With a directed cleave, my sword slams into the hard hide of an enemy minotaur, slicing through the hairs, ripping into the skin and muscle.

The minotaur screams, its eyes burning in anger towards me. The damage had been superfluous. They are ‘meat shields’ as Commander Quasi had stated, a term used for a being which can take hits and keep fighting. He had said something similar about his own group but instead using the term ‘tank’.

My opponent roars, spit flying out of his mouth as he lifts his wooden club to the side and swings with a force that could shatter stone.

My eyes focus upon my foe in his entirety. The movement of his muscles, direction of the attack… his size.

Before my defeat at Quasi’s hands, I would have taken that hit directly to my scales, believing myself capable of shrugging it off.

My tail flicks, grounding me in a quarter of a second.

But Quasi has taught me that fighting isn't about being able to withstand the opponent's strikes.

I bend my legs and raise my shield, coiling my muscles, tensing them, my large scales scraping apart at each other.

He had taught me...

And like a coiled snake, I extend my legs, my shield ripping forward with the weight of my entire body.

That fighting...

“[Shield Bash]!”

Is about your opponent not being able to withstand your defense!

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMMMM

Darrow’s black shield, created from the scales of the dungeon boss Lacerta, rips forward, the air whistling behind it, impacts the giant tree branch being used as a weapon. The branch shatters completely, not slowing the shield down one bit. The skill enhanced shield continues forward,

impacting the minotaur's hands, bending and breaking them as though they were made of twigs. And even then, his shield barely slows, going forward still, slamming into the minotaur's chest.

The sound of bone cracking is heard as the chest indents before physics seems to take over and the six hundred pound minotaur goes flying into another group of them, knocking them down, possibly breaking something in the process.

Quickly regaining his footing, Darrow takes a moment to look around the battlefield, finding that his people are battling the minotaurs well.

His group specifically, the 'Heavy Infantry', are leading the majority of the assault. As he had taught them, they are absorbing the hits from the minotaurs with their shield while attacking them if they get distracted by Thorous' group. Her group, the 'Fighters', are striking hard and running back behind his heavies, slowly whittling them down. Which is what Quasi had ordered them to do. To avoid killing them as he wants them to join him.

If it was anyone else who asked him to fight an enemy and not kill, he would have told them off. Because in the end, he was sure some of his people would be dead through the fight.

But Darrow holds immense respect for the commander, so he had followed the plan. And to his surprise, nobody had been killed. Hurt, yes. Some of his heavies had been idiotic enough to attempt to block with their body but the commander had implemented several contingencies. The first would be a quick replacement heavy to fight the minotaur. If all are busy, then one of the [Lieutenants] would take over. If they are busy or not in the area, then the flock will descend and end the minotaur's life.

Darrow glances up, watching as the enormous birds circle the battlefield, waiting to be directed with but a thought.

And so far, they have swarmed with impeccable timing, killing two minotaurs. Two of ninety.

But what is more impressive is that the commander is keeping track of the entire army while fighting the enemy [Chieftain].

Darrow looks to the side, eyes gazing towards a location seemingly devoid of trees. His mouth opens in confusion. It takes several moments for him to understand the situation, and another moment to close his mouth.

Standing on a tree, Tessa watches the fight between Quasi and the enemy [Chieftain] unfold. And while it unfolds, she was tasked with relaying orders to the army that Quasi yells to her.

And for the life of her, she can't even remember what orders she had relayed. Because right now, at this moment, she is dripping wet.

A chill goes down her spine, extending to her tail.

The whole fight had been… intoxicating. Many a time through the fight, she had almost fallen off the branch she is sitting on, and only through luck was she able to keep her body in control.

"Would you fucking give up!?" Quasi yells, spinning his staff in his hand, casually walking in circles around the [Chieftain].

It takes a long moment and a bit of effort before she removes her gaze from Quasi and lands it on the [Chieftain].

A Level 31 [Chieftain]. Strong, big, and powerful would be words to describe him before the fight.

