

Chapter 4 - Hack Apart! The Ground Spider

Leaving Nibrel Village, we return to the governmental seat of the margraviate without any incidents. Shea and I directly head for the guild to report the success of our wyvern subjugation. However, the report of a subjugation report feels unexpectedly thorough.

First we hand in the completion form signed by the village chief of Nibrel Village, the requester. Then we get interviewed by a guild staff member. The questions are quite detailed, revolving around the circumstances of the site after our arrival, the size of the killed wyverns, their ferocity, and the spawn condition of magic beasts in the vicinity. Of course, it's Shea who replies most of them.

"The wyverns were plump and fat. They had already eaten five people," and so on, she answered in a way showing that she's already accustomed to such questioning.

I'm stuck only nodding at her words.

The guild gathers information from the hunters it dispatched to various places, and draws up reports about the magic beasts' activity level, their ferocity, and their progress of invasion into inhabited areas. This allows them to comprehensively analyze the situation in all of Wildinne. I'm told that this is yet another important duty imposed on the guild.

"How was that? If there's something you don't understand, feel free to ask anytime." Ms. Sarah addresses me with a smile, seemingly having paid attention to me who has remained silent for the entire conversation.

Should I take her up on that offer? I mean, there's so much stuff I don't really get...

"I've been wondering about it before, but what are those six calamities you've mentioned the other day?"

"Oh, so that's where we've got to start. For a long time, it's been said that there are six big calamities in the Wildinne Region. Floods, thunderstorms, droughts, and in addition to those, three magic beasts. Magic beasts that reach a certain level are the same as natural disasters or calamities for humes. You could say, encountering them is bad luck as it means certain death."

"I see. So that's why calamities."

"Yep. The Undead Dragon which swallows entire cities by causing a tidal wave or explosively increasing the number of undead, and the Lion King which has never been injured by anyone so far. Then there was Bilrutong the Black Dog which was killed by Ms. Shea. It's said that Bilrutong bit 2500 hunters to death until that point...meaning, Ms. Shea is really amazing." Ms. Sarah explains while looking very happy.

However, Shea glares at her as if completely pissed off by her words.

"Stop it. It's not like I killed it by myself. I was just lucky enough to be a survivor among my party. I don't want this to be seen as my own achievement."

"Still, surviving in a huge party of 200 people..."

"Enough of this. Teo, we're going to choose the next quest." Arbitrarily stating this, Shea starts to walk off at a quick pace.

"So quickly?"

"It's not quick or anything. I've always had some quest going." Shea scrutinizes the currently available quests.

"How about it? See anything you'd like to do?"

"If possible, I don't want to do any of them..."

Of course she doesn't even listen to my plea. Almost all of the wall on the right side of the counter is covered by a bulletin board. That huge, wooden board is chaotically packed with pinned quest notes. She carefully scans the quests while standing on her tiptoes to stretch herself or crouching down, as required.

"Hmm...I see, I guess this one's impossible with our current numbers."

"Yes...this is a condition set by the client, and not the guild. I'm terribly sorry, but I can not do anything about it." The female guild staff, who's been called over by Shea, repeatedly bows while feeling sorry.

It looks like the quest, which has piqued Shea's interest, requires a certain number of people, and as it's only Shea and me in our party, we're lacking in that department... Apparently even a certified hunter like Shea can't overturn such conditions.

Ripping off several other quest notes in a somewhat rough manner, she comes back to where I am.

"None of those are really good. It's quite unusual for this place, but most recently it's been very hard to find decent quests here." Shea spreads the parchments listing the quest details on the round table.

The difficulty is all over the place, ranging from E to B. According to Shea, these are the only quests where we can expect some reasonable reward while being at a level where I won't die.

"The ditch slime cleaning in the Ikraho Water Channels...is an extremely safe option, but if you get touched by those slimes, you'll stink for around ten days, and above all, it's a tedious, boring job... Choosing a boring job or putting Teo's life at danger...I'm really wavering here."

"That's nothing you'd need to waver about, is it!?"

