed spot, not wanting to take the risk of accidental discovery, when I decided to test another trick.

I stole half of the Divine Spark the seed had, only to watch its growth come to a standstill, even starting to lose its life. Yet, that didn’t last long before I ‘softened’ the Divine Spark, replicating the same trick I had pulled with the Headmistress, allowing the seed to bond with its Divine Spark more efficiently.

Then, I repeated the same trick again with the rest, even sacrificing some of my own Divine Spark to double the initial amount — after all, I could always take it back before leaving — until the sapling had passed the state of the other tree I had observed, handily reaching to Demi-God status.

I wasn’t surprised to see the tree absorbing the mana with an even greater speed, though amusingly, its growth slowed down. But I could see its structure getting stronger.

I was supposed to stop there, but sometimes, curiosity was hard to beat. I continued to replicate the trick, allowing the sapling to continue bonding with the Divine Spark even easier.

Until it turned into a God. An extremely weak one, but still a god.

What harm could it do, I thought as I continued to feed it purified mana, moving underground.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Three

I kept most of my attention on my surroundings, and only a portion was still focused on the growth of the small sapling, which slowed even more after the latest adjustment, but I could see many changes in its nature, enough to justify that.

I sensed it carefully, ready to intervene in case of a weak undead response — and evacuate in case that scary lich that repaired the dimensional wall arrived. I was still confident in myself in a desperate fight, but I had no intention of putting myself to it unless absolutely necessary.

My latest experience with that corrupted angel was a good way to remind me just how many trump cards an enemy could reveal during a fight.

I focused on my other aim, slowly digging a tunnel deep underground, one that went almost a mile, opening to a naturally concealed pit — which I reinforced further with several more wards. And, on the way back, I had carefully covered the tunnel with wards as well, split between concealment, and explosive wards that were filled with the purest light mana I could convert through my fake light node.

A nice present in case the undead discovered me.

It took more than an hour, and when I returned, the little sapling had grown noticeably — from one inch to two — but its growth had stopped after finishing all the mana that was inside its protective shell.

Which was not too surprising. What surprised me was that there was a sense of taint in its leaves, the tip of one of them already blackened.

“Is there something wrong with my ward?” I asked myself even as I started examining the protective shell I had established to protect the little sapling from the necrotic energy. I was extremely focused, and not just because I was worried about the fate of the sapling, which was something between bait and an idle experiment.

I was more interested in why my ward failed. It might be my failing, or there might be something critical I was yet to discover about how mana worked in lands outside the purview of the system.

Either case, it had some great implications for the defensive quality of my temporary residence and my future plans.

However, even after sinking a great deal of time, I was yet to discover the source of the leak. And, before I could go deeper, I noticed a movement at a distance, coming from an upstream direction.

Another band of undead, though smaller than the first party that was sieging the elves earlier. The limited number of zombies that were brought along suggested that they were just reinforcements rather than ones that were expected to restart the siege — suggesting the undead were yet to discover my little intervention.

It was clear that the party was not there to understand the unexpected defeat either, as a horde of zombies — even a small one — was hardly something that could be kept hidden.

Among them, I could see two necromancers herding the rest. I cast two spells. First, an illusion, one that showed a large tree in place my little sapling, growing brightly. The horde to a stop after noticing its presence, and I used my second spell then.

A wave of light mana, infused with some proto-HP, enveloped most of the horde, taking them down in a single hit.

A hit that didn't target one of the two necromancers, who was busy retreating.

I wanted the seed to work as bait, but with its growth hampered, I wasn't above cheating a little.

Only after making sure the necromancer had retreated outside the visual range, I dispelled the illusion and focused on examining the ward once again.

No matter how much I searched, I failed to find any sign of a problem. Even worse, I could see the leaves continuing to darken slowly despite my attention.

My frown got bigger even as I decided to turn my attention to my little god-sapling, and created an intense flood of proto-HP, flooding its structure, spending more than a thousand mana in the process.

Not that it was a problem. I could easily tap into the Aether for more, and the results were impressive. The leaves gained their bright green coloration, and even the growth of the sapling quickened, reaching four inches.

“So, you can process proto-HP even faster than pure mana,” I murmured idly. I was aware that I was talking to a plant, but it was better than losing my mind in silence. “Now, if only I could find

your problem,” I added, watching it.

Only for the same blackness appearing on the tip of the leaves, even faster this time. I frowned, and was treated with another flood of proto-HP, non-stop until it finally reached the height of a foot, finally looking like a proper sapling.

Yet, the leaves darkened even faster. “You should be more resistant, little buddy,” I muttered as I cured it once more, unable to understand why it was struggling that much.

Until I felt a stirring of necrotic energy, centered at the sapling itself. I immediately sent a tendril of mana through its structure, this time pure, carefully examining it.

Only to realize it had an additional set of roots, in addition to the physical one, made of mana. No wonder its growth was much slower than I expected. Most of the pure mana I provided was used for that purpose.

And, just like the physical roots were slowly spreading into the ground, those roots were slowly spreading into the Aether dimension, catching the small pieces of Aether, broken down enough that I called them impure mana.

No wonder it was struggling. The more roots its established, the more impure mana it tried to deal with. And, even worse, the Aether dimension was long tainted with Necrotic energy. I ignored it, because it was nothing against my own purification abilities, but clearly the same didn't apply to the small tree.

Maybe it would have been b

I wondered whether it was a problem for every tree, or if I somehow intensified the problem by enhancing its merging with its Spark.

An interesting question, but under the circumstances, theoretical enough not to matter. I could always experiment on that the next time I stole some seeds, ideally a dozen or so so I could test impacting variables even more.

For now, I focused on the more immediate needs. First, I pruned most of the mana roots that were spreading into the Aether. With its limited Divine Spark, its transformative capabilities were extremely limited, and a few points of mana that it could convert every minute would hardly matter compared to the generous flood.

Then, I flooded its structure with a mixture of pure mana and proto-HP, both its roots and its

leaves drinking the mana thirstily, just like a little lamb that discovered a cold spring in the middle of the summer.

Curious enough to watch its growth with my eyes, I climbed out of my cave, confident in my detection capabilities to catch any interloper before they could notice my presence.

I was glad that I did so, because its growth was a phenomenal experience, one of the greatest shows I had enjoyed. The little sapling continued growing at a shocking speed. First, two feet, then three. Soon, it was as tall as me, with its branches getting larger and larger, its emerald leaves thick enough to bend them.

There was only one problem. When it reached double my height, its growth slowed down significantly. It didn't take long for me to catch the responsible. Its mana roots were continuously expanding no matter how much I worked to prune them, trying to replicate the size of the physical roots.

"Such a needy little tree," I muttered as I decided to apply another solution, and encased its roots with wards, hoping that it would be enough.

It turned into a little disaster. Aether particles were destructive enough on their own, especially against wards I had deliberately designed as soft. Still, I was confident that I could come up with a solution if I worked enough.

But, my little project decided to react aggressively to the threat of being confined like that, lacking any advanced thought and limited to basic reflexes, and started attacking the ward from the inside.

Its mana roots weren't the most excellent tool to do so, but the internal structure of the wards was defenseless as well, easily destroyed. Creating a bigger ward was out as well due to the nature of the Aether dimension, making the distance a confusing attribute.

"You win, you annoying plant," I decided, surrendering my attempts to keep its mana roots short, instead of focusing on its growth.

It wasn't like I was short of mana.

I continued to pump it full of easily digestible mana, its limited Spark working wonders to digest it, while my proto-HP worked hard to keep it healthy. Its height reached the mark of twenty feet, when its growth slowed down once more.

This time, the reason was more obvious. A flare of nature-life mana radiated out of the tree, and suddenly, the dead ground around it showed signs of life, a thin layer of grass appearing to cover the gray earth, pushing for life.

It was a fascinating view, one that I enjoyed seeing as I continued to pump mana, ready to get the attention of the undead as they sent more of their forces, the existence of the tree an excellent culprit to keep me hidden.

Unfortunately, this time, the next ward that triggered came from the opposite direction, downstream.

Elves were coming.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Four

I was quick to move back to my cave at the warning of the wards, and even took down the ward that was protecting the tree from the necrotic energy. At this point, it was strong enough to handle the radiating necrotic energy with my assistance — especially since I didn't place it right next to the river, but put in some distance, limiting the impact of the constant flow of necrotic mana.

Unlike undead, I knew little about elves, and it was better for me to stay concealed, with no sign of my presence at the surface, rather than testing the limits of their detection.

Luckily, not only I had warded my cave greatly, but also, as the tree grew, one of the roots reached the cave, allowing me to continue feeding it with mana while staying hidden. I watched from my hidden spot, assisted by several wards, as several cloaked figures arrived at the opening I had chosen as my hidden spot.

Admittedly, I was annoyed with the development. Based on the aggressive expansion of the undead and the defensive state of the undead, I expected the undead to arrive first. I had stayed close to the territory of the elves, because I hoped that the signs of battle would be the thing that received their attention.

Their aggressive scouting surprised me.

As they got closer, I realized that it was a small party of four, each armed with bows and arrows — and I noticed that none of the arrows had fletching, and the arrowhead was just the thickness of the branch that had been used as well. They looked grown rather than crafted.

It was a comment at a distance, but I felt rather accurate in my expectation.

I didn't have the slightest idea of their language, but their shocked cries weren't particularly difficult to decipher, nor their heated gestures as the group split into two, pointing between the tree and their encampment.

In the end, three of them stayed with the tree, tense, with their bows raised as they looked in the upstream direction, while the last one rushed back with great speed. Their reaction was not too surprising, making sure the news was delivered safely was important, but defending the sudden appearance of another guardian tree was clearly more important for them.

And, as I watched the elves, I realized that I might have misunderstood the importance of the

guardian trees, even after what I had watched them in the battle. The battle itself was chaotic, with many things to focus on, but the current circumstances were much safer.

Enough for me to observe the elves more in detail. At the first glance, they were not too different than humans, but then I noticed them absorbing the nature-life energy that was radiating off the trees.

At first, I thought that they were preparing to cast the spell, but then I realized it was a passive, one-way absorption, eerily similar to breathing, implying a certain level of dependence on the guardian trees — though, I had no idea whether it was something of a luxury like a good dessert, or something truly vital like water.

I needed to observe more — preferably with more invasive methods than secret tendrils of mana — to make a definitive conclusion, which caused me to temporarily abandon that track, focusing on feeding the tree.

And, in response, it continued growing, the amount of nature-life mana getting more and more significant. When elves returned fifteen minutes later — this time as a group of twenty — the tree already gained another foot of height, with a corresponding increase in the mana that it constantly radiated.

I turned my attention to the elves. Out of the twenty, nineteen of them were archers, dressed in similar garbs, with the signs of battle still in their bodies. However, one of them was considerably different.

A man, wearing a different cloak, carrying a staff, its robe carrying several silver inscriptions that looked completely alien to my gaze. I didn't need to feel the mana gathering around him, following his commands to detect that he was a mage.

I still used my detection capabilities to examine him. After all the times I had practiced that particular trick, examining others' soul spaces, it was one trick I was truly confident in applying, easily invading his being before he could notice.

I noticed a great difference between him and the other elves immediately. A crystallized piece of Divine Spark, almost exactly like the Light Node the headmistress had created for me and Titania, though made of Nature Spark rather than Light Spark.

Still, the amount was small. Not as small as the minuscule amount the fruit I had stolen had been carrying, but still smaller than the tree had been carrying. It was enough to allow him to transform some mana, but I didn't want to imagine just how long or exhausting such a process

would have been.

I might have wondered why he hadn't been a part of the earlier battle, but his face, etched with exhaustion, told me the story. The way he stumbled toward the tree just further confirmed the extent of it.

One of the archers approached to help, only to be dismissed with a harsh bark.

Interesting, but not as interesting as the ward that he started creating ... or growing, I corrected myself, because the way he cast his spell was significantly different than anything I had seen, even when I included Janelor's tricks.

Instead of using the mana to create a node and surround it with an outline and building the additional nodes one by one, he created — for the lack of a better term — a seed, and started gently supporting it with the nature-life mana he was supplying, and the ward started to grow slowly, just like the tree itself did under my assistance.

An interesting casting strategy, and one, in certain aspects, could probably generate a lot of advantages, but the disadvantages were equally clear. It was impossible to use it in any kind of direct confrontation.

Maybe his exhaustion wasn't the only reason he wasn't a direct part of the battle.

Another disadvantage was the lack of control during its growth phase. I had the ability to subtly break and take control of other wards as well — a skill I had applied against a great number of enemies. And while I could imagine such a different ward would have been harder to interfere with than a similarly-powered ordinary ward, the exact opposite was true while in the growth phase.

Making it trivial for me to intervene while keeping myself hidden.

I didn't have the ability to transform nature-life mana directly, but with the tree helpfully providing a lot to me, all I needed to do was to gather some from the air and form it into the exact shape of the tendrils the tree had been extending into the astral dimension, and change the shape of the ward.

Just like that, the ward had changed shape. The initial intention was to create a protective layer around the roots. After seeing their other attempts, it was clear that they wanted to uproot the tree and bring it back to their encampment.

Too bad I didn't trust myself to stay hidden as they brought it along. And even if I was confident, I had no intention of traveling to an area firmly under their control. So, under my intervention, the protection ward changed shape, and turned into an ordinary defensive ward that would protect the roots.

The protection such a ward would offer compared to anything I could create was negligible, but it didn't mean that it was worthless. It created another layer to hide my intervention when they tried to dig around for my intervention.

An intervention I expected. After all, he was a mage — a terrible one, but a mage nonetheless — and it was only natural for him to start digging around why his ordinary spell had failed.

But his reaction proved that I might have misunderstood the extent of their difference. He cast another spell, but, rather than for it to travel down underground to explore the ward he had cast, it wrapped around the tree, then, connected to every single elf around the tree.

He barked another order, and all elves — except two of them that continued to guard — gathered around the tree, and started some kind of ritual, reminding me of an elegant dance, yet extremely serious.

I expected some kind of mana pattern to appear around them, ready to break it up, expecting them to use a more forceful method to move the tree. I was prepared to redirect their clumsy spell, or even break it directly if necessary.

I didn't want the bait I had worked so hard to establish to be broken.

No spell appeared even as their ritual continued to build up, which surprised me. I expected them to charge a stronger spell, but then I realized there was no excess mana for that.

With nothing to do, I split my attention between observing them and feeding the tree, waiting for the undead to arrive and finally interrupting them.

Yet, it was not the undead that interrupted me first, but a flare in the depths of the tree. A flicker of Divine Spark.

My first reflex was to blast every single elf into pieces. Who were they, daring to try to steal the Divine Spark under my control, just because I didn't let them move it.

I pushed my mana into the tree, ready to pull that flicker of Spark back, only to realize the Divine Spark of the tree was still intact, and it was an additional flicker.

How intriguing.

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Five

As that new fragment of Divine Spark floated in the trunk of the tree, dancing against the rest, yet to be sublimed — which wasn't surprising considering how little Spark the tree contained originally — my first reflex was to check the crystallized Divine Spark of the mage, expecting him to sacrifice a portion of it.

Only to see it completely intact.

“Can worship actually create Divine Spark,” I thought with fascination. I was shocked, though I had to admit, it wasn't supposed to be that shocking. After all, gods were obsessed with worship, and assuming that it was just about pure ego with absolutely no benefit had been prejudicial.

In my defense, I neither had a direct interaction with god. The closest had been the headmistress, and she had shown no inclination of organizing such a thing — admittedly, her problem never had been finding enough Divine Spark, but controlling what she had in possession.

And, that was assuming such a thing was possible with the System greedily devouring anything in the first place.

While I was lost in my thoughts, the spark continued to dance in the soul-equivalent presence of the tree, conflicting against the Divine Spark, even causing some damage — that I repaired without significant side effects — showing that, a worship ceremony was not exactly something simple.

I continued to observe them, and fifteen minutes later, another flicker of divine Spark joined the first. The amount of newly acquired Divine Spark was almost as much as the seed originally had — thought it was less about the great efficiency of the ritual, and more about how little Divine Spark the seed had contained in the first place.

I could have helped the tree to absorb the Divine Spark, which would have been much more easier than actually repairing the damage, but I waited, wanting to see if the elves had the ability to detect it. To this aim, I didn't even let it crystallize into a safer state, but forced it to stay moving.

The elves continued their ritual-dance, unaware of the danger that was brewing at the target of their worship. Fifteen minutes later, another sliver joined the mixture, this time intense enough

to fight against the tree.

The elves started to look exhausted, which was not just a physical failure or mana deficiency but something different, showing that the ritual was not a trivial affair.

I continued to observe them, but my attention was on Divine Spark, examining its nature. As the amount of Divine Spark grew, I started to realize that its structure was more chaotic than all other Spark I had touched.

Every other spark I had touched — which wasn't a great list, but still included the headmistress, the princess, and most recently, the guardian tree — had been, for the lack of a better term, pure.

Sharp.

Even when I used my Tantric abilities to purify it to destroy their hardness, it only stripped that intent further, turning it into something soft and pure.

In comparison, the one that was provided by the elves was chaotic and without direction. It still had the same general essence of Nature, but there were differences to it, like two different artists, drawing a picture from some description. No matter how well they practiced before, they couldn't just put their halves and create one flawless picture.

Only in this case, there were multiple artists with slightly differing visions, their creations conflicting despite the spell around them — which was affecting their mental state, allowing them to focus on the same thing.

Elves continued, unaware of the risk, which confirmed that they had no idea of the risk they were creating. Their ritual would have created no problem for the other guardian trees, which had enough Divine Spark to sublimate the little amount their worship had generated.

They had no idea my tree was cheating.

Luckily, my cheating was not limited to just transforming mana. I was experienced in helping others sublimate Divine Spark. I pulled the amount they generated, and after some processing, I let the tree absorb all of it.

Enhancing its godhood, not that the mana it could generate had the slightest significance against what I was providing at the moment.

Then, I turned my attention to the elves, trying to understand how they could generate Divine Spark. I spread my mana to the immediate surroundings, which would have been a very alarming affair if it wasn't for two things. They were distracted by their ritual...

And that mana was coming from their guardian tree, therefore absolutely trustworthy.

Yet, even with such a thing, I had little progress with the source. I poked, pulled, and occasionally detonated my magic, but all was useless. I even checked the Aether Dimension, but with nothing out of ordinary.

Well, not technically useless, I corrected, as it gave me one very important conclusion. Whatever was going on, it was certainly not mana, pure or transformed.

Sometimes, eliminating the possibilities was as important as finding the clues of the correct path.

Still, I wasn't discouraged. I enjoyed delving deep into the mysteries of magic and existence, and the importance of the topic only made me more interested. My mind was already filled with different experiments I could conduct...

Only to be distracted by a warning from one of the wards upstream.

The undead really had terrible timing.

Elves proved that they weren't a slouch in detection, by discovering the undead barely a minute after, their sentry barking in alarm. The ritual stopped, which was unfortunate as I would never say no to more Divine Spark, especially, for all intents and purposes, it looked like it was being generated from the thin air.

My first real discovery about the source.

The elf mage replicated his attempt to cast the spell again, and once again, I used that to create another protective layer around the tree. It surprised him more than his first attempt, showing that he expected their ritual to work.

Maybe it worked like taming an animal, feeding them to make it calmer. If that was, it was a pity that it wouldn't work.

He attempted it twice more, but the warriors around him started to act restless. One of them said something sharply, and the mage responded with anger. It didn't take long for it to turn into

a heated argument, showing the apparent control of the mage wasn't as strong as it had implied.

Elves might be a mystical race, a part of the stories, but their reaction to danger had been refreshingly ordinary. A pointless battle for power among a few, while the rest watched ineffectively, risking their lives with inaction, yet unable to intervene directly.

I examined the archer that started to battle, and noticed a few differences. For once, his bow was different. Not just more intricate, but also in a different style, giving me the impression that it was created by a different expert.

And he had a dagger, wooden just like the others, but with a large, intricate emerald on its hilt — with no hint of magical energy, suggesting more of a status symbol.

If it wasn't for the fact elves had just given me the key to continuing growing stronger, I wouldn't have cared much about anything other than aggravating the undead. After all, after I had destroyed more and more undead while disguising my actions, the higher-up of elves would inevitably join.

Yet, after their performance of generating Divine Spark, I changed my mind about keeping them as incidental participants. I needed to impress them more.

“Sorry, old man,” I murmured as I stretched a tantric-filled mana string to the mage, and invaded his crystallized Divine Spark, taking half of it before he could realize it, and transferring it to myself. With the mage distracted, and without the System constantly trying to devour every free particle, it was very easy to succeed.

I had to admit, I felt slightly guilty at doing so, but under the circumstances, a lot more than a slight guilt was necessary to keep me from acting.

I created another fake soul space to prevent interaction between two fake Chosen Nodes. I had no idea how they would react, but remember the first time I tried to mix different-natured mana, I had no intention to test it casually.

The amount of Divine Spark I had taken was not significant for me, but it was still significantly more than what the tree had. And, more importantly, converting the mana directly was much easier than letting the tree do it — not because I was more efficient while using the same mana, but because it helped me to control the results.

And, I used the resulting mana to feed the tree directly. Just like that, its growth, which had

been stunted due to the instinctive priorities of the tree, picked up speed once more.

Thirty feet turned fifty, which, in seconds reached sixty, then seventy...

I expected the elves to watch in shock, their argument was forgotten, but, against my expectation, it got more intense the faster the tree grew. And, even more surprisingly, it was the mage that was getting more subdued, while the archer started to act brazen, a smug smile on his face.

I was prepared to intervene when the mage admitted defeat and started walking, only to be surprised when he moved in the opposite direction I expected, followed by most of the archers. Rather than retreating, they started establishing a defensive perimeter, while the archer stood in the middle, smug.

Then, he gestured to two archers, and talked with them quickly, his attitude implying a certain amount of authority — though not a welcome one, if the stiff attitude of the other two told.

Their stiff attitude didn't prevent them from listening to his orders, and one of them took running, following the river, directly toward the encampment I had just seen. Yet, the other was more interesting. He took the dagger with the emerald the other presented, and took running.

Toward a different direction, confirming that I had misunderstood the nature of their argument.

"A happy misunderstanding," I thought with a smirk, continuing to feed the tree with forcibly converted mana — with a speed that was getting exhausting — while the mage and the remaining others worked hard to create a defensive position.

The mage spread some seeds and cast a spell, which immediately turned into a thick wall of vegetation. He didn't show any hint of noticing his loss of ability, which was to be expected considering he was using the generous amount of nature-life mana that was filling the opening rather than trying to do it on his own.

They worked hard to establish the position, with archers taking position all along the new wall, the tree continuing to grow behind them.

When the undead finally appeared over the horizon, the tree had already broken the height of a hundred feet, radiating an aura of security...

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Six

The undead horde approached quickly after their appearance, showing the benefits of their lack of concern, not caring about the lives of their soldiers — a meaningless description when zombies were concerned — or their stamina.

Still, the horde was more impressive than the previous force. Not just the numbers, but also the mana radiating off them.

It didn't take long for them to enter into the range of the elves, their arrows flying with impressive accuracy and speed. I kept monitoring them even as I continued to feed the tree, only to notice that, with every arrow that flew, some of the mana that was a part of their body disappeared.

Making their arrows almost a spell, though a dangerous one. No wonder they were treating the guardian trees with such reverence and worship. Their dependence was even stronger than I had realized before.

Luckily for them, with my ability to convert mana from the Aether, I wasn't lacking in some extra I could pump into their defensive encampment, pushing them to peak performance.

More than one elf had sent glances filled with worship as they turned back, looking at the tree, which they assumed to be responsible for their victory. I didn't care much about the credit, just glad that they maintained to keep their focus on the battle rather than starting to worship the tree again.

I turned my attention to the undead force, and noted that the necromancer force chose to stay behind quite a distance, already establishing a defensive perimeter of their own, a staggering number of wards appearing.

By the number of nodes that were being built independently, I could sense that the number of necromancers was much greater than I expected, and their competency was greater as well. The biggest signal was the amount of mana they were using.

As they established their wards, they used all the mana the stream had been carrying, leaving the water as nothing but a muddy flow.

I used the tree as a medium to send a bolt of life energy, strong enough to crack the defenses they had been busy establishing, but weak enough that I was sure of its failure before sending

it.

I had no intention of routing their serious attack, because if I did so, there were two options for them, abandoning the battlefield, or sending an overwhelming force...

And, at the moment, neither was to my benefit. I much preferred to slowly pull the focus of the battle to my location, with both forces reinforcing to allow me to focus more.

And maybe gather even more Divine Spark in the process.

The realization that the tree could be used to gather Divine Spark was nice, but stealing some from Elven mages promised much higher returns. Especially if the sole mage that was busy establishing the wards was not their strongest in terms of the Divine Spark they possessed.

However, while the prospect of increasing my abilities was nice, I suddenly found myself facing a different problem, this time with a personal nature.

I lacked the ability to numerically track the increase in my capabilities.

Technically, it wasn't supposed to matter, as I could easily sense the increases and decreases on an instinctual level, but after a life spent looking at an illusionary screen, I found the lack of numbers telling my growth unsettling.

Like it wasn't real.

It was ironic considering the effort I had put to find a path alternative to the System, but ultimately, my problem with the System was not the numbers, but the realization that it could be taken as easily — a concern that turned out to be the truth, as evidenced by my current circumstances.

It wasn't too difficult, especially since I had the time.

The first challenge was determining the unit of measurement. What better way to measure that rather than stats, to do that, I turned my attention to my stats.

I had used my purified Divine Spark rather accidentally at first, which, in effect, spread the effect of the stats rather evenly. I used my own mana to diagnose my body more in detail, carefully measuring the various capabilities, and crossing those capabilities with what I remembered from my own growth and what I observed from others.

Only to conclude with the point, a simple self-targeting illusion spell, creating the familiar

burning letters...

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 7

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 8}

Admittedly, the numbers were a little lower than I had previously expected, but I realized that, once again, the even distribution of the abilities worked wonders, and my casting capabilities had benefited greatly from the unlimited mana I could generate, with different structures as needed, optimized for the spell in mind.

Not the mention, the lack of a system, constantly devouring every single scrap of mana that was generating also helped. That, and casually spending thousands and thousands of mana with no concern of waiting for it to regenerate.

I turned my attention to the next stage, the relationship between the stats and the purified Divine Spark that was necessary to enable it.

And, to do so, I first focused on my stats, playing around a bit until making sure I could change only one stat.

As I tried, I made sure to pay attention to the battle, occasionally sending blunt bolts of nature energy toward them, other times intervening at the last second to save the life of an elf — not wanting to lose any precious source of Divine Spark.

After playing with my stats for an extended time, I succeeded, but not great. I wasn't able to push any stat significantly higher than the others, a few points of difference enough to give me a sense of imbalance — along with a sense of danger.

Still, playing around a bit was enough to understand the relationship between the Spark and the Stats. There was a quadratic relationship, with each increase costing more and more.

I decided to mark the smallest unit, one that required pushing a stat from zero to one, as a unit of Divine Spark, while pushing a stat from one to two, occupied four points of Divine Spark, and from nine to ten took a hundred points.

Of course, it meant that, increasing from one to ten required three-hundred-and-eighty-five...

And, my old score of fifty points of charisma would require a whopping forty-three thousand points — well, forty-two-thousand, nine hundred, and twenty-five if I were to be exact, but a mere seventy-five points of difference was not that great.

A great, suffocating number, especially when compared to the other sources around me.

The amount that was currently in the tree was barely half a point even after the worship ritual, while the elven mage's Chosen Spark was barely more than four points before I stole half of it.

Of course, it was enough to put the capabilities of the System to a suffocating level in comparison. Either the System had a different way of supporting the stats — which was likely — or had an unbelievable amount of Divine Spark stored in its unknown depths.

Which was scary...

"One thing at a time," I murmured as I slapped my cheek, distracting myself from the oppressive feeling of helplessness. It didn't matter how strong was the System as long as I didn't fight against it.

Which I had no intention to do. What I wanted was to find my way back — and escape again with my girls if things reached a dangerous point.

After all, after faking my death, the mysterious faction of the Eternals that targeted me had no idea I was alive — and with my performance, had other priorities to deal with.

And, the System itself ... was a problem for a later time. Much later...

I turned my attention to measuring my capabilities. After a few more spells, a new line joined the rest, representing the amount of Divine Spark I had been keeping in reserve to aggressively break down the Aether to match my excessive mana usage.

{Purified Divine Spark: 43}

"Excellent," I muttered. It wasn't a great amount I had in storage, not enough to boost any of my stats by another point. If it was one disadvantage of my numerical adjustments, it allowed me to directly compare my current state with my previous one.

And the difference was suffocating.

Of course, the power from the System was just borrowed while my strength belonged to me, but it was a bitter consolation.

“Spending borrowed is not smart, but it is fun,” I admitted with a murmur before I shook my head, focusing my attention on the next stage rather than lamenting about my lack of metaphorical wealth.

{Pseudo-HP: 450 Mana: 7220}

Since I added others, I decided to add a real-time indicator of the converted mana and pseudo-HP I had in my storage as well, allowing me to keep an eye on my reserves at all times.

Then, I turned my attention to the next aspect. My fake Chosen nodes. It wasn’t as helpful as the others, but still, it was better to be comprehensive about such things.

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 2.1}

“All complete,” I murmured as I put my hand on the solitary root that was passing through the cave, about to turn my attention to the battle. Then, it hit me. “Oh, how can I forget you, little buddy,” I murmured in amusement as I added another category, along with a mana link.

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 0.6}

“Now, it’s complete,” I said as I turned my full attention to the battle that was going on above the ground.

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{Strength: 8 Charisma: 7

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 8}

{Purified Divine Spark: 43}

{Pseudo-HP: 450 Mana: 7220}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 2.1}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 0.6}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Seven

Processing the current state of the battle didn't take long, as even while I was busy creating my self-System, I was taking occasional glances, to see if there was any great change.

The undead continued to entrench themselves along the river, slowly expanding their wards to get closer while sending a continuous wave of zombies, and the elves continued to rain their arrows.

At first, I expected elves to have some logistical trouble, but when their mage used another spell, continuously taking branches of the wall they had created, manipulating them with simple spells, and turning them into arrows.

Rather efficient, I had to admit. I preferred explosiveness over sustainability, of course, but it was clearly a philosophy that wasn't shared by my new friends.

Elves got surrounded tighter and tighter as the undead magical encampment spread, but that did little to damage their morale, because, even when I was lost in experimentation, I didn't stop feeding the tree with mana, fueling the wild growth of the tree further and further.

Of course, I knew that, even with its Spark completely merged to its structure it would take seconds for it to burn completely the moment I stopped feeding it mana, but elves lacked the ability to discern that.

Luckily for them, I planned to stay for a while more. The discoveries I was making were simply too important to abandon the location until it became too dangerous for me to handle.

But, with the battle going slowly, I decided to make some more preparations, to make my stay more stable.

My first attempt was to create a large array surrounding the root of the tree, connected with an opening that constantly provided mana, then filled the storage with enough mana to continue supporting it in case I had to move.

{-2103 Mana}

I didn't want the tree collapsing the moment I moved around, looking for some convenient targets.

My next aim was to make sure I didn't kill myself accidentally, and started converting some

more pseudo-HP. It was harder to store than mana, but considering the next step of the plan, it was a reasonable choice.

I didn't want to die to an accidental burst of necrotic energy. It would have been a pathetic way to go.

{-1428 Mana}

{+419 Pseudo-HP}

Then, I moved to my next plan, and started digging another tunnel, deep through the floor, passing right under the undead encampment, barely digging a couple feet every minute, more focused on filling the tunnel with numerous wards that would reinforce the walls and keep me hidden.

For that, I didn't use my stored mana, limiting myself to the speed I could convert from the Aether. Even then, I prioritized supporting the growth of the tree and keeping the elves alive rather than speeding up the tunnel.

As I passed the line of fortification and arrived at the undead side, I started adding a great number of small wards, each pointing upward, filled with nature-life mana. I would have preferred to fill it with light mana instead, which was significantly more deadly against the undead.

But it would also shout to both parties that there was a third party playing with them, which was a bad trade against the possibility of victory.

Digging the tunnel was a long and laborious activity — not the digging itself, but the number of wards that I used on the path. But, while the labor was difficult, the rewards were equally delicious.

As I continued to dig, the number of elves started to increase. First, another squad of five elves joined, followed by a larger squad of ten soon after, all coming in the direction of the small delta I had discovered earlier.

I didn't know if the numbers I had seen them fighting were their full force, but if it was, it meant that they had committed almost four-fifth of their fighting force to here.

A shockingly serious commitment, though I felt like it was more a sign of their desperation rather than incompetence.

Their arrival was welcome, making their defensive line much stronger. Especially since the undead was more occupied by trying to create a strong defensive encampment than attacking, concerned with the potential of the tree — a concern that I fueled by raining more and more nature-life bolts against their defenses.

Their defenses stood strong, giving confidence in their defenses — unaware that I was putting finishing touches to the great trap right under their base.

It took hours for me to finish the trap, and when I finished, it was dawn once more. The undead continued to gather their forces. Of course, the only reason that they did so despite that, was whenever they sent a zombie force that looked strong enough to overwhelm the little force of elves — exhausted despite the constant absorption of nature mana — I used the tree to intervene whenever they were close to death, sending another concentrated blast of energy to destroy a critical part of their attack.

And the elves pushed back the attack without a loss.

Yet, the repeated failures didn't make the undead retreat, but instead receive more and more reinforcements. Their magical messages of communication weren't subtle enough to avoid the detection wards I had sprawled around.

And while I didn't know the language they used, considering they were receiving more and more reinforcements during the night, with monsters that looked much stronger than the hastily-raised zombies from forest animals, I was confident enough to bet some Divine Spark to my comprehension.

However, as the sun started to rise, the undead decided that they had finally gathered enough force. Another zombie horde rushed forward, with enough members to make the ground shake, but my attention wasn't on the ordinary members.

My gaze fell to the center, where I could see a small group of four, walking with a fascinating elegance, their black armor gleaming despite the mess of rotten flesh and bones that surrounded them.

Death knights, I recognized as they passed over one of the hidden detection wards, allowing me to detect their nature — which survived only because the undead didn't even bother searching for them before setting their wards, the interference only helping to keep them hidden even better.

I was glad that it survived, because it gave me a chance to plan against the death knights.

Technically, I didn't know whether they were death knights, which might as well be a construct that was only useful when combined with the system.

Not that accurate description mattered much. The passive necrotic energy they radiated, leagues above any zombie left no doubt that they were magically potent yet lacking in intent to direct it externally, while every step revealed a dangerous combination of strength and elegance.

And, their blades, black enough to devour the light around their surroundings, left no doubt about their preference for melee combat.

Even if they were not technically death knights, from a battle perspective, they were similar enough not to matter.

It left me with a great challenge. How to handle them ... or more accurately, how to handle them without revealing my presence. I knew from experience that several wide-area explosion of light energy was a good way to deal with them, and it could be always followed by several more targeted spells as they inevitably get slowed down.

Unfortunately, such an ability was clearly not a part of the departure of the elves, and would reveal my presence.

I needed a better way to handle them, I thought as I watched their steady approach. Halfway to their approach, elves noticed their presence as well, and a few of them focused their fire on them.

Unfortunately, deflecting these arrows was trivial for Death knights. The one at the front pulled his sword, a wave enough to deflect all the arrows that were flying toward them.

The display was enough to make the defenders shout in alarm, and more of them focused on the target, raining arrows to take them down, only to fail spectacularly. Not only none of the arrows hadn't touched them, but the volley didn't even slow them down.

"It's your turn again, buddy," I murmured as I touched the root once more, flooding its structure with mana, both pure for it to digest, and nature-life to cast a spell.

This time, however, it wasn't just a clumsy bolt of loose mana, but something more interesting. I used my mana to etch small wards on the leaves on the edge, which gathered nature-life around them.

Yet, the nature-life was just the outward, hiding small, sharp needles of pseudo-HP in them, which was much deadlier against the undead. I used it rather than light mana directly, because of the similarities between the two energy, it had a much better chance of avoiding notice.

The rain of leaves was much more effective than the arrows. Thanks to the great amount of mana the tree had already swallowed during its growth — easily above a hundred thousand — each leaf were already magically-dense enough to threaten a zombie in the first place, and the enchanted rain of explosive leaves worked much better. It get rid of all the zombies trying to breach the defensive front, and left the four death knights alone, without logistical support.

Unfortunately, they were much stronger than the zombies, and my attack barely slowed them down as they continued moving forward, uncaring of the loss of the zombies.

The reason turned clear a moment later, when one of them raised their sword, and a wave of necrotic energy exploded, erasing the life energy I pumped into the field, the horde rising around them once more.

Fighting undead was always a frustrating affair...

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{Strength: 8 Charisma: 7

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 8}

{Purified Divine Spark: 43}

{Pseudo-HP: 869 Mana: 5460}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 2.1}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 0.6}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Eight

Against the renewed march of the undead, I responded with another wave of magically-charged leaves, which, unfortunately, didn't work as well as I had hoped. The reason was a lich that moved forward before casting a spell, and expanding the protective ward over the army.

"Amateur," I murmured in disdain. By the mana emanating from his spell, it was clear that the lich was strong, but his strength did nothing to the horribleness of his decision. By extending the wards forward, he created a barrier that was impossible to breach by the rain of leaves, no matter how many times I had repeated it.

But it came at the cost of damaging the integrity of the ward they had spent all night creating. Ultimately, the strength of any ward depended on their structural balance, and extending it carelessly was dangerous, leaving many vulnerabilities to be exploited.

I was annoyed, because I had to hold myself back to maintain my concealment, letting his ill-thought response stand.

I turned my attention to the elves, whose morale was plummeting as they started to argue once again, their language still a mystery. This time, several of the elves that belonged to the original encampment started to shout at the other warrior, who rejected their words dismissively, continuously gesturing at the tree, showing his intent to stay and defend.

The others looked ashamed, but I noted more than one of them shuffling toward the back, showing the signs of a rout.

Before they could make a move, a sharp sound filled the air, sharp enough to actually reach my cave. It was the sound of an eagle, but amplified a hundred times, to a deafening degree. Yet, as that sound reached, it changed the attitude of the elves completely.

The argument was cut short immediately, leaving the elf with the different bow with a smug smile as they focused on their defensive efforts with a renewed passion. Reinforcements, I deduced, which turned out to be a reasonable assumption, as a giant eagle appeared on the horizon.

The undead reacted to the presence of the eagle in two ways. One, a group of necromancers appeared all along the ward, already targeting the eagle with wide-area necrotic spells to slow his approach, their spells getting amplified by the wards.

They were prepared, showing it wasn't the first time the elves chose the path of aerial reinforcement.

While most of them focused on targeting the aerial reinforcements, trying to keep them away, the lich that was responsible for casting the ward moved forward, reinforcing the army with several spells that intensified their speed.

Still, their choice left me curious, because they still had a great number of forces hidden in the base, unused, making me wonder if I was the only one that was deliberately baiting a bigger fight.

Admittedly, from a strategic perspective, it did make sense for them. Not only the battlefield was located right next to the stream, which they were using as a core part of their magical logistics, but also they were battling in a location that was very important to their enemies, triggering a defensive response that was strategically unsound.

Not just because the undead spent all night entrenching the defensive location with both magical defenses and an endless number of extra resources, but it was far into their own defensive line, making the location hard to reinforce and easy to envelop.

Which was a horrible decision. Not that I blamed the elves too much for trying to defend the position. Up until now, every single thing that I saw showed that they were losing, and losing rather spectacularly.

And, while drowning, even the flimsiest rope was worth grabbing. A guardian tree, appearing from nowhere magically, radiating far more mana than the others they had in possession, certainly qualified to trigger hope among despair.

Death knights marched forward, their blades raised, the necrotic energy they radiate enough to encourage the zombies to move faster and hit harder. Yet, I noticed a detail that encouraged me.

They weren't just channeling the energy of the river, but actually pulling the remnants of the nature-life mana I had used against them. I sent a small tendril of Tantric mana for detection, still maintaining the connection to observe their structure.

And found what I was looking for. Right at the center of their chest, was a crystallized piece of rotten energy.

Necrotic Divine Spark.

“Not bad,” I thought with a smirk, my intention to take them down suddenly intensified with the sudden appearance of benefits. And, the amount was certainly not small, almost ten units in my new scale.

And, three more tendrils showed that the other death knights were in possession of a similar amount of Divine Spark. Four of them represented enough Divine Spark that could almost add another Stat point.

A great reward for a simple battle. All I needed was to find an easy way to take them down.

Elves proved smart enough to abandon the first line of defense as it turned untenable, allowing me to focus my attention on the death knights rather than trying to save their lives.

I had to admit, I was curious about the amount of Spark that the lich possessed, as he seemed stronger and more important. Pity he was not only a caster, but also too far away, making it very difficult to subtly infiltrate his being like I did to death knights — who made my job much easier with their effort to transform the life energy.

Luckily, I had one tool I could use really efficiently against the growing threat. I flooded the structure of the tree with my mana, but this time, rather than discharging it, I started to take control of it more directly.

Unaware of the threat they were about the face, the death knights rushed forward, confident in their upcoming victory. And, not unfairly so, I decided, as their performance was clearly over an average level fifteen warrior, while the elves could barely match a level five one.

Most of the elves moved forward, but the sole mage among them surprised me by raising his hand, and suddenly filling his body with nature mana.

He started to grow with a shocking speed, turning into a giant over twenty feet in an instant, but the moment did so, his body transformed completely.

A clearly suicidal attack, killing him before I could even attempt to intercept it — though, it would be a lie if I said that I was torn up about the result, not when he had granted me the tool that could be used to hit back the undead without revealing my position.

The treant that appeared in the place of the elf lumbered toward the death knights, swinging its arms with each step, destroying dozens of zombies with each swing of its wooden arms, destroying the empowered zombies easily.

The pause it created allowed the elves to create another defensive line, but I decided to make their lives closer. Their unique way of warding was rather weak, but easy to copy, so I used nature mana to seed another wall of thorns they could use, but this time behind the trunk of the tree, to allow the undead to approach unimpeded.

The treant rushed toward the death knights, but only two of them moved forward to meet its charge, while the other two rushed toward the trunk of the tree, determined to take it down.

A little faster than I expected, which surprised me, as I felt that they wanted to take down the reinforcements as well. However, when I turned my attention to the sky, I saw that they had already solved the problem

There were three giant eagles in the sky, two of them made of bones and rotting flesh, each carrying a lich on top, raining spells against the eagle. Worse for the elves, they didn't arrive from the base but appeared behind them, waiting for the reinforcements to arrive before cutting their path.

Leaving the elves no choice but to land. They defended desperately against the attack, packing enough magical power to barely defend themselves, rushing toward the tree. Only to meet with another rain of necrotic energy from the wards, enough to overwhelm their defenses before they could land.

The sacrificial spell of the elven mage wasn't faring any better. The treant was strong, but only temporary as the remains of his will directed the living will of the treant mindlessly, trying to target the nearest death knight. It was strong enough that, even a glancing hit might have damaged the death knights significantly.

Unfortunately, the death knights looked proficient in handling such tactics. One of them stood in front, dodging the attack while the other used the opportunity to deliver a devastating hit, leaving a devastating taint, shortening the already limited life of the treant even more.

A devastating counterattack, one that made me question the merits of just writing off this as a defeat and searching for a more equal battlefield.

Under the circumstances, it was clearly hopeless to expect the elves to defend anything around the perimeter.

But, before I could make the decision, one of the death knights arrived near the tree, and stabbed his sword through the trunk. I didn't care much, more than confident enough to cure any damage he left if I decided to fight more. And if I decided to retreat, such an attack would

be a good excuse.

But then, a surprising change happened when he flipped open a crystal, glowing emerald green.

It was accompanied by a sense of tugging, one that I had felt before — in a fashion — though in a way that I didn't expect to affect me in this fragmented plane.

I might have written it off as an illusion, a paranoia, but it triggered my new, hand-crafted system.

{-0.1 Spark, God Tree}

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 7

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 8}

{Purified Divine Spark: 43}

{Pseudo-HP: 869 Mana: 5460}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 2.1}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 0.5}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Forty-Nine

The only thing that prevented me from exploding in panic was that I could sense the source of the pull was the crystal that the death knights holding in hand, rather than something mysterious and over-encompassing.

Dealing with another System was the last thing I needed.

With that fear squished, I turned my attention to my current problem. Under the circumstances, Divine Spark stealers were not something I expected to deal with.

I didn't appreciate the potential competition.

Though, maybe I shouldn't be surprised by their ability to trap Divine Spark. After all, I could easily do so, and Mariel did so with amounts that were shockingly higher than the scraps that the guardian tree contained.

Moreover, while I had the ability to purify it, it seemed that it was a rare ability to have — if not unique — and I was yet to feel any of it being destroyed. It was very likely that they were capturing it not to use, but somehow deprive the elves of a potent weapon.

I remembered the destroyed guardian trees on my path. I had assumed that the Divine Spark was lost in the Aether after their destruction. But maybe they had suffered from the same fate, their Divine Spark captured and stored rather than let float freely, free to be caught by other trees.

Of course, I had no idea what was their next step with the Divine Spark. Maybe they had a method — even if it was potentially slow and cumbersome — to convert it, or maybe a god with millions of units of Divine Spark could somehow browbeat different natures.

Maybe they would just throw those crystals into the Primordial Aether, to float for eternity.

Regardless, it was a problem for the future. For now, I was content to change the fate hidden in that crystal.

And with, my strategies.

Under my control, the roots of the tree lashed out. Two of the roots burst out of the ground, right underneath the feet of the death knights. They were fast enough to avoid it, but a well-timed rain of leaves gave them a more urgent target to avoid.

They swung their swords to push. They were wearing helmets, but the contempt they felt against my trap was clear from the casualness of their swing as they batted away the leaves.

It was a strategic mistake, but I couldn't blame them for it. After all, in everything I had seen up until the moment, the guardian trees lacked sentience, and along with it, the ability to develop strategies.

Unfortunately for them, not blaming wasn't equal to giving them a chance to adjust their thinking. The roots wrapped around their legs, immobilizing them. They tried to desperately cut the roots, each swing of their blade delivering enough rotting energy to completely destroy the tree —only to clash helplessly against my own wave.

Then, a third root jumped out, snatching the Crystal off his hand.

A little pressure was enough to crack the crystal, and a mana flood drained all the spark let out from the crystal.

An incredible amount, I realized, wondering just how many trees their group was responsible for destroying as the pure, crystallized clumps of Divine Spark were absorbed by the tree. A little touch of my mana, and the tree absorbed the energy rapidly.

{ +205 Nature Spark, God Tree }

I let the tree absorb all of it, as the obligation to continuously feed it mana was getting rather troubling. While I could use wards for that purpose, the tree's divine spark worked much better to convert even more nature mana.

Freed from my obligation to assist the tree to converting pure mana into nature mana, I turned my focus to purifying mana and breaking down Aether. The difference in output was stark, almost increasing ten times, pushing against the necrotic mana like an out-of-control flood.

The lich that commanded the enemy army didn't appreciate my move, exploding in anger as he delivered several orders. I might not understand his words, but reading the moment of his whole army, charging forward, was rather obvious.

It was an all-out attack.

The other two death knights ignored the treant and rushed forward the tree, trying to destroy the tree before it was too late.

Unaware that they were delivering me exactly what I needed. I delayed dealing with the two captured Death Knights for a moment not to scare the other two, turning my focus on the rest of the battlefield.

The biggest benefit of the order came from the reinforcements. After the order of the lich, the forces that were supposed to keep them away turned their attention to the tree, the most notable being the sudden absence of magical arrows.

The eagle flew toward the ever-growing branches of the tree, in a hurry to join the battle, though even with their speed, it would be a while until they could join the battle. It would be too late before the bulk of the zombie army could achieve their aim, their reckless charge enough to close the distance. I prepared to change my focus to change it.

Then, stopped, realizing a nice surprise.

The treant, lumbering toward the upcoming army, grew larger with each step as it absorbed the almost unlimited nature mana that was in the environment, getting stronger. The mind was already gone after the sacrifice, but the remaining instincts were enough to remind his enmity with the undead.

It smashed against the first line of the charging zombies, each blow making the earth shake as it destroyed many zombies. Panicking, some of the necromancers turned their attacks toward the tree, ignoring the order of the lich.

That angered the lich, but his repeated orders fell wayside as the necromancers desperately tried to eliminate the threat first. Yet, their attacks turned useless as the treant absorbed the nature mana to recover.

I wondered just how long the treant would last. Seconds, or whether it would manage to resist a minute. The constant cycle of decay and recovery was leaving some dangerous instabilities in its structure. Its nature as a wild growth that was never designed to reach this size only quickened its fate.

Yet, it managed to tangle all undead forces into battle, which was far more than what was supposed to be possible before the unlucky elven mage had sacrificed himself in a desperate rush.

Since the undead had kindly committed to the battle I had no reason to keep myself back. I turned my attention to four death knights, desperately hacking the tree in the hopes of destroying it. Unfortunately for them, it was a desperate hope. Unlike the treant, the tree didn't

need to rely on nature's mana to cure the havoc created by the undead energy. It could just assimilate and convert the mana without even my assistance.

The lich might have been more successful with some well-crafted spells to resist that, but the uncontrolled blasts of death knights had no chance.

I stabbed the first death knight with roots, draining it of its mana — and along with it, its divine spark. This time, I didn't feed it to the tree, but absorbed it myself, quickly purifying and absorbing it.

{+ 21 Pure Divine Spark}

"Thanks for the meal," I muttered as I observed the undead army, trying to see if the lich reacted to the trick. But, since he was more occupied with trying to bring down the tree rather than trying to resist the invasion, I was willing to believe that it was not the case.

{+ 72 Pure Divine Spark}

And since that was the case, I let absorbed the other three rapidly as well, their desperate last stand might as well not exist under the circumstances.

The dense background mana made it an impossible victory for them, reversing their initial advantage completely. The eagle used the opportunity to land behind the tree, using its huge — and still growing — trunk as cover.

Still, their faces were grim, recognizing that, even with their recent advantages, a desperate battle awaited them.

Luckily for them, they represented a renewable source of divine spark for me, each death an unfortunate loss. I wanted to end the battle as soon as possible, in a spectacular manner.

The treant gave me an excuse to do so. With its desperate hunger for nature mana, it was easy for me to take control of it, and move it forward in a desperate charge right in the middle of the undead formation. It received attacks from all sides, each second hastening its inevitable demise, unable to attack back...

But I didn't care about the limited damage it created. All I cared about was to see if it could reach its destination... The traps I had laid under the undead army.

The moment it touched, I used the connection to destroy it in one last explosive energy, each

splinter filled with nature mana to make a destructive weapon, taking a small yet significant chunk of the army.

The rest was destroyed by the traps going off, with the sole exception of the lich that was leading to the army, its soul detached from its body to escape.

Too bad for him that, before he could escape, a surreptitious ray of light jumped out of the ground and stabbed its soul, draining its divine spark. It was not the first time I had fought with liches.

It took a while more than draining death knights, as not only it had much more dense energy, but also the spark was absorbed enough to reach demigod standards.

Too bad that it didn't matter in his helpless state, as it disappeared unglamorously.

{+ 104 Pure Divine Spark}

With the battle finally won, I turned my attention to the elves.

It was time to make some new friends.

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 7

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 8}

{Purified Divine Spark: 240}

{Pseudo-HP: 869 Mana: 5460}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 2.1}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 206}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty

As I returned to the cave under the tree, I was satisfied with the gains I had made from the battle. Not only I had destroyed the most immediate threat of the undead assault, but I achieved that without revealing myself.

The giant guardian tree in the middle of nowhere was not any less inconspicuous, but for all intents of purposes, it belonged to elves, which the undead was already fighting against. They had no idea there was a meddler in their battle, nor they had the ability to actually give chase without identifying me.

That didn't prevent me from creating a new plan for my underground base, one with several more escape tunnels. If the worst happened, and the undead decided to attack with a force that I couldn't push back despite my abilities, I could always drain the tree of its divine spark and leave.

The battle already netted more than four hundred points of Divine Spark, which was far more than I had hoped, enough to improve all my stats by another point.

A rather excellent gain for a day's battle.

When I arrived back at my cave, I split my attention into two. Most of my attention went to digging new tunnels and crafting new wards, with much greater speed than I could push ordinarily. The undead was already gone, I wasn't afraid of them.

I avoided the attention of the elves in a different manner, and directed the physical roots of the tree to spread around, the constant mana output hiding my own tunnel spreading deep into the ground.

A thick root moved toward the river in particular, and created a complicated web, and I had created a ward on top of it to channel all the necrotic energy into the tree. I even wasted some Divine Spark to create the ward, softening the necrotic mana before it was devoured by the tree.

{- 5 Pure Divine Spark}

A waste, maybe, but after the gains of the battle, I was more willing to treat divine spark as a resource than a treasure that needed to be kept hidden desperately.

The tree started converting all the mana the undead continued to provide into its food, which,

combined with the impressive amount of mana it could get from the Aether, created a wave of nature mana.

Curious, I even poked my head to observe my surroundings. As the mana spread, the dead land regained its vitality rapidly, desolate turning alive.

On the other hand, I continued to observe the movement of the elves. Most of them were already worshipping the tree, and only a small portion of it going through the battlefield to find a clue or work to prepare defenses.

Normally, the lack of practicality would have annoyed me, but considering their action was already generating benefits for me, I was more than happy to forgive the strategic stupidity of their actions.

{+0.7 Nature Spark, God Tree}

All that remained was to make a decision about whether to communicate with them directly or indirectly, and what would be their method of communication.

After some consideration, I decided to choose a mixture of the two in, a direct, but restricted manner. And, the best target was the priestess that was currently leading the worship, which could be the best way to communicate.

Of course, it was a completely practical decision, and had nothing to do with her beautiful strawberry blonde hair, or the way the furs she wore wrapped her body in a way that showed an extremely curvy body.

Not at all, as I was never a person that would compromise my strategic decisions based on attraction.

Never...

No matter how delicious was the glimpse of flesh I received whenever she moved.

I chuckled even as I cast a spell, and several branches moved down toward the priestess, and roots burst out of the tree as well. Just like the attack I had delivered on the death knights, just much slower, enough to show that it was not an attack.

It triggered a discussion between the priestess and the others. Even without knowing their language, the situation was clear. The priestess was willing to follow the mysterious direction of

the tree, while some argued against it.

It seemed that the priestess had some power. She was able to dismiss their arguments quickly and let the roots and branches gather around her, until it created a chrysalis around her, cutting her from the outside.

The nature mana gathered around the wooden chrysalis, thick enough to make any probing attempt completely useless even if the elves stopped worshipping.

Meanwhile, the tunnel deposited the beautiful priestess to my lair. She looked at me with panic — understandable — as she took a step back, her arms raised.

Her alertness reduced as I raised my hand, letting a great amount of nature mana filled the room. She said something.

I shrugged before I cast a spell, and several pictures appeared in sequence, the magic allowing me to draw those pictures in a very detailed manner.

The first picture showed me fighting against a group of undead, and the second picture showed the same, but against many more undead, enough to make it a desperate battle. The third one showed me floating in a complicated device as the undead destroyed my plane — as I didn't want to casually reveal my ability to travel unaided through primordial Aether.

The fourth one showed me landing in their plane, and the fifth one showed elves and zombies fighting. Then I added several more, each detailing some of my more visible contributions to the battle — though I had positioned more as some kind of alliance with the tree rather than directly controlling it.

Naturally, the pictures didn't show my real origin, but a fictional origin of another dimension fighting against the undead, populated by humans that also used nature mana to fight against the enemy.

A good explanation for my current status.

She tried to say something, but I failed to understand, and she draw a picture. One that asked me to go upstairs.

My answer was ready. With another picture, I displayed that, if she actually told me about my presence, I would just leave.

She nodded hesitantly.

I smiled as I flared my mana, and a wooden chair grew next to her, and she sat down, thoughtful, trying to come to a decision.

I used the opportunity to examine her in a more detailed manner, taking note of her beautiful almond eyes, bright green enough to rival the leaves of the guardian tree, her flawless skin that contrasted interestingly with her wild aura, her pouty lips that curled in indecision.

After some long consideration, she drew another picture, with her talking with the other elves while pointing at me, then crossed, then draw a large square, empty.

Asking what to say if she stayed silent.

I didn't find her decision too suspicious. The undead invasion was a desperate situation, with their defeat certain, making such a trust less reckless and more hopeless.

I drew another picture, this time showing two of her, one showing her casting a spell, with limited impact, the other showing her casting a much bigger spell, even more ease, with the shadow of the tree behind her.

She looked at me, her question clear without drawing a picture.

I summoned a small fruit, glowing with energy.

Her panic was clear. She quickly drew a picture, of eating a glowing fruit, with power. Then, she drew another picture, this time someone eating two fruits, and dying.

The rather expected result of different Divine Sparks clashing. There were many ways of stopping that, but all required a significant amount of mana control. For all intents of purposes, that level of mana control was not accessible for elves, at least for the ones I already met.

I responded with another picture, first similar to hers, two fruits killing someone. Then, I followed with the picture of a ritual, treating one of the fruits with some kind of ascension, and the next picture showed someone eating two fruits, one ordinary and one special, and getting powerful.

She looked at it, thoughtful.

I threw her the fruit. She grabbed it in panic and reverence mixed, then turned to look at me, her expression sharp.

I couldn't help but chuckle as I caught her expression, surprisingly similar to what Helga wore whenever she noticed me treating the books with disrespect.

That didn't last long, however, as she turned her attention to the monumental decision in front of her, trembling in hesitation. I said nothing, giving her a chance to make her decision without interruption.

After several minutes, a determined expression appeared on her face, and she ate the small fruit in one bite, showing her decision.

The fruit was completely empty except for some nature mana, just there to give me an excuse to meddle with her. I let my mana invade her body, checking her current strength.

She was stronger than the mage that sacrificed himself in terms of Divine Spark, almost four points in my new measurement scale, but the divine spark was even more solid and less integrated.

That changed rapidly under my control. I increased the integration with the divine spark to the demigod level, while also transferring some spark from the tree to her.

{-6 Nature Spark, God Tree}

{+6 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

It took a while for her to adapt to changes, but I was getting rather proficient in helping the merger process, especially for such small amounts.

As a result, not only did her Divine Spark increase more than double, but her flexibility increased significantly... A nice meeting gift.

As she looked at me in fascination, realizing just how powerful she had become, I drew another picture, this time showing a group of elves digging guardian trees from other locations, burying them around our god tree.

She looked at it a bit before nodding. After communicating with her a bit more, I sent her back to the surface.

I would have loved to seduce her immediately, but we had a lot of work to do.

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 7

Precision: 7 Perception: 8

Agility: 7 Manipulation: 8

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 8

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 8}

{Purified Divine Spark: 235}

{Pseudo-HP: 869 Mana: 5460}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 2.1}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 201}

Elven Priestess - 8}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-One

After the disastrous chain of events that left me helpless in the new world that was going through a hopeless undead assault, the last thing I had expected to have a...

Holiday.

It certainly felt like a holiday with everything that was going on. The area was a gray hellscape when I had first visited, and right now, an area of several miles was covered with a lush, beautiful forest, one that filled me with relaxation as I walked, my feet wading through thick grass.

There were forests as thick back in the main material plane, of course, but I could never fully relax back then, not with the ever-present risk of monsters attacking. Here, the growing forest was safe enough for me to drop my guard for a moment and enjoy the clean air, nature mana surrounding me gently.

Of course, I wasn't having a moment to relax because I decided to avoid my responsibilities, a fact that was reminded me by an alert from a ward at the distance. I smirked as I moved toward the flicker, not even bothering to go to my tunnels, just pulling a simple illusion spell around me.

After a week spent hiding among elves, I had long realized that they relied upon their affinity with nature mana even more than their sharp eyes to notice any possible interloper. An excellent method to catch the undead, or even another elf, but not so good against someone with a greater competency of manipulating magic.

I passed hundreds of elves on the way to my destination, some caring for the trees, some preparing food, some going to a patrol with bows in hand... But most were busy worshipping, each moment creating another divine spark for me to enjoy.

Their presence was the reason I was spending time here rather than not moving. I didn't need to move, with the elves migrating to my location in droves.

Already, the number of elves that were living around the tree were counted in tens of thousands, not just warriors, but also children, more than happy to move to a location that promised more safety over whatever little defense they had in their own tribe.

Luckily, they didn't come empty-handed.

They brought their trees with them.

The presence of another guardian tree was what I felt, and I started moving toward the edge of the land, passing hundreds of other trees, and arriving at another robed mage — this time a young man — casting a spell to allow the trees to root.

I flared my magic, and the roots of the central tree wrapped to the guardian tree, flooding it with its presence, stealing two-thirds of the divine spark that was in the newest guardian tree that joined to the ever-growing forest, split equally between me and the main tree.

{+16 Nature Spark, God Tree}

{+21 Pure Divine Spark}

Well, almost equally.

I didn't feel any guilt robbing the guardian tree of some of its divine spark, because, in exchange, its structure was flooded with nature mana, with purity and an amount that was impossible for it to reach on its own.

The tree was already tall when it was first brought, larger than a hundred feet, but it still looked at the edge of death, half of its leaves yellow, and the rest already brown and dried, outer branches showing signs of rotting.

Yet, the moment it merged into the forest, that reversed. Under the flood of nature mana provided by the tree, every sign of decay disappeared in seconds, and the tree started to grow with a visible speed.

Triggering another ceremony of worship for the elves.

It didn't matter how much it grew, I thought as I looked at the center of the growing forest, to the original tree that was just a seed a week ago.

Now, hovering above the forest like a small mountain, already taller than a thousand feet, a giant radiating a sense of protection.

Most of the elves were encamped around the tree, dancing and worshiping the giant miracle that had given them hope against the ever-growing threat of the undead. They had seen the effectiveness with their eyes as undead sent several probing attacks, only to be destroyed under the flood of nature mana.

Not even able to reach the outer perimeter.

Unfortunately, those were probing attacks, without any necromancers to lead, or death knights to support, giving me only a few points of divine spark to me.

A point that would have saddened me greatly if it wasn't for the hard work of the elves, constantly providing me with more and more divine spark, both as a burst by bringing their guardian trees with them — most having somewhere between twenty and a hundred based on their maturity and the amount of worship that had gone to them — and the constant worship, tens of thousands elves enough to generate more than a hundred divine spark daily.

After I had completed the integration of the guardian tree into the growing forest, I added several wards, one to channel the necrotic mana back to the main tree to be converted, the other to transfer large amounts of nature mana as needed.

By that, the forest was not only a generator for divine spark, but also a surprisingly effective defensive structure, capable of not only defending against the growing threat, but also creating a surprisingly effective fortress against the undead attacks.

To the point that they had temporarily changed their strategy, probably gathering their armies while they tried to rely on harassment techniques.

Pity their biggest tool, the river that they used to deliver mana, was not working, a fact that they were unaware of, if the intensity of mana was any indicator. The water carried an amazing amount of mana during their earlier attack as well, easily measured in hundreds per second.

After their probing attacks failed, they increased it to thousands per second, unaware that they were just granting my god tree more mana to convert.

Forcibly converting one mana into another was difficult, but not as difficult as breaking down Aether.

With that task done, I had returned to the underground, to my little residence — one that I had turned into a beautiful hovel of several comfortable rooms — if I was going to live underground, I was going to do it comfortably.

I returned, ready to rest after a long day...

Only to realize that I had an uninvited — yet certainly not unwelcome — guest.

My elven priestess. “I can’t believe that idiot, daring to say I don’t deserve the touch of nature...” she muttered in anger.

“Tough day, Seldanna?” I asked, enjoying the benefits of learning the language enough to have a casual chat. With my intelligence — finally increased thanks to all the Divine Spark I had gained during the week — and my hard-working tutor, I progressed a lot.

And as a nice side benefit, I also learned her name.

“Yes,” she growled in shock. “Another feud between tribes, this time about an insult three generations ago..”

I chuckled, listening to her angry spat, making no attempt to stop her. It was not the first time.

Apparently, before the undead invasion, most of the elves lived as insular tribes, with little to no connection other than occasional spat about hunting grounds and other ordinary spats, which turned into long-lived feuds.

Until now, more than fifty tribes had joined our growing forest encampment. And with it, thousands and thousands of feuds, some between tribes, the others between individuals. As a consequence, my priestess, as the never-seen-before chosen of nature that was essentially a prophet for the elves, had to spend most of her day trying to break fights and mediate arguments.

Rather than spending time getting used to her radically-enhanced magical abilities.

The result was a great deal of frustration. She knew that I was busy reinforcing the defenses much better than she could achieve while she was busy keeping order, but that didn’t remove the feeling of annoyance from dealing with pointless activities again and again.

“It’s tough to change the way they lived, give them time,” I said, trying to sound more compassionate than smug, more than happy that I wasn’t dealing with that repeated nonsense. I loved to trick and tease people, but that was when I managed to get a sense of progress. I didn’t enjoy repeating the same tasks, again and again, with no progress.

“I know, but it’s so frustrating. Against a disaster that already swept most of the border, while that arrogant morons at the Great Tree were willing to bury their heads to the ground...”

The Great Tree and the strongest tribe, a reveal that didn’t surprise me a bit. I had already assumed that there would be stronger elves than the occasional tribe that was easily destroyed

by the undead, and the fact that they chose to ignore the growing threat due to some unknown internal reason didn't surprise me even a bit.

I had seen that movie many times.

"I wish that there is something I could do," I said with a shrug. "But a massage is best I can offer, but you seem to be rather reluctant," referring to the times I had offered to help her relax, only to shut down quickly.

But this time, the answer didn't come instantly...

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 9

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 520}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 10460}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Tree - 2106}

Elven Priestess - 14}

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Two

I watched as her exotic face turned confused, then reluctant, before admitting. “What kind of massage?”

“I was thinking of a simple palm massage,” I said. “It sounds simple, but works well on humans. Elves shouldn’t be too different.”

She looked thoughtful, her blush invading her face slightly as she considered it. “Maybe it wouldn’t be too bad,” she muttered.

“Good, come here, then,” I said as I cast a simple spell to reshape Earth into a large slab — once again using Arcana to do so rather than direct elemental, still reluctant to test them. I was yet to see anyone else using them, and I didn’t want to take the risk.

[-138 Mana]

My homemade System sent a notification, showing the relative inefficiency of such a move, but I ignored it, instead channeling nature mana to grow a thick slab of grass on the surface, comfortable to sit down — or lie down if she preferred.

I didn’t care about the mana expenditure, because that much mana was nothing compared to all I had spent trying to get a sense of the location of the girls, easily measured in millions. The best I was able to get was a vague sensation about their safety — and I was almost sure that was not due to the System, as that was all I was able to feel about Aviada as well.

She was at a distance and safe, but that was the extent of the information I was able to acquire as I found myself stranded.

Still, I didn’t consider that as a waste, as it allowed me to maintain my current position without taking absurd risks like going back to Primordial Aether. Instead, I stayed here safely as more and more elves gathered, bringing more and more Divine Spark with them.

With that, more power to make my ultimate journey safer.

As I thought that, Seldanna sat on the platform I created and raised her hand. I grabbed, wasting a bit more to coat my fingers with proto-HP, hiding that behind a thin layer of nature mana.

[-29 Mana]

The combination worked spectacularly. Her eyes widened the moment I dragged my finger over her palm, shocked by the sensation. I ignored the following shocked gaze as I focused on her palm, acting like I hadn't noticed it.

I stayed focused on her hand for the next minute, letting my mana penetrate through her body to loosen her. Tantric might have been revealed as a true miracle that was able to purify all kinds of mana and Divine Spark, but it didn't mean that its initial function as a massage aid was lost.

I had no problems using it to the limit.

I could feel that she was relaxing enough to pull back, which was not something I wanted. I decided to remind her about one of the stressful points. "Any news from the central tribes," I asked, probing her about one of the more important topics.

My week wasn't just filled with magical experiments, I also spent some time learning about the political state of the plane. It wasn't as useful as I had hoped. Elves turned out to be even more insular than I had expected, their communication rarely extending further than their neighboring tribes — and that was not always positive.

Their information about the tribes farther into the plane was sporadic and contradictory, though there were some points that were more aligned. One of those points was what I had already concluded, that they were considerably stronger than the border tribes.

Seldanna informed me that the border tribes had sent several messengers to communicate with them when the undead proved themselves too strong to handle, but received no response.

"Not really," she answered, her stress back at the mention. "They should have returned already even if there was no help was in the horizon."

"And even if they failed to reach, the central tribes should have already noticed the undead invasion and reacted," I completed her words, completing her concerns.

"Yes, and now, they have another thing to complain along with every ridiculous problem they bring, expecting me to rule in their favor," she complained, her lips getting looser as my fingers steadily destroyed the stress she accumulated.

She sent me a warning look as my fingers climbed up to her arms, but as the mana flooded through her body, her complaints about that were suspiciously absent. Pity teasing her about that was not possible without scaring her.

Instead, I listened to her arguments about the difficulties of her job while I continued massaging her, flooding her body with mana. As a welcome side effect, it gave me a chance to observe her internal structure more in detail, examining how she was handling the additional Divine Spark.

The results were ... interesting. Even in the demigod state where the impact was limited, I could see that it was somehow transforming her body. Some of those transformations were clearly beneficial, a stronger body that could not only perform better in battle but also channel the mana better.

That was not a new finding, as I had long detected it, along with the fact that natured Divine Spark empowered them much more than the purified spark I used.

Now, I was trying to understand how it scaled up by feeding more and more Divine Spark to her, empowering her further — subtly enough that she would assume it was just the after-effects of the fruit she had consumed rather than my active management.

{-1 Nature Spark, God Tree}

{+1 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

The results were ... complicated. It was hard to measure that, but I was almost sure that the growth trajectory of the natured Divine Spark wasn't as steep as my unique technique. It wasn't linear, but it wasn't directly exponential as well, falling somewhere in between.

Not the best news I could get, especially when I contrasted her capabilities with the god tree I had created — now more of a god forest as I continued to enhance the connection — and the trajectory it was displaying.

It showed that, for the same amount of Divine Spark, they had a much more significant display of power. The gap was even steeper for the gods than for demigods, and to make things worse, the higher the power level, the bigger the gap would be.

I was jealous ... but also I was not. They might have a much steeper curve of improvement, but they lacked one important thing in comparison. My ability to take any type of Divine Spark and absorb it.

I had seen what a great challenge for to actually absorb Divine Spark. Even after turning it into a God Tree, the little guardian tree would have died under the addition of the new Divine Spark if it wasn't for my assistance.

That would be less of a problem the stronger it got, but still, that was a great impediment. Properly absorbing and bonding with Divine Spark required not only time, but also some kind of compatibility — even with my assistance.

The priestess that was currently mewling under my hands, for example. She was able to merge with Nature Spark easily because they were already attuned to nature mana to a significant degree.

I doubted things had gone happily if I tried to bond her with Light Spark — or worse, try to give two different Sparks at the same time.

I still remembered just how much trouble to mix mana of two different natures. It was spectacular enough to dissuade me from experimenting on Divine Spark until I reached a much higher place.

“You should give yourself more time,” I murmured to her ear even as I shifted higher, putting my hands on her neck, rubbing gently, each caress making her tremble a bit. “You’re too tense.”

“What can I do ... with everything going on,” she murmured with a sigh, leaning back slightly against my chest as I stood behind her. “The constant raids, internal conflicts, the reinforcements trying to arrive...” Then she turned toward me, her expression frustrated. “And you had to go and pick me to handle that mess. Couldn’t you have picked someone else?”

I could have rightfully pointed out that the amount of power my choice granted to her was more than a good deal for the little troubles she was dealing with, and things like undead raids would have happened regardless of my intervention, only worse.

However, I wasn’t stupid enough to do so, not when she was just trying to find an outlet for her frustration, her new role preventing her from talking with anyone else.

“I could have, of course, but who else could have handled everything as amazing as you, and keep all those tribes under control. Would you trust anyone else to handle it as well as you without it turning into a mess,” I murmured softly, stroking her ego.

Not the most clever of words, but worked amazingly well when combined with the masterclass massage she was receiving. She leaned against my chest..

... and I felt some kind of connection between us. A subtle connection, almost nonexistent, and easily written off as an illusion.

If I wasn't familiar with the sensation of the Companion Process. It wasn't exactly the same, but the similarities, however faint, were unmistakable.

However, before I could push forward, I felt a strong sense of warning from the outer wards.

Another undead attack. Just in time.

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 9

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 520}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 10123}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2105}

Elven Priestess - 15}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Three

“We better pause our little treatment, undead is attacking again,” I said.

She jumped up to her feet, the urgency of the situation enough for her to think that she managed to hide her awkward expression from me. “I — I better go join,” she said after a while.

I was going to send her away with a chuckle, but as I used the various wards I had implemented around to detect the attackers, I realized that something was suspicious about the attack. Namely, the number I could detect..

And their strength, or more accurately, the lack of it.

The number of zombies I could detect was significant, enough to be counted in tens of thousands. That didn't worry me much, as, after some point, it was easy to deal with such groups, especially if they were kind enough to gather into one convenient target for wide-area spells.

It was their weak presence that made me frown suspiciously. At this point, there were thousands of elves already. There was no logical reason for sending such a huge number of zombies and nothing else.

Meaning, they were just a distraction from the real thing. I continued examining their structure, trying to understand what was being planned. The formation was the first thing that gave me the clue. Strong in the winds, weak at the center.

If it was an ordinary army they were facing, I would have assumed that the center was the bait, inviting the shock troops of the enemy before they enveloped that. But that didn't work against elves because of their preference toward ranged combat.