But now, the [Chieftain] stands naked. Completely and utterly naked. All of the [Chieftain]'s fur and clothing had been completely cut off by the razor discs dangerously spinning and circling the [Chieftain]'s body.

"NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!" the [Chieftain] yells and attempts to stand, but falls quickly. Both leg tendons have been severed, immobilizing him.

But Quasi rolls his eyes, shaking his head. "Seriously. You've lost. Stop being stupid and give up. You can't win."

The [Chieftain] attempts to stand, falling again before roaring in anger.

"Surrender!" Quasi yells, his voice echoing loudly in the clearing, getting the attention of both sides of the battle.

"NOOOOOOOO! I FIGHT!" yells the [Chieftain]

Quasi frowns, eyes growing calm and sad, a look Tessa had never seen before. A look of seeming disappointment.

Sigh

"Then die."

At those words, the discs accelerate towards the [Chieftain], ripping into flesh, cutting and slashing. The [Chieftain] roars in pain, blood splattering the hair covered ground. His roars of

pain get louder and louder, the battlefield quickly going silent, overtaken by the [Chieftain]'s screams. A moment passes and the screaming stops, the [Chieftain] dead and his corpse completely mutilated while the area is coated with his blood.

Quasi turns to the battlefield, to his audience.

"**Your leader is dead. You are mine!**" he yells before turning around and ordering one of his birds to land, allowing him to mount it and take flight.

As the [Hero] leaves, silence continues for several moments, only broken by a loud moan, followed by a crash.

****

Looking up, Jessica hears the wingbeats of Quasi's minion, expecting to find another injured Gajen she needs to heal. Instead, she finds Quasi landing with a sad expression on his face. The fact that he is here and not directing the army can only mean that the battle had ended.

He lands and dismounts before giving me a troubled look.

"What happened?" I ask, unsure what else to say. To her, he looked like he was defeated.

He sighs.

"The battle… did not go as planned," he says softly, moving next to her and grabbing a piece of cooked meat.

But he's a [Hero]. Heroes never lose. Or maybe one of the [Liughtenants] had died. He's grieving.

"So… who died?" she asks, thinking on the possibility.

Thorous seems too capable to die, especially considering her new class. Darrow is probably just as hard to kill. Lilly is a possibility, but so is Tessa. Though he might be crying if it was her considering he might have stronger feelings for her…

"The stupid enemy [Chieftain] did," he exclaims before ripping into the meat as though it had insulted him.

"Do not mourn your enemy," a voice calls out behind her. Quickly looking back, she finds Zorren sitting, gazing at the [Hero]. He had been tasked with protecting her. Not that anything happened in the meantime.

“I’m not mourning his ass! I’m upset that I had to kill him,” he yells out, partially chewed food still in his mouth. ”He was supposed to give up and join me. He would have been a leader of my minotaur group.”

Jessa raises an eyebrow, “But what about Grognak?” she asks.

Quasi stops and starts coughing, a piece of food coming out of his mouth in the process.

“Hell no. I don't care that the idiot somehow got a class upgrade to [Squire]. What is he going to be? A [Knight]? I mean sure, he gained two points of intelligence, but that just means he is less stupid. Still stupid though.”

“But he at least tries.” she voices.

Quasi snorts, ”You mean that time he tried to copy Thorous as she practices her forms? He tripped and fell into the fire, burning himself.” Quasi shakes his head, “That's why I gave him to Marcia. She seems like she can use him for labor.”

The [Hero] takes a deep breath and looks at the surrounding area. Already the stumps of trees for their forward base are starting to grow back. By the time his army and the new recruits return, they will need to trim the trees down again. And then, if there is time, travel to where the females of this new tribe are and have them join him as well.

“Anyways, I'm going to fly and try to scout the other side of the dungeon. Hopefully, I can find a couple more tribes to add to my army.” Quasi says before mounting his bird and waving away at Jessica.

She frowns and looks towards the direction of where the battle had taken place, expecting a lot of work for her when they arrive.

A sad smile forms on her lips as a thought passes through her mind.