Because of the scarce changes of Shea's expression, it's hard to tell whether she's joking or talking seriously. Either way, I'd appreciate a boring job as I plan to survive at any cost, but Shea seems to regard boring jobs as intolerably 'worthless.' Pushing the parchments with boring quests aside, she's trying to pick up a quest where I could die!

"A better option than this one..."

"Exists!"

Suddenly a voice I've never heard before cuts into our conversation. At the same time, two wooden mugs are placed on our table with a rhythmical clanking.

"Those are my treats. Orange ale. The drink I can recommend the most among those available here."

A single girl has shown up in front of us. She has beautiful, blond hair, a slender body build, and above all, characteristically pointed ears. Without a doubt, an elven girl. The age of elves is hard to guess, but I've got no doubt that she's still young. Her face and figure have traces of childishness left to them. I dare say she's younger than Shea and me.

And there's yet another aspect standing out like a sore thumb besides her youth...her charm. Fair-skinned, blond hair, slender, and emerald eyes - an orthodox, undisputed beauty as typical for elves.

"I'm Elemia. You're the newbie magic blacksmith? You look quite frail, don't you? Do you really have what it takes? Also, long time no see, Lady Shea." The elven girl selfishly goes on with her own story.

"An acquaintance of yours, Shea?"

"No."

"What are you talking about!?! Of course we're acquaintances! We've met at the guild many times!"

"Really?" Shea jerks her head to the side in confusion, apparently having no clue about Elemia.

"A promising archer who's been steadily gaining fame most recently, and a Rank B hunter rumored to possess an excellent taste among elves - Elemia, the Morning Mist Shooter. You must have heard of me, right?" Elemia throws out her chest once more with a triumphant expression.

However, in spite of her exaggerated introduction...

"...Umm, Morning Mist-what?" Shea looks puzzled.

"Morning Mist Shooter! The one said to possess a mind eye allowing her to shoot the head of a worm with just one arrow within heavy mist..."

"Yep, okay, no idea."

She's gone out of her way to explain her own nickname, and yet this reply. This gotta be quite embarrassing for her!

The elven girl's face becomes bright red, all the way up to the tips of her ears.

"Give me the ale back! I'm a pinchpenny after all! Anyway, I've come here because I heard that Black Dog Hunter Shea has finally formed a new party!"

"It's no such big deal. The party only got Teo and me."

"Yep, that's why I'm telling you to let me join you guys. If you do that, it'll allow you to accept a wider range of quests with better pay. This will give you another option you were looking for!"

"I see, but no thanks."

Just as expected, Shea readily turns her down.

"No way...an offer by the Morning Mist Shooter...why?"

"An olden yughul proverb says, 『You mustn't go with a stranger, if they talk to you out of the blue』."

"That's something very normal, passed down among all races! Or rather, we're hunters, and it's commonplace for us to join up for work. And just as I've told you over and over again, I'm not some stranger or anything like that! It's probably the eighth time that we've encountered each other."

"Sorry, but I don't remember you at all."

"Haven't you just forgotten because of the curse!? I've greeted you each time we met in the guild, and I should have made it pretty clear that I'm more than willing to form a party with you. Lady Shea, what's the point in you ignoring people who're giving you such signs when you're completely isolated inside the guild!?"

"It doesn't bear any meaning if you don't speak up about such things." For some reason, Shea responds in a tone, indicating that she's rather regarding this as Elemia's fault.

"Yes, I should have told you directly! But...but, it'd be just normal to realize...seeing how I offered you honey-soaked lemons whenever you looked exhausted, or quickly passed you a cooled towel when you came back from a job under the blazing sun!"

That's too obvious! She's been totally acting like a fangirl who's idolizing her admired senior!

"I was convinced that it was a service offered by the guild."

"There's no way that you'd get such a service in this savage guild, is there!?"

"Now that you mention it. Okay, I'm worse at dealing with other people than magic beasts, but I'll at least greet you from now on." Shea offers an apology that lacks any feelings, and returns to choosing the next quest.

For Shea this story is over with. At least that's what she might believe, but...

"Holy shit, Lady Shea, your communication disorder goes beyond my worst predictions. As I thought, I've got to join this party after all, else it won't work." Elemia tenaciously hangs on, without having learned her lesson at all.