A surprise through the center was the most likely outcome, probably through some kind of shock attack through the center, enough to overwhelm our strength and attack the central tree itself.

A simple plan, but not a bad one. Pity that it was destined to fail, for several reasons. The biggest reason was always my presence. Even without all the traps I had established, spreading miles across every direction, I alone could take down both the army and whatever surprise they prepared.

Near-unlimited mana was extremely convenient.

That was only the last resort, of course, as revealing myself would mean abandoning my biggest advantage. My anonymity. Still, there were other advantages.

Like the fact that destroying the central tree actually meant nothing. At this point, every guardian tree was connected to each other, acting as a singular operative, and the Divine Spark danced freely among them. Destroying the largest tree would impair the mana conversion ability of the forest significantly, but only temporarily.

Their formation suggested that they were not aware of this little fact.

Of course, the tree represented morale for the elves, and unless there was no other option, I didn't want it to be demolished.

Luckily, I already had the weapon to prevent that. A sexy, beautiful weapon...

"You need to be careful, it's going to be a strong one," I said. "I could detect a strong army, several times the one that had attacked us previously."

"It doesn't matter, we can handle it after everyone that joined. The forest alone..."

"Exactly, that's why I'm not feeling well about that attack. They had already lost an army when there were barely dozens that were trying to defend. Now, tens of thousands are here, and their little trick with the river was completely useless. Yet, they are still attacking..."

She paused for a moment, her lovely face contorted in doubt. "Because they are hiding a weapon."

"Exactly, and my best guess is that it's coming through the center, and attacking here," I completed.

"You expect them to take down the tree."

"Exactly," I said, displaying more accuracy than I had been feeling — but even if I misread the situation, I could just intervene directly if the worst had happened. "I need you to leave the zombies to the others and wait at the center..." I explained, then paused.

It was a good opportunity for me to present her with another power-up.

"What's wrong?" she asked as I displayed my worry.

“Maybe...” I murmured morosely, even as I pulled another glowing fruit from my pocket. “Maybe it’s a good time to take another risk.”

“W-what’s that?” she asked, even as she flinched at the radiating mana with shock, not sure whether to take a step forward, or slide back in panic.

“Another empowerment fruit. One that I was hoping not to use for a while, waiting for the previous fruit to bond with you properly, but this attack is giving me a bad feeling. I think we should take a small risk and empower you further.”

“T-that’s an option?” she asked, shocked at my nod.

“A dangerous one, but this attack is giving me a bad feeling,” I explained.

My explanation was partially correct. It was true that their tactical layout was giving me a bad feeling, but the part about fruit and the risks were complete nonsense. I just wanted to sell the situation while maintaining the mystery of the situation.

And, if her display could trigger some panicky undead response, even better. They would eventually attack the full force, that much was obvious from just how much undead presence I could detect from my surroundings, and the earlier they attack, the more disorganized their forces would be.

Not to mention lots and lots of Divine Spark I could gather from their failed attacks.

She didn’t take long before coming to a decision. “If you think the risk is acceptable, I’m willing to take it,” she said, not asking any more questions.

“Really?” I asked, surprised at the speed of her acceptance.

“I trust you,” she responded, which was too pure of a statement. Though, considering everything I had been doing to protect them, it wasn’t as absurd as I first thought it to be.

I just nodded as I passed her the fruit, which had even more Divine Spark hidden in its structure, but this time. As she bit into it, I channeled Divine Spark to mix into her body. It was a pity that I couldn’t use her Divine Spark for enhancing her Stats — which was the major drawback of using the natured Divine Spark — but to compensate, I

{+55 Divine Spark, Elven Priestess}

[-55 Divine Spark. God Forest]

“It’s — too much,” she gasped as she felt Divine Spark invading her body, her beautiful almond eyes widening beautifully. “I don’t think I can handle it,” she tried to complete, but I pressed my finger to her mouth and silenced her beautiful argument.

“Don’t worry, sweetie, I’m here to help,” I said even as Tantric mana flooded her, reinforcing the structure of the barriers that kept the Divine Spark from spreading freely, still keeping her in Demigod state, any dangerous spread prevented before it happened.

The endless sessions I shared with my beautiful headmistress were paying great dividends. After many sessions we shared, I developed a great sense of how to handle and manipulate Divine Spark, which was helping me greatly.

Though, even as I did so, I doubted I could have replaced that attempt easily on another human. Just like how Mariel was directly aligned with the Light mana due to her nature, elves were aligned with Nature Spark, and as a Priestess that had been already Chosen, she was even better aligned.

I had no doubt that, even without my assistance, she could have eventually absorbed and controlled the great amount of Divine Spark I was presenting to her, but it would have probably taken days, maybe even months.

With my assistance, the required time period constricted into a lone minute, Divine Spark gathering obediently into her body, giving her not only the ability to convert mana much more rapidly, but also increasing the potency of her magic significantly.

I could even feel her body getting stronger, but it was a rather limited effect compared to the other impacts.

“This power,” she murmured as she raised her hand, and my cave residence — though much more luxurious after all my adjustments — was filled with beautiful flowers. “I can just go and destroy all of the zombies, alone—” she tried to say.

“Not so quickly, sweetie,” I said. “If you go along and swing your magic like a careless lumberjack, you’ll scare our dear enemies, and we don’t want that.”

“We don’t?” she asked, genuinely surprised.

“Of course we don’t,” I explained to her with a smirk. “They had gone through such great trouble to arrange a trap for us, why should we let them pull back. Instead, let them pay for the information about our strength...”

“And since I’ll be the one to fight, they’ll still be unaware of your presence, and when they attack again, even stronger...” she muttered.

“I’ll be there to solve it,” I said with a chuckle. Of course, I didn’t mention to her that, with every repeat, the undead would be bringing me more and more of their power, which would increase my combat capabilities further.

I couldn’t wait to bring my stats back to the range of twenties, or maybe even higher...

“You’re our savior,” she whispered as she looked at me, her gaze filled with worship. “How can we repay you?”

I smirked, never one to miss a beautiful opportunity even under the immediate danger of a battle. “How about a kiss?” I whispered.

“A ... kiss,” she gasped, her blush beautiful as she avoided my gaze. “Just a kiss.”

“Oh, my beauty, your kiss is too glorious to be classified as just a kiss,” I answered, enjoying her spreading blush even more. “But, I’m willing to wait until the end of the battle to receive it. Why don’t you go ahead, and teach those useless things the mistake of trying to trap us,” I said, once again triggering the tree-elevator.

She left, a beautiful blush on her face...

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 9

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 520}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 10123}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Four

If there was one disadvantage of great planning before the battle, it was boredom...

I used the great number of magical detection wards I had spread underground to get a real-time view of the battle. As I predicted, the zombies were attacking from the wings, rushing in with a recklessness that was exaggerated even for disposable corpses of undead beings.

Some of the elven archers panicked at the unexpected strategy, but the numbers were simply too far apart for it to make any difference, especially with nature mana filling the forests to the brim, both allowing them to cast much stronger spells, and giving them a natural barrier to weaken any undead spell before they were even cast.

However, soon, the reaction of the elves disappointed me. They reacted to the attack rather more obviously than I expected, splitting into two to meet with the attack, and left the center almost completely empty.

I wasn't afraid of the consequences, as I had already arranged for Seldanna to stay in the middle, ready to defend against the trap, but it was annoying to see elves not only missing the trap, but also reacting to it exaggeratedly.

They were excellent archers and decent mages in their sphere ... but their tactical acumen was nonexistent.

A topic for the future, I decided as I continued to watch the assault. Five minutes into the intense assault, I finally noticed a stirring in the middle...

And the monster came strolling in. I didn't recognize the monster. It looked like a dragon, but with many weird changes on its body. Whether the beast had been a natural chimera when it was alive, or had been adjusted by the necromancers to create a very effective battering ram was a mystery.

But, since the battle was enough to distract the elves, I used the tree-elevator to go to the surface as well. I wanted to watch the battle with my own eyes, though more as a leisure activity than an actual need. With my Divine Spark-infused forest as my focus, my magical senses were much more useful than my eyes to catch anything extraordinary.

I just wanted to watch Seldanna throwing down against the great monstrosity.

Though, I had to admit, the monster rather looked intimidating to the naked eye. A hulking

beast, a hundred feet tall and five hundred feet long, it was already scary enough without its skeletal dragon head open, displaying its teeth, each bigger than a sword.

Even at a distance, its roar was dangerous, radiating a huge flood of focused necrotic energy, an ugly facsimile of a dragon's breath, the thickness of the necrotic energy intense enough to cut through the passive shield of the nature mana.

That was far from the full extent of the defenses I had created, but I was deliberately keeping them hidden — ready to appear only in case of mortal danger — as I let my beautiful priestess a chance to shine.

And, shine she did. "You dare!" she shouted as she raised her hands to the sky, and the mana that surrounded her answered, touching a little seed — one that turned into a huge tree to block the necrotic flood, absorbing it to its structure, rotting as the necrotic mana clashed with nature mana.

But, the elves surrounding Seldanna survived, looking at her with shock as she casually rewrote what was possible to do with nature magic. Understandable, as the strongest elf that visited the forest barely had five points of Divine Spark locked in Chosen form, limiting both their output and their control significantly.

What Seldanna did in a second, a coven barely replicate in a minute.

However, that only made the monster pause for a moment before it continued charging. Seldanne rushed forward as well, doing her best to meet with the monster without it could reach the first guardian tree at the perimeter.

She didn't know that it didn't matter to actually defend them and I could pull back its energy and spread along the other trees — though, considering the cultural importance of the guardian trees, I doubted that it would have mattered in the first place. She would have still done her best to defend them.

If there was one thing she was, she was earnest in her desire to defend the land.

The monster charged forward, uncaring of the small figure that it could easily squash standing in front of the first guardian tree — which was enough to confirm its lack of intelligence, and also confirmed that there was no necromancer that was directly controlling it.

Interesting choice, I decided as I stretched a little mana stream inside the beast. Ordinarily, using mana for diagnostics would have been very difficult from such a great distance, but

another advantage of the forest was that I could manipulate mana in the forest almost as well as if I were standing next to the beast.

Surprisingly, the moment it slipped into the beast, I lost control of the mana, like it was lost to a raging tornado.

Interesting, I thought, and rather than pushing, I waited for an opportunity.

It arrived soon after. Seldanna cast a spell, and a horde of roots exploded from the ground, wrapping around the limbs of the beast. A single root was weak enough not to slow the beast down, but hundreds of magically-enhanced roots were enough to stop it momentarily.

And gave me an excuse to slip a much more invasive probe.

[-183 Mana]

“No wonder it disappeared instantly,” I murmured as I felt the mana disappear into the beast. Inside the beast, there was a chaotic dance of mana going on, and not just necrotic mana. I could sense different types of mana, each swirling in a different body part. The necrotic mana and nature mana were the most prominent ones, but occasionally, I could sense other types of energy as well.

Purer mana that reminded me of Janelor at the head of the dragon, arcane mana that radiated from a weird-shaped grafted wing, some purer healing energy coming from a shell ... and some other energies that I could barely recognize.

Each of them was contained by a crystal that was buried in the middle, one that was containing a crystal filled with Necrotic Spark, and one that clearly contained more than a hundred points of Divine Spark.

No wonder no necromancers were actually defending it. It was not a vanguard, but an explosive trap, and the creature was just there to isolate the different types of mana as they brought it deeper into the center.

An interesting gambit. In its nature, it was very easy to defeat the beast, just immobilize it and push it away, and watch it destabilize as the different types of mana started to react violently. With no necromancers controlling it — no doubt afraid of the backlash, a phenomenon I flirted with during my own attempts of mixing energies — it was almost trivial for an accomplished mage.

Yet, that required a reasonable tactical response, which the elves were lacking significantly. As the beast appeared in the center, most of the elves rushed toward it in panic, arrows flying desperately as they wanted to take down the beast before it could reach the first tree.

Arrows themselves weren't a threat against any undead, but the nature mana these arrows delivered was a different thing. It started to infuse the beast, triggering its chaos. The beast pushed to move forward as its mana started to destabilize, but the hold of the roots was too strong for it to move.

A fact that the few necromancers that were a part of the army didn't miss, and aimed their spells at the roots that were holding the beast in place, the necrotic energy enough to destroy them.

I could have intervened to keep the roots, but instead, I decided to let them snap, curious how Seldanna would react.

My aims were twofold. I wanted to test her tactical understanding of the situation — as we had many discussions about magic and its strategic applications for the last week — and I wanted to give her an opportunity to display her true power in front of the other tribes.

I didn't miss that more than one was grumbling about her authority, and a little reminder about true power wouldn't be amiss.

For the first attack, Seldanna attacked the beast directly with several spells, trying to take it down as quickly as possible, but a flare of mana made her realize something was wrong.

"Get away, and continue protecting the edges, something is wrong," Seldanna ordered them, shouting as loudly as she could manage, but even with her incredible displays of magic, not all elves listened to her orders.

The majority listened, but a significant minority did not — and some I recognized as the latest arrivals, and the guardian trees they brought along were right at the edge, risking destruction.

As far as disobedience went, it was not a terrible reason, but that didn't change the fact that it made Saldenna's next move extremely difficult. She started casting two spells at the same, another horde of roots to pin the beast in place, and a wide shield that would not only protect her, but also the elves that surrounded the monster, some stupid enough to try and flank the beast.

Their presence made Seldanna's job much more difficult. Creating a half-circle shield was

relatively easy, because it only needed to deflect the explosion, leaving it to spread to the other side. It was not trivial by any means, but it was still doable for her after the power-up, even with the roots taking some of her attention.

Unfortunately, the same didn't apply to a full shield, especially when she made the mistake of covering the top and making a half-circle, impossible to contain. And, ironically, even if it did, there would have been only one direction for Necrotic Spark to escape; underground, and it would have damaged the forest just as much.

Luckily, I was there to help her. Just as the explosion was triggered, I took control of her shield, opening a gap at the top to channel the explosion away safely, while reinforcing the ground to avoid disaster from there.

{-2949 Mana}

Right in time, as the explosion happened hard enough to imitate an earthquake. I watched as Seldanna collapsed due to exhaustion, pushing herself to the limit to reinforce the shield, which showed she was too distracted to actually notice I had taken over the shield.

The elves rushed toward her, some in panic, but even from a distance, I could sense several of them had some bad motives — one even had his knife out already — showing that generations of tribal hatred weren't just gone, but simmering underneath.

"How fun," I muttered sarcastically even as I cast a spell, and roots appeared around Seldanna and pulled her into the ground. Since I had such a convenient excuse to intervene, I just did so.

Luckily, I was able to steal most of the Divine Spark the necromancers hid in the beast, making it not only a beautiful teaching moment, but also profitable.

{+192 Divine Spark}

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 9

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 712}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 7352}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Five

I pulled Seldanna underground even as the cheers exploded on the surface, celebrating their victory, unaware that just how close to disaster they were after their spectacularly bad intervention. I kept my attention on the surface, dealing with the nearby undead scouts, but not even for a second I believed that I was able to deal with all of them — or even a significant minority of them.

The attack was too calculated for them to just have a few observers close in, and the explosion itself was too spectacular to be missed. My best hope was to hide the details of the victory.

However, as I pulled back, I noticed another interesting thing.

Small particles of Divine Spark, flew toward my victorious priestess, just like the forest had been receiving them constantly. However, her current Divine Spark wasn't reacting as I had expected.

With the tree, the reaction had been simple. Then it was weak, the sparks were absorbed violently into its tiny collection of Divine Spark, like trying to add more coal to a fledging fire, about to extinguish. Only my intervention kept the tree alive and absorb the energy smoothly. But, as it started to get stronger and stronger, the absorption capabilities turned much more substantial.

At this point, I didn't need to intervene to help it absorb.

Yet, with Seldanna, it was different. Rather than being absorbed by her Divine Sea — which I decided to temporarily name — they floated around like fireflies, with no intention of merging. As if she was pushing them away.

No wonder there were no notifications warning about the absorption.

I watched as those sparks danced around her magical presence, not going away, yet not merging. Curious, I let that continue even as I turned my attention inward, putting the gift from the undead to work.

{-302 Divine Spark}

{+3 Perception}

"Fascinating," I murmured as I enjoyed the difference the increased stats were made, enough to trigger a significant difference in my senses. It helped that I was getting more proficient in

assigning stats, allowing me to extend the difference between them somewhat.

With my enhanced perception, I could see that what was going on was not a simple issue. Somehow, the layer around her Divine Sea was rejecting the infusion of the spark, like a magnet pushing different polarity.

Maybe it was like the difference between having and not having Sapience, maybe it was something completely different. I lacked the information to understand it.

Luckily, I thought as I cast the spell to awaken her. I had sufficient time to assess that.

“Where am I —“ she gasped before she raised her head and looked at me. “What happened in the battle.”

“We’ll talk about that in a moment, but to not push you too much, the battle is completed successfully, with no loss,” I explained to her as I caught her gaze. “Now, tell me your biggest mistake.”

“My ... mistake,” she muttered.

“Well, I was forced to intervene against an enemy you should have been able to handle alone, so there was clearly a mistake,” I said, and to her shocked expression, I continued. “There’s no guarantee that I will be here able to help you during the next battle,” I suggested.

“You’re leaving,” she gasped in shock.

“Not yet, but ultimately, that’s on the table,” I reminded her. “But not immediately, and not until I’m sure that we’re secure here,” I said, and she relaxed. “Unless there’s an emergency,” I added, and she was tense once again.

“Then, what?” she said.

“We don’t know about the scale of the next attack,” I admitted. “I’m sure that that beast was an attempt of last resort, but not from their leader. I’m sure they are much stronger. No, this was the last resort from the unlucky lich they tasked to defeat and secure the borders before they could move inland.”

“And now, their true elites will arrive,” she gasped, afraid. “Maybe we should send another courier to the other tribes. Maybe they would come.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that, they’ll arrive,” I said with a chuckle.

“They didn’t, at least not yet. What changed.”

“Well, two things. First, we’re able to defend this spot far longer than anyone could expect, even though they abandoned it as a sacrifice,” I explained, doing my best to frame their lack of attention as negative — not that I needed to work hard for that with their all historical baggage.

“And second?” she asked.

“Second, I’m sure that the spectacular explosion would be more decisive than any message we can send. It’s proof that we’re standing here, with more power than they expect. And if there’s one thing the rulers don’t like, it was the others gaining the same power.”

“We don’t have a ruler,” Seldanna declared decisively, yet with her pretty face, it came across as petulance. “Tribes are independent of whatever they have there, even if they dare to name it as the capital.”

“Sure,” I answered. “But are you sure they would answer the same if I asked them?” I countered, and she fell silent. “Exactly,” I said with a chuckle. “But enough about that. Let’s go back to the question. What was your mistake?”

“My ... mistake,” she whispered. “I wasn’t very familiar with my power,” she said.

“No, that was just something forced by the circumstances, that’s not your mistake,” I corrected her.

“Then, what was it?” she asked hesitantly.

“You pushed yourself too much, trying to protect stupid people against their own mistakes. You have already ordered them to retreat, but they ignored your order and did something incredibly stupid. You can’t risk everything to protect them. Not when it was at the risk of killing anyone.”

She ducked her head shyly.

I chuckled. “But you knew that, didn’t you,” I asked, and she just nodded hesitantly. “But you did it anyway, because you knew that I was there to protect you...” I continued, and she nodded again, blushing even more.

“Naughty...” I said with a chuckle, letting my voice earn a throaty tone as she shivered. “Such a

naughty move, using me, are you willing to pay the price, then?"

"Yes," she answered, which came much quicker than I expected, making me shiver in anticipation. "Yes, I am..."

It seemed that I wasn't the only one that was frustrated by our massage being interrupted halfway. "Good, first, your punishment," I said, and patted my lap. "Come here."

"Punishment..." she gasped, surprised, but that surprise didn't prevent her from walking forward steadily until she stood in front of me.

"Now, lay on my lap," I whispered, my tone suggestive. She shivered, but the arousal in her eyes was unmistakable. Not that I blamed her. I was not only her savior, but also my massage skills were spectacular.

"Well, you're the ... leader," she whispered as she followed my direction and lay on my lap, her robe thick enough to cut the feeling significantly, even as I put my hand on her back. "Are you —" she started, only to be interrupted by a gasp.

A gasp came after my hand landed on her hips.

"Am I ... what?" I asked with a chuckle as I raised my hand and landed on her bottom.

"That punishment," she gasped. "Maybe something else..." she whispered, managing to sound throaty as she did so.

"Something like what?" I said as I chuckled, acting like I didn't understand what she was leading toward. It wasn't believable, of course, but she was too shy to point that out. Instead, her eyes fell on the floor demurely.

The next spank landed, and her chin clenched as she tried to keep her moan in. Which wasn't too difficult, as my spanks were more playful than painful, and her thick robe further blocked the pain. "I ..." she whispered, but that was all she was able to say.

"Well, since you can speak, the punishment is clearly not effective," I said with a chuckle, and grabbed her robe. "I should work hard to dissuade you from such dangerous gambits."

She said nothing for a while, losing herself in the sensation as I slowly pulled her robe up, slowly revealing her beautiful legs to my view, with curves to die for. "Thank you," she managed to say as the robe continued to climb, which surprised me. "You're a very selfless hero."

After a week, I must have made an even greater impression.

“I am a hero, right,” I said with a chuckle, though it was certainly not inaccurate. After all, I was doing most of it as a mixture of powering myself up and experimenting on Divine Spark, but that didn’t change the fact that I was their savior.

And, from her perspective, I did so selflessly, without even revealing myself, letting her take all the credit.

Not to mention, empowering her in the process.

She was ready to reward me for it, if her silence as I slowly peeled up her robe was any indicator, revealing her surprisingly perky ass considering the plumpness of her hips...

It was going to be fun, I decided as I spanked her ass once more, this time only her underwear to block my touch...

Her moan was simply beautiful...

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 410}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 7352}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Six

When I had started teasing her, I hadn't expected much, but her absolute lack of protest as I rolled up her robes had done quite a bit to change my mind about it. I spanked her once more, enjoying the way she trembled on my lap.

In a way that had absolutely nothing to do with fear.

Only anticipation.

I spanked her again, and this time, a whisper escaped her mouth. "How much longer?" she whispered.

Her question earned me a big smile. Pity, she couldn't see that from her current position. "Well, do you want me to stop?" I asked with a chuckle, a question that she left without an answer decisively. "Excellent," I added, and spanked her once more. "After all, your tactical failure needs a big punishment."

She didn't answer, silent as my hand stayed on her ass after the spank, dancing on her skin. Curious, I decided to push a bit more. A flare of mana, and two vines burst out of the ground, one wrapping around her wrist, the other around her legs.

"W-what's going on," she gasped.

"Well," I said, intentionally extending my murmur as I did so. "A part of your failure is about your abject failure to control your mana, so I have a little control exercise for you. You need to free yourself from your impediments, but you're not allowed to flood it with your mana and destroy it. You need to overcome my control."

"I..." she whispered. "What if I can't... Will I be ... punished?" Her tone left no doubt about what she was asking about.

"Of course not," I answered with a smirk, and pulled my hand away, stopping to touch her. "I'm not going to touch you ... at all."

"At ... all," she said, her voice starting from a whisper and turning into a panicked gasp halfway.

"Of course not, you have been already punished, this is the training part. Aren't you happy that you have such an enthusiastic helper, priestess?" I said with a chuckle as I crossed my hands behind my head.

But the state of her robe was enough to convey my true intent without the slightest doubt. After all, why would I leave it rolled, breaking the whole point of her conservative robe to reveal her surprisingly toned legs?

Which was a truly glorious sight, even with the monstrosities she wore as underwear.

“I see,” she whispered, but that was all she was able to say as she froze on my lap, unable to act.

Her inaction lasted a full minute, frozen with indecision, no doubt overwhelmed by what had just happened. She had already accepted my implied invitation, but the following twist was enough to freeze her.

Passively accepting was different than taking an active role.

It took a while until I felt her mana. Her magic gave her a lot of options, some allowing her to cut herself free from the vines, or at least fix her dress, but she ignored all of those possibilities, and soon, her mana danced in the vine, probing against my mana.

I responded to her tricks to take control, treating that as a fun way to experiment with controlling nature-mana, which was a great way to kill time as she tried to process the situation.

As we battled for control, both of us experienced a significant jump in mana-related abilities, and we were surprisingly balanced. I had the advantage in terms of pure power, but she was certainly more familiar with how nature-mana interacted with actual plants. I was just brute-forcing control most of the time — though, it was more the equivalent of wild bribery in vegetation terms.

She managed to steal control of the one around her arms after a while. I might have tried to steal it back, but when I felt it wrap around my arms instead, I decided to let it slide, curious about where she would go.

I smiled, but I was unable to hide my curiosity as she managed to push herself off my lap, instead ended up in front of me, kneeling due to her legs, still wrapped. Our little competition stalled with her focus shifting to keep me bound rather than trying to pull back.

Curious, I let that happen, enjoying my height advantage as she looked up silently. She was already a bundle of nerves, which gave me some nice ideas about how she might follow the situation, but I didn't dare to ask.

I didn't want to scare her off — not to mention, I wanted to see what she would do of her own volition.

"It seems that we're locked in a stalemate," she whispered, her soft tone promising a lot of interesting things about the situation.

"It seems that way," I answered with a chuckle as I shrugged and raised my hands, highlighting my helplessness. It wasn't an intense situation, especially since I could get rid of my bindings a dozen ways, and I suspected she knew that as well. "What are you going to do?"

But she didn't say anything, busy biting her lips while avoiding my gaze. "I guess ... I have to cheat a bit, then," she whispered. Her words were ambiguous, but the way she put her hands on my thighs certainly was not.

I had several words on top of my tongue, ready to go out to tease her about her choice, but since I wasn't a complete moron, I held them back to see what she would do.

"Let's see if you can ... handle it," she said, this time louder like volume would give her confidence. It worked, though only until her hand landed on my lap, and felt the hardness underneath. "This is ... wrong," she whispered.

"It's fine to admit it if you can't handle it," I said, giving her a little help. With my teasing, her anger flared. Not the softest of emotions, but an excellent way to suppress her hesitancy and push her toward an ill-advised decision.

The anger wasn't enough to completely cure her hesitancy, but it was enough to let her hand continue its climb rather than stalling, and soon, she was pulling my pants down. "See ... I can handle it," she whispered, her voice dreamy as she looked at it.

I used that opportunity to counter-attack her, and the vines around my arms loosened for a moment. "Hey," she gasped as she remembered to control them, and soon, they were once again tight.

"Well, as you said, distraction is a fair game. I can't do anything if you can't handle it."

Her frown of frustration was simply beautiful, especially since it was accompanied by a twitch of her pointy ears. "I'll show you distraction," she gasped.

"Excellent decision," I whispered as she dragged her hand up once more, this time touching my pole to remove any ambiguity about what was about to transpire.

She said nothing as her hands started to dance on my length, hesitant yet impressive, though her lips parted open in shock as she realized one important detail. "It's ... growing," she whispered.

"That's how it works when it's ... being used as a tool of distraction by a gorgeous beauty, honey," I said with a chuckle, enjoying her shock.

"I'm gorgeous..." she whispered dazedly before focusing on its size. "But ... it's too big," she whispered as she leaned back, her face contorted with shock.

"No, sweetie, just big enough, don't worry about it," I answered, enjoying her tremble, but her conviction proved stronger as her fingers started moving, her fingertips unable to touch.

"If you say so," she whispered, doubtful, but too focused to care. As her hand danced, our magical struggle continued, though with less intensity. I could have used that to reverse the situation, but with her hands picking up speed, I decided to let that go.

It was nice to see her passion growing slowly. The attraction was a dangerous weapon, especially when combined with the rush of a near-death experience. She said nothing, but her moans lingered as her hands danced.

I said nothing, enjoying the sight. With her on her knees in front of me, her fingers wrapped around my erection, squeezing slowly with an intense look of concentration on her face. A little more forward than I expected of her, but certainly more attractive.

She looked at me occasionally with rapt attention, slowly squeezing her hand, while watching me for signs, her skills developing rapidly as she put her phenomenal perception abilities to the limit, her pressure soon reaching a perfect degree.

It was nice to see her newly improved abilities to excellent use. To her credit, she didn't forget why she was trying to distract me in the first place, her mana battling against mine, and suddenly attacked with a mana rush.

"A good attempt," I said with a chuckle as I blocked her. "Pity you failed to distract me enough..."

"Oh, I failed to distract you enough," she whispered, the way her lips curled in challenge simply spectacular...

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 410}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 7352}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Seven

I said nothing as a soft blush covered every part of her visible skin while she reconsidered her strategy to distract me, her attention once again slipping away from the magical aspects of the battle. I wondered if her whole body was covered with that blush.

Then, as if she read my mind, she decided to show me that. Her hands reached to her front, and one by one, she started unbuttoning her shirt, shivering with each step, the revealed skin just as blushed. Soon, however, I was more interested in the peek of her cleavage, showing the expanse of her breasts...

She tried to keep her expression serious, but it was a challenge that got stronger with every button. Soon, her robe was completely parted, revealing her underwear... Yet, when she grabbed her robe, her hands trembled, like she was wondering whether it was too much.

That would not do, I decided, and manipulated the vines to move once more, the distraction proving enough to focus her back on our ... game. "I'll show you," she growled as she get rid of her robe, leaving her effectively naked.

"A daring play," I commented. "Now, are you going to continue with your fingers ... or something more?" I said.

"Something more," she whispered before she realized where I was looking at. "W-with my lips?" she asked, her cute eyes shining with shock, yet desire was not too far behind.

"Well, that's one option, but certainly not the only one," I reminded her, letting my gaze dip down to her spectacular breasts that challenged the ability of her underwear to stay whole.

"You —" she gasped, but another magic assault to the vine that was keeping me bound was a good way to distract her from the shameful nature of the event, letting her focus on the present instead.

Though, the shameful nature of the event didn't keep her down for long. She didn't lose much time before her gaze fell on my shaft, which was already throbbing thanks to her earlier treatment, and the show only made the situation more intense. Soon, she leaned down. Slowly, hesitantly, her gaze jumped everywhere.

Yet, ultimately, her lips captured the head of my shaft, her mouth even warmer than her fingers — which returned to the base almost immediately. It felt like velvet. Then, she moved, slightly,

her shivers enough to kill a weaker man with a heart attack.

Yet, the true effect only started when her head started bobbing. Slowly, hesitantly, yet with an intense erotic tone. As she did that, she slowly caressed the base, unsure of her movements like it was a puzzle she was trying to resolve. When her head pulled back, I was afraid that was the end, but then, her tongue darted out as she hesitantly started her task, giving a lick.

I attacked my bound hands once more, which finally earned her gaze, frustration battling with desire. “Well, you need to work harder to distract me,” I suggested.

She murmured something unintelligible, probably not too nice. Then, her beautiful ruby lips parted, swallowing a third of my length in one smooth move, surprising me with her initiative.

I let my magical attack fade, abandoning the ground I acquired, giving her some advantage in our little game. The positive reinforcement worked better than I expected. Her eyes glowed — literally, with mana — as she pushed herself deeper on my shaft, managing to swallow more than half, and only letting out one gag in return.

It was a spectacular view with her lips caressing the base while the crown started to experience the tight grip of her throat. The sensation was equally nice.

Certainly a unique experience. Spectacular, even, especially when she continued to look at with her pretty eyes colored with victory. I didn’t argue against that, as we were playing one of those rare games that her victory didn’t mean my loss... A mutual victory was certainly on the table.

I watched passively as her pretty little mouth tightened around my girth, my length disappearing into her depths. Then, things escalated even more. She started alternating her pacing, her lips tightening further as she quickened.

It took everything I had not to comment on it, letting her continue to explore her self-assigned path to victory. She mumbled occasionally, but with her mouth occupied, it was difficult to decipher her words.

She surprised me by continuing her magical attack, and I felt her magic invading the vine that kept her legs immobile. I was tempted to act like I hadn’t noticed that trick, curious how she would follow up, but then decided against it. I didn’t want to make her overestimate her abilities to cast concealed spells, that kind of thing was dangerous.

Luckily, that didn’t mean I had to sacrifice my fun to teach her the lesson properly. As she delivered her covert attack, I copied one through the vine that was around my arm, loosening

its grip, enough that I could pull my hand out of its tight hold. She didn't notice it.

"You lose—" she whispered once the vine loosened around her legs and wrapped around mine, which was the moment I grabbed her hair and pulled her down using my freed hand, cutting her words.

I didn't plunge her down immediately. "Think again," I said, using my distracting attempt as leverage to wrap the one that was around my arms to hers, forcing her arms behind her. "You need to be more careful about counter-attacks. Now, you can blink twice and I can take it as a surrender—" I commented, only to receive a growl instead.

A very clear negative response.

"As you wish, then it's my turn to distract," I said as I plunged her head down, invading her throat mercilessly. It had been a while since I properly tasted the warm touch of a beautiful woman with everything that was going on, and changing that felt incredible.

For a while, I stayed merciful — relatively — and maintained a pace she enjoyed as her head bobbed outside her control, her lips gliding over my steely shaft.

Her attempts to attack with her mana stopped for a moment, and I used the chance to move the second vine on her as well. Bound both ways, she lost the ability to react as I ripped her top off, finally leaving her breasts free.

"Now, that's a distraction," I chuckled as I squeezed her nipple, which just brought a suppressed moan, but there was no mistaking the arousal dancing in the depths of her gaze. She shivered, showing she barely had a minute to resist this pace.

If I hadn't been going through the biggest dry spell of my recent history, I might have slowed down.

For this time, I had a different method in mind.

I tightened my grip without a warning and pushed her down even faster, while simultaneously raising my hips, occupying her throat aggressively. Her beautiful blue eyes widened in shock as I rammed my cock even deeper into her throat, cutting her breathing. Her throat muscles tried to resist my invasion, but I was merciless, not allowing her a chance to succeed.

Despite wheezing and gagging, she managed to maintain her gaze on mine, with a look that was just asking for more.

“What a naughty little priestess,” I said with a chuckle, though I didn’t find that inappropriate. After all, she was worshipping something that effectively I created, making me her ... grand-god. A little worship of my trunk was nothing inappropriate.

While I was fucking her throat mercilessly, she gagged and wheezed, adding another layer of enjoyment to our little game. She did her best to act obediently as she swallowed my behemoth to the best of her ability. Her mouth opened as wide as possible, trying to swallow me down.

“There’s a good priestess...” I murmured as I let her pull back to catch her breath, just before she climaxed, her nipple still between my fingers. “Now, do you want to stop our training, or do you want to continue.”

At the edge of a climax, she didn’t say anything for a moment, trying to catch her breath. Which wasn’t easy, with my hand digging into her tits, the rush of pleasure working excellently to distract her from the more immediate aspects of our little game.

“No,” she managed to whisper after a long while. “Don’t you dare to stop...”

“As you wish, my dear Seldanna,” I whispered as I pushed her down once more, her mouth fully open under my firm assault. My full length disappeared into her mouth and down her throat again, while she did nothing but gag and choke obediently.

I closed my eyes to enjoy the sensation as she started trembling, enjoying her first orgasm ... of many that we would eventually create. And, as a first-time bonus, I let her pull back as she trembled badly, her bindings working excellently to keep her from collapsing.

Bit by bit, she recovered, and her gaze found mine. I expected confusion, maybe a soft vulnerability.

I didn’t expect a vindictive smirk.

Suddenly vines wrapped around my arms and legs.

Oops.

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 410}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 7352}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Eight

“Well...” she whispered as she stood in front of me, trembling in excitement, but that didn’t prevent her from leaning forward, her hands on my knees, her lips just inches away. With her mana filling the vines that she used as chains, she looked like she was in control ... almost.

Her plan was ruined by her chest, desperately rising back and forth as she failed to control her excitement.

Still, that didn’t mean she wasn’t wearing an absolutely maddening smile. “I guess someone was mentioning punishment for failure. How about now?” she whispered throatily.

“I was the one that talked about attention, yet I lost. Why don’t you tell me what you have in mind as punishment?”

“Good question,” she whispered, her smile getting wider as I played along. Still, she didn’t say anything immediately, just let her finger caress my body, climbing up all along, giving me a chance to drink her beauty, wearing only her panties and nothing more.

Almost enough to feel like a reason to avoid such a disaster.

She looked like her heart was about to explode in excitement, so when she pulled back coyly, I knew that it was less about teasing me, and more about her trying to control herself. Still, that didn’t mean she didn’t enjoy the attention as she turned halfway in and bent over, the angle hiding the most interesting aspect as she slowly pushed her panties down, leaving her naked.

“I ... shouldn’t be naked,” she whispered as she raised her hand, and suddenly, another vine pulled out of the ground, this time thinner, much more elegant, and filled with colorful flowers. It wrapped around her slowly, and soon, she was dressed in a beautiful collage of reds and yellows.

Looking godly.

“Isn’t this a shocker,” I whispered.

“Well, it’s not appropriate for a priestess to be naked while she’s busy with punishment duty,” she whispered, getting steadily used to the process.

As she closed in the distance, each step was sending shivers down my body, showing that her elegance was not only for battle. It didn’t help when she started swaying to an imaginary song,

her voluptuous figure forcing her new dress, making her look like an excellent dancer.

I wanted to adore her and punish her in equal amounts, so I let her continue playing. The flowers danced in her wind as she twisted and turned, enhancing her striking beauty even further. Her innocent beauty combined excellently with her enthusiastic seduction, I decided as I enjoyed the contours of her body, my mouth watering in anticipation.

It had been quite a while. Yet, I could see her desire just as fast — and she had even less experience controlling that. I could wait until she cracked.

“Punishment,” she whispered, but it felt like anything but that as she sat on my lap, the flimsy magical flowers the only thing between us. Her smile grew as her hips danced, riding me rapidly, my shaft teasing her core with each step. “How’s this as punishment.”

“Positively evil,” I whispered, which was true. Her magical variant of a dress was beautiful, but at this point, it was just an impediment, blocking our fun and nothing more.

She didn’t say anything, but her moans, along with the way her back arched, were enough to confirm that she was not too far from my direction.

I waited, enjoying her close dance as her shivers got more and more intense, curious about just how long she would maintain her punishment excuse. Pity my hands were empty, I was unable to caress her body like she had been doing.

Then, it clicked with me. I had a way to do so without cheating. She was doing her best to keep the vines around me under her control, and I couldn’t steal the control back without ruining the game ... but the same didn’t apply to her dress.

I let a sliver of mana infect it, dancing along her body as she moaned seductively, and soon, her whole dress was under my control, and she was too distracted to notice. So, as she danced, I decided to make some subtle changes.

The dress started to get thinner in certain places, revealing more and more of her beautiful bosom, for example, or subtly getting thinner around her waist to reduce the dampening effect. The thinner the dress, the more apparent the heat of her parts against my shaft.

She closed her eyes and enjoyed the sensation, too distracted to notice the intentional nature of it. Her legs parted, intensifying the sensation even further ... making it a very dangerous situation with my control over her dress.

I could have brought things to completion, but I didn't ... not yet. Instead, I focused on the top side of her dress, ordering the petals to rain down, each petal increasing the show further. Soon, her tits were once again naked, this time in an ocean of flowers, her nipples showing just much she wanted the next step.

Luckily for her, I was at the end of my patience as well.

[-21 Mana]

Taking complete control over her dress was trivial. Her eyes widened as I took control of the vine and ordered it to abandon her body, her eyes widened. A beautiful sight, just not as beautiful as her body, completely naked. "As I said, you need to be careful..." I whispered even as I used the vine around her wrist to raise her up, aligned against my presence. I gave her a second, one that she could use to argue against the situation if she wished so, but there was only anticipation.

Who was I to leave her desires unfulfilled.

I let her sink down, her warmth wrapping around my girth spectacularly as her lips parted, filling the room with beautiful cries. She closed her eyes to enjoy the feeling, and I used the opportunity to extract my hands from their bindings.

I had played with her enough. Now, it was the time for the real deal. My hands ran up to her hips, ending up on her plump ass, disappearing into her softness soon after, enjoying the texture even as I assisted her movement. Up and down, but deeper with each repeat as she sacrificed her first time for me.

As her body adapted, her head shook, messing her hair, making the moment even more exotic than it had any right being. The feeling was intense. I enjoyed the sight, alluring yet magical, even as I picked up speed more and more. Her cries rose as well, making me glad we were safely underground, with no risk of alerting anyone with her spectacular cries.

"A fascinating way to train, isn't it?" I asked her even as I continued the show. Her eyes opened, showing her surprise that I was talking, followed by shyness as the realization of what she was doing hit her. "Why, is there something wrong," I said as I stood up, raising her as well. Her legs wrapped around my waist desperately, but she didn't say anything.

She was too busy moaning.

"Excellent," I commented as I walked toward the bed, happy with my encumbrance.

When we arrived at the bed, I lay on my back, but did so without allowing her to pull out, and she found herself on the top. A position of control, or at least, it would have been if it wasn't for the state of her arms, still bound behind her. I loved it, not just because of the control it afforded to me, but also, by forcing her arms back, enhanced the sight of her breasts even more.

Which, when combined with the position, looked even more spectacular.

"Ride me," I ordered, and her hips rocked, not wasting even a second. She rose up, but only to sink deeper with a more intense passion than I expected, melodic moans rising non-stop as she traveled toward her first orgasm. She might not be experienced, but her enthusiasm was certainly peak-level.

Crossing my hands to enjoy the perkiness of her tits was one option, but I chose to reach and grab them, earning a lost cry in the process. "They are ... too sensitive," she admitted.

"How about the nipples?" I asked with a chuckle as I twisted them. The resulting mindless cries answered my question, along with her hips, picking up even more speed. Along with her tightness...

Signaling that she finally climaxed, and since it had been a very long time, my own explosion wasn't too far away. I exploded into her, filling her with my seed...

And then, something weird happened. A connection, like a bridge, building between us. It was similar to the companion process, yet also different. It felt less controlled, more intense... But also, somewhat more substantial.

Like walking through a beautiful garden rather than looking at the same garden from behind a window.

She seemed unaware of that, if the dazed yet calm look she had as she collapsed against my chest, her hips rocking lazily... Her tightness was a prison, one that I was happy to stay in while throbbing, even as I tried to understand what had been going on...

Whatever just happened was magically too complex to understand, at least in just one attempt.

Luckily, there was nothing preventing me from repeat experimentation... Not when no one would be alarmed by her disappearance while she took a well-deserved rest after her spectacular victory...

—
{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 410}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 7331}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Fifty-Nine

“It was a good warm-up,” I whispered. “Now, are you ready for the real punishment?”

The way her almond eyes widened was simply divine. Her lips parted open. “Real punishment —” she tried to ask, which died as my tongue invaded her mouth, and my arms closed on her back, which kept her in place as I twisted and turned.

And she found herself looking at the roots of the tree above us, pointing from the roots. A nice, comfortable position for her to enjoy the show ... while giving me absolute control over the process.

I wanted that to get a better feeling of the connection. A connection that was, even at its weakest, complicated enough to overwhelm me if I allowed that to flow completely.

I was not in a hurry to let that connect fully. Instead, I pushed, a cute moan escaping Seldanna’s mouth despite my tongue, the position allowing me to invade her fully at my own pace. With my tongue in her mouth, she lacked the ability to say anything...

Not that she was trying to say anything in the first place, not when she was more than happy to let me take control. As she abandoned herself to my touch, I enjoyed the feeling — pity I couldn’t fully enjoy it, not when I could feel our connection growing slightly, but enough to matter.

Pity I lacked the necessary stats to understand the fluctuating, confusing nature of the connection.

I was familiar with splitting my attention, so even without the full force of my old stats to support me, balancing the carnal and magical aspects of our little dance was not a challenge — especially since my innocent priestess seemed to be happy with the repeated invasions, not looking for any frill.

Ecstatic even, I corrected myself after pulling back from the kiss, and her cries exploded enough to strain my ears — a beautiful strain, naturally, especially with the rhythmic dance of her breasts, as if they were musical instruments to accompany her cries.

I had to admit, elves — at least, the spectacular example of her race in front of me — had a natural sense of grace, so even as I invaded her repeatedly, the rhythm of her cries and the sway of her breasts stayed synchronized.

A beautiful private show, I had to admit. Or at least, that was what I had thought ... then, her mana started to get wild.

My little hideout was already drenched with a lot of nature mana, which was an inevitable consequence of the position at the center of a magical forest that was doing its best to convert an incredible amount of mana from Aether...

Which meant, there was a lot of mana for Seldanna to use. When the vines burst out of the ground, for a moment, I thought that we would repeat our earlier dance — which was not something I was entirely against it — but then, every single vine burst out flowers, with colors that I had struggled to imagine, covering every inch of the room.

A little cosmetic change, I thought at first, about to ignore, but as she used that, I felt our connection tremble, strengthening slightly once more. Interesting, I thought. I tried to make sense of it, which was rather difficult while being distracted by pretty colors and even prettier cries.

“Someone is feeling naughty,” I said as I rolled off the bed, our bodies still connected. It would have been painful, but the floor was already covered with flower petals thanks to her out-of-control spell.

“S-shut up,” she muttered. “It was an accident. I was ... excited.”

“Oh, really,” I said with a chuckle, and reflexively sent a little sliver of magic into her. I was glad about it, because I noticed a little change, where her little sea of Divine Spark was resting. It was a subtle change, one that I might have failed to notice if I wasn’t watching in real-time, but I could see the borders of the energy, getting subtler.

For a moment, I was afraid that the border had been weakening, which certainly wouldn’t have ended nicely. I was ready to stop and help her recover — even if I had to take back most of her Spark, but the collapse I expected didn’t happen.

I was afraid, because the Divine Sea was similar to the Soul Space of the System.

For Soul Space, the borders were everything. The stronger they were, the higher the limit, and there was less chance of a collapse — which was deadly, as the experimentation on my enemies had shown.

Yet, Divine Sea acted differently. As the borders had weakened, I could sense her control over it was strengthening. Not an incredible jump, but then, the changes in the borders weren’t

significant either. Just a change that could be measured by percentages...

The impact was clear, making me glad that I didn't try to elevate her to the next level by using the same trick of the God Tree on her. I already had the idea such a thing might be bad — as the situation of my dear headmistress and her attempt showed — but still, having evidence was nice.

As I examined the way she interacted with Divine Spark, I could see that there was a fundamental difference between the Guardian Trees and somewhat with the soul. Compared, it wouldn't be unfair to classify the Guardian Trees, or the current God Forest, as artifacts.

Artifacts were capable of autonomous activities, even decisions, but there was a gap between that and sapient beings.

I took a note not to let Seldanna absorb more Divine Spark before I get a sense of what was going on...

Then turned my full attention back to the fun side of my experiment, and continued impaling her in a thick bed of petals and flowers, her face contorted with pleasure, unaware of her slowly growing power.

“So, what do you think, is your punishment working as intended?” I asked. Her answer came in the form of a beautiful moan, loud enough to create a spectacular scandal if we weren't conveniently underground.

“Mmm, not as good if you are failing to answer,” I said, chuckling at the panic on her face as she suddenly found herself empty. Luckily for her, I wasn't in the mood to tease her. I paused just enough to grab her legs and bring them to my shoulders, giving myself an even better angle. “Let's try something more interesting.”

Her moans got even more intense as the new angle allowed me to invade her even more aggressively, her moans filling the place spectacularly.

A beautiful and memorable event for a beautiful first time. Playing with my shy priestess was certainly fun even without the surprise magical advantages and disadvantages... I picked up speed even more even as I decided to turn the sensuality up a bit more. I leaned down and pressed my lips against her neck, her moans rumbling against my neck. Her back arched as her legs wrapped around my waist tightly, helping me to pull even more.

I couldn't help but smirk in satisfaction as she started to get more and more intense.

Her moans intensified as I moved down. First, I nibbled her collarbone, earning a sharp cry. Then, I arrived at her gloriously round breasts, assaulting her nipples with my teeth to add some edge. As the red marks on her breasts increased, so did her cries.

The magical side of things got even more interesting as she climbed toward her second climax, as I could sense some of my Divine Spark being pulled.

{-1 Purified Divine Spark}

It wasn't an intense pull, certainly not something I couldn't prevent if I wished so, but I let it move, and feel it settle in between her and me. A soft line, flickering and almost invisible.

But most importantly, not in the material plane. No, the connection actually extended between us through the Astral plane.

Interesting, I thought even as I flipped her on all fours, her back arching erotically while her tits swayed with each hit, the slaps invading the room. My thrusts were aggressive as her moans filled the room once again.

"A good finish, right!" I whispered as the pleasure started to get too much for me, and exploded inside her. I pulled her hair back even as I did so, filling her insides with my energy...

And feel the connection get even stronger...

{-10 Purified Divine Spark}

"Yes, yes, yes," she started moaning as another climax hit her, the unfamiliar pleasure enough to push her to the land of unconsciousness.

"Beautiful," I murmured as I carried her back to the bed, enjoying her graceful looks in the room filled with flowers. I wanted to stay and enjoy it, but after some thought, I decided against it.

The undead had just attacked us with a renewed attack, and I expected them to come toward us with an even bigger strength in a few days. Going to scout was risky ... but the benefits were tempting as well.

Especially since I finally had a safe-spot for to teleport back...

—

{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 399}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 7331}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2050}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty

It was good to be moving around once more.

Even if I was going through a long stretch of ruined land, necrotic mana getting more and more intense without the forest I had built up to prevent that. It was not the whole world filled with that mana — at least not yet — but that didn't mean it wasn't an unpleasant feeling.

Especially since I couldn't just plant one of the seeds that were with me and transform the whole area, not unless I wanted to be swarmed by a horde of disposable zombies. I wasn't afraid of them, not with all the tricks I had developed since my arrival, but that hardly meant that I wanted to face them on unfavorable ground and ruin my preparations.

The river gave me a route to follow, and I moved upstream, though I made sure to stay half a mile away. Close enough to see anything that was going on easily, but far enough to avoid the occasional patrol that was following the river.

The patrols were getting more and more common as I moved upstream. A few zombies walked around aimlessly at first, but soon turned into disciplined squads that were made of skeletons wearing armor that was forged for their bony bodies, accompanied by a necromancer.

It was much harder to avoid necromancers, but that didn't mean I was unhappy seeing them. The number of patrols and their strength meant that they had something to defend.

"It's better to be worth my time," I murmured as I hid under the shadow of another dead tree as waited for a large contingent to pass me, ignoring the smell of death. "I wonder if I could set up a secondary breach," I murmured as I slipped a seed, but the mana that followed didn't go to its growth, instead covering it to create a field that would protect it from necrotic mana.

Along with a beacon that would allow me to teleport there if I wished.

[-583 Mana]

{-1 Nature Spark}

It was difficult to put that much Divine Spark in seed without destroying it, but luckily, I had enough time to fiddle while I waited for a particularly large patrol to pass me.

I even had enough time to reach Aether Dimension to grab some Aether, efficiently breaking it down to more usable mana.

[+9210 Mana]

Though, as I delved aggressively, I could feel the density of Aether was dropping. Not significantly, but enough to be noticeable.

I had a feeling that my forest had a role in that change.

Soon, the patrol moved away, and I continued my depressing trek, toward the border of the plane once more, though stopping more and more due to patrols.

Until I came across a fortress. One that was even more depressing than the desolate landscape, as the fortress was carved from the remains of a huge, broken tree, the kind that would be measured in miles rather than yards.

I didn't know how tall it had been when it was alive, with its branches reaching toward the sky, but considering even its broken state it was taller than two miles, I had a feeling that the term touching the sky wouldn't have been too much of an exaggeration.

Pity that was not only completely dead, but was also carved into an imposing fortress, spitting out undead every second.

The imposing nature and the density of the undead already revealed that it was my destination, and I didn't need to see the river that I was following was coming from the roots of the tree, probably born from an underground spring.

Now, all I needed was to decide how to sneak into the place. I was tempted to use my usual underground trick, but unfortunately, I was quick to realize it wouldn't work. The closer to the tree, the more the ground was infused with necrotic energy.

"Annoying," I murmured as I realized that it was probably not an intentional strategy, but a side effect of corrupting that huge tree. It was the roots spreading the necrotic energy in a wasteful manner.

I could have tried to cut through the necrotic mana, but the density of mana would effectively blind me.

The river was facing a similar problem. Diving sounded like a viable strategy, but considering they were using the river to constantly pump for mana, it was also risky. I didn't know how active they were in managing the process, but the risk was unacceptable.

Luckily, there was an easier solution. A few choice illusions, some tailoring, and a hunch later, I was just another zombie, walking forward. It was a simple disguise, yet effective, for one simple reason.

I could manipulate necrotic mana to stick around me.

It was hardly a pleasant feeling, even though I was careful to maintain the distance and my Proto-HP was there to block any harmful side effects. Unfortunately, it was a vital part of my disguise.

With that, I waited until I noticed three groups of zombies merging together under the guidance of several necromancers, and slipped into the group, acting like a part of the flow. It was not as simple as it sounded, but luckily, all the times I had disguised with the assistance of Subterfuge taught me a lot, and I managed to slip in.

I could feel the energies of the necromancers spreading around and controlling the zombies, and a tendril also reached me, convinced by my fake connection.

And, I just acted like I obeyed their command as they patrolled around their fortress, occasionally slipping between patrols to drive closer. Luckily, the necromancers were occasionally stealing zombies from the control of each other, which made my switch rather innocuous.

Once I mixed into a new group, I waited for an opportunity to change my concealment method, sometimes looking like a skeleton, sometimes as a zombie. The closer I got to the fortress, the stronger I made my necrotic-mana shell.

However, the closer I got, the more I started to notice interesting stuff.

For one, the dead tree was not just filled with necrotic mana, but also Necrotic Spark. I couldn't be sure how much unless I probed directly, but even at a distance, I could feel thousands of units would have been an understatement.

Fascinating, though that brought the question, of why the river contained so little mana — at least relative to the potential it represented. Some were clearly being used to create a bigger undead army, but unless I was significantly miscalculating, that didn't explain it either.

I had a feeling that the answer was in the Aether dimension, but even as I took a quick peek — which was a risk — it ended with a failure. Not unexpected, as I was still far away from the tree, and I doubted it would work, not with the way the distance worked in the Aether

dimension. Without a beacon to help me find my path, it was near impossible to find the tree.

Temporarily shelving that objective, I turned my attention to my more immediate problem. Sneaking into the fortress successfully.

It took five hours for me finally to arrive at the huge gate of the fortress tree, and another hour to find a group actually entering the fortress to slip in. Hardly an efficient use of time, but much less risky than trying to penetrate the layer of magic around us.

Six hours later, I was finally inside the fortress.

The inside of the tree had been carved into a huge entrance, every inch filled with undead, with stairs that were going both upstairs and downstairs.

The upstairs seemed even more crowded, so I chose downstairs as my first direction. Another half an hour, and I managed to slip down, and even find a nice corner to change my disguise once more, walking around as a low-level necromancer.

I even conjured a large pile of paper, walking around in a hurry, hoping to give the impression I was a man with a task.

After taking another set of stairs that brought me even deeper, I finally came across the source of the river. A huge spring, bubbling fresh, and some kind of mana I didn't recognize — similar to nature mana, but not the same.

Pity that was the only glimpse I could get before it was drowned by the constant necrotic mana that was being pumped into the water by a necromancer, using a corrupted root filled with runes to achieve the objective.

It accounted for some of the mana the corrupted tree was generating, but not all of it.

Luckily, that floor had several nooks I could use to draw teleportation beacons. Even better, the constant conflict of mana as they fed the river made sure that the energy in the room was chaotic enough that the beacons could stay concealed for more than a temporary glimpse, which would allow me to teleport into the fortress directly into the future.

Risky, but safer than trying to dig a tunnel, and more preferable than half a day of constant disguises, alternating between skeletons and zombies while suffering the suffocating aura.

With the beacons done, I climbed the stairs once more, looking for a safe corner I could use to

peek into the Aether dimension.

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{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 399}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 16831}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2049}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-One

I had to climb two floors before I could finally come across smaller rooms I could use to hide. Most of the floor was dedicated to a forge, with several zombies constantly forging swords while an impressive number of necromancers pumped necrotic mana into the forge to ensure the weapons would end up tainted.

It was painful to watch. I was hardly a professional forger, and I had my own shortcuts, but still, watching their horrible waste was annoying.

I didn't let that annoyance stop me from slipping into one of the storage rooms, piled with weapons that were radiating cold energy. If it wasn't for my layers of protection and Proto-HP, just standing in this room would have killed me.

As an advantage, the mana they radiated was enough to conceal my own spells as I looked into the Aether dimension.

Once again looking at the confusing dance of Aether and mana, I searched for my beacons. The beacons were weaker than I would have liked, but combined with the physical proximity — which assisted, but not as much as I would have liked — I managed to find the magical presence of the tree after a minute in the confusing mess of Aether and mana.

“What a pity,” I found myself murmuring. Unlike the physical part of the tree, which was broken and destroyed, the presence in the Aether dimension was still whole, just corrupted. There was no hint of nature mana or Spark in its presence, instead, the whole structure was doused with Necrotic Spark, pumping Necrotic mana to the Aether dimension...

I couldn't help but wonder where, and I started trailing the mana tendrils. It wasn't an easy task without fully phasing into the Aether like I was teleporting, but luckily, the constantly shifting nature of the Aether dimension helped. I didn't need to move to trace that. As I waited, the destination drifted closer at one point, and I finally came across the other end of the connection.

The border of the plane. Or, more accurately, the chaotic, rotating shell of mana that was rotating endlessly, surrounding the plane, made from more mana than I could imagine.

No wonder it was a mixture of necrotic and nature mana battling, and why it was the undead trying to make sure the outer shell stayed intact by responding to the breaches.

It was clearly a lengthy affair.

I guessed the fortress tree I was in wasn't the only focal point for the ongoing corruption — likely not even the strongest one — but ultimately, it was just a guess. I needed to explore much more to ensure it worked flawlessly.

With that, I left the armory, and started climbing upstairs, glad that the preferred fashion among necromancers was thick robes and cloaks.

I continued climbing up the stairs, each floor dedicated to a different kind of operation. However, I had seen the signs of a change on the tenth floor, with four death knights standing guard at the entrance. Combined with the lack of traffic, my constant disguises wouldn't have worked.

Luckily, that was not the only trick in my bag — my admittedly large bag. I went back two floors down, and found another empty corner before casting several more spells, changing the dark robe into a patterned brown to match the color of the dead tree.

Then, in the absence of convenient windows, I carefully cut an exit at the outer layer, and started climbing the outer layer, the dead branches and an illusion to camouflage helped me to sneak in.

Though, even cutting had been a challenge, as the dead tree was containing a great amount of Necrotic Spark. My own manipulation abilities managed to keep it from turning into a disaster — though suppressing the temptation to drain the tree was big.

I could have tried to cut an entrance, but instead, I climbed toward the upper side, where there was an opening large enough for a dragon to land — and that was not hyperbole, considering I actually watched an undead dragon lift off.

It was dangerous, but not as dangerous as trying to cut open an entrance to end up facing a wandering lich or an overenthusiastic death knight.

Their private entrance was the less risky option. Still, I made sure to adjust my face slightly to look like an elf in case I got caught. That way, even if they enhanced their defenses to prevent another breach, they would focus outward.

Luckily, they relied on magic rather than active observation for defenses, which was easily dealt with. Once again, I was inside...

The upper floors lacked the chaos of the lower floors, which made it a pain to move around. Only Death Knights and Liches were there, forcing me to cast several spells to hide in the shadows. Their numbers weren't high enough to trust the anonymity of their disguise.

I didn't know where to go and was exploring randomly, so when I felt a flare of Arcana Mana. A good destination, I supposed as I followed it, only to see a death knight leaving a room empty-handed.

Clearly not an ordinary room, I decided, though matching the clues was not exactly challenging. For once, the room didn't just use the dead tree as walls, but was actually made of metal. And, considering the number of runes that surrounded its walls, they weren't just relying on the strength of the metal.

Another clue about the importance, the room was guarded by an impressive group. Two liches, and eight death knights, none of them particularly weak as shown by their presence.

Which meant sneaking the room was impossible, at least with my current stats. Concealing my presence while unraveling the Arcana defenses and pushing back the suffocating necrotic energy would have been challenging if I had access to full Stats and skills granted by the System, let alone now.

Even cracking it without destroying whatever was inside was a challenge in my current state.

Luckily, that didn't prevent a more blunt approach.

But, I didn't launch that strategy immediately but waited for someone else to arrive and use the vault — which clearly was — to see what kind of material that was hidden in its depths. I waited at the edge, slowly creating a few arrays that I pumped with mana -- nature mana I converted from the surrounding Necrotic energy.

I stayed as mobile as I could be for the next half an hour, away from the vault, filling several wards with nature mana to the brim, waiting for another undead to use the vault. It happened another half an hour later — a tense, stressful half an hour. The death knight was carrying a crystal.

The same kind they had used against me, to drain Divine Spark from the trees.

A good find, as from their lack of ability to convert the Spark, I expected them to just dispose of them into Primordial Aether. But maybe I was wrong, and they had the ability to convert it, just not as portable as I do. Or maybe they had some alternate usage.

Either way, they had something that was worthy of me to plunder, the same thing that I was in desperate need of. Fascinating.

Fascinating enough that I was willing to change the objective of the mission significantly, especially since the amount of Necrotic Spark that was locked in the tree made it a good target. I couldn't steal all of it, not without defeating all the undead that was currently here — let alone the potential reinforcements — but the same didn't count for the little amount that might get lost during the battle.

After all, even a percentage of the thousands of points I could feel locked in the dead trunk meant a stat point or two — and I was not at the point of turning my nose.

Still, I didn't launch my attack immediately. If I was going to turn that into a more convincing assault, I needed a reliable excuse.

At that point, I remembered the seed I had buried, which was a good excuse for me to push. Creating a connection of mana was not expensive, but it would have been impossible to do.

Luckily, I wasn't the only possible source of mana. Instead of connecting to me directly, I connected the seed to the God Forest, creating a stable connection that could be used to channel mana.

{-30 Nature Spark, God Forest}

Not a cheap connection, especially since the Spark that was assigned would get lost if the seed would get destroyed. Yet, that was not without its advantages. I used my permanent connection to the God Forest to modify the tree, so, when it started growing wildly, it didn't grow as a tree.

But as a treant.

I assigned not only more than a quarter of the mana the forest was generating — the most I could afford without pushing the elves to panic — but also allowed it to access a few mana storages I had been keeping for a serious siege.

The amount that I channeled was significant. Almost two million points of mana... Enough to destroy everything.

But, not for nothing. I didn't need my indirect connection to feel the approach of the treant, destroying the hordes on its path...

The way the ground trembled with each step was evidence enough...

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{Strength: 8 Charisma: 10

Precision: 8 Perception: 12

Agility: 8 Manipulation: 10

Speed: 8 Intelligence: 10

Endurance: 8 Wisdom: 9}

{Purified Divine Spark: 399}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 16240}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2009}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Two

I wasn't sure what to expect as the huge treant got closer to the undead fortress. I didn't expect panic, at least not the blind kind if such a monster attacked a city filled with people. Zombies lacked the sentience to be affected by their oncoming end, and lichs could always retreat.

However, even when counting that, I was surprised by the reaction the sapient undead was displaying against the battle. Reading a bunch of bones wearing robes or armor was not exactly simple, but I was almost willing to say they were...

Excited.

The reason didn't take long to understand. Half of them dashed into the vault, and when they left, each was carrying crystals, their lack of glow showing that they were empty. And the ones that stayed back were clearly unhappy.

I already knew they were using it to capture Divine Spark, and probably for an important objective, but the intensity of their reaction and the incentive they were displaying that they were somehow benefiting from captured Divine Spark.

And, considering their speed to join a potentially dangerous battle, they not only benefited from it, but they also benefited from it significantly. Which was curious, forcing me to reexamine most of my assumptions about the battle. Clearly, something else was going on.

Luckily, I had the time to examine that. Just as the first wave of zombies was dashing toward the treant I started examining my strategy, curious whether I could attract the remaining group as well.

First, how to handle the first wave. There was no chance the zombies could damage the treant even a bit, but even at a distance, I could feel the excessive amount of necrotic mana filling every zombie. They weren't going there to damage, but to deliver some mana.

Smart, too bad I had no intention of allowing that to happen. I sent another magical order, and the treant raised its wooden arm. A swing distributed hundreds of seeds, and a small horde of smaller treants rose, moving faster to meet with the zombies.

One horde against the other, while I watched through a remote spell. As they crashed, chaos appeared under their feet, grass and flowers blooming and dying repeatedly in a spectacular display of the circle of life. Zombies died, and treants got injured, even as I slowly started to tap

into the core of the situation.

A glamorous battle slowly covered the plain in front of the tree fortress, balanced even as the sky started to get covered by the fluctuations of mana.

However, the balance didn't survive for long. As the number of necromancers on the field increased, they started to support the treant from a distance, slowly chipping the smaller army of summons.

Pity there were still many guards at the vault. I wondered if I could actually trick them. I let the huge treant radiate even more nature mana even if it started tapping into the reserves I had created.

Yet, it was effective for two reasons. First, it allowed the treant to rush forward faster, taking down more and more zombies, and doing so rather rapidly as the horde got closer and closer to repurposed remains of the previous tree. Second, and more importantly, it implied that the treant had even more Divine Spark than they had first thought.

The temptation didn't take long for the work. A few more lichs rushed into the vault and left with empty crystals, and after some argument, they left, leaving only two Death Knights to guard. Not willingly as I could feel they were the weakest ones. Their reaction confirmed that even with the extra juice, they didn't see the treant as a threat but as an opportunity.

I understood their approach, certainly. Pity, it was a horrible decision.

Since the threat of the casters was no more, I approached the vault much easier, and relaxed as I suppressed my magic. I started gathering my magic, sharpening the nature mana into two deadly spears, and soon, I let them loose.

{-1290 Mana}

Two death knights went down immediately, before they could even react. I created a cage of mana, preventing the remaining mana in their structure from dispersing, and drained their Divine Spark.

{+29 Purified Divine Spark}

Now that the threat of the death knights was no more, I started working on the Vault, quickly unraveling the security layers, enough to allow me to enter. Luckily, the defenses were more focused to prevent unauthorized access than actual protection, which made the problem much

simpler than otherwise. Soon, I was inside.

“Wow, that’s a lot of crystals,” I murmured as I examined rows and rows of crystals, though I noted that once one crystal was placed, a magical defense activated to prevent it from being removed. Not a huge problem, but harder than the entrance — especially since, at the same time, I had to keep my attention on the treant and make sure it was giving a valid defense.

The challenge got bigger since I couldn’t actually let any of the liches or death knights approach, because, unlike what I was faking, the treant only had a few points of Divine Spark, and most were about trying to maintain the connection. So, I used the reserves to aggressively blast any that approached — even if it destroyed a few death knights and ruined the opportunity to steal all the Spark they had.

Luckily, I didn’t care much about a few dozen points, not when I was looking at the hundreds of crystals that were in the vault.

Two minutes later, the first row was successfully unlocked. It wasn’t a huge amount of time, but unfortunately, not little either. Not with a battle going on outside, each second costing a dangerous amount of mana.

{+529 Purified Divine Spark}

“Amazing,” I murmured, but before starting to work on the next row, I decided to make a little adjustment.

{-442 Purified Divine Spark}

{+2 Intelligence}

{+2 Manipulation}

The immediate boost not only allowed my mana to dance much more smoothly, but also allowed me to understand the intricacies of the situation even better. Soon, the second of the ten rows was unlocked, and it took about a minute and a half.

{+621 Purified Divine Spark}

Excellent, I thought even as I applied the next wave of improvements, even as I started to feel the weight of the unbalanced attributes. Luckily, there was still some margin to push.

{-432 Purified Divine Spark}

{+1 Intelligence}

{+1 Manipulation}

{+1 Perception}

With those three increased as well, each row took less than thirty seconds to unlock, which meant, the remaining eight rows barely took four minutes.

{+5210 Purified Spark}

A fascinating amount of Divine Spark.

It was still a challenge to balance the battle outside, but the treant managed to both keep the illusion that it was packed with Divine Spark, but also drove much closer toward the fortress than I had been expecting.

It surprised me. I was already planning to let the treant retreat a bit to maintain the illusion, but the magic of the necromancers had been much weaker, and the defenses were much more chaotic. Then, I realized the problem.

The necromancers were manipulating the defenses, and they were doing so to allow treant to approach much easier. For a moment, I was surprised, as while the existence of the traitors wouldn't have been shocking, it was a weird location to reveal that.

Then, I realized that their trick was a bit different than I had predicted earlier. Instead of weakening the defenses of their opponents, they were weakening theirs ... only to draw the treant closer, clearly hoping to take the biggest share of Spark once it was taken down.

A fascinating show of selfishness ... though maybe not, considering I was dealing with a bunch of people that sacrificed their lives for a cursed existence.

Regardless of their drive, it gave me a rather interesting opportunity. But, before taking that opportunity, I needed some more improvements. First, some physical boost to balance the weight of the stats.

{+5 Strength}

{+5 Precision}

{+5 Agility}

{+5 Speed}

{+5 Endurance}

{-2550 Purified Divine Spark}

“Finally,” I murmured as the familiar warmth spread into my body, one that gave me the necessary physical improvement to allow me to push for more and more.

Next, I wanted to top off the Wisdom and Charisma to match the other stats.

{+4 Wisdom}

{+3 Charisma}

{-746 Purified Divine Spark}

And just like that, my stats were fully balanced, and with a great amount of Purified Spark available to be leveraged for the next stage or to be converted to Stats if necessary, but converting and absorbing all that Spark took another few minutes of me.

Enough time to get the treant even closer... which stopped me from improving my other stats. Getting even stronger was nice, but not at the cost of ruining my opportunity.

It was showtime.

—

{Strength: 13 Charisma: 13

Precision: 13 Perception: 13

Agility: 13 Manipulation: 13

Speed: 13 Intelligence: 13

Endurance: 13 Wisdom: 13}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2618}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 12140}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2009}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Three

I was feeling much different as I planned to leave the vault, lighter and stronger.

No doubt, considering the amount of improvement I had just experienced. Pity I didn't have time to use the rest of the Purified Spark I had managed to score. I could have stayed to improve more, but at this point, the treant was already being surrounded, and I didn't want to ruin things until things collapsed.

And, I didn't want to miss the opportunity.

I had drawn several runes into the vault, and dumped enough nature mana to make it dangerous, before I teleported down to roots, using the earlier teleportation beacon I had created.

With the increase in Stats, the jump was even more trivial.

The moment I arrived at the basement, I lashed out with a magical bolt, which was enough to take down the necromancer imbuing the water with his cursed mana.

{+50 Purified Spark}

Not a waste, but only the start compared to what I had in mind. First, I rushed toward the bubbling mana source, and created a huge ward around it, one that used both Purified Mana and some Nature Spark, and suddenly, the river had changed from necrotic mana to nature mana.

The sudden change of mana flow affected the battle outside significantly. The undead lines, surprised by the change, retreated more than necessary. And, it allowed the treant to rush forward, and connect the huge dead tree...

A mental order later, the treant sacrificed itself, and all the mana that it was on its structure infused on the tree... A significant amount, but not enough to leave anything but cursory damage. Luckily, that was all I needed. At the same time, I triggered the explosive wards I had in the vault, and rushed toward the edge of the tree.

Neither was there to actually create damage, just a distraction.

The real trick came in the form of an aggressive release.

{-2000 Purified Spark}

{-10000 Mana}

A huge, spectacular risk, but also, it was the fastest way to take down the tree. My purified spark spread along the tree, converting every Necrotic mana and Spark they touched. First, I split the wave into two. One wave channeled upward, to ease the path of the mana that came from the sacrificial treant.

The second, bigger wave traveled down, converting all the mana and Divine Spark they had invested to the tree ... every root started to convert from a neutral entity.

At this time, the lichs were panicking against the sudden tyrannical mana fluctuation ruining their fortress much worse than they were expecting. They realized that their arrogance, probably from their overwhelming success against ineffective elves, put them in a horrible position.

They attacked the treant both with their crystal and their spells, which was another mistake. After channeling all the mana and spark inside, the treant had already turned into a useless relic.

Their erroneous judgment made their small chances even more horrible. If they had been using the dead tree as a casting focus, they could have thwarted my assault, but they didn't, giving me a chance to actually follow.

Soon, the wave of mana and Spark I had sent to the roots finished its job. I sent the mana toward the trunk, but devoured all the Spark from the roots.

Soon, the Spark from the upper trunk arrived as well...

{+6801 Purified Divine Spark}

Another spectacular gain, enough to trigger another huge stat boost, one that I desperately needed to meet the next upcoming battle.

{-5900 Purified Divine Spark}

{+3 All Stats}

Fantastic...

I opened my eyes to focus on the control, this time the Aether dimension. I could sense the connection with the outer shell, but the constant flow of Necrotic mana toward the shell had stopped. It didn't cause an immediate collapse, but I doubted it would stay like that for long.

"I found my way to trigger an urgent undead response," I murmured happily. Not only this dead tree was more important for their strategy, but also I didn't risk any valuable elven lives as a trap.

But, before any response, I needed to do a lot more things.

I grabbed the ground, and pulled some stone on me, turning into a shiny, obsidian armor, and a huge, beautiful sword. Completely useless, but enough to look distracting.

But, before going outside, I had to do one more thing. I threw another small seed, and created a small tree, one that was connected to God Forest, right at the river, converting the watery mana into pure Nature mana, and sending it upward.

I could have tried to connect it to the huge tree, but I was afraid that it might trigger an adverse reaction. I could feel that the huge tree was not something simple.

Then, even as mana started to fill the underground cave, converting from the river — which was much easier than the challenge the necromancers experienced due to similarity — I created a tunnel, and went out.

