Naturally, I accepted the evolution prompt right away. Dragon Shifter had become a hallmark of my fighting style. Whenever I entered a draconic form centered around a particular skill, that skill became vastly improved. I could only eagerly await the final evolution of this skill.

For a moment, I was taken out of my draconic form, the skill reverting me to my true appearance as it evolved. Once it did so, I was greeted with the new skill, Dragon King. Was it just me, or did a lot of skills have King in their name when they reached the final evolution?

Reading the description of the skill didn't really help me, either. 'Become the king of dragons, bearing a natural authority over other dragons and wielding their skills'. Did that mean that this skill had become a control skill against other dragons? No, that couldn't be right.

Mind control effects simply didn't exist to that degree. There were skills that could control the body, but nothing that could control the mind to the degree of commanding loyalty. This was one of the impossible fields of magic that had long since been abandoned, along with manipulating time.

Then, what could that description mean? Unsure what to expect, I decided to activate the skill to try it out. If I couldn't figure anything out, I would teleport to the dragon nation to see if there was a change in how they treated me.

As soon as I activated the skill, I noticed an immediate difference. The skill did not prompt me to choose another skill to channel like it usually did. Instead, I took on the form of a large, golden dragon. This form was almost twice as big as the form that I was used to when taking on my draconic appearance, making me appear as a symbol of terror for my enemies. Or, at least, I could hope so.

However, the fact that it did not prompt me for any skill caused some concern. It didn't make sense for it to lose the skill amplification effect of a previous evolution. After all, skill evolutions should always build off of their previous forms, rather than removing and replacing their abilities. That was the entire benefit to evolving skills in the first place.

So, I decided to test it further by activating one of my skills, Shadow Forge. I focused on creating a simple longsword, but making it a permanent creation. Once I did so, I watched as my shadow congealed, forming into the sword that I had envisioned. The response was instantaneous, making me wonder if there was anything unusual.

Then, I decided to observe myself with Roaming Sentries. Dozens of invisible eyes floated out of my scales, turning to observe me at once. This time, the effect was more obvious. I should have only been able to create two or three sentries at the same time, needing to focus on continuously creating more.

In other words, the evolution effect of Dragon King means that the skill amplification affects all skills? I thought to myself, recalling the wording of both Dragon Shifter and Dragon King.

Dragon Shifter said that it would allow me to transform into and wield the power of one dragon, while Dragon King implied that it wielded the power of *all* dragons.

This made me question internally, were all normal dragons just focused towards specific skills? In other words, maybe the black dragon Drake was a race of dragon that was focused towards a specific type of shadow skill? And if that dragon found the skill that their species represented, they would gain increased power with it.

That would explain why Motan just loved firing off meteors. I wasn't sure if I ever saw him use another skill, aside from his fire breath. If the skill that his draconic species focused on was his meteor skill, it made perfect sense.

And, if this was the case, it would further answer another question I had about my own transformation. Originally, I didn't know if using my enhanced skills would have caused any mana burden. This wasn't something I had any way of measuring for myself, but the answer became clear if my theory was correct. After all, I knew that Motan burned his mana when summoning meteors.

Additionally, if Dragon King allowed one to turn into a form where every skill was free to cast, that would be too powerful even for a grandmaster skill. Though, this did raise a question regarding other dragon skills like Diane's. If the true dragon line didn't discount mana burden, why did the branch lines?

The only thing that I could think of was that this was a trade-off for consuming specialized skills during evolution. In exchange for losing the ability to become other types of dragons, their affinity for that one type of skill was significantly enhanced.

Shaking my head, I cleared my thoughts. This was not the time for me to be theorizing over the origin of dragons. I had to keep working on training my puppet creation skill until morning.

So, that's exactly what I did, casting aside my previous line of thought and focusing purely on my training. With my increased experience gain, it didn't take long before both Puppet Design and Puppet Artisan evolved, becoming Customize Puppet and Spawn Puppet respectively.

After my design skill evolved, I was given access to more in-depth tools for creating puppets. For instance, I could designate different parts of the puppet and enchant it with a skill. So long as the puppet's creator had that skill, it would be automatically enchanted on the puppet when created according to the blueprint.

Alternatively, I could create an internal series of strings and pulleys, allowing the entire puppet to be controlled through a single anchor point. This gave the puppet far less weak points, but also meant that just targeting one wire cluster could bring down the whole thing, as opposed to just a single limb.

For now, I created the internal network, and also began layering skills onto the Diane puppet. On its cloak, I put my Beyond the Veil skill, letting Diane hide it at will or make it phase through objects. Then, on its hands, I enchanted the Shadow Forge skill to let Diane create weapons on the fly with her puppet.