"..."

"Really, Lady Shea, I've got no idea what to do with you. It's terrible that you're so isolated in the guild. That's why I'll help you..."

"..."

"Lady Shea, at least say something. Things will never work out with two people who got communication disorder. Going by your combat style, you definitely need someone to handle ranged attacks, Lady Shea! Isn't it fine to simply accept me as a member!?"

I feel like she casually involved me in there as well just now!

"Don't make me repeat myself. I..."

However, Elemia quickly perceives that Shea is about to turn her down.

"OK, OK, I got it! If you're going this far, I'll tell you my true feelings! I reaaally adore you, Lady Shea! I also want to become a certified hunter. Absolutely, by all means! No matter what, I'll become a certified hunter, even if I have to eat mud! And then I'll obtain a wealthy, decent life. Joining up with you is the best option for that sake. That's why, accept me as your party member!" Elemia turns her passionate look directly at Shea.



It looks like she's the gutsy type of girl with a straightforward character, contrary to the gracefulness of her appearance.

"I've fully understood your feelings. I'm very happy and thankful about you admiring someone like me...but, it's still a no."

"Wait, wait! Lady Shea, let's sort things a bit, okay!? I'm well aware that you're often heading to dangerous places, targeting big game. I'm set on wanting to rise in the world, so I'll greatly welcome any dangerous quest. Also, since I'm an archer, we fit together perfectly. Since you're isolated in the guild, there are no other people that would join a party with you, meaning I'm your only choice. Now then, think it over well. The answer is pretty obvious."

What an incredible pressure! She's unbelievably pushy despite being a pretty elven girl! She's even making sure that Shea can't escape by secretly holding onto her arm under the table.

"I understood your feelings, but no."

"Hey, newbie! Do something about this! Lady Shea is acting strange!" Elemia draws close, suddenly turning the conversation my way.

"Strange, you say. Rather, I think that's the usual Shea."

"In such a case, isn't this now the perfect time for her to say, 『Good grief, it can't be helped』!? Why is she turning me down? Usually one would feel bad when refusing under these circumstances, no!?"

"I think so as well, but...it's Shea we're talking about here."

"No, no, no, even a cursed weapon user who's shunned and feared in the guild should show a bit more of a reaction after being told all this, don't you think!? Hey, come on, Lady Shea, I've told you that I adore you! Please!!" Elemia advertises herself by spreading her arms and overreacting.

"Umm, Elemia was it, right? Your appearance and behavior are completely misaligned."

She's right. Even among the elves with their many beauties, she falls into the category of being extraordinarily attractive. Her outward appearance is like that of a pretty doll, delicate, slim and elegant.

That elf is currently swinging her arms while ferociously appealing herself.

"I don't give a damn about my appearance. My family is poor. I must provide for my little brothers and sisters by making a career! For the sake of taking the shortest route, I have to party with you, Lady Shea! Please!" Her green eyes, shining like jewels, are directly fixed on Shea.

As expected, even Shea should find it hard to ignore her pure passion.

"...Hmm...Teo, it can't be helped. I guess we'll go for the ditch slime cleaning... I don't really feel like it, but whatever."

She has completely disregarded Elemia! Far from having difficulties with ignoring her, she actually denies her very existence!

"Shea, a bit more lee..." I try to interject as I can't simply watch this, but...

"No. Pity kills hunters. Forming a party and becoming all chummy is bad for everyone involved."

"Lady Sheaaa! I'm great at handling trouble."

"It's troublesome for me. Anyway, that's my final word. Teo, let's go with the slime cleaning?"

Forcibly closing this topic, Shea returns to the quest selection. She focuses on the parchments atop the table as if Elemia has vanished out of existence.

"Lady Shea, how about this then? A subjugation of a basilisk." Elemia quickly adds another parchment to the pile.

"Hmm? ...Not bad. There was such a quest available?"

"It was pinned at a conspicuous spot. However, you need to have three people to be accepted."

Now she's trying it from the angle that we'll be able to accept a greater variety of quests if we add her as a party member.

"Hmm, it's overwhelmingly better than the ditch slimes..."