Appearing from right underneath the remains of the tree.

Risky, but after the great stat boost, a risk I could afford easily.

The sacrificial explosion of treant had been useful for two reasons. First, it dealt with most of the zombies, which would have slowed me down. Second, and more importantly, as the distraction went through, a great number of necromancers had gathered around, trying to be the first ones to take the Spark of the treant.

A few of them were already fighting against each other.

I couldn't say that they had no justification as far as what they could read, but it didn't change the fact that it was a mistake.

A deadly one.

I rushed forward toward the closest lich before they could even register my presence, my newly

enhanced speed more than enough to cut it mercilessly. A deadly slash was all I needed to deal with it, though the slash was just there to cover the huge burst of pure mana, eroding its divine spark.

{+95 Purified Divine Spark}

That changed the situation significantly, but they lacked the opportunity to react before I started mowing them down. I dodged under a hurried blast of necrotic mana and took another necromancer.

A fascinating start.

As they started to gather their defenses, I put my hand on the ground, and a small forest appeared around me, and appeared rather rapidly, enough to conceal me from their view as I dashed around...

The trees turned into treants while I cut down necromancers one after another, while the invasion of mana started to wreak havoc in the trunk of the dead tree, especially since all necromancers had recklessly walked outside, and were too distracted by my assault to even notice that.

Another flare of mana, and a huge number of leaves rained down from the trees that appeared freshly, destroying the hordes that were attacking. I was showing a bit more than I had initially intended, but after all my gains, I was willing to reveal more.

After all, I had some other interesting tricks I was ready to use.

What followed was fifteen minutes of non-stop battle, which was surprisingly boring. Especially since it was one against a necromancer army. If they had been attacking me using a proper formation, things had been much more difficult...

But with their vulnerable elements, the only ones with the ability to actually threaten me, facing me directly, the danger had been lost almost immediately. And, after the disappearance of the risk, what remained was a large army that couldn't threaten me, one that I cut easily.

With amazing benefits. Even though it was lesser than my other gains, it was still significant nonetheless.

{+728 Purified Divine Spark}

While I had dealt with the outside, the constant infusion of Nature Mana already handled the internal defenses, and destroyed the inner side, killing the remaining undead.

That didn't mean I stopped the rest after the battle was over. I dashed around the dead tree, using my new stats to create a very complicated defensive ward that could be leveraged against the assault.

The defenses were much stronger than the other settlement, and not just because of the increased stats. Unlike the settlement, I didn't need to keep my defenses subtle or hidden.

After all, I had just taken down a huge undead army, and the lack of any growing defense would have been more suspicious than the alternative. I dared to do so, as, if the worst came to worst, I could just teleport away...

With that done, I started waiting. And, since I had nothing to do, I turned my attention to the Aether Dimension once more. Not just to replenish my mana storage, but also to finally examine the structure of the outer shell...

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 16

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 16

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2392}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 4140}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 2009}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Four

The Aether dimension was much calmer without the constant flow of the Necrotic mana pumping toward the planar shell. Interestingly, the connection between the dead tree and the shell persisted...

No, not just persisted, I realized as I felt a small flicker of nature mana flowing toward the shell.

The tree was still functioning.

Fascinating, I thought as I followed the connection back to its source, and soon, I realized the tree wasn't as dead as I had first assumed. I had no idea from where, but there was a little Divine Spark possessed by the dead tree.

Then, a notification popped, warning me about the source.

{-1 Nature Spark, God Forest}

The delay was rather suspicious, but before I could pay attention to that, I had a more important thing to do. I dashed inside, using the same tunnel I had used earlier, to the underground cave with the spring.

Only to see one of the roots of the border tree already burrowing against the first tree, taking control... It was definitely not good news, and I was ready to cut the connection ... but not before a little experiment.

{-199 Nature Spark, God Forest}

A bit wasteful, maybe, but after the great haul I had attained, a few hundred points looked like a much more acceptable amount. After that, I destroyed the tree I had created in the underground cave, only leaving the ward to assist the tree.

Then, I went outside once more, leaving the tree to recover. The carved sections were already recovering as the tree devoured most of the mana. Once outside, I tapped into the Arcana dimension once more, creating a similar ward around its magical roots to fasten its conversion rate — this time, with several traps of light mana in case any undead might decide to fiddle with it.

Once that was done, I turned my attention back to the outer defenses, creating a layer of trees to conceal the wards. Once that was done, I started adding several beacons, some inside the

defensive line, some hidden away, ready to give me the mobility I needed.

The lack of constant mana drain was certainly useful.

However, as I started establishing the detection wards, I noticed a trigger. Not from here, I realized, but back from the God Forest.

It didn't feel like the undead, but still, I teleported immediately, right into my basement outpost.

Seldanna was gone, but I could sense her outside, and the rest of the camp was reacting to her movement as well. Curious, I went to the surface, confident my invisibility would hold up without a problem.

The great improvement in my stats made me feel much more confident in the situation.

On the surface, I met with a surprising sight. A great flock was flying toward the camp, consisting of large rocs, and the elves had gathered to greet, with the priestess at the center. The leading bird was a bit different. At first, I assumed it was another roc, but further examination revealed that it was not the case.

No, it was some kind of majestic bird I failed to recognize, but somehow radiating nature mana. As they got closer, I could see a dozen or so elves on top of that majestic bird, each wearing gleaming golden robes, and the rest wearing silver metal armor.

Altogether, there were almost a hundred elves split along a dozen beasts. A great response.

However, I didn't need to hear the suspicious glances the elves throwing toward the birds to know that it was a bit excessive for reinforcements — especially since, even at a distance, I could feel their strength.

It was hard to perfectly identify the power of the elves from such a great distance, but it got easier once they passed the second layer of detection wards I had established for this exact purpose, allowing me to check their mana potential.

Of course, it was a cursory assessment, difficult to pin down, but still, I could make an educated guess. The silver-armored elves were more or less as strong as a death knight, though since I had no idea about their true combat potential, it was hard to pin their exact combat potential.

Still, at least they were solidly in Chosen territory.

Golden-robed figures were stronger, but it was hard to guess just how strong they were. For the

sake of safety, I would assume that they more or less had the combat potential of a regular lich, but that was hard to make sure.

A dangerous force, and certainly not a casual amount of reinforcements. If the elves had enough forces to reinforce each defensive position with such forces, the undead would have a much harder time getting a beachhead in this plane, let alone making such great progress.

Even with my new stats, the power they represented was scary enough that I wouldn't dare to fight against them in an open field. Luckily, I had long turned my forest into a veritable fortress that I could use from a distance.

Not to mention, the trees were just as capable of draining nature mana as pumping it, which would limit their combat capabilities significantly. If it came to a fight, I was confident in taking them.

It wouldn't be an easy battle, but it was a winnable one.

Soon, the birds landed outer edge of the camp. First, the silver-armored figures jumped down, their weapons raised, pointing at the other elves, their dismissal easy to read.

And not just for me, if the reaction of our camp was any indicator. The relationship between the outer tribes and central tribes was even worse than I had expected ... though, based on the detailed style of their armor and their refined attitude, I was starting to think that the inner tribes were less wild and more urban.

Interesting distinction, though they had hardly cared about it.

“Disgrace!”

It was the first word that left the mouth of the golden-robed figures, though, unlike the warriors, they didn't even bother leaving their seats — luxurious-looking seats, more of a carriage than a saddle.

The camp fell silent. Well, that was not entirely accurate. The more accurate statement would be that no one in the camp had spoken. The silence was cut by the bows being raised.

“Stop! Lower your weapons,” Saldenna ordered before one of them could actually use their bows. I just watched as she sent a scary glare to the camp commanders, who started working to calm the camp.

Good call. The newcomers were outnumbered one to fifty, but without my assistance, the camp would lose, and even with mine, it would have been a bloody affair. And, a few smirks I could see on the silver-armored figures told me that they were more than happy to start such a massacre.

“We have reached you in the hopes of an alliance between our tribes against the undead—” Seldanna started, only for one of the golden-robed figures to raise their hands.

“Stop, wildling,” the old man declared. “What kind of dreams of grandeur you’re living in to think that you can ask the alliance of our glorious city.”

That was enough to challenge Seldanna’s control over the camp. She couldn’t retaliate against them directly, afraid of their power, but her lack of an answer was already impacting the rest of the camp, which was shuffling in panic.

The golden-robed figure was brash and antagonistic, but I had a feeling that it was not a reflex, but something calculated. The whispers of the others behind him reinforced that idea.

Probably a politically expedient reaction, unhappy with the sudden gathering of the outer tribes. Understandable. One by one, they were hardly a threat, but together, they might have some impact.

Especially when supported by a mysterious forest.

“Hurry up,” one of them whispered. “We still need to go to the boundary to assess the changes,” one of the golden-robed figures said, unaware that I was listening.

“I don’t know, this forest gives me a weird feeling. I don’t want to leave this place as well. Maybe it’s linked to whatever that was going on.”

As they argued, I quickly sent a magical message to Seldanna, telling her to accept whatever they had in mind unless they started killing. She didn’t say anything, waiting for their discussion to end, aware that they were outnumbered.

“Enough, we don’t have time to waste,” their leader suddenly bellowed, and a magical pressure radiated off him, which relied on his Divine Spark, which was still in Chosen form, but almost about five hundred points.

A fascinating amount, enough to scare all elves — except Seldanna, but I was quick to send a message to her, to act shocked.

“As per the rules of the silver city, we declare this patch of forest ours. All of you, disperse!” he ordered, then, pointed his finger to Seldanna. “And since you’re the leader of this rebellious band, you’re going to go to the capital for trial.”

Even as they gave the order, two of the golden robes stepped down, staying in the forest with ten soldiers, while two other was already moving to arrest Seldanna.

A fascinatingly quick reversal.

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{Strength: 16 Charisma: 16

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 16

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2392}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 4140}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1809}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Five

I stayed hidden in the camp as I watched the elven reinforcements split into the three groups — the smallest escorting Seldanna and the biggest going toward the border — fascinated by just how quickly things could change in a few seconds. It wasn't a lesson I was learning for the first time, but it didn't make it any less fascinating.

Once again highlighting that, personal power was more important than any kind of fortified establishment.

My first aim, I followed Seldanna, communicating with her through our connection. "Go with them and act obedient. I promise I'll save you. Also, ask the elves to establish a camp downstream and stay put for a few days. Promise them a solution, I'll handle it," I said.

I didn't want random elves to ruin my observation.

Seldanna just nodded, not daring to use magic while surrounded by others. The arrival of the elves from the central tribes was actually not that problematic. It was annoying in the short term, sure. I didn't want my defensive bastion that could be used to farm Divine Spark ruined, that was true...

But I wasn't unaware of the advantages either. I wanted to learn more about the central elves, and trying to do was rather dangerous. And, even if they sent some reinforcements, they would have been reserved as a part of a larger group,, making it harder for me to detect anything.

Yet, they were kind enough to split into three groups, one to escort prisoners, one to defend a set location, and one to explore the camp where every inch of it was filled with defensive wards.

A perfect way for me to observe what was going on.

My first focus was following Seldanna. The wards allowed me to observe the camp from a distance, and the larger group could be temporarily dismissed. Undead might attack them, but defending them was not my responsibility.

I was glad for the recent improvement of Speed, allowing me to dash behind the group rapidly to make sure things weren't problematic. I could try to use Seldanna as a beacon for an emergency, but it was not something I wanted to risk.

Still, chasing after a flying beast wasn't exactly simple, especially since I was on unfamiliar

ground, challenging me to the limit while forcing me to use a great number of spells to avoid occasional tribes.

Deeper into the territory, there wasn't much undead presence. However, that didn't mean none. An hour into our little adventure, just as they were flying over a mountain, a motion burst from the ground, followed by a familiar necrotic blast.

It hit the wing of the roc, forcing the beast into a freefall.

Elves reacted, but even with their rapid response, before they could shoot their arrows, another necrotic blast rose, along with some bone arrows. Just one lich, and a group of skeletons. Not a weak lich, as its aura suggested, but not a strong one either.

I watched as the Roc landed. One elf stayed with Seldanna, watching her carefully, while the rest attacked, making quick work of the skeletons and the lich. The lich tried to retreat, but the mage of the elves was strong enough to prevent that, showing that the lich was there to handle weaker targets of opportunity.

Altogether, it would have been a boring combat event, but I noticed that before the lich reached its unfortunate end, one of the warriors rushed forward, pulled some kind of large acorn, and pressed against the bones of the lich.

Absorbing the Divine Spark.

I frowned. I was too far away to get a true sense of what was going on, but from what I could have seen, it had been suspiciously familiar. There was no visual connection with what I saw, but that wasn't enough to write off my suspicions.

Luckily, I had a chance to observe. While the elves were distracted by the combat, I circled their combat and approached from the other side, targeting the roc with a twisted healing spell, one that forced the beast into a coma while healing it at the same time.

I could have killed the beast directly, but keeping the beast unconscious had the potential to keep them there even longer.

Success, I thought as I watched them argue for a while before their caster started working on the roc — not a dedicated healer, I noted as I felt the clumsy nature of his spells, not to mention nature mana was not purely conducive to healing as my Proto-HP — and twenty minutes later, the rest started to set up a camp.

Excellent, I thought as I set up a teleportation beacon. Since the camp had been set up, I wanted to check the other hot spot.

I teleported toward the border. The largest group of elves had already arrived there, and a small forest had grown around it, though, unlike mine, their trees were more ordinary kind, filled just with mana rather than divine spark.

They were not just using the environmental mana, but some kind of liquidized version, pouring them for the trees which grew them rapidly.

The mages were busy with that, but the warriors patrolled the perimeter, dealing with the occasional undead attack. The undead incursions were weak, but clearly, they were meant to be, They were just using probing attacks, while the others were actually using the attacks of opportunity for the situation.

I watched the battle for a long while, which gave me a better sense of their combat capabilities — enough that I wouldn't have wanted to tangle with them in my situation unless necessary — and the undead response — gathering at the horizon, but promising to be spectacular.

Yet, before I could make a move, a notification appeared in my vision.

{-5 Nature Spark, God Forest}

It was enough of a reason for me to teleport immediately back to the main camp, expecting an undead attack. I neither wanted to lose the tribes Seldanna collected, nor did I want to lose my own defensive beacon.

Even as I did, however, I was frowning. I had enough detection wards there to make sure such a slip was impossible, and the fact that the undead somehow managed to arrive there was not good news. Not in the slightest.

Yet, when I appeared in my underground chamber and used the detection spells, I felt no undead presence. There was only one ward around the main tree, established by the elves and containing them, but with no undead presence.

Something was seriously wrong, and I didn't have a lot of time to detect what exactly was that wrongness.

{-5 Nature Spark, God Forest}

Something was still stealing my Divine Spark, something I had no intention of allowing, so I went above the ground.

Only to see all but one of the elves dead, and the mage currently using the same kind of acorn to drain the tree. Treason, how interesting.

Not all of them were dead, I realized a moment later when one of the warriors gasped. “Why?” he whispered in his dying breath.

“Why? You dare to ask why. This world is doomed, brother, and I have no intention of letting that succeed. I want to escape this forest fire, and to do that, I need some leverage.”

As he said that, he kept the acorn connected. I ignored the emotional aspects of their little play, and instead focused on the acorn that he was using to steal Divine Spark, one that had functioned very similarly to the crystal that the undead used.

A mana sliver of mine was all I needed to follow the flow, and I started examining the internal structure. Despite the similarities in function, the outer layer of the two pieces of equipment couldn't be any more different. The acorn was a living thing, while the crystals were inorganic.

Maybe, if I was a less suspicious man, I would have made a conclusion. Yet, the differences at the outer layers were too much to be coincidental, so I started examining.

A good decision, I realized quickly as I deciphered the outer layer, and found out that most of the outer layer was actually a very elaborate self-destruction mechanism, primed to go off at an intervention.

Luckily, my mana was pure enough to mix with Divine Spark and follow the source, and my stats were significant enough to allow me to keep a tight leash.

And then, I got a glimpse of what was inside, and a big frown appeared on my face. A crystal, not just similar but identical. Worse, as I examined that, I realized it wasn't just the working principles that were the same. No, I could see several signs of habits that would belong to craftsmen that had been trained by the same master, working together, using the same equipment.

Elves and undead were using the same crystals to capture Divine Spark. More importantly, someone had gone through a significant amount of trouble to actually hide that fact. I only realized it, because I was a mage, an expert on Divine Spark, and a crafter at the same time...

Maybe I was being paranoid, but I smelled a conspiracy...

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 16

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 16

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2392}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 4140}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1799}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Six

I watched the traitor as he slowly drained the Divine Spark from the forest, trying to process the implications of the betrayal.

Not the betrayal itself, of course. I had long learned people were willing to sell others for their benefit, and concepts like honor and loyalty were mostly transitional.

I was more interested in the possession of the acorn, and the crystal buried inside to steal the Divine Spark, the exact copy of the one that Undead possessed, but with some organic layer to cover up the similarity.

I didn't react, because I wanted to check something first. While the traitor was busy stealing my Divine Spark, I started to examine the remains of the elves that had been betrayed. Particularly, their bags.

I wanted to see if that crystal acorn was something unique. A tendril of mana that sneaked into their bags soon discovered eight more, confirming that, no they were not unique. Moreover, five of them were filled with Necrotic Sparks, gathered from the undead.

I drained them.

{+145 Purified Spark}

{-5 Nature Spark, God Forest}

Not exactly a treasure, but nothing to be scoffed at either. Far more than I was losing.

Once I finished purifying those, I turned my attention to the real issue. Why they were working hard to gather Divine Spark. I had initially assumed that the undead was stealing the Nature Sparks to protect their dominion, but what the elf had mentioned while bragging to his dying friend suggested another option.

They were selling them to others. For a good price as well, considering the timing of the traitor. The existence of a buyer was troubling, adding another layer to the ongoing battle, not just in the current plane, but also in other planes.

It explained why I was seeing many planes being invaded by the undead. Some mysterious group was supporting them — of which I had some suspicions, but I didn't want to overreach and miss something important.

Worse, that mysterious group was probably playing both sides, providing them with identical containers, and absorbing the Divine Spark from both sides as payment for their services. I needed to target those buyers.

I just needed to ascertain the identity of the buyer and make sure they were who I was suspecting. Luckily, I had the target to question, a target that probably have the buyer prepared if the intensity of his betrayal was any indicator.

The perfect target to tail. The only problem, I didn't want him to drain all of the divine sparks I had on the forest. Easy to solve, I thought as I flooded the crystal with my mana, and triggered its limiter, giving the signal it was full.

At the same time, I ordered the forest to stop radiating nature mana, and instead channeled their production to the underground storage wards. Together, it gave the sign that all divine spark was stolen successfully.

"Huh, I expected the forest to have even more," he said, then shrugged. "Maybe it drained faster than I expected."

I said nothing, and waited to see if he would try to create some kind of fake battle. He did not, confirming his intention not to return. Instead, he climbed to the roc, and took flight.

I didn't follow him immediately, but instead pulled some necrotic mana from the environment to create a fake battle scene at a small distance and dumped the bodies there. I didn't want the other elves to get suspicious. Not because I cared about the life of the traitor, but because I didn't want them going around and blaming the tribal elves.

I still needed them.

Luckily, creating a fake battlefield just took a minute, and soon, I was caught up with the traitor.

His path was interesting. Rather than going toward the center, was going toward the planar edge, which reinforced my initial suspicions about the source.

After an hour of the persistent following, and soon, and soon, I watched him stop in front of a magically protected area. It was just the first layer, some kind of identification layer combined with an assault ward if the first one triggered. I deciphered it in seconds ... because I recognized the magical tradition the wards had been constructed...

A very familiar tradition.

The Eternals.

“Hello, my old friends,” I said, a dark smirk appearing on my face as I came across the source of my trouble at such a great distance from home. I was getting suspicious due to signs of someone purchasing any kind of Divine Spark regardless of the type, as the System had the ability to absorb them — while the Gods either lacked it completely, or their method was inefficient enough to necessitate a trade.

Either way, an ambitious ploy.

Unfortunately, entering there was not exactly an easy job. If it wasn't for my familiarity with their unique brand of warding, I wouldn't even dare to try, and even with the experience, I couldn't just make an attempt.

It was not a bunch of undead I could just destroy before escaping. They had much more flexibility. “I wonder if they forget to defend underground again,” I murmured as I started to dive down, slowly creating a tunnel. It was the method I had used the previous times I had fought against them with great impact, and I saw no reason for it to suddenly change.

Unfortunately, the process was much slower this time. I lacked the assistance of my skills and my exaggerated stats, but the wards were still as strong as the ones they had used during their training exercise. Worse, I didn't have access to Earth mana, which made digging a much slower process.

Still, I resisted the temptation to hurry up. I slowly dug through the wards, not caring about the fate of the traitor one way or another. Though, once I had reached deep enough, I set up another warded teleportation beacon, and even teleported to check Seldanna. Through our connection, I could feel that she was safe, but I didn't want to take the risk.

Luckily, her escorts didn't have any traitors — or if did, they didn't have a reason to attack.

Once ensuring there was no immediate danger, I returned to my long and thankless task of digging a tunnel deep into the underground. A long, exhausting work. Not the physical kind, but the attention I had to constantly pay. I held back any possible complaints, and kept my attention on the task.

“So complicated,” I murmured once I reached the ward, examining the mana flow. One advantage, I was almost sure that the ward was not established by a caster, but through an item. Even better, it was not as overwhelmingly strong as the defensive wards they had used for the training, nor it had that constant detection feature.

Together, it allowed me to slowly unravel the weaker defenses underground string by string, creating an entrance that was just big enough for me to stumble through. Once passed, I used the earlier trick, and followed the shell of the ward, moving miles and miles inside.

Until I finally came against a secondary ward. It was much stronger, and it was trickier to bypass as it was physically integrated into the foundations of the fortress I had found myself in. Still, bypassing was equally straightforward, just required more time. Half an hour rather than a few minutes, but I had enough time to exchange some for safety.

After some careful magical tinkering, I was inside, in the basement of the castle. I dared to push without more preparation, because the fortress didn't prevent teleportation — well, it tried, but nothing that couldn't be penetrated by wasting a few thousand points of mana.

And, if there was one thing I wasn't lacking, it was mana.

Once inside the second ward, I found myself in the bowels of their fortress. Bowels that were protected by layers and layers of wards from the inside. Too bad that my access had ruined most of their access. For a moment, I wondered about the benefits of using copious amounts of explosive wards to ruin their life. Though it was more of a fantasy than an actual objective.

It didn't take long for that desire to lose its allure, because soon, I felt a unique pull, one from the System, trying to steal my Divine Spark. However, it was much weaker than the usual pull, a shadow of its endless devouring. Ignoring that had been trivial. Yet, that barely took my attention....

I had a much more important issue. I felt a stirring in my soul space, the connection once again alive. And, just like that, I had access to the System once again.

What a surprise.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 16

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 16

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2537}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 4140}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1794}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Seven

The emotions awakened in me as I connected to the System again were... complicated.

On the one hand, it was an excellent opportunity, one that shouldn't be squandered. Having access to my skills again, even in a reduced capacity, increased my abilities significantly, and I could use the fortunate access to solve some of the questions I had about magic. A great opportunity.

Yet, even as I used the information access to parse through the information, a part of me couldn't help but be dissatisfied with the access. I felt like it was damaging my growing independence, and, at this point, I was enjoying my independence significantly.

"Less time pondering, more time focusing on practical concerns," I murmured. Self-assessment of my emotional state might not be a waste, but it was certainly not the time. Not when I could suddenly come face to face with enemies I couldn't rival.

I turned my attention to the connection between the System and the environment. The first thing I noticed was that, the connection itself was hampered. It was draining Divine Spark from the environment, but at a much slower degree compared to back in the mainland. It didn't even drain any mana.

Though, the reverse was also true. There was no convenient mana or HP recovery, and the skills were ... for lack of a better term, faded. The mana conversion feature, for example, was not working. Stats weren't working either, but they were not just dead like before. Classifying them as half-awake was a more accurate definition. I had a feeling a push would awaken them.

I didn't dare to experiment. Instead, I turned my attention to an even more important aspect. Companion module. Interestingly, that was just as dead as the earlier.

"Isn't that interesting," I found myself murmuring, my smile getting bigger. I had already assumed that the Companion process was something like an alternative System, and what was happening here just confirmed it. The connection here with the Main System only...

And it implied, if I could understand how such a connection cut through the primordial aether, I could replicate it for my unique brand.

Or even better, create one that was completely under my control...

With the assistance of my skills, I was already coming up with some really interesting methods

such a connection could be created. It would have been weak and ineffectual compared to the main system, but it would be under my control, and my control only.

What a fascinating possibility.

I wanted to go upstairs, and find the source of the connection... The only problem, I wasn't confident enough to deal with the Eternals. Not with my current capabilities. It would have been different if they didn't have the System, but they did, possibly with a method to keep their Stats at least partially active.

It was not a situation I was willing to face in a hurry, not without something pushing me. I had already received the answer to my question. The crystals were coming from the Eternals, and they were using the System to devour the Divine Spark.

I might have thought differently if the Eternals weren't using the connection with the System to devour the Divine Spark. If that had been the case, raiding their storage, which would have probably held tens of thousands of Divine Spark for my benefit, would have been an incredible strategic benefit.

Unfortunately, wishing didn't make it a reality.

However, just because I didn't want to go upstairs didn't mean I wanted to escape either. The sudden connection with the System was convenient, and I started resolving my problems. My first target was Proto-HP, using Biomancy to develop a better understanding, using it in tandem with Tantric — which I always had full access — to examine the internal structure of Proto-HP, to understand how it could be used better.

I stayed in the basement for three hours, carefully examining the structure, and soon, I attained two important benefits. One, I managed to increase its efficiency.

Two, I discovered a way to safely put some to someone else. It was not completely solved, and it certainly required some experimentation to understand the limits and drawbacks, but it was a start.

I might even stay longer, but I felt the wards between the basement and the upper floors flicker, and decided to beat a retreat.

It was not the time for a confrontation, not yet.

However, just because I didn't seek a confrontation didn't mean I wanted to leave them alone.

First, I pulled a mile away — though, for a chance, I didn't leave any beacons, afraid of those getting detected — then pushed toward the surface.

I examined the castle from a distance, examining its structure. The first thing I noticed was the towers, five of them, one at each corner, and a taller one at the center. Each tower had a crystal at the top, creating some kind of magical cage to protect the castle, but even at a distance, I could see that it was too complicated for it to be the only purpose.

I was willing to bet those crystals were responsible for the System access. The mana usage was too intense to be just for the defensive effort.

Unfortunately, intimidating walls and magical towers weren't the only things I had noticed. I could see dozens of people at the walls, confirming that not trying to breach the castle was the better idea.

"It's time to retreat," I said I retreated back to my tunnel, and as I moved back, I collapsed the tunnel behind me, until I had reached the outer layer.

I pulled back another mile, then created myself a barebones shelter, just enough to teleport, hold a few detection wards, and other fundamentals, with no care for comfort. Then, outside, I started building a subtle detection ward that was hard to detect.

Ward, I built even farther, because I didn't want to alert the Eternals. No, for that purpose, they were the bait...

I didn't need to wait for the first bite. Barely two hours since I started establishing that ward, before I even finished, I felt a tug at the ward. I went out, magic around me enough to keep me invisible, enough for me to detect a procession of the undead. Five liches, twenty death knights, and a thousand zombies.

Not a small army, especially since I could sense the liches were even stronger than I expected. I could have attacked them directly... But I wanted to try something different.

They were trusting the liches to protect the crystals, their presence glowing against the detection ward. I moved underneath them, until I was near them, and let a thin string of mana toward the crystals ... draining slowly.

It would have been a hopeless task if they had the ability to actually sense Divine Spark. Luckily, none of them actually had that ability, and used the crystals to bypass that. That inability allowed me to act like a thief, and when they finally stepped out of the range of my wards and

entered the range of the Eternals, half of the Divine Spark with them belonged to me.

{+1480 Purified Spark}

A fascinating amount. Of course, I would have loved to take all of it, but I doubted the Eternals would just wave as those groups got attacked. One or two, I could get away, but more attacks would bring attention that I wouldn't want.

Instead, I was happy with the fascinating amount of Divine Spark that I was able to steal with next to no effort.

I waited for a sign to leave, but before I did, I saw a familiar face. The unlucky traitor, left the wards with a huge frown on his face. "I'll burn that cheating forest down," he murmured as he moved toward the forest.

My wild guess, the Eternals measured the crystal he had and realized it was empty, not giving him what he was hoping for in exchange for his betrayals. I might have let him go away, but I didn't have any need to be a traitor.

Instead, halfway in, I attacked him. Before he could even realize my presence, I stabbed him with a pure mana line, and pulled it to steal his Divine Spark.

{+21 Purified Spark}

Not exactly strong, but not weak either.

"W-what's going on!" he gasped, shocked as he tried to summon mana. If the environment he was in was generous with Nature mana, he might have put some kind of useless defense, but in the middle of a desolate land with more necrotic mana than nature mana, he was just helpless...

I appeared in his sight, wearing an illusion to make me look like an elf. "We have a lot to talk about, traitor..." I said, the churning of mana around me enough to turn me into an intimidating sight.

"I'm not a traitor!" he tried to argue, but a flood of pure mana was enough to intimidate him to keep silent. Of course, it was suspicious for an elf to use pure mana, but I didn't care about that.

It wasn't like he would survive after the interrogation...

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 16

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 16

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 4038}

{Pseudo-HP: 2869 Mana: 4140}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1794}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Eight

“I don’t have time to discuss the nature of your betrayal,” I said as I flooded his body with my mana, creating a drunken effect even as I destroyed certain parts of his mind, forcing him to speak truthfully.

It was near-irreversible, but considering I had no intention of keeping him alive, it was not exactly an unfortunate trade-off for me. Instead, I turned my attention toward my target. “First question. Tell me how the war started..”

That launched an interrogation that lasted for almost an hour, and gave me a lot of answers I had been searching for.

Apparently, what I had learned from Seldanna about the start of the war had been misleading. Her guess had been a few weeks at best, but the traitor claimed that it had been almost a year since they had first come across first undead presence, only to be destroyed immediately...

This launched a long campaign of hide-and-seek, where the undead fought to establish a stronghold where they could spread their power, and the elves from the central city doing their best to squash it — without even bothering to inform the border tribes, apparently, treating them more as a nuisance than potential assistance.

He had summarized dozens of battles to me, each incredible success against the undead... Yet, even as he went through the battles, something was tickling my mind... The battles he described were incredible, worthy of stories, requiring heroics, bravery, and sacrifices... If I hadn’t already used magic to strip him of his ego, I might have assumed he was trying to exaggerate the battles he was in, but that was certainly not the case.

More importantly, only two names were coming across as heroic repeatedly, and he was not included... Prince Arun, and High Priest Ivasaar.

“Suspicious,” I found myself murmuring.

I had fought against the undead many times, and the way those battles unfolded didn’t sound reasonable in the slightest.

“And when you discovered you can trade Divine Spark in that fort?”

“What?” he asked.

I realized we might not be sharing a name. “What you had in that acorn,” I said.

“Essence of Life,” he corrected, which sounded interesting. Maybe it was another valid name, but it was almost like they were deliberately cutting the link between the Gods and the energy they were trading.

“Good, tell me when you heard about that?” I ordered.

“I heard two subordinates of High Priest conspiring to steal some of the acorns and bring them directly for a trade,” he said. “They were talking about a mysterious group trading Undead Essence for a miraculous version of Essence of Life, and for a price, they even extract already absorbed Essence to allow improvement...”

“A good service,” I muttered. The profitable nature of that little offering was certainly fascinating. From what I had seen, it was impossible for the others to absorb two different sources of Divine Spark without conflict, so they wanted to get rid of their weaker source first before replacing it.

And, here they were, Eternals, offering to absorb the weaker source, something they already wanted, for a steep price, and from there, they were offering some kind of exchange service between different Divine Spark — and I doubted they were just doing some equal exchange.

A profitable trade, enough to make me question whether they were here just to profit from the battle ... or their presence actually predated the battle and they were the ones that fueled the battle in the first place.

After all, my memories of Zokras were there to remind me that the Eternals were not above using undead as convenient patsies for their purpose.

“I wonder if the undead is their only ploy,” I found myself murmuring. After all, the victories of the elves, particularly the High Priest and the Prince, didn’t make much sense either. It almost gave a sense of a choreographed fight.

Pity that was not something the traitor would know. Or would he? “Tell me where you get that acorn from?” I ordered.

“It’s the great invention of the High Priest, allowing us to prevent the undead from resurrecting,” he answered.

Which gave me the answer I was searching for. High Priest had some kind of connection to the

Eternals. Probably a willing accomplice, but I couldn't just assume that with certainty. There were other possibilities, trickery, magical control, blackmail, or they might even succeed in convincing him that it was a way to strike back against undead, and they needed to hide the origin of the invention...

Regardless of the extent of his willingness, however, it was clear that the Eternals had infiltrated the Elven Capital to a dangerous degree, highlighting the need to act carefully.

"And, I'm guessing that you're under strict orders to bring back those Acorns back to the High Priest, and never use them on anything else, am I right?"

"Yes, and any contamination has the risk of creating an explosion."

I thought of another question. "And, how did you discover you could use those Acorns on the trees and not just undead," I asked. I had a feeling that he wasn't as smart to come up with that trick.

"I have caught one of the soldiers of Prince Arun sneaking around the Tree of Life, sapping its energy," he admitted.

"Why didn't you try the same?" I asked, even as I wondered if some naughty elves walking around, stealing the divine spark of important guardian trees explained the fall of that border tree. After all, even its remains were impressive. But I abandoned that track for the moment.

"Tell me more about the capital, how it works, and its social structure of it," I said. I said nothing as he gave me the breakdown of their societal structure. An immobile social structure with a strong caste system, with almost no mobility — not helped by their incredibly long lives — between the groups. Royals, nature priests, soldiers ... and servants were collected from the tribes.

Or, as the way the traitor was framed, given the chance to serve their betters and make something out of them.

No wonder the tribes were antagonistic against them.

The capital was clearly smaller than I would otherwise expect, but the power difference — provided by the tree of life, if his words to be believed — allowed the city elves to easily bully the tribes, and squash any attempt of building alliances — not that it was particularly difficult if the way they reacted to extinction events was any indicator — and maintain their monopoly of power.

That monopoly didn't help them as the undead slowly yet inevitably invaded their home.

"Goodbye, little traitor," I said as I delivered my final blow after I had learned everything I could in short order. I did so, because I felt the wards I had left with Seldanna signaling movement once more. I wanted to go and protect her.

Not to mention, I liked the mentions of the Tree of Life, and the capabilities it boasted. I wanted to see how it worked. I had a feeling that I would learn a lot from how it worked. And, the combined objective of protecting Seldanna and sneaking around left me with one option.

It was time to wear a disguise once more.

But, before that, I needed some assistance.

If I was going to go around concealed, once more disguised, I needed my relevant skills as optimized as possible.

Even if it burned all of my purified spark storage, even tapping into the Guardian Forest.

{+6 Charisma}

{+6 Manipulation}

{-3800 Purified Divine Spark}

{-342 Guardian God Forest}

"Not bad," I murmured as I stopped for a second, once again enjoying the feeling of getting stronger. My mana suddenly flow stronger and softer at the same time, but also it gave me confidence that I could easily conceal myself as a servant once more.

Even in a society as structured and xenophobic as the Elven capital.

"But, one more thing to be done," I murmured as I closed my eyes once more, reaching to Aether Dimension to pull Aether, breaking it down to pure mana, converting it to HP and mana, just in case I met with an emergency.

God Forest had hundreds of thousand of points of mana hidden, of course, but the distance meant that it took a while to reach it. Worse, if anything blocked my access to Aether Dimension, it would also block my access to that stored mana.

I wanted to bring some more.

{Pseudo-HP: 8000}

{Mana: 15000}

With that done, I teleported, ready to shadow Seldanna once more.

It was time to step onto the elven capital.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 338}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1452}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Sixty-Nine

“Fascinating...”

That was the word that escaped my mouth as I scaled a mountain while my mission was to follow Seldanna and her escort closely — to make sure they didn’t have another traitor that might decide to freelance for personal benefit. I knew I was close to the capital, so, finding a city when I climbed over a mountain hadn’t been surprising.

The nature of the capital, however, was very much a surprise.

At first glimpse, I found myself thinking that I had just come across an ordinary meadow, a large tree, surrounded by some shrubbery. But with my senses, it took a second to realize it was just a scaling error. The city was far more distant than I realized, and what I took for shrubbery was trees. Huge, intimidating trees that on average, taller than a mile... There were thousands of such trees covering the huge plain, with houses on the branches...

Then, there was the tree at the center. Tree of Life.

I would have said a huge tree, but that would have underrated it to a criminal degree. No, huge were the trees that surrounded it, most taller than a mile, with houses on their branches.

The wooden titan at the center made them look like shrubbery, almost fifteen miles tall, its branches cutting through the clouds and touching the sky — and that was not an exaggeration. Enhancing my senses with magic, I could see that the branches were actually touching the planar border.

It was not hard to assume that it was responsible for providing most of the mana that was responsible for maintaining the constant cyclone of mana that protected the plane from the ravages of the primordial aether.

Fascinating, I thought even as I flexed my magic to create another hideout, this time smaller, with a beacon but with little defense. Here, the nature mana was much denser, and I didn’t want the risk of getting caught. The stronger the defenses, the easier for it to be detected.

That also went for my disguise attempt. If it wasn’t for the hundreds of elves entering and leaving the cover of the trees — both by flying and by walking — I might even have abandoned my mission and just saved Seldanna before she arrived in the capital.

Instead, I sent her a subtle magical message saying that I was about to enter the city along with

her, and that she shouldn't worry too much.

Creating an outfit for myself based on the elves that were entering the capital didn't take long. I based my outfit the way their civilians — or, what I assumed to be civilians, walking around with no visible weapons — before I climbed down the mountain, dashing while concealed in magic, slowing down only when I got closer to the city.

I should be able to teleport to Seldanna in an emergency, but it was better to have alternative paths in case of an emergency.

Yet, even as I passed through the first line of trees, consisting of the smaller ones that were merely around a thousand feet tall, a smile found my face. In a world under the siege of the undead, I wouldn't have thought I could find a peaceful neighborhood like this.

Unlike their tribal counterparts, the elves in the capital moved with a very distinct lack of hurry that I had only seen the noble scions back in the main material plane. Not that I blamed them — much — as the streets were not only lined with huge magical trees that constantly radiated nature mana, but also with huge treants that were slumbering under the trees, with huge weapons made of wood and silver next to them, ready to act.

One thing was certain, the security here was not a joke.

Pity it was completely geared for defense, and wouldn't matter once the undead covered the rest of the land.

I ignored the greatness of their strategic mistake as I moved deeper into the capital. The inner parts were richer, both in mana, and in material wealth — evidenced by the decoration and the way the elves were dressed.

Also in security. I had to change disguises three times, and used the underground tunnel trick twice before I could even take a step into the inner city.

There, I could see that the trunks of the trees were decorated with silver, gold, gemstones, and other precious materials, enough to equip an army with top-tier weapons. It wasn't to say that they were completely useless, as they enhanced the magical potential of the guardian trees somewhat; but from any practical perspective, the effort was not aligned with the final impact.

Arrogant.

As I pushed my way through another security point, this time manned by some serious figures

that were decked in the same kind of armor that was worn by the commander of the strike force, disguised as a servant — and didn't that awaken some nostalgic memories — when I finally left the trees behind.

All but one.

At the innermost circle, there was no tree but the Tree of Life. The shadow it cast underneath, and the roots that no doubt dug deep and wide, left no chance of survival — especially if my guess about its astral presence was at least partially correct.

Without the numerous trees to be hidden, sneaking into the tree was much more difficult. Luckily, the lack of trees didn't mean the lack of plant life. The place was filled with all kinds of smaller plants, shrubbery, flowers, and tall grass.

And, to my convenience, maintained by an army of servants.

It was another sign of decadence that every single servant had some Divine Spark inside them. They were firmly in the Chosen territory, with Spark fully crystalized, but even a careless observation put their potential around ten points on my measurement scale.

A great waste, as the mages of the tribes weren't as strong ... and even the soldiers that were sent to the border weren't as uniformly strong.

The signs of decadence were getting even more obvious, to the point of getting blinding. They were fighting a war that probably risked all their lives, yet they had the luxury of letting their mages work as gardeners without worry.

I sat in the tall grass, pulling nature mana to hide as I continued to observe, trying to see maybe I was missing something, that their gardening had a bigger importance ... but no, it was just gardening, to make sure everything was perfect.

It looked perfect. Not only every single blade of grass gave a wild yet cultivated look, but also their magical presence was the healthiest I had ever felt.

I rolled my eyes as I took a step further, walking around the perimeter to find a safe path toward the tree. Just like the other houses, the titanic tree had many buildings located on its trunk, connected with bridges of wood and crystal — another beautiful yet excessive display of decoration — and I just needed to find a path for myself.

That proved to be more challenging, as the elves that had the right to step there preferred

flying rather than walking, but the presence of the bridges convinced me otherwise. And, by juggling between a servant and a soldier outfit, I finally managed to find a bridge that was unattended by the soldiers, ready to climb.

But, before doing so, I put my hand on the trunk of the Tree of Life. I remembered the traitor admitting that other traitors stealing Divine Spark, and I wanted to examine it. I was careful in my probing, sending a slow and steady tendril to breach the outer layer ... the only problem, it didn't work as well as I had hoped.

Inside the tree was a veritable storm of mana and Divine Spark. Not the most confusing or intimidating storm — as I swam in Primordial Aether, which had been a much scarier experience. The Tree of Life reminded me of my own God Forest somewhat, but the nature of it was much more chaotic.

My guess, it was having trouble absorbing the constant new Divine Spark generated by the elves that surrounded it, locking it in a weird state. It prevented the tree from having any kind of sentience...

But also, it was enough to block my measurement capabilities to a significant degree. There were ways to bypass that, a few wards to support my sensing capabilities while sending a stronger probe would give me what I needed ... Too bad it would also ruin my disguise.

I needed to find another way. Luckily, the spy revealed that the other traitors had been using the acorns to steal divine spark, and there was no way for them to succeed with the current level of protection. Meaning, there were spots with weaker natural resistance

I was already pushing my luck, and I didn't want to get caught worse.

With a sigh, I started climbing the stairs, toward where I could feel Seldanna's presence.

I had a beautiful elven priestess to save.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 338}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1452}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy

I left the questions about the chaotic nature of the Tree of Life behind as I climbed the stairs, once again disguised as a servant. Their habit of using Chosen as Servants might be wasteful, but it was beneficial for my purposes.

It gave me an excuse to surround myself with nature mana, creating an outer shell that would hide any illusion I might need to cast underneath. With that assistance, I picked a faster pace, climbing the stairs.

Seldanna finally stopped moving, suggesting she was finally imprisoned. I needed to make sure she wasn't suffering from any kind of problem. The connection didn't show her distress increasing, but better safe than sorry.

Even with all my advantages, an hour later, I was still searching for her, unable to find her. My ability to sense her was distorted, which was an achievement.

Even more interestingly, I could see several elves discreetly running around, their discussion implying panic. Curious, I slid closer, listening to their discussion. "Any clues in the cell?" one asked.

"Not yet. Not even our best magical tracker could find her. She somehow disappeared from existence. No mana presence, no life energy, nothing," the other answered.

"We need to find her. The prince already relayed his intentions to speak with her. I don't want to tell him that I failed him ... not in such a critical time."

The first one sighed. "Why does he want to talk with a savage in such a time in the first place? I thought we had bigger worries."

"I don't know, and I'm not stupid enough to ask such questions," the second one said. "Why don't you take that as a lesson and focus on searching, so you don't get demoted for losing the savage that the prince needs."

Interesting, I thought as I listened to their discussion about the disappearance of the prisoner. It wasn't hard to guess that they were talking about Seldanna, though. From their whispered discussions, I could hear that Prince Arun suddenly developed an interest in her...

My guess, it was about the report about the God Forest. Probably they realized something extraordinary, and they probably linked it to the Eternals ... or, as they knew, the mysterious

merchants.

Either way, they might send another force to that. I used the connection to send an order to the trees, and the whole forest used nature mana to turn into treants, and started moving. I ordered them to join the tribal elves, before starting to migrate — with orders to take any other elven tribe they had seen with him and move to the inner parts of the plane.

Hopefully, their numbers would allow them to absorb the other tribes without Seldanna's assistance. Though, even if they failed, the moving forest should be enough to confuse the Prince ... and whoever was responsible for making Seldanna disappear.

I watched the soldiers search Seldanna for a while, only for them to fail. They had been using many mundane and magical means, but none worked.

Luckily, I didn't rely on just mana. I used Divine Spark to create a path between me and Seldanna, tracing it toward the prison. To my surprise, even that didn't work as smoothly as I hoped, giving an accurate read only when I managed to get a lucky break, and got closer to the entrance of her new prison.

"Fascinating," I murmured as I realized the entrance of the prison was actually carved into the Tree of Life itself, which, from everything I had seen, was a heretical behavior for Elves. Though, while heretical, it was extremely useful. The chaotic dance of mana worked excellently to hide anything inside the prison, to the point that they didn't even assign any guards, trusting the tree to keep the intruders away.

And, not for a wasteful reason. The secret path was actually filled with the same chaotic flow I felt earlier, threatening to erode me. It would have been scary if I didn't experience much worse when I first arrived.

The elves weren't traversing the chaos every time they walked, of course. On the wooden walls of the tunnel, I could see many etched wards, capable of temporarily protecting the tunnel. However, activating those would mean alerting the others.

Luckily, as a constant source of Nature mana, I could easily merge with the dance of nature mana, and the occasional Sparks that I collided with were easily dealt with.

{+4 Purified Divine Spark}

My objective was not to drain the Divine Spark, but I wasn't going to bother trying to avoid every single scrap when absorbing was easier. And, it didn't even harm the tree, as the floating

crystallized pieces were clearly harmful to its general health.

And, the deeper I moved, the more I started to feel that the assistance was necessary. I was not in very deep compared to the general thickness of the tree, but still, I could feel something was wrong... I didn't have any direct evidence ... just a general feeling.

Before I could analyze that, I came across a door. barely a few hundred feet deep. Unlike the tunnel, the room was protected by active wards, ignoring the storm of mana that raged around. The wards were strong ... but with my enhanced stats, barely enough to delay me for more than a second.

I found Seldanna alone, worried. "You —" she gasped as she turned. "You're here!"

A wave, and the chains that were holding her fall apart. She dashed forward immediately, hugging me. "Don't worry, sweetie, I'm here," I said, patting her back to calm her down, her arms tight around me.

I wasn't in a hurry to make her move, as we were in the safest location. The one that imprisoned her here was confident that it was impossible to find the location, and ignored other disadvantages.

Including the fact that they couldn't observe the location.

I felt safe, as even if they walked in, they wouldn't send a big force, and I would have the absolute advantage. Worst came to worst, I could try to drain the tree of Divine Spark to get stronger. It would be risky, as I could feel the tree was already giving me a bad feeling, but it was not a concern I would take if I suddenly faced a deadly situation.

I hugged her for a while, letting her calm down, until I spoke. "Now, why don't you tell me what happened since you arrived?"

"Really? Shouldn't we escape first?" she said.

"No," I answered as I waved my hand. "Believe me, this place is much safer than anywhere else we can find in the capital. And, since we're here, we shouldn't waste the opportunity to look around a bit."

She looked doubtful, but she still said. "If you think that's for the best," she whispered.

I chuckled as I waved my hand, and a chair appeared in the otherwise empty room. I sat down,

and pulled her down to my knee. She continued hugging, not wanting to avoid the proximity. “Now, tell me what happened since your arrival,” I said.

“That was confusing. First, some kind of commander tried to question me about the forest and how it suddenly managed to appear, and didn’t believe me when I explained it. He kept asking about a group of merchants,” she said, looking at me at this point.

“I know who they are asking about, but I’m not one of them,” I explained quickly. “The merchants are the ones that are supporting the undead. I discovered it very recently as well.”

She nodded, blushing slightly as she questioned me, but I let it slide. She had her concerns, viable ones. “Then, they mentioned one of their useless princes, and left me in my cell...”

“Not this one, right?”

“No,” she answered. “I was suddenly attacked by a magical rush, and I was immobilized. Then, a robed old man appeared, and for some reason, asked me which god I was working for, and why I was betraying them.” She stopped, snarling in anger. “Like I owe those smug entitled monsters any kind of loyalty in the first place.”

“Any idea why he asked you that?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” she said. “He just used some kind of crystal on me, and based on the results, he started questioning.” In other words, he tried to drain her Divine Spark, but the amount of spark she had was the same. So, either he failed to drain, or stopped halfway intentionally. Either way, the mysterious interrogator — probably the high priest — used the crystal to assess the state of her Divine Spark, only to realize it was somewhere between Demigod and God — though the exact nature of the latter was still a mystery for me.

“Then, what happened?” I murmured as I found myself frowning. I suddenly felt a flicker, another line of Divine Spark connection establishing with her. It was soft, vague, and impossible to notice if she hadn’t been sitting on my lap.

“He mentioned something about sacrifices, forced me to eat some kind of fruit, and dragged me here. I was afraid of being poisoned, but I don’t feel anything like that,” she explained.

“I don’t know what it was, but I’m sure it wasn’t poison. I suspect it’s something much more interesting,” I murmured, letting my smile widen. “I think I need to check it carefully, without anything to intervene,” I said.

And pulled off her robe.

“H-here,” she stammered, shocked, not expecting. But it didn’t last long as she realized what her exact state of undress would lead to.

It was time to use Tantric once more.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 342}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1452}

Elven Priestess - 70}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-One

“Well, we’re in a safe location, and I have established several alerts to make sure we won’t be ambushed,” I said with a smirk. “Do you have something more interesting in mind to kill some time while we waited for the idiot who dared to imprison you?”

“Well, no...” she whispered. “But, this is Tree of Life, the holiest place for us elves...”

“I need to make sure nothing is wrong with you, and the closer we are, the better,” I answered with a smirk. “Your clothes would only get in the way. And, what’s the problem. You venerate nature, and can you imagine anything more natural than what we’re about to do?” I said even as I got rid of the remaining fabric on her body, leaving her completely naked.

“But...” she whispered, which melded into a moan as I put a gentle kiss on her neck, making her tremble.

“Don’t tell me you’re not excited to do it at the center of the Tree of Life. Can you imagine somewhere even more appropriate...”

“Well, no,” she whispered, trembling on my lap as she said that. “But, still...”

“You know, I’m not exaggerating when I say it’ll help me to examine you.”

“Really?” she asked.

“Yes. Would I lie to you?” I said as I put my hand on her chin, my tone husky enough to make her shiver. The blush that covered her whole body was not a surprise, as Seldanna was innocent enough to be extremely vulnerable to charm, her inexperience and social status working against her.

My recently boosted Stats helped greatly as well.

“I... Still...” she murmured, trying to find words, only to fail spectacularly. She was silenced when I raised her head to meet my gaze, her lips parted slightly. I didn’t bother saying anything else, and just leaned forward for a kiss.

She responded, her tongue invading my mouth readily while I reached to her chest, enjoying the softness of her breasts. “Damn, girl, I missed it,” I whispered as I pulled back for a breather.

“Shut up, and start your examination,” she said and leaned forward to continue the kiss, while

her fingers moved along my body, getting rid of my clothes. Her initial hesitancy was quick to disappear, leaving its place for pure arousal, one that was enflamed further by her close encounter with deadly danger.

While she got rid of my shirt, I leaned forward, adding some very necessary hickeys on her beautiful tits. “Naughty,” she gasped, but considering she fell on her knees and got rid of my pants right after, it was not exactly an insult.

“And I missed this,” she whispered before capturing my girth between her lips... I wanted to focus on her body, but I wasn’t exaggerating when I said our closeness would allow me to examine her situation better.

The first thing I noticed was that the connection I had felt that led to her was not an illusion or a mistake. There was truly a thin connection of Divine Spark connecting her, and the Tree of Life was the other end of the connection.

“Fascinating,” I murmured, and Seldanna’s gaze found mine even as her head continued to bob. I smiled at her, acting like she was the intended target of my words.

The true target was the connection itself. It wasn’t a strong connection ... nor it was particularly stable. My first thought was that it was poorly made, which wouldn’t have been surprising.

The proper ability to manipulate the Divine Spark was a rare ability, after all...

Yet, the more I examined the weak connection, the more I realized my initial assumption was wrong. The connection was not poorly made ... or even actually made artificially in the first place. The more accurate way to define it was to say it was growing organically, no different than a tree.

However, the growth was very slow, which was why it took a while for me to realize that. I didn’t question why such a connection was growing. It was clearly a ploy from whoever threw Seldanna in this special prison — probably the High Priest.

Similarly, I wasn’t panicking about the connection itself, not when I could easily snap it off. Yet, I did not.

Such a connection was not necessarily harmful. Oh, I had no doubt that whatever her captor planned was careful about her safety ... but with my constant observation, things were different.

A sharp hint of pain brought me back to the present. “Pay attention to me,” she warned, leaving

teeth mark on my shaft.

“Someone is pushing her luck,” I answered, my throaty tone putting a smirk on her face. I smirked back even as I grabbed her waist and pushed her onto her back before crouching between her legs, assaulting her delicious folds with my tongue.

Circling around her knot, it triggered a rather loud moan, but from the way her legs tightened, I could feel that she was satisfied by the action. “You’re the one that pushed your luck,” I said.

She failed to come up with an answer against my satisfied smirk, and soon, it was impossible for her to actually do so, because I let my tongue free, raiding and invading every sensitive spot between her legs, teaching her a new meaning of the pleasure.

I expected her to retaliate by grabbing my hair, twisting her body, or retaliating in some other way. Yet, she did not, just accepting it passively as I invaded her core with my tongue. She might not be the most experienced lover, but still, there was a certain ego boost in stripping the rebellion from a sexy blonde with a few brushes of my tongue.

She gasped and moaned as I pushed her steadily toward a climax, so much so that she didn’t even bother to comment as I removed the rest of my clothes, matching her in nudity. She did gasp in shock when I added my fingers to the assault of my tongue, dancing at the entrance aggressively.

Moans filled the prison as the climax finally hit her, opening her soul even more. While she gasped for breath, I turned my attention to the magical details once more.

The first thing I noticed, the growth rate of the connection increased several times. Soon, the soft connection turned into a magical root, one that reminded me of the ones the Guardian Trees stretched through the Aether Dimension to gather and convert mana, only stronger, and it started sending tendrils through Seldanna’s Divine Sea.

My first assumption, it was a method to drain Seldanna of her Divine Spark, one that would strengthen the tree. But that didn’t make much sense, not with the crystals on their possessions. Why bother doing that.

Then, I notification popped into my view, showing my first guess was wrong. Diametrically so.

{+1 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

“Okay, maybe they are not trying to steal her spark,” I murmured as I examined her soul space,

ready to address the problems. I expected her Divine Sea to turn chaotic, as foreign Divine Spark required quite a bit of effort to suppress and absorb.

However, I expected a weak wind from just a point of Spark ... but what I found was a raging storm, threatening to destroy her Divine Sea. Without my help, it would take barely a minute for a point of Spark to destroy her sea.

It was not about potency ... but control. The Divine Spark she received was moving with a deliberate movement, thrashing to destroy her sea.

I had many ways of resolving that, including purifying that lone point of Spark, but I chose to apply an indirect method.

{-300 Nature Spark, God Forest}

{+300 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

The sudden influx of Divine Spark calmed her Divine Sea, preventing a dangerous rapture, and giving me a chance to examine the nature of the connection. The foreign spark continued to rage inside her, trying to find a way ... which gave me the impression that, while it was being controlled, the intelligence behind it was animalistic rather than sapient.

Which explained why the connection continued to grow despite my intervention. I was ready to intervene and reverse it, but it was better to watch without taking action. Divine Spark was a complicated issue, so, the more observation, the better.

“Is something wrong?” Seldanna whispered suddenly. “I can feel something weird with my magic ... it’s fluctuating.”

“It’s complicated,” I answered. “They cast some kind of spell on you, one that’s supposed to drain your power, but I managed to block it.”

“It doesn’t feel like that’s the end,” she said, worried.

“Technically, it could be. I could stop the process easily if you want...”

“I’m guessing there’s a but,” she said, catching on to my implied point. “Why don’t you tell me rather than dawdling?”

“It’s an opportunity. I can let the process continue and do my best to control it. If it works, you’ll be much stronger.”

“How much power, and how stronger?” she asked.

{+1 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

The notification was a warning that I shouldn't delay the treatment. “A tough question. About the danger, I'm quite confident that I could terminate the process if it goes too badly ... and about the power, we're talking about a significant amount.”

“How significant,” she asked.

“Potentially,, enough to make you the strongest person in the capital by a wide margin,” I said. It was a guess, but considering the source of the connection, a pretty safe one.

She waited for a moment, then her expression solidified. “Do it!”

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 342}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 1152}

Elven Priestess - 372}

—
[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Two

“Open your legs, sweetie,” I said as I positioned myself above her.

“You need a better connection ... of course,” she murmured, a little annoyed, but mostly aroused. Her core glistened as well, showing she was ready for my invasion.

“Brace yourself, and try not to use any mana,” I suggested as I slipped into her wetness. She hugged me, her arms tighter than necessary. She was afraid ... not that I blamed her.

I started moving, slow and tender, even as I closed my eyes, focusing on the magical side of things.

Her Divine Sea was churning chaotically as another point of foreign Divine Spark joined the mix before the previous one could have been assimilated. Left without intervention, I could easily imagine a few more points erasing Seldanna from existence.

Which begged the question ... what they were trying to do. I doubted it was a fancy execution, especially since Seldanna was, for all intents and purposes, a peasant that could be killed without any political implications.

Meaning, they had a different objectives. Pity I didn't have the time to go around and search for that answer.

{+2 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

Not with the process getting faster and faster, as my homemade System warned me. I turned my attention to Seldanna's Divine Sea, our connection at the maximum level, which was necessary as I interacted with the new Divine Spark through her Divine Sea — as my Divine Spark would have just purified it, destroying the point.

As I touched the Spark, memory fragments rushed into my mind. Memories of war and disaster, the sky itself splitting, rains of fire mixing with raging tornados, the very ground disintegrating.

{+10 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

The memories flew too fast for me to pin them down. The only thing I could understand was that the view was from the perspective of a forest, made from trees that dwarfed the Tree of Life that we were currently in.

The intense flow of the Divine Spark forced me to add some of my Tantric Mana to the mixture, softening the foreign Spark to make it easily absorbed by Seldanna.

Just in time.

{+10 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

As I saw the memories, I realized that I wasn't sharing the perspective of the trees ... no, I was sharing the perspective of an incredibly strong being that was using the trees as a medium to fight against those beasts ... only to fail horribly.

{+10 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

Shocking, as the being was channeling an incredible amount to channel directly, wasting more than a million points each second — maybe even more, but lost in the fragmented memories.

I had a feeling that I was getting my first experience of what a god was ... and it scared me, even worse than I did when I realized the power of the Eternals.

{+50 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

Yet, despite all their powers — no, all his power, I corrected, the memories giving me a better understanding of his identity. Just to be on the safe side, I wrapped the Divine Sea of Seldanna with a layer of mana, and over it, a layer of my Pure Divine Spark. It prevented Seldanna from using any mana, but it also prevented those memories from touching her.

{+50 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

I could isolate myself from those memories easily. My stats helped to strengthen my mind, and even without that advantage, I had a better advantage. The memories came buried in Nature Spark, which was distinctly not me. Seldanna, as a Nature-Spark carrier, would have a more difficult time.

Still, a few days of meditation were all she would have needed to cleanse those memories, I thought as I continued to decipher the fragments. The battle raged, as I saw the glimpses of other Divine Sparks, sometimes used against the trees, sometimes allied. Fire, light, Healing, Martial ..., and others that I couldn't recognize.

{+100 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

Yet, there were other concepts, like pure elements and undead, that constantly fought against

the trees, cutting the reach of the lone god of nature that tried to stem the tide more and more.

Soon, I found myself revising Seldanna's capability of keeping the memories isolated from hers. The intensity of the memories got stronger, which made it much more unlikely that Seldanna could have handled those memories even if she meditated for years.

Even for me, they were impossible to isolate. I wanted to process them ... and if I still had access to System, I might have succeeded, but without it, it was a hopeless affair. The more intense the memories got, the harder they were to comprehend. Soon, I had to cut the connection with the memory, and start destroying them.

{+100 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

Either that, or they would pollute Seldanna's Divine Sea.

Luckily, the memories weren't the only thing that came with the flow. I also received a lot of magical knowledge, and I did my best to save some, separating them from the others. For them to be safely recorded.

Yet, I could feel that, the flow was not slowing down but getting faster, making me fear that I would have trouble controlling the flow. Luckily, I was prepared for that.

{-1000 Nature Spark, God Forest}

{+1000 Purified Divine Spark}

The amount of Divine Spark I took from the forest left the tribes in a dangerous position, but the forest already stored enough mana to keep them safe for a few days, so it should be alright. And, if we were still trying to deal with the connection a few days later, we had much bigger problems.

I focused on helping Seldanna metabolize the Divine Spark, feeling the most recent rush would have been enough to contain it. Unfortunately, another notification was quick to steal that confidence.

{+200 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

I squeezed my teeth, focusing fully on the mental state while my body continued to move, a part of me annoyed that I couldn't enjoy the beautiful, desperate embrace of Seldanna even a

bit, missing a special moment. Luckily, my reflexes were fully trained in the art of lovemaking, and even with my wandering attention, Seldanna was moaning ceaselessly...

{+500 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

The next burst of Divine Spark was enough to destroy my confidence that I could actually suppress the flow. Luckily, I had other methods to cheat. A bit riskier, but it was still better than cutting the connection that offered such incredible benefits ... or worse, letting Seldanna burn out with an overflow of power.

I dived down into her Divine Spark directly, letting my Divine Spark mix with hers. My Divine Spark formed a scalpel before cutting a generous portion of her newly acquired Divine Spark. I didn't have time to ask for her permission, but I was sure that she would forgive me.

And even if she didn't, I could earn it the fun way.

{-200 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

{+200 Purified Divine Spark}

So, I was shocked when a voice echoed in my mind.

“HOW DARE YOU STEAL MY POWER!”

The voice echoed in my mind ... no, not my mind, I realized. In my Divine Spark, particularly the newest part that I was in the process of purifying completely. And, it was certainly not Seldanna.

I didn't try answering. Trying to answer angry incorporeal voices didn't seem to be a good idea ... especially when the voice in question tried to hide his presence as harmless memory fragments, creating a trap.

I bit my lips as I focused my Divine Spark, purifying the amount I cut far faster than any other attempt. Just as well, as the flow suddenly increased.

{+5000 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

He was playing for the keeps. The sudden infusion of the new Divine Spark not only threatened to kill Seldanna, but also destroy our surroundings completely. Her Divine Sea was ruined completely already, losing all coherence.

Unfortunately for the incorporeal being that was trying to drown us, that was all that did. The

two-layered protection, the first layer mana, the second layer Purified Spark, was especially effective against the tactic.

I would have pitied the guy if he wasn't trying to steal the body of my lover. An amazing ploy, yet somehow, his minions picked a target that was uniquely equipped to prevent it by a complete accident.

I decided to attack back.

{-1000 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

{+1000 Purified Divine Spark}

“STOP, MORTAL!”

I expected the being to either stop, or attack harder. Yet, it did neither.

{+4000 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

Weird, I thought as I focused on the connection, only to realize it getting stronger, despite the flow lessening, and the realization hit. The being didn't have the ability to stop the flow ... not at this point.

He was a god, I realized, and the memory fragments were from the war between Gods and the Eternals — though the memories confirmed the war was certainly not that simple — and he was probably sleeping in the tree for centuries, one last relic from the forests that he once commanded.

Unfortunately for him, I had no intention of even trying to speak. The god was knowledgeable and strong ... and also desperate. A horrible combination to face, and now that I had the opportunity, I had no intention of allowing him to succeed.

Ironically, killing him was too simple. I just followed the strengthened connection with a line of Purified Spark, and reached the center. I found his soul at the center of the tree, hibernating to protect himself with his lack of power — giving me the realization that, true godhood required a lot of Divine Spark to prevent fading away.

The power that I isolated from him ... making him die ignobly. I destroyed the rest of the memories as quickly as I could manage, prioritizing speed over perfection. I had dealt with such problems too much to assume that it was the end of it.

Especially not in a plane that was dealing with elven traitors, undercover teams from the Eternals, and an ongoing undead invasion...

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{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2542}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 152}

Elven Priestess - 9104}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Three

It was a weird moment, I had to admit. On the physical side of things, I was doing the most intimate dance with Seldanna, our bodies sweaty as they slapped against each other, while, on the magical side of things, I was protecting her from the death throes of a slumbering nature god...

While trying to make her a full-fledged god.

A very simple task, right...

"What is my life," I murmured, pausing for a moment to consider the situation. It was a pity that Seldanna didn't have the full picture to answer that ... or was aware enough to actually hear in the first place. She was in a dream trance as she merged with the Divine Spark that was escaping from her Divine Sea.

At this point, it was inevitable. There was a limit to my purification and containment efforts. Especially as the connection continued to send more and more.

{+4000 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

A very useful reward, and I reached to take more of it. It was useful to purify her Divine Spark ... it was useful to help Seldanna, and the more spark I had, the better.

{-300 Nature Spark, Elven Priestess}

{+300 Purified Divine Spark}

I was planning to take much more, but as I started to take it, I felt a dangerous shift.

I wouldn't have cared if the shift came from the soul of the god. He was about to be killed in any case.

I would have been more careful if the shift came from Seldanna, but ultimately, I would have continued and used my extensive healing abilities to stabilize her. That might cost her the nebulous opportunity to become a true goddess, but I was sure that she wouldn't complain too much if she became an extremely strong demigod instead, and in time, I was confident I could come up with a way to elevate her...

If the source was the Tree of Life, it would have been a more difficult question. After all, it

wasn't just cultural importance that helped elves ... many of them actually lived on top of it. Massacring thousands was not something I wanted to do, even for power.

Still, I could try to find a workaround if that had been the case as I assumed for a moment...

Yet, the problem was none of them. It was the plane itself that trembled, not only the rotating planar border, but the very ground ... giving me the feeling that the Divine Spark of the slumbering god intersected with the existence of the plane in a deeper way than I had expected.

Stealing more spark was not a good idea ... not if I wanted to keep the plane in one piece.

Pity, as the additional Divine Spark would have been useful ... and, if what I suspected about the impact of our little situation was even halfway accurate, it would be immediately useful.

I was tempted to convert my Spark into Stats ... but a little examination showed that was not possible. Not unless I was willing to sacrifice Seldanna. Most of my available spark was occupied with cleansing the memories of the slumbering god.

I just needed to maintain my touch to help Seldanna, so I pulled out, using magic to dress us both. As much as I wanted to keep her naked for my enjoyment, I chose otherwise.

As Seldanna slowly absorbed the Divine Spark from the Tree, its ability to block my senses had weakened significantly, and I could already hear the signs of growing chaos outside. I could sense not only flares of nature mana, but also necrotic mana, clashing against each other ... with an intensity that surprised me.

I used a detection ward outside, to check how much time passed. "Wow, it's already night," I said, loudly despite knowing there would be no answer from Seldanna. The passage of time surprised me. The mental battle with the slumbering god must have taken much more than I initially assumed.

I decided to take two actions. First, to deal with the tree. As Seldanna continued to absorb the Divine Spark, the mana production of the Tree of Life was dropping. It was yet to reach a dangerous point, still supplying both the planar border and the elven capital with their mana needs, but it would eventually happen unless I intervened.

A problem to deal with, but not immediately. I had a more urgent one. As Seldanna pulled the Divine Spark of the Tree, the chaos that tortured the tree for a long time was quelling. Technically, it was good news, as it meant the tree was suddenly free of one disease that had

been torturing it for centuries, freeing a lot of mana it had been using to prevent its death free, boosting the combat capabilities of the elves. Unfortunately, it wasn't good news for me, as it made it much likelier for the outside forces to realize what was going on. I needed to solve that immediately.

I started creating a ward, one that would fake the mana cyclone right under the bark to block any detection. Hopefully, with the battle going on, no one would pay attention to the tree.

As I built the ward, I started to pay attention to the progress of the battle, to understand when the elves would be victorious. They had to, considering the most recent mana boost they had received. Still, building the cyclone ward required some time, giving me a chance to observe the battle.

Only to realize elves were losing ... badly.

That surprised me at first, especially since I could feel the elven presence was stronger than the necrotic mana I could feel immediately around the capital. Due to the sudden nature of the battle, the undead had been lacking the most effective part of their arsenal. Their hordes and hordes of zombies and skeletons, create the necessary curtain for their dangerous members to handle the work — while also absorbing hostile mana and corrupting the environment as a welcome benefit.

Even without that advantage, the undead was steadily gaining ground ... which was surprising.

Then, I realized the problem, which was twofold. First, the capital, at least most of it, had been already evacuated rather than joining the battle, which was a big loss considering a majority possessed Divine Spark they could use to defend the capital. It was a waste, but not a decisive one, as the capital still had a significant army.

There, I noticed the second problem. Most of the army had been fighting against each other, leaving only a portion to defend against the undead.

A vicious civil war.

"Damn it, they are even more useless than I expected," I murmured even as I examined the layout of the two armies, their armor distinguishing them. The first group was wearing predominantly robes, and defending the tree, while the ones that were attacking them were leaving heavier on the armor.

Also, the armored ones were the ones that were busy evacuating the city ... through a stable

gate, one that cut through Aether. Teleportation on that scale was not important, but very, very difficult; especially if they had been maintaining it for as long as I suspected. It relied on some kind of artifact.

A lot of things to respond to... and I needed to decide what to do first ... before that, I needed to make sure Seldanna could stay safe.

Since the elves managed to defend for that long, a few minutes were acceptable. I pulled my own Divine Spark, and used that to establish a more stable ward around Seldanna's Divine Sea, to make sure to handle the conversion, and with a persistent connection I maintained to alert me to any irregularities.

{-2000 Purified Divine Spark}

Luckily, the Tree of Life no longer interfered with my detection.

As I put the finishing touches on the ward, I could still feel the death throes of the god, but at this point, they were more of an echo. Whatever that was driving his awareness, it was finally gone. It was time to take action.

I could have dashed out immediately, but before that, I wanted to pull one last trick. What should I disguise myself as? And, while I could disguise myself as anything, it worked the best when a disguise both fit my immediate requirements, and was served in a way the audience found believable.

Quickly, I made a list of requirements. I needed to look in a way that kept my real identity and my core secrets hidden. That was nonnegotiable, especially with the Eternal presence I managed to detect.

Second, I needed a disguise that gave me an excuse to throw around as much power as I could handle; which was not a lot right now after I had drained my God Forest to save Seldanna. But, there was a civil war going on, and I could gather a lot of Nature Spark to replenish that.

Third, if possible, I needed a disguise that prevented the elves from attacking me desperately — though, when a pinch, a portion would do, considering they were in a civil war.

A smirk appeared on my face as I went through them again, a flash of inspiration giving me a very appropriate disguise.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 842}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 152}

Elven Priestess - 12804}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Four

I decided to disguise myself as the God of Nature.

Was disguising myself as a true divine being disrespectful, certainly. However, I wondered if the fact that I had just killed the said divine being made it more respectful ... or less.

Either way, it was just an idle question while I finished creating my outfit, using the fragments of memories I had experienced. I let my body slowly be covered with some kind of grown robe, and a living branch throbbing with Nature Spark appeared in my hand, and a hood covered my face.

Just like the way his memories showed him to act.

My first target was the elves. Or, more accurately, the civil war that was going on. The robed ones were already struggling to defend the tree, and I didn't want someone to breach the defenses and kill Seldanna while I was busy with dealing the undead.

When I went out, I didn't attack immediately. Instead, I cast a concealment spell as I flew down — the battle was mostly on the ground level — to understand the exact nature of the battle. I could see that the armored ones were gaining a lot of ground, with chants shouting the name of Prince Arun.

Which made the defending side the supporters of High Priest Ivasaar.

The battle was interesting, as both sides desperately used crystals to capture the Divine Spark of the fallen, allowing them to store more and more. They were desperate to generate some currency for their trade with the Eternals.

The army of the Prince was already close to victory, but the defensive wards of the priests were too strong, preventing a direct confrontation. And, to their credit, I was impressed with the wards, they looked weak, but had a deceptive strength. The High Priest had been clearly preparing for his ploy for decades — and my guess, only to be forced to pull the trigger early due to a sudden undead invasion.

No wonder he desperately tried to use Seldanna as a host.

A part of the reason for the battle was clear, but I wanted an even better picture. And luckily, there was an easy way to achieve that little trick, one that would put me in a good position.

I carefully manipulated the defensive wards, weakening them. Not all across their defensive line, but creating a path between Prince Arun and Priest Ivasaar, pushing them together.

“Push forward!” ordered the Prince as he rushed forward, thinking he was the one that brought down the defenses, and High Priest pushed forward at the same to block his path.

As I watched them approach, I started to stretch my mana tendrils outside, hooking into the Cystals that held the Divine Spark of the elves that had been slain during the battle.

None of the crystals I managed to find at the edges held a lot of Divine Spark. A few points here, a dozen there ... but the combination was rather impressive. Half a day of battle cost a lot of elves their lives, and even a portion was able to help my God Forest recover most of its losses.