This was undoubtedly the most advanced puppet that I could create at the moment. Thankfully, there was another option that had been added to Customize Puppets, allowing me to customize the material that the puppet blueprint required. I imagined that this was to let designers create mithril or orichalcum puppets, or puppets made with the bones of certain monsters.

For myself, I flipped through the materials, stopping when I found one that surprised me: Ki. Was this an option because of my Spawn Puppet skill, or was Ki always a viable material? I couldn't understand how a craftsman would build a puppet out of it normally, but this worked perfectly for me.

Once morning came, I spotted Diane leaving her inn room through one of my sentries, ending my training to teleport back to the inn. When she pushed open the door, she paused, looking at me. "You didn't get any sleep, did you?" she asked in a suspicious tone.

I simply put on a wry smile, spawning the new puppet that I had made for her. "I was a little busy working on this," I answered, before explaining the new functions that I had installed.

Diane perked a brow, walking over and examining the puppet. Currently, I was holding it up with my Shadow King skill, not wanting it to just collapse to the ground. That would somewhat ruin the atmosphere.

She lifted one of its hands, feeling the joints. Beneath the black cloth of the gloves, there were still distinct wooden joints, but I had done my best to make sure that all of the joints had been covered. The only exposed skin was the upper half of the face, and even that was hidden behind the hood Diane always wore.

Diane continued her inspection of the puppet for a few minutes before nodding her head in satisfaction. "I'll do some practicing with this one, then. It would be nice to raise my skill level to the point where I could deploy it in battle, even if it is just a temporary distraction."

I could understand what she meant. This was a fairly new skill, even by Diane's standards. I didn't know if she had done any puppeteering in her other games before this one, or if this would be her first experience with it. Either way, the skill's level was too low to do complex maneuvers in battle right now.

"Why don't you see if Steward Roku will let you use the Skill Simulation Platform?" I asked, and Diane hummed thoughtfully.

“I might, after I get a hang of how the skill works myself. I don’t want to train it without *actually* training it. By the way, can you make puppet versions of yourself and Bella, as well? You never know when it might come in handy to throw out a distraction like that.”

I blinked, thinking about it. “I could maybe do one of Bella. As for myself, I’m not sure how viable it would be. My skills can’t really be replicated with a puppet the same way that Bella’s can.”

I could create a rifle as part of the puppet body, but I couldn’t create a puppet that would throw out skills like I do. And if I did, Diane wouldn’t be able to support it with her mana.

“Just Bella, then,” Diane said, and we heard a door open down the hall, accompanied by a low yawn.

“What about Bella…?” the elf in question asked, wiping her eyes as she appeared in front of my door. She looked at the puppet version of Diane, and then to the real one. Then, she looked at me, giving me the same accusation that Diane had originally. “You didn’t get any sleep, did you?”

I rolled my eyes with a groan. “In *other* news, my dragon skill reached the grandmaster rank while I was training,” I told them, before informing them of the changes in the skill, as well as my conjectures about the nature of dragons that came from it.

Diane looked thoughtful again, seeming to think that my theory held merit, while Bella was just bewildered. “So now your dragon form is even bigger? You definitely won’t be able to use it for indoor dungeons anymore, right?”

“Probably not,” I shook my head, unable to refute the claim. If there was an indoor dungeon where I could maintain that form, I would have to be even more concerned about what lived there to warrant such a size. “At least, not unless I get some kind of skill to reduce my size. Though, that doesn’t really seem like a practical skill, now that I’m thinking about it.”

“It could be, depending on the benefits,” Diane countered. “There could be a skill that exchanges size for speed. You might lose a bit of physical strength, but your combat effectiveness hasn’t relied on physical strength for a long time.”

“Either way, I think I should let you two know. The next big patch is in three weeks, and some of the highlights were just announced.” This caught the attention of both Bella and myself, who snapped to look at Diane.

“First, as I’ve said before, the main content of the patch is a player dungeon. This update likely won’t affect the two of you too much, but it will be important for Bella to know about it. The dungeon creation aspect is essentially a side-game. These dungeons won’t appear in any location within the game world, but any player can challenge a dungeon created by another player at any time.”

“If they do so, they’ll get rewards like experience or loot from that dungeon as per normal. Meanwhile, the dungeon’s owner earns points based on how effective their dungeon is. With those points, they can enhance their dungeon with new mobs or mechanics. You can only put mobs in the dungeon that you have defeated in the main game, and their cost is dependent on their combat power.”

“For instance, Drake here is only level one. However, if someone were to kill him, his combat power would certainly not be appraised from just that. But we are *definitely* not turning him into a dungeon boss. If we did, there is the chance that someone might set up a dedicated farming team to try to farm his trait. Like with normal dungeons, boss monsters in player dungeons do have a low chance to drop their traits.”

My eyes widened at that. Thinking back, I couldn’t recall any players that had killed me before, so hopefully I wouldn’t be appearing as anyone’s dungeon boss.