At least this time I won't have anyone die in my arms

****

Pissed. It's been a while since I have been pissed off. Why couldn’t he just give up? Why the hell is the leader so goddam aggressive. Is it because he is stupid? Possibly, but that should make it easier for me to manipulate them. A ten-minute battle took an entire hour. It should have been easy. But it wasn't because the [Chieftain] seemed to have unending morale…

Fuck. Could it have been a skill? Did I just waste my time removing all of his fur for nothing?

...

“Damn. That's probably it. I’m such an idiot.”

Funny how my confidence has a tendency to backfire. Here I am, making complicated plans to overtake a small army of minotaurs with a priority to obtain the leader’s loyalty, but I failed. I’m not used to failing. My plans are always on point. Here, the rules are similar, but I forgot the defining feature of this world. A feature that is excessively new to me…

Now that I think about it, a world with game-like mechanics is something completely new to me. It would be understandable that I would not be able to fully implement the system into my own plans. Especially considering I can't actually figure out what skills another person has.

I mean, I could guess, but I’m lacking a immense amount of information.

“Huh… did I just make myself feel better?”

The wind buffets my face, a nice breeze considering the humid air.

“Yup… apparently, I did.”

I shake my head, a goofy smile forming on my face.

“Well, let's see If I can really make myself feel better.”

Status

Level Up x 1 You are now a Level 50 [Necromancer] New Skill Awarded: [Corrosive Fog]

[Corrosive Fog] Create a concentrated acidic fog that destroys flesh but leaves bones untouched.

Level Up x 2

You are now a Level 41 [Noble]

New skill awarded: [Stable Posture]

Error. Skill mastery exceeded. Upgrading Skill.

[Stable Posture] is enhanced to [Stabilizing Presence]

[Stabilizing Presence]

Your presence alone brings confidence to your allies, greatly increasing allied morale while reducing the strength of negative mental effects. Range scales with Soul. Strength scales with Willpower.

Quasi Eludo

Level 50 [Necromancer]
Level 37 [Hero]
Level 41 [Noble]
Level 34 [Enchanter]

Raise Undead
Advanced Analyse
Skeletal Renewal
Enhanced Undead
Bone Telekinesis.
Advanced Mana Sense
Enchant
Enhanced Structural Enchantments.
Undead Eyes
Undead enrage
Lightless Undead
Minor Undead Modification
Create Skeletal Guardian
Split Concentration
Converging Mana
Enhanced Trainer
Create Skeletal Warrior
Minor Mana Efficiency Enchanting
Stabilizing Presence.
Corrosive fog

Strength	23
Dexterity	37
Stamina	32
Perception	246
Endurance	14
Vitality	227
Mana	1018
M/regen	3.9
Affinity	13
Intelligence	490
Willpower	3047
Soul	4143

“Aw fuck. Really? Damnit.”

The fuck am I going to do with a [Corrosive Fog] skill? Am I just going to stand there and wiggle my fingers while gas comes pouring slowly from them?

Frowning, I order my mount to stop and hover. The air quickly dies down, humidity returning in force.

I extend my arm, mentally activating my skill as a cloud of gray gas forms in my hand. It flows out towards a direction, but slowly. A speed slightly lower than someone who would be speed walking, but slightly faster than someone who is just walking.

Hmmm, the spell seems to fluctuate on continuous mana cost. Maybe if I increase it…

A third of my mana pool is shoved into the the spell, quickly turning the spell a dark purple before shooting out. This time, the gas disperses less and travels significantly faster.

And thanks to my keen eyes, I understand why. Part of the gas had condensed into a liquid in my hand thanks to the extreme amount of mana.

“Awesome, I just created an acid flamethrower.”

But my excitement disappears quickly.

“This is mana inefficient,” I say, watching as the gas slowly eats away at the trees and leaves.

Its effect is also very freaking slow. I don't want to wait an hour for something to die.

Sighing and shaking my head, I look at my other new skill.