{+755 Nature Spark, God Forest}

A welcome change, as moved around the Tree of Life, and placed sixteen seeds in a rough circle, preparations for a defensive bulwark, one that I was yet to trigger ... because while I was dealing with those two aspects, the prince and the high priest was finally face to face.

I just watched even as they started to fight, even though the High Priest was at an immediate disadvantage. I didn't feel any guilt doing so, as neither the High Priest nor his men were my allies. They were just enemies that were conveniently blocking the path toward what I cared about.

“It's not too late, my prince,” the High Priest shouted even as he summoned a horde of roots and targeted the prince, who used his sword to chop them off easily. “You can still change your mind and go back on the right path.”

The prince laughed in derision. “Nonsense, old man. You want us to return to a distant path, where we were the servants of a tyrant monster. Why would we, when I hold the keys of fate in my hands! I will not be a slave.”

“No, you'll be a weapon in the hands of our enemies, and take down the very thing that allowed us to survive. Do you think we could have survived the Great Disaster without his sacrifice? Yet, when it's time to pay back, you're choosing to betray him.”

“Old tales, you can't be serious to believe them! I'll burn that damn tree if I have to. It's the only thing that holds us back from our full potential.”

The priest laughed derisively. “Don't you mean you'll sell it to those damned foreigners, like I

don't know what your men were up to! Die!"

Their heated discussion gave me everything I needed to make a decision. I could go out and kill them both, but that was hard. I could see them fighting passionately, and neither of them was any weaker than me in terms of pure combat capability.

And each had an army.

Luckily, neither paid much attention below ground. I didn't blame them, as the roots of the Tree of Life were not a joke, ready to destroy any attacker — unfortunately, I had a rather good relationship with its new owner, so I was spared of that fact.

I started moving through the underground, and I positioned myself underneath the two. A few more careful changes of the defensive wards, gave the prince another chance to rush forward, and soon, the high priest ended up skewered.

The other priests immediately started to pull back the moment that happened, their courage faltering without their leader. I ignored that, making my move ... in the form of a root that wrapped around the high priest.

{+1518 Nature Spark, God Forest}

He had an impressive amount of Divine Spark in possession, explaining his impressive magical combat. I didn't even realize keeping that much Divine Spark in chosen form was possible, but somehow, he achieved it.

I needed to copy that method.

The prince kept his sword buried in the priest's heart after taking off his head, confident in his victory. "Your leader is dead. Surrender—" he shouted, which was cut short when the deceased high priest suddenly exploded with nature mana, his remains to turn into a mindless treant.

And, just like that, the prince was skewered with its roots, which drained him completely.

{+618 Nature Spark, God Forest}

Both sides pulled back, trying to understand the sudden shift as their leaders had fallen simultaneously. Some of the higher-ranking officers were trying to make a point, but the double defeat was too sudden for them to react.

I didn't react, which gave me time for the panic to spread. It wasn't my intention, as I was busy

integrating the sudden infusion of Divine Spark into my forest, but it was certainly welcome.

When the integration was complete, the forest was stronger than ever, and its mana generation capacity was significantly enhanced. And, before the two factions could decide what to do, the trees I had planted started growing with a shocking speed.

“You dare to hurt my loyal servant, traitor!” I shouted as I burst out of the ground, radiating an intense amount of nature mana, while sixteen trees started growing with a shockingly glorious speed.

It wasn’t just my appearance that shocked them, but the trees, each looking like smaller versions of the Tree of Life. Of course, the similarity was just cosmetics — changing the color of their bark and leaves was much easier than copying a divine tree that a god used as a weapon, yet still impressive enough to convince a bunch of elves.

“Impossible, that’s an illusion,” shouted some of the higher-ranking commanders of the prince while the others were just shocked, showing that their true objective wasn’t completely spread or understood.

“It’s true, we’re saved,” gasped the priests, elated with the sudden reversal even if it happened after the death of their leader. Though, the respectful way they had looked toward the treant I summoned was any indicator, some actually believed his sacrifice made it possible — my apparent anger confirming it.

I might have accidentally created a new myth of sacrifice, the heroic and loyal priest sacrificing himself to awaken his god. I thought about correcting them, but looking at the state of the priests, I decided against it after a shrug.

I had too much work to focus on something that was working. I still needed to subjugate the prince’s army, deal with the undead attack, and check where that teleportation gate was leading.

... so that I could start working on the real problems...

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 842}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 3043}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Five

“Your little tantrum is over, my sons and daughters, drop your weapons!” I shouted as I started radiating even more mana. Charisma came useful to make that order effective, but not as effective as the sixteen trees still growing despite the presence of the Tree of Life, similar in appearance, already taller than half a mile.

Growth magic was convenient.

“It’s just a trick, we can still —“ one of the commanders started, only for a root to burst out of the ground to skewer him. He tried to defend himself, and was successful in cutting the root. He was even successful in cutting the next three. “Come on, fight, we can—“ he tried to encourage the others, but the next chain of attack, two dozen roots, was enough to take him down.

{+128 Nature Spark, God Forest}

All it took was a second, before the others could even react, and his incompetent display proved to be enough to break the courage of the rest. Which was good, because if all of them tried to retreat, I could have taken down only a fraction of them. Focusing only on one target made it much easier.

Not to mention, I didn’t want to kill them, not when they were useful against the undead.

“Bow down to your god!” I shouted like a megalomaniac, enhancing my voice with Arcane magic — even adding several illusions around me to make me more intimidating. Amusingly, it worked much better than I expected, and they started to fall to their knees.

“Good, now, you five, lead them to the defense of the capital,” I said, and five roots burst out of the ground once more. They panicked for a second, but the sudden flood of strength was enough to change their attitude.

“Thank you, my god,” they shouted as their Divine Spark melded into a Divine Sea, turning them into demigods. Then, since I had the connection, I broke the crystals they had in their possession, and pushed that amount into them as well, so each of them had about five hundred Divine Spark.

I didn’t exactly want them empowered, but I could always take that power back. As long as I kept an eye on them, it should be alright.

Their sudden empowerment worked better than I expected. I was trying to create some capable

commanders that could hold the undead back, but I had forgotten most of them were ready to betray their kind for power — the existence of a god that could grant power made things much simpler.

“Now, go forth and fight for your land!” I ordered, and all elves knelt.

A fake god wielding punishment and distributing rewards was very effective, especially to a group that was already dealing with an existential crisis. I decided to push my luck a bit more.

“Before leaving, drop those crystals and acorns on the ground. They are cursed, and anyone that uses them, I’ll punish them with damnation. That made them freeze, and I had no doubt that, if it wasn’t for my earlier display of empowering the five priests — who were still showing off their newfound power — they would have protested a lot.

Instead, most of them dropped their crystals on the ground, and roots appeared, devouring them. Some had Necrotic Spark, but most were filled with Nature Spark. Enough that it would take me a while to actually absorb...

{+13592 Nature Spark, God Forest}

[+2128 Purified Spark}

I planned to repurpose some of the Nature Spark, but not immediately, not when I could use all the nature mana they generated to grow more and more guardian trees — a necessity against the constant undead attack.

Still, being rich was a convenient feeling.

And, speaking of being rich, I could still sense some Divine Spark imprisoned in Crystals. “You have three breaths to drop them, or...” I shouted.

Some believed me, dropping their crystals. The others didn’t, and ended up skewered in roots, injured and bereft of their spark — just a flicker left to prevent them from absorbing a new one.

Giving me another convenient burst of Divine Spark.

{+1420 Nature Spark, God Forest}

[+301 Purified Spark}

“Now that the traitors are dealt with, go and destroy the undead, my sons and daughters,” I

said, raising my hand to pump a wild wave of nature mana, one that destroyed most of the advantage the undead strike force managed to collect.

They rushed forward, ready to show off to their seemingly omnipotent new god, and I flew above them, unaided,, radiating mana and providing courage. While I flew, however, I cast a spell to bring one of the remaining commanders with the highest rank.

The commander looked shocked, not by the fact he was flying — which was not impossible, even with nature mana — but by the intensity of mana that wrapped him. It was a wasteful move by me, but intentional as well.

I wanted them scared. I was too busy to deal with a rebellion.

“Where’s this portal leading, explain,” I ordered.

“M-my god,” he stammered. “T-that’s the arrangement of my priest, a tool that’s acquired from a group of mysterious merchants, leading our people into safety.”

“The same merchants that are buying the crystals,” I asked.

“Y-yes, my god, but you have to believe me. That was all Prince’s idea, and we tried to argue but he never listened,” he argued, doing his best to cut the connection with it. I didn’t care much either way ... not like I actually planned to rule them in the first place.

Too much work.

Instead, I split my attention. Part of it, I kept making sure the counter-attack against the undead didn’t cost any life — knowing that a flawless victory would do wonders to handle it. However, I limited myself to casting a few wide-area spells that would renew the dead zones around the capital to destroy the strategic advantage of the undead. Then, just to be safe, I summoned a few treants and linked them to the God Forest. “Go forth and destroy the undead, my children!” I shouted. “I’ll go and save the citizens from the betrayal of that rotten noble!”

With that, I turned my attention toward where the last few citizens were still using the portal to leave. Admittedly, while I cared about the fate of the citizens, it was significantly lesser compared to the attraction of the portal itself.

It was an ingenious production, just the capability enough to allow me to design half a dozen spells on the spot.

The ability to open semi-stable connections between two points, not just to teleport but also to allow the movement of the others was a very interesting concept. Unfortunately, despite the cursory similarities with teleportation, even a distant glance was enough to show the working principles were completely different.

Teleport just required shearing of the space barrier to allow a step into the Aether dimension, and using another beacon to navigate toward the other destination, the constantly shifting nature making the destination much shorter.

However, while that fluid nature made it easy to traverse great distances, it worked reverse on any attempt to build a semi-permanent pathway through it.

Luckily, while the elves were spoiled and arrogant, they weren't entirely stupid. The moment I started flying toward the gate, they pulled back and started worshipping — one that already started to yield benefits.

{+1 Purified Spark}

Not much, but reminding me that saving them had important implications. I arrived at the artifact that was keeping the gateway open, stretched my mana, and started examining it. The first thing I noticed was ... the artifact was a masterpiece, the kind I had to work on for years even to have a hope of copying. It was incredible, elegant ... yet recognizable.

The touch of the skills was unmistakable. It was heavily reliant on Arcana, but it was not the only thing that it was relying on. I could see the traces of Darkness, Light, Elemental, all carefully separated by the ingenious applications of crafting to prevent a cascading failure.

Then, after a minute of studying, I realized that it wasn't even the real artifact. It was just a marker, not unlike my own beacon wards, just more advanced, guiding the pathway to here. The real task of maintaining the pathway was done from the other side.

And, there was no reason to build something that magnificent, that strong, just to move people in the same plane. It might have been a move of luxury, but while the Eternals could be wasteful, it was not to this degree.

No, I just needed to stretch my mana inside the gateway to feel the immensity of the distance it was traveling. The other end was not somewhere that was in this plane. For a moment, I wondered if the other end led back to my home.

If that were the case, I would have found myself in an important dilemma.

But,, after examining the ephemeral tunnel, I felt that it was not as strong to resist the chaos of the Primordial Aether. Tracing, I felt the other half of the artifact right at the planar border, cutting through the swirling mana shield, uncaring of the long-term damage it was leaving.

Then, before I could decipher more, I felt the artifact on my side growing chaotic, far too sudden and intense to be accidental. I could feel the different types of mana mixing together, about to explode.

I infused it with Tantric immediately to calm that mana down, which also ruined the device without any hope of working again — but not only it prevented the explosion, but also it saved the device for further study.

However, as much as I wanted to ignore everything else and study the structure, I wasn't able to do so. Not when I could already feel the destabilizing tunnel being flooded with Necrotic mana. It was a good way to prevent me from following them.

Unfortunately, it was very effective.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 16 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 3272}

{Pseudo-HP: 8000 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 18183}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Six

Even as I gathered my mana to respond to the sudden flood of necrotic mana, I was thanking my luck that I hadn't converted the Divine Spark I had collected earlier into Stats but left it with the Divine Forest.

If I hadn't, I might have been forced to create a shield around the Tree of Life and retreat inside to protect Seldanna and abandon the rest of the plane.

It sounded absurd,, but the amount of Necrotic mana they were channeling using the tunnel was simply that suffocating, the kind that was counted in hundreds of millions by the measurement of the System.

Ironically, the only reason it didn't obliterate everything immediately was the structure of the magical pathway. It was strong enough to survive the stress of the planar border, therefore it was strong enough not to shatter under the great flood of Necrotic mana, limiting their throughput.

Still, it was enough to be measured in hundreds of thousands for each second, a huge version of the river that I had dealt with when I first arrived. Naturally, the response was the same. I did my best to create a huge ward. It was a crude one, but against an unrolled wave of mana, elegance was not what the ward was supposed to display.

Resilience was.

Even though it was simple, the ward had three layers. First, the outermost layer; made from a mixture of Nature Spark and Nature Mana.

{-500 Nature Spark, God Forest}

The outermost layer was deliberately weak, not even attempting to block the flow of mana and just letting it flow inside. After all, the only function of it was to hide the second layer from the watchful eyes of the Eternals.

I had no idea how much detection capability they maintained under the suffocating deluge of Necrotic mana, but better safe than revealing my greatest secret.

The second layer was made of Tantric mana. Luckily, unlike Divine Spark, Necrotic mana was much less resilient against manipulation of the Divine Spark, especially when it was used like this, without any shape or form of destruction.

And, my great reserves of Purified Spark allowed me to achieve that very rapidly.

I had pulled a lot of nature mana from the environment to kickstart the process, the elves around me crying in fear at the sudden draught of mana, their nature too aligned with it not to care about its absence. Busy saving the world, I ignored them as I shaped Tantric mana into a huge sieve, forcing the necrotic mana to pass through its gaps and purifying it in the process.

Then, the third part, a strong funnel made of Nature mana, connecting the purified flow into the God Forest, taking the purified flow and storing them in the depths of their structure.

I could have let the purified mana flood the Aether dimension, but that would be harmful in two ways. First, as it flooded the plane, it would give the undead some easy targets to exploit. And it would make the Eternals suspicious, making them question why a Nature God was producing pure mana rather than nature mana.

Instead, I let the God Forest devour the flood, even going as far as to force their leaves to suddenly turn brown, like they were straining under the great flood of energy. It had an immediate impact on the morale of the elves, especially when combined with the absence of the Nature mana, but I wasn't in the mood to coddle them.

Revealing my secret to Eternals would have been much worse for them. Eternals were willing to destroy the plane behind them just to keep their presence a secret. I didn't want to imagine the lengths they would go to catch me if they realized the true nature of my abilities.

Even just as a competition for their hunger for Divine Spark, they would target me, and the less said about my true identity and how they would react, the better.

I stood still, straining myself to the limit as I made sure the ward worked as intended, turning their devastating attack into nourishment for the forest.

Even as I did so, I couldn't help but think about what had caused them to respond in such a devastating manner. Maybe they had noticed I had been fiddling with their artifact on this site and decided to prevent me from learning their secrets.

Maybe they were alerted by my fake god role and decided to retreat, not willing to face a god.

Or maybe, it was much simpler. They had just realized that the elves stopped arriving, and moved to the next stage of their plan. It wasn't unlikely, especially since the sudden flood of necrotic mana was hardly something that could be put together at the last second.

It must have been planned beforehand.

“And, that answers whether they were just here as an accident or not,” I murmured. I was already suspecting that, but the nature of their response was further evidence that they were the ones leading the undead invasions — though whether the undead invasion force was aware of that fact or they were just unwilling puppets was another question.

One that didn't have any important implications in the short term, especially since I was determined to hide my true nature regardless. I couldn't be sure that the Eternals would stop observing the dimensions after that.

I was hoping that it would be enough, but soon, I noticed a shift in the pathway. Strong as it was, under the constant rush of necrotic mana, it was shattering slowly. I would have felt relief if I was having trouble handling the rush.

Unfortunately, the situation was the exact opposite. After the shattering of the pathway, the necrotic mana would spread around the Aether dimension, giving the undead a decisive advantage. And, while I could protect the capital, the same was not true for the rest of the world.

Luckily, I had some time to respond. I floated upward, opened my hand, and made a show of throwing seeds into the air, which glowed with a blinding green before they spread around four corners of the world.

It was just a light show, and at the same time, I reached Seldanna. She was still in a dreamlike state, and while our connection was mutating, it was still enough to use her as a conduit, which, in turn, allowed me to reach the Tree of Life.

And, there, through the roots, I connected with the plane ... I wanted to celebrate, and I wanted to hurl in disgust, the sensation of being one with a tree not exactly the sanest of sensations. However, it was not a waste.

The Tree of Life was a unique entity, one that was connected to not only every living being living in this plane either directly or indirectly. It even linked to the plane itself... Enough for me to use it to give every living being one order.

It was not something I was trying to pull blindly. I was trying to copy a feat that I had seen in the memories of the unfortunate god that I had slain earlier, a method that he had used many times during his desperate battle to give commands to his forces regardless of distance or loyalty, accompanied by overwhelming compulsion.

RETURN TO THE CAPITAL!

It was an order that reverberated through the mana itself, accompanied by a great amount of mana — one that emptied all the mana my God Forest had been storing. The mana radiated across the plane, not only carrying my order around the plane, but also empowering all the trees and other immobile beings to react.

Some uprooted and turned into treants, dashing toward the capital with great speed. The plants too weak to handle it forced their Divine Sparks into their seeds, seeds that birds flew down and grabbed before they started their migration toward the center.

Small or large, every being started rushing toward the center. Elves could have rejected that call, their sapience giving them the chance to reject ... luckily, they were not stupid enough to do so when every single plant, insect, and beast was desperately rushing toward the center of the plane.

“Success,” I murmured as I cast a large illusion around me. It was necessary.

I didn't want the elves to see their new god collapsing on the ground, puking blood as he struggled to stay conscious.

Hardly a divine view.

Trying to pull that trick despite the conflicting nature had been challenging. I realized that, if I tried to pull that off without the Tree of Life as a medium, I would have extinguished my soul. Even under the circumstances, the damage was not inconsiderable. Luckily, the impact was blunted enough that I could feel my soul was still whole.

A little bruised, maybe, but nothing a little push wouldn't cure.

The same couldn't be said for my body.

{- 3200 Pseudo-HP}

Even as the healing energies rushed into my body, I could feel the structure slowly collapsing. Desperate, I grabbed my Purified Spark, feeding it into my Stats to enhance my Endurance.

[-3084 Purified Spark}

{+8 Endurance}

As my body slowly got stronger, the collapse of my body stopped, and slowly reversed. I wanted to do nothing but lay down and sleep for a day ... or a week. Unfortunately, I could already feel the necrotic mana filling the Aether dimension.

The undead was about to receive an incredible boost...

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 24 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 188}

{Pseudo-HP: 5800 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 18183}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Seven

As much as I wanted to lay on the ground and slowly recover after casting my first proper godly feat, that was not something I could do.

Not when the undead that surrounded the capital received an intense boost to their abilities as the necrotic mana continued to fill the Aether dimension of the plane. It was yet to reach a point of diffusing into the physical plane, but I wasn't the only one that could reach the Astral plane and pull some mana.

They just lacked my ability to break down Aether into mana, which limited the effectiveness of such a move significantly. But, at a point where the Aether was still being filled with an incredible amount of necrotic mana, that was not needed.

The first thing, I had given an order to the God Forest, and a great number of treants rushed forward toward the outer line to reinforce the battle, to get rid of the advance undead force before they could get even stronger.

I would have intervened directly, but creating a ward around the capital was more important. I rapidly worked, ignoring the strain in my body as I built a barrier between the Astral plane and the physical side, one that would block the mana flow — and, as an added benefit, teleportation as well.

I was copying another trick that I had seen in the memories of the nature god, which didn't make erecting the barrier any easier. If I used just the principles of such a concept and focused on building a barrier, it would have been much faster...

Unfortunately, it would also risk shouting my true origin to the Eternals, who were still busy pumping the plane with necrotic mana. I didn't know just how intensely they were observing now that they were about to leave.

They wouldn't miss a ward that was larger than a mountain.

I squeezed my teeth as I focused on building the nature ward all over the capital, leaving only the roots of the Tree of Life defenseless, letting them die temporarily. If I had the opportunity, I would have saved them, but with the whole plane suffocated by the necrotic mana, doing so would give my enemies too many chances to attack, and I doubted I could stop those even if I revealed the full range of my abilities.

I was still far from the peak of my power and injured; not to mention a full-fledged necromancer assault confident enough to deal with a god was not a trivial attack.

Especially since it was still being supported by the Eternals.

As I continued to build the wards, I couldn't help but think whether the Eternals pulled the same trick every plane they had intervened, or it was something they were forced to do because of my sudden intervention. I hoped that it was the latter, because it would mean their current attack was forcing them to waste some valuable resources.

I knew they were strong, but imagining them treating what had just happened as a disposable resource was too hard to comprehend. The necrotic mana in the Aether dimension was still growing, and the planar border had already changed its nature.

Before the attack, it was a relatively even mixture of necrotic mana and nature mana, conflicting at the edges, but as the Aether continued to fill with necrotic mana, the balance shifted. The nature mana was demolished until it turned into a small point right at the top, a helpless small circle continuously supported by the Tree of Life ... while the rest of the border turned necrotic.

I was tempted to cut the connection completely, but I could sense some thin connections between that border and Seldanna. I had already cut the roots of the tree which slowed her Apotheosis significantly. I didn't dare to do that last part.

Instead, I stretched a connection between it and the God Forest, ensuring enough supply of mana to prevent its collapse.

And, just like that, the preparations were complete... It was time to hunt some undead.

I stretched my attention along the border, and noticed that, at several spots, undead had been already reinforced. Interestingly, that reinforcement came in the form of lichs and death knights using their flying mounts — bone dragons and other impressive beings — rushing toward the defensive line, which, despite the addition of the ward, already buckling down.

It was an impressive showing ... but my frown was more about confusion than fear. Their approach was rather more chaotic than I expected, and actually reduced the impact of the force they could bear.

"Of course," I murmured a moment later as the realization hit. They were not attacking ... but they were racing forward. Now that they believed their success was imminent, they were more

interested in stealing the most Divine Spark they could rather than making their victory perfect.

They clearly didn't care about their losses but their individual benefit.

At a distance, I even saw a necromancer killing another, using the crystal to trap his essence. It didn't surprise me. Even the elves were more than happy to betray their kind for power.

Necromancy wasn't exactly an art famous for kindness and self-sacrifice.

I wasn't complaining. Their habits worked excellently to my benefit. That meant, I had the space to pull a little trick. I cast an illusion spell, one that created a floating, wooden copy of the god, the same gold and white coloration of the Tree of Life — another trick from the memories — and sent it toward the most intense spot of the battle.

The speed of it was impressive, and the constant nature of mana it radiated was enough to entice the elves to fight harder. The undead looked hesitant as they pulled back, but rather than fully retreating, they sent hordes and hordes of undead toward it, while the strongest liches connected to it.

Yet, the moment some necrotic energy landed on the surface, a crack of diseased energy and rotten wood appeared. The treant let out a display of pain before it let out a huge flood of nature energy, recovering from the damage and empowering the nearby elves at the same time.

During that display, a group of leaves disappeared permanently, like the treant had made some permanent sacrifice for that burst.

The undead was too smart to miss that sign of weakness, and they rushed forward, unaware that they were attacking an empty puppet connected to God Forest, just a conduit for all the mana I had stored from the earlier attack.

That addition ensured that the most important defensive point wouldn't collapse. Another illusion spell, and I had turned into an ordinary elven warrior, and rushed toward the weakest area... Once I arrived there, I cast another spell, and turned into a mere skeleton warrior, radiating necrotic energy.

The chaos of the battlefield was perfect as I rushed among the horde of zombies, not many people paying attention to the movement of the undead. Soon, I reached the first necromancer, who was yet to take his step into the lichdom. A swing of my sword was enough to destroy him as I pressed a crystal into his corpse.

Of course, both the swing and the crystal were unnecessary. Just a small invasion of mana was all I needed to steal his divine spark, and purify rapidly.

{+34 Necrotic Spark, Chosen}

“Nice,” I murmured as I measured the amount of strength he granted to me, even though it had come with a sense of disgust. Holding Necrotic Spark inside my soul, I could already feel a sense of corruption radiating, showing just how unnatural its existence was.

Not something I wished to do, but the circumstances forced me to do so. The sight of a poor necromancer, fighting with his peers behind the battle lines was much less attention-grabbing.

Especially when I could already see dozens of duels going on.

With my body injured, I wasn't in a position to just fight against the undead, and I doubted they would be still fighting against each other if I managed to assassinate them from a distance. It might force them to gather their forces together and deliver a coordinated assault — which was not something I could handle in my wounded state.

Worse, any hint of success might trigger the Eternals to act even more overtly. Ideally, I didn't want to see what else they had in store, ever, but if I was going to see it, I preferred to delay it until I could completely recover.

First, I cast a spell on myself, changing my disguise from a skeleton knight, then, gathered some necrotic mana from my environment, and raised a bunch of skeletons that were under my direct command. Giving orders to corpses didn't feel nice, but I ignored the disgust and ordered them to spread around...

I had a lot of undead to hunt.

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 24 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 188}

{Pseudo-HP: 5800 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Necrotic - Chosen 34

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 18183}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Eight

Unfortunately, just because I looked like a necromancer didn't mean that I could just destroy them. Indiscriminately. The way the necromancers acted showed that they had a complicated web of alliances between them, and while the betrayals were common, I could also see several that was not being touched despite the chaos around them.

Considering they were not particularly strong among the necromancers, it was not hard to guess that they were servants of the stronger beings. For the moment, I left those alone as well, looking for more appropriate prey.

As my skeleton knights spread around, I started looking around, looking for prey. Soon, I found my first one, a necromancer that was rushing back, chased by two mounted skeletons, his wounded state proving just how badly he had been defeated.

"Aner!" he shouted desperately as he shouted at a distance, probably to the controller of the skeletons, who had been doing his best to retreat. "Do you think you can just kill me without consequence? The others will make you pay!"

"Only if they survive," Aner shouted back, several hundred feet away while his minions rushed forward, one of them carrying the crystal. I sent a skeleton forward, doing my best to empower it with speed...

But the skeleton shattered halfway.

"Okay, better be careful," I murmured, realizing necromancy might be a tad more complicated than I had assumed. I didn't have necromancy as a skill, so I was roughly copying the way I had animated the treants, using the necrotic mana to enhance the skeletons.

However, I had missed one important detail ... treants were still living beings, and the excess nature mana just made them grow and strengthen.

Necromancy was the exact opposite. Necrotic mana corroded even the remains, and the excess mana hurt the skeletons. The true strength didn't come from the physical power of the shell, but from the soul, whose power was forcibly plundered through the connection.

And, since I had no intention of mutilating the souls of the poor dead elves — I had my limits — I needed to find an alternative path.

Luckily, unlike the necromancers that were using the opportunity to kill and massacre, I had

different options. The skeleton shattered after the empowerment, because it was weak, which meant, there was an easy answer.

Use a stronger skeleton.

Luckily, I didn't need to go around with a shovel and dig to find a stronger skeleton. Instead, I just targeted one of the shattered and abandoned zombies, and cast a spell to separate the flesh from the bones. Then, I targeted the bones with a flood of mana, using my full range of biomancy abilities.

The treatment cost me a pretty chunk of mana, but considering the ordinary bones soon received a strength that could rival bone dragons, it was acceptable.

"Arise, my minion," I muttered as I chuckled, finally raising a skeleton that could rival a strong skeleton warrior.

Though, I had no doubt that any necromancers would have been maddened by watching me waste such an absurd amount of mana, easily touching ten thousand barriers, just to raise a weak minion. It went against the whole principle of necromancy, its greatest advantage was its absurd mana efficiency.

During my experimentation, the skeleton knights had already managed to deal with the escaping necromancer, and captured its spark into a crystal container. They were already returning back to their owner, when they were ambushed by my new skeleton knights, and smashed.

And, before the necromancer could even react, it covered the distance and brought it to me.

"Thanks for the crystal," I shouted happily as I used my mana to repeat the same process on the bones of a horse, and started running away.

Predictably, the angry necromancer chased me. "Stop, you bastard!" he shouted, but as I ignored him, he continued to chase me.

"Catch me if you can," I shouted, a little absurd, but the allure of the crystal in my hand was enough to anger him. A good excuse, I decided as I used my empowered skeleton to steal a few crystals, and soon, I was being chased by a large group of necromancers.

The first few that joined the crowd were the ones that lost their crystals, but after a few, some greedy necromancers joined the mess without needing me to anger them.

Of course, I wasn't idle while running. First, I drained the crystals I had stolen until I had empowered my fake Necrotic Spark, until it reached a reasonable limit, allowing me to control a small horde of skeletons with ease, but not corrupting my soul any further.

{+65 Necrotic Spark, Chosen}

Once I had gathered enough Necrotic Spark to give a convincing outlook of a strong necromancer — necessary for the next step of my plan — I had drained the rest of the Crystals I had stolen, empowering myself.

{+562 Purified Spark}

Not a huge amount, but every bit counted, especially since the next step was going to be pointlessly difficult.

I ran, until I saw a nice small valley that would work for my benefit. It was clear that it had been a beautiful vista just a day ago, but the undead attack had already trampled it to destroy most of the vegetation, and the remaining plants were already dying due to the increasing density of the necrotic mana.

As I entered the valley, I was already crafting some destructive arrays, mixing Necrotic mana with Arcana to create some necrotic bolts that would be effective against other undead.

"Finally—" one of the necromancers exclaimed as he charged with a burst of speed after noticing I slowed down, enthusiastic to get the first hit, but two of my skeletons ambushed him, killing him easily. They didn't even carry a crystal, so I used my mana connection to absorb his Spark before he could react.

{+81 Purified Spark}

"Not bad," I murmured even as I noticed the amount of Divine Spark he possessed, enough to make him a significant enemy — at least in the context of the amount of strength I was revealing — if he didn't act too greedy.

Unfortunately, the necromancers might be greedy, but they were not idiots. After watching the fate of the first one, the others slowed down, while a few of them rushed forward to cut the sight of the valley.

Not exactly a problem since I had no intention of retreating. Instead, I ordered my skeletons to rush and destroy what the other necromancers had brought in. The amount looked impressive

at first glance, but only because I could count almost fifty necromancers that had been split from the main group.

With that fact considered, the horde was relatively small, the majority of their horde too slow to follow up with the chase.

“Good,” I said as I watched my skeletons stand against the mismatched army of the necromancers that chased me, their job made even easier by the fact that the necromancers had no idea how to cooperate with each other. None of them worked together with each other, they were just some that attacked me randomly...

A few of the smarter ones tried to retreat. The first one succeeded — as I needed a bait — but the second one hit against a ward, bouncing back. “It’s a trap,” he shouted.

“Smart, but too late,” I said as I waved my hand, casting another illusion, one that, paradoxically, looked like I had just broken my illusion. I looked like an ancient lich, radiating necrotic mana to reinforce the. View.

“Just attack together, he can’t destroy all of us,” one of them shouted. “We just need to resist until the rest of our horde catches up, and destroys the wards from outside—“ he tried to explain, but that was all he was able to say until a necrotic bolt hit him.

He didn’t even try to dodge, feeling that the bolt was not a threat. The necrotic bolts still hurt them rather than benefit them, but their resistance was strong enough to treat that as a nuisance. Unfortunately for him, I had used the necrotic bolt just as an anchor, and the real work was done by the Arcana mana in it, exploding to destroy its whole structure.

{+34 Purified Spark}

Not as strong as the previous necromancer, but still better than nothing.

“We should attack,” one of the other necromancers said, but he stopped when I waved my hand, and an army of skeletons rose from the ground. As the army marched toward them, most of them decided to break the wards was the smarter choice.

Pity, as only the first line of skeletons was actually real, the rest was just statues of colored earth just giving the aura of the undead. However, without thousands points of mana to reinforce each of them, they would have shattered at the slightest touch... Making them only useful as tools of intimidation.

However, the selfish nature of the undead worked well, and fifty necromancers that had been happily chasing a great harvest turned to try and run ... allowing me to easily harvest them.

{+3190 Purified Spark}

“Not a bad harvest,” I murmured as I took down the last necromancer. Not a bad one indeed, especially since I just stole their Divine Spark, and not the crystals they had carried. I had rapidly absorbed the Necrotic Spark first, turning it into Purified Spark, absorbing it easily, while I channeled the Nature Spark they had captured into God Forest.

{+2420 Purified Spark}

{+5128 Nature Spark, God Forest}

“They had been working harder than I expected,” I said with a frown, realizing that I still need to protect the tribal elves that had been retreating back. But not immediately.

I first needed to deal with the large chunk of the undead army reacting to my latest move...

—

{Strength: 16 Charisma: 22

Precision: 16 Perception: 16

Agility: 16 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 16 Intelligence: 16

Endurance: 24 Wisdom: 16}

{Purified Divine Spark: 6475}

{Pseudo-HP: 5800 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Necrotic - Chosen 99

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 23305}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Seventy-Nine

I could sense the movement outside the barrier getting more intense as a significant part of the Undead Forces started focusing on my little 'rebellion' rather than the ongoing siege.

I was confident in meeting their charge, but that didn't mean I wouldn't turn my nose down to some extra insurance. After a quick calculation, I started feeding my Stats with more Divine Spark, and soon, I felt the familiar and welcome burst of energy filling my body and soul.

{-6083 Purified Spark}

{+3 Strength}

{+3 Precision}

{+3 Agility}

{+3 Speed}

{+3 Perception}

{+3 Intelligence}

{+3 Wisdom}

And, as an added benefit, the improvements helped me to handle the technique I had used prematurely, finally feeling like I could cut loose without risking the destruction of my soul. The improvement wasn't as intense as the Endurance, but under the circumstances, it was still welcome.

This time, I needed to give an explosive display.

And, while the state of the Aether dimension, slowly filling to the brim with Necrotic mana, was horrible news, it did give an excuse about how a previously unknown lich among them could explode with such explosiveness.

I wanted to leverage the opportunity as much as possible, displaying greater competence than the other necromancers to destroy them, and then hopefully writing it off as some kind of accidental display of capability.

Just to make it more convincing, I started building a horrible, butchered version of a

teleportation ward, one that would just create a temporary breach between Aether and Physical planes, one that would flood this side with intense Necrotic mana.

Of course, there was a reason most didn't do such a silly thing, because aether particles that weren't broken down into mana were very dangerous. There were ways of pushing them back to Aether Dimension, but it was enough to occupy a qualified mage for a decent time.

A rather explosive method, but considering I could even deal with Primordial Aether, hardly a scary proposition.

Soon, I turned my attention toward the next stage, and started transforming the wards, which were already buckling under the constant attacks of the elite. "Oh, they are strong," I murmured as I took note of the intensity of the attacks, glad that I didn't confront them directly.

Their empowered state was no joke. Even with the God Forest constantly filling me with mana, I doubted that I could win against them.

That made me change my mind about the nature of the attack. It might have been a bit more suspicious than I preferred, but I started using my crafting to create a huge number of earthen arrows, easily shattered, each holding a small flicker of light mana combined with Proto-HP inside.

Despite its low mana requirement, I wasn't able to create a lot, as the little amount of Light Spark I had showed its limits even with the perfectly purified mana I was feeding to quicken the process. I barely managed to concoct a hundred of them before the wards finally reached their limits.

The moment the first ward shattered, it triggered an explosive reaction that spread through the undead forces, and I used the chaos to target several stronger death knights among them, hoping that it would slow them enough, while their relative lack of magical capability would cause them to miss the trick.

I wasn't afraid of the liches noticing my trick, not from a distance while all that chaos was going on. In this particular case, the influx of necrotic mana actually worked against them, easily destroying the light mana before they could start assessing the reason for their death knights' intense injuries.

Of course, they rushed forward, racing to destroy me before taking back all the Divine Spark crystals I had gathered, unaware that they had been long absorbed and turned into my stats.

There, the second part of my plan started. I triggered the ward I had prepared, and the wall between Aether and Physical weakened, a veritable flood of Necrotic mana and unbroken Aether hitting the arena.

The telltale sign of a suicide attack. The fastest ones found themselves in the Aether dimension, before I could even steal their Divine Spark. I used the opportunity to change my disguise and teleport.

Just like that, I was in the middle of the undead horde ... while they were blinded by the necrotic mana. The intensity of Necrotic mana was supposed to help them, but such an intense amount was enough to blind them.

I set up a ward around myself to protect myself, then I started dashing among them, a huge sword of necrotic energy in my hand, every swing taking down a death knight or a lich.

Of course, there was no way pure necrotic mana could kill them easily. It was just a bridge for me to hide the flow of Tantric mana, rapidly draining their Spark for my purposes, the numbers rising more and more.

With their own spark and the crystals they had carried with them, it was an incredible harvest.

{+2040 Purified Spark}

{+3153 Nature Spark, God Forest}

Not a bad harvest, and it was just starting. As more and more leaders among the undead fell, it left their horde without a controller, and the flood of necrotic energy didn't make things any easier — especially with occasional Aether particles preventing them from making easy use of that mess.

I was about to continue making use of the chaos, when a bone dragon rushed forward toward us from the back of the line, already casting spells, and the breach I had created started to close down.

A familiar face, I realized — well, metaphorically, as liches hardly had any identifying features in their actual faces.

It was the lich I had seen when I first arrived, the one that had closed the breach at the outer wards. The speed at the breach closed despite the pressure off the flow showed that he was not a weakling. Ordinarily, the smart thing was to pull back and disappear while the strong lich

dealt with the troublesome breach.

Unfortunately, his appearance meant that he would soon join the main attack, and considering I was the one that was handling the defense until Seldanna could wake up from her Apothesis, it was better to deal with him.

The question was, how.

I thought about challenging him as another lich, an extension of my current ploy, but after some consideration, I removed that. It was believable to have a rogue, overlooked lich could make an arrogant move to kill the rest, but there were limits to his abilities.

I had already faked the death of a lich, and if I appeared again, not only I would reveal the death was fake, but also I would have burst with enough power to overcome a top-tier lich.

Especially since I didn't know I could actually take him down while acting as a lich. Using necrotic mana was not a simple thing. Even now, I could feel the strain of the cursed effect of wielding the energy anathema to life, and that was only when I used it for effects of trickery.

Facing a strong lich in a direct duel was not a challenge I was confident while restricting myself to necromancy.

Especially that, against a competent caster, I couldn't easily slip tricks like my disguised light arrows. He would notice that immediately. And, a necromancer that could use the light magic was too much of a curiosity, possibly enough to inform the Eternals — especially if the extent of their cooperation was as intense as I suspected — ruining all the effort I had put into disguising myself.

Luckily, that was not my only option. I didn't need to stay limited to necrotic magic ... not with the convenient presence of a huge avatar. I focused on my connection with the God Forest, which had been recently beefed up by our connection.

As I tried to indirectly cast a complicated spell, another death knight attacked me at the same time with three skeletons, realizing that the ward around me marked me as a point of suspicion — that, or trying to score some easy Divine Spark in the chaos. I absentmindedly dodged it and counter-attacked, my retaliation dealing with him.

{+33 Purified Spark}

Not a huge reward, but better than nothing.

Before another death knight could notice me, a huge root suddenly burst out of the ground, and a huge flower exploded from its center, spreading hundreds of seeds, and the moment they touched the ground, they started turning into a small horde of treants, attacking against the horde.

The god forest had supplied them with a great amount of nature mana, but with every inch of air filled with necrotic mana, that would be only enough to keep them alive for a few moments.

Not that I cared as I stepped on top of the root and changed my disguise once more, once again donning the outlook of the nature god.

After all, what was absurd about an actual god taking down a lich, no matter how strong.

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{Strength: 19 Charisma: 22

Precision: 19 Perception: 19

Agility: 19 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 19 Intelligence: 19

Endurance: 24 Wisdom: 19}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2465}

{Pseudo-HP: 5800 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Necrotic - Chosen 99

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 26458}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

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[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty

The moment he noticed my approach — on a rapidly growing root — the lich stopped his attempts to seal the breach completely and started moving away, not willing to deal with an unknown enemy.

Unfortunately, he was just too tempting a target for me to let go. Not just because I wanted to get rid of a tempting target, but also because I noticed that with the breach still open, the undead army had to stop their attack and focus on dealing with the spreading Aether particles, banishing them back to their rightful place taking a significant dimension.

A good excuse for my huge treant to suddenly move faster and start dealing with the undead.

{+54 Purified Spark}

A death knight pulled late from the frontlines, turning into my food as I used the treant to absorb the spark once more.

A profitable endeavor all around, giving me another reason to chase the lich even as he tried to escape back to the main army.

He was fast enough to escape me if I relied on the root to follow him ... so I cast another spell. From the halfway point, the root broke, but before it could fall, it sprout two thick branches, growing in opposite directions. Soon, those branches sprouted further, followed by leaves. The main root transformed at the same time...

And, soon, I was perched on top of a huge wooden dragon, one that was flying even faster than the bone dragon the lich had been using, each flap of its wings spreading a thick rush of mana, enough to momentarily suppress the necrotic mana.

It was another trick I had learned from the memories of the god. Apparently, gods loved to create draconic mounts — much to the distaste of actual dragons, if the scraps I got were any indicator — and even better, my memories had much more impressive specimens of the same spell...

Which meant, my fake draconic mount was not suspicious when cast by a diminished god who had just woken up from his long slumber.

Of course, the memories showed that such a beast would have required a sentient center and a lot of Divine Spark to function properly — and mine was essentially a pupped linked to my God

Forest — but the show was sufficiently impressive.

“Being challenged by an actual god. As a little demigod of Necrodes, I’m honored,” the lich shouted even as I closed in the distance.

I chuckled at the dig the lich threw, trying to trigger the pride of a god to create an opportunity for himself.

And, amusingly, based on the memories I had watched, I could see that such an attempt actually had a high chance of working. The nature god had been a prideful creature, and he might have actually stopped because chasing a demigod was beneath his glory. The memories showed that, even as the battle that forced him to slumber turned desperate, he rarely took the role on any battlefield that didn’t have a ‘worthy’ foe.

Instead letting his worshippers die in droves.

“Do I need to bother horror when I slap down disgusting mosquitos that had disturbed my sleep,” I shouted back, my magically enhanced voice exploding in the opening, the mana radiated turning into mana arrows and destroying the zombies underneath us.

Along with that, I sent several wooden bolts dense with nature mana to the lich, but he easily dodged them. Nature mana was hardly the most fitting choice for a high-speed flying chase. I wished that I could use my light mana without raising too many questions, as it would have worked excellently during a desperate chase.

A good way to deal with them while still acting the arrogance of a god.

The lich didn’t answer, continuing to escape, though I had noted that he had already changed his direction, likely trying to bring me into a trap.

I was tempted to turn back, but seeing that the first stage of the undead siege was finally broken and elves were trying to recover from the intense battle, they could use the time to heal, rest, and erect some wards.

The wards I had established kept them safe from the ever-increasing density of Necrotic mana, while the sight of a god counter-attacking should be enough to temporarily dissuade the remnants of the undead from attacking — especially with the constant Aether particles making their lives more difficult.

That would change if they tried to counterattack, but I used my treant to give them another

order, asking them to create a stronger defensive line.

Of course, even at a distance, I could see a few arrogant ones ignoring those orders and moving forward, but I ignored them. With the necrotic mana getting denser and denser, such an attempt was equivalent to a suicide attempt.

And I was too busy to save the lives of morons.

I ignored them and focused on my counterattack. My rush was valuable because it made the forward undead force shatter and retreat — which would be critical if I ever wanted to create a safe corridor for the tribal elves to arrive.

I continued following the lich deeper into his territory ... but then, I felt a flicker from inside. I was about to write that off as another sign of damage, but another flicker followed ... and I realized where it was coming from...

The necrotic spark.

It was suddenly far more livelier, moving with an intent, outside my control.

That was not good news, not at all.

{+90 Purified Spark}

{-99 Necrotic Spark, Chosen}

I immediately followed it in two moves, which explained the mismatching numbers of the notification. First, I immediately converted the most into a pure spark, keeping it separate from the rest for a moment to make sure that effect didn't continue before letting it be absorbed into the rest of my purified spark reserves.

At the same time, I pushed the remaining necrotic spark into the crystal, carefully watching its movements. It started to shuffle more as I followed the lich, for about twenty seconds, then stabilized.

If I hadn't been familiar with a necrotic spark — both with using and storing — I might have been convinced that it was just a momentary magical effect, of the increasing necrotic mana intensity around me, but I was able to notice it.

The necrotic spark was ... for the lack of a better term ... obedient.

That couldn't be good news, especially with the subtle route change of the lich. I was being led by a trap, clearly, but I started to feel that the trap was not just there to delay me while the lich retreated. Luckily, testing was easy.

I pulled back the mana output of my wooden dragon slightly, as if I was slowly reaching my limit as I got away from the capital. A good display of fake weakness that explained my sudden slowing.

The effect was not too pronounced, as I acted unaware as I sent another wave of wooden projectiles toward the lich, the kind that he easily dodged several times. Yet, this time, one of them clipped the wing of its bone dragon, and it slowed down slightly.

Just to make sure I still had the hope to catch him.

It gave me all the evidence I needed to confirm my guess. Whatever trap he had was not about saving his life — well, unlife — but taking me down.

Whether it was to disable, injure, or kill, I had no idea. I wished I could cast some diagnostic spells to check, but unfortunately, at this point, the increasing density of Necrotic mana worked against that option, ready to disperse anything but the strongest and structurally-sound detection spell.

And, any such attempt would shout that I had detected their trap, making them act earlier. I could turn and retreat, and the distance would make their planned ambush much less effective ... but unfortunately, that option was blocked due to another reason.

The arrogance I had displayed earlier.

It was a beautiful tool. The pointless arrogance of a god provided a convenient explanation for many of the seemingly stupid moves I had done, preventing my allies and enemies alike from digging too deep. It was too convenient to lose.

Instead, I decided to double down, and suddenly ordered my wood dragon to stop and dive. The lich took a second to react to that sudden change, and at that moment, the dragon had already landed on the empty field, the plants already dead — and a few hundred zombies easily demolished.

"I don't have all day chasing a useless pile of bones," I said as I waved my hand, and a forest started to grow around me. It was something an arrogant nature god could do, creating a new forest rather than chasing the enemies further, like they could be dealt with any time.

Of course, the fact that a growing forest around him could be weaponized very aggressively against an attack was just a coincidence.

Certainly.

The only thing that saddened me was the inability to draw some of the Divine Spark of the Forest to ready myself for the upcoming battle. With the forest split between two locations, it was tempting to bring all of my lagging stats to twenty.

Would that make a great difference ... no, but it would have given me some psychological confidence.

Pity.

—

{Strength: 19 Charisma: 22

Precision: 19 Perception: 19

Agility: 19 Manipulation: 22

Speed: 19 Intelligence: 19

Endurance: 24 Wisdom: 19}

{Purified Divine Spark: 2600}

{Pseudo-HP: 5800 Mana: 15000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 26458}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—
[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-One

As I watched the lich come to a sudden stop after realizing I was not following anymore, I realized another drawback of fighting against them, one that was worse than their endless numbers.

They didn't have proper facial expressions, which sapped the enjoyment I would have felt from shocking him with my current stop. He observed me for a moment as I stood in the middle of a forest, my wood dragon long mixed back into the forest.

"I would have never thought that a god would have been a coward," he shouted, his voice enhanced magically. A childish taunt, which was made worse by the fact that everything I had seen in the memories suggested that the deceased god would have fallen for that.

I didn't even bother to answer as I raised my hand, and the forest that grew around me started spitting out acorns. Only a fraction of it targeted the lich, forcing him to escape, while most of it spread between me and the capital, a forest growing around the undead force.

The guardian trees were quick to attack them, demolishing them easily once the thick necrotic energy was destroyed by the growth of the forest, the trees sapping the mana and replacing it with nature mana. The lack of strong liches and death knights — that already retreated the moment I pushed forward, smart enough to realize the initial assault failed and not willing to risk themselves — made the destruction even easier.

Unfortunately, it also meant that the fruits of the rapid success were meager. I had managed to break thousands of crystals that were in the possession of the weaker zombies. Unfortunately, there was a reason those were left under the control of the zombies, the amount of Spark they contained was truly meager, most not even reaching the mark of one point.

{+219 Purified Spark}

{+2153 Nature Spark, God Forest}

Still, strengthening the god forest had been a nice benefit. Before I could enjoy it, however, I saw the lich I had been chasing turn back, and soon, five other liches appeared around him, teleporting.

I examined the necrotic spark I kept imprisoned, trying to if there was any increase in its weird movement. There was not, at least not yet, meaning the liches that joined didn't bring whatever

trap they had planned with them.

I could play with them while they struggled.

“Let’s hunt ourselves a god,” one of the lichs shouted as he cast a spell, and necrotic bolts started to rain. I didn’t even bother looking at him, continuing to expand the secondary layer of the forest until it turned into a shield around the capital, battling with the necrotic mana. The branches of the trees cut them off.

The constant supply of mana provided by the God Forest kept the trees healthy, but I still made a point of staggering slightly as the attack got more intense,, selling the idea that their attack was successful.

The more they committed to their ineffective strategies and gave me the time to recover, the better. I was much better compared to that mad attempt to summon all the elves, but still not at my full performance.

Under the assumption that their necrotic attacks were effective, the demigod-level lichs triggered a rain of necrotic energy together, determined to weaken the forest around me, while, at the same time, a horde of weaker undead wars attacking me.

As more and more lich. joined the attack, it soon turned into something that would rival the earlier siege against the capital, enough to challenge me.

A dangerous strategy, one that would have a chance to succeed if they rushed together, forcing me to retreat at a minimum ... maybe even managing to cut my path completely.

But, since they were undead, they were selfish enough to play safe, sending weaker hordes of undead, supported only by their weaker necromancers.

“Daring to challenge me just because I had just awakened from my slumber, you pathetic pieces of bone skin!” I shouted, letting my voice be enhanced with mana to turn into an attack that would destroy the weaker zombies, but this time, the necromancers among them were ready for it, countering the attack.

I let out an angry cry, triggering an attack that used almost a quarter of the mana I had converted earlier, the rain of explosive leaves and acorns destroying a significant part of the undead army. Another spell from the memories of the dead god.

I knelt the moment I cast that spell, and this time, it wasn’t entirely for show. The difficulty of

the spell was comparable to the earlier summoning call, but with my most recent improvements, the impact on my body and soul was significantly lesser.

And, the rewards were equally impressive.

{+7219 Purified Spark}

Time to boost my stats once more.

{-8414 Purified Spark}

{+3 Strength}

{+3 Precision}

{+3 Agility}

{+3 Speed}

{+3 Perception}

{+3 Intelligence}

{+3 Wisdom}

The reason I received such a high boost was the last-minute decision to purify both the necrotic and natural sparks at the same time. The god forest was already capable of creating more mana than I could wield safely, and there was no harm in prioritizing my Stats.

“Attack him while he’s weak,” the shout came, and the undead horde continued attacking, easily shrugging the loss that would have broken the resolve of a sentient army.

Though, I had noticed the necromancers and death knights made a point of staying farther back. Smart, and it would have been enough to save them ... if it wasn’t for one detail.

I had been paying attention to the Necrotic Spark I had kept in the crystal, and it finally stirred violently.

The trap was finally arriving.

“You cowards,” I created as I used the same attack again, but this time, aiming at them, the divine spark they represented was far too valuable to be ignored. Still, I didn’t want to alert

them to my most important ability, so I revealed a huge crystal floating above me, one that immediately started to glow black in various spots, as if it had many slots, each filled with a Divine Spark I had just stolen after my attack.

Naturally, I consumed all but a slice that remained to maintain the excuse.

{+13280 Purified Spark}

Another boost, this time all nine lagging stats, bringing them back to the level of Endurance.

{-9117 Purified Spark}

{+2 Strength}

{+2 Precision}

{+2 Agility}

{+2 Speed}

{+2 Perception}

{+2 Intelligence}

{+2 Wisdom}

{+2 Manipulation}

{+2 Charisma}

Another boost, one that brought me even closer to my peak. I stayed on the ground, moaning in genuine pain even as the forest handled the rush of the undead. I watched them approach, though slowly, I started to notice a change.

The undead started to show a renewed sense of strength, one that was much stronger than the others. At first, I thought it was just another effect of increasing density, but soon, I realized that was mistaken. It was their divine spark that was getting more active ... almost consciously.

It was a subtle change, one that I wouldn't have noticed if it wasn't for my familiarity with the Divine Spark and all that was related to it. But how, I was not sure. I could only feel that it was coming from the six leader lichs that floated above the rest, content in sacrificing the rest of

their army.

There were two ways of examining that. Either I could try to get close, and confront the lichens without the protective presence of the forest ... or I enhance my stats even further.

I chose the second option, especially as they kindly continued to attack me, even more uncaring of the losses; at least a part of their newfound recklessness about the crystal that was floating above me, representing a great fortune that could be exchanged later on.

Unaware it was just empty bait.

After waiting a few seconds to recover as much as I could manage, I cast a spell, a basic light spell that made me glow green, faking the side effect of another spell I had picked from the memories, continuing to feign weakness. "What a big disgrace, thinking that an army of dead ants could face my greatness!" I shouted as I used the spell again, this time taking down a smaller portion of the army.

{+4214 Purified Spark}

{-5760 Purified Spark}

{+1 All Stats}

I was supposed to feel safer and safer as my powers got enhanced, but that didn't seem to be the case, not when I was able to feel the way the Divine Spark showed more and more movement with each round of absorption.

It felt similar to the earlier trick I had pulled, ordering all elves to retreat back to the capital, but rather than a one-time effect, it was a continuous one.

Luckily, after my latest round of improvement, I was able to detect what had been affecting it. It was the leading lichens...

No, it was a shadow of Divine Spark that overlapped with them, slowly getting stronger while still staying hidden.

I had a feeling that I was about to face my first true Avatar.

—

{Strength: 25 Charisma: 25}

Precision: 25 Perception: 25

Agility: 25 Manipulation: 25

Speed: 25 Intelligence: 25

Endurance: 25 Wisdom: 25}

{Purified Divine Spark: 4151}

{Pseudo-HP: 2783 Mana: 9210}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Guardian God Forest - 28611}

Elven Priestess - XXXX}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Two

I felt myself split between excitement and fear as I found myself about to face my first proper Divine opponent, even though I was feeling that the powers it displayed, even in the half-gathered state, were strong enough to impress me.

Unfortunately, fighting against an Avatar directly was not a good idea. Not because I was particularly afraid of myself, confident in my ability to defend myself if I revealed some of my secrets ... but I was reluctant to trigger such a battle this close to the capital.

I could retreat back to the capital, the wards giving me the chance to retaliate against them ... but after a moment, I decided against it.

I could feel the connection the Avatar slowly building with the rest of the Necrotic Sparks ... which gave me an interesting opportunity. I could easily locate the locations of the other Necrotic Sparks. Even better, from the shape of the connection, I could sense whether those sparks were currently passive or active...

"I see I have a cowardly god that wants to delay me while you hunt for my innocent elves. You are too young to trick me," I said as I suddenly teleported toward one of the larger gatherings of the undead that was currently in a state of active battle. I found an elven tribe, surrounded by the Guardian Trees that had currently turned into treants, desperately fighting against the undead that surrounded them.

It was a large tribe, about ten thousand strong, struggling against the undead attack. "Go and worship me, my children," I shouted even as I waved my hand, and a huge tree appeared, growing to reach a hundred feet of height in just two seconds, and another second later its center shattered, revealing a gate at its center.

A portal for the elves to travel — a new ability I developed after examining the device of the Eternals — leading it to the capital.

The portal itself was made of pure Arcana mana, but I made sure to create the connecting tunnel through nature mana. It was far less effective in terms of mana efficiency, but mana was much less precious than my secrets.

The tree itself was unnecessary as well, just another layer for my deception.

While the elves retreated, I consumed the Nature Spark of the Guardian trees, and the

attacking undead.

{+3882 Purified Spark}

The amount I got wasn't enough to enhance my stats once more, but before I could lament about that, the Aether plane was breached once more, and six liches appeared in front of me.

With one great difference. This time, six of them stood side by side, covered by the shadow of a dragon made of necrotic spark. A shadow that gave me an intimidating feeling ... containing far more than I managed to steal despite my extended battle.

And, considering the relative benefits they drove from the Divine Spark were far superior to mine, it didn't feel like a battle I could win.... "Let's see if the ancient gods truly deserve their reputation," the shadow spoke, the voice alone radiating power...

"I don't have time to waste with you, dog," I called as I teleported, just as the huge necrotic bolt passed where I had been.

I expected him to follow me to the Aether dimension immediately, which was the reason I appeared in a relative opening, but he appeared several seconds later. "How dare you insult me despite being a coward," the Avatar shouted, the desolate landscape shattering under his cry...

"Do you think you deserve to fight with me? A coward that doesn't even dare to show himself and sends an Avatar to fight me," I said. "Here, a worthwhile opponent for you."

With that, I raised my hand, and a huge treant appeared in front of him, attacking him recklessly. I connected him with the remaining stored nature mana, which made him grow to a threatening degree as it rushed toward the Avatar.

I doubted that it would hold it for more than a minute, but then, that was all I needed. I created an illusion of myself before slipping away, and started hunting the undead forces that were currently fighting against the retreating elves — though luckily, most of them were already close enough to the capital to make my involvement unnecessary.

With my attempts to facilitate their escape getting faster and faster due to repeated practice, the Avatar failed to catch up with me. And, luckily, he was arrogant enough to chase me rather than attack the capital to force a confrontation.

With Seldanna still going through Apothesis, the last thing I wanted to disturb that, especially with the great gap between the direct might we were capable of applying. Technically, I had a

dozen ways to equalize the situation in a direct confrontation, especially from a bunch of safe wards, but that would only reveal my secrets.

And, while the Eternals finally stopped pumping necrotic mana into the Aether Dimension, that didn't mean that they were still not spying.

I continued bouncing around, transferring more and more of the tribal elves back to the capital ... which had an interesting, but welcome, side effect. After being saved by their 'god' they were more than willing to worship the Tree of Life, which currently belonged to Seldanna.

Through the portals, I took the occasional glimpses, and noticed a similar connection between her and the nature spark that was held between elves was occurring, showing the process was getting even faster.

All the while, I continued to get stronger by hunting undead while saving more and more elves.

{+18291 Purified Spark}

{-20300 Purified Spark}

{+3 All Stats}

Soon, I realized that I wasn't the only one that was trying to use tricks. Occasionally, the Avatar of the Undead God showed speed fast enough to trap me ... but he did not, probably still assuming that I was trapping the Necrotic Sparks for his convenience and exhausting myself at the same time.

Pity that was a lie.

As I continued my escape, I felt Seldanna's reach touch at my God Forest. That didn't surprise me. I could have fought for control, but I needed her awake as soon as possible, and not to mention, she would be able to use its power without constant soul damage.

Divine Abilities were not jokes.

I let the chase continue, even after I managed to save all tribes I could find, dealing with smaller and smaller undead clumps, unprepared for my attack.

Ironically, the presence of their god sealed their defeat. Without his presence, I could never have discovered them with such ease, each discovery empowering me further, until I felt that I could finally rival my old self.

{+17291 Purified Spark}

{-16250 Purified Spark}

{+2 All Stats}

I still didn't have access to the convenience of Skills, of course, but the near-infinite mana was more than enough as a substitute.

And, finally, I received the message I had been waiting for. "I'm awake!"

Seldanna was back.

"Excellent. We have your test here already," I called. Even after her Apothesis, I could feel a faint connection with her. I felt that she could snap it if she wanted, but she maintained it, and from that, I could feel her state.

She was strong enough to contend against an avatar...

"You want me to fight against a god!" she gasped.

"Come on, sweetie, You're a goddess, you can handle it," I called. "And, feel free to cut loose, I'll make sure both the dimensional wall and the capital is safe."

With that, she rushed forward, soon appearing next to us. "Wait, why there is a goddess here!" the Avatar gasped, his shock almost enough to make me pity him.

I disappeared, and focused on repairing the dimensional barrier. The memories of elementals invading a plane were still fresh in my mind, and while they didn't seem to be caring that much about the planetary fragments, that didn't mean they wouldn't invade the place ... and I much prefer not to deal with them without the assistance of the System.

Instead, I watched as the Necrotic God fought against Seldanna in a hopeless battle ... but just because it was hopeless didn't mean it was quick. The battle lasted for days, the Avatar's ability to create endless hordes matching Seldanna's life-creation abilities.

I ignored many opportunities to strike, for one simple reason. Seldanna had the adjusted memories of Divine Abilities, but using them required practice.

In contrast, the Necrotic God was much stronger, but the difference between having an avatar present versus being present directly was much stronger. He tried to retreat several times, but

each time, I blocked him, not willing to let go of that much Divine Spark...

Worse, the more he drained the necrotic mana from the Aether, his biggest advantage started to disappear. As the Divine battle consumed more and more mana, the Aether Dimension turned even more sparse, like a deflating balloon.

I had a feeling that, without my intervention, the plane would have collapsed, but I worked hard to support the planar barrier with a constant feed of Nature Mana I had hidden away...

“You win this time...” the necrotic god suddenly shouted. “But don’t think that it’ll be free.”

With that, I felt his body, made of Divine Spark, ready to explode. I waited until his hint of consciousness finally disappear, then before the spark could disperse, captured it with a cage of Tantric mana, first stuffing it into a crystal, then absorbing it.

A fascinating amount ... far more than anything else I had got.

{+230490 Purified Spark}

I had just received a fortune...

Now, it was time to celebrate, I thought as I looked at Seldanna’s Divine visage...

My first time with a goddess.

—

{Strength: 30 Charisma: 30

Precision: 30 Perception: 30

Agility: 30 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 30 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 30}

{Purified Divine Spark: 237555}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Elven Goddess - ???}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Three

As I stood in front of Seldanna, I said nothing for a moment, focusing on assessing the differences between an Avatar and the actual presence of a god ... and found the difference suffocatingly different. No wonder that, for all her inexperience and her lacking power, Seldanna managed to defeat the Avatar easily.

Without my latest burst of Stats, her presence would have been suffocating ... and even then, the only reason I wasn't collapsing was because she wasn't using her power on me directly.

At her current state, I would have no chance of winning ... now that we were face to face, even escaping her would have been challenging. Luckily, even if she decided to suddenly go crazy and betray the man who had not only saved her people from certain extinction but also helped her to ascend to divinity, I could have used the incredible amount of Divine Spark I had collected from the defeated Avatar to increase my stats...

And with that improvement, I should be able to escape successfully.

Of course, the fact that I was making various plans to escape as I faced Seldanna told nothing nice about my state of mind ... but after living as an utterly powerless being for most of my life, I was not comfortable facing someone that outclassed me significantly.

Luckily, the long battle between the two, combined with the scraps of memories I had received, gave me a better understanding of how they fought. Both the undead and Seldanna were overly reliant on their environment, without abilities that could deliver a burst of damage.

If it wasn't for my experience with different types of Divine Sparks, I would have assumed it was a weakness that was shared by all gods ... but I knew that sparks like Light certainly didn't have that vulnerability.

A problem for the future, I thought as Seldanna landed in front of me in her real form, letting me take the differences. The biggest was her clothes. Gone were her robes, replaced by a living dress made of leaves, each brimming with enough mana to make a weaker mage go blind. And, that was the most minor difference.

Her hair and skin had also changed. Her skin maintained its flawless quality, but turned green. Luckily, it was the soft, soothing green of flesh leaves, somehow adding to her beauty than distracting from it. Her hair was a darker shade of green, living flowers peeking through its lushness.

Just by standing, the surrounding aura of decay and destruction disappeared, replaced by thick grass and the most beautiful flowers I had ever seen, their smell alone more intoxicating than a strong drink.

I didn't need to feel the way she connected to every being with a Nature Spark — except mine which I kept locked behind a tantric ward — to be assured of her true divinity.

"Someone had been being a bad boy, lying quite a bit," was her first words.

I smirked, amused by the direction she chose, which was far better than the alternatives, showing that her new power didn't destroy her sense of humor. "Well, I wouldn't say lying. More like creatively re-interpreting the truth rather than flat-out lying."

"Very creatively. You should be a storyteller rather than a ... mage," she said, though the last part hesitant. I could sense that she wanted to call me something else, but lacked the words to define me. Which was not exactly unfair, as I lacked them as well. I was not a mortal, but I also wasn't a god, not the way the other gods functioned, at least.

Though, considering I could feel Seldanna being linked to the very land, which empowered and imprisoned her at the same time, I wasn't sure I wanted to be one. Not with the Eternals inevitably poking around. They were not an enemy that I could just bunker down to defeat.

"I'm a man of many skills," I said, letting my smirk turn salacious. "As you very well know."

She avoided my gaze, even turning away to hide her face to hide her blush. I chuckled, amused that divinity didn't prevent her from blushing. She followed it with a spell, and a bunch of plants appeared around her, hiding her from view. When they disappeared, she was sitting on a throne made of plants.

Which would have been more impressive if the only reason she went to that trouble was to hide her shyness.

"So, what were your plans when you arrived?" she asked, desperately trying to change the subject in order not to destroy any gravitas of her first true showing as divinity, unaware of the fact that trying that hard destroyed any hope of it succeeding. "Were you aiming for the slumbering god from the beginning?"

Despite the sensitive nature of the question, she didn't have a hint of anger in her voice, and that was not because she was an amazing actress. Though, it made sense, as regardless of the answer, she didn't have much to be concerned about, considering she ended up being a god

rather than ending up as the minion of an ancient god with little care about the lives of his minions — a fact that Seldanna was aware of thanks to the memories she had received.

I delayed answering, letting my smirk widen as I did so. Instead, I waved my hand, creating a throne made of bare stone, just a bit larger than hers, making her eye twitch slightly. She fed it slightly more mana, which increased the size of her throne to pass mine.

“Truthfully, nothing,” I answered. “My aim wasn’t to arrive here, but to escape the group that was using the undead as a tool to expand their forces. The only reason I picked this plane among the others was that I could feel the undead invasion was ongoing rather than complete, giving me a chance to recover. Anything else, including our fortunate meeting, was just luck.”

I chuckled even as I let my throne grow to pass hers in size. “Don’t tell me that you’re unhappy about meeting me,” I said with an exaggerated needy tone. “I don’t think my poor heart could handle it.”

Her eye twitched in annoyance, making me wonder whether it was about my teasing tone, or the fact that my throne was higher than hers once more. “I don’t know, it’s hard to think that my innocence was taken by such a liar,” she answered, her throne growing further.

“Oh, it hurts, after everything I sacrificed,” I mocked her, my throne growing even bigger.

She smiled, trying to let it grow more ... but only to experience a snag. An artificial one, in the form of a ward, refined her nature mana into pure mana, reducing the strength of her throne, and making the flowers that covered the surface fade.

“Oh, that’s how you want to play,” she growled in mock anger, and suddenly, several roots burst out of her throne, digging into my earthen one. I might have been able to defend if I had elemental mana to actually reinforce, but considering I was still using Pure mana as a proxy, it was impossible to win against natured mana.

Especially when said natured mana was used by an actual goddess.

Instead, I created a floating throne made of Arcana mana, but with a touch of light, enough to make her widen at the sudden trick. I was revealing a secret to her, and she knew enough about me to guess it was not accidental.

I was extending my trust toward her, which made her react favorably, and I abused that trust by...

Creating an even bigger, floating throne. “It seems that I’m the victor,” I declared with an exaggerated laugh.

“You bastard,” she growled, playful anger replacing her emotional state, and a veritable forest burst out of the ground, their branches trying to grab me. I dashed away in my floating throne, and she chased, creating the most impactful tag game imaginable.

I chuckled as she chased, going toward the destroyed landscape. And, as she chased me by creating more and more trees and other plants, we left behind a huge, growing forest ... it would take a while for the animal life to return, but it was a start.

I escaped and she chased for hours, making it a fun but exhausting game out of reforming the plane after the undead assault, the most critical aspects of the land recovering under our incredible chase. However, as she chase me, I could see significant signs of exhaustion on her...

And that was with her using the God Forest as some kind of weapon to spread life. Without it, even for a goddess, it would have taken weeks and months of hard work. Combined, it was a good, fruitful activity, not only entertaining, but also repairing the worst of the damage that was delivered to the undead.

I slowed down, letting her trees surround me and cut off my path. “You’re surrounded, I win,” she declared.

“Oh, really,” I answered with a chuckle, and teleported behind her, hugging her from behind. “It seems that you’re the one that got caught..”

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{Strength: 30 Charisma: 30

Precision: 30 Perception: 30

Agility: 30 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 30 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 30}

{Purified Divine Spark: 237555}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Elven Goddess - ???}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Four

Seldanna said nothing as I wrapped my arms around her divine being, not that words were necessary to convey her feelings. The way she trembled under my arms was enough.

I said nothing as well, just leaned down to snuggle to the nape of her neck, taking a deep breath, enjoying the novel nature of her new smell, which was a mind-bending mixture of the most beautiful flowers imaginable, intoxicating in its nature, enough to reveal her divine nature.

I delivered a soft, lingering kiss on her neck, and she shivered helplessly. I enjoyed her warmth against my chest even as I felt the beautiful texture of her skin, her beauty was truly unmatched. Admittedly, even the dress of leaves she had conjured for herself had an unmatched softness, adding a nice texture, yet not blowing her body from my touch.

It seemed that godhood had other perks that were near unlimited power and dominion, one that was even more interesting for me.

“So, my goddess,” I whispered after I kissed her neck again, enjoying the way she reacted to my barest touch, showing that I wasn’t the only one enjoying the more carnal benefits of her transformation. “We have played enough. Do you think it’s finally the time to celebrate your successful elevation?”

She shivered, catching my gaze, her desire burning even more than I expected. “Yes, worship me,” she whispered, though her needy tone contrasted with the haughty nature her words tried to reflect.

“As you wish, my goddess,” I answered. I was tempted to teach her the mistake of trying to order me around — the fun way, of course — but after some thought, I decided to follow her direction. After all, not only she had become an actual goddess, but also she defeated the Avatar of an enemy god.

More than enough to earn some rare preferential treatment.

“Wait, really?” she whispered, showing that even with all the power, she was unused to her authority. It was good, as I had no intention of letting her get arrogant.

Playful obedience, however, was a different matter.

“You’re a goddess, Seldanna,” I whispered as I tightened my grip around her waist, pulling her

closer. "Who am I to reject your holy decree?"

She let out a dismissive chuckle at the misleading nature of my words. Understandable, as my full erection was leaning between her cheeks. Hardly a move that conveyed respect.

However, while Seldanna mocked my words with a giggle, she made no move to extract herself from that position; unless the way she was moving her body slowly up and down was a way to slowly free herself from my domineering grasp.

While I played with her, I cast a spell, slowly lowering us to the ground, where a huge bed made of leaves appeared. I let her go from my hold, and she lay on her back immediately, her rapid movement revealing her desperate desire, enough to destroy the dignified aura she wanted to cultivate.

And, if her blush was any evidence, she realized that after she ended up on her back. "Undress me," she ordered, trying to sound haughty to compensate for her earlier slip, but it made her look even cuter instead.

"As you wish, my goddess," I said as I leaned above her, and put my hands on her dress that was made of thousands of leaves, and removed one piece. Then another, and another... each enhancing her impatience further.

So, before I could even reach two-digit numbers, her dress suddenly parted open, timed to look like my touch had removed a critical piece, revealing her breasts, which looked even more incredible after her transformation.

Alluring enough to change my mind about slowly teasing her. I leaned forward, enjoying her gaze filled with excitement getting more intense as I got closer. Unfortunately, that eye contact didn't last long.

Fortunately, the alternative was even better. I buried my head into the glorious valley between her breasts, licking them slowly, their taste more spectacular than the most amazing nectar imaginable.

Seldanna let out a moan of pleasure ... which had some interesting effects. Some of the effects, like the ones that had on my body, were perfectly understandable. As her needy moan hit my ear, I felt my body burn with an intense desire. It almost felt like a magical compulsion, and if I didn't know my own body intimately when it came to that subject, I might have actually believed it.

But it was my own body, treating her moan as a delicious sustenance. At first, I thought that it was just an illusion, but as I closed my eyes to feel the energies of my body — without stopping the dance of my lips over her amazing breasts, naturally — I realized that it was actually the case. The Divine Spark in my body building a connection with hers.

It was a soft connection, with the potential to grow further. But I didn't panic, as I recognized the unique nature of the Companion bond. The details were different without the System to modify it ... but I could feel deep inside me that it was the true form of Companion Connection, and the System-Assisted version was a watered-down variant.

A nice finding, I thought as I continued licking her breasts, my fingers caressing her stomach to make her tremble sexily. She moaned again, and the effect triggered once more.

This time, I turned my attention to the external effects, which were not about me, at least not directly. I had already detected that, as a Goddess, she had some kind of connection with the land itself. It was the same kind of connection that the memories of the old god showed.

I just didn't know if it was something unique to Nature Spark, or something that was integral to every god, my information was extremely limited. The avatar of the necromancer god didn't have such a connection, but that didn't mean much.

In the end, one thing was certain. Seldanna's connection with the land getting stronger was a good thing. It would allow her to use her power remotely with much greater efficiency, which was the greatest advantage of the gods and goddesses. Even I couldn't do that.

I had my own tricks, like the one that I used with the God Forest, but I realized that it only worked because there was no god in the fragmented plain at that moment. If I tried to replicate the same trick while using Nature Spark, Seldanna could block it easily, and even if I used another Spark, it would end up with a bitter struggle where she held a great, incredible advantage.