"Hey, newbie! You tell Lady Shea, too! Basilisks are much better than ditch slimes, right!?"

"No, I don't quite understand..."

"Ditch slimes are hell. Thanks to their stench, you'll become unable to live normally in the city for a week. You'll be forbidden from entering restaurants etc. Lady Shea!"

"Hmm..."

With her arms folded, Shea is comparing the basilisk killing quest and the ditch slime cleaning quest with her eyes. She's obviously hesitating.

"Hunt! Give me just one chance! Pweeeaaase! Lady Shea! Hey, pwetty pweeease, Lady Shea!" Looking at Shea with upturned eyes, she pleads with the voice of a spoiled child.

This time she's going with the begging strategy. She sure hangs in there.

Eventually, Shea sighs deeply, "...For just this one quest."

Looking up at the ceiling, Shea has finally caved in!

"Thank you very much, Lady Shea!"

Moreover, half-eaten sheep heads still lay in the grass, obviously not having been cleaned away yet.

"Wait...we're in the middle of another quest."

"I'm well aware of that. It's the basilisks up at the mine, right? The ground spiders have descended the mountain because of the basilisks' appearance. The spiders kill our sheep and cows while also devastating our fields. At this rate, all sheep in our village will be gone. Once that happens, all those living here will be doomed to die from starvation. Please help us somehow..." The village chief bows very deeply while holding a big sickle in his hands which he has been using to reap grass. "Oh, we've stopped letting the cows graze. Now we're feeding them grass after having locked all of them away in the shed. Just how long is this going to continue..."

I'm sure it's quite the heavy labor to harvest enough grass to feed a big number of cattle. Exhaustion is clearly visible on his face.

"That sounds like a tough chore..."

In response to my words, the village chief turns his tired eyes this way, "Please. Of course, we'll reward you, although it'll only be a small amount..."

The chief's face is fairly haggard, and his thin arms look like they are unsuited for swinging a sickle, too. And when looking at the ruined pasture land, I actually feel bad about getting a reward from them.

"Shea, can't we drive the spiders away for them?"

Shea's crimson eyes are fixed on the old man.

"How many spiders?"

"Ten or fifteen...it's the first time in my seventy years that such a number of spiders has come down from the mountain. Moreover, basilisks have shown up at the mine. I wonder whether all of this is some kind of omen for something terrifying being afoot."

"Fifteen ground spiders, huh? That's definitely unusual."

"Please. If this goes on, we'll die as well."

Pity kills hunters - those words mentioned by Shea the other day cross my mind. Decisions based on pity and friendship directly lead to death. I'm sure, just like last time, Shea will...

"No choice. We'll help you."

She easily accepted the village chief's plea!

"That's fine with you? Pity kills..."

"...hunters. I know. But...ignoring an old man in need of help disqualifies one as a person."

"For Lady Shea, known to be an aloof cursed tool user, to help other people...that's unexpected." Elemia frankly spells out her surprise.

"My grandfather raised me as a foster parent since I was little, so I'm somewhat weak when it comes to the requests of the elderly."

"Well, I'll take what I can get, so count me in. But, the problem will be whether we can count this as a supplementary side-quest."

"Supplementary side-quest?"

Elemia is completely flabbergasted by my question.

"Argh, this is why newbies are such a pain. Look, it's not said that you'll only kill the targeted demonic beasts during a quest, right? If demonic beast A is the target, and demonic beast B shows up around A, you must kill B as well. That's a supplementary side-quest. If you petition it with the guild and they approve of it, the reward will increase accordingly." Elemia carefully explains while drawing a figure on the ground with a twig.

"So far as it goes, this village lies at the foot of the mountain. Village chief, you're not in contact with the folks up at the mine? They are not buying stuff at your shops, or recruiting miners down here?"

"Well, rarely, or rather, very rarely they come down here to buy sheep or chicken. Once or twice a year, I'd say."

"Hmm, okay. Let's treat this place as being barely a part of the mine then."

"Elven lady, this here is the Mauser Village, and the mine is..."

"I know, I know. But, us hunters have been dispatched on a quest at the mine."

"Hmm, but this place is..."