[Stabilizing Presence]

I nod bitterly. The skill is certainly useful. A perfect skill for someone leading an army. But it’s also really boring. All I have to do is stand sexy and everyone fights harder.

Not that they need a skill for that. They already do that on their own. All the females are trying to prove themselves into my bed while the males are mostly masochists.

Not even the minotaurs need my skill. They're too stupid to stop fighting anyways.

Sigh

“And now I’m pissed again.”

Rolling my eyes at my mood swings, I order my mount to accelerate once more, aiming to get some long distance scouting done. I also increase the amount of mana that the slave ring is taking, drastically increasing its range. Unfortunately, that Is all I am comfortable doing since messing with it could cause Jessica’s death.

****

Marcia gazes strongly, watching intently as the structures are built. Her tail flicks out in annoyance. Her annoyance stems from the lack of speed in which the construction is progressing. Though the minotaurs are strong and powerful, able to lift the wood with ease, they are sorely lacking in other areas. Areas requiring precision. Even the females of the species have a hard time cutting straight.

At the very least, Marcia is glad that the walls were done, massive spiked things of wood. They extend thirty feet from the ground, bordering the forest. She had asked Quasi if it would be better to instead just wall off the forest to maximize space, and he had told her that the idea was amazing and that she was a genius.

The praise was, if Marcia was being honest with herself, very captivating. Unfortunately, her advanced age as well as possibly living mate restricts her from accepting courtship. But of course, as a female Gajan, she cannot help but have feelings for her commander. His potential is just excessively amazing.

“Marcia,” yells a voice, taking her attention from her dirty thoughts.

She turns to the voice and finds Grognak, a young minotaur who dreams of becoming strong.

“I cut logs straight.” he says, showing her several logs that have indeed been cut correctly, something even the females of his kind could barely do.

When Quasi had handed Grognak to her, she at first thought she was being punished. She was angry, upset even. She believed that Quasi was trying to make her life needlessly harder for not being able to build fast enough. She was confused.

But those worries all went away when she realized that it was completely the opposite. Though yes, Grognak is just as dumb as the rest of his male kind, he is still far superior, possibly more than even his mother.

“What do now?” he asks with a broken speech which has actually improved slightly since yesterday.

And all of that has to do with his class of [Squire]. It is clear to her now that Quasi had known how impressive the [Squire] class is. Such a class, if she is guessing correctly, allows one to learn quickly from someone of a much higher level than them. Thus, by slowly making Grognak do more and more complicated tasks under her direction, then he will gain levels while also becoming smarter.

If she is to guess, then she believes that Quasi wants her to raise Grognak into a leader of his kind. Truly, the man thinks several times ahead.

Flicking her tail out in delight, she points towards a home slowly being built by her group. The ‘workers’.

“I want you to talk to Decant. He is a [Builder] and ask him to show you how to create fasteners.” she says.

“Fasteners, fasteners, fasteners,” Grognak repeats so that he does not forget. He trudges quickly forward, towards her [Builder].

Marcia nods, watching as Grognak slowly becomes smarter. Eventually, with time, his intelligence will exceed his mother’s.

Turning away, she looks at the buildings which have been built under Quasi's specifications. The building would not at all be considered attractive, but such a thing is moot to her considering how stable the architecture is. At the far back is a massive building, a place to house meat, both dry and fresh. Farther up, very close to the entrance to the first dungeon floor is a building. A residence with which Quasi will sleep while being able to see his entire city that he is building.

A city she is proud of to be leading the creation of. She had decided to follow and help as much as she can so she can see her mate again. Her mate, a Gejan who had left and is possibly on the sixth floor.

Her kind have attempted to make many cities before, but those were usually on the first floor and they always found themselves overrun. The only reason that her home is still standing is because of the light which scares the desbats. But here. Here she can see the start of a new city. A massive city that can and would dwarf her home.

A new land for her kind.

Her tail smacks the ground, slightly denting it, her excitements and thoughts traveling every which way. With more energy than she knows what to do with, she starts walking down to assess how the building making is coming. After all, Thorous did beg her to make homes as soon as possible.