Since I could still be confident in escaping if Seldanna ever changed her mind, rather than doing the silly thing and interfering, I helped her further by creating a hidden ward in the Aether dimension, one that would convert Aether particles into pure mana and feed it to her — while also conveniently getting rid of remaining necrotic mana in the Aether Dimension.

Well, I didn't feed it to her but to the God Forest, not willing to distract her from her amazing state, but practically, it was the same thing. It quickened her bonding with the land several times without interrupting her fun.

And, speaking of her fun, she let out a spectacular moan as I took her nipple between my lips, my tongue teasing it. The resulting moans were spectacular enough to convince me to focus on our pleasure, ignoring everything else.

My fingers danced more aggressively on her stomach, making her tremble under my fingers. She opened her mouth to say something, but only a moan escaped her pretty lips. "So, my goddess, are you enjoying my worship?" I whispered as I started moving up, kissing her collarbone.

"Stop speaking and start working, you insolent mortal," she said, her attempt to sound angry dying a quick death as she immediately followed it with an explosive moan.

"How about if I start like this," I said as I started moving lower down, kissing her stomach as I moved lower. "Do you think you can handle it?"

"O-of course I can handle it. I'm a goddess," she moaned, which would have been more convincing if she had been able to keep herself from stammering as the pleasure invaded her divine senses.

And, I was yet to reach her wetness.

When I finally reached there, she let out an even more explosive moan, and with her pleasure, the forests around us got even stronger. Her taste was beautiful, tinged with overwhelming arousal as my fingers danced around her knob, my tongue dipping to her wetness, bringing her divine qualities to the surface.

"It's good that your pleasure is useful for growing even more forests," I said as I chuckled, taking a small break.

Her blush thickened further as she examined the surrounding area. "T-then, you better start working faster," she whispered shyly. "The forests need all the help they could get."

"For the environment," I chuckled as I lowered my head...

—

{Strength: 30 Charisma: 30

Precision: 30 Perception: 30

Agility: 30 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 30 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 30 Wisdom: 30}

{Purified Divine Spark: 237555}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Elven Goddess - ???}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Five

“So, my goddess, does having a divine communion feel good?” I asked.

“N-no, of course not,” she stammered, her tone telling the exact opposite as my tongue continued to tease her. I smirked, entertained by her shyness.

“Then, how about we change the pattern, maybe you’ll like it better,” I suggested and changed position. Before she could react, I was on my back, and she was above me, looking the other way. I continued teasing her wetness with my tongue, while she found herself looking at my raging arousal.

“Come on, sweetie, we don’t have too much time to waste,” I said, another brush of my tongue making her cry once more. It was a beautiful cry, tinged with overwhelming arousal as her pleasure got more and more dominant.

“I-if you say so,” she murmured in rapid acceptance rather than calling off my absurd argument, her blush thickening as she lowered her head, her excitement reaching a new level.

She said nothing else, as her mouth soon busied itself with a more important task. Her warm lips enveloped my girth, giving a new meaning to the divine sensation, just the presence of her lips was enough to bring me near my limits.

“Fascinating,” I murmured, enjoying the way she shivered against my body, but it didn’t prevent her from going deeper, and soon, my shaft was doing something quite heretical, pushing against her throat.

She gagged even as she pushed down, showing that even divinity wasn’t enough to solve all of her physical ailments — not that I was complaining. The moans that escaped her mouth were heavenly despite their muffled state, her chest rubbing against my stomach with each desperate push, soon falling into a hypnotic pattern.

Never too one to leave such a spectacular thing without payment, my tongue started exploring her entrance, quickly turning fast and aggressive, circling her knob again and again. Her moans turned even louder, showing how much she was enjoying me spoiling her.

Another gag escaped her mouth as she lowered herself even more, enough to cut her breath completely ... which was, technically speaking, not particularly critical at the moment. She was strong enough to survive without breathing for a long time — maybe even permanently —

though that took nothing from the spectacular tightness of her throat.

As she treated my girth to a divine journey, she pushed her hips down, her beautiful, plump thighs tightening around my head as if she was trying to suffocate me in turn.

If someone else dared to do so, I would have reacted rather aggressively, but Seldanna earned that leeway after her spectacular performance of ascension and the battle that followed. I continued to lick her core as her hips moved in response, her wetness grinding against my face aggressively. Her movements were forceful and choppy, showing just how familiar she was with even a hint of domination, but her inexperience just made it sexier.

“It feels amazing,” she murmured dazedly once she pulled back to take a deep, desperate breath — showing that while she didn’t need to breathe, the habit was still there — while tightened my hold on her plump ass, making sure it was impossible for her to move away to get a reprieve.

She moaned several times under the combined assault of my tongue and my fingers, giving me time to enjoy the softness of her beautiful hips. “A ... break,” she whispered soon.

“Not until you finish your own job,” I warned her. After all, my poor shaft was once again without anyone to tend, lingering alone. It was not fair.

“I ... just a few seconds,” she begged.

“No,” I answered, the time to form the word the only break I took, determined to continue teasing her for an hour if she wanted to surrender.

Slowly playing with her until she turned into a delicious puddle of joy was just too tempting. Especially since, with every immediate danger resolved, we had time to waste.

“A-as you wish, my lord,” she whispered, her voice conveying surrender as she lowered herself, showing that the confidence she had received from suddenly becoming a god hadn’t changed her inherent submissiveness.

Amazing.

She went down once more, this time her head moving with ruthless efficiency, taking me deep into her throat, tightening mercilessly... Enough to trigger an explosion, and while I could have rejected the call and continued, I let myself go instead, painting her throat.

She deserved that reward.

{+1 Endurance}

A gasp of shock appeared in front of me at the sudden, unexpected notification. Seldanna didn't react, busy catching her reward, giving me the time to dig and understand what had just happened.

My first guess was that I had somehow used my storage of Purified Spark, but a quick check showed that it was not the case.

It didn't make me feel any better. I was afraid that I had somehow stolen some Divine Spark from Seldanna, and while the amount was not high enough to make a difference, the way it happened accidentally was not a good sign. Also, at his point, it required almost a thousand points of Divine Spark to increase a point ... which was not entirely a small number either.

Yet, as I turned my attention inward to see how much Spark I had pilfered from her accident, I met with another surprise.

The amount of Divine Spark I had assigned to support Endurance Stat was still the same as the others ... but then, where did that extra point of Endurance come from...

A hand distracted me from my musings. "Don't tell me you're tired already," Seldanna said playfully, which was followed by a gasp as I immediately pulled her to my lap, a delicious gasp escaping her mouth as I skewered her.

I made sure she was pointing the other way, making it easy for me to spank her. "Ride me, my goddess," I ordered as I landed a loud spank. She followed it immediately, giving me another dose of pleasure.

"So impatient," I murmured, unable to keep a wide smirk from covering my face. However, that was all I allowed myself to feel before I dug down back to my soul, trying to understand what was going

At first, I expected Seldanna's distraction would make it more difficult, but instead, the opposite happened. As she rode me desperately, I felt another flicker in my Stats ... and realized that, it was the nascent connection between me and Seldanna responsible for it.

I had initially assumed that it was just a connection between the two of us, but as she rode me desperately, I soon realized that the connection was actually between her and my Endurance

stat.

{+1 Endurance}

As my stat increased again, I was able to observe directly ... and I made another fascinating discovery. The reason my Endurance increased was the efficiency increase.... And, it was an incredible benefit, as the square relationship between the divine spark meant that while I only needed a hundred spark to increase a stat from ten to eleven ... I needed a whopping ten thousand points just to increase from a hundred to a hundred and one...

Which had meant that it would have been impossible for me to directly compete with any god, the best I could achieve was to escape back to Primordial Aether, where I had the advantage.

Of course, I had been planning to explore ways to increase that efficiency ... but I certainly didn't expect that to happen in such a smooth manner. I could feel the connection between us increasing the efficiency, giving me hope that I could reverse it.

I analyzed the connection more, and I realized it was not just about her power, but also the way she was connected to the Plane inherently. It wasn't the Divine Spark of hers that was increasing my efficiency, but the land itself.

She was just a conduit. Which was good, as it meant I wasn't stealing anything from her.

However, it was also bad, because it meant there was a limit to it ... unless I found a way to increase the size of the planar fragment ... which I doubted to be a simple challenge.

Another problem, I could already feel that the way she was connected to Endurance was inevitably tight, resonating with her Divine Spark in a fundamental manner.

Meaning, I needed more goddesses if I wanted to spread that effect into the other stats.

Oh, no! I needed to seduce more goddesses! The horror!

—

{Strength: 30 Charisma: 30

Precision: 30 Perception: 30

Agility: 30 Manipulation: 30

Speed: 30 Intelligence: 30

Endurance: 32 Wisdom: 30}

{Purified Divine Spark: 237555}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

Elven Goddess - ???}

—

[Level: 36 Experience: 631374 / 666000]

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Six

“I had just noticed someone triggering the planar wards, and it’s not the undead,” Seldanna muttered, but considering she was locked between my body and a Tree of Life — one of many we had grown during our attempts to erase every sign of undead invasion — each hit of our bodies allowing Seldanna to resonate stronger with it.

A fun method to enhance the plant growth of the area we had discovered.

“Talk about horrible timing,” I murmured, blur tare then stopping, I quickened the movement of my hips, hastening our journey to the explosive end.

It had been three months since the end of the battle and my latest discovery ... which had some interesting outcomes in terms of my stats.

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

Pity that, after three months, Seldanna’s connection to the plane had reached a state that wasn’t easy to improve further, which meant that the gains I received from that hit a limit after a month.

Still, that didn’t mean the other two months were a waste. We had caught several attempts of undead incursions, some blunt, the others subtle, suggesting that they had no intention of stopping to target the region.

Considering they weren’t dissuaded by their earlier decisive defeat and still dared to probe a plane that hosted two divine beings — at least from their perspective — it meant that they had a plan.

It didn’t take a genius to guess it had something to do with the Eternals.

It was why I stayed with Seldanna for two more months even after realizing I had hit a limit in

terms of my direct benefits.

The most visible benefit I had generated for her was to help her with the revitalization efforts. While that, in her current state, she had no trouble converting any type of mana into Nature mana, she was still limited by the amount the plane could generate by slowly breaking down Aether — which in turn was limited to the slow decay of the primordial aether that slipped through the planar barrier.

The greatest advantage of my unique skillset was to break down Primordial Aether into mana directly, hastening the process that would normally take years into days.

The other benefit was subtler, but still useful. We have studied a lot — though with frequent breaks to ... revitalize the land — to integrate some of the principles of Arcana detection wards into Nature Spells she could cast, so that she didn't have to rely on the Arcana wards I cast.

I wasn't going to be here for long.

I still needed to return back to my home. I could still feel that my girls were alive and well, but that was the only thing I could feel, the rest of my connection already faded. I would have been afraid that it was targeting something outside my control ... but then, it coincided with another effect.

My original System, disappeared.

When it happened, it came as a shock, and only the fact that I could still feel the presence of my girls — through a far more faded manner — prevented me from panicking badly.

Still, no matter how much I expected it to happen, it still came as a shock. Luckily, I still had Tantric completely embedded into my existence, still with me even as the System faded.

The loss of the skills was unfortunate, but that was the only practical challenge. With my stats already at a point that could rival the earlier state, and with the chance to improve more, I was not in a position to miss it.

I couldn't be more glad that I had designed my own System, impossible to be taken from me, or I would have returned to my earlier meaningless existence ... and not for long, not with the enemies I had collected in the process.

While my mind wandered, my body continued its steady movement, and soon, I exploded into Seldanna, filling her to the brim once again.

“Do you really have to leave?” Seldanna murmured. “Can’t you just stay here and we can defend against them.”

“I have to,” I answered. “Our enemies are too strong for us to stay in a fragmented plane forever and hope we can resist them. Just look at the things we could do because I managed to steal mana storage from them...” I said. “We can’t afford to wait until they realize I’m not just an old, feeble god.”

During those three months, I explained some things to Seldanna about my power, but during that process, I also made sure to conceal some fundamental aspects. Ironically, this time, it was to protect her rather than myself.

The secret I was hiding was immense, and if it was discovered, I could run away ... but bound to the plane by her nature of existence, she could not.

And, I strongly doubted a small, fragment plane could resist the full attention of the Eternals, who seemed to pull yet another interesting trick whenever I encountered them.

“Still, I don’t want you to go,” she said.

“I don’t want to leave you either...” I answered as I caressed her hair. “But that’s the only option we have.”

And, unlike my earlier misdirection, that was completely true. I had to travel outside the planar border several times during that journey, but no matter how much I tried, I failed to find a way to navigate the Primordial Aether.

I could not only survive but also thrive in the Primordial Aether thanks to my limitless mana generation — though without a plane to base myself, it was rather boring — but the same thing didn’t work to my benefit.

There was only one thing that worked to my benefit, and that was my ability to return to Seldanna. With my connection to her, no matter how far I traveled in Primordial Aether in our expeditions, I was able to return back easily, allowing me to take a daring step forward.

So, I stayed to help Seldanna strengthen the plane — while avoiding some of the crazier ploys I had planned not to alert the others — waiting for the Eternals to make another trip.

I was confident that they would visit to understand what was going on at a minimum. Not to mention, I had made such a big show of capturing and imprisoning all the Divine Spark from the

undead army, which, to their knowledge, was completely useless for me, so I should have been willing to trade it.

Trying to sneak into their ship was a risky plan ... but it was the best way for me to find the way back home ... and if all went well, maybe even discover a way to navigate repeatedly.

With a sigh, I cast a spell, activating the giant avatar I had created for that purpose. "Ready for teleportation," I asked her.

"Not yet," she said, fixing her hair and changing her dress into armor — well, a wooden, grown equivalent of armor, with rose thorns growing, making her sexy yet dangerous at the same time.

"You remember the plan," I asked. It was unnecessary, of course. We had gone through several times, but I was feeling tense as well.

"Yes, once your confrontation is over and you sneak into their vehicle, I'm going to bring the avatar back to the valley you prepared, and make it look like you're meditating to further adapt your power, while I act like I'm intimidated by you."

"And, what will you do if the Eternals come to you with an offer to help you defeat me," I asked.

"Can't I just kill them," she pouted, and I looked at her with a teasing glare. "I'm going to do my best to look like I'm tempted with the idea, but still intimidated by the process, while I'll use the treants you prepare to destroy any ship that tries to sneak in, so they'll assume you're the one destroying them. And, if I face anyone that I'm not confident in defeating, I'm going to trigger the emergency beacons you prepared."

"Good goddess," I said with a chuckle as I leaned forward and kissed her, amused that, after all that time, it still made her blush spectacularly. "Now, are you ready to confront our uninvited guests?"

She nodded, and we teleported...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 32920}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess}

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Seven

I teleported us to the location of the breach, only to see a large ship breaching through the planar border with shocking ease, causing almost no chaos. “Stay back and look intimidating, while my avatar handles the talk,” I warned Seldanna even as I gathered my mana around and cast the strongest invisibility spell I could manage.

At the same time, I let my avatar radiate a flood of nature mana and create two roots that grabbed the ship before they could retreat — impressive, but clearly not offensive. The avatar acted just like what I had seen in the memories, arrogant and reckless.

The amount of mana I spent on that display could destroy a city in seconds, a great display of power, yet it didn’t turn offensive.

The ship didn’t try to run away, recognizing that it was a display to impress rather than attack. I was glad, as I had no doubt they had many tools that would help them escape. While I had a plan in place to slip into their ship if that was their strategy, I much rather sneak in slowly.

Soon, the front of the ship opened, and someone appeared. “We are mere merchants between planes, great one,” he shouted even as he fell onto his knees. “We didn’t know that this dimension was under the control of a great being such as yourself. Please forgive us.”

My avatar didn’t answer immediately, and I used the opportunity to slip out of the plane, slipping out of the planar border. It was only the thick cover of nature mana that was constantly radiating off the avatar that allowed such a thing.

Once in the Primordial Aether, I drew the weakest protective layer I could draw around me as I moved toward the ship, betting for the chaotic nature of the Primordial Aether shielding me from their detection capabilities.

“And what do you trade that would make you daring enough to travel through the Primordial Aether,” my avatar spoke.

The self-proclaimed merchant pulled a box, and revealed a crystal, one that was stuffed with a Nature Spark of shocking quality, around two hundred points, a piece that would be challenging for even the gods to create, as absorbing and splitting them created significant challenges.

A considerable gift, and a very important strategic resource for a god that was just setting up his forces, allowing the creation of a strong and loyal warrior cadre quickly. Too bad for them it

was completely useless for me.

“How daring, mortals daring to touch the blood of the gods,” my avatar spoke, the voice alone triggering an earthquake. “I remember a bunch of meddling kids during the great betrayal. It seems that those bunch of rats didn’t die off yet.”

I continued to swim even as I used my avatar to observe them, getting tenser as I did so.

The attitude of the Eternal was interesting ... for all his surface-level subservience, he was arrogant. And, more importantly, he was not showing any sign of fear, as if despite being caught, he was confident that he was still in control.

There was a chance that his attitude was just unfounded arrogance, but that was hardly a risk I could take under the circumstances.

“You’re lucky that even a dragon might parley with rats under dire circumstances,” my avatar declared loudly.

“We’re glad for your wisdom, great one,” the merchant declared. “We offer you a great trade. An equal trade between the essence of those cursed undead. We want nothing more than the destruction of those abominations, and we will support you as much as we can.”

That was an interesting choice, I thought as I finally reached the outer hull of the ship, and connected myself using a tendril of mana. Carefully, I started examining the surface, but didn’t find a way that I could slip inside ... luckily, I didn’t need it, not when I could just continue to hang on the surface.

Luckily, that was not needed.

“Acceptable,” I declared. “I have thousands times more of that cursed essence ready to be exchanged,” I added, and noted the expression on the merchant’s face. Not greed, like I expected, but victory.

Clearly, they had a different plan than just an equal exchange. I decided to interrupt whatever plan they might have.

“However, even a dragon could be brought down by the poison of the rats. You’re going to leave what you have here, and I’m going to examine it carefully. You can visit six months later for trade,” the avatar declared as it waved its huge tree hand. “I would love to leave my home defended while I go and destroy those undead for daring to invade my land,” I added.

An arrogant statement that seemingly revealed my strategy, combined with a small time request. Together, they would be enough to make the Eternals wait patiently.

At least, that was what I hoped ... though I had quite a number of defensive measures if that was the case.

“That is more than acceptable, great one!” the merchant declared.

“Good, leave,” my avatar declared, once again accompanied by a great explosion of nature mana. “Come here three months later. A day earlier, a day late, and I’ll destroy you before attacking your pitiful organization.”

With that declaration, the ship started to move ... dragging me along as I stuck on the outer shell ...

Which triggered a long, boring journey.

In terms of monotony, it was even worse than the first time I had gotten lost. At least, then, I was struggling for my life, which meant I had to constantly pay attention to my surroundings. Here, I had nothing to do but wait.

I didn’t need to struggle to hide myself, because the ship was unable to extend any detection wards out of its structure as no mana other than Tantric could resist the intense bombardment of Primordial Aether for long, which they didn’t use.

Unfortunately, the same applied to me as well. The structure of the ship was incredibly solid, made of thick, interlocked mana and material, impossible to analyze without destroying. And, I couldn’t destroy it, not without actually breaching the surface.

So, I got stuck on the surface as they traveled in the primordial aether, visiting certain planes on the way.

Interestingly, every plane they visited actually had some kind of magical port allowing them to approach, suggesting some kind of semi-permanent access. Out of the eight planes they visited, six of them belonged to the undead, showing the extent of their spread.

Yet, two of them belonged to different entities. One of them was more of pure mana, suggesting a heavier Arcana usage, and the other, the current one, interestingly, light.

I wanted to try my hand at breaching the two, but considering their strong relationship with the

Eternals, I decided against them. Still, the rapid succession of visits suggested that they were having a far better time finding their path in Primordial Aether.

Pity I was yet to acquire their method.

Maybe I should attempt to sneak into the dimension. Of course, to do that, I first removed my own Light Spark and put it behind several Tantric wards. I still remembered how the Necrotic god was able to affect it.

Then, I moved away from the magical construct the Eternals were using as a port, and moved toward the other side of the plane. Then, I brought a crystal from my hidden spot, one that was holding Necrotic Spark, using it to convert a great amount of necrotic mana.

In the depths of the Primordial Aether, generating about a million mana only took a few seconds. I could have converted more, but replicating the divine spells took a lot from me, even with my new endurance.

That was just insurance.

I approached the planar border, created a mana capsule, and pushed inside, which was as small as I could manage. It was a buried detection ward, one that would be able to slip through the current detection capabilities of my own planar border.

It allowed me to detect the interior — which was filled with harsh light mana. It was impossible for an ordinary human to survive there for even a second. Worse, I detected a greater problem. Only a few seconds of detection, and they reacted, bombarding it with long-range light magic.

Wanting to destroy my mark, I smashed the necrotic mana I prepared, breaching the planar border.

The magical alerts exploded around, and immediately, an army of angels teleported to the border, ready to attack.

Worse, I could feel that Divine Spark was active and aligned, suggesting the presence of a god.

Which was enough for me to abandon my attempts to push for more and retreat back to the port. This time, the Eternals stayed for a bit longer, no doubt exploring the reason for the sudden undead presence, but that was just an extra half a day.

Soon, we were on the way once more...

And, a day later, I was finally looking for a plane that was thousands of times bigger than the fragmented planes I had been encountering.

Home...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 32920}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess}

Part Six

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Eight

Unfortunately, even as I arrived at the door of my home, the challenge was yet to be over. On the contrary, it was just starting.

Luckily, once I managed to draw close, the presence of the main material plane was intense enough that I didn't need to be afraid of getting lost again, so I let the connection with the ship — one of many that I could sense, using some kind of magical dock that was far bigger than the other planes — fade away, and let myself float freely at the dimension.

That removed the risk of immediately getting caught by the Eternals, but still left two problems.

First, the intense strength of the planar border, which was far stronger than any fragmented planes I had come across. I could possibly manage against it, but it wouldn't be a simple challenge. But that wasn't the most significant challenge.

No, that honor went to the elemental beings floating around the plane, fighting to penetrate through the dimensional barrier, with a density that shocked me. Even with the detection in Primordial Aether being hampered, I was still able to push forward recklessly.

That was not a confrontation I wanted to have ... because, unlike the other beings, elementals looked rather at ease with the Primordial Aether, not sharing the fragility of the other being. An interesting aspect of their behavior.

I circled the plane, looking for an opportunity. I could have tried to dodge the elementals, which seemed sustainable since they didn't notice my presence, but I didn't dare to just push through the planar border. I still remembered just how easy was for me to be detected in that light plane, and I didn't want to risk something more.

The opportunity I was seeking, I found a day later. Several elementals, rushed through yet another breach, allowing me to slip through the breached border.

And, the moment I slipped through the border, I felt a connection between me and the System. Admittedly, it felt like it came from a seed, one that was long buried in me.

It was the system, trying to make a connection ... yet, I could sense that it was the ordinary

System and not my unique one.

“A bit late, buddy,” I thought mockingly even as I suppressed that connection, having absolutely no idea to connect with it. Even now, it was a complicated connection for me ... but luckily, after everything, I had the ability to block it easily.

Yet, I let that seed alive, because there was a chance the System could still detect me without that seed. I remembered my cute dragon only being safe under the darkness ward.

The magical yet hopeless struggle of the elementals around us gave me a good idea about potential risks. Of course, there was a chance that it wouldn't be the case ... but then there was a chance that there would be.

I left the elementals to their desperate struggle and teleported away.

After one jump, I paused, and started meditating, trying to detect the location of my girls ... only to have another failure. I could feel their presence, and the fact that they were alive, but that was the extent of my ability. I was not able to detect anything else.

A troubling detail.

“It seems that the disconnect with the System will impair me more than I feared,” I murmured. “Luckily, I still have my beacons.”

Unfortunately, that was not entirely without a challenge either. The main material plane was huge, far bigger than I had even given credit. Even when I was completely on the plane, I wasn't able to sense my beacons properly. They were a distant lump at a faraway distance.

I slipped into the Aether plane, which, after the horrible challenge of Primordial Aether, felt like a holiday. It was even smoother than the Aether of the fragmented planes, though with absolutely no hint of mana, unlike the others.

The slow yet efficient suction of the System was rather obvious. I continued to travel, ignoring the temptation of stopping for some sightseeing. Even with my near-infinite mana — as I was still able to easily break down Aether — I didn't want to take any risk.

Yet, soon, I became glad for that decision for another reason. The closer I got, the more distinct the presence of my beacons started to get. Yet, as I drew closer, I noticed the absence of some particular beacons.

Which I had left at Silver Spires.

I felt tense. Admittedly, the only reason I wasn't panicking was that I could feel the existence of my girls in my soul, preventing me from coming to some unfortunate conclusions about their state of living.

After a long travel, I finally managed to find Silver Spires ... or, at least, what was left of them.

The first thing I noticed was the ragged nature of the area. The towers, famous for their unique color, had been damaged. Half of them were destroyed — which included the tower of the headmistress — and the rest had suffered some significant damage, enough to turn them into ruins.

Just in case, I decided to walk the rest of the distance rather than risking teleportation, even to one of the safe houses I created, and instead decided to walk the rest of the distance, a little magical field around me enough to hide me from the monsters that surrounded me.

As I got closer, I could see more details. Unlike the towers, the walls were mostly intact, and manned by a surprising number of guards, defending the school against the monsters.

However, that didn't fill me with confidence, not when I got close enough to notice their uniforms, which were not the distinct style of the guards of the Silver Spire.

They were wearing the colors of the royal family.

"What the hell had happened there?" I murmured as I approached, feeling tense. I had been confident that the girls would have been enough to handle the mess that they were facing, and seeing the evidence otherwise was not good news.

Still, turning and leaving was not one of the considerations. Even if the girls were not there anymore, the location offered me the best opportunity to find a clue about what had happened. Before I arrived, I found a caravan moving toward the broken school, and slipped inside, casting an illusion to blend.

It was temporary, of course, as I couldn't be sure if there was someone competent in illusions at the walls. Not to mention, with the constant draining effect of the System, it was far harder to establish a convincing illusion, and I didn't want to take the risk.

So, I stole a bunch of clothes even as I listened to the gossip, trying to understand what had happened.

What I learned was useful. Apparently, there had been a war at Silver Spires two months ago, with the Royal family sieging the place to punish them for hosting the Princess. I had no doubt that it was a bullshit excuse, as I doubted the princes could mobilize enough to take the place down while it was defended by my girls.

I had no doubt that the Eternals played a big role.

Yet, I didn't despair, because it was not the extent of the gossip. No, instead, they were still gossiping about how lucky they would have been to somehow catch one of the several women who were being searched.

A list that included all of my girls without exception ... though how they learned the name of my sexy dragon was a mystery. Things probably had gone worse than I expected. Still, the fact that the search was active was enough to give me even more hope about their relative comfort. They were still on the run, at least.

Of course, that left me with a difficult mission to search and discover the truth of the issue, a monumental task ... thankfully, not impossible.

I didn't have much trouble sneaking into the school, once again using one of the secret passages rather than using the main entrance, and my knowledge of the walls was useful. And, just like that, I was back in Silver Spires, where everything started.

Ready to find my targets.

Rather than acting immediately, however, I started to observe my surroundings.

The search wouldn't start easy, not when I was surrounded by an army of unfamiliar faces. Worse, from the way people were moving, I could see that they were stronger than I expected ... with their stats far higher than the old state.

If they were wearing fancy clothes, I would have expected them to be a part of the royal family. But, no, they were clearly taking weaker positions. Which meant their origin was dubious. The Eternals were my best guess...

The search wouldn't be easy indeed...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 32920}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess}

Chapter Two Hundred Eighty-Nine

I couldn't help but feel nostalgic as I walked through. Even with all the changes, it was just like the past. Once again, I was disguised as a servant, walking around, desperate to hide my true identity.

The only difference was the nature of the threat. In the past, I was afraid that anyone could take me down ... but now, it was different. I just needed to avoid the attention of the Eternals.

As I walked around, I took note of the changes. Amusingly, more than half of the teachers stayed, showing that they had no problems with the new management. Even more interestingly, the guilds were also here ... and they were acting far more arrogantly.

Enough to actually insult the teachers.

A rather interesting change.

However, the classes also changed, paying even lesser attention to the content of the classes, making Silver Spires even more useless ... and even the levels of the students were much lower.

"I wonder why they didn't just close it down," I murmured. Maybe it was a trap ... not for me, obviously, as they had no idea about my survival, but the girls. Considering they were wanted, it made sense.

Unfortunately, poking around the locations that could be accessed by servants didn't give me any clue about their destination. I needed to be more adventurous.

First, I visited the ruins of the headmistress' tower, trying to find any hint of a ward, a hidden clue, maybe a Divine Spark ... but nothing stayed other than a bunch of rock. Whatever destroyed it did so with a rather intense display of anger, and if anything survived, I wasn't able to pick through my magical probes — limited to avoid distracting the wards that surrounded the area.

Naturally, there was no hint of Divine Spark, which was not a shocking surprise. Without the darkness ward to protect it, the System would have long devoured it.

I needed to cast more aggressive detection wards ... but I was having trouble doing so, afraid of getting caught. Especially since my mana signature was slightly different than the one that the System provided.

I didn't know if they had the ability to catch, but either way, I didn't want to go around throwing epic spells.

Maybe I could tap into a different source instead, I decided.

Then, as I passed near a warding class, where an incompetent teacher teaching an even more incompetent batch of students, I had an idea. Do I need to be the one to cast the spell?

Sneaking into the class while staying hidden under a shadow was trivial with my stats, and a blanket of illusion ensured it would stay that way.

I didn't have to wait long for an opportunity. The incompetent teacher was building an unnecessarily complicated ward that would waste a lot of mana, so I stretched a tendril of mine, connecting to his soul space to pilfer a good amount of mana in the process.

Watching the ward stutter and die was a particular kind of fun.

Though, I didn't pull back ... because I had realized he also had a water magic skill. Just an advanced one, but I wondered if I could use it for my benefit. I pushed some of the mana I acquired from him ... and from the other side, I received some freshly converted elemental mana.

Just what I needed, I thought with a huge smirk, and decided to extend that trick to the rest of the class; their attempted wards failing just as easily.

Not that I cared, but when I discovered another student having earth magic ... so, I channeled the mana I stole through his skill as well.

{+1200 Mana}

Not a bad haul, especially since it was split between three sources, pure, water, and earth.

If I used it carefully, it should be enough to cast a decent detection ward.

However, as I played along in their soul space, I noticed something interesting. As they worked on their magic determinedly, I sensed the momentary appearance of Divine Spark. It was a subtle effect, barely more than a fraction of a point.

It reminded me worship of the elves and the resulting Divine Spark.

Of course, the existence of an occasional divine spark was not a shock. I had long deduced the

reason the Eternals did their best to dominate the main material plane was the renewable Divine Spark generation. I guessed the reason they let the beasts survive was the same reason.

They wanted the people to live under constant pressure, and what better way to ensure that than a hostile environment, where the constant presence of numbers reminded them they just needed to fight a bit more to secure their freedom from the dangers.

A beautiful balance, I had to admit.

Yet, it wasn't what caught my attention. No, most of the Divine Spark had been just devoured by the System ... but a few drifted downward.

And disappeared.

Not devoured by the system.

"How interesting," I thought even as I extended my mana slightly, trying to touch what was going on. I managed to catch a glimpse, but it took quite a while. Still, I managed to capture a hint of Darkness Mana, concealing the spark before it could disappear.

"Wow,, that's a challenge," I murmured, but rather than rushing forward, I stayed put, not wanting to scare away my only potential clue. Instead,, I stayed back, carefully tracking the direction of the darkness ward to extrapolate a direction.

It didn't work, the directions were wild enough that, either the target location was on the move — wildly so — or the spell accounted for that fact.

Luckily, I had other options.

First, I stole some of the Divine Sparks that were being stolen ... and managed to inject pure mana in the depths of it, and injected my own Divine Spark into it. The ward protected it from being stolen, and my connection ensured that I could track it toward its destination.

It had traveled through a confusing path at first, but soon, it was revealed that the path had been the first layer of protective measures, and it steadily started to go underground.

"Finally, a destination," I murmured as I finally left the classroom and followed the path. First, I arrived at the storage rooms in the basements. With my stats, finding a weak spot in the damaged wards only took a second ... and I started using Earth Mana to create a tunnel once more.

“Fucking finally,” I murmured as I enjoyed the smooth journey. It had been a long while since I didn’t have to use rough arcane mana to replicate the task, and the difference in performance was incredible.

Still, I did my best to limit the mana presence while closing the tunnel behind me, afraid of getting caught — by Eternals, and by the owner of the Darkness ward.

I had to travel far deeper than I expected. Only after I was two miles underground, I came across a protective ward, one that had been created by Darkness mana, making it very troubling to sneak in.

Troubling, but not impossible. I stayed at the edge for another hour, stealing slivers of Darkness mana from the wards, aware that it would be the only way to conceal myself from the other tools of detection. Darkness mana was excellent for it.

And, the irony of using their own weapon for this purpose was very interesting.

Soon, I gathered enough mana to create a beautiful cloak around me, and used it to slip through the initial darkness ward. For all its amazing qualities of maintaining concealment, Darkness mana wasn’t a good material to make wards. Once discovered, bypassing them was trivial.

Oh, whoever built it was smart enough to realize that fact and built a secondary layer under the first, but whoever built it wasn’t exactly competent. High-leveled, but not competent.

“Probably the princess,” I murmured as I assessed the evidence. That made sense, as she had access to the darkness ward, and if necessary, high-level skills, and the combination would allow her to dig down.

But, I could also deduce that it was not for her own residence. They had already bonded with Darkness Spark, and unless things had changed radically, she wouldn’t be able to use the Sparks she had been stealing from the school.

With that in mind, I continued traveling down, bypassing the ward layers, taking note of the details.

Then, I arrived at the center of the wards, and I came across a familiar sight. Two familiar sights, even.

The first, and the less important, part was the crystal platform that the headmistress was using

to suppress her divine spark continuously. However, not without some changes, as half of the supporting pillars were gone while the platform itself showed signs of damage as well.

All of those were just details compared to the more important aspect.

Helga was at the center of the platform, naked and frozen...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 32920}

{Pseudo-HP: 1103 Mana: 2410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety

As much as I wanted to rush forward to make sure Helga was alright, I kept myself back.

After months of staying away, I didn't want to ruin everything by a solitary mistake. Instead, I stayed at the edge, expanding my mana with a focus I had rarely gathered, using the softest touches I could manage to check every single spell around her, painstakingly making sure that there was no trap ready to go off.

Then, I turned my attention to the spells that were keeping her in stasis. At first, I thought that she was a prisoner, but a detailed diagnosis showed that none of the spells actually kept her unconscious, just supported her life functions, and kept her alive.

At the same time, it drained some mana from Helga to maintain the wards, channeling some through a Darkness Spark — leftover from the large ward the headmistress employed — to make sure both wards stood strong.

The caster of those spells was the same, likely the princess through one of her clones once again. The caster's intent was good ... but misguided, I realized, as while I was working on the wards, I watched the darkness ward slowly adding Divine Sparks to Helga.

That didn't surprise me as much as it should have. After all, even before it finally deserted me, writing me off for dead or lost, I knew that my System was doing its best to use me as some kind of vector to gather more Divine Spark, and it wasn't too shocking that it focused on my Companions once that was not an option.

Maybe it was what the princess was thinking. Helga would continue to absorb Divine Spark and channel it to the mysterious real owner, and it would help Helga in turn.

Unfortunately, from the shoddy construction of the wards, it was clear that she didn't have much time to build the hideout ... and that meant she also didn't think about how the darkness ward would interact with the situation.

I was almost sure that, at first, darkness ward didn't stop the spark from being drained. Unfortunately, that was a temporary situation. As the wards got stronger due to their connection with Helga, the darkness ward got strong enough to cut the connection completely. I was sure that those wards weren't built by the same person who built the genius collection aspect.

Which prevented the System from draining the Spark from Helga. A troubling situation.

But just troubling, and not desperate. After all, as far as I could understand, I was the closest thing to an expert on divinity, with the perfect toolkit to solve the issues.

I was tempted to cure her ... but I decided against it. "No hurry," I murmured. I needed to do this right, not quick. After some consideration, decided to focus on the wards at first. I cut Helga's connection with the outer wards and took it for myself, feeling a remote connection with the Darkness Spark.

It was truly a pitiful fragment, barely half a point, but still, it was enough to convert the pure mana of the System with decent efficiency. And, it was even better with my overly purified mana, especially after I focused on making it as malleable as possible. Unlike the System-provided mana, I didn't care to make it usable without transformation.

Still, I spent two hours carefully feeding the ward while also working on its structure. It was the first time I was working on such a complex darkness ward on my own, but I had some impressions from the past. More importantly, forty-five points of intelligence were no joke, and they allowed me to solve the complicated problems inherent in the structure with shocking efficiency.

And, two hours later, the area turned into an impenetrable area that the System couldn't hope to penetrate, a small safe house that I could focus on immediately.

Only then, I allowed myself to walk toward Helga, and dispelled all the spells that were holding her in place before looking inward to her soul space.

It was a chaotic mess. Her original, System-granted soulspace was damaged beyond repair, and while I could see the hints of a new one trying to grow out of her companion node, it was nowhere near successful, damaged by the free-flowing Divine Spark fragments.

Fragments that were far more crowded than I expected ... hundreds of points worth in my measures. And, the only reason that didn't kill Helga already was the partial bond she managed to achieve with some of the Divine Spark ... a shocking achievement.

Even as I slowly purified those connections, I tried to understand the nature of the Divine Spark that had been collected by her ... it was a different shape than the others, with a certain purity that was very similar to pure mana.

It was hard to identify the Spark, but the taste of it gave me a similar feeling to how Helga

thought. A desperate search for knowledge ... the search for truth. And, unlike the other sparks I played with, it lacked the aspect of domination.

For convenience, I decided on a name.

Knowledge Spark.

With that decision, I started the slow, methodical process of capturing every single fragmented spark, purifying the excess, useless components. As, not every fragment carried her search for truth and knowledge as purely.

With those cleansed, the amount she had finally dropped below a hundred, the remainder taken by me.

{+349 Purified. Spark}

Not because of my greed, but because I wanted her to have something closest to the concept she managed to extract. The ward she had built to collect them had been very selective, and I didn't want to ruin her plans by meddling too much.

Instead, I carefully modulated the absorption of the Divine Spark, while at the same time, I cleansed every little bit of the System and Companion process from her body, locking them behind a fake soulspace that would still give the impression that Helga was unconscious.

In case the wards fail they could detect her once again.

I didn't need them polluting the complicated process of her first proper Divine step.

Another hour, and her eyes fluttered open. A fascinating sight, especially since I could see her eyes glowing with an intensity that I missed. "T-tell me it's not a dream," she whispered, her voice throaty.

I would have told her that, but it soon turned impossible. My lips were silenced by hers as she slammed her lips against mine with a desperation that shocked me, her hands gripping my hair as hard as she could manage without her stats.

I barely registered the pragmatic differences in her body as her legs wrapped around my waist, and she desperately grabbed me, doing her best to increase contact between us.

Who was I to disappoint my favorite nerd, I decided as I cast a simple spell, making my clothes melt off my body, leaving her alone and ready for more.

She clearly missed me as much as I missed her, as she moved her hips higher without the slightest hint of resistance, her thick thighs tightening around my waist, her core dragging around my length, getting wetter by each second.

She trembled desperately as she did so, not just excitement but also exhaustion, showing her haphazard recovery system hadn't been very effective.

With a kiss, I flooded her body with pseudo-HP even as I let my hands drift down through her sides until they landed on her delicious thighs, supporting her up. "Better?" I asked.

She nodded enthusiastically, not trusting herself to talk, immediately returning to the kiss.

I just chuckled as my fingers tightened on her ass while I slowly lowered her down, ignoring my usual habit of teasing. Her excitement, once clear as a day, was too beautiful to darken with frustration after such a long departure.

She wanted to remind herself that I returned. "Faster," she moaned as she pushed her trembling legs down, taking me deeper inside. She let out a guttural moan, and I found myself being pushed on the floor, Helga firmly sitting on my shaft. "I missed you so much, you bastard," she exclaimed even as she moved back and forth, enjoying a panicked, hasty ride.

"I missed you too, my love," I answered, her smile growing incredibly. She smiled brightly even as she danced back and forth above my shaft, her eyes firmly open as if she wanted to make sure I couldn't disappear from under her.

That alone was enough to confirm just hard had been my disappearance.

I stayed under her, letting her ride me, completely on her terms, no matter how much her beautiful moans tempted me to take control. She deserved her reward certainly. I tightened my hands on her cheeks, enjoying their generous softness.

"Faster," she moaned as she picked up speed, her eyes filled with a deep need, a burning passion.

Her desperate ride, combined with the long, involuntary celibacy she experienced, resulted in a desperate climax, and she collapsed against my chest. I kissed her lips gently. "I missed you, my love."

"I missed you too," she answered, even as I felt our bond establishing once again.

{Goddess Acquired: Goddess of Knowledge}

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33269}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-One

“... so, you’re saying I’m now an actual divine entity,” Helga murmured as she lay in front of me, while I massaged her body. Partially to help her merge with her divine spark successfully, but more to continue touching her after our intense embrace.

As much as I wanted to continue, she needed a break. Not physically, as that was easy to bypass with magic, but mentally. As much as meeting again was elating for her, she still needed to process living in magical suspension for months, and experienced a close call with death due to an unforeseen magical complication with the wards.

So, while I massaged her naked body, I had given her a breakdown of my experiences, both the events that happened since my disappearance, and some of the pertinent details I had hidden from her during our encounters.

She took them better than I expected, which implied that their lives hadn’t been particularly easy in my absence — not that I needed evidence for that with the state of Silver Spires.

“Oh, you have always been a goddess for me,” I answered, which made her chuckle.

“You are a shameless flatterer,” she said, trying to complain, but it was hard to do with my hand caressing her sides gently. “I’m sure I can’t compare to that elven goddess.”

“Oh, someone is feeling jealous,” I said with a chuckle, leaning down to kiss her neck, and making her moan. “So cute,” I murmured as I pulled back, enjoying her shuffle. “But no need to be jealous. You’re already a pseudo-goddess, and we just need to find a location for you to complete the transformation to get away.”

“Does that mean we need to escape this plane?” she asked.

I frowned. “That, I don’t know yet. Running away is certainly safer, but that also means months of travel at best. Primordial Aether is not the friendliest place. Maybe hiding in plain sight is the better option, but for that, I need to know what exactly happened after my disappearance.”

“Actually, there’s not much I could tell,” Helga admitted. “We pulled back to Silver Spires after your warning, and organized the defenses. It was a good thing that we did, as it took just a day for the biggest monster horde we had seen to attack, sieging us nonstop for a month, and the moment we defeated it, they were replaced by the royal army.”

“Let me guess, they were much stronger than you expected,” I added.

“Yes, it was probably the Eternals supporting them directly,” Helga admitted. “That was much harder to defeat, but somehow, we still managed to do so ... but then, the System changed a month ago, giving us several levels, a lot of achievements, enhanced mana and HP regeneration, and promises for even more.”

“As long as you provided Divine Spark to it,” I said. Helga nodded. “I’m guessing you were the one that discovered the true source of Divine Spark and built that ward to steal the generated fragments from the main System.”

“Yes,” Helga said proudly, then wilted. “But it backfired. When we started absorbing the sparks directly, the Eternals decided to take a direct approach, and attacked with a small army of level-forty soldiers, each carrying weapons we had never seen before. Our wards were strong, and we managed to resist at first... But then, the System stopped.”

“Yes, that’s a nasty trick they have,” I said.

“I was in the middle of casting a Spark-Powered ward, so the sudden loss hit me particularly hard. I barely managed to ask the Princess to bring me to the safe house and set the wards, and I lost consciousness before I could arrive. The last thing I remember is a magical message from Titania, saying that they were trying to escape.”

“They are still alive. I can still feel them,” I explained. “I’m hoping that they are also free, as the search for them is still ongoing, but that, we can’t be sure about. It’s also likely that the Eternals captured them but didn’t bother actually informing the source.”

“And what are we going to do?” she asked.

I sighed even as I caressed her spine, making her shiver. “It’s your call. Retreating and finding a fragmented plane is the safest option. We can make your bond with the plane and strengthen you slowly, safe from intervention.”

“But it’s not the only option,” she commented, too smart not to notice my phrasing.

“No, we can also stay here, and you can bond with the area under the darkness ward. It should be enough to empower you to the next stage, and we could enhance the current ward to be more efficient and provide you with constant Divine Sparks from the school, especially if go and focus on the recovery of the school. But there are a lot of risks in doing so. I don’t know what would happen if the darkness ward ever breaks down, but I can’t imagine it being pretty.”

“We’re going to stay and save them,” Helga declared bravely, not waiting for even a second.

“My brave goddess,” I said as I kissed her. I wasn’t surprised by her decision, but that didn’t mean I wasn’t impressed. Not everyone could risk their lives directly for their friends — and I had no doubt that, they become even better friends under the constant siege.

“It’s only right—“ she started, only to gasp as I flipped her, and she ended up on her back, her beautiful breasts once again in my sight.

“Just because it’s right doesn’t mean people would do it,” I said even as I cupped her breasts, enjoying her moan. “It means you deserve a reward.”

“Oh, a reward,” she whispered. “Is it any better than your earlier reward?”

“Certainly,” I said as I caressed her curves, her stomach contracting as her body trembled in anticipation. “Earlier was a frantic greeting because I missed you. This is going to be a reward for my most beautiful and most knowledgeable goddess.”

“You’re exaggerating,” she whispered, followed by a moan as I tweaked her nipple.

“Oh, really? The only way to bond with a divine spark is to have the perfect alignment with it,” I explained. “Consider what it says about you to have such a unique alignment with something that I could only classify as the Spark of Knowledge.”

“I ... I don’t know,” she whispered, blushing shyly. It was good to see that, despite everything that happened, she was still shy enough to maintain her cuteness.

“Now, to the reward,” I said as I caressed her breasts before moving down, my movements getting less erotic and more patient. Her eyes widened as she realized what would follow. “That doesn’t feel like a reward,” she whispered.

“Nonsense, you’ll relax, and we’ll make sure you’re properly bonded with your Spark in the process. Don’t you want to be healthy so I won’t worry?”

“You’re playing dirty,” she growled.

I just chuckled. “Oh, sweetie. Did you forget? I always play dirty.” She moaned. “And, why are you complaining? It’s not like you don’t like it.”

“... maybe,” she whispered, followed by another moan. As my hands danced on her body, Tantric mana infused her body, not only allowing the Divine Spark to meld into her body perfectly, but also resolving the tightness of her muscles and healing the hidden dangers and

blockages.

And, as I worked her body, Helga moaned repeatedly, but stayed passive, letting me enjoy the show of her naked body once more. Soon, my focus was on the light perspiration she was developing, highlighting the beautiful contours of her curvy body, from her pouty lips to her shapely hips.

Pity I had already committed to teasing her, as I was already raging for another taste. “Now, let’s change your pose,” I said as I flipped her once more, but this time, I didn’t let her lay. Instead, I let her tense her arms and legs while pulling her up, making her create a triangle.

A very sexy, naked triangle, with her hips tensing even further. “Now, don’t move,” I warned her as I dragged my fingers along her inner thigh, close to her core. The way her legs trembled tempted me to cut this little game close, but I managed to reject that call.

Barely.

“Slide your foot further,” I told her instead while I caressed her inner thigh again, my mana circling inside her, removing the remaining signs of System from her body. I doubted that those fragments would do anything, but it was always better safe than sorry.

Though, I didn’t keep myself from teasing her. I pushed her to more and more tempting poses, which challenged me more than I was expecting, but it was good to see her frustrated expression.

I missed teasing her.

Ten minutes later, her beautiful slender fingers curled over my shoulders and pushed me down. Her strength was barely more than an ordinary person, which was shocking considering she had already bounded with her Divine Spark, and it should have worked enough to empower her.

But it seemed that the distorted nature of her spark didn’t enhance her physically, leaving her vulnerable.

However, she was quick to show that while the physical enhancement might have been limited, the exact opposite worked for her magical attitude. Two magical chains appeared and pulled me down, pinning me on the ground, their structure completely novel ... and more importantly, rapidly shifting as she experimented on them.

Her experimental capabilities had enhanced greatly, but I wasn’t able to talk about that, as she

used my bound state to climb on top of me. "My turn," she growled as she pushed herself down, her warmth wrapping around my girth.

She was impatient.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33269}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Two

“Someone has spent too much time with Cornelia —” I started, which was all I was able to say before Helga waved her hand, and her magic closed my mouth, silencing me.

“It’s punishment time, no talking,” she warned even as her hips started moving, riding me. I let out a muffled chuckle at the setup. Naturally, even if the spell she used was genius, she currently had access to a very limited amount of mana, and it couldn’t be compared to my reserves — and the less said about my ability to convert the mana from Aether, the better.

However, I didn’t use them, instead just struggled against the bonds physically.

To my shock, they were able to resist even as I applied enough Strength to reach twenty points. Impressive.

“You can’t escape without cheating with magic,” she declared smugly even as she put her hands on my chest, going back and forth, showing she was strongly underestimating my new physical abilities.

I let her continue to believe that. She earned the right for it, and I was happy to play at her own pace.

Particularly, considering the enthusiastic dance she was conducting on my lap was less of a chore and more of an excellent sexy dream. It took her several moments to get into a pace and control her initial pleasure.

A cheeky smile bloomed across her face.

She raised her hips and brought them down with a sudden change of pace. A jolt of pleasure shot up my spine while she looked down at me smugly. “It’s not fun when you’re the one being played, is it?” she asked.

I certainly disagreed. I was having a lot of fun, but my mouth was blocked, so saying that was difficult. Instead, I looked up, enjoying the dance of her tits while her legs splayed on both sides of me while her wetness spread along my length. She had pulled out, and limited herself to gliding along my length after her initial desperate ride.

She clearly wanted to play with me just as well.

“Patience,” she delivered, trying to sound smug as she slid down even more, and took my length

into her mouth, teasing the head. Pity she just sounded needy. She needed her orgasm even more than I did, her body trembling in anticipation.

She was cute, beautiful, and sexy at the same time.

God, I really missed her.

Unaware of my thoughts and focused on my shaft, she pulled back and breathed over my shaft, the sudden change making me shiver. Then, she returned sucking the sensitive head, treating it as a particularly sweet dish.

“ I figured you need some lazy pampering,” she whispered, though as I shifted my leg slightly so it rubbed against her wetness, she followed by a deep moan. “Naughty,” she gasped as she waved her hand, and two more chains appeared, this time along my legs.

Satisfied with her achievement, she went back to licking and suckling on my shaft, her fingers focusing on the base.

I tugged at the restraints playfully, acting like I was using the full range of my strength. She just chuckled. “You can’t escape those with brute force,” she whispered. “Too bad you’re behind in your magical studies, you naughty boy.”

The bindings had almost no give, holding my wrists spread, but it was her tone that made me shiver. She played the sexy yet disappointed teacher very well.

My body acted on its own, pushing my hips high just as her lips wrapped once again, touching at the entrance of her throat. She pulled back, and patted my chest playfully. “No need to be impatient,” she whispered, repeating my treatment earlier.

She clearly enjoyed having me tied and under her mercy.

I was tempted to let her play more. After all, she deserved a lot of rewards. Unfortunately for her, her last words made me even hornier than I expected ... and more importantly, I knew she would enjoy the reversal just as much.

I tugged the magical chains once more, and she grinned smugly.

A smug grin that disappeared when her magical chains shattered. “I-impossible,” she gasped, but that was all she was able to say as I ripped off my gag as well. “Not impossible,” I said as I grabbed her and rolled, and she ended up under me, her wrists grabbed by my hands. “Just

difficult.”

She smiled, which turned into panic as she realized a very important detail. There was no mana around her, not even a point she could use. “N-no,” she gasped.

“Did you know this barbarian discovered a way to create an anti-mana field,” I whispered. “A bit difficult to use in a practical manner, but very useful to teach a smug mage a lesson she couldn’t forget.

She flexed her muscles, trying to get out, her eyes wide as she stayed pinned. Though, as she struggled, it wasn’t despair that appeared on her face, but resignation.

And, intense arousal.

Even knowing it was impossible, she struggled to get free, each second making her feel a more intense arousal. She moaned as I pressed my shaft against her entrance, but she didn’t tense, clearly expecting me to tease her just like she had been doing.

I had a different plan in mind, one that was worthy of a barbarian who just captured a princess. I pushed hard, and her wetness swallowed me.

“It seems that you’re overestimating yourself against a barbarian warrior, you pitiful princess,” I said loudly. She might have answered, if it wasn’t for the moan that occupied her mouth. Instead, she undulated as best she could and squealed in delight as I impaled her mercilessly.

Invading her body with Tantric mana was almost an afterthought, hastening her binding. Too bad I couldn’t help her absorb Purified Spark without risking diluting the conceptual integrity of her merging.

Instead, I continued rocking my hips mercilessly, a simple move that I nonetheless turned into an art form despite its inherent simplicity. It wasn’t just an animalistic push, but a rough dance, the pace, the strength, the distance, all adding to her pleasure while I invaded her in reckless abandon.

There was only so much pleasure her body could endure before it succumbed to another orgasm, especially when she was as tense as she was. She closed her eyes, moans filling the room as the orgasm hit.

The healing spell I used ruined the barbarian role I was playing, but keeping her conscious was more important.

Her bleary eyes opened. “You haven’t blacked out and missed the fun, exalted mage,” I said mockingly, my grin wide enough to annoy her even under the circumstances. However, with my hips drilling ceaselessly, she didn’t have time to comment on that.

“You’re merciless,” she gasped.

“I know,” I whispered. “But you haven’t seen anything. After all, Strength is not my biggest stat..”

“And, what’s it?”

“Endurance,” I whispered. “Currently, it has sixty points.”

Her breath hitched when the implication of that number hit her, tensing in anticipation of pleasure. I continued banging her repeatedly, not giving her a chance to delude herself so that she could tire me out.

As her eyes closed to focus on the pleasure, she didn’t seem to be particularly against the idea.

I impaled her again and again, reshaping her wet hole for my presence once more. She just groaned and moaned, her body losing every hint of energy it possessed. She was limp and obedient.

Until another orgasm hit, and she involuntarily bucked against my hold despite the impossibility of getting free, earning a chuckle.

“You’re still acting out, maybe you deserve another punishment,” I whispered. Another small spell to cheat, this time to ready her backdoor entrance for my invasion, I pulled out, and slipped into her tightness.

The sudden intrusion was enough to earn a cry from her, which was a perfect mixture of pain and pleasure. “You’re nothing but an anal slut for my barbaric cock, you pitiful mage,” I growled.

“No, I’m not pitiful,” she gasped.

“Oh, really,” I said, and suddenly, I flipped once more before letting her hands go free. “Here, I stopped. Are you saying that you have the willpower to just pull back?”

“You’re a fucking bastard,” she growled, but that was all she said before she put her hands on my chest, using it as leverage as she rode me desperately, doing her best to climax from anal

penetration. With her panting and trembling, it didn't take long for her to reach another climax.

This time, she wasn't alone. As the orgasm hit her and her ass tightened around me, I exploded in her as well, filling her with my seed.

She collapsed against my chest, barely conscious. "You're such an evil man," she growled. "You're lucky that I love you."

"I love you too," I answered, hugging her as she fell asleep, the emotional highs and physical challenges finally catching up with her. She earned her rest.

I closed my eyes as well, but for me, there was no sleep.

I still needed to plan her divine domain. We could afford no mistake with her fate.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 45

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33269}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Three

The linchpin of our success was in creating a domain in Silver Spires.

Even in ruins, with its old luster lost, Silver Spires was still the closest thing I knew to a pure center of learning and research, with a focus on more. The intense action of studying created Divine Spark.

Of course, even the most focused mage lost in the studying generated only a fraction of the concept that could be termed as Knowledge Spark. Despite the students counting in thousands and the total population in tens of thousands, we would be lucky if we could reach a two-digit Knowledge Spark harvest daily ...

“... the fourth section has a problem with the subsection, it’s breaking the whole structure. Correct it,” Helga cut in my work, her attention intense.

We were working on the collection array to make sure we could collect Divine Spark from the students before the System could devour, made out of a mixture of Arcana wards and Darkness mana. The initial ward had been established in a hurry, and therefore imperfect, barely able to pick a few points of Divine Spark every day, less than a point could be defined as Knowledge spark.

Of course, looking back, it was a happy accident. If that hadn’t been the case, Helga probably would have met with an unfortunate end even with the suppression of the crystal platform.

“Why don’t you fix it yourself then, goddess,” I growled in mock anger as I slapped her ass — her naked ass, as we missed each other far too much to bother wearing clothes, which was pointless considering we ended up entangled with every couple of ours.

“Why should I bother when I have my servant with me to deal with that trivial things. Anyone could handle those mundane things.”

She was smiling teasingly as she said that, and I chuckled as well. Naturally, she knew just how difficult was to create such a complicated control ward. Even with all the practice I had outside the System — which created a much more delicate warding tradition due to the absence of the system’s constant devouring — the only reason I was able to create the delicate ward she had designed was my immense stats.

And the fact that, under the layer of Darkness mana, the System didn’t drain its mana

completely and ruin its structure.

However, no matter my casting capabilities and my Intelligence stat, I couldn't have come up with that design. Intelligence and Wisdom were excellent at supporting rapid learning, and they allowed me to adapt the things I had known to other traditions ... but inventing completely new methods was far more different.

Helga had always been better at that, and it only got better once she merged with the Knowledge stat. Together, we made an excellent team.

Not to mention, it was fun to work with, I decided as I suddenly stabilized the ward and stopped working, and pushed Helga on the same huge desk we had the plans, putting our nudity to the best usage once more.

"You're insatiable," she moaned, her hips responding already. "We need to work."

"The first stage is already complete, and the second stage could wait a few minutes."

"Minutes," she chuckled. "Don't tell me the great Caesar finally exhausted and turned into a quick shooter."

I laughed. "You asked for it. Hours it is," I said as I slapped her ass, she giggled, and we started ruining the plans on the desk once again...

The reason I was quick to stop was because we had managed to complete the first stage of the ward, which was the urgent aspect.

The first part focused on the Knowledge Spark. Based on several incredible leaps Helga managed to come up with, we had managed to enhance the identification capabilities of the ward several times, so it only collected what could be converted into Knowledge spark, and didn't target any other spark.

That way, we were able to collect the majority of the spark Helga needed and store it, feeding into a ward of purified mana to soften slightly so Helga could absorb and bond with it. That way, she would be able to receive several points of Spark every day ... likely doubling her Knowledge Spark stores in ten days, from a hundred to two hundred.

Of course, ultimately, it was nothing. For us to even have a hope of making a stand against the Eternal, she would need hundreds of thousands of Spark, not just a hundred ... but it was to be concerned for the future.

For now, we were happy with the linear growth.

The second stage of the ward was different. It was mainly for my benefit, which was the reason I was willing to delay a couple more hours for fun. Essentially, the aim was to create a secondary collection mechanism with its own filters so it could convert the other Divine Sparks, purify, and store them for my convenience.

Unfortunately, that was only a marginal benefit, as the amount we could collect was limited. Even if we collected everything the school produced, it would probably mean a hundred sparks, and we certainly didn't dare to collect all of it.

We had no idea whether the System could track the source of the Divine Spark it collected — but I certainly suspected there was, even if it was not too accurate — and if it did, the sudden dip of the Divine Spark would be noticed.

Pity we couldn't just spread that ward under every single city, but that was not possible. First, and the simplest reason. We didn't have enough Darkness mana. The ones that had been collected for months were barely enough to serve our needs.

Not to mention, multiple locations increased the risk of being caught. One location, we could defend ... multiple, we could not, and I didn't want the Eternals to have any purified spark.

Who knew how they would use it.

I wished I could use the various types of other Sparks that were being generated, but it was impossible. Because, every single fragment had a slight difference, and required a central mentality to focus and channel it, allowing it to coalesce into a coherent piece of spark.

If that had been the case, I would have been far more enthusiastic about collecting the fragments through that ward.

I might have been able to use it to grow my current Companion crystals, but even then it would have limits. Doubling the size might have been possible, though even that would have been a stretch. Anymore, and it would lose its coherence and I would be forced to purify it.

I experimented with Nature Spark many times during my lengthy stay to get a better understanding of Divine Spark.

With both paths closed, I focused on empowering the sexy blonde who was currently riding with reckless abandon, her huge tits dancing with each push to send tingles through me. The

pleasure that filled me was incredible...

However, the melding of our souls as I slowly guided her Divine-infused soul was even more impressive.

It was the other part of my strategy of empowering her. By carefully leading her external senses, I was allowing her to bond with the area that was under the darkness ward, creating an absolute Divine Domain.

By that way, her Divine Domain would be established where she had near-absolute power, the Darkness was keeping it safely out detection.

At first glance, it seemed like a terrible choice. After all, other gods and goddesses had world fragments to themselves. What was the benefit of such a small domain to rule, when the enemies could easily surround ... or ignore considering it was even tucked underground.

Worse, she would be bound to that small area, unable to leave unless she uprooted herself, which was only possible by a terrible price, reversing her complete divinity. Together, no other god or goddess would actually do such a thing.

But, Helga was certainly a special case.

Her Divine Spark was unique, and even if she had a huge domain to herself, I doubted she would be able to defend it successfully against another avatar ...

Instead, we had to find other ways to use her advantages. But, those exact plans for the future. First, she needed to establish her Divine Domain and complete her Apotheosis, which required some time.

And, lots and lots of sex.

“Move faster, my whore goddess,” I moaned as I spanked her tits, making them dance as I enjoyed the tingling sensation it created. Her moans rose higher and higher, resonating with her surroundings, and that was not just a figure of speech.

I could feel that she was slowly assimilating the surrounding area into her divine domain, some of her Divine Spark dancing outside her body. It was the one advantage of creating such a small Divine Domain, that she was able to afford the consumption of the Apotheosis.

Taking a comfortable step into the divinity.

Now, it was my turn to support her...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 47

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33275}

{Pseudo-HP: 700 Mana: 2000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Four

Soon after the fun, I managed to complete the urgent tasks in my underground layer. The second layer of the ward was established, Helga's Divine Domain started to coalesce, and security measures were established.

It was time for me to leave once more.

I didn't want to do that. I had missed Helga greatly, and another separation, no matter how short, was not a welcome development. Unfortunately, I had two important priorities. One was to empower her, and the other was to find the rest of the girls.

Neither could be done in Silver Spires.

Finding the others was obvious ... searching for them couldn't be done from Silver Spires. The school was already away from the centers of power even before my arrival, a haven for the noble children to slowly develop. The current situation isolated it even further. Trying to find the girls from there was not only inefficient, but any new spy ring would be caught easily.

Strengthening Helga was trickier. Increasing the production of the Divine Spark was very simple. The more students in Silver Spires, working to improve themselves through a study of magic, the more Divine Spark fragments there would be generated ... and the faster Helga would get stronger.

Unfortunately, while it was simple, it was not easy.

Silver Spires were effectively in a political exile, and were being deliberately suppressed. I could easily take the role of the headmaster in disguise or put a puppet before increasing the student intake ... but that would get the attention of the royal family, which then in turn bring the Eternals down.

However, trying to set up another school from scratch was an even more complicated process, and if a mysterious organization suddenly grew from nothing and surpassed Silver Spires in numbers, it would be even more difficult.

Political problems require political solutions...

So, I decided to travel to the Royal Capital, the biggest city on the material plane. Not only I could make the necessary moves that could be leveraged, but also I could set up the feelers necessary to an extent.

Admittedly, my melancholy about leaving her was a bit exaggerated, as I still have my ability to teleport back and forth, but with the several self-assigned missions that needed to be launched at once, I would be extremely busy.

There were people to be hired, spies to be organized, businesses created ... no, I would be extremely busy, and it couldn't be simply done by just disguising as a servant.

It was why I was at city gates, driving a large carriage while wearing armor, a huge hammer on my back, and my hand scarred with flames. My outfit shouted blacksmith, and my cart was filled with exquisite weapons ... well, exquisite from a commoner perspective, as forging them took barely an hour with the help of my magic.

It was just there to establish a business, waiting for my turn at line, just to enter the outer city. Finally, it was my turn.

The guards looked disappointed at my arrival. After all, I was a sole traveler, which meant little money they could skim from the top.

"Reason for arrival," one asked.

"I'm a blacksmith, trying to establish a business," I answered. At my mention, their gaze widened, and grew even bigger once they looked at the cart.

"That's a lot of weapons," one said, their eyes glinting with greed.

The other joined immediately. "Bringing that many weapons into the city is suspicious. We need to check them carefully."

"You're right, of course," I answered, but didn't act panicking. Instead, I grabbed two swords, both considerably better than what they had, and passed them to the guards. "How about now. The number should be acceptable," I said.

The guards didn't answer, and I immediately grabbed more, this time two daggers, and their greed was stoked even further as I passed it to them, thinking that I was easy to extort. "We still need to..." he started while he played with his new sword.

"How about I check your old sword as well," I said, and before he could react, I grabbed his old sword. "A piece of garbage," I said as I bent it, and it immediately shattered.

The expression of the guards changed immediately. "On second thought, the numbers look

more than satisfactory,” the guards changed their attitude, even ready to give the swords back.

“Good, you can keep them,” I said as I rode the cart into the city.

After all, my aim was not to avoid the guards or somehow save one or two weapons. If that had been the case, I could have just sneaked into the city and silently established a business.

No, I wanted everyone to know that a formidable blacksmith had arrived in the city, one that appeared from nothing... Which was not that uncommon in a world that was ruled by the system. A strong soul space and a certain amount of recklessness — and a lot of luck, both to survive against the monsters and to get decent achievements — was all that was needed for someone to climb up to the peak from nowhere.

Of course, while such entrances burned brightly, they were usually suppressed soon after. Oeyne’s fate was a good example. An incredible blacksmith who could forge enchantments directly to the metal, yet she had been suppressed until she had to escape to Silver Spires and live ignobly.

I wanted to replicate that trick.

There were multiple reasons for choosing a blacksmith. First of all, a blacksmith was not immediately threatening. Oh, they could take down a lot of low-level people if they had time, but that was true for every high-level individual. They lacked area-of-effect impact, which was what mages dangerous. Which meant, that blacksmiths represented opportunity rather than danger.

Especially when they were not a part of the Guild.

Which was the second part of my trick. I wanted the Guild to target me. Not because my objective was to actually hurt them — no, that was a nice side benefit — but I wanted a reason to expand aggressively, sell my weapons at the cheap, and helplessly align with a lot of parties despite the apparent disadvantages.

I was willing to give away my weapons for free as long as I could establish the necessary connections, but such disadvantageous actions would require an important reason — which the guild should provide with their arrogant ways.

Such connections should give me the necessary political connections so I could poke and prod the decisions about Silver Spires once I understood the political landscape. I could always pull some more obvious actions as a last resort, but I wanted to see if I could resolve it with some

soft touches first.

Another advantage was the recruiting. I needed to hire and assess a lot of mages, with a preference for low-level and non-combat roles that might be desperate to accept a mysterious role; to create some additional source of Divine Spark for Helga ... or maybe even find a few good candidates to be raised as Chosen.

Amusingly, a blacksmith's identity was better than a mage for it. To get a lot of apprentice candidates, a mage should be very high level, and such a high level one was expected to be discerning. And, if not, they would get a lot of unwelcome attention.

Making a blacksmith identity far more useful for recruitment.

Of course, while they were important, none of them was the main reason.

I wanted to send a message to Oeyne.

The girls were being hunted, and naturally, they would be very carefully hidden. I couldn't find them directly, and since they weren't stupid, they wouldn't try to find me without having a reason to believe I returned.

The weapons I planned to sell would be that reason. I had worked together with Oeyne for a long time, and I knew her style intimately, just like she knew mine. By creating tens of thousands of weapons in that exact style and flooding the market with them cheaply, it would be a message for them.

Hopefully, the cheap prices I would push as I fought with the Guild would allow those weapons to spread all along the Empire, while the story of their creation would lead her right back to Capital.

Which was the most dangerous yet the safest place for her.

Pity I didn't have a similar way to connect with the rest, or it would have been much easier.

"One step at a time,," I murmured as I moved toward the commercial district at the outer city, ready to plunge the capital into a smithing crisis.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Five

It didn't take long for me to purchase a large building with a huge garden. The properties in the capital weren't exactly cheap, but I wasn't exactly hurting for money either.

Especially since a magical weapon could easily be used as money. Four magical great swords, six longswords, and two bows allowed me to purchase the building with little fanfare. The owner tried to bargain, but a threat about going to another building was enough to stop his attempts to bargain further.

I also used an agent to purchase the surrounding buildings ... but for the moment, kept that particular detail a secret. Subterfuge and teleportation were a very useful combination for that purpose.

The sellers didn't argue much. Especially since I was significantly overpaying for the old, poorly maintained buildings ... but considering my first action was to demolish it completely before I set up a temporary workshop in the open, it was hardly a problem.

Then, I started forging myself a house, made entirely of bronze and steel, right out in the open.

At first, it looked like a needless expense, especially as I was visibly using parts from Class Ten beasts to strengthen the metal further, but there were three benefits to it.

First, it was the best advertisement I could create. As I forged out there in the open, a huge crowd gathered in the streets, piling around to watch me work. Not everyone could meet with someone with Grandmaster Blacksmithing skill.

Of course, technically, I didn't have that skill anymore. Luckily, for that, the guild helped, which formed my second benefit.

From the window of the nearest building, three people with Grandmaster Blacksmithing skill watched me. I had no doubt that they were sent by the higher-ups to assess the threat of the sudden appearance of another Grandmaster, and what was the best way of communication.

And, to do that, they needed to assess my true range of mastery. Not only in terms of skills, but also the key stats, particularly, Strength, Precision, and Endurance.

However, they were unaware that their presence was helping me greatly.

No matter how strong my stats were, without my Skills, I was at a disadvantage. Luckily, their

presence helped me resolve that particular problem.

A string of pure mana, mixed with darkness mana to keep it hidden, connecting to their soul space directly, subtly stimulating their Skill. It was a variant of the trick the Crown Princess pulled, but rather than letting the system create an artificial soul-space on a clone for me to control, I tapped the information flow of an existing one.

It was a difficult trick, especially with a Grandmaster-level skill. Rather than my soul space creating a cushion for me to absorb it slowly and steadily, the information flooded my mind mercilessly, leaving me with a nasty headache even with my Intelligence helping me greatly to filter through the knowledge ... but the benefits were incredible.

I could sense my forging capabilities improving with each second. It wasn't as good as directly having the skill ... but then, unlike having the skill, it couldn't simply disappear.

Altogether, it was much more preferable.

The third benefit was simpler. I didn't use my own mana to forge, but using incredible amounts of monster parts still created a temporary cloud of mana that created some interference despite the constant devouring of the System, which allowed me to create a deep tunnel toward the bottom, and several secret basements, which would ultimately be very useful.

More and more people gathered around the place as my metal house started to rise, and at the edge, a line grew ... potential customers, much to the distaste of the guild members.

It was fun, but unfortunately, I had a lot of things to do, so I stopped after two days, only after building two floors, with the potential to build more.

Then, I grabbed a huge metal plate, and started carving letters on it before I hung at the walls.

And the crowd exploded in shocked whispers.

It was an announcement, one that told that I was recruiting apprentices for forging, as well as mages capable of enchantment. Each role had several requirements such as level, skills, and minimum stats, which was not exactly shocking especially since I kept them deliberately low.

No, their gossip was triggered by the last line.

No official guild affiliates were allowed.

A declaration of war.

The guild members scoffed at my daring as they left, probably to deliver their findings to the headquarters so that they could teach a lesson to someone daring to challenge them. Arrogance, they thought without a doubt.

Admittedly, it didn't take long for me to see an immediate impact. The huge line of people waiting to purchase my weapons suddenly scattered like chickens, afraid of angering the guild. Only a fraction stayed, and I had no doubt some of them actually belonged to the guild, wanting to buy some of my works for detailed examination.

I ignored them as I put another plate ... one that showed a detailed price conversion list. One that contained a huge amount of materials, from common iron and copper to very rare gems and monster parts, each with a direct point equivalent.

I wanted to preempt the most obvious trick the guild would pull against me, blocking the sale of the supplies.

I didn't know if it would actually work to give me the materials I needed. I preferred it if it did, as it would keep me from going around purchasing materials from other cities under different identities before teleporting back ... or stealing from the guild warehouses.

I could do both, but I preferred not to waste time.

The moment I put the price list on, the line started to grow once more, with several people who had left the line earlier returning.

The temptation of my prices, half of the official guild prices for the same quality of weapons was hard to turn down.

At a distance, I could see the guild members signaling to their member, who was third in line. The first two quickly purchased a weapon each, cradling them like newborn children. Then, it was the turn of the third one. "I'll buy everything," he declared proudly.

"No," I answered simply.

"What do you mean, no?" he asked. "I'm willing to pay the full price."

"No, I'm not going to sell all my stock to guild dogs so you can continue to swindle the poor fighters that stand against the endless monsters that surround us," I said, deliberately shouting.

"I'm not a guild member. How dare you—" he started, then, suddenly stopped.

Which might about my fingers around his throat as I lifted him up, and threw him away like a ragdoll. Everyone on the line froze while I turned and walked back to the price board, and added another line.

'Each customer is limited to one weapon.'

That made a lot of people grumble in frustration, and a few more left their places on the line, but more people filled the line ... until I sold everything. A few people used monster parts to pay, but most just paid with money.

Understandable, as not everyone just walked around with their carts filled with iron.

"You can stay in the line if you want. I will be selling at least fifty weapons each day. The number will increase if I can find some competent apprentices."

With that, I started moving my workshop inside, a trivial task with my immense strength, ignoring the two other growing lines, one for forging apprentices, and one for mages that would work as enchanters. They had been gossiping and fighting, but I didn't care too much about it.

As long as I had some helpers to look convincing, it was enough.

After all, it was just a cover for the real thing.

Of course, while I was busy with that, people were already trying to purchase the surrounding buildings, most I had already purchased. I didn't sell any of them, but some, I deliberately let them rent, letting spies fill the places.

Others, I had put on various disguises as I covered them with wards, acting as I belonged to some other group that was spying on me as well... By that way, I would be able to act much freer while blaming some mysterious third party.

At the same time, I quickly interviewed the apprentices, kicking only the most obvious spies out while letting in the rest.

Just like that, everything was ready...

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Six

The three days passed without anything notable. I had hired a lot of apprentices who worked day and night to process the raw materials while I forged weapons without stopping in my private forge. In those three days, I stayed focused on the operations of the forge.

Naturally, there were some attempts to block me. For example, no supplier in the whole capital was willing to sell anything to me ... and more interestingly, the guards suddenly became far more proactive in searching the carts, stopping and confiscating any forging material that didn't belong to official suppliers.

I was able to bypass that blockade using teleportation, which probably left the guild members scratching their heads about their apparent failure.

However, I ignored all of it as I faced a young enchanter who was trying to solve the problem I had given to her. She was the first one who had managed to solve the unofficial test I had given her, making her a good candidate for my plan.

Now, she was trying to solve a deceptively simple Arcana ward structure and turn it into an enchantment. She was nowhere near solving it, but she still made good progress ... most importantly, she was willing to understand and solve it despite her skills being useless, which meant she was a good candidate as a magical assistant.

Was she perfect, no. But I had to start from somewhere; and under the circumstances, speed was far more useful than the alternative.

So, I approached her when she was alone. She tensed when she noticed me, which was understandable as I used a disguise. I ignored it as I spoke. "You have true potential in magic," I declared as I let my voice gain an incredible cadence. "Tell me, girl. Are you willing to learn the secrets of true magic?" I said.

"Who are you. And, w-what do you mean?" she asked, looking suspicious, but I raised my hand, and a useless ball of mana appeared on my hand. Useless, but nearly impossible to create without an average stat distribution over thirty, along with a good understanding of Arcana mana.

She gasped in shock. "B-but, why here..." she said as she watched the rotating ball.

"Because this place is such a distraction, one of the many places we recruit our true students.

People capable of understanding the truth about the magic,” I said, exaggerating slightly.

A bit rude, but it was a recruitment pitch. Hardy an avenue of accuracy.

“May I think about it?” she asked.

“No,” I answered. “Either accept or leave.”

She looked at me in disbelief. “I can leave. What if I tell others?”

“And people will believe you?” I countered with a smirk. Of course, I wouldn’t actually let her leave, but instead put her into some kind of sleep for a few weeks, which should be enough for my trick here to turn useless.

She looked confused, while I tapped into my Light node slightly, and the Arcana mana turned into light mana, still dancing elegantly...

“I accept,” she admitted. It was a bit hurried, of course, but understandable. She was a mere six-level mage, and already at her limit, which put her slightly above a common worker even with her surprisingly decent precision stat. And, I had already researched her. No family, no close friends. Perfect target for our organization.

Which was certainly not a cult. Right?

All of those factors made her easy to accept my abrupt suggestion. Not to mention, with my display of power, I had about a thousand different ways of harming her if I wished. Ironically, it made it easier for her to believe me.

“Good.”

“What do I need to do?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I said as I grabbed her shoulder, covered her with mana, and teleported. She gasped in shock as she saw the chaos of the Aether, but before she could register, we were under Silver Spires.

“Hello, love,” I greeted Helga with a searing kiss, distracting her from studying.

After she pulled back, she noticed our guest. “A candidate,” she asked.

“Yes, the first student of your chapter,” I answered, following our previously agreed lie. Since I

recruited her acting like an already existing organization, we needed an excuse as to why there were no other students.

Building a new chapter was a good excuse.

I didn't bother asking, but I was sure she still believed us to be under the capital. A good thing for the students to believe.

"I'll leave you two to get acquainted," I said, and after another kiss, I teleported away. When I returned, I used an illusion to look like our first student, exited the building, walked into an alley next to a building I hired for guild spies ... and disappeared.

If I could use a string of disappearances on the guild, it would be even better.

But, for now, I hadn't taken any action. It would be more effective if I could point out several disappearances.

After I 'disappeared' in the alley, I returned to the base, only to change into another disguise and leave. However, this time, my disguise was deliberately poor. At a distance, I could already see several spies following me while I stepped into a black carriage waiting for me.

In the carriage, there was a servant waiting for me, serving me a drink. "My lord is glad that you have decided to take his meeting. You won't be disappointed. He's the one that can break the guild's resistance."

"I don't need his help against a bunch of pencil pushers that forgot how to hold a hammer," I answered, arrogant and direct just like a stereotypical man who spent all his time dealing with forging than other humans. That rash and careless attitude were not exactly designed to achieve optimal political objectives.

But it allowed me to poke around the complex web of political alliances easily, without care. "I have already told him what I need from him. If he's unwilling to deliver that, you might stop the carriage right now."

"Don't worry about it, grandmaster," he said. "My prince is happy to give you what you need as long as you supply him with what you promised."

I waved my hand. "Just a thousand sets of armor. It's nothing," I said as I bragged shamelessly, but said nothing else. Even when the carriage left the city walls. A while later, a group joined us on horseback, carrying bows, but the lack of reaction from the servant suggested that they

were pre-arranged bodyguards.

I might have tensed if I was just a fighter as I led them to believe, so I decided to put that show on. My fingers tightened around the glass while I looked out of the window, subtly fidgeting. As we moved away from the capital, not using the main road, more than one monster attacked us.

But, with a full squad of bodyguards around us, nothing happened.

“Our royal guards are very competent,” he commented. Which, I had to agree with. Of eight bodyguards, the weakest was level sixteen. Already at his level cap, but with a decent stat distribution. The strongest was level twenty-two ... but with some interesting Skills. Like, having illusion magic rather than a melee ability.

A spy, and a very good one from the looks of it. I felt flattered.

I was already worth mobilizing such an important asset.

“Since we’re approaching the residence of our prince, would you like refreshes about the etiquette, grandmaster?” he asked.

“No need,” I said. “I’m a blacksmith here to talk business. He can summon one of the frogs from the court if he needs to be entertained,” I said, glad that my character didn’t require me to bow and scrape.

I certainly didn’t want another year acting as some kind of servant.

It took almost half an hour for us to arrive at the mansion of the prince, though even if I didn’t know about the owner, it wouldn’t have been hard to guess. The first reason was the lavish nature of the place, as who else would have walls covered with gold and gems.

I would have understood if they were a part of the wards, but I could sense that it was not the case. There was no mana connection, just opulence.

Of course, that didn’t mean there was no magical protection. I could sense several wards, layered on top of each other, though they prioritized defense over counterattack, all under a central point of control. Clearly, they assumed that, for any attack, they would receive reinforcements in quick order.

The wards were strong yet simple ... and certainly not resource-efficient. Clearly, the royal family was not lacking in money or other resources... Curious, I dug deeper into the structure,

trying to see if there was a nasty surprise, like a surprise addition by the Eternals that would trap me ... but it seemed clean.

“We’re here,” the servant said, and I stepped out as I arrived at the inner court.

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Seven

As we arrived at the courtyard, I felt the wards settle over me, giving me a sense of suppression. Not because they were particularly strong, but because I didn't appreciate the sensation of being under the wards that weren't under my control.

The fact that they assumed I was magically insensitive made it worse. They didn't even bother adjusting the intensity, giving me a sense of suppression, tempting me to break them.

I ignored the weight along with the servant that led me inside and instead focused on my surroundings ... particularly the guards, making sure that there was no one that could threaten me like an undercover Eternal soldier.

Luckily, it seemed that their entanglement with the royal family wasn't at the level of filling the residence of every prince. Maybe they had a few spies, but no one that they bothered to empower.

Good, I thought as walked through the official entrance, the inner wards parting as well, allowing me to effortlessly bypass the strongest part of the defenses. As I passed them, an upbeat melody reached to my ears, marking a celebration.

The servant continued to escort me, and I noticed the nobles filling the place. I looked rather absurd among them, my blacksmith outfit contrasting greatly with the rich nobles that filled the place. I looked like a barbarian among them.

Naturally, I noticed more than one mocking whisper about my clothing ... though they made sure to keep that whisper down. After all, I also represented an important source of high-quality weapons, hence my invitation. They didn't want to lose such a great opportunity just in case.

Soon, they led me to a garden, one that was filled with a lot of noble guests, and even more servants keeping them well-fed while dancers and musicians kept them entertained.

At the center, there was the prince that invited me. To my surprise, rather than waiting for his servant to lead me to him like it was appropriate, he jumped up to his feet and walked toward me with quick steps. "And, the guest of honor of today's party is finally here," he declared loudly. "The courageous blacksmith that dared to strike against the suffocating dominance of the blacksmith guild!" he greeted.

I couldn't help but smile as the prince greeted me in such an explosive manner. It was a great

honor, to the point of being absurd ... meaning he needed something important from me, important enough to greet me with such aggression.

Interesting.

“My Prince,” I said, giving a slight bow ... one that was far too weak to be respectful to a royal, especially coming from a peasant, even a high-level one.

Immediately, I noticed several frowns around, but the prince managed to hide his distaste quickly as he led me toward a table that was occupied by about a dozen noblemen and noblewomen who were resting, enjoying wine and food.

Most of them were unfamiliar, and some I recognized from my research. None of them were particularly important, meaning the prince didn't call any of his important supporters, not wanting to insult them with my presence.

It would have been quite a hidden insult if I cared the slightest. Instead, I listened as the prince rattled over my ear for almost an hour, while I listened to his nonsense. Luckily, the food was enjoyable — even though once again, they went for the flash rather than quality, assuming I was easy to trick.

My job got even easier.

Finally, he gestured to a servant, and they led the other guests away, leaving me alone with the prince. “I need your help for a topic that's vital for the fate of our country, Grandmaster,” he said, once again exaggerating his compliments.

“What exactly do you need, my prince,” I said, but even as I did so, I reached his soul space and subtly suppressed his stats.

Not that it was difficult. He was merely level twelve. His stats were unnaturally high, but that was to be expected with the potential knowledge of the royal family. However, I didn't push my Charisma yet. “I need your help repairing a weapon,” he said.

“There's no weapon I can't repair,” I declared.

“Good to see you're confident,” he declared, relaxing visibly as I accepted the task.

“I can just take it with me. I promise you that it'll be repaired in a week at most,” I added, feeling free to promise. It was easy to promise things when I didn't expect to actually fulfill

them.

The prince had a sheepish expression, one that he did his best to look casual, but I could sense a sudden tenseness. “Unfortunately, that would not do. The weapon we have to repair is a secret treasure, and you have to visit it.”

“That’s acceptable, but that means I have to first stay in my new business and make sure everything is in order, my prince,” I said, finally pushing the magical weight of my stats against him, and he immediately looked dazed.

Privacy wards around us had some defensive features to block me from using my Charisma aggressively, but interfering with those defensive features was even easier than temporarily suppressing his stats.

“It’s ... problematic,” the prince admitted, dazed. “It’s really important for that weapon to be repaired. It might be the key to putting me on the throne.”

“What kind of weapon are we talking about, my prince?” I asked, even though I already guessed the answer.

“A spear,” he replied, and immediately, the memory of a broken spear popped into my mind. It seemed that the fourth prince had some substantial benefits from the attack against my girls.

“Very good, my prince. I can repair it, but before I can justify my lengthy disappearance, I need to set up my operation. How about if you put me a hefty order. Maybe something like ten thousand weapons.”

“What would I do with that many weapons?” he asked. “I can’t even afford such a huge order.”

“It will be only good for your eventual bid to the throne if it’s known that one of the royal princes cares about the ordinary citizens of the public,” I said, as I did so, I started to increase the pressure on the Charisma, but with it, started to add several spells to further muddle his thinking.

The spells were hard to cast, pushing my capabilities to their limits, but I needed them to convince him of my words. “I sincerely believe that you care about us peasants, my prince. It’s why I, a peasant blacksmith that had risen from nothing, is supporting you with all my Strength, enough to forge ten thousand weapons for free so that you can build up your reputation against your brothers, and gain the throne.”

The spell and my words were calculated. Even with the spells, I couldn't just brainwash him to actually care about the peasants. However, it was possible to quickly convince him that he managed to successfully tricked me into that fact.

Therefore, he wouldn't suddenly find it suspicious that I started to support him with a lot of free weapons.

"Of course. You're one of my greatest supporters because you believe in my true cause," he quickly answered, even his dazed state unable to prevent him from lying to increase my support. "And, you're right, visible support to peasants would help my cause," he said.

In that moment, I enhanced the pressure even more, and put him in a trance. "However, you have to do something striking for your sudden support against the peasants to be convincing. Why not sponsor a sudden influx of new magical students from all corners of the Empire? That way, everyone will be excited for a new Emperor that actually cared about his citizens."

"Hmm," he hummed, too dazed to say something as I did my best to push that idea into his subconsciousness, repeating it again and again. This part of the trick, I was using for the first time, so I wasn't particularly sure how effective it would be.

But it couldn't hurt.

Hopefully, it would work and he would start pushing for more peasant intake for Silver Spires quickly, which would give Helga a much better source for Knowledge Spark.

I slowly lessened the pressure once more. "Now, my prince. Let's focus on exactly how can I support you by providing you with all those weapons," I said. "I can deliver at least five hundred weapons a day, maybe even a thousand if you can help me resolve my problem of acquiring high-quality metal ores..."

With that, our private meeting turned normal. Soon, we came to an agreement that I would stay and supply him with endless weapons that he would distribute toward the locations that were struggling most with the monster attacks, and in a few weeks, I would move to that secret base to repair that mysterious spear.

Naturally, he didn't mention anything about Silver Spires, but when I mentioned it, he just smiled smugly like he had a genius idea.

With that, the first step of my plan was complete. Now, I just needed to return to the capital and start working.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Eight

The party had lasted until the first lights of the morning, with every single noble getting completely hammered with the magically reinforced wine that was served without a stop.

Of course, not one to miss an opportunity, I used that Charisma trick to sell the idea of expanding Silver Spires by allowing peasants to attend. Of course, some believed that it would help them profit by getting more mages, while others believed that such a trick would support their houses. Some even believed it was an attack against their political opponents.

Ultimately, their reasons didn't matter. The important thing was, they were quite a bit convinced by the genius idea of the prince — who finally declared his plan toward the end of the night, when he was utterly drunk — much to the consternation of his steward.

However, I didn't care about that as I once again entered the cart they assigned to me, and started traveling back to the capital. After an evening of dealing with an annoying number of nobles, I wanted to do something actually productive.

Like starting to forge the weapons I 'promised' to the fourth prince. Hopefully, by pushing servants as well, I would be able to hasten their distribution. Oeyne should be able to discover that if she was free. If she was not ... well, that was something for the future.

For the moment, that was the best I could do before I could establish a proper spy organization. Which was simply impossible to do quickly. Maybe, as I 'proved' myself to the prince, I would be able to get in contact with the royal spies, giving me a chance to subvert their organization.

Too bad I was simply too busy to poke around them.

As the carriage moved, my mind was already on how to forge those weapons ... when I felt a movement outside. The assigned bodyguards were moving ... six of them suddenly burst into action, and killed the other two.

I used my magic to observe their performance, trying to see if they could actually threaten me.

The answer was ... they could not.

Still, I gathered some mana from the Aether dimension and created an invisible ward underneath the carriage that was ready to explode outward just in case.

At the same time, I pulled out my hammer and kicked the door open. "What's going on, you

cowards,” I shouted, but seeing I was facing six, I stayed tense and defensive.

“No need to panic, Grandmaster,” one of my supposed bodyguards said with a large, threatening smile. “We’re just going to have a nice talk and nothing more.”

“Interesting way of inviting me for a talk,” I said, doing my best to look panicked and intimidated by the sudden reversal. Though, I was more interested in the implications of the sudden attack ... the residence of the fourth prince must be filled with an incredible amount of spies for six of my eight assigned bodyguards to work for his enemies.

Likely his brothers.

Of course, even as I faked a scared look, I made sure not to make it too exaggerated. After all, I was supposed to be a high-level warrior who climbed without any help, even with my blacksmith skills dragging me down.

I couldn’t just act as a coward ... luckily, they didn’t seem to be expecting that. “First of all, Grandmaster, let me apologize for the inconvenience,” he had said as he passed a pouch to me. Curious, I opened it, only to find some very precious crafting material.

If their magical signature was accurate, they belonged to Class Twenty-Five beasts.

“Certainly enough to justify some discomfort,” I said as I leaned back slightly, making a show of being impressed. With my magical prowess, finding and hunting such beasts wasn’t a trouble, but for a mere Grandmaster blacksmith, it was an incredible gift. “Now, tell me what you want.”

“Your reputation for directness is not unfounded, Grandmaster,” he said with a chuckle. I shrugged.

“I’m too busy with my business already without all this pointless royal politics, especially between different princes,” I said, the slight tightening in his eyes confirming that my guess was accurate.

They were working for one of the other princes.

“And, how happy are you to gain the support of the fourth prince,” he asked.

“Support, what support?” I said with a chuckle, dismissive. “I have dealt with enough nobles to know that he wouldn’t care about me the slightest if he didn’t need me.”

“And, what does he need you for,” the spy tested me, but I just raised my eyebrow in amusement. “We’ll make sure to suitably reward you, of course.”

“And, treating me as an idiot is not a good start,” I said. “You should be already aware of what he asked me for. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have revealed yourself in that way.”

The spy was surprised at my bluntness. “You’re more aware of the political landscape than you show,” the spy suggested.

“No, it’s just not as complicated as you all seem to. That bunch of useless nobles is no different than a bunch of blacksmiths that received their business from their fathers, trying to jockey around,” I explained, deliberately giving a cynical yet accurate analysis.

Ironically, I couldn’t just brainwash a spy ... well, I could, but it wouldn’t be effective. Their handler would easily notice the sudden discrepancy in their behavior. Unlike them, a Prince had the right to be stupid and willful, allowing such behavior to slip under notice — especially since the plans were halfway reasonable.

Instead, I needed to show myself as a capable partner.

It worked, as the spy activated a silencing ward around us, even keeping the others silent. “And, are you willing to help the prince repair that mysterious weapon,” the spy asked me directly.

“Fuck no,” I answered, and the spy looked surprised.

“That’s a more dedicated response than I had been expecting,” the spy said.

“Do I look like a moron? He’s asking my help to repair some kind of mysterious weapon that he believes to be completely secret. Unless the royal family suddenly lost all of their resources, there should be some blacksmiths at least half as good as me,” I explained, not neglecting to brag about my abilities.

It was not a bad idea to give the impression that I could be easily manipulated by my professional pride.

“But you still accepted,” he countered.

“Well, it’s because he’s using tens of thousands of weapons from me to be distributed all along the Empire, and the more he distributes it, the harder it would be for me to just disappear. Once it’s finally time to repair, I’m just going to reject the offer,” I explained, giving him my

'plan'.

Naturally, I didn't need to see his mocking smirk to know it was a stupid idea. If a prince was angered personally, no amount of reputation would save an ordinary blacksmith from death ... either officially, or through assassination.

"And what if we give you a different offer," the spy suggested. "A better one."

"Naturally, I will be interested," I said. "Naturally, the price has to match the job."

"We want you to take the job to repair the weapon, but instead steal it for us. Don't worry, we'll send reinforcements to make sure you can get away safely."

"Interesting offer, but I need to make sure you can't simply get rid of me. First, I want whoever supporting you to order even more weapons from me, and distribute them all around the Empire, and each weapon has to carry my mark."

"Acceptable," the spy said. "But the fourth prince will not be delayed for long."

For a moment, I thought about talking about the plan to expand Silver Spires and how the other princes should steal his thunder ... but after some consideration, I decided against it. It was not something a blacksmith should be caring for. "That's your job as a spy," I said. "I'll do my job, and you do yours. Just be aware that, I won't accept repairing that weapon unless my reputation is spread across the Empire."

"You drive a hard bargain," the spy countered, acting like I had received a big concession from them.

In actuality, I did not. After all, distributing thousands of high-quality weapons to their key supporters in a visible manner was not exactly something harmful.

"I'm guessing that's all. I'll be waiting for your order from official channels. And, don't forget to supply me with enough materials as well, as the guild is already being annoying."

The spy just chuckled as he pulled back, and the carriage started moving once more. They still had to explain the death of the two bodyguards, but it was their problem. I said nothing else as they escorted me back to my base.

The moment I arrived, I gathered all my newly hired apprentices and started forging, making a show of rapidly finishing a huge number of short swords with the help of my new apprentices.

At the huge forge I had built, twenty forging apprentices were responsible for continuously melting the metal, while on the other side, thirty of them were responsible for putting the finishing touches.

And, in the middle, I was able to quickly forge every piece of hot metal they had prepared into short swords, each slam of my hammer infusing the monster parts into metal in a very specific way — and at the same time, hiding the short yet intense burst of mana I infused.

At the same time, I was planning exactly how to spread the gossip about the fourth prince's genius idea of turning Silver Spire into a school for peasants and expanding it significantly. Naturally, disguised as spies of various forces.

Hopefully, the combination would be enough to make contact.

All that remained was to show patience.

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 49

Endurance: 60 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 33280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Two Hundred Ninety-Nine

“Another batch is complete, apprentice. Prepare for the next set,” I ordered as I grabbed my hammer tighter, ready to forge another batch of weapons...

A routine that had been going on for almost a month at this point. Since the meeting with the fourth prince, followed by the spies of another prince — the second prince, but disguised as the spies of the crown prince — I had been busy.

Mostly with my forging. My weapons spread around the Empire, delivered to every border. Both the fourth prince and the crown prince — hence the disguised spies — each ordered almost fifty thousand sets of weapons. Up to this date, I barely completed about ten thousand of them.

Well, officially.

I had another surprise. I created another workshop under the first, one that was hidden below the capital, filled with enough wards to keep it hidden ... to the point that I used some of our valuable darkness mana sources to ensure its safety, isolating it from the System.

Of course, ordinarily, there was a reason that people didn't use completely independent magical wards to create weapons. Every monster part was unique, requiring the judgment of the blacksmith to perfectly meld into the structure of the weapon. It was impossible to attain uniformity, therefore impossible to rely on the wards to automatize anything...

Except for replacing monster parts with pure mana.

Naturally, I wasn't the only one who came up with such an idea, but considering even the most ordinary enhanced weapon required hundreds of mana to properly forge that way, no mage was really crazy enough to do so when their mana took almost a day to replenish.

For me, converting hundreds of thousands of mana points was a trivial achievement, allowing me to produce more than ten times the weapon I had forged. Then, using various disguises, I made sure that they were distributed across the Empire. Some, I added to the royal deliveries but manipulated the delivery orders to keep that knowledge from reaching the upper echelons. Some were sold into the black market by 'enterprising thieves'.

Some, I even allowed them to be discovered by various villages and towns in hard-to-reach areas, in the form of a ruined caravan after a monster attack that I personally arranged after

destroying it repeatedly.

All of those measures ensured that the weapons were distributed at each corner of the world...

At the same time, the transformation of Silver Spires was going on with excellent speed. With both princes competing to steal the credit for that incredible achievement, tens of thousands of mages without noble blood were transferred to the place, most already at their level limit.

Of course, the process was not smooth, and many noble students left the school in protest, but that was hardly a problem. Helga confirmed that the ordinary students with their level limit were far more enthusiastic about learning, determined to squeeze even the smallest advantage from the situation.

Increasing Helga's Knowledge Spark collection significantly. And, even for me, the rewards were not exactly negligible. I collected quite a bit of Purified Spark, enough to have a healthy reserve.

Of course, the most important advantage was her domain. As her domain got stronger and stronger, so did her power ... and so did the multiplier effect on my Intelligence stat.

[Intelligence: 51]

It wasn't at the point of matching my Endurance, but every progress counted.

However, while I was thinking about those things, another apprentice just joined. "What's going on?" I asked.

"A-a messenger from the fourth prince arrived. He says it's urgent."

"Very well," I said with a sigh, put my hammer into my tool belt, and walked out. A messenger without a warning only signaled one thing. The prince was getting impatient.

Pity. I wanted to make contact with Oeyne before I had to face such an important confrontation, but it didn't matter. "Tell every apprentice to stay inside the base. I'm not responsible for the safety of anyone who leaves the workshop while I am away," I said.

I had already reinforced the wards enough to handle anything but an explicit military siege just in case, with some interesting self-destruction mechanisms to handle extreme emergencies. But those measures would only protect the people who trusted my warning and stayed inside.

Hopefully, they would listen.

I walked into the courtyard, and found the messenger standing rather than taking a seat. Another display of patience. “Grandmaster. My Prince is asking for your presence in strongest terms,” he said.

His rudeness would have been enough for me to run away if I wasn’t confident in my abilities. “Alright, let’s go and handle this repair job,” I said, watching the messenger tense.

He was clearly aware of the nature of the task. Interesting.

Yet, he didn’t even conceal the hint of annoyance on his face as he stepped into the carriage, gesturing me to follow. I stepped inside, acting like I didn’t notice two dozen guards following us from a distance.

Or the fact that some of those guards actually belonged to the guilds rather than the royal family.

I ignored that, because the location of the spear was an impossible clue ... that, and the existence of two parties was a boon for me. If I dealt with them and disappeared, they would be blaming each other first before digging into the issue.

I acted obedient even as the carriage left the capital, and almost a hundred guards joined the mix. Clearly, after the previous — fake — attack, the fourth prince wasn’t taking any chances.

Too bad his forces were already filled with enough spies to make that unnecessary. Clearly, those spies weren’t in his inner circle, or they wouldn’t need my help to steal the spear.

I wondered exactly what they had planned for me.

I said nothing much, staying silent as the carriage moved. A long while later, we arrived at a cave entrance. “Please, this way,” the servant said as he led me inside, four guards accompanying us visibly, while four others were hidden behind a magical field, hidden from ordinary view.

Further confirming that they were planning something.

I followed them even as they led me to a prison.

Not literally, of course. No, it was a nice room, furnished expensively enough that it wouldn’t be amiss in the royal palace. Yet, the opulence didn’t matter when contrasted by the sudden weight of the wards I could feel on top of me, restraining my physical strength.

In a very obvious manner.

“W-what’s going on!” I shouted in mock panic. The door opened, but there was a glimmering barrier remained.

It was the same servant that escorted me. “Please wait patiently, Grandmaster. Someone important will attend to you soon. Meanwhile, please enjoy our hospitality. He gestured to the table, which was piled with some of the most expensive food I had ever seen, no doubt made by the royal chiefs.

Aware that I was still being watched, I first looked angry, even trying to flip a chair, only to be prevented by a jolt of energy. It didn’t even hurt with my Endurance, but I acted like it was painful.

I made a show of raging for twenty minutes before calming down, and stumbled toward a large pitcher of chilled wine, enjoying a great deal. A predictable response from someone without magic trapped in a cage they couldn’t resist.

Too predictable, even, but I trusted my acting skills to sell it.

Interestingly, I had no idea exactly why they imprisoned me. I expected that, but at least I expected them to show me the spear and see whether I could repair it before locking me down. Yet, they just imprisoned me the moment I arrived, and did it decisively.

Fascinating.

I made a show of drinking and getting slightly drunk, as the magically reinforced alcohol was enough to make someone with about fifteen Endurance drunk. By acting tipsy, I was signaling that it was around twenty.

“I can’t believe it,” I raged several times, but stayed tipsy. I could already feel the presence of people at the other side of the door, and I wanted to have a talk.

When the door opened, I turned toward it with a blaring gaze ... only to actually feel surprised. “Oh, I feel honored. The guild sent its strongest dogs to attack me,” I said as I looked at the two warriors, and ignored the old man behind them. “It’s a pity you’re cowardly enough to need a ward to do your work.”

The old man, was one of the two legendary blacksmiths in the capital, and the only one that worked for the guild. Naturally, the guild had other legendary blacksmiths, but others were not

in the capital.

“Oh, Legendary Blacksmith Hetra,” the old man intervened with a chuckle, using my name, but my title was rather surprising. Clearly, he was convinced that I was hiding my capabilities. After some consideration, I decided to play along.

“H-how do you know that?” I gasped.

“Please, do you really think a mere grandmaster could provide the exquisite weapons you seemed to create in seconds? Not to mention, the courage to challenge the guild in one of our home fields. Only Legendary Blacksmith could have the courage.”

“What do you want?” I asked.

“Well,” he said, his smile smug. “That’s the question, isn’t it?”

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 54

Endurance: 72 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 56280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred

I considered saying nothing for a moment, letting the man revel in his smugness. Unfortunately, that would show him that all the production he had gone through to impress me had been for nothing. And, if he realized that, he might not reveal why he had gone through all that trouble.

Of course, I couldn't just start begging for forgiveness or do something equally absurd. After all, I was supposed to be a brave soul that challenged the guild directly. "It seems that I should have joined the guild," I said, acting like I was using my anger to cover up my fear. "That way, I might have learned how to be a coward like you."

My insult was enough to create a flicker of frustration on his face. It wasn't a particularly well-crafted one, but coming from someone that he saw close to his skill, it clearly had an impact.

He suppressed it with all the smoothness of a politician, and smiled instead. "Oh, the fire of youth," he said dismissively instead. "As you grow old, you'll learn that not every problem needs to be faced head-on." He paused, his smirk sharpening. "Well, if you grow old..."

"Impressive, I would have thought that you would have at least finished explaining whatever amazing offer you had before resorting to the threats," I said, leaning forward as if I wanted to turn that into a physical confrontation.

"You're brave," he commented. "Too bad you don't have the necessary caution to temper it."

This time, I gave a mocking laugh. "What's the point of reaching the peak of what's possible if I'm going to act cautious all the time. I rather die."

That earned a patronizing shake of his head. "Oh, poor child. You think that you're at the top of the world just because you leveled up somewhere near level thirty and earned a few achievements on your own. You don't know just how many secrets the world truly holds. We're just at the beginning. You're weak."

"What nonsense are you talking about, you crazy old man," I said, acting shocked. "Do you want me to believe that there are others that could treat me like a weakling? Have you been using drugs? Why would the world be such a hellhole if there were people that are much stronger than us..."

He sighed in defeat. "That's the question, isn't it," he answered, his sigh of frustration real as far as I could see. "For some reason, they don't intervene even as the monsters massacre

people, only intervening when things get too much..."

As I listened to him, I became convinced that his knowledge about the Eternals was quite limited. It was good, as it meant they wouldn't be alerted if I had to take a sudden emergency action.

"Let's assume for a moment that what you're saying is correct, and you're not getting mad in your advanced age," I said, not missing the opportunity to get in another insult. "Does it have anything to do with this cowardly trap," I added.

"Somewhat, but it's mostly your fault," he answered, his smirk widening. "This facility holds the key to making contact with that mysterious organization. It was the greatest opportunity of your life when the fourth prince reached for you to repair it ... but you chose to waste that opportunity by trying to betray him for the crown prince."

"And, let me guess, he reached out to you," I said, implicitly accepting that claim. I had no doubt that the only reason they had learned was because the second prince's spies deliberately let it known. The fourth prince's spies — the ones that were actually loyal to him — were nowhere good enough to catch it otherwise.

They clearly wanted to make sure I couldn't just work for the fourth prince, and had to follow up with the plan of stealing the Spear.

"I have to thank you for that. The prince clearly has concerns about trusting any guild member with such a secret. Without your betrayal, he wouldn't have contact with me."

"Good for you, but why all the trouble," I said, making a sweeping gesture as I spoke. "Why bother explaining all to me when you could just go and repair your precious weapon ..." I continued, then I made a show of freezing. Shocked at first, soon turning into amusement. "But you can't repair it alone, can you?" I said.

"T-that's nonsense," he immediately responded, but he was unable to suppress his shock. That was understandable. He no doubt didn't expect to be caught due to the blunt personality I had been reflecting.

"Oh, really, then why are you here if you're not trying to offer me a deal I can't refuse. I help you, and you convince the prince to let me go free. Right?"

His silence was deafening as he tried to decide what to say, his preparations ruined. He could argue against my conclusion, but it would be pointless when he would eventually circle toward

it. “And, you think that you’re capable enough to offer me something that I can’t find in the guild.”

I leaned back even further, enjoying his growing frustration. “I certainly can. I’m much better than the bunch of lazy pathetic apprentices that you constantly fill into the guild,” I declared.

“Pretty arrogant of you,” he cut in, clearly desperate to change the topic.

“Maybe. It’s not arrogance if I can back it up,” I declared. He looked happy with that change, so I decided to douse his excitement once more. “It’s not like it matters,” I added.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you clearly don’t think that I’m not as good as your fellow legendary blacksmiths, but still went all that trouble of capturing me.” My smirk turned merciless. “Your fellows don’t know about the opportunity, do they?”

He paused, his arrogance long gone. He stayed silent for almost a minute before speaking. “I see, you’re not as politically unaware as you led us to believe,” he said.

“No, I’m not. I just prefer not to waste pointless flowery language and lengthy yet pointless intrigues.”

“Even when it costs you a lot,” he said. “Things would have been much more different if you tried to ramp up your operations slowly—“

“Well, that’s debatable,” I cut in. “Discounting this nonsense that I couldn’t have foreseen, it wasn’t a bad plan. No matter how I tried to enter, the guild would have tried to cut my path eventually. At least, in my way, I would have gathered enough supporters to make the guild’s job harder.”

“Thinking like this, it’s not too unreasonable,” he admitted. “And, since you’re more scheming than you revealed, why don’t you show me exactly how good are you and guess why I need you,” he asked.

“Come on, that’s the best you can come up with,” I said. “My techniques are designed to create weapons that could be easily enchanted. And only an expert on the topic could create such simplified designs. Ergo, you’re having trouble repairing something about its magical structure,” I suggested.

“Not bad, not bad at all,” he answered. “And does such an offer look acceptable to you?” he asked.

“Depends,” I said.

“Depends on what?”

“On what you’re willing to offer, of course,” I added. “I want some evidence about this mysterious organization before even checking the weapon, and I want to meet a representative before I start working.”

“You can only meet with them once the repair is finished, but otherwise acceptable,” he accepted quickly. “Although, I had to admit, I expected you to resist much harder after the betrayal.”

Good point. Luckily, I had an answer ready to go. “Betrayal is unacceptable, of course, but you were my enemy until a few moments ago. How can we talk about betrayal when there was no allegiance.” I paused for a moment, taking a threatening breath. “Of course, if you were to pull something like this now...”

“Message received,” he answered with a chuckle. “Provided you can prove your worth, of course,” he said as he pushed some papers toward me.

Some very familiar papers, created by my own hand, showing some of the progress notes I had prepared when I had been working on the Spear. I didn’t have any doubt about the source of that mysterious repair job, but it was always good to have confirmation.

“Wow, that’s an interesting weapon,” I said, making a show of my shocked display. “Is this real, or is it just a complicated test?” I asked.

“Good question. Why don’t you tell me,” he said, looking happy now that he had achieved his mission without a problem. Of course, he was unaware that he was just another pawn. I had no doubt that the second prince’s agents were doing their own preparations to contact me, about to deliver their own incredible offer.

Patience, I thought. After all, I had already received everything I needed from the current situation. After I finished my notes, I pushed them back, and his eyes widened.

“Not bad, not bad at all,” he murmured, clearly impressed by my display even as I undersold my capabilities greatly.

I passed the test.

All that remained was to decide whether to use the opportunity to make contact with the Eternals. I was always afraid of targeting them directly ... but what if they were the ones to recruit me...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 54

Endurance: 72 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 56280}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred One

“How’s being a prisoner going,” Helga asked the moment I teleported back to our little hidden spot, once again bringing a dozen prospective candidates with me for Helga’s special classes.

“Not bad,” I answered with a chuckle.

It was the third day of my imprisonment, and they were yet to allow me to come into contact with the Spear, still trying to come to a decision about my loyalty.

Naturally, it took me about fifteen minutes after the guild blacksmith had left to take control of the whole wing teleport back, using another disguise I prepared to pose as my own assistant back in my forge, making sure recruiting efforts were going well despite the production slowing down.

It wasn’t like I was short of money.

I teleported back to Silver Spires to bring the best candidates, finally pushing the number of private students Helga had over a hundred.

Of course, based on my request, she only interacted with them through a very complicated and awe-inspiring illusion, introducing herself as the spirit of knowledge. The sense of wonderment that awakened helped the Divine Spark generation quite a bit.

“How about the —“ she started, but I silenced her ... rather directly, with a searing kiss.

“No talking. It’s time for my conjugal visit,” I said after I pulled back.

“Really, before we even give you a show of my newest discovery,” she said. I was about to say yes, but then I stopped, recognizing the naughty way her lips curled.

For a moment, I said nothing, examining her. Her beauty was as striking as always with her beautiful blonde hair spilling to her shoulders, and her robe hugging her body. Yet, it was her smile that grabbed my attention. Beautiful as always ... but with a naughty, playful curl that was normally absent.

She was getting even sexier.

And wasn’t that a was a scary thought?

Good kind of scary.

“Alright, tell me,” I said as I decided to surrender, not having in my heart to ruin her little ploy.

She said nothing, but waved her hand. Immediately, a complicated illusion appeared, representing the single most complicated magical artifact I had ever seen, impossible to discern where the magic ended and the material aspects began.

Even with my intelligence, I was barely able to decipher its function after examining it for a while ... and only because its ultimate function was simple.

“A beacon,” I gasped. “One that can be detected accurately through primordial aether.”

“It’s just a prototype, and I’m not sure how long it could resist the emptiness of the Primordial Aether ... but yes, a beacon,” she said, with no problem of counting the negative aspects. She was proud.

As she should be. What she designed was no joke, even if it was impossible to build in its current form — the forging requirements were significantly above my capabilities, and flat-out impossible in several locations.

In comparison, purely magical aspects were masterful, perfect as far as I could see, with several methods showing it in a way that I hadn’t thought to be possible. “What does this ward here do?” I asked.

“Ah, it’s simple. It’s there to solve the core mismatch between the ...” she started, giving me a lengthy explanation, one that I barely understood despite my Intelligence stat.

Admittedly, she didn’t make my job any easier by the way she positioned herself. She stood next to me, with her hand sneaking down, dragging her palm over my erection, my pants proving to be a poor insulator against her divine fingers. I stopped listening and started enjoying her touch.

“Focus. Do you want me to explain twice,” she said the moment my attention started to wander, before I could even give an outward sign. Yet, from the way her smile widened, it was clear that she was confident in her assessment.

“Your power?” I asked.

“The position of the Goddess of Knowledge has some interesting benefits,” she said. “Including how to catch wayward students,” she added, squeezing my shaft slightly.

“Inconvenient,” I pouted, and her smile turned even more vicious. “I’ll pay attention,” I immediately corrected, happy to play along by giving an exaggerated display of obedience.

She certainly deserved me playing along with her fantasies.

I kept my attention on the glowing magical display that zoomed in and out repeatedly as she explained how every single part worked. Some parts displayed how the fundamentals worked, while the others showed some magical rules and principles that I didn’t even know existed.

She was using her new strength as a goddess very efficiently.

I enjoyed the lecture on magic ... even if her fingers were making it very difficult to focus. It was difficult enough when she was caressing from outside, but it turned even more difficult once she pushed my pants down.

“Is this appropriate behavior, professor,” I teased her.

“Of course. You can’t listen to the class with your pants feeling tight and uncomfortable,” she answered readily. True, but that didn’t make her naked touch any less distracting.

She was playing for the keeps.

The explanation lasted almost an hour ... and even then, it could only be described as an introduction. “Now, show me how well you understood it by upgrading the design of the physical parts,” she ordered.

What she asked of me was not a simple task. The pressure from the complicated wards alone was enough to destabilize most of the ordinary metals, which was challenging enough. Then, there was the aspect of building a correct and stable structure. Then, it had to be able to hold the mana for long, resist the erosion of the Primordial Aether at least partially ... as well as some other interesting features.

Even a prototype was difficult to truly design.

Still, I started working, doing my best to improve.

Then, Helga chose to complicate matters seven further by falling down on her knees and her lips wrapped around the head of my shaft, making the challenge even more difficult. Her soft fingers stayed wrapped around the base, pumping up and down steadily

I didn’t bother to keep down my moan. “Focus,” she admonished, pulling back just enough to

deliver her warning before she sank down again, this time going deeper.

I followed her request and suppressed my moans, enjoying her steady effort. Jolts of pleasure spread through my body as she started to apply a very complicated pattern of movement.

“It looks like your Domain of Knowledge is not limited to magical knowledge,” I mocked her, learning a playful pinch.

“I told you to focus,” she warned, but she was unable to prevent the blush from spreading on her face. For all her efforts to look like she was an expert on maintaining control, she was still my shy bookworm at heart.

Anyone else trying to order me around would have earned a playful punishment at best. But Helga was different.

She earned the privilege of a delayed punishment.

I worked on my task carefully, maintaining a fragile balance between work and pleasure. It was a challenge to do so with the wetness spreading around my girth, attacking the fragile balance I had built.

I continued to take many magical notes, but my speed of writing slowed down once she took me into her mouth fully, moving back and forth at an incredible pace.

I squeezed my eyes shut, trying to process the sudden rush of pleasure without moaning.

I failed, spectacularly.

“I expect my students to be more attentive,” she said ... without even stopping her treatment, using magic to vocalize it while her mouth was busy. She bobbed her head, her pace changing. Sometimes, she moved back and forth aggressively, sometimes, she bobbed slowly as she savored the taste.

Making my job harder and harder, grunts turning into a long string of moans as she worked on my shaft.

Time slowed down, and I suffered a delicious torture as I tried to put the finishing touches on the schematic.

However, as we climbed toward the peak of the pleasure, our bodies weren't the only thing that was reacting. My mana danced in her automatically as it was my habit, helping her to process

the new Divine Spark she had collected.

That spark started to float once I helped her to completely bond with the environment, solidifying her domain further.

And, giving me a beautiful reward in the process.

[+7 Intelligence]

It was interesting just how little the size of the Domain mattered as far as my benefits went. Just in a few weeks, Helga was able to catch up with Seldanna, who had thousands of times more Divine Spark to rely on along with the memories of an old god.

Yet, Helga almost managed to catch up with her initial stage. Well, at least in terms of supporting my power.

In other aspects, like actually allowing her to resist an invasion, her tiny domain wouldn't be particularly useful. Not that it mattered.

I was there to defend her.

With the significant boost of intelligence I had just received, working on the plans of the beacon got easier. The higher processing speed allowed me to make some interesting calculations that I was unable to complete earlier, and soon, the first set of changes was complete.

Of course, the beacon was nowhere near complete ... but it was progress nonetheless.

"Good work," Helga said and grabbed my legs while she took a deep breath. "Now, it's time for your reward." With that, she leaned forward, her blonde hair spilling down to hide her face as she mercilessly deep-throated me....

And, soon, I reached a limit, filling her mouth. She pulled back once she managed to catch every little bit of my seed, swallowing with gusto.

"It's a pity you have to return to prison," she chuckled as she waved her hand, and teleported away, teasing me.

Cheeky girl, I thought with a smile, and teleported back to my prison rather than following her.

I could punish her during our next meeting...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 61

Endurance: 72 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Two

On the sixth day of my — extremely unsuccessful — imprisonment, the men of the second prince finally made a move. They were patient ... a bit too much, even, as it was two days since I agreed to the offer of the guild leader and started working on repairing the spear.

Well, to be more accurate, I was looking like I was trying to repair. With my full abilities and previous experience, it would take minutes for me to properly repair it, and a few days to improve the design significantly.

Storing Divine Spark was kind of my expertise at this point.

The spy approached me just as I walked out to a garden, enjoying the grass under my feet — an arrangement to reward me for my cooperation. He was wearing a black and gray uniform, dressed as a guard without a rank.

“We meet again,” he said.

“Yes, and I can’t say that I’m happy with it,” I answered, looking dissatisfied. “You were supposed to be here when I arrived to help me, but instead, I ended up imprisoned. I can’t say I’m happy with the cooperation abilities of the crown prince.”

“Oh, I can just go and leave you to the mercy of the fourth prince if that’s what you wish,” he said, threatening me directly.

Ordinarily, it was not an attitude I would appreciate. However, his smugness was more promising than annoying. Such a confrontational attitude implied that they were feeling the pressure. “Wait,” I said, pushing an appropriate amount of panic to my tone. “Just because you failed once doesn’t mean I want to kick you out.”

“As you wish,” he said, nodding with a slight smile, avoiding to mention my sharp twist. “We are ready to act if you’re ready to act.”

“When?” I asked.

“Whenever you think you can bring us the spear. We couldn’t enter the inner sanctum, but we managed to take control of the perimeter defenses. We can use the opportunity to get away the moment you’re ready.”

I nodded. “Tonight,” I said with a determined tone. “I’m bored of being a prisoner, and I want to

escape.”

“Are you sure you can take the spear,” he said. “What if they notice the absence of the spear before you can leave the inner sanctum. You wouldn’t want to anger the crown prince with such a great mistake.”

“Don’t worry, I already forgot a replica,” I said as I reached into my pocket and passed a spearhead to him. “I just need to craft a broken handle and switch it. They are not even searching for me.”

He looked suspicious. “How did you manage to forge it. I doubt they have given you a personal forge.”

“Of course not. I just said that I needed to forge a copy of the weapon several times in order to get a better sense of its construction. Stealing one of the copies while melting the rest was easy.”

“Not bad,” the spy said. “Too bad you don’t have appropriate skills. You would have made an incredible work partner.”

I shrugged. “I’m glad with my skills. I don’t want to be a snake,” I said, delivering one last insult as he walked away. Ordinarily, I wouldn’t have done so, as angering the people I was supposed to be relying on.

Luckily, I had no intention of cooperating with them. Not because of what I suspected to be their intentional information leakage that removed any possibility of working together with the fourth prince. That was easy to ignore, as betrayal from the people I didn’t trust in the first place was meaningless.

No, I wanted to get rid of him to look more committed to the path the guild leader had created for me.

So, as I went back to the forging room, I found him. “I just had a little birdie that came to me with an offer,” I said. “My freedom, in exchange for the spear.”

“That’s interesting,” he said as he glanced at me, raising his head from the repair plans he had been examining. They were mostly drawn by me, and I made sure to keep those plans workable, but ultimately too complex to be really practical, with several weaknesses.

It might be something I could create easily, but no need to empower my enemies any more

than necessary.

“Interesting how?” I asked.

“Well, it’s an opportunity to get free. I thought that you would take it rather than trust our offer.”

I shrugged. “It’s not that I trust you, but I trust a bunch of spies with a very convenient offer even less. Add in the high chance of failure,” I added, letting my words linger.

He tossed his head back and laughed. “And, what do you have planned.”

“I plan nothing,” I said as I pulled a spearhead from my pocket. “Just find an agent to disguise as me and pass it to them, use their movements to clean their operation. I’ll be in the forge, where it’s safe.”

“And how do you know whether this place is safe?” he asked.

“If it wasn’t, they wouldn’t have bothered with me and would have stolen the spear directly,” I said. It was not as simple as I implied, but it was still logical enough to avoid suspicion. “Now, do you want to continue working, or do you want to chat,” I said as I returned to work.

He took a step back, surprised at my outburst. For a moment, he stood still uncertain of how to reply. “It’s good to see you so enthusiastic about it,” he said.

“Of course. I think we can finish it in a few days if we work hard. Maybe even tonight if can come up with a breakthrough. I don’t have time to waste with political nonsense,” I said, once again relying on the supposed passion of a legendary blacksmith.

He stared at me for a while before he shook his head, no doubt underestimating me even further after my ‘simple’ explanation. “I just need to arrange the plan,” he said as he walked away, leaving me alone.

I acted like I was focused on my work, even as I subtly cast several spells, preparing for the next stage. I wanted to use the upcoming battle to expand my control over the wards. Admittedly, it was not one of the main reasons for the plan, but just a side benefit.

Mostly because I couldn’t plan for it. Most of the places were not like my prison cell, with little active supervision. The other locations had several mages constantly maintaining the wards, making infiltration a troubling challenge.

This was particularly true for the forging room.

I hoped the upcoming battle created enough commotion to allow me to sneak inside. The spy looked desperate enough ... and if he failed, it was not exactly a problem either.

The guild leader returned not too long after, and we started working. Soon, I grabbed several monster parts, and started forging them into one big entity. "... I don't think it'll work like this. You'll overload the nodes," he said.

"Trust me," I answered as I continued to slam my hammer. He was used to my sudden bouts of inspiration, so he let that slide, unaware the only reason I was going through a dangerous explosive process was to fill the room with excess mana.

Preparing for the commotion.

With my mana in place, even if the battle was less damaging than I predicted, I should be able to make some progress.

I lost myself in my pretend work, working more and more fervor, looking lost in my beats ... and soon, a sudden flicker hit the wards.

The battle started. I used the mana I had already spread into the room into the ward, using the lack of attention from the mages responsible for the operation. Their attention had turned to the perimeter, while I slowly sneaked into the core of the wards, slowly adding my own layers to the structure, betting on the fact that they were not created by the others.

It was a challenging affair ... until the spies of the second prince surprised me by triggering several explosions throughout the facility. Mostly outer structure, but enough to earn the focus of the other mages almost immediately.

And, as a result, their attention slipped. Not one to miss such opportunities, I let my mana spread, infecting the wards like a particularly aggressive disease. With that, I had the keys to the defense. I didn't use them other than watching the agents of the second prince being mowed down like grass, helpless to resist.

It was fun to watch my enemies being killed by my other enemies. It was efficient.

I ignored that as I continued forging. With the wards under my control, there was no point in delaying the work. Toward midnight, I slammed my hammer on the spear for one last time. "Finally complete," I said as I pulled back.

“Fascinating,” the guild leader said, his greed almost physical as he wrapped his hands around the broken handle. At that moment, his greed-fueled his jealousy further, and in real-time, I could see him coming to a decision.

He just didn’t give that order immediately. “Amazing work,” he said. “You should go rest. We have a week to prepare before the representative from that mysterious organization arrives.”

“Of course,” I said, using my apparent exhaustion as a reason to miss the obviousness of his lie.

Yet, even as the guards escorted me to my room, I continued observing him through the wards. He was rather purposeful as he dashed away.

I wondered exactly what he was planning to do with that spear.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Three

To my surprise, the guild leader didn't stay at the outpost.

Instead, he went to the vault, and placed the spear into the vault. No, not the spear, I corrected myself as I used the vault wards to check the integrity of the weapon, and realized that it was a replica.

Amusingly, it was the same replica I had used to trick the spies of the second prince. An amusing trickery, but it didn't answer why he was in such a hurry. Especially since he disguised himself as a guard once he went to his room before leaving the complex.

Interesting.

Luckily, my luxurious cell might as well be a private palace at this point, as I teleported away easily without alerting any of the guards, and started following them.

The guild leader, disguised as one of the guards, left the complex in a great hurry, escorted only by two others. And, to my surprise, he met with another spy, accompanying him into another hidden location near the capital.

This new hidden location was defended even stronger than the previous location. For a moment, I thought that I wouldn't be able to sneak inside ... but a slight examination changed my mind. It was easy to slip in ... because most of the wards were actually targeted inward.

They were trying to keep someone prisoner. Someone strong, it seemed. Most of the wards were actually dedicated to internal defenses, and the rest were dedicated to keeping the location secret. It might even be useful ... if a very excited guild leader didn't lead me directly there.

I had some suspicions about who might be inside the place, a suspicion that was enough to anger me, but I didn't explode. I needed to make sure first.

The misaligned defenses didn't even slow me down as I entered the complex, quickly disguising myself as a servant to follow my target closely. He entered a room, and I stayed outside, using magic to eavesdrop.

"The spear is here, my prince," he said as he knelt. I wasn't able to see them, but the way his knee hit the ground was rather distinct. "You can use it to steal some of her Divine Essence and use it to bargain with the Eternals. I'm sure they will be happy to accept such an exalted person

as a part of them. And, with their help, your ascension will be guaranteed.”

“Oh, interesting,” the prince said. “You seem to be rather enthusiastic about giving such an opportunity to me. I would have expected you to take it for yourself,” he said. “It’s not exactly something I expected from one of the leaders of the guild. Your organization had always been rather protective about your independence.”

“Not at all, my prince. You’re the next in line to the throne, and you have the necessary vision to finally stop the constant collapse of the Empire. The support of the Eternals is just insurance.”

I had to admit, I was impressed. The words of the guild leader implied that he was the crown prince.

Meaning, he managed to trick both the second and the fourth prince in the process of their operation and ended up with the spear.

“Good, and I’m sure that, as the next Emperor, I couldn’t leave anyone that knows about such an important secret,” he said.

“Wait—“ the guild leader gasped, shocked, but that was all he was able to say before the prince activated the wards he had arranged beforehand. Similar to my initial imprisonment, but actually used to deliver a hit without a warning rather than used as a threat.

His sole words turned into wordless cries. His level was high, and as a blacksmith, his physical stats were nothing to scoff at. The combination resulted in a high HP ... unfortunately, that only extended his suffering.

It took a minute for him to end up dead. At a distance, his guards experienced the exact same end.

I made no motion to save them, just used the opportunity to hide better.

“Are you sure that was wise, my prince? What if the spear he brought is fake?”

“Doesn’t matter. If it’s fake, the real one has to be hidden in the other hideout. There’s no chance that he changed it halfway. He wouldn’t be stupid enough to trust such a treasure to another guild member. If it’s fake, it would be in the hidden base of my brother, and we will just use our forces to raid.” He took a deep breath. “Not exactly what I prefer. It would mean revealing my hand, but better than the alternative.”

“What about the Emperor. What if he decides that it violates the limits he had set.”

“Doesn’t matter. My father is a dead man walking. He barely had weeks remaining. And, he won’t take such a risk close to the ultimate date. Certainly not to protect my most useless brother. Just make sure that he’s nowhere near the hidden base while you launch the assault.”

“Hopefully, it won’t be necessary, my prince,” he said.

“Hopefully,” the crown prince answered. Soon, the door opened and he entered to the corridor, giving me the first glimpse of him. He was tall and broad-shouldered, creating an imposing sight. Wearing armor and a crown, he made an imposing sight.

Charismatic and competent, he made an imposing sight. He would make a good emperor ... assuming that this facility was not built to host one of the few people I really cared about.

If that’s the case, I doubted that he would enjoy a long reign — or even last until the demise of his father.

Sneaking into the inner parts of the prison would have been challenging if the prince hadn’t removed every detection ward in place. Hidden behind an illusion, I followed him. Illusions were hardly foolproof, but luckily, the prince felt no need to check his surroundings.

Of course, I wasn’t exactly betting my life on the prince’s carelessness. Unlike the guild leader who had just met with his demise, I wasn’t lacking in magical abilities. I could take down the whole hidden base if needed.

It wouldn’t be silent, and it would reveal more than I wanted ... but facing the possibility of saving one of my girls, was an acceptable risk.

After we passed another ward, we arrived at a huge location. At the center, there was an unconscious angel.

A familiar face.

Mariel.

My dear headmistress.

However, even as I looked at her, I could see that things were not exactly well. Her wings. Instead of pure white, her wings were filled with a mismatching crisscross of black lines.

Darkness Spark.

Well, it explained where the Darkness Spark that was used to power her unique wards had gone.

My first instinct was to just rush forward and take down the prince and save her. However, I held back. It looked bad, but she had managed to resist whatever that was going on for months. Keeping a few more minutes to see what was going on was even easier.

I waited passively, with one exception. I cast a small spell, one that would have struggled to light a candle. However, targeted one of the traps I had built into the spear, breaking one of its vital parts, and turning it into an ornament.

Despite the tenseness of the situation, watching the expression of the prince as he approached Mariel. It started confident, almost smug, but as he stayed close nothing happened, It first melted into surprise, then shame.

“It seems that our partner was craftier than I had given him credit for,” he said as he looked at his loyal retainer, and in his eyes, I could see murder. The retainer kept his eyes down, loyal to a fault.

Our future emperor clearly had a fragile ego.

He stayed silent for a few seconds before giving the order. “Activate our kill teams. I want that base burnt to the ground, and the real spear with me. I need this spear. I can’t give up her without stealing some of her Divine Spark.”

Ironically, I might have saved his life by intervening. Even without examining, I could see that Darkness and Light Sparks were currently on a weird balance on her body, a situation that was only possible due to the opposing nature of those sparks and centuries she had used Darkness Spark to keep her Light Spark in control.

If the crown prince managed to do what he wished and started poking around, it had the chance to destroy the fragile balance of the opposing Sparks.

The prince started walking away. At the same time, I cast an illusion that would take Mariel’s place, adding a few new wards to fake her presence in the many detection wards. With the most important wards temporarily turned down to enable the prince to approach, my job was easier.

Soon, I was out, Mariel with me.

As much as I wanted to return and teach the crown prince a lesson about trying to target my people, Mariel's safety was more important. After wrapping her with a layer of protective mana, I started flying toward the capital.

I had two reasons for not teleporting to Helga's domain. I didn't know how being in another Divine Domain would play with her situation... And I didn't know how teleportation affected her state. Going to a place where I could fly in short order was the logical choice.

The next step, a medical examination... And, if everything was well, playing the doctor game...

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Four

I wanted to punish the crown prince for daring to capture my sexy angel. I even have several ways to deliver such punishment. But, as I dug a tunnel underneath the capital — easily bypassing the magical defenses built to prevent such a problem — to bring her to the safehouse I had established for emergencies, unable to teleport due to her dangerous state, I ignored that desire.

At this point, revenge wasn't as important as making sure her problems wouldn't suddenly explode. The prince was not someone that I would have trouble reaching. I could take him down any time.

My focus was on making sure Mariel was safe.

Even as I created a tunnel to allow a secondary access point to my safe house, I did my best to avoid touching Mariel with my mana, afraid of somehow breaking the fragile balance between the Light and Darkness Sparks.

Usually, even the mana of different natures didn't play well together, let alone the Sparks, and I didn't know why Light and Darkness were the exceptions to that.

Not that it was the first time I had noticed that. Mariel had been using their opposing nature to keep her own ill-advised step into Divinity in check, preventing her Light spark from burning her body.

However, I didn't dare to do anything until I could drag her into the center of the base and activate all the wards. Not just the defensive wards, but dozens and dozens of wards, some arcane while others relied mostly on tantric mana.

Designed especially to address the Divine Spark-related problems. After seeing Helga's situation, I expected the others to experience similar problems, and was prepared for the worst.

Well, what I expected to be the worst. It seemed that I had to revise that estimation downward significantly. I used the wards to carefully examine her situation, trying to come up with a diagnosis.

There was good news. Well, one of them.

Against all odds, her situation was stable.

Unfortunately, that was the extent of what could be termed as good news. I had been hoping to just remove Darkness Spark from her, which would leave her only with her Light Spark. Unfortunately, the two Sparks were even more intertwined than I expected — or even thought to be possible.

Worse, the Sparks had already mixed with her body, enough to complete her first step into the Godhood, which took the removal of the Divine Spark from her off the table. Divine Spark was not like a mana, and an external source of power that could be added and removed without consequence.

Divine Spark bonded with the carrier on a fundamental, existential level, requiring a mental alignment while changing the physical parts subtly. It was still possible to reverse it when the bonding process was on the level of Chosen or Demigod, but once the vessel reached Godhood, the issue was far more troubling.

Worse, I didn't even know where the changes made of the Divine Spark started and where Mariel's angel nature ended. After all, she was the only angel I met under non-combat circumstances, and she was already juggling the two opposing Divine Sparks desperately then.

Making a judgment call about it was difficult.

I needed someone to help me brainstorm. After casting a few spells to make sure the base was secure and no one was following me, I teleported to Helga — finding it annoying that teleporting her back was equally impossible due to the way she bonded to her domain.

How frustrating. No wonder gods used avatars often. Unfortunately, the only method we know was too expensive in terms of Divine Spark for Helga to afford — not to mention the disadvantages of using such a method on System space.

“Still, it's a good thing that you have found her, right?” Helga said.

“Certainly better than the alternative,” I answered. “Still, that doesn't solve our problem. Any ideas?”

Helga stopped for a second, her beautiful face creased with a frown. Then, she spoke. “How far are you on forging those beacons,” she said.

I sighed. “So, you have the same idea as me. I was hoping that you would come up with something else.”

“Maybe if you give me two years and unlimited access to literature on Divine Sparks that the Eternals had collected, but without it, I lack the basis to make any kind of progress on the topic,” she explained.

I nodded, understanding where she was coming from. Even with all my advantages interacting with Divine Spark, my understanding was very limited, and my approach was blunt. For example, I strongly doubted that copying the draconic method of reinforcing my body with Purified Spark was hardly the most efficient method of strengthening myself ... but it was the only method I had.

In that vein, Helga’s hands were tied as well — and not the fun way.

Of course, that left another problem, which led to the reason for Helga’s question. I needed to find an unoccupied plane for Mariel to complete her Apotheosis. The trick we used for Helga was beautiful and elegant ... but ultimately, it was only possible due to her exceptionally unorthodox Divine Nature, making such a small location viable.

Using the same trick would waste Mariel’s potential. Assuming that was possible in the first place.

“Do you think that we could use the same trick we used here for Mariel as an emergency,” I asked. I already guessed the answer, but I wanted to be sure.

Helga thought about it a bit, then shrugged in defeat. “No, not even if you’re willing to sacrifice the potential. The whole point of my domain is the Darkness Ward hiding me from the System. Mariel has both the Light and the Darkness, either could easily break the ward while she goes through the merging process. And, the less we talk about the potential combination issues, the better.”

“I see,” I admitted with a soft sigh even as I started walking, and she accompanied me silently. We went toward the forge I had built there.

The forge wasn’t as big as the one I had in the capital, but since I could use my magic without limit here, it was far more advanced.

“What’s your plan?” Helga asked, subdued as she helped me to create a batch of beacons that would hopefully allow me to return faster than my previous attempt.

“Nothing complicated,” I said, feeling frustrated as well. The last thing I wanted was to leave the main material plane now that everything was in order once again. Unfortunately, that was

inevitable. "I'm going to go and do my best to find an unoccupied plane."

"And, do you think that's doable?" Helga asked, realizing the problem.

"Likely not. So I would probably use Mariel's light spark as cover to invade one of the weaker undead planes and hope that it would take a while for the Eternals to realize the change."

"Not exactly a plan, is it?" Helga said, and I shrugged. Sometimes, that was the best one could do. "How about the beacons?" she asked.

"That's a bigger problem. In their current state, they won't last more than a few minutes unless I embed Tantric Spark in them..."

"And, that would create too big of a risk of discovery," she said.

"Exactly, so I'll probably create a web of teleportation that allows you to eject those to the Primordial Aether. I'll also create a pattern that'll send them out periodically, and I'll do my best to return in a week or two. But predicting that it's hard, and I want you to send them out with full power if you face an emergency," I said. "I don't want you to take unnecessary risks."

She looked frustrated about the need, but luckily, she wasn't like the others, who might have taken such a thing personally.

With that, we spent the rest of the day filled with magical research and construction — interrupted by a few quickies. I did my best to perfect the beacon deployment system, which was frustrating as I was struggling to create some kind of magical message that I could detect from a great distance, but at the same time, it needed to avoid the attention of the Eternals.

But, after some struggle, I managed to create something that I hoped to work, one that relied on creating a very complicated mana flare instead of a better message, one that could easily be written off as background noise by anyone who wasn't looking for it.

Hopefully, it would help. At the same time, Helga finished creating a complicated ward that used Light and Darkness mana, balanced by tantric, one that would keep Mariel stable through the chain of teleportations.

Hopefully.

"Be careful," Helga said after placing another kiss on my lips.

"You too. And, don't do anything to reveal your location even if you receive a message from

others. Just send the signal we arranged, and I'll return. We can't risk them baiting you."

"Don't worry too much," she said with a wet chuckle. I kissed her one last time, and teleported to the capital. Luckily, the prince's intervention gave a good reason for the disappearance of the master blacksmith. Still, I left a few letters for the apprentices, writing them like I had prepared beforehand.

Additionally, I had left several messages that could only be read by the girls, using our shared experience as a clue. The messages didn't say anything other than wait near the capital, in case someone else understood it.

Then, I teleported to my real destination.

To Mariel.

For a moment, I said nothing, examining her beautiful visage and her marred wings. "You're such a source of trouble," I said with a chuckle as I started to build the ward Helga had designed around her. "You're lucky that you're so pretty. Because you're the most troublesome one," I said with a mocking sigh."

Then, I grabbed her and teleported away.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Five

“I didn’t miss this mess,” I murmured as I found myself floating in the Primordial Aether, the main material plane under me, about to disappear the moment I stepped out of its range and found myself in the chaotic flow of the rest, Mariel safely with me in the ward.

I said nothing else as I waited until the first beacon was launched. The magical location was clear. More importantly, the Eternals didn’t suddenly come rushing, allowing me to mark it as a tentative success. With that, I let the chaos of the Primordial Aether drag me away...

Luckily, it wouldn’t last for months, unlike my boring, extended swim through Primordial Aether while I hung onto the Eternal ship.

I had a permanent, unbreakable connection with Seldanna. It wouldn’t have been enough to find her location in the Primordial Aether despite the strength of our connection if that was all. But, Seldanna was fully merged with her plane as well.

And, that was much easier to locate.

That, along with Seldanna’s ability to send me some rudimentary messages through our connection — enough to denote an alarm — I was able to leave her alone for months without being bothered. All the while, the only interesting thing was the Eternals skipping the date I had given to them while disguised as the ancient god of nature, despite the explicit threat of not dealing with them anymore if they skipped it.

Lucky.

Of course, I wasn’t stupid enough to miss the fact that their lack of communication had some dangerous implications, but considering the number of issues I was trying to address, I was willing to exchange long-term dangers with short-term calm.

Not exactly the healthiest of decision-making, but the best I could do under the circumstances.

It was a pity that I couldn’t use the same trick to find Helga, and therefore the material plane. The darkness wards we used to hide her from the System had that inconvenient side effect.

Thinking of Helga, I reached for the Knowledge Spark I took from her, trying to use it to solve a magical problem. Unfortunately, while it helped, its help was far less sublime without her presence. It still helped somewhat, but its advantages overlapped with Intelligence too much to measure accurately.

Of course, Primordial Aether was complicated and treacherous enough that even with a strong beacon, it still took two days for me to reach my destination. Far better than the months the earlier trip had consumed.

The only trouble, was that wasn't exactly an indicator of how long the next trip would take. It could take half a day, or half a month depending on pure luck. Well, maybe not luck, but I lacked a more detailed understanding of Primordial Aether.

And, teleporting was certainly not feasible unless I wanted to end up in pieces.

I wanted to stop by Seldanna first and talk more in detail and share the developments. We had a lot of strategic details to consider, both in terms of the past, and in terms of invading another plane and its potential to trigger the undead forces into other actions ... but also, more simply, I missed her.

It had been months.

However, those plans disappeared the moment I arrived at the edge of her plane ... and met with a nasty surprise. There was another plane orbiting hers. It was a smaller plane, one that was radiating necrotic mana.

Worse, the sudden orbit was clearly not a coincidence. There was some kind of magical ship between the two planes, one that was almost ten times larger than the trade ship I had been a part of, using some kind of thick magical connection to create a resonance between the two planes, pulling those two closer.

It was a complicated process, one that used a lot of mana and time, clearly going on for months and required at least another month to complete ... but it was surprisingly sneaky. After all, the ability to travel through the Primordial Aether was shockingly rare.

I was glad that it didn't require an immediate reaction. I bypassed the planar border easily — reminding my explosive entrance the first time, thrown out violently.

The moment I entered, I made sure that my surroundings were empty, and then I flared my mana. Immediately, a response appeared, and the plants around me started to grow, the flowers bloomed and floated before coalescing into a familiar figure.

"I missed you," she said.

"Good, I'll be waiting for you, come here," I said. Her avatar looked confused, clearly not

expecting me to stay near the border, but she trusted me enough to dispel her avatar and start traveling directly.

She didn't have the ability to teleport. Luckily, that was not a problem. With a wave of my hand, I created a gate for her to step through, finding her location even easier.

"You're here," she gasped as she jumped into my arms.

"My beautiful goddess," I said even as the most amazing flower smell filled my whole being. Coming from her, but also from the environment. And, it wasn't even a spell or a conscious effort. No, nature itself was reacting to her presence, the plants doing their best to impress her.

A nature goddess indeed. No wonder my Endurance was continuously improving. She was far more aligned with her Divine identity, no doubt a benefit of assimilating the memory scraps and melding further with her Spark.

Before I could say anything else, I felt her lips over mine, which tasted all the beautiful fruits at once. It was the best way to be silenced.

We had a lot of things to talk about, but as I felt her dress, made of flowers and leaves, melt under my touch and reveal her perfect body, I decided that those things could wait a few minutes.

Then, I felt her rip off my shirt with a shocking passion while her legs wrapped around my waist, and corrected.

A few hours ... half a day at most.

It didn't matter much, especially since Mariel was in a stable condition and no urgent event was knocking on my door. Her hips danced, reminding me of her passion, while I shifted my lips to her neck. "Oh, I missed this," she moaned, while I groaned appreciatively.

Not to mention, it wasn't exactly a waste of time. As we kissed, my mana merged with hers ... and through her, I could feel the whole plane as a singular entity.

There, Intelligence showed its biggest benefit. Even as I enjoyed the kiss — and more — to the fullest, I was able to analyze her connection with the plane. A quick burst of mana allowed her to completely merge with the Divine Spark that had been generated in my absence, giving a nice boost to her. Of course, that meant that the empowering fruits the elves were hoping to receive would be delayed a few months.

But, considering their long lives, such a sacrifice should be an acceptable compromise. “T-that feel great,” Seldanna moaned. “It’s like a headache I didn’t know existed disappeared.” Made sense. More established Gods probably had ways to get rid of the spark they couldn’t merge easily, but Seldanna had yet to develop such a technique.

Meaning her Divine Entity could get polluted relatively easily. Not in a few weeks or months, but years would certainly be a problem.

Luckily, I was there to help.

“Good for you,” I said as I let my lips drag down, capturing her nipple, and turning her appreciation into another moan. “Now, it’s time to pay the price.” With that, I pushed her down, the grass turning into a thick, comfortable bed before she could even touch the ground. “Now, it’s time to pay the price.”

Then, I skipped the foreplay completely and slipped inside her. I would have loved to extend it a bit more, but I wanted to reward her for her first time. After all, she had waited for my return patiently for months, when she could easily create a fake emergency to call me while using the Eternals as an excuse.

“Good goddess,” I said, unable to prevent the humor in my tone completely as I slipped inside. She looked at me in playful anger, but that died quickly as my hips started to move, invading her core just as decisively as my mana invaded her soul.

She readily accepted both.

“A good way to apologize for your long absence,” she said, all she could say before a moan exploded, filling the opening along with an instinctive flare of mana. And, just like that, the meadow turned into a wild forest, the trees growing tens of feet in less than a second.

Making me wonder just how nature would react to her orgasm. Luckily, from the way she clenched around me, I doubted that it would take too long to understand.

“Do you want it fast, or slow?” I asked despite guessing the answer.

While she tried to catch her breath to answer, I cupped her breasts, enjoying her moan even as I made it harder for her to answer.

“J-jerk,” she managed to stammer once I squeezed her nipple, her moan majestic and sexy at the same time. “H-hard,” she added.

I thought about teasing her, but her begging expression was enough to earn my mercy. “Hard, it is,” I declared as I pushed forward...

Her cries echoed across the planar fragment... or, at least, that was how it felt.

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58410}

{Pseudo-HP: 15000 Mana: 20000}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Six

“That bastards. To think that they are about to attack my domain...” Seldanna started before her words turned into a chain of curses, some I had never heard before.

I didn't blame her. Realizing that she was just weeks away from a deadly invasion was a nasty realization.

Pity it was just an avatar of hers and not her real body, preventing me from helping her stress in a more direct manner. We had spent almost a full day together without stopping, but it had been barely enough to quench our thirst.

Right now, we were floating in the Primordial Aether, safe in the wards I had created while we observed the Eternals' invasion plan.

“You have to admit, they are not playing around,” I said as I observed the plane in the distance, only visible due to my Tantric spell creating a viewport. “The moment they realized they have to deal with a god, they brought one of their own. And, this time, they are not bothering with an avatar, but attacking with full force. And, to make it more interesting, even if the surprise attack failed, there's no evidence linking them to the attack, giving them plausible deniability. They have perfected their art.”

“Do forgive me if I don't feel impressed by an attack that was about to be launched into my land,” Seldanna said, her voice thick with anger.

She was the most furious I had ever seen, suggesting that there were some unexpected side effects to creating a Divine Domain. Though, maybe I should have expected it. The tighter she connected to her domain, the more it turned into a part of her existence.

Meaning, the upcoming invasion was a highly personal attack. I had no doubt that, if I suggested her to let that attack happen as a part of a complicated plan, she would have fought against it very intensely.

Luckily, that was mostly theoretical. I had no intention of taking the risk of letting a god with more practical experience step into her domain.

“Don't worry, we have enough time to deliver a lot of attacks, especially with my ability to freely interject with the area,” I said.

She looked at me, looking considerably more relaxed. “Yes, you can just attack from outside

until you can break the planar border, and the Primordial Aether will do the rest.”

“No, that won’t work,” I countered.

“Why?” she asked, frustrated. “It looks perfectly doable.”

“Well, let me correct it like this. We can do it, but why should we waste such a golden opportunity,” I said. “I need to find a planar fragment for Mariel to fix her current situation, and the Eternals were kind enough to bring one to us, even showing me the best way to link the two planes together.”

“That’s ... ambitious,” she said, though her tone made it clear that she wasn’t happy about that solution. A part of it was her concern for her Domain, but I had been juggling a complicated relationship long enough to catch the hint of jealousy not too far away from the surface.

“Ambitious, true. Especially linking two domains together without making them merge or drift away. I probably have to come and check every couple weeks for a long while to make sure everything was in order.”

Just like that, Seldanna’s distaste disappeared at the prospect of more visits. “How exactly do you think this long while is,” she asked, trying to sound casual.

“Probably years,” I said, doing my best to hide my smirk. “Maybe you’re right and I should just break the planar border —“

“No, you’re right. It’s an opportunity not to be missed,” Seldanna said, her panic clear despite her avatar making it much easier to hide.

She was cute enough to tempt me to teleport back and show her just how much I missed her, but I suppressed that desire temporarily.

Unfortunately, we still had serious issues to talk about. “It’s not going to be simple. We need to work hard to create a counterforce to distract them.”

“Not elves, right,” she countered. “The war had damaged their numbers badly enough that they need decades to even start to recover from their losses.”

“No,” I said with a shake of my head, my smile wide. “Only the idiot and the desperate try to invade the domain of undead with living beings... And, we’re not desperate.”

“You want to use treants,” she gasped.

“Exactly. That, and I’m almost sure I could fashion some kind of breach using the God Forest... Then, just as they pit all their forces to block the invasion of the treants...” I said.

“Then, what?” she asked, excited.

I gave her a naughty smile. “Well, that’s a surprise. A man needs to have a few to continue impressing a sexy goddess of nature....” I answered as I changed the direction. We had a lot of work to do, and maybe a few more rewards in the process.

“Fascinating,” Seldanna said as she looked at the army of treants that spread in front of us. Ten thousand trees, each filled with endless waves of Nature mana we created through a combination of my purification and Seldanna’s conversion.

A trick that I only dared to pull after checking the whole plain carefully so as not to alert the Eternals. However, compared to the previous times, I was less careful.

Ironically, it was their invasion method that led to it. Clearly, once rejected, their methods were more heavy-handed than I expected. I had no doubt that, even if they didn’t catch anything suspicious, the failure of their invasion would give them enough reason to escalate.

At this point, them getting suspicious about my abilities — well, the abilities of the ancient nature god — would actually be helpful to keep them behind.

And, even if that failed, we still had my other surprise to distract them.

“Are you ready,” I said as I looked at Seldanna. She nodded, and with a wave of her hand, another treant bloomed. It was smaller than the others, barely twenty feet tall rather than five hundred, and made of flowers rather than wood.

I said nothing about the shape. The avatar was throbbing with Divine Spark. Those flowers didn’t need thorns to be dangerous.

Then, I waved my hand, and another avatar — a fake one in my case — grew with a shocking speed. A wooden dragon, with a five hundred feet wingspan, almost a thousand feet long from head to tail.

An avatar worthy of my fake personality.

“Let’s go,” I said as I stepped on the dragon, and Seldanna’s avatar followed. I used the dragon

as a focus to cast another spell. This time, another movement appeared, and a huge ark appeared, enough to hold this impressive army.

Even with our combined abilities, it took two full days for us to create it. The size was not a problem, but the fact that it had to hold against the ravages of the Primordial Aether, even for a moment, was something else.

Especially since I couldn't just cheat by using Tantric and alerting everyone in the process.

The ark started to fly, leaving Seldanna's real body behind. Through her avatar, Seldanna cast a spell, and the planar border parted open just enough for the ark to move out, showing the extent of the control Seldanna was exerting on the fragment.

Just like that, we were floating in the Primordial Aether. I pushed the Ark to go at maximum speed, each second melting the surface of the Ark. I watched the artifact that the Eternals had been using to connect two planes to see if they would notice such a big commotion.

It didn't seem like they did, but even if they did, it wouldn't matter. I could feel that the planar fragments were already close enough to exert some kind of magical pull on each other.

The Ark cut through Primordial Aether, each second further breaking the defensive structure. "Do you think we'll be able to reach the other side safely," Seldanna asked.

It was not a bad question. Made purely from Nature mana, I doubted the Ark could last another minute. And, even if Primordial Aether behaved somewhat normal near planar bodies, there was no guarantee that a sudden chaotic wave wouldn't have extended the distance by a few minutes ... or hours.

"Don't worry. I can always cheat," I reminded her.

"Good," she said even as her avatar reached and squeezed my hand.

Then, we hit the planar border of the undead Domain.

The moment the contact occurred, I felt the mana at the planar border shift and solidify. The speed at the border transformed was incredible. The mana pushed against the Ark. It wasn't as destructive as Primordial Aether, but it didn't need to be. All they needed was to keep us out for a minute, and the environment would do the rest.

Unfortunately, he didn't have the time. It might have been different if they expected a counter-

attack, but they did not. The Ark had already rammed through the border before they could start reacting, costing them precious moments.

We pushed through the border, and entered the plane.

Into the domain of a true necrotic god.

The easy part was over.

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{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58,410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Seven

“Wow, this is...” Seldanna’s avatar gasped as she took the view in.

Her shock was understandable. The plane was filled with undead as far as the eye could see. I had often referred to the undead as endless, but only now, I realized just how inadequate that description was. I hadn’t dared to explore the plane directly, afraid of being caught and ruining the surprise.

Looking at their numbers, I was glad that I didn’t try to go with the alternative of letting the planes collide and defend the invasion. With those numbers, I would have had to pull all the stops to have a hope of defeating them, serving my secrets to Eternals on a plate while also dealing with devastation that would have been far deeper than the previous undead invasion.

Sometimes, fortune really favored the brave.

“Do you think we can win,” Seldanna asked.

“Probably. And it’s not like it matters even if we lose,” I answered with a shrug. I might have warned her about army morale and being confident, but that was not exactly a concern while leading an army of wooden constructs. “You’re only here as an avatar, and I’m confident that I can escape with most of our Divine Spark. At a minimum, we would destroy a majority of their army.”

As I said that, the Ark finally landed on the ground with a devastating crash, the collusion enough to destroy the zombies in its immediate surroundings. Then, the wards that were holding back millions of nature mana cracked, creating a thick wave to collide against the suffocating necrotic mana — enough that, if I had landed on this plane just after my accidental exile, I probably would have died in seconds.

How much difference does a few months make, I thought even as I watched ten thousand wooden giants leave the Ark along with the mana wave, attacking the undead army before they could react, each greedily pulling the surrounding necrotic mana to convert into nature mana.

After all, they were essentially a singular unit. Another god forest that was connected by fully melded Divine Spark, giving them an incredible efficiency advantage. I even made sure to give them a very old look, making them look like an ancient legion my fake personality had created long ago.

I wanted to intimidate the Eternals, not send them to a blind panic. And, while an intimidating wooden giant army that a nature god could wield as a weapon was scary, it was nowhere near scary as a god that could create such an army once a month.

Making them believe that the former was the case was to my benefit ... especially considering my other trick would make them panic enough — preferably somewhere away from here.

“Impressive, isn’t it,” I commented while I controlled the treant army to destroy the undead army with shocking efficiency. Seldanna just nodded, fascinated by the speed the endless legion dwindled.

Admittedly, while it was an impressive sight, the achievement of destroying the first section of the army was hardly a challenge. Mostly because none of the army in front of us actually had Divine Spark in them to counter the spells I had been constantly casting through the treants — their nature making it very easy to channel the same spell through all of them at the same time.

It was the benefit of an ambush. There were no death knights or liches to counter my spells to give a fighting chance to the zombies, and there were no skeletal dragons in the mix to tussle directly with the treants. I had no doubt that they had such members, but they were probably somewhere nearer to the center.

After all, why bother commanding an army that was happy enough to just wait without doing anything. Add in the fact that zombies were best when their numbers could spread along a huge line endlessly to hunt the peasants and strain the supply lines rather than fighting against elite forces.

Especially elite forces like ours that had no mind to be intimidated, and no muscles to get tired.

Worse, we had one more decisive advantage. The sudden clash of two huge waves of opposing mana was overwhelming enough to extend into the connection between the material and the Aether. Unless they were to lose the majority of their commanders to the violent Aether waves, they couldn’t just teleport nearby, leaving only an ordinary method.

At a distance, I noticed a bone dragon, mounted by a lich. My dragon construct made a gesture, and a giant bolt of nature mana flew toward it, obliterating it with one hit.

Leaving a lingering cloud of Necrotic Spark behind.

“My opponent is about to battle is about to get fun. Take over the army,” I said to Seldanna.

“Are you sure you want to take that directly? Maybe I should be the one. I’m just an avatar—” she said as she watched that mist created by Necrotic Spark growing wildly, but I silenced her with a gesture.

“No, we talked about this, take over the treants,” I ordered. She sighed as she jumped down, floating on top of the biggest one. At the same time, the army paused for a second, giving the zombies a chance to counter-attack. It would have been devastating if our army had any physical weakness...

But they didn’t, so it only meant a monetary dip in their destruction.

She didn’t have my tactical acumen, but she was better at using Nature Spark as a conduit. She was not as good at casting offensive magic, but she was far better at cleansing the land and creating a thick forest that could support the battle, so the combat efficiency of the treants stayed roughly the same, just with a more defensive focus than offensive.

Pity she was only there as an avatar and this wasn’t her Divine Domain. I would have loved to see just how strong she was when she truly cut loose.

I still could have watched her for hours ... but, unfortunately, I had something else to pay attention to.

My opponent.

I rushed forward on my dragon, though I let a layer of wood cover me, hiding my real body to make him believe I was here as a dragon avatar.

He had already managed to push enough Divine Spark to create an avatar before I could arrive, which was a part of my plan. After all, it was far easier to steal from his Avatar than his real body — which was doubtlessly rushing forward as well.

“You dare invade my domain!” the necrotic god shouted, his voice exploding with a wave of necrotic mana, every undead that it touched empowered significantly. And, if we had an ordinary army, most of it would have been already dead with that one spell.

Enough to show that, fighting a god in his domain was no joke. If it wasn’t for the other part of my plan, I would have been already planning to escape after stealing as much as Divine Spark to turn it into deadly guerrilla warfare even with my advantage.

Instead, I responded in kind. “Do you think I would let you invade my Domain without a

consequence, you upstart dog!” my dragon shouted back, while I used it to pull the same trick.

The last time I had used that trick, it had left me damaged and injured, my body unable to handle the intensity. Luckily, since that time, my Endurance had increased several times, making that a momentary discomfort even as I channeled almost a million mana without a ward to assist me.

It destroyed another chunk of his army while countering his trick. “You dare challenge me!” he shouted as he cast a spell, and the destroyed zombies started floating up and merging, soon turning into a huge dragon, even bigger than mine.

Since I was playing the role of a narcissistic god, I decided to act true to that personality, and channeled mana into the dragon avatar, making it grow even bigger, using the nature mana to its best advantage.

However, just because I was acting like a narcissistic moron didn’t mean I had to be one. I used the incredible mana flare to conceal several other spells, the most important being a subtle detection ward to detect mana types, one that I cast into the Aether dimension to make its detection even more impossible.

Searching for anything other than necrotic.

I wanted to find out if there was an Eternal base here, one that could be conveniently destroyed during the battle, with all the information conveniently getting lost in the explosion.

However, even with my abilities, casting a detection ward that would search a whole planar fragment was not an instant task, especially when I was trying to keep its existence hidden.

I let my dragon rush toward the undead one, and they started the most pointless melee battle of all time, endlessly regenerating wood against endlessly recovering undead flesh.

Luckily, I had my complicated magic to keep me entertained...

—

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Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 58,410}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Eight

The battle of two dragons raged at the dark skies of the dead land, while Seldanna led our invincible treant army with great efficiency, leveraging their inherent advantage over the disposable zombies in great efficiency as she destroyed them.

Without the liches and death knights to support to army, she was even able to focus on transforming our breach point into a lush, raging forest, though this time, it didn't look like her usual beautiful, calm forests, but a raging chaotic piece filled with thorns and spikes, looking threatening.

She flooded the seeds with a shocking amount of mana, putting a drain even to the amount I was able to provide to her momentarily, but I didn't ask her to stop. It was a strategically dangerous commitment, creating a place for them to strike back. It was not the kind of strategy I would have committed.

But I didn't stop her either. If the plane was populated by humans or elves — or even any kind of living being — I might have insisted on maintaining strategic mobility to hit their weak spots and logistic weaknesses, but those concepts didn't apply to a bunch of unliving that didn't have any need other than necrotic mana.

Then, there was the other reason Seldanna had a great advantage. I noticed three liches approaching the battle on top of a bone dragon. With a raging cry of nature mana explosion, I threw the necrotic avatar in that direction. Then followed.

[+3,692 Purified Spark]

And, immediately grabbed and converted the Purified Spark they had. Another small but noticeable jump to my reserves. I didn't immediately use it to boost my stats, but instead used it to convert Primordial Aether I continuously grabbed from a small breach I maintained, using the new amount to quicken the process even more.

Focusing on converting the Aether and the Necrotic mana would have been even faster ... but that, I didn't want to commit to.

Not before I could find the location of the Eternals. The less information they gather, the better. I still didn't know the full range of their magical capabilities, but I had seen enough to be scared.

I continued to fight 'recklessly' as I threw around the necrotic dragon like a rag doll, to the point of almost pitying the avatar. Even as it desperately drained the ready necrotic mana to empower itself, he was not able to match the endless mana I was channeling.

Cheating was always fun.

I moved around, faster and faster, destroying more of his arriving leadership cadre.

[+3,190 Purified Spark]

War was a great tragedy, but not when our side was made exclusively of disposable pawns, and our enemies were exclusively undead monstrosities that were best erased from existence. I moved around, preventing the arrival of the stronger casters, while Seldanna continued to destroy the rest of the army and expand the forest even more.

However, regardless of the ease I was having, I didn't dare to slow down, continuing my aim to search for the inevitable Eternal base, desperate to find them before the real body of the necrotic god arrived to face me.

Unfortunately, that, I failed. At one moment, without a warning, I felt the enemy avatar getting stronger. Suddenly, I couldn't just throw it around while destroying his armies with ease.

The necrotic god was near, and I was nowhere near destroying him.

Sigh.

I turned my gaze toward the horizon, and soon noticed a lich, floating forward, easily mistaken for an ordinary undead if it wasn't for the suffocating waves of necrotic mana flowing out of him like an endless wave.

Not an easy enemy.

It was the time for the contingency, one that I was hoping not to use. I pumped my avatar with as much mana as it could hold for a moment, and let it sink into the ground and turn into a tree for a moment, radiating an explosion of nature mana, trying to trigger plant growth all around the plane while it desperately drew in the mana.

For a moment, it looked like I was trying to snatch control of the plane from the necrotic god.

As far as the distractions went, it was spectacular.

It was a stupid move that was impossible to make. I knew that, and my enemy knew that ... but the problem was, he had to understand why I would make such a stupid move despite its apparent uselessness.

He pulled back along with his avatar, his tendrils of magic extending from a distance.

I used the opportunity to teleport away, not wanting to waste the time I gained. At best, I barely had a minute. I used my mana-conversion breach to slip out of the plane, and immediately moved to another ward that had been attached to the surface of the plane.

One that is made of Tantric mana to resist corrosion. Unlike the giant ark bursting through the planar border, it was a secret operation, therefore allowing different attacks.

I moved around the planar border as quickly as possible, and created another breach, deploying a hundred more constructs to the mixture.

However, this time, they were not treants, but something I had forged. Essentially, they were empty sets of armors, filled with enough pseudo-HP to make them look like they were full, but without anything to heal, it was useless.

Ultimately, those suits of armor were wholly ineffective when it came to fighting when considering the amount of effort I had put into them and the mana I had spent in their construction...

However, still, they were a great distraction for two reasons. First, every suit of armor came with a set of metal wings, each layered with enough illusion spells to trick an actual god — hopefully.

And, second, each had its own mana storage filled with an incredible amount of Light Mana, which I had carefully converted using Mariel as a conduit. I could have skipped the whole armor fiasco and used the light mana as an explosive ward and be more effective.

But that wouldn't have scared the necrotic god just as much.

The light was devastating against necrotic mana.

Since I was already back on the plane proper, I just teleported to my fake-avatar. The Aether Dimension was still in an extremely chaotic state, making teleportation impossible for anyone else, but still, it was nothing compared to the true chaos of Primordial Aether.

I arrived just as the necrotic god realized the whole trick with the tree avatar was nothing but a distraction, and sent his own dragon avatar toward me while he started moving toward the border. Pity that he was too late.

If he had been just ten seconds faster, he would have destroyed my fake-avatar while it was still in its helpless tree form while it was uselessly trying to spread its reach. Unfortunately, I was in place, and just as he was about to reach me, I made the avatar transform once more, turning into the dragon, maintaining the roots...

Which suddenly jumped out of the ground and stabbed the necrotic avatar, greedily draining the Divine Spark that created it and passing it into me.

I had to admit. At that moment, I pitied my opponent. Probably under the 'kind request' of the eternal, he had turned every defensive asset into an offensive one for a very dangerous assault, only to be caught completely unprepared, and just as he was about to deliver the counterattack, he was caught in a deadly pincer.

Which cost him a very expensive avatar, which he didn't like much considering his cries.

[+731,931 Purified Spark]

I wondered what he would think if he knew his Necrotic Spark was not locked behind a ward but devoured.

Nothing good, I presumed.

Worse, before he could go to the border to deal with the 'angels', my avatar caught with his real body, and attacked.

I would have loved to say that I destroyed him ... but the reality was, it was the opposite. Even with the endless mana, I was channeling to the dragon avatar, the best I could do was to delay him, with every spell of his destroying a chunk of the avatar.

If it was actually empowered by Divine Spark, those blows would have dispersed that spark, weakening the avatar in quick order.

But, since I was a cheater, I just continued to pump the avatar with more and more mana, its nature spark core easily converting it into nature mana to regrow its limbs. At the same time, I made sure to move that core repeatedly to avoid the blows...

Even with that, it was a hopeless battle for that dragon avatar. Eventually, it would fall.

Unfortunately for my opponent, the keyword was eventually. With Seldanna attacking from one side, and the light constructs attacking from the other, he was rapidly losing his invasion forces, each second costing him another chunk of his forces.

I kept my attention on the dragon avatar, doing my best to maintain the situation. Whether in terms of weakening his immortal army, or expanding the grasp of nature, we were the ones making progress.

It was his turn to come up with a solution.

—

{Strength: 45 Charisma: 45

Precision: 45 Perception: 45

Agility: 45 Manipulation: 45

Speed: 45 Intelligence: 62

Endurance: 73 Wisdom: 45}

{Purified Divine Spark: 797,223}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Nine

The necrotic god decided to respond conservatively. He continued to attack my avatar directly despite its endless regeneration, while he sent his armies to the forest Seldanna was in the process of creating.

I didn't intervene, letting him commit his army there, happy that I could shift my attention to them and steal their divine Spark immediately. Hundreds of demigod-class undead were impressive, but not enough to take down Seldanna's avatar.

Though, once they mixed with the zombie army and attacked, I found myself revising that opinion. I had underestimated their effectiveness. The immediate presence of their god meant that their Divine Spark was empowered significantly.

And, it clearly had a bigger impact than I expected.

Luckily, Seldanna had already managed to create a huge forest that was strong enough to counter most of their necrotic mana tricks, giving her some kind of home-field advantage, and allowing her to successfully maintain her defense.

For the moment.

Her forward progress was stalled, under the focused magical assault of the necromancers, the treants finally started to fall. Just a few at first, but they managed that achievement without sacrificing any of their own critical pieces.

That caused Seldanna to pull back almost desperately, doing her best to defend every single treant and every inch she had.

Big mistake.

I wondered if it was her unfamiliarity with the large-scale warfare that triggered the mistake. However, it was also likely that it was her divine nature as the goddess of nature that was making her prioritize keeping her creation safe.

Either way, I didn't intervene, letting her make that mistake. Ultimately, it was a mistake that worked to our benefit in our current situation. It showed the necrotic god that his armies had been making progress, albeit slowly, giving him the confidence that he could be successful as long as he maintained that strategy.

I would love to face such a static assault. I had many ways of reversing that ... I just wanted to find the Eternals first.

I continued my desperate battle as I kept my attention on my fake angel constructs that scoured the far end of the plane, their light attacks doing wonders to not only destroy any undead they came across — which wasn't much as almost all of the forces was moved to our side to create an invasion army — but also permanently eradicated the necrotic mana that filled the plane.

The advantage of light mana over necrotic mana was unbelievable.

The former didn't hurt the necrotic god much, but the destruction of the necrotic mana was not a small problem. So, I expected him to send a similar force of liches and death knights to that side to take down the angels at a minimum ... though I was hoping for another avatar to deal with them, which would allow me to steal even more spark from him.

Yet, to my surprise, he neither created an avatar,, nor did he sent any of his army. I failed to understand the reason...

Until one of my detection wards finally discovered a movement toward the edge of the plane a concealment ward stopped working for a moment, and a man started flying toward the angel. "Stop," he shouted, easily blocking the automatic attack of the angel using some mind of the artifact-based magical shield.

At the same time, he decided to speak. "What are you doing! Are your god is willing to throw out the agreement," he declared.

His words were interesting enough that I had split my attention to control the nearest construct, even though it meant my dragon avatar fell to an even greater disadvantage.

As I used the construct to look at the unknown Eternal, I did my best to come to a decision. Should I try and risk capturing their ship, hoping that they didn't implement enough safety measures, or try to bluff them?

The former was the more attractive reward, and if hadn't failed to detect them until their mistake of revealing their presence, I might have chosen to take that risk. But, it was clear that, despite all my improvements, my magical capabilities weren't enough to unravel all their tricks.

Bluffing, it was.

“No, of course not,” I said, speaking through my connection. “It’s just that my exalted god received a better offer.” With that, the construct raised its hand, and cast a focused light spell.

“You dare to betray us,” the Eternal shouted in anger, his artifact blocking the attack relatively well, but he still flew back. “Do you think that anyone else could face our glorious organization,” he declared.

At the same time, their ship started to move. Their hiding capabilities were quite impressive ... but since I had already detected their location, following the movement was much easier compared to the alternative.

My construct acted like it didn’t realize that, and focused its attack on the sole eternal, who was safe from the attack. I could feel them getting ready for an attack. Which was not good news.

Certainly not while I was trying to deal with an actual god in his domain.

Luckily, my tricks were not over. I used all the constructs to attack him together. His artifact wasn’t strong enough to resist that ... but on that side of the plane, there was no mana storm to block teleportation. He teleported right back to his ship.

At the same time, I followed with another attack, one that was even stronger, cracking the planar border, a storm immediately invading as the plane was invaded by Primordial Aether.

At the same time, a horrible Primordial Storm under my control hit the ship, pushing it away. Since the ship was designed to resist the primordial aether successfully, it didn’t cause anything more than cosmetic damage ... but it pushed it out, out of the protective shadow of the planar border ... and just like that, they disappeared into the chaos.

It would take days for them to return even if they wanted to.

Of course, that attack was not for free, and it destroyed all but five constructs, the planar border still broken. I wanted to repair it immediately, but even that momentary split was enough to put my dragon avatar at an even greater disadvantage.

I needed more strength, even if it would make my job harder.

[All Stats +20]

[-600,700 Purified Spark]

[+5 Endurance]

[+4 Intelligence]

The capability increase from the wholesome improvement was considerable, allowing me to control my avatar with an even greater efficiency. However, it would still take a while for me to balance the situation enough to repair the border.

I didn't want the plane to be destroyed. I needed it to help Mariel.

However, I was still fearful about using my truly secretive tricks. What if Eternals had another ship. After all, they successfully managed to hide one. However, before I could make that decision ... I felt a strong movement of Divine Spark.

And another avatar appeared right next to the necrotic god. "Do you think I'll let you destroy my domain!" he cried in anger, his words enhanced my magic.

I wished I had time to slap my own head. For a moment, I forgot that I wasn't the only one that wanted to keep the plane intact. From his perspective, the angels were already defeated, and he had the advantage on the other two dimensions.

Then, it clicked me. Maybe he didn't even realize Eternals were banished successfully. If he noticed their departure, he might very well assume that they were busy counter-attacking the nature plane while we were focused on the battle here.

I wanted him to repair the border, but I didn't want to make it easy. "I'll destroy it if I can't own it," my dragon avatar shouted back, glowing with a threatening amount of mana, looking like a suicide attack.

Admittedly, it was not too different. The sudden empowerment consumed all of the stored mana I had, and I didn't have enough purified spark to convert it speedily enough to match him.

Luckily, I had a nice source of replacement right next to me. I charged toward the new avatar, the empowered dragon strong enough to avoid his panicked attacks.

And, I devoured his second avatar.

[+372,421 Purified Spark]

Not as strong as the first one, but definitely enough for me to recover my mana output. He started creating another avatar ... but this time, rather than splitting his attention between attacking my dragon avatar and creating the avatar, he kept his full focus on creating an

impenetrable defensive ward around the avatar.

I charged toward the ward, it bounced me off ... and I used that momentum shift to suddenly reverse direction, and slam his lich army from behind, taking down a notable minority of them while he finished conjuring his avatar and teleported it away.

[+144,021 Purified Spark]

And, I had another meal in the process.

I rushed toward his actual body once again once he finished with his task. "You're pushing your luck," he shouted, but this time, despite all his anger, his voice was much weaker.

Losing two avatars wasn't exactly trivial.

—

{Strength: 65 Charisma: 65

Precision: 65 Perception: 65

Agility: 65 Manipulation: 65

Speed: 65 Intelligence: 86

Endurance: 98 Wisdom: 65}

{Purified Divine Spark: 712,965}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Ten

“You’re talking a lot for a pathetic god of corpses and garbage,” I shouted back, once again using the Dragon Avatar to speak.

As far as insults were concerned, it wasn’t exactly the most creative one I could come up with, but it still made him attack me with full force. He was already angry after losing two avatars in a row. Insulting to the basis of his existence pushed his anger even further.

This time, rather than engaging him directly, I dodged the attack and moved toward the center of his domain. “Let’s see how you feel once I start destroying your avatars as well,” he shouted as he turned toward Seldanna.

Interesting statement, making me wonder whether he even knew he was facing two gods — supposedly — at the same time, or the Eternals hid that particular nugget of information from him.

Not exactly impossible.

I didn’t want him tangling with Seldanna. She was inexperienced enough in using her powers that even with her actual body, I wouldn’t expect her to win against another god on neutral ground. And, in the domain of another god, only as an avatar ... it would be lucky if she could last a minute.

Luckily, I had the perfect bait. “I wonder how you’ll feel when I use the breach to dump your Divine Spark into the Primordial Aether,” I shouted as I flew away on my dragon, hoping that the possibility of losing more than a million sparks was enough to galvanize him.

After all, he had no idea that his Divine Spark was long gone, purified, and some even turned into stats to empower me further.

“You dare!” he shouted as he immediately changed his direction and started chasing my dragon avatar, the bait working perfectly. A little predictable, but understandable. A million Divine Spark was an impressive amount, particularly considering it had been absorbed perfectly. If he lost it, even capturing two of our avatars wouldn’t make up for it — as Eternals used a very lopsided exchange ratio when it came to trading Divine Spark.

I made a show of trying to rush toward the breach that his avatar was trying to close, only to be knocked away with every attempt. However, ultimately, it was just a trick to have an excuse to

visit every part of his plane, my exaggerated mana attacks giving me to perfect cover to hide my detection spells.

Maybe I was a bit paranoid, but I wanted to make sure there was no other Eternal presence that could report some of my more suspicious moves. I had already pushed my luck enough with the secrets I revealed, even pushing my fake identity as an Ancient god to the limit.

Of course, I might have chosen a more reckless strategy if time was working against us, but that was not the case. With every second, his army got smaller while Seldanna continued to expand our nature reserve, creating a bigger hold for life in the domain.

At the same time, his reckless attacks drained quite a bit of the necrotic mana that was stored in the Aether dimension ... while a few secret wards I implemented there worked hard to turn the rest into nature mana in some warded packets, growing stronger with each minute.

Ready to go off the moment I confirmed the absence of the Eternals.

Of course, extending the battle meant giving a chance for the Eternals to return, but on that, I was a bit more confident. I had built a layer of detection ward over the planar border, made of tantric mana to make sure it could resist the ravages of Primordial Aether, ready to alert me for their approach.

And, in Primordial Aether, I was confident I could take any forces they would send to a relatively distant location like ours during an emergency — as far as that word has any meaning with the crazy dimensions of Primordial Aether.

Pity that I couldn't say the same for what they could bring to bear outside the main material plane.

But that was a concern for the far future.

For now, I just needed to defeat my first true divine enemy, which was a great achievement even if he was completely lacking in any true tactical sense, which was only partially about my secret abilities. He was too used to corpse-wave tactics to develop a habit of reading the enemy tactics. Worse, he was too panicked by the prospect of losing his Divine Spark to even question why I was spending hours repeating the same trick again and again.

I doubted that it would be the experience when I faced my next divine opponent. The more I fought against him, the more I started to suspect that his strategic ineptitude was one of the reasons the Eternals supported him.

After all, an unaware puppet was the best one.

I might have pitied his situation ... but necromancers, especially ones that had committed enough massacres to reach the position of divinity — whether or not with the help from the Eternals immaterial.

Half a day later, I had managed to scour the plane. I destroyed three wards that belonged to Eternals, though they were empty other than some raw resources and a few basic detection wards, clearly functioning more as listening posts and emergency hideouts.

More importantly, I was confident that I didn't miss anything else.

Without a warning, I teleported toward the bordering spot that was still being ravaged by Primordial Aether, a consequence of his split attention and the weakness of his avatar. Without a warning, I appeared next to the avatar, draining it aggressively.

[+225,918 Purified Spark]

At the same time, I triggered all the wards I had buried in the Aether dimension. “Now, Seldanna,” I ordered, and she started channeling all the mana she could to the planar border, rapidly turning its structure from necrotic to nature.

Naturally, that allowed even more Primordial Aether to invade the plane.

“Please stop, you're going to destroy everything,” he shouted. “I surrender.”

I ignored him, or his sudden attempts to escape right into the center of his domain, creating a new dimensional barrier around him with a far smaller domain.

Even going as far as completely pulling back from the domain, leaving it suddenly ownerless. And, just like that, the speed at Seldanna assimilated the plane hastened immensely, new forests appearing each second.

“What a disappointing ending,” I murmured. In his haste to protect himself from what he saw as the inevitable destruction of his plane, he had committed the worst mistake a god could commit. He locked himself in a small domain, surrounded by the domain of another divine.

Essentially, he put himself in the same position as Helga, but in that case, we had driven by a deep calculation based on Helga's abilities and the unique location of that domain.

His was fueled by poor strategy and cowardice. I had to admit, it ruined my mood to even

banter with him. Instead, I created a thick ward around his domain, one that made sure that he would stay pinned and couldn't go anywhere.

Especially since I didn't use nature mana, which necrotic mana could fight against in equal grounds; but my unique brand of light mana that was empowered with pseudo-HP, which necrotic mana could fight against about as efficiently as dry paper could fight against fire.

Another silencing ward to keep his pathetic begging hidden, I turned my attention to the rest of the domain. First, to Seldanna. "You can stop," I called as her avatar appeared next to me.

"Really. How about you let me take this plane, and we can find another for your angel," she said. Worse, it wasn't a demand, but a request while Seldanna did her best to look innocent and vulnerable, her avatar turning into soft, gentle flowers immediately.

Having a goddess as a lover was amazing ... but also came with complications. Buying gifts, for example, was far more difficult.

"How about I get you a new plane once I understand how the Eternals linked the planes together," I offered. Which was an unexpected gift from them. With their sudden departure, they didn't have the time to take back their artifact, giving me a chance to duplicate it.

Not easily, I guessed, but much better than trying to come up with a method myself.

"Deal," she said, her smile pressed against my cheek and disappeared, showing that, she might have exaggerated her displeasure slightly to earn a promise.

I had to admit, it was well played. She earned herself a punishment with that trick along with her gift — but I doubted that she would dislike it.

But, that was for the future. I teleported next to her. "Let's go," I said, then escorted her to the nature domain.

And, escorted an unconscious Mariel back.

It was time to awaken my cute headmistress.

—

{Strength: 65 Charisma: 65

Precision: 65 Perception: 65

Agility: 65 Manipulation: 65

Speed: 65 Intelligence: 86

Endurance: 98 Wisdom: 65}

{Purified Divine Spark: 938,885}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Light - Chosen 7.4

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Eleven

The idea behind helping Mariel from her coma was simple ... but not exactly easy. It required a lot of care and attention, as well as time.

It was why I started the process even before finishing up the necrotic god properly, instead, of letting the light ward constantly attack and weaken him further. Even locked in a small domain, it took a while to take him down, and I didn't want to keep Mariel waiting anymore.

I created a thick shell of mana around her as the first step, one that covered about a mile. However, this time, I created two layers. A thicker outer layer that would keep any interference from outside blocked.

And, an inner layer made of the most malleable pure mana I could create, perfect for her to change and manipulate as she needed once she started stirring back. With that protection layer complete, I turned my attention to the area that was covered by the ward, purifying every inch with great care, not leaving even a hint of necrotic mana to ruin the process.

Then, I brought Mariel into the center, and gently coaxed her into her shell, touching her Divine Spark gently with my mana, and led the smallest tendril which was a mixture of Darkness and Light out, slowly spreading through the tiny domain, doing my best to copy how Helga and Seldanna achieved the same aim.

I waited, holding my breath. A minute passed, then two minutes ... five minutes, making me wonder whether I needed to do something more.

Then, her Divine Spark started spreading. Slowly at first, but slowly picking up speed.

"Excellent," I murmured as I moved out of her domain. I still had several wards that allowed me to observe every minute change that was going on, but I had other things to do.

First, the enemy god. I teleported to the outside of his cage while at the same time, tapping into the Aether Dimension, using all the available purified spark to drain necrotic mana, converting it into the modified light mana, and flooding the ward.

Once the transformation was complete, gods were strong and resilient, especially in their own domains. Unfortunately, to my enemy, that wasn't exactly good news. It only expanded his suffering while I cut down his Divinity down bit by bit, until he ceased to exist.

Not in a glorious last stand, but with a pathetic whimper.

Giving me the most incredible bounty I had ever received.

[+4,491,152 Purified Spark]

I immediately channeled the most into my stats. Purified spark had its uses, but not without the necessary power to control it. As I received my new burst of power, I could feel my abilities reaching a new level. With all stats increasing, almost double, the combined effect was far more than just multiplying it by two.

[+50 All Stats]

[+20 Endurance]

[+15 Intelligence]

[- 4,282,460 Purified Spark]

It was a useful upgrade as I had a very tedious task at hand. Turning the plane into somewhere that Mariel could adapt as quickly as possible. Which was much harder to do for her than it was for Helga or Seldanna. Helga only had to create a tiny domain for herself, making her job easy.

And, Seldanna had both the heritage of the old Nature God that tried to possess her, and a huge spread of existing creatures, both elves and trees, that she was aligned well to use as vectors.

Mariel only had a ruined, dead plane still filled with zombies.

She was lucky that my abilities lent themselves to such a cleanup task particularly well, and the current spread of assets only made it easier.

First, I commanded our treant army to spread around the plane, even teleporting some of them to distant corners. Then I used the avatar I still had — diminished since I didn't need all that power — to trigger them.

First, transforming them into giant trees, then ordering them to flood the plane with their mana, triggering a sudden vibrant growth all along the plane, destroying the remaining presence completely.

However, as they pushed life into their surroundings, they started to lose their color, fading silently. I let them do so, intervening only when they were at the edge of collapsing. Even then, I didn't heal them, but kept them in that state. I had a plan for them, but I was hoping that it wouldn't be necessary.

It was a simple yet tedious work, one that took almost a week.

Meanwhile, Mariel managed to create a tentative bond with the small area I had created for her, but her coma was still a problem. Clearly, such a basic link wasn't enough to relieve the soul pressure. Maybe she would have been cured if I left her here for a few decades. It was a time that most divine beings treated as a momentary rest, but my perception hadn't been warped that much yet.

Not to mention, there was no guarantee the Eternal would leave us alone for that long. And, trying to defend her during an attack was far more dangerous than the little experiment I had.

I pulled all the Divine Spark I had from the main avatar and challenged the Nature Spark back to Seldanna. At the same time, I drained all the mana from the Avatar. The outer layers rotted with a rapid speed, falling apart before I gust of wing spread those pieces around to turn into fertilizer.

After the amount of mana it had been channeled through that wood, it made an excellent fertilizer.

All that remained of that giant avatar was a seed, one that maintained a tenuous connection with the near-dead forest around us.

At the same time, I grabbed a unit of new Divine Spark that Mariel slowly spreading into her new domain.

I named it Twilight Spark. The theme and the feeling it gave me fit it perfectly.

[+1 Twilight Spark]

Then, I moved to the center of Mariel's new domain and buried that seed there, gently leading the solo point of Twilight Spark I had taken from her. First, it crystallized, making the seed a Chosen. Then, very carefully, I spread the weak spark into a demigod soul, and at the same time, started feeding pseudo-HP and pure mana.

[-1 Twilight Spark]

Unlike the flood of nature mana, the combined treatment didn't allow the tree to suddenly sprout into a giant tree but barely allowed it to sprout. As it sprouted, the Divine Spark mixed into its structure further, reaching into the first step of godhood.

The same trick I had pulled with my God Forest, creating an unthinking, unfeeling divine vessel.

The perfect weapon for a goddess.

It took half a day of careful caring for the tree to reach a foot of length. At that point, Mariel's domain finally embraced it, her tendrils of mana touching.

I touched the connection where they melded, allowing Mariel to bond with it. Slowly, her Divine Spark started to flow to it, strengthening the budding tree. Its trunk turned into a dull, tainted silver color ... no, not tainted, I corrected a moment later, but shadowy. Like they were dancing at the surface, dulling and brightening repeatedly.

Similarly, the leaves turned into bright gray, but with dark streaks spreading through its structure, glowing and devouring light at the same time.

Fascinating, I thought even as made a temporary connection with the tree, and stole quite a bit more Twilight Spark. Luckily, the budding tree got strong enough to handle it.

[+57 Twilight Spark]

I used that spark to convert purified main into Twilight mana, which, assisted by my stats, was far faster than Mariel could have achieved with the same amount of Spark. Her small domain was filled with Twilight Spark, but it was just a start.

I teleported out, and started Twilight Spark to connect the god tree with the other trees that were about to die ... which was only possible because every single tree had originally been a part of that avatar, allowing the connection to be established successfully, but not easily.

I had to visit every single tree by myself and build the connections one by one, each taking a minute to successfully establish, and that was only with my most recent stat boost. Without it, it would have probably taken hours for every tree.

Even in its shortened version, ten thousand trees meant ten thousand minutes, it took a week without even a wink of sleep. But, it allowed her slowly strengthening Twilight God Forest to spread across the plane, allowing her to bond with it much faster.

Two more days.

And her eyes opened.

I was there, waiting for her.

“Good morning, sleepyhead.”

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 115

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 115}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

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GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twelve

“W-where am I ... the war ... this feeling,” Mariel murmured, the chain of questions fading as she felt herself dealing with the situation. Understandable, considering not only did she wake up in a completely unfamiliar location after a long pause, but also she woke up very slowly.

I didn't say anything for a moment, letting her process the moment. After all, she was a bonafide goddess, with all the additional power it brought along. Their transformation didn't exactly come with a full range of stats, more limited based on the conceptual basis of their transformation, but there was still a certain base increase in question.

“To answer your questions in sequence,” I said only when her confusion faded. “We're in a planar fragment that you're currently turning into your divine domain to somehow allow you to bond with two different Divine Sparks. The war was months ago, and it's already behind us, with serious interesting consequences. And, that feeling is probably the Divine Tool I had created for you, a forest that not only seed life across the plane, but also works entirely on Twilight Mana.”

“Twilight mana? What's that,” she asked, focusing on the question with the most immediate answer.

“I have no idea. It's what I have been calling the form of your new Divine Spark once Light and Darkness mana melded. How did that happen, by the way?”

“I ... I don't remember much,” she admitted reluctantly. “I remember defending the school against the beast wave, but then an undead horde appeared on the horizon. I decided to go and handle them before they could join the war, but when I went there, I saw nothing but weak zombies.”

“And, let me guess, that was when they hit you with a mysterious weapon, and you lost consciousness,” I guessed. It explained how the crown prince somehow managed to capture her ... and it also explained how she was still alive. It confirmed something that I had been suspecting for a while.

She was an experiment.

Not for the Eternals in general, as if that had been the case, they would have just captured her rather than relying on what they clearly thought to be their lessers. It was much more likely to be one of the high-ranking members, trying to hide things from the rest.

My guess. Either the angel with two types of mana that was responsible for the ambush, or his boss.

Either way, it explained the way they decided to get rid of me. They wanted to make sure I didn't ruin their experiment.

Too bad it backfired on them spectacularly.

It also explained everything that was going on with the undead. Everything was to make sure Mariel left the defenses of the Silver Spires so that they could bring their experimentation to the next stage.

It felt good for things to finally make sense.

"Well, yes," Mariel admitted, pausing a moment as she looked at me. Suddenly, she was angry. "You have been lying to me!"

It felt weird to be focused on the anger of a goddess. It felt like a pressure, suffocating and overwhelming ... or, it would have been if it wasn't for my recent experience, of taking down a god. After that, it was more of an interesting glimpse that allowed me to understand the difference between her spark and the necrotic one.

For one, the weight of it felt different. Not heavier, but more shapely, almost theatric, with the components of the light overbearing, while shadows danced ... though even as I thought that, I could sense that it was not the Twilight Spark, but the impressions from the previous form.

It would take a while for the true merger to stabilize. Decades without my help, but even with that, months would be an ambitious target.

I chuckled as I created my own pressure against hers. "Well, I didn't exactly lie. I just didn't mention that I wasn't the leader. Or, are you going to say that my organization hadn't been as strong as I promised? And, I did save your school several times."

"Well ..." Mariel stopped, realizing that, technically it wasn't a lie. I might have implied the existence of a bigger organization, but what I presented wasn't any weaker. It was even stronger. "You lied about your abilities," she said, but the moment she said that I could feel the shift. With her righteous fury robbed, what was left behind was the cute, socially incompetent angel that I was familiar with.

"So did you, unless I missed a long explanation about how you were using two opposing Divine

Sparks in a very delicate balance that could destroy a nice chunk of the plane if you made a mistake.”

“Well, you knew about it,” she said, but her argument lost quite a bit of weight. “And, your secrets were bigger.” However, as she wilted, I could see that her brand-new Divinity wasn’t enough to cure her social ineptitude.

Just like before, where her supposed tough exterior crumbled the moment her true self was revealed. Not to mention, this time, I had the advantage of the memories of last time. She blushed badly, which I took as permission to escalate the satiation into its fun portion.

“Maybe,” I said as I took a step forward without a warning, hugging her. All the critical questions were already answered, and the rest, she was smart enough to deduce. “Now, why don’t we skip a step and you admit the reason you’re acting cranky is you missed me.”

“Never! I could never miss a liar and a cheater like you,” Mariel answered, but her lack of conviction wasn’t hard to see.

She tried to push me away, but considering I didn’t even move an inch despite all her new Divine Might, it was difficult for her to claim that it was a determined push. I chuckled as I watched her move and shuffle, doing her best to create a bigger and more efficient outlook, giving me a chance to push things forward without escalating things any further.

It was a beautiful moment.

“Bastard. Let me go. All that time, no even knowing whether you’re dead or alive... “ she muttered, her already feeble pushes weakening even more.

I could have pushed her, but I waited, her hands slowly settling on my shoulders. “I ... I missed you,” she admitted.

“And I missed you as well, my sexy angel,” I answered, enjoying the suddenness of the blush that crept up her neck. It was good to see her sudden divinity didn’t cure her almost-crippling shyness. Her hands settled on my waist, while mine crossed her body a bit lower, and her wings wrapped around me.

And, whatever else that Twilight Spark triggered, I could say that the impact of it on her wings was beautiful. Her wings had always been soft and warm, but no matter what, there was a sense of sharpness that came from her mana nature.

The light was not exactly forgiving.

Twilight mana, on the other hand, didn't have those edges, making her hug even more comfortable. I could have stayed in this hug forever, but there was only one problem. I had more visceral plans for our meeting.

"Damn, this is comfortable," I murmured, deliberately acting soft, almost lazy. "I would have fallen asleep ... but I'm afraid that you'll molest me in my sleep again."

Just like that, the tenderness of the moment was gone. "J-jerk," she gasped, pushing me back once again, this time much harder, with hands safely on her hips, that didn't work.

"Why, am I lying," I said as I grabbed her hips tighter, squeezing hard enough to earn a moan. One that tempted me for more, so I leaned forward to steal a kiss from her elegant neck. She moaned again. "I distinctly remember your hands getting very adventurous, your hands exploring every part of my body."

"S-stop," she whispered, her blush intense enough to make me worry if it wasn't for her recent rise to Divinity.

"Why, I even remember the spell you cast on me to make sure I stayed asleep, and climbed on top of me with those hips..." I said as I let my hands dance on her ass, enjoying their firmness while she closed her eyes, shame dancing with arousal.

"Then, for some reason, I remember examining your wings, do you remember why," I said, teasing her about the position that followed. Admittedly, even now, I still cherished the memory of her back, her glowing silver wings spread wide as she hesitantly lowered herself and took me inside her for the first time.

"S-stop, please," she gasped shyly. "Please."

"Well, why don't you make me—" I teased her, which was all the goading she needed before she leaned forward, her lips sealing mine.

I liked her method of choice to silence me...

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{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Thirteen

I did nothing as Mariel sealed my lips with her searing kiss. I could have taken back control immediately, but after all the harrowing experiences she had gone through, she deserved to get a sense of control.

And, to be honest, the way her wings wrapped around my body was too comfortable to change, even when her fingers grabbed my hair painfully, squeezing helplessly as she ravaged my mouth with her tongue, the two sensations contrasting greatly.

I liked it.

As she continued to drink my lips with the desperation of a traveler lost in a desert, I let my Tantric mana infuse her body, mixing with her mana, finally helping her to quicken the bonding process. Now that I wasn't dancing on the blade's edge, that was much easier.

At the same time, I felt our bond getting stronger, her domain linking with my domains, enhancing the efficiency of my power just as what I had been experiencing with Intelligence and Endurance.

[+1 Wisdom]

[+1 Manipulation]

The double notification was a surprise. Wisdom, I understood more, as, despite all the sharp edges, Light was still tightly linked to life and healing, which linked to Wisdom.

Manipulation was a surprise, mostly because I didn't expect a double boost, but considering that, Darkness and Manipulation weren't exactly a difficult connection to make.

It was surprising, but ultimately, very helpful. Wisdom helped quite a bit when converting Mana natures, particularly when I was fighting against undead or mass healing ... and manipulation was even more useful as it allowed me to shape the mana much more finely.

A combination that would help me greatly ... but rather than thinking about those benefits, I focused on Mariel's hands, which were busy pushing my pants down.

"Someone is impatient," I murmured, fascinated by the expression of desire on her face as lowered herself.

“Shut up. It has been months,” she grumbled shyly as she stood up, while her white robe followed the opposite direction, and pooled around her legs. “Just let me do this ... I have been dreaming it for a while.”

With that, she jumped to my waist, her legs wrapping around my body tightly, just not as tightly as her walls clamping around my girth, enough to make me thankful for my high Endurance.

As she lowered herself ... I had to say, I was a bit disappointed. She was still amazing and beautiful, but the way she said that implied that she had a more interesting idea in mind than a simple position...

Then, her wings rose and fell once, making me swallow those words. She started flying, and since her legs were safely clamped around me, I was dragged along. “I ... I missed flying,” she admitted shyly as we rose to the skies, her hips dancing aggressively in contrast to her wistful tone.

Clearly, flying wasn't the only thing that she missed, but I didn't say anything. I looked at her eyes, enjoying that captivating brightness before I leaned forward to capture her lips, enjoying her taste.

She let out a chain of gasp as she repeatedly impaled herself with my length, while her wings picked up more and more speed. Our flight wasn't exactly comfortable, which was a choice. She could have easily used magic to fly a dozen different ways, but she clearly wanted to rely on her wings, each swing radiating mana as she bonded with her Domain even better.

Not that I was complaining. The jerkiness of our movement made her hip movements even more unpredictable, making our carnal dance more pleasurable as a result. She closed her eyes to enjoy her double sensation, the freedom to finally fly without being hunted mixing with her carnal joy.

And, as her joy rose, her defenses fell, which would have been devastating if I had any ill intent. Luckily for her, I just used the opportunity to hasten her bonding with the plane even more.

[+3 Wisdom]

[+3 Manipulation]

Her eyes stayed closed, her hips rocking wildly as the last scraps of hesitation disappeared. I might have assumed that it was about her new Domain ... but I knew for a fact it was not. Even before, she had shown just how wild she could get once she got going.

“My beautiful goddess,” I whispered.

“B-blasphemy—” she started before freezing. “No, this is not blasphemy, is it?” she muttered, as if she was just realizing the true implication of her transformation.

“No, it is not,” I answered. “With your domain complete, you’re an actual goddess. We just need to find you some worshippers. How do you feel about elves,” I said, enjoying her expression of shock. The following thoughtful expression, less so.

“What elves,” she said.

“Later. I have something more important to do first,” I chuckled as I grabbed her body and twisted until I was behind her, hugging her from behind.

“W-what are you doing,” she gasped, which was all she was able to say as I grabbed her wings, stalling her flight as I started fucking her from behind.

“Riding you properly, of course,” I said with a chuckle.

“I’ll — kill — you,” she gasped, though not at once with her moans ruining her voice as I repeatedly invaded her. I wondered if it was the indignity implied in the act of riding that angered her more, or the fact that I was preventing her flying.

Teasing her like this changed the nature of our earlier romantic mood. However, I didn’t want to stop the fun halfway just because she wanted to stop to think about the unimportant aspects ... like her Divinity.

She would have a lot of time to ponder on that once I left.

I kept holding her wings, using them as leverage to invade her wetness even more aggressively, each moan spectacular even as we fell, the ground coming close with a dangerous speed ... well, calling it dangerous was a touch excessive, as we had a lot of magical methods to slow us down ... and a collusion was hardly dangerous.

Yet, that didn’t change the feeling of danger that we drove from the sensation of diving, mixing incredibly with the carnal side of the pleasure. Just as we were about to hit the ground, I exploded in her and shifted my hand, forcing her to pull before we hit.

Challenging with every inch of her body, including her wings, trembling with pleasure. She slowed down and landed us on a hill, though with a little adjustment so that I was on my back.

“Now, it’s my turn to ride,” she said with a raspy tone while her hips started to dance.

The movement of her hips was amazing, as were her moans that echoed off the empty landscape.

The landscape itself wasn’t as beautiful. Other than the Divine Trees with their silver glow, there wasn’t a lot to look good on the landscape.

While she was busy riding me, I pulled the Twilight Mana around us, creating an emptiness for a moment before I flooded the same area with Nature Mana, triggering the growth, replicating the same trick I had done with the trees.

Without the necessity of carefully balancing it with Mariel’s condition, it was much easier. Just like that, the bare hills turned into beautiful meadows. Mariel might be passionate enough to ignore the ugliness of her domain ... but she certainly appreciated the change.

Showing it by her hips getting even faster, my grunts of pleasure mixing with her moans, her tits dangling beautifully in the prison of my palms with every shake, her silky wetness enveloping my presence deeper and deeper.

“Truly a divine experience,” I said as a chuckle escaped my mouth. She sped up even more, fast enough to kill a man who couldn’t comfortably fight against gods.

“Shut up and fuck me,” she said as she leaned down and kissed me, her hips not skipping even a single beat as she showed her appreciation with her body.

It was the best way to be silenced, her tongue burying itself into my mouth once more as her hips gyrated, her tightness increasing even more while putting every single part of my body on high alert. Her nibbling drove my pleasure even higher.

Soon, her tightness turned into an inescapable prison as she started to shiver, her wings glowing beautifully as she orgasmed, which triggered one of my own as she collapsed against my chest, moaning and gasping.

Her connection with her domain got stronger.

[+3 Wisdom]

[+3 Manipulation]

“I ... I missed you, bastard,” Mariel whispered.

“I missed you too, my sexy angel,” I answered, responding with a kiss, letting her recover.

After all, we still had a plane to repair, and a domain to bond completely ... the fun way.

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Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge}

Chapter Three Hundred Fourteen

“I can’t believe you’re going already, you bastard,” Mariel said.

“Oh, a month wasn’t enough. A month that we spent wrapped around each other, I might add,” I answered with a chuckle as I kissed her, enjoying her blush.

“That doesn’t count, it was just to repair the plane and seed it with twilight beings,” she answered with a beautiful blush.

“Oh, there was seeding alright,” I said, enjoying the crass joke mostly because of her scandalized expression. She was willing to experiment in some really fascinating positions during the month we spent together, but a little low-brow humor was enough to dismiss and unbalance her successfully.

“S-shut up,” she said even as she blushed.

“Why don’t you make me,” I said, and she did so by slamming her lips against mine, extending another kiss. One that I had to pull back soon, because it was almost time for the beacons to flare, and I wanted to start traveling as soon as possible. “So, a month wasn’t enough,” I said with a chuckle.

“Not even close,” she answered. “Not with all the times that you disappeared to visit your elf whore ...”

“Hey, get along well. You need each other to defend yourself successfully in case the wards I set up get breached,” I warned. It wasn’t too much of a surprise that they didn’t get along well, especially since I couldn’t just arrange a threesome to make things fun. They were bound to their own planes, and avatars were poor substitutes for a threesome.

Luckily, the month wasn’t just a waste. Other than helping the two bond with their planes even stronger, I was also able to break down the artifact the Eternals used to bond the two planes together, enough to replicate its function with a ward before it broke down ... though it did cost me quite a bit of purified spark to constantly replenish the mana.

As a result, the planes ended up getting locked together, which meant they could support each other in case of an attack. Hopefully, it would be enough, especially since they were well-matched against the undead, and I hoped that they would be able to resist any other attack together.

More importantly, Mariel was able to build another darkness ward that somehow hid the planes. It was expensive in terms of mana ... but considering I had integrated a conversion ward to both planes and given them far more mana than they could otherwise use, that didn't matter much.

Of course, leaving some Purified Spark with them was risky. If the Eternals attacked successfully, there was a chance they would be able to acquire some, taking away my strongest advantage.

All things considered, it was a risk I was willing to take.

"Now, one last kiss before I leave," I said, sharing another heated kiss while her naked body rubbed against mine, her wings a blanket around me.

With that, I teleported, once again into the Primordial Aether. And, since I had already said my goodbyes to Seldanna, I moved away from the shadows of it, waiting for the signal from the beacons.

As I waited, I looked around, realizing Primordial Aether didn't feel as chaotic and in comprehensive. It wasn't exactly like the normal world, still a mixture of a haze and a maze, but this time, trying to find my way felt like trying to remember something while drunk.

Out of reach, maybe, but along with the realization that, once the mist of alcohol faded, everything would be clear.

My latest stat increase was certainly convenient.

With that increased capability, the moment I felt the signal of the beacons, I started moving in that direction ... far faster than I had hoped. More importantly, as I traveled, I was able to sense the location of the main material plane. Nothing concrete, just a giant shadow in the mist.

Enough for me to travel the rest of the way even without the beacons, allowing me to complete the rest of the travel in just two days.

I was getting more and more comfortable in Primordial Aether ... which was enough to give me hope.

Once I arrived at my destination, I found it surrounded by Elementals once again, each desperate to invade. I was almost sure that their desperation was about the System ... but exactly how, I had no idea.

I wanted to poke that particular point, but unfortunately, I didn't have too much time.

With my path familiar, sneaking back into the plane and teleporting across had been easy. My first destination was Silver Spires. From a distance, I could see that Silver Spires had gotten far bigger than I expected.

With almost ten times people living directly, and nearby, I could see a few new towns under construction. The change was interesting.

Just not as interesting enough to delay my meeting with Helga. I teleported again...

"Hello, love," I said as I appeared behind Helga, hugging her. I didn't surprise her — I couldn't, not in her domain — but I still managed to hug her from behind.

She twisted in my arms until we were face to face, kissing me aggressively. "I missed you, you bastard," she murmured as she clamped against my lips, not asking a single question as her legs wrapped around my waist.

And, she was supposed to be the Goddess of Knowledge.

How amusing.

Pity I couldn't make that joke to her, not with her lips doing her best to steal all my attention ... and succeeding. I slammed her against the nearest shelf, the books raining on the floor even as I ripped her dress hungrily.

She didn't seem to have any problem with that, considering she was repeating the same action on my dress. As she pulled, I absentmindedly noted that she was stronger physically ... nowhere near me, but enough to match a mediocre fighter.

It was good to see that even a conceptual Spark like Knowledge gave her some improvements. It might help her in a dangerous situation.

More importantly, it would help her be even more active in our private fun times ... a fact she realized as well if the way she crouched down in front of me with great enthusiasm was any indicator.

"Wow, someone is in a hurry," I commented as I watched her kneel down.

"Yes, because I can't keep you for long while there's a civil war going on," Helga said. "Five minutes, then you're going to go to the capital and make sure everything is in order," she

ordered.

“Oh, I love it when you start ordering. Being a goddess suits you,” I said, enjoying her blush ... especially that shy reaction didn’t prevent her from leaning forward to capture my girth between her pouty lips and started giving a blowjob that shocked me with its aggressiveness.

She pulled back once my shaft hit the entrance of her throat and looked up. “What, I missed you,” she said, somehow still shy enough to be cute even as she returned to the task at hand.

Her hands planted behind my thighs as she pulled me forward, giving me the best blowjob I had ever got. Passionate and wild, yet still with a pattern. Almost like a dance.

Suddenly, I smirked. “You used your spark to design everything, like a dance, right?” I declared.

She said nothing, but the sudden pause and the glowing blush showed that I was very accurate. I didn’t say anything else, just enjoying her aggressive yet elegant blowjob in silence, not ruining her beautiful surprise any further.

I just looked down, enjoying her beautiful nude body while she did her best to make my shaft disappear completely in her throat, ignoring the temptation to grab her beautiful blonde locks.

It was her gift. It would be rude to ruin it like that.

I just stayed in place, enjoying as her head bobbed up and down around my hardness. Her eyes stayed open, locked with mine to give me a treat of their blue depths ... depths that shone with supernatural intelligence.

She soon picked up the pace, taking me even deeper down her throat a few times before she stayed there, wrapping my legs ... and gulped, the sudden tightening enough to trigger me. As she choked around my dick, I moaned, filling her throat.

“So, how was it?” she murmured after she swallowed every last drop and pulled back, then proceeded to trace with her finger to catch any of my seed that may have slipped while she was distracted.

“You’re a goddess, indeed,” I murmured as I lifted her up, and pressed a gentle kiss to her cheek. “Pity that I have to go to the capital immediately.”

“Yes, a pity,” she answered while she caressed my chest, then turned and walked away with a very deliberate sway on her hips.

Even as I fixed my clothes and teleported away, I couldn't help but imagine just how else she was going to use her spark in the bedroom. Too bad I had a civil war to navigate before I could get that answer.

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{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

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Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

—

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel}

Chapter Three Hundred Fifteen

The moment I arrived at the capital — teleporting nearby and then flying several miles rather than teleporting directly to make sure I stayed unnoticed — I understood why Helga asked me to hurry up. The city was surrounded by a large army, all carrying the personal flags of the second Prince, while the capital sported the flags of the third Prince.

No sign of the crown prince and the fourth prince.

Interesting, I thought even as I mixed into the surrounding army, curious about the exact situation.

A few questions were enough for me to get a general sense of what was going on. Apparently, the crown prince attacked the estate of the fourth prince, triggering a fight that cost the life of the fourth prince. There was some gossip about a lost artifact with no further explanation.

More interestingly, before the crown prince could even return to the capital, he mysteriously disappeared, with the second and third princes blaming each other for assassinating him.

I had a better idea about his fate ... especially since I could detect several Eternal agents moving around in the army, all disguised as ordinary soldiers and servants, though nowhere near as hidden as they believed themselves to be.

There were too many of them to actually be about the capital ... and their role didn't justify them. Giving me a better idea.

The Eternals — at least the group that was using Mariel as an experiment — finally realized the crown prince lost her. I wondered if they killed him.

I hoped not. I preferred to take revenge directly.

A twenty-minute walk around the military camp was enough for me to notice almost thirty Eternal agents, even the weakest above level forty, with decent stats.

It was fascinating just how little I felt threatened by them.

Of course, that was not the only change. Such an opportunity was a chance for the nobles to throw their support behind the winner. The number of the flags showed that the most believed it would be the second prince that would be victorious despite the fact that the third Prince held the capital.

Ultimately, however, I ignored most political nonsense. I didn't care much about who would be the Emperor. Why would I, when I could easily destroy them if they really pushed me.

No, I cared about exactly what the Eternals were doing, and just how many agents they had in the city itself. I needed to sneak in.

I could have easily teleported, but it was almost certain there was a stronger mage that could catch the fluctuations. Teleporting was not exactly subtle, especially since the capital activated its magical protections.

Luckily, I didn't need to wait for long. There had been a sudden magical attack from the army to the city, followed by a regiment attacking to the walls. It was more of a threat than something that could actually work, but it was enough for me to mix with them ... then, change into the colors of the defending army.

Things were much easier with my improved stats.

The capital was a mess. People looked shocked, angry, and hungry. And, while I pitied them, I couldn't do anything.

Not with the number of Eternal agents I could count, their numbers increasing as I got closer to my blacksmith. Not exactly good news, especially since the increase was too significant to be coincidental.

Once I arrived, I found a dozen of them surrounding the blacksmith, along with a regiment from the royal army. The wards were activated.

More importantly, from such a close range, I could finally feel a presence, one that was familiar despite all the differences, reminding me of flames, forges ... and chains.

Oeyne was here.

I used one of the secret entrances I prepared to sneak inside, soon arriving at the garden. Not too far away from me, there was a group of higher-ranking apprentices I talked was speaking. "Enough of this nonsense. I beg your leave to depart from our usual agenda and for once, think clearly. We have an opportunity here. Let's use it."

There were fifteen of them. Some of them nodded at the declaration. A few muttered things under their breath. The speaker ignored them, clearly treating this as an opportunity.

“What, support the second prince. After he betrayed our master. No, we need to take down the wards and join the third prince. With all the weapons we have in storage, they have a chance to change the tides of war. We will be heroes, and not betray our master.”

“Why do we care about a dead man,” the speaker responded, clearly comfortable before crowds. Yet, I would have ignored it if it wasn’t for one thing.

He was another Eternal agent, his soul space making it clear, making me wonder exactly what his plan was. Not the siege, certainly.

Probably Oeyne’s presence.

Well, it was in vain to hope that Oeyne could actually sneak in without being noticed. She was hardly the subtlest person imaginable. I had been hoping that she was someone else with her that could guide her somewhat, but that turned out to be not the case.

At least, it wasn’t as bad as it could be. I would have been far more afraid before my latest trip ... but now, not only do I have the necessary stats to be confident in escaping, but also the Twilight Spark to generate darkness mana as necessary — at least its hiding function.

However, I still walked around, them, disguised as an ordinary servant, keeping an eye on their discussion. Just because I could escape didn’t mean I wanted a chase. I rather disappear easily. Or at least, understand what was going on.

So, I watched as he continued to unroll his speech, talking about the direness of their situation and how it was important to allow the second prince to the capital. However, as he spoke, I could see exactly where he was looking.

Inside the main building, where Oeyne was.

Their plan wasn’t particularly complicated. They were either aware of Oeyne from the beginning, or noticed her once she started moving toward the capital. However, rather than capturing her, they followed, hoping clearly that she would lead them to Mariel.

And, since no one tried to contact her, they started acting in a way that hoped to force our hand without revealing their presence.

A good plan. Too bad they relied on a bunch of wildly inaccurate assumptions.

I cast a detection spell, targeting Oeyne’s surroundings. The first thing I noticed was several

detection wards around her, ready to catch any kind of magical communication to alert her minders, but they missed one thing.

They linked their spells to the main ward. It would have been a good idea if they could decipher the tricks buried in it ... but with their reliance on the skills, there was no chance for them to understand even a fraction of the structure I had developed together with Helga.

Just like that, their web of detection fell into my hands, giving me all the information I needed while depriving of them the same.

While the spy continued to give his speech, I examined Oeyne. She was healthy and moving. She was currently in one of the private forges, crafting an exquisite dagger, far better than anything she could earlier, magic and metal shaping under her will.

She was utterly relaxed, clearly unaware that she had four Eternal assassins ready to intervene, and a team of twenty not too far away.

Clearly, after losing Mariel due to their desire to maintain deniability, they were determined not to repeat that mistake.

I almost pitied them. Their numbers might have represented a challenge before. But right now, on my home turf.

The speech went on, but I left it behind and moved forward, easily keeping myself hidden both from the curious eyes, and their magical detection methods. Soon, I was in the same room as Oeyne, the sight of her dusky skin covered with sweat as her hammer danced rapidly.

I wanted to hug her immediately, but before, there were things that needed to be done.

First, I created a new ward for the room, one that would not only block any curious magical detection spells, but also fake the result to show Oeyne was still alone and forging. I didn't want to be interrupted.

Second, I cast a diagnosis spell on her, checking her soul space. Just like I expected, her System was gone, replaced by a new Divine Spark, one that could easily be defined as Forging. She was in the process of bonding with it, but she was still somewhere between the demigod and goddess stages.

Still, her status was stable, there was no danger ... and our privacy was assured.

A perfect reunion.

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{MINIONS

— —

GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel}

Chapter Three Hundred Sixteen

I decided to greet Oeyne in a fun way. A wave of my hand, and the mana gathered around her, which rushed into the metal lying around her, turning into chains to clamp around her arms and legs.

I was ready to stop if she actually panicked, but her response surprised me. "Finally, you're here," she simply said, showing that she was very quick to recognize me.

"Wow, what was quick recognition," I said as I chuckled, approaching even as I made the chains turn her toward me, enjoying her beautiful face. She said nothing, just opened her mouth happily as I kissed her, her arms still immobile.

"I recognize that shoddy technique to bypass the need for proper forging everywhere," she said, her smile cheeky.

"Oh, really," I said as my hands slipped to her hips, enjoying the way her expression shifted as she caressed her ass through her leather pants. "Someone is looking for another reason to be punished."

"A-another," she stammered, surprised at the statement. "What do you mean, another reason?"

"Well, you didn't realize the Eternals are using you as bait for their trap. I think that deserves proper punishment, don't you think?"

At first, a flash of panic went through her face, but the moment I tightened the chains around her body, the flash disappeared just as quickly. She recognized that, if I could feel free to tease her, it couldn't be too serious. "Yes, punish me," she whispered. "I deserve it."

"Whatever I want?" I asked.

"Whatever you want..." she responded, her voice begging for it.

"Good," I said as I waved my hand, and suddenly, her chains melted, and she ended up on her knees ... a great loss, considering her physical abilities were much greater compared to the amount she had when she still had the System.

Her own form of spark seemed to be improving her physical capabilities far more than I expected.

“W-what,” she stammered, shocked.

“Since you’re happy with any punishment, you don’t mind waiting until we deal with the Eternals, do we,” I said as I presented my hand to help her stand up.

She slapped it away. “You’re a right bastard, you know that, right?” she grumbled, her frustration only made me chuckle more. It was amusing to see Oeyne focus more on her pleasure than the danger ... but hardly surprising.

Oeyne was an excellent, passionate blacksmith, but apart from that, she only had her pleasures. Those pleasures were only gambling and alcohol before we met, and sex was added after — no doubt because she never had someone who could properly dominate her as she enjoyed.

Ultimately, however, she had very little concerns about the strategic aspects of the world ... so, even the mention of an Eternal trap didn’t faze her. She was clearly happy to take clues from me without even questioning the exact status.

A dangerous combination of trust and carelessness.

No wonder the Eternals were able to find her.

“So, tell me everything that happened,” I said, happy that, finally, I had a choice to question someone about the events of the attack. Helga and Mariel were unable to answer that question since both had been unconscious due to the situation.

“Should I start from the battle,” she asked. I nodded, and she started giving an extended breakdown of the battle itself. Apparently,, Mariel had displayed a very effective battle performance before she had been taken down by a mysterious artifact and disappeared ... which was probably used by the crown prince.

Helga had fallen about the same time, while she was trying to build a ward to defend them.

“Then, the princess dragged her away, but I wasn’t able to pay much attention, because it was when I felt some kind of energy flooding me. It felt weird, like the satisfaction of completing a very complicated set of armor ... but at the same time, flames of a volcano.”

“The technical term is Divine Spark,” I cut in.

“Sounds fancy,” she answered. “Anyway, as that hit me, I felt distracted for a moment and lost connection with the System, but for some reason, I got even stronger.”

"I'm guessing it wasn't enough," I suggested.

"No, not even close. The enemy was simply too crowded. I was near the walls, and I managed to get away, but it was a close call," she said.

"Any idea about the rest?" I asked.

"Some of them," she said. "I saw the librarian getting captured by a few robed figures, but before I could go help her, they teleported. I don't have a clue who they are, though."

"Most likely the Eternals," I answered. "And, even if they are not responsible, I'm sure they know who. The other?"

"I remember seeing the princess on top of an emerald dragon, but when the same robed figures appeared them, they disappeared through a multicolored gate..." Oeyne explained.

Not exactly bad news, as it implied they were able to avoid being captured. The problem, I had absolutely no idea where they might have been.

The princess had the ability to conceal herself with Darkness Spark, and Janelor was a dragon with the ability to travel through the Primordial Aether unaided.

They might be anywhere, and I had no clue.

"How about Cornelia and Marianne," I asked, knowing that she was familiar with them thanks to Helga keeping everyone connected after my disappearance.

"They, I have no idea," Oeyne answered. "Marianne, I don't have the slightest clue ... but I remember seeing some kind of battle where one side had been using a lot of flame attacks. However, before I could go there, it had been gone, leaving behind a scorched waste."

I asked several follow-up questions about the situations, but unfortunately, Oeyne was not a mage, and the information she could provide was extremely limited in this context, even with all the follow-up questions that we asked.

"I think this is the best we could get," I finally admitted as I stopped asking questions and waved my hand, creating a large couch to sit on. There was no point pushing Oeyne with too many questions and ruining our reunion. Ultimately, she confirmed that Janelor and the princess were likely in good condition, and gave a clue about the potential location of Titania. Combined with her own safety, it was far better than I could have hoped.

It was frustrating not to have any clue about my lovely healer and angry fire mage, but at least, even with our connection diminished, I could feel that they were alive ... just like I could feel Aviada was still alive.

Not ideal, but still far better than some of my fears.

I sat down on the couch I conjured, and Oeyne followed, hugging me tightly. "So, what's the plan now?" she asked.

"We need to stay here a while and understand the plans of the agents around us. For now, they seem to be happy to stay in the background while searching."

"But why?" Oeyne asked. "They are so strong already. What exactly could force such a strong organization to stay on the defensive?"

"The other members of the same organization, of course," I answered. "It's clear that not all of them are willing to support whatever experiment that was going on with Mariel. It can be to our advantage."

"How exactly?" Oeyne asked as she hugged me even tighter, showing that she was less concerned about my answer, and more about enjoying our closeness ... a bit too much, even, her body rubbing against mine subtly yet steadily.

I acted like I didn't notice her 'subtle' trick.

"We're going to force their hand," I said. "I'm going to leave —" I started, and her arms immediately tightened, and returned to the town officially, acting like I had managed to get away from the hands of the fourth prince. Since one of their agents is already talking about going to the side of the second prince, it'll give me an excuse to deal with them."

"Interesting," Oeyne answered, which was hardly a compliment, considering her expression was already getting glazed, and one of her hands sneaked down her shirt under her leather apron, unbuttoning her shirt.

Somehow I thought that she was being subtle. No wonder the Eternals easily found her after her escape.

"I know. Challenging them directly has some dangers, but it'll work. Though, maybe I should just go and challenge them one by one to show them my power," I followed up, deliberately giving a nonsense answer.

“Whatever you think is the best,” she said as she pulled her hand under her apron, her dusky caramel cleavage looking far more alluring.

Under different circumstances, I would have punished her even worse ... but after such a long separation, I decided to be merciful.

“You’re really pushing your luck,” I said as I grabbed her hair, pulling hard.

She just moaned enthusiastically, and I sealed her lips with another kiss...

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel}

Chapter Three Hundred Seventeen

Oeyne moaned into my mouth as I kissed her aggressively, giving her exactly what she needed. I was tempted to quicken her bonding process with her Divine Spark, but after a momentary consideration, I decided against it.

I wasn't entirely sure about the full range of methods the Eternals possessed, and I wasn't ready to reveal my hand to improve Oeyne's merging while she was holding a position where she could be easily caught.

So, instead of staying focused on the magical side of things, I focused on the physical aspects of our fun. Another flare of mana, and her hands were bound behind her. She tried to break them ... but even with her increased strength, they didn't budge.

There were benefits to near-infinite mana.

"Oh, don't tell me great Oeyne is afraid of a little magic," I teased her between kisses, knowing she enjoyed the mocking just as much as her helpless position.

"Coward. Why don't you show me exactly what you're capable of," she answered, already getting in the mood.

"As long as you can handle a little pain," I said with a chuckle as I tightened the hold even more even as I grabbed her leather apron, ripping it as easily as it was paper, leaving her only wearing her shirt ... a shirt she had already unbuttoned, revealing her beautiful breasts.

"Bring it on—" she moaned, which was interrupted by a slap to her beautiful breasts, making her moan desperately.

"Oh, that's it? A little pain, and you're not even able to finish your sentence," I mocked, even though I was very much aware it was not the pain that made her pain ... well, at least not directly.

"Arrogant bastard —" she moaned, once again interrupted by another moan, this time by a twist of her nipple leaving her equally helpless. Fascinatingly beautiful, almost as beautiful as the pained gasp that followed when I forced her off the couch and onto her knees without a warning, her magical chains extending to her legs to make sure she couldn't get free.

She tried to free herself, but no matter how strong her new Divine Spark-enhanced body was, it wasn't enough to break through my magical restraints with physical force.

I let her struggle as I conjured a blade, carefully cutting every piece of clothing she wore while she struggled against the bindings, each helpless moment making her turn even more desperate and aroused.

“Feel free to beg for help if you’re feeling distressed. I’m sure someone will bother to save you,” I teased.

“Never,” she whispered back throatily. “If I’m defeated, I deserve my punishment.”

I chuckled as I grabbed her chin, and raised her head. “You deserve it indeed,” I said as I kissed her once again, enjoying the way her tongue danced ... getting more and more desperate each second, clearly wanting me to continue. “Maybe I should leave you like this and leave. A day or two like this should be an excellent punishment.”

“N-no,” she said, shivering in real fear, clearly not ready for it. Certainly not after such a long time apart. “Please.”

Luckily for her, I had no intention of doing that either. It would simply be mean. “Why don’t you show me exactly what are you willing to do to get away from it, then,” I said as I pushed down my pants, revealing my erection.

“Whatever you want—” she started, only to be interrupted again, this time physically as I pushed forward hard enough to invade her throat. Happy with the sudden interruption, her tongue danced even as I grabbed her head, assisting her with the movement of her head, each push bringing her closer to a climax with a shocking rapid speed.

Her happiness with the rough treatment was obvious from the way her tongue danced despite the challenging situation, swirling around my girth repeatedly. It earned a grunt from me even as my hand tightened around her hair. She hadn’t bothered to shape it up while forging, keeping it in a simple ponytail, which allowed me to pull it easily to use it as a handle.

Her beautiful bosom heaved repeatedly as I invaded her throat mercilessly, going deeper and deeper into her throat. “Divinity suits you,” I said even as I felt our connection getting stronger once more ... and this time without an external System as a bridge.

Though, I could feel that there was a difference between her connection and the others, it was merely a flicker compared to the bonfire of the others.

The reason wasn’t hard to discover. Her power. She didn’t even properly complete the first step to Godhood, let alone actually establish her domain ... and the difference from it was incredibly

different.

Even as I enjoyed her throat, I wondered what would be the better choice for her. A domain that was similar to Helga's, where she could just focus on her craft with little responsibility or a full domain.

However, as I looked down, watching her enthusiastic expression, and compared it to earlier where I discussed the potential strategies against the Eternals, the answer was clear.

A small domain was the best for her ... and even then, I was afraid that I would still be the one to truly manage the other blacksmiths. Luckily, unlike Helga, whose Spark was very difficult conceptually, Oeyne's Spark of Forging was ... for the lack of a better term, straightforward.

With that small challenge resolved, I decided to turn my attention to the next stage. I continued to push forward, invading her throat as she choked and gagged, enjoying her punishment.

She was magnificent.

"That's enough playing," I suddenly said as I lifted her and threw her on the couch, her face burying against the soft surface, her plump ass ready for my attention. And, since her arms were still bound behind her, I had a perfect leverage to hold.

"Yes, fuck me," she moaned immediately ... once again pushing her luck. She was lucky that I missed her after such an extended forced separation.

I grabbed her bound hands with one hand, and put the other on her hips, enjoying her excited shivers. It was good to see I wasn't the only one that missed her.

I sank down slowly, enjoying her naked wetness as she clamped around. "Oh, I missed you," I whispered as I disappeared halfway inside. With her face buried, I wasn't able to see her face, but I didn't need that to read her reaction ... particularly her charged moan.

"I missed you as well—" she tried to respond, but I chose that moment to bury myself even deeper. I rather have her moans showing me just how much she missed me. They were far more honest. She just moaned, her voice thick with desire.

My own grunts mixed with her moans, and soon, another instrument joined the mix. My hand, landing on her ass, spanking repeatedly...

It was a good feeling, to ping her down to let our bodies get familiar once more, impaling like a

steady warrior. She didn't say anything, already too far gone in pleasure, her moans trembling, her breathing uneven.

A few more seconds, and she climaxed.

However, that didn't make me stop. On the contrary, I was able to push even more. Her expression twisted with pleasure, but despite her overwhelming pleasure, she was able to handle it easily.

Understandable, as forging was traditionally connected with long hours of work, which came with the advantage of endurance. Not as much as the other benefits, but still enough to allow her to resist the overwhelming pleasure.

"Oeyne, are you sure you don't need rest. You look exhausted," I said, teasing her even as I drilled her aggressively.

"N-not at all. Feel free to continue," she said, unable to keep her voice from trembling. After all, enduring the endless pleasure was one thing, but hiding the impact of it was something else.

"Good, then you don't mind discussing our plans for the future," I said, not even slowing down as I pushed her toward another climax.

"O-of course not," she answered. Her answer didn't surprise me, as she had always been stubborn.

"Good..." I said, and started giving her a very lengthy explanation about Divine Domains and how they could be established. Not exactly a simple topic to understand even under the best of circumstances ... but the fact I continued to drill her without a pause all the while made it even more challenging. "You understood that, right?" I said.

"O-of course," she whispered, her voice more certain than I expected ... but then I realized that I might have been mistaken about the improvement from her status, somewhere between Demigod and a Goddess, and unlike Mariel that had been fighting to contain it, she had no problem.

Helga had problems as well, but considering her irregular type of spark, it was easier to guess exactly what had gone wrong.

It gave me hope about Cornelia, Marianne, and Titania, as all three had standard skill load-

outs, similar to Oeyne.

“Since you understand the choice you have in front of you, I can leave and start on the other parts of the plan. I hope it’s alright,” I said.

Only for her legs to wrap around me. “Not before you finish what you started,” she said, wrapping her legs around me.

“As you wish,” I chuckled.

After all, I still had several minutes ... or hours, I corrected as I looked at her expression, as determined as it was euphoric.

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{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 115

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Eighteen

When I left the city, the general lines of a plan were already formed in my mind. The plan was more aggressive than I would have liked, but what I had learned from Oeyne, particularly about Titania's capture, hastened my plans.

I needed to find a way to reach the base of the Eternals as soon as possible.

An intimidating target, but luckily, not particularly impossible. The city was already teeming with the Eternal agents, unaware that they had been discovered, which gave me a lot of targets to follow once things started to heat up ... and the civil war made it far easier to trigger the chaos.

A civil war that my fake identity was already involved, thanks to the annoying habit of the princes trying to turn everything into a resource for their battle for the throne.

All I needed was to decide the size of the chaos I wanted to trigger. I could act tame, sneak into the capital, and start making small and suspicious moves from my base. It was not a bad plan.

It would have been one I would have picked if it wasn't for the latest power-up I had received thanks to the necrotic god I had dealt with, more than doubling all my stats in the process. With the security blanket it provided, I had the option to be more daring.

Especially since I had already removed Oeyne from her room and moved her down the base I had created under the base, trying to get familiar with her new Divine Domain. It didn't take her to decide to set up a base under the Capital, finding the tradeoff of limited movement underground a fair trade for improvement.

And, now, she was happily forging me an army of intricate armors that I could animate with magic, far more intricate and effective than I had used to trick the Necrotic god.

As she established her domain, I received my own rewards. A burst of new forging insights through our connection ... and Stats.

[+9 Precision]

Eternals were not aware of that strategic development, as I created a fake body to stay at the surface and trick the Eternals.

I even allowed that fake body to level up to make sure the trickery would hold against some

basic magical probes. Now that I had access to Darkness mana through my connection with Mariel, I could put the fake body trick of the Princess to good strategic use.

Oeyne was safe ... but they still thought that they had leverage against me after all the trouble I had gone to communicate with her secretly.

It was time for the civil war to have a third competitor, one that would put the Eternals on high alert.

For that, I moved to the hill, one that had the ruins of the fourth prince's residence, where I had joined for a party. It was deserted, and already in ruins, but I didn't care about the quality. What I cared about was it gave me an excuse to appear after such a long absence ... and close enough to be visible.

"I AM FREE! NOW, THE ROYAL FAMILY WILL PAY FOR THEIR BETRAYAL!"

What I let out was a magically enhanced shout, one that was the inferior version of the trick I had used when I was trying to summon elves back into the capital. A shout that echoed Divine Spark slightly.

Naturally, the Divine Spark I chose to use was light.

They wanted Mariel. And I wanted to give them a clue about her, one that would be enough for them to focus on. I let a surge of mana follow that initial burst, made of pure light, turning into a sky beam that would be enough to get the attention of everyone in the capital.

And, while my enemies could start deciding what to do, I decided to start working.

Experimenting was fun, I decided even as I raised a hammer made of solid light ... and used it to rapidly forge a large sheet of metal ... then another, until I had replaced the ruins of the mansion with a castle made of light-infused metal.

Then moved on to forge a series of ballistas, each forged from metal, and required no ammo, working on Light Mana.

It was a devastating combination. Supplying enough mana was the only challenge ... and since I was trying to convince the Eternals that Mariel was with me, it was even an advantage. The design was intricate and complicated, and if it wasn't for my connections, which allowed both Helga and Oeyne to help me, it would have taken weeks to come up with a design.

With Helga solving the magical challenges and Oeyne dealing with the forging aspects, it took only minutes. As for the light projectiles, I didn't even need Mariel's help. They were rather simplistic.

But very effective.

I had been forging my independent weapons, very visibly, right on top of the forge, as I wanted to make a point about both my skills and my Divine Spark, like an arrogant Demigod drunk in his own power.

That was not accidental. I was doing everything to convince the Eternals that I was a rash, direct individual, driven by revenge despite my recent power-up.

While I had planned if they suddenly decided to attack me with their full might, I would prefer if they tried to manipulate me for a while, which would finally allow me to get an invitation.

I still didn't dare to follow them back to their base directly, afraid of the possible magical defenses they had in place.

I might not agree with their political aspirations ... or basic human decency; but there was no arguing about their incredible magical capabilities. Even with my capabilities, trying to sneak into their base directly was the last option.

Letting them bring me in was the better option. As a guest.

Or as a prisoner.

I had already finished forging all the ballistas, and was currently forging a huge leg, when I saw the first movement. A large group of mounted soldiers, rushed toward me. "Stop, in the name of the Empire. You're under arrest —" the commander started.

Which was all he was able to say as I triggered one of the ballistas remotely, and he disappeared under a bolt of brightness.

Light mana was spectacular when it came to destructiveness.

"Attack him, before he can recharge his weapon," one of the soldiers shouted. Not a ranking one, and more importantly, he was retreating even as he declared that. An interesting choice ... one that turned even more interesting once I caught the fact that he was both too fast and too smooth to be an ordinary soldier.

I suspected that he was an Eternal spy, and decided to check ... in a different way than I used. Instead of checking his soul space, I attacked him with another ballista. He dodged.

I attacked him two at the same time. He dodged one, but another hit.

He survived.

I attacked with three more. This time, already wounded, he failed to dodge any of them. And, three bolts were enough to slay him. But, his incredible performance was telling enough. With his performance, he deserved to be a bodyguard for the prince. There was no way he could be just an ordinary soldier.

A spy.

It was an excellent way to catch one.

Ironically, the fact that it took so long to kill him encouraged the other soldiers to attack me. From their perspective, I had to struggle to kill a low-level soldier, which gave them confidence for victory. Not something I intended, but also not something I was complaining about.

The large squad attacked me, confident in their victory, which only lasted until I took down their commander and the other three ranking officers. "Run, he's too strong!" the soldiers shouted and dispersed. I let them go. I didn't want to kill ordinary soldiers.

And, as they escaped, they would spread the news of my arrival, which also worked to my benefit. I wanted a commotion. I chuckled as I finished forging the other legs, and soon, I had a walking fortress, steadily moving closer to the capital. Enough to truly scare the princes, but it was just a side effect.

I wanted the Eternals, particularly that angel with the corrupted divine spark, to come for me, and my fortress gave me an excuse to fight against ordinary Eternal agents even if they suppressed the System once again, but it wasn't strong enough to actually take an angelic demigod, certainly not one with two Divine Sparks.

Hopefully, that fact would be enough for him to come down.

I had a revenge to complete.

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 124

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Nineteen

“The royal family will pay for their betrayal!” I shouted repeatedly as I moved toward the castle, doing my absolute best to look like a reckless man hellbent on revenge, overestimating himself after an intense power-up.

Also, I wanted them to have no doubt about my intentions. I didn’t want the princes trying to take my allegiance. It might have been useful under different circumstances. Now, I wanted to make a show.

My repeated, magically enhanced shouts worked just as I wished. “Attack, for the name of the prince,” The shouts exploded as I moved over the hill, and I saw a significant part of the army stop the siege and line against me.

It was a chance for the forces at the castle to break the siege, but they didn’t take the opportunity, and just watched. What I intended.

As the army attacked, I repeated the trick I had used against the earlier squad, exclusively targeting the nobles and commanders among them, and attacking the commoners only when they got too close. “I have no problem with the common people. Retreat, and I won’t harm you,” I shouted even as I continued to pick off the nobles.

Morale was an interesting thing. Extremely useful, but fragile. Especially when the nobles were not just morally superior, but also physically. Not only they were better armored and had magical protections, but also they simply had higher stats and HP.

And, seeing their vaunted leaders disappearing with just one hit, their morale shattered, and they started running away. However, I could also see a lot of minor nobles mixed in the wave. Just like that, the army had stopped being a threat, while the prince and the bodyguards retreated into the city.

It looked like the prince didn’t care about the crown as much as his life.

I didn’t really care about him while I positioned myself in front of the capital, and started attacking the walls steadily, creating a show. The magical defenses of the capital were no joke. After all, it was a reason the second prince didn’t assault the capital, and was trying to break the morale instead.

Even against the constant barrage of light mana, the wards stood strong. Even with the intense

assault that my new toy couldn't sustain for long, it would take weeks, maybe even months to take down the wards.

Which was why it was good that all was just to make the Eternals take the bait. Not only did my near-endless usage of light mana suggest I had an external source for it, which they would assume to be Mariel, but also it would help them to assume Mariel was still wounded or unconscious, making it a perfect time to catch her.

After all, if that hadn't been the case, why would she not stop my extremely showy siege.

Of course, I wasn't betting only that. Attacking the capital in such a visible manner was showy, showy enough to be noticed by all Eternals, and not just the group that had been doing their best to be sneaky, forcing their hands further.

And, just like what I expected, they reacted by the most obvious tactic. They took Oeyne prisoner. Well, they took the mana clone I had left in her place prisoner. She was happily forging and experimenting in the secret base while the clone was already ambushed and captured by the Agents they had placed in the forge.

To my surprise, they didn't bring the clone to the walls to threaten me, but instead, brought her away, before a magical message was delivered to me, saying that they had imprisoned Oeyne, and I had to come to them if I didn't want her to die.

It was a simple threat, but an effective one. After all, they knew I had gone a a lot of trouble just to send her a message, making her a good hostage. I was glad for it, because it gave me an excuse to pull back. "How dare you threaten her, you cowards," I shouted as I sent another salvo of attacks before I started to retreat, acting like I blamed the royal family for it.

Soon, I was at the ruins of the mansion, where I had been invited. A good location, I have to admit. The number of new wards — subtle enough to avoid the notice of a blacksmith — showed that they were prepared for it.

I could see about fifty people, but I could count another two hundred, hidden. It looked like they had pulled all the eternal agents forward. However, what I really wanted, that corrupted angel, was not there. "Let her go, or I'll kill all of you," I said as I moved forward in my walking fortress without attacking.

They didn't do anything even though it brought them in range, and confident in their wards. "Surrender if you don't want her to die," one of them shouted. I recognized him as the one who had been trying to create a rebellion back in the forge.

He must be a ranking one. An amusing coincidence. "You're angering me," I said, but I didn't attack them. After all, they were keeping Oeyne prisoner. "You don't want to see me when I'm angry."

"Really, what would you do," he said.

"Let me show what I can really do, and maybe, we can have a talk," I said even as I started firing all of my ballistas to empty locations. Presumably, to intimidate them. However, one of those attacks, in a display of complete coincidence and nothing more, hit a critical node, creating a malfunction in the hidden wards.

I could sense their mages reacting immediately to repair, but they weren't too alarmed. After all, from their perspective, it was nothing more than a lucky shot. Actually calculating in real time would require a true genius. And repeating it while it was being repaired would require even more.

A goddess of knowledge.

I sent a mental note of thanks to Helga as she shared the exact three nodes I needed to hit to create a catastrophic failure in the wards. I followed it, and their hidden wards exploded, the backlash killing their mages.

The best part, it didn't have any visible impact, allowing me to act unaware even as their amazing preparations were wasted, taking down a lot of their mages in the process. "Scared now?" I asked as I continued to move, like I assumed their sudden panic was about the explosiveness of my attack. "Leave my love alone, and I'll not even bother killing you as you deserve for touching her!" I shouted, one that gave an excuse for my recklessness.

"We can still talk," he offered. "We're not here to hurt any of you, but to offer a membership to the true protectors of the land," he said.

"Oh, the Eternals. The ones that had been arranging the deaths of the millions for their power," I said, enjoying their sudden shift of expression. "Oh, yes. I know all about the true face of your gutless organization," I said.

I noticed them setting a subtle teleportation array around Oeyne-clone, clearly prioritizing her safety over their other agents. Understandable, as she was a valuable hostage, and pulling her away would give them a chance to extend those talks.

"You can't trust the words of a jealous prince, pouting just because we denied him the chance

to join our glorious organization,” he said, though the way his mocking was exaggerated was clearly intentional. They were trying to probe the source of my information.

I was more than happy to give him one that would hopefully give me what I truly wanted. “A prince?” I scoffed loudly. “Like I would care about his words. No, I had been chosen by the true divinity. A beautiful angel had spoken to me, telling the truth about your cursed organization. I would die before joining an organization consorting with the monsters and the dead.”

He paused a moment, though it was obvious that he had been magically communicating with his leader. Excellent. “And, what if I tell you that we’re the chosen of the true divinity, and you are the one that had been lied to.”

“Unless you have another angel that will come and tell me that I’m lying, it won’t work,” I said.

“Well,” he said, and suddenly, a glow appeared at their center. It was a mere teleportation spell, but there were a lot of spells cast by other mages to turn into a show. Admittedly, a good show. Then, a familiar angel appeared.

“I’m here to tell you the truth, my son —” he started, only to be interrupted by a barrage of light bolts. The reason was simple. I could have allied with him, but the first thing he would ask would be to bring me to Mariel ... and faking a goddess wasn’t as simple.

And, I still needed to pay him back.

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 124

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty

“What are you doing!” the yet-to-be-named angel shouted. The moment he did, I could see some kind of black corruption spreading through his wings.

“Destroying an abomination,” I shouted back, doing my best to lean on the worst aspects of a Light Spark. Direct to the point of recklessness, confident to the point of zealousness. After all, my current identity had already achieved its greatest mission, and it was time for it to die.

“So be it,” he shouted, the dark corruption spreading even more.

This time, I was too familiar with the Divine Sparks to miss their conflicting nature. His conflict was between Darkness and Light, similar to Mariel’s challenge. Well, somewhat. His Light Spark felt similar, but the Darkness spark he used felt different.

The one that the princess used was calm, and soft, like a shadow. His Darkness spark was bright, angry, and changed. I could sense that it was somewhat forced to shift its nature. My guess was that he did so to counter his Spark.

His rain of attacks, a mixture of dark and light, came even stronger than I expected, making me glad that he was barely a demigod. I would have hated him to fight if he completed it.

While Mariel’s unique brand of Spark, which I termed Twilight Spark, had brought some unique advantages, its destructive capabilities came mostly from its Light aspect.

It wasn’t true for my enemy. His brand of Darkness Spark was almost a weird reflection of Light Spark, with a sense of destructive capability to match it. They weren’t blended, but balanced, even the slightest touch enough to send the balance careening.

A dangerous path. I didn’t want to imagine just how much of a nightmare to fight against him if he was an actual god. With the combination, he would have a good chance of winning against the other gods even as a mere avatar. His concept of destruction was just that good.

Luckily, in his demigod state, he was far more busy trying not to kill himself, making him a much more easy enemy. If I didn’t need him to find the base of the Eternals, I would have killed him easily. Instead, I defended his attacks in the worst way possible, and took his attack with my walking castle.

And channeled the resulting explosion to kill half of his men, and used the opportunity to mark several with some very obscure beacons that would start signaling a while later, somewhat

similar to the working principles of the beacons we designed for Primordial Aether.

I didn't expect that to lead me to the real base. The soldiers would probably be transferred to a sub-base, but my bet was that it would go unnoticed, especially since, for all intents and purposes, they were on a secret mission, and would be trying to cover it up.

Of course, that wasn't my only trick. Oeyne clone was another. I had been hoping that, once I 'died' her value as bait would be gone, and they would imprison her again, ideally in the same base they held Titania.

"Is this all you can do, ugly abomination," I shouted. In response, I received a primal shout that surprised me with its intensity. He didn't seem to appreciate an insult to his physical features. His response was an even bigger wave of bolts, each hit destroying bigger chunks of my castle.

He was playing right into my hand.

While I already had two baits, one that led to a potential barracks, and one to a prison, I still needed a third one. One that would lead to his secret sanctum ... which definitely existed. Keeping the two different Divine Sparks was a very dangerous process, the kind that any disruption would be deadly. Combined with its relatively hidden nature, I had no doubt that he had a nice base that no one else knew just for balance.

I just needed to give him a reason to use it.

As he attacked once again, the castle had already turned into a rubble. I triggered an explosion, using the opportunity to fake my death ... but not before sending a blade of concentrated light, far too fast and intense for him to react.

And severing his wing.

His cry of pain was a balm to my soul. His reaction was intense ... which was understandable. I had been with Mariel enough to know that their wings were bound to their existence even tighter than the rest of their bodies. Cutting off his arm would have been less painful.

As he collapsed, trying to contain the sudden disorder of Darkness and Light in his body, I wrapped myself with a Darkness cloak and moved forward ... and forced a link with the Spark remnants in his wing.

One that would allow me to follow him to his base.

Then, I retreated before someone could notice my presence. My reckless last stand had come to an end, and another infiltration mission was about to begin.

Only after I moved a distance away from the battlefield, I teleported back to the capital. Or, more accurately, right under the capital, next to Oeyne.

“Is it done?” she asked as she hugged me, clearly worried. I didn’t blame her, considering my last encounter with that angel. I ended up lost in Primordial Aether.

“Almost. Currently, they are kidnapping your double. Others had already teleported away. I could sense their location...” I added, then paused. “In the sky.”

“On a mountain or something?” she asked.

“No, right at the sky,” I said with a frown. “And, their locations are too far apart. Either they have several flying locations that are moving in perfect harmony...” I murmured.

“Or their base is far bigger than we expected,” she added.

“Maybe. But if it’s true, it’s big. Several times the capital big.” I paused, feeling the location of Oeyne's clone ... which was definitely not in the sky. “At least they’re secret prisons in a different location,” I said, then felt the location of the angel I had just maimed. “And so is the secret chamber of that angel.”

“What’s the sequence,” she said.

“Three steps,” I said, but I didn’t have much time. The beacons I left wouldn’t last long, as I deliberately made them underpowered. And, the city’s location feels weird, like it’s occasionally shifting in location.

“Probably a defensive method,” Oeyne suggested. That was probably the case. They might have nothing to fear from people of the material plane — well, except me, but they didn’t know that — but the same thing didn’t apply to their divine enemies.

Even assuming they had no enemies — which was an absurd assumption — most gods would be to weaken their bargaining position. I had no doubt that their base had been defended very aggressively.

“I need to go,” I said as I kissed Oeyne, and she nodded.

First, the prison. Hopefully, Titania would be there.

I didn't teleport the location directly, but instead targeted a location that would take several minutes to travel even if I flew on a fake elemental. And, without it, the travel took even longer, but I didn't want to trigger any alarm in the process.

Not when my favorite librarian's life was at stake.

It turned out to be a good choice, as I had to bypass several detection wards in the process, each supported by an artifact. Though, as long as I approached them carefully, they were easy to bypass. Their need for secrecy prevented them from building an impenetrable prison.

Instead, they decided to bury the prison deep, relying on magic to conceal themselves from the beasts, and limiting the number of guards to avoid betrayal. A smart choice.

Too bad that it left them particularly vulnerable toward my skill set. I didn't even bother engaging with the guards, using another cloak of darkness to bypass the wards. Soon, I was at the center of the prison, where Oeyne's clone was, trapped in a complicated array.

And, next to her, there was Titania.

The moment I had seen her, I had decided to murder that corrupted angel painfully, because the scene in front of me was worse than I expected. Titania was locked in an array, her body glowing with Light Spark.

But not just that. Her Light Spark was Tainted. At first, I assumed it to be another divine spark, Spark of Water, but it was not.

The Divine Spark, regardless of nature, gave a similar feeling to a soul. Concentrated and directed, but still somehow human.

Whatever tainted her felt more like Primordial Aether, but a wild version. But, whatever it was, it was strong, enough to devour and destroy her spark despite being much smaller.

I frowned. I wanted to destroy the prison for daring to do such a thing. I didn't know the thing that tainted her soul, but I could see that, without my unique set of skills, it would have been deadly. And, even with my unique skills, it wasn't a trivial situation.

I suppressed the desire to destroy the prison as I searched the place, hoping to find something that would give me an idea about her situation. But, there was no information.

I took Titania away to another base I created for her, leaving a clone behind to warn me when

someone started to experiment on them. Meanwhile, I needed to do some experiments.

But, before, I needed to deal with a corrupted angel.

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 124

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 1.147,577}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-One

Ironically, for all its defenses, finding and sneaking into the hidden base of the corrupted angel had been even easier than I had expected. He was trying to take control of his out-of-control Divine Spark, which allowed me to discover him rather easily through the temporary connection I had triggered.

His base was hidden much better, but by tracking his location, that was removed.

And, once that was gone, the other defenses had been even easier to bypass. “Fascinating,” I said even as I walked around. He had no guards, no doubt afraid of betrayal in his vulnerable state, but it left him even more vulnerable.

It was a treasure trove. There were several rooms filled with familiar-looking crystals, glowing with Divine Spark, along with Eternal Gems, weapons ... and most importantly, an incredible amount of books.

There were many different types of Divine Sparks. Some, I recognized easily, like Necrotic, Forging, Light, and Nature — though Necrotic was definitely the most common one. Others, I never interacted before, but recognizing was easy enough. Arcana, Swordsmanship, Elemental, and many other skills. I didn’t know how exactly Swordsmanship and other melee abilities interacted with Divine Spark, but I didn’t bother exploring that point, and just brought several samples from each of them.

And turned the rest into Purified Spark — except the elemental ones that felt significantly different. There were only Water ones available.

[+8,183,190 Purified Spark]

The Eternals were even richer than I had initially thought if that was the amount someone could steal successfully from their vault.

No wonder they had been treating Gods as some kind of weapon for their purpose. Even though they were split into pieces and therefore not as valuable, there were still enough Sparks to create multiple gods. It was not a joke.

Then, I moved to the center room, which was a giant version of the crystal structures that Mariel had used to suppress her own sparks.

I sneaked forward, and pressed my hand to his head, draining all Divine Spark from him. It

killed him directly, not even letting him have a chance to speak, but I didn't want to risk if he had some kind of trigger that could communicate with his allies. Divine Spark still had too many secrets, and I didn't want to test myself against a being that had been experimenting on it for centuries.

An ignoble end to a dangerous enemy ... but that was how assassination worked. All the effort that went to months of acting, fake displays, and baits, all to force my enemy to reveal his hand without making him realize he was being targeted.

Technically, I could have tried to create a foolproof containment area, but the amount of time I needed to spend to make such a prison foolproof was too long. And, neither Helga nor Oeyne had the ability to contain if he actually escaped or called reinforcement.

With that, I sealed his unique brand of Darkness and Light mana. I doubted that I would be able to control it, and I certainly didn't want to any of the girls to use such a dangerous tool, but it could be still weaponized as a devastating bomb.

"Now, let's remove the evidence," I said, and set up several wards filled with Darkness and Light mana, ready to go off the moment someone breached the place. I wanted him to look like he died in the explosion if the Eternals managed to discover his location.

Once that was done, I teleported back to Silver Spires.

Or, more accurately, Helga's domain under Silver Spires.

She was at the center of the room, carefully analyzing the small, isolated blue fragment at the center of the room. "Any development?" I asked.

"Nothing much," Helga answered. She wasn't surprised by my presence, but only because we were in her domain, and hiding anything from her would take an incredible effort. "I can say that it's definitely not Divine Spark in any shape or form. It's not unfair to say that it's the opposite, even."

"In what way?" I asked.

"In many ways, Divine Spark is a unique, concentrated imprint of soul that somehow overlaps with a mysterious energy that fills the universe, and creates a sense of higher order," Helga said. I nodded rather than arguing. It was just a theory for the moment, and she had no evidence to support the existence of that mysterious energy. It was not the time to lose ourselves in a pointless battle.

“What we have here is essentially the reverse of it. It mixed with the Primordial Aether, and turned into a lower-order, chaotic existence.”

“Elementals,” I said.

“Very likely linked, but not completely the same. If this new energy is Primordial Aether, Elementals are the equivalent of Aether,” she answered.

“How about Titania?” I asked.

“From everything I checked, it looks impossible to just cut the infection from Titania. It infused into her soul for too long, and added that chaotic aspect to it. I have no way to remove it, and you can’t just break it down either.”

I nodded. After all, I had already tried that with a sample, and it was ... explosive.

“That means we need to study more,” I said as I revealed the books and the other samples I had brought to her, and her smile widened.

“It’s the best gift ever,” she said as she kissed me quickly before she moved to the books, her expression even more elated than the time I had actually raised her to Divinity. I wanted to bend her over the books to properly celebrate.

Pity that we were facing an emergency.

As we read, our frowns got bigger and bigger. “This is the fifth reference I caught to about other universes,” she said with a frown.

“I noticed several as well,” I said. “And, I’m starting to think that the potential they the text repeatedly mentions is the Primordial Aether more than anything. It looks like we identified how the first gods arrived here ... from another universe.”

“It looks that way,” Helga said, and I didn’t blame her for shivering in fear. We were likely looking at the most honest historical notes, drawn by the personal anecdotes spread across magical notes, and several hand-written conclusions. “Also, there are mentions of a previous rebellion that allowed the gods to cut a dimension from the main one.”

“Likely ours,” I said. She nodded, agreeing with my conclusion. “Pity there’s very little about the Eternal Rebellion,” I said. “Other than the Eternal’s repeated inability to create a second System, and all the conjecture related to it.”

“I don’t like the number of notes about trying to find the other universes,” I added. Luckily, they were all mentioned along with failure, but who could know how it would go.

“No going to another universe,” Helga immediately said.

“Oh, I wouldn’t even think about it,” I said, shuddering. Jumping between planes had been enough of an adventure for me. I wouldn’t have even bothered with the Eternals, but by achieving something they failed to achieve, I had already turned myself into a target. Only by Strength, I could protect myself against them.

Of course, that also raised some questions about where my first System came from, but I didn’t have the time to explore it.

Instead, I continued reading, slowly creating a more reliable account of the history of our universe. The first gods came from another universe. Though, at least, when they arrived, they seemed to barely step into the Chosen stage — or at least, their equivalent of it — and reached the Divinity stage here.

It was good, as the idea of older, stronger Universes was scary enough. The idea of it was strong enough that even actual gods abandoning it just for a chance to improve would have been too much.

There were some references to actually establishing the material plane, but very little about how that feat had been achieved.

Then, at one point, the Eternals established the System, based on the information from a traitor ... but once again, no real detail about her identity, just enough to confirm that she was a woman.

“At least it confirms my theory,” Helga said, though her tone was listless. “There are quite a bit notes about theories about another energy they can’t detect, and how it makes Divine Spark gather far faster. They claim that it’s some kind of energy based on the creation stages of the universe.”

“Creation, and destruction,” I corrected her as I confirmed through the other notes. “It doesn’t exactly fill me with great confidence about what would happen if they discover us.”

“True, it doesn’t,” Helga said, but once we finished reading, there was no immediate answer. There had been a lot of books, but the information they had was limited, and not entirely trustworthy.

“You should continue reading,” I said. “It looks like I’m going to visit the Eternal City.”

—

{Strength: 115 Charisma: 115

Precision: 115 Perception: 124

Agility: 115 Manipulation: 122

Speed: 115 Intelligence: 151

Endurance: 168 Wisdom: 122}

{Purified Divine Spark: 9.330,787}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Two

Analyzing Titania's soul was a challenge, which was why I invested most of my Purified Spark into my stats.

[-8,645,700 Purified Spark]

[+45 All Stats]

But, even with my increased capability, analyzing it was a challenge.

As we studied the mysterious elemental energy — which we decided to name Elemental Spark — that had been infused in Titania's soul, we reached a conclusion.

For all its similarities with the Divine Spark, It was impossible to remove, and almost as impossible to control. Worse, it didn't react to Tantric, removing most of my tools from the play.

Luckily, Titania was still stabilized, preventing a potential disaster. But, it was only temporary.

"It looks like I'm going to have to take the risk," I said to her with a sigh.

"Are you sure?" Helga answered. "Her situation is still stable. Maybe we could find a solution."

"Maybe, but I'm not as hopeful," I admitted. "For all the similarities, the Elemental Spark has none of the features that make it easy to bond with the human soul," I said. "It's clear that they come from the same source, but without the filtering that the Divine Spark receives during its creation process, it's far more volatile."

"Still, we're making progress —" she started, only for me to silence her.

"No, you're making progress," I admitted. "Let's be honest, without the Tantric working, I'm not exactly a good researcher. It's far more efficient for you to stay here while I finally try to infiltrate the Eternals," I said.

"How are you going to do it?" she asked.

"Easy, I'm going to infiltrate one of their recruitment teams," I said. "The other soldiers that I tracked already revealed a few bases, and infiltrating them is very easy. I had already walked around the bases easily," She looked at me doubtfully. "Well, it's easy if you can fake soul spaces instantly," I corrected. "Most of their access points are reliant on checking a specific soul-space

signature, and I can fake it easily enough.”

Which was a big security gap, but I didn’t blame the Eternals for it. After all, who would have guessed that their unique achievement would have been invalidated?

“Are we sure that we’re going to find the answers about the Elemental Spark there?” she asked.

“Inevitably,” I answered. “There has to be a reason why the elementals are desperately trying to invade this plane while not bothering with the others,” I said, revealing my approach. Then, after one last kiss, I teleported away.

Right in the middle of one of the recruitment bases, an illusion already covering my face perfectly. After my improved stats, the illusions I used looked real ... not that it mattered. The guards at the teleportation room just checked my identity through their artifact, and a tendril of mana touched my fake soul space, which perfectly copied the soldier I had replaced.

I didn’t care much about the base itself as I moved forward. A turn through a corridor, and soon, I was at the room where the new recruits had been held. A little adjustment to the paperwork, was an illusion, and I was among the crowd.

No one even noticed it. After all, the new recruits consisted of hundreds of people, all waiting to be transported into the main base to expand their soul space forcefully. And, once they leveled up, they would be brought to one of the trial grounds — like the one I had stumbled on when I met with my dragon friend — to see which ones would survive the transformation without going berserk.

A journey I wouldn’t be joining them.

I needed to reach their base.

I stayed at the base for six hours before the guards ordered us to visit a teleportation array. Of course, the base didn’t teleport that many recruits every day. Some of the recruits had been waiting for her for weeks ... but I had already known the delivery date for this base was close. It was the reason I picked the timing.

I stayed in the middle of the crowd as we were led to our destination, finally about to visit the main Eternals’ base, which I failed to discover despite how much I worked.

I stopped at the teleportation array, and the world shifted... I found myself in another closed room.

Ironically, the moment I stepped into the base, I discovered the reason why I wasn't able to find the location of the base.

We were flying, which was obvious from the location of both Helga and Oeyne.

Not just flying, I noticed after a moment, that I felt a smooth flicker, and our location changed significantly. The base was not just flying, but also teleporting in some frequency.

No wonder I wasn't able to pinpoint its location during my searches.

The new recruits had gone through a very detailed process, checking our soul spaces three different times to make sure there was nothing wrong. Unfortunately for them, that proved to be ineffective. I stayed undetected, and was soon directed to a room with all the others.

It was a fascinating room. A huge, impressive tower, one that gave me the first glimpse of their base through a large window.

I ignored the speech one of the Eternals delivered — one that included a long story about the honor and mission, laced with a lot of mind-altering spells to develop a subconscious sense of loyalty — in favor of examining the base.

The first thing: it was not a base, but a fully-fledged city, one that easily housed tens of millions of people, which made me change my impression quite a bit. A fully-fledged, flying city, one that could teleport fully. Not exactly a simple enemy.

At a distance, I could see the Eternals were a far more egalitarian crowd. At a distance, I could see angels, dragons, phoenixes, and many beings I didn't recognize flying, and on the ground, and on the ground, I was able to recognize many races, elves, humans, and many others that were supposed to be extinct.

A far more egalitarian crowd than I expected. Worse, in many of them, I could see the signs of Divine Spark, far better integrated than the corrupted angel I killed — though none of them looked like they were trying to mix two types.

I wondered if the gods they had been trading with were aware of the truth of the matter.

However, as I watched them, I understood why the elementals were constantly trying to invade the area as well. There were huge four artifacts, one at each corner of the flying city, and in each, an elemental was trapped, each taller than a mile.

I didn't know their function. Maybe they were there as trophies, or maybe they were generating the force that allowed the huge city to fly. Either way, they looked far stronger than the other elementals that attacked the plane.

I had to admit, at this moment, I questioned my whole plan. I had expected to face a formidable enemy at the base ... but what I found here was far too strong. Not something I could fight even if I pushed my stats ten times higher.

Even sneaking around felt dangerous.

Maybe Helga was right. Slowly exploring Titania's affliction was the better option. I would have turned and left, but it would just alert my enemies. So, I stayed, waiting for the process to end so I could escape.

The speech was over soon. "Prepare for the enlightenment!" the speaker shouted.

And the building was filled with mana. A very familiar form of it.

Tantric Mana.

I stretched my own control to the nearby recruits, examining their soul spaces to fake my own. I was shocked by the process ... as it was far more aggressive and incompetent than I expected. The Tantric mana felt forceful and uncontrolled, damaging the soul spaces it targeted even as it left many problems.

At first, I thought it to be accidental, that whatever Eternals using to control the mana lacked control, but the more I examined, the more I realized the problem had a different source. There were two controllers for the mana.

One controller did its best to stabilize the flow, while the other did its best to turn it into a destructive mess, trying to destroy every single System user.

I already had a feeling about the identity of the second controller ... but, I realized that it was not a one-way process.

YOU'RE HERE, SAVE ME! FREE THE ELEMENTAL LORDS!

The words echoed in my mind, showing that I had been detected. That would have been bad enough ... if it wasn't accompanied by a sudden shift. The city teleported again, but this time, we weren't anywhere at the main material plane, but floating in Primordial Aether directly.

The creatures rushed forward, while at the same time, a huge army of elementals rushed from all directions, flooding from the primordial aether, and forcing the city to defend.

Fuck.

—

{Strength: 160 Charisma: 160

Precision: 160 Perception: 172

Agility: 160 Manipulation: 170

Speed: 160 Intelligence: 220

Endurance: 231 Wisdom: 192}

{Purified Divine Spark: 725,291}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Three

My first reaction as I suddenly found myself in a battle, especially when I was supposed to be doing an infiltration mission and nothing else, was to curse.

Only in my mind, of course. Because, as the new recruits, we were supposed to have fallen unconscious. I used the opportunity to observe and decide on an action.

The first thing I realized was that the city was not ready for a battle, their citizens attacking slowly but steadily ... but neither were the elementals. Their numbers looked impressive, but they came across as a disorganized wave.

A surprising battle for both sides.

Admittedly, it was a good opportunity for me to follow the suggestion that came from the voice. As the chaos raged, I could sneak toward the center of the city and do what the voice asked me to. There was only one problem.

I didn't trust it.

I was reasonably sure that the voice was the thing that was responsible for my unique brand of the System, but I had long concluded that that didn't mean I would trust them. Triggering a battle without even asking my opinion to force my hand didn't make things any better.

What really annoyed me was that it didn't really matter whether I trusted the voice or not. I needed to act.

Even before seeing the city, I was aware that the Eternals were a dangerous enemy, one that could turn my life into hell if they were aware of my existence. Anonymity had been my greatest weapon. That feeling only intensified when I saw the true base of the Eternals. They had been more passive than even I expected, lost in their own world, happy with all the Divine Spark they collected through the System, and by exchanging with the gods.

If they won the battle, it was inevitable that they would turn more active. If they did, it was very likely that they would discover my presence sooner or later, forcing us to retreat and abandon everything, which would likely include the two planes that were under our control.

One way or another, I had to act.

The guards who were responsible for the recruitment effort were distracted by the battle,

making it easy for me to slip out and move deeper into the city. I ignored the tall crystal towers and the beautiful gardens while I searched for a place to hide.

And, focused on my connection with Helga. It was an invasive spell, one that inevitably left a mark on the protective barrier, but the Eternals had bigger things to worry about.

“What’s going on?” Helga asked.

“I need you to test whether the System currently having any problems?” I asked. “Any drop in power, or slowing communication,” I asked?

“No, why?” she answered after a moment.

I gave her a quick summary of the battle. “I wanted to validate what the System had been telling me about it being trapped at the Eternal City,” I said. “But, it’s clearly a lie. The planar border of the material plane is strong enough to interfere with the communication.”

“It’s probably what’s shacking them,” Helga guessed. “They will be free if you destroy them.”

“And, there’s a chance they’ll get free even if the battle goes on long enough. With the planar border in between, there had to be some limitations.”

“True,” Helga answered. “I might discover the real location if that’s true. There has to be some signs.”

“Excellent, you focus on that, and alert me if there’s anything wrong,” I said, giving her the task.

Then, I interrupted the connection. Just in time, a being I didn’t recognize rushed toward me, carrying a sword that was glowing with a dangerous amount of pure air mana. An eternal guard, I recognized even as I faded into the background, gathering enough life energy to counteract the assault.

I paid attention to his armor, which was a work of art, with many different decorations covering its surface. Their operations were a mystery to me, but I could still see that he was a high-ranking one.

However, I was surprised by their daring to use elemental mana even when they were being attacked by the elementals.

Then again, maybe that was why he was assigned to guard duty rather than the front lines.

As he was rushed forward, I waited for an opportunity to ambush him. Which didn't work, as the moment he arrived, a gentle wind covered every inch of the alley, and he turned toward me. A dangerously competent mage.

And, also a demigod that was stronger than an ordinary avatar, I realized even as he swung his sword, and the whole alley filled with sharp mana blades. If it wasn't for the corrupted angel's nice gift, it would have been a fight that would make me struggle.

Instead, I scooped a huge amount of primordial aether — one that was available to be reached in a sub-dimension of the city — turned it into mana, and teleported right behind him.

Punching through the wards was supposed to prevent that.

He was surprised by my achievement, but he reacted quickly, his blades reversing direction. Too bad he wasn't fast enough to match with my new stats. I punched through his chest, the armor crumbling under my mana-reinforced punch, and used the closeness to invade his body with Tantric mana.

The first thing I noticed was the Divine Spark, an amount that was considerably less than I had expected. From his display that was strong enough to match an Avatar, I expected him to have around a million Divine Sparks, not just barely thirty-thousand.

But, it was arranged in a mysterious pattern, as if it was designed to be channeled only in specific ways. It restricted the flexibility greatly, but there was no doubt about the impact.

[+32,193 Divine Air Spark]

I didn't purify the result. Even if it was Divine Spark and not actually an elemental spark, it might help me find a way to cure Titania's ailment.

The moment I killed him, I triggered an explosion by flooding his body with the twilight spark, though I made sure to lean in the darkness aspect to make it look like the unique mixture of the angel I had killed. Then, I went a step further and wore his visage as an illusion.

There was no harm in creating a fake culprit.

I flew away for a while, watching as several Eternals approached from a distance before I dove down to another alley. I had to admit, the acquisition of the Air Spark had been timely, as it allowed me to create several fake elementals around me, which then attacked the ones that chased me.

“Alarm the defensive lines, some elementals have slipped through the defenses,” one of the leaders shouted even as he chopped the fake elementals down without even realizing they were fake ones.

My subterfuge habit once again proved to be useful.

Once I avoided the chase, I moved around until I found a spot that could help me observe the battle and allow me to take the next step.

First, I examined the border of the city. A huge mana shield, one that could rival a planar border, was around the city, keeping the Primordial Aether out, showing that the city could easily function as an artificial plane.

However, just like a plane, it was unable to resist a more focused assault. At several points, the elementals breached the defenses, forcing a melee. A wind of Primordial Aether accompanied their breach, but some kind of defensive spell interfered immediately and shuffled the Primordial Aether into some kind of sub-dimension to slowly break into Aether, then to mana.

They probably had no idea that they gave me near-infinite mana through that method.

A good advantage, one that I could use to my benefit as I slowly moved deeper into the city. With people searching for a rebel angel, I actually had a good chance to escape. A good thing, as, at the edge, I could see several undead avatars appear and attack the elementals. Their presence didn't surprise me, as, at this point, the alliance between the Eternals and the undead was not a mystery but a fact.

With their presence, I expected the battle to end with the Eternal victory, but there were too many elementals gathering, signaling the battle would still take a while. With the teleportation feature of the city being interfered with the System, I had the ability to walk around without a problem, maybe even raid their Divine Spark warehouses.

Turning the trap into a treasure.

Then, just like that, I had managed to curse myself. Someone appeared in the primordial Aether, attacking the undead from behind.

Someone that I was familiar with. Intensely.

Marianne.

—
{Strength: 160 Charisma: 160

Precision: 160 Perception: 172

Agility: 160 Manipulation: 170

Speed: 160 Intelligence: 220

Endurance: 231 Wisdom: 192}

{Purified Divine Spark: 725,291}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Four

Annoyance and relief battled in me as I watched Marianne attack the undead with a confidence that shocked me.

As she raised her hand, modified life magic radiated, countering and destroying the necrotic energy it touched, even more effective than my own modified light-life attack. She wore shiny armor, and her blonde hair danced in a way that made my blood move faster. She looked good.

More importantly, I could see her domain trying to establish itself, showing that her absence had been productive. I would have been surprised, but the timing of her attack made it obvious that it was the mysterious actor behind my unique System that helped her. Otherwise, there was no chance she could absorb her unique Divinity in such a short time.

Just not as strong as she would have developed with my help.

Seeing her alive and thriving was a beautiful surprise, but most of the relief was negated by the inconvenient presence of her attack. I could see her rushing into the endless undead army recklessly, which put her in a perilous position.

Her presence ruined my plan to slowly sneak in and find the center while Helga worked to discover the core of the System. I couldn't just abandon her to certain death. I could see avatars of eight undead gods closing in, accompanied by the real body of one, ready to surround her, hidden away from her detection.

I pulled the darkness around me tighter to stay hidden as I rushed forward, glad for the recent acquisition of Air Spark, which helped me to enhance my speed even further. First, I needed to break her from the trap before they took action.

There was one thing to my advantage. Once detected, an ambush was more of a danger to the undead. In an effort to keep their ambush hidden from Marianne, none of them had started pushing their domain. Admittedly, it was not a bad strategy. If it wasn't for my most recent improvement in Perception, along with my magic expertise, I would have missed their presence in the undead mass.

Unfortunately — for them — the battlefield was an unforgiving place. Without the domain, they were vulnerable, and with their focus on Marianne, the sole god with his real body — a lich wearing some kind of crown — noticed my presence only when I put my hand on his skull.

Too late.

He tried to establish his domain, but I flooded his body with enough of my unique brand of mana to break down his Divine Spark.

Unfortunately, even when ambushed, taking down an actual god took some time and most of my attention. I couldn't succeed if the other eight avatars attacked me at the same time.

"Marianne, now, attack with your full power," I shouted even as I stretched my mana. She looked at me, shocked, but quick to recognize me once my mana touched her, and a connection bloomed between us, using the remnant old connection from the System.

She could have easily broken that connection as a Divine Being, but instead, she strengthened it, her face blooming with a big smile as she recognized me despite my disguise. And, I used that to block the other connection she had with the System before the mysterious connection could catch onto it.

Another task that was only possible because of her trust. It would have been an impossible task if she tried to defend that connection with the System.

I didn't snap the connection completely, but let it carry a bunch of fake information. At the same time, I used our connection to send an incredible amount of mana toward her. Not just pure mana, but most of my Pseudo-HP I stored.

"Thanks, honey," she said as the mana flooded her, which she channeled into her domain. Pseudo-HP was even easier for her to convert to an attack with her own unique brand of Divine Spark. A glow covered the battlefield, targeting eight avatars at the same time, forcing them to deploy their own domains defensively.

And, gave me the time to drain the undead god that was supposed to be resurrected infinitely.

[+6,291,192 Purified Spark]

"Excellent work, my love," I said even as I dumped all of it into my stats, improving myself even further. The exponential nature of the growth weakened the potential of the improvement somewhat, but every bit counted.

[+20 All Stats]

[-5,820,700 Purified Spark]

“My pleasure,” Marianne said as she continued to attack the avatars, preventing them from establishing their domains, and looking amazing while she did so. And, without their domains, they were even weaker to my attacks.

In the process, I created several large crystals glowing with an ominous dark purple color, making it look like I was capturing their Spark rather than devouring them wholesale. It was one secret I had no intention to reveal, even when my power was increasing greatly.

[+3,248,300 Purified Spark]

[+10 All Stats]

[-3,441,850 Purified Spark]

“I’m so glad you’re alive, my love,” Marianne said after we dealt with enough undead to give her a chance to establish her domain.

“Me too, but what are you doing here?” I asked.

“We’re trying to help Cornelia,” she said proudly.

“What’s wrong with her?” I asked.

“She’s having some complications with her Divine Spark, and the solution is here,” Marianne explained. “So, when the System alerted us to the possibility, we decided to act ...” she said. Just as she spoke, the defensive barrier of the city trembled, as one of the corners of the defensive barriers shattered.

The corner that was being held by the Fire Elemental.

“That’s what’ll help Cornelia, right?” I asked even with a sinking feeling. It was clearly a trap, but once again, I was slower to react. Another step in the System’s plan, one that forced me to avoid the mess even more. “Who’s we?” I asked.

“Aviada, of course,” Marianne answered. “She’s the one that helped us escape from the main material plane.”

“Very good,” I said as I looked around, watching as the eternal army tried to react to the sudden changes in the battlefield, trying to adapt to intensifying elemental attacks. Fire elementals, in particular, were having a far easier time penetrating. “I need to continue distracting them while I go and help Cordelia,” I said, and cast a spell.

It was a beacon, one that contacted Seldanna and Mariel, summoning their avatars to my side. At my right, light started to gather to form a winged being, shadows creating accents. At my left, flowers bloomed, quickly gathering into a humanoid figure.

I used a lot of mana to help them summon their avatars, but even then, it was a slow process. I just reduced it to a minute rather than hours.

“What’s going on —” Marianne said as she looked at the two gathering avatars, surprised, but before she could say anything else, I took a step forward, kissing her. She was quick to respond, and used the proximity to flood her soul with my mana, helping her to bond with her Divine Spark better.

Thankfully, our emotional closeness meant that Marianne accepted that without asking any question rather than resisting and slowing down the process. My increased stats made the process even stronger.

However, as I felt Marianne’s lips over mine, I care less about that. Instead, I raised a shadow barrier to block us from the view, and pressed her armor. It had an automatic removal spell, which required a unique spell to trigger, which worked as a lock.

Armor fell, revealing her beautiful body wearing just a corset, which I pulled down to grab her beautiful breasts. “I missed those,” I said even as I squeezed them, making her moan. Not seemingly appropriate in the midst of a battle, but the pleasure made her soul even more malleable to my intervention, quickening the process of her power up.

However, the similarities between her Divine Spark and Mariel’s played quite a role in the speed of my achievement as well. Otherwise, even with my advantages, I couldn’t squeeze the process into a minute.

I played with her body, not because of the pleasure it granted me — well, not only that, at least, as I truly missed my curvy healer — but because I needed every help I could find.

Luckily, it was something I enjoyed immensely.

“And I missed your massages,” she moaned as I twisted her nipples. “But why is my Domain getting far stronger.”

“A gift, of course,” I said as I pulled back, and put the armor back on. She looked disappointed. Frankly, I was as well, but there were more urgent things we had to deal with. And, now that our connection recovered once more, I was not afraid of not finding her once more.

The magical block that was keeping us hidden from the battlefield fell, and Marianne came face to face with Mariel and Seldanna. “H-headmistress,” Marianne gasped.

Mariel’s smirk was visible even under the circumstances. “Marianne, this is Seldanna,” I said as I pointed at the flower avatar.

“A - a pleasure,” Marianne said, still looking surprised.

“Your powers combine perfectly to deal with the undead. I want you three to cut through the undead army and in general be a nuisance, but stay at the edge,” I said, ignoring my desire to introduce the three in a far more familiar manner. Unfortunately, Cornelia’s situation was too dangerous to be delayed, so I had to leave that for the future.

“But, we need to march at the center to save Cornelia—” Marianne started, but I cut her argument off with a gesture.

“No, I’ll handle that, I promise,” I said. She looked unwilling, but she still nodded, trusting me to handle it.

I was glad for that, because controlling a rebellious goddess would have been a very troubling challenge.

With that, I departed. I had an angry goddess of fire to save.

—

{Strength: 190 Charisma: 190

Precision: 190 Perception: 204

Agility: 190 Manipulation: 201

Speed: 190 Intelligence: 254

Endurance: 268 Wisdom: 230}

{Purified Divine Spark: 913,221}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge

Goddess of Healing}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Five

As I rushed toward the fire tower, I didn't neglect creating a small mana subdimension for my three goddess, linking directly with the Primordial Aether to provide them with more mana than they could control.

It was needed, as once we dealt with the ambush, the undead responded with more force. I could count more than a hundred avatars surrounding them, and at least three gods that approached them.

And, that was their share. An even bigger force was moving toward the tower of fire, mixing with the other members of the Eternals. I was so lucky that the majority of the Eternals were actually escaping the battle, some feeling strong enough to be a serious threat.

With the System unreachable, their courage faltered significantly. I didn't sympathize with them, as every single one of them had some kind of Divine Spark, and they could have easily fought against the tide. Instead, they relied on their disposable undead underlings while they chose to stay in their estates, which allowed the elementals to penetrate the city far more.

It was hard to pity them, when they let monsters kill people for hundreds of years just to speed up Divine Spark generation.

I slowed down to keep my approach concealed, as a considerable number of Eternal warriors and mages surrounded the place, ready to act. Luckily, behind me, the battlefield was getting more heated as the girls put their infinite mana to good use.

Mariel took the point, using her aggressive light attacks to vaporize the strong undead that could threaten them with precision, while Marianne's unique spark was perfect for area effect, dealing with the weaker horde.

This left Seldanna free to grow a shocking number of treants that she sent forward wave after wave, countering the enemy's number advantage while also entangling any Eternal that wanted to join the mess to support the undead.

Three of them made an excellent anti-undead army.

Sometimes, I loved my luck.

Unfortunately, even with my luck, pushing through the army that was trying to cut through the fire elementals that tried to defend the tower wasn't easy. Though, as I moved forward, an

Eternal flew back, bisected. I checked his trajectory, and at his start point, I found a familiar figure.

Aviada.

She changed during her long absence but also stayed the same. Her shiny black hair was longer and gathered to a braid, and she wore a full plate armor that was made the same style as Marianne's, but otherwise, she was the same. At least, physically.

She still had her family sword, but it was glowing with some kind of mysterious inner fire, every swing enough to take down an Eternal.

We had clearly underestimated the potential of her sword. It had some kind of Divine Spark inherent to its metal. It was hard to define, but Sword Spark wasn't a bad definition. Maybe Cutting Spark would be more accurate.

It didn't just cut physical stuff. Every swing of her cut even magic, no matter how strong. Truly a fascinating weapon.

It even had its own domain. Fairly small, but robust enough to cut any other domain that was trying to push against hers.

To make her even more dangerous, she had her own spark empowering her. It was harder to detect, but it felt more like some kind of physical improvement, mostly Strength and Agility with a sprinkle of Speed, allowing her to move far faster even though she was merely a pseudo-goddess.

A devastating combination.

I wanted to talk with her, but unfortunately, that was not exactly possible. Instead, I moved slightly away from the battlefield, and summoned Oeyne's avatar while communicating with her.

"It's a mess in here," Oeyne said the moment she appeared.

"I need you to support Aviada," I asked. There was a reason I left Oeyne out of the anti-undead team, even though her abilities would mix excellently to empower the treants Seldanna was growing.

Aviada trusted Oeyne. After all, she was the one who introduced me to Oeyne in the first place.

“It looks like a mess,” Oeyne said, but she didn’t ask any more questions. She knew that it was a dangerous situation.

I needed to help her a bit more. I cast a spell to pull any metal that was currently discarded and ownerless to her, and at the same time, created a defensive position with her with its own forge. “Create confusion,” I asked her.

A goddess of the Forge was not exactly the ideal combatant, but with the defenses I created for her, and Aviada’s help to harry any dedicated attacker, she could provide some valuable distraction. And, even if she failed, she was only here as an avatar.

A defeat might be crippling to any other goddess, but as long as we were victorious, I could help her absorb more Spark.

I didn’t stay helping her communicate with Aviada. I didn’t trust Aviada ... well, I trusted her to help me and not attack me. I just didn’t trust her to hide her reaction to my presence, or not to alert the whole enemy army to my presence due to sheer surprise.

She had always been excitable and aggressive, and expecting that to get somehow more manageable after the clear power-up she managed to gain... No, that would be stupid. Instead, I stayed at the corner, watching her battle against some of the other threats while Oeyne rapidly forged several golems, her divine domain making it far easier.

It wasn’t the most ideal way of using mana on the battlefield, but I couldn’t afford to summon Helga.

She still needed to discover the real core of the System, a task she was uniquely suited for.

Aviada confirmed the accuracy of my guess soon enough when the golems started marching. “Oeyne,” she declared happily the moment she noticed her presence, not noticing the potential additional risk she had exposed Oeyne.

I vaguely felt a sense of disapproval from her sword. It was subtle, but I didn’t think that it was just an illusion.

However, while the possibly-sentient nature of her sword was important, it wasn’t urgent. So, I ignored it as I carefully floated closer to the tower. Bypassing the Eternal army was easy, especially when they started to pay too much attention to Aviada and Oeyne.

The elementals were more of a challenge, but my extended experience with fire magics helped

there. I pulled the flames around me, and with a layer of darkness magic underneath. Combined, I registered as an elemental to their mindless rage.

And, they lacked the intelligence to question why one of their members had been rushing to the opposite side of their mindless rush, toward the tower.

Of course, while it was a simple trick, it was certainly not easy. Elemental flame was a completely different challenge than ordinary fire magic, and without my ridiculous stats, I could never control them directly.

Using them to attack my enemies would have been easy ... but controlling them tightly enough that they wouldn't touch the darkness layer underneath while letting them burn outward freely was much more difficult.

Pure elements were strong enough to burn through magic if touched, so I couldn't just ward it. Any ward that was strong enough to actually block the flames would alert both the elementals and the Eternals to my presence, ruining the whole point of stealth.

But, after my recent improvements, it worked perfectly. Combined with Aviada's distraction, I arrived at the tower.

The tower itself was the most marvelous magic object I had ever seen. Too bad it was completely shattered as the elemental lord it was supposed to be containing raged. I climbed, only to see one of the most amazing, yet scariest sights I had ever seen.

Cornelia, naked as the day she was born, wrapped in flames. Her eyes were closed and she looked frozen, the flames actually invading her.

I prepared to interfere. Whatever that was going on, it was not good news.

—

{Strength: 190 Charisma: 190

Precision: 190 Perception: 204

Agility: 190 Manipulation: 201

Speed: 190 Intelligence: 254

Endurance: 268 Wisdom: 230}

{Purified Divine Spark: 913,221}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge

Goddess of Healing}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Six

The battle raged outside as I walked toward Cornelia, still trying to decide what to do. The decision would have been easy if the thing that was invading her soul was anything but Elemental Spark. My experience with Titania showed just how difficult it was to handle.

And, that was just a sliver of energy instead of the flood Cornelia was dealing with. A flood that was being consciously driven by intelligence. The flames that surrounded her didn't burn her, but I had a feeling that it could be changed at any moment.

The smart thing to do was to turn back and leave Cornelia to her fate. Instead, I cast a spell against the flames. Nothing impressive, just a mere bolt of flame, mixed with Tantric magic. "I come to parley," I said.

HOW DARE YOU!

It didn't make a sound, yet the intent was clear. It wasn't like the message from the System, which was overwhelming but featureless, barely enough to be discerned as female. It felt like the sky had been covered with burning letters instead.

"I dare because I represent the biggest hope of your freedom," I answered, feeling the greatness of the sealed entity. This time, a flame attack rushed toward me, covering me as well. I was ready to create a barrier made of several Divine Sparks, enough to isolate the flame, but it didn't burn.

The silhouette of a bird, made entirely of flames, appeared in my mind. "I am a primordial being of flames. Look at my form and despair!"

She sounded furious, but somehow, I felt a hint of desperation as well. Not shocking. If I was guessing correctly, she had been captured and used to fuel the protections of a city, likely being experimented in the process. Hardly the most comfortable life.

I could extract herself from my grip, that much I was sure. Tantric might not have broken down Elemental Spark immediately, but it still worked wonders to isolate and protect my soul. Even better, by reaching me like that, I was able to pass through the outer defenses and was able to reach Cornelia's soul.

Just like her body, her soul was surrounded by flames, slowly being infused by Flames. I was glad that I intervened. A few more minutes, and she would have turned into a vessel.

I reestablished the connection between us, reaching to her soul while keeping the angry bird unaware. Instead, I decided to distract her by speaking. "You can show off, or we can make a deal," I offered, immediately changing the topic.

I was hoping that it would surprise her enough to pay less attention to my magical presence.

"How dare you! I had been born with this universe, far before your disgusting, parasitic ilk invaded the realm to steal and pollute!"

The interesting thing about commuting with a divine being, the conveyed information was not limited to words. As she spoke, images followed. Images that showed a wave of Primordial Aether appearing from nothingness, covering everything.

Or, maybe, creating everything. That emptiness wasn't normal emptiness. It was a true Void, dark, chilling, threatening to devour and destroy everything.

A problem for another time. The images continued, where many elements filled the void, slowly developing a plane, led by four beings. A bird made of flames, a tree made of earth and metal, a turtle made of water, and a cloud, representing air.

Four elements.

Their harmony was broken down by the sudden appearance of a ship cutting through the void at the edge, filled with elves, and bursting into the Primordial Aether. On the ship, there were many Demigods. What followed by fragmented visions of many battles, where humans, elves, angels, and many other beings, each on their own ships while they invaded Primordial Aether.

Some raiding for energy, some invading the Material Plane to turn into gods. The latter faction was led by a Goddess, whose voice was surprisingly familiar.

The System.

"Look, I'm not going to talk about how much of a barbarian my ancestors had been. We have more important things to work on," I countered. "You're clearly struggling, and either I help you in your troubling state, or I do my best to stop you."

Of course, I was not the one to suddenly extend my trust into an unfamiliar being, particularly when it was some kind of Primordial Being with a grudge. An understandable, fair grudge, but a grudge nonetheless.

The moment the connection with Cornelia was reestablished, I sent a flood of Divine Energy into her soul ... and I was glad for it. The situation was even worse than I expected. She was resisting the invasion of Elemental Spark of Flame, but only because of her own Divine Spark of Flames.

The edges were frayed by the Elemental Spark, but that was the least of her problems.

Her soul had been turned into a trap. There was something that was eerily similar to flames, which would have been almost impossible to detect if it was wrapped by Elemental Spark. But, in its core, there was a seed made of Divine Spark.

That Divine Spark wasn't exactly Purified Spark, but close enough. Cornelia was just bait, a delivery mechanism for a corrupting influence. I had no idea what it would have done once it was taken in by that bird, but my guess; it was nothing good.

I strengthened Cornelia's soul as much as possible, helping her to bond with her own Spark better. Ironically, that worked better than what Titania had been dealing with. Titania had to deal with much less Elemental Spark, but after months, it filled her soul completely.

Here, Elemental Spark was just an invader, and could be pushed out.

While I slowly reinforced her soul, I also unlocked the seed, and started examining it. It was an insidious weapon, one that would spread into the Elemental's soul and turn her into a slave. It was very complicated, and even with my Intelligence, I would have had a lot of trouble deciphering it if it wasn't based on the working principles of the System.

And, that was a topic I had great expertise.

"How dare, you pathetic mortal!" she shouted when I ignored her initial answer, and instead attacked me with a similar soul attack, trying to absorb my soul to turn me into another slave.

Big mistake on her part, as it not only slowed Cornelia's corruption, but also distracted her, allowing me to counter-attack.

By using the seed as a weapon. First, I cut its connection with the System, linking to my own unique System. Then, I started to fuel it with millions of mana. It was designed to work slowly, but that was not a drawback. I used my connection with the others to pull mana, and the Seed grew rapidly ... before that being could realize, she was completely infected.

Or, at least, her consciousness that was out of the seal. It cut her connection with her power.

Another chain of changes followed. I felt the city tremble, and at a distance, three towers crumbled ... and three elementals, in their full power, started to wreak havoc in the city. A pity, as I would have loved to capture them as well. Unfortunately, whatever was keeping them in control had crumbled the moment the balance between the four was gone.

They would soon destroy the city.

The flame bird, the one that was closest to escaping, was the only one that stayed imprisoned, but she was split into two. Her consciousness stayed captured by my System, while her power stayed, powering the city.

The flames were gone, and Cornelia collapsed on the floor. "Caesar," she gasped as she looked at me, shocked yet smiling.

"I'm here," I said as I took one step, and kissed her. "I missed you," I added even as I repaired and enhanced her control over her Divine Spark far better. "Now, follow my clone, and retreat back to the material plane," I said.

With three of the elementals free, there was no need to leave them. Worse, I could feel the three freed elementals devouring Primordial Aether with a shocking speed, suggesting that they were yet to recover to their full strength.

I didn't want to be there when they returned.

"What about Marianne?" she asked.

"I already sent clones for her and Aviada as well," I said. With that, I teleported them back to the Material plane.

"How about you?" she asked.

I smirked. "I have one last thing."

—

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Precision: 190 Perception: 204

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Speed: 190 Intelligence: 254

Endurance: 268 Wisdom: 230}

{Purified Divine Spark: 913,221}

{Divine Air Spark: 32,193}

{ADDITIONAL SPARKS

Twilight - Chosen 30

Nature - Chosen 10

Knowledge - Chosen 10}

{GODDESSES

Elven Goddess

Goddess of Knowledge

Twilight Archangel

Goddess of the Forge

Goddess of Healing

Goddess of Flames}

Chapter Three Hundred Twenty-Seven

Watching the battle of the Eternal City was an interesting experience. Almost out of body. With three of the elemental lords freed, they were cutting a swathe through the defenses of the Eternals. I stayed in place, afraid that they might prioritize freeing the fire elemental first; therefore risking the girls while they were retreating.

However, to my surprise, not only did the Elemental Lords ignore the plight of the Fire Elemental, but also they attacked each other whenever they drifted closer.

They were not exactly friends.

Unfortunately for Eternals, their enmity didn't help their defense efforts. The elemental lords, even in their weakened state, were walking embodiments of destruction. They attacked each other, but as their powers clashed, the side effects were enough to eviscerate large parts of the floating city.

As their elemental attacks clashed, the resulting explosion had been enough to destroy large swaths of the city. At a distance, I could see many Eternals trying to reach to the ships, only to fail halfway. A tragedy, but considering everything they had done, hardly undeserved.

I wanted to avoid the chaos, but the mystery of the System was still at the center of the city. As much as I wanted to stay safe, I didn't want to risk the system to fall into the hands of the elemental lords. They looked far too determined, and based on the scenes I had seen after the words of the fire elemental, I doubted that they would be merciful after gaining power.

I might have picked a simpler strategy if we had been able to discover the real location of the System in the material plane, but that was still ongoing. Instead, I took a deep breath, pulled my mana into a tight shield that could handle the aftermath of those great explosions, and rushed forward.

Some of the Eternals were strong enough to notice me, and I had no doubt that, if it wasn't for their focus on escaping, dealing with them would have been very difficult.

It was good to see that my enemies had their own troubles.

Luckily, the elementals didn't share that concern, allowing me to rush to the center of the city, where there was a central obelisk surrounded by a shocking number of wards. Even though quite a bit of them had been shattered under the attacks of the elementals, there was still

enough to create some trouble.

I connected with Helga and pulled an Avatar of hers. "What's going on—" she asked.

"A mess," I said as I pointed to the collapsing wards. "Help me with them," I said, not really having enough time to talk. Instead, we started dealing with the chaotic mess of the wards with the assistance of her unique Knowledge Spark. With that, I passed those wards ... and entered the room.

Only to be teleported into a unique mental space ... I could have resisted it, but instead, I chose to use my magic to blind the entity that pulled me to Helga's presence, which would allow her to track the location of the System core more efficiently.

"You're finally here, my champion," a voice arrived to my ear. A gentle, soft voice, preceding the arrival of a kind, beautiful woman, who also radiated a sexy aura like she wasn't aware of.

I might have fallen for it, if I didn't feel her Divine Spark trying to dive against my System to take control of it. I recognized what she had been doing. She was looking for the traps that I had long removed.

She was competent, but luckily for me, she was powerless. If I were to measure her raw power, it would be merely five points for each stat, maybe even lower. However, even with the disparity of power, if the traps were still in place, I would have been defeated.

I created a few clones of those magical traps, but intentionally jumbled them, giving her the impression that the traps just needed to be repaired. After all, the more she focused on me, the longer Helga would have to track the location.

"Who are you?" I asked, trying to keep her talking.

"I'm the goddess of creation and the System," she answered. Lies, on both accounts, but not unreasonable ones. If it wasn't for that cursed angel forcing me to travel among the planes, I might have even believed it for a time.

Luckily, delaying the talks worked to my benefit. "How could I believe you?" I asked, acting like I was inclined to believe her in the first place, but kept back.

"Watch," she said as she touched my temple, and many scenes flooded my mind. It was similar to what that elemental had shown, but also different. They lacked the vividness of the other scenes, along with an artificial feel.

They were lies, so I didn't pay much attention. I still faked it, giving the impression that I was fascinated, while the mysterious goddess still continued to try and activate the traps she had buried in the System.

At the same time, I was communicating with my girls, who finally arrived at the Material Plane, and currently dealing with an attack from the elementals, whose determination to invade Material Plane increased several times.

A trouble, or, it would have been a trouble, if it wasn't for a message from Helga, informing me that she had discovered the core of the System.

She teleported with a clone of me, which I used to tap into the stores. Considering everything, it had been an easy victory, but I was happy with it. It was much preferable to a merciless, endless battle that cost us our lives.

There were a lot of reserves in the system, enough to be counted in hundreds of millions ... yet, in a way, I felt the amount was too low. After all, it was supposed to represent the reserves collected across hundreds of years.

Eternals must have been using them more than I expected ... either that, or their connection with the other universes was stronger than I expected.

A troubling matter, but it was for the future. Right now, I have a simpler challenge. First, I turned off the System's constant absorption of Divine Spark. I might activate it in the future, but for the moment, it allowed the girls to defend against the Elementals much more easily as they established their domains.

Then, the next problem. What I would do with the Spark in storage. I could devour them to strengthen myself, which would increase my stats several times. Tempting, but still not enough to defend the material plane against the sudden elemental attack.

Luckily, that was not my only option. Instead, I used our connection, and started to channel my power to my girls, using my power to allow them to bond with the excess Divine Spark smoothly.

With that, their speed to establish their Domain got much faster, and the Material Plane was safe. At least, temporarily.

The stores of the System were almost completely depleted when the goddess realized that her traps had been removed long ago. "You!" she shouted in anger, attacking me.

“Me,” I said with a chuckle as I grabbed her hand. “What about it, miss inter-dimensional invader?” I said with a chuckle. Then, while maintaining my grip, I dispelled mental space, and forced her into a physical body.

It was made of mana, essentially an inferior avatar I could dispel just as easily. “You know,” she said, her voice resigned. “Kill me,” she added, opening her arms.

I chuckled. “No hurry,” I said with a chuckle as I grabbed her, and finally teleported away from the Eternal City, leaving the place for the battle between the Elementals and the Eternals, ignoring the temptation of trying to deal with the Elementals when they were weak.

I doubted that it could be achieved easily.

“What are you going to do with me —” she started, but before she could complete it, I sealed her again. No need to complicate things further.

Instead, I teleported to the System core, leaving my girls to deal with the Invasion.

I had a System to assimilate ... and then.

The future was limitless.