"T-h-a-t-'s w-h-y. Village chief, we'll only get paid for the subjugation at the mine. Our destination is the Gilshoot Mine and its related facilities, got it?"

The village chief looks confused. But even he cannot escape Elemia's pushiness.

"Umm...the village will pay your reward."

"It's pointless for you to reward us. I mean, at most you'd give us the healthiest calf of your farm, or some such, right!? But that's of no use to us. I prefer getting paid by the guild. With money, and not calves. And with a proper record for my career and a written report."

"Haah..."

At this point the village chief has given up any resistance, obviously shrinking away from her.

"The ones who are going to defeat the ground spiders are Lady Shea and Morning Mist Shooter Elemia. I'll now teach you how to fill out the documents for the guild, okay? First up is a written application, followed by a report after the spiders are dead. You'll write down that you requested the help of Morning Mist Shooter Elemia and two others, and that your people's lives and assets have been saved after we've completely annihilated the spiders with our magnificent skills."

"Haah..."

"Next you'll tell them that we were polite, conducted ourselves well, and that we didn't break any of the village's property."

"...Understood." The village chief's face clearly shows that he's resolved himself to his fate at this point.

Elemia looks like a bill collector who's come here to extort money rather than a hunter who's come for rescue.

"Okay. With this, a supplementary side-quest has been established. It's a great opportunity for me to show you, Lady Shea, my skills. Ah, and while I'm at it, you as well, newbie. Ground spiders, come and get me! I'm ready for you at any time!" Elemia adopts a daunting pose with the village chief following like her servant.

Given a little bit more time, this vigor would likely lead to the inauguration of a new village chief. Morning Mist Shooter Elemia - even though her archery skills still remain a mystery, her overwhelmingly eager drive and vitality have no equal.



We take a short break after being invited over to the village chief's home. Meanwhile the village chief draws up the written application for the subjugation of the ground spiders under Elemia's strict tutelage. Just when he's almost finished writing the application...

"They're here! The ground spiders have come!" A middle-aged man rushes into the village chief's house.

"So they've come, eh? How many?"

"Umm, fifteen, twenty...a lot!"

Contrary to the man with his ghastly pale face, Shea has remained completely calm and collected. She immediately pulls Corpse Eater and Breaking Bone Mask close.

"Very well, village chief, you and your people are to evacuate to a safe location."

"O-Okay."

"Take care of the report, okay?"

Elemia shoulders her favorite composite bow, and attaches the quiver to her belt. Unlike moments ago, an intense tension hangs in the air.

"We leave the rest to you then..." The village chief bows and hurriedly leaves the house together with the man who's reported the appearance of the spiders.

Shea watches through the window how the two men gradually become smaller as they run away. Once she's confirmed that the villagers have evacuated safely, she heads over to the opposite window, and throws it open.

I feel like the thicket ahead of the broken fence is shaking. I can hear a faint, repeated screeching - a revolting noise as if hard objects are rubbing against each other at a very high speed.

A black shadow jumps out of the thicket with a rustling. A spider! A big one at that!

The spider is far bigger than a hume. Its size looks close to that of a horse. It crawls across the ground at an astounding speed while furiously wielding its long, thick legs.

"I'm heading out." Shea whispers.

Picking up the mantle she had messily thrown on a chair's back, she hides her face by lowering her Breaking Bone Mask. And then she slowly readies <Corpse Eater> in front of her. Violet-black miasma with a slimy viscosity streams out of its blade.

"Teo, there's a lot of spiders. Moreover, it's an unplanned subjugation. I'll have you earn your reward." Shea leaves those words without looking back before running outside.

"Lady Shea, don't you have anything to say to me as well!?" Elemia follows Shea while complaining.

I shoulder the field smith set I've just recently bought, and chase after them.



Leaving the village chief's home, we proceed towards the northern forest and after reaching a small farm barn, we hide ourselves in its shadow.

"We'll ambush them here." Shea's body is glued to the barn's wall, her breath bated. Imitating her, I also hold my breath while standing next to her.

Suddenly we hear the creaking sounds of spiders fiercely grinding their jaws. Because they've gotten as close as several meters from our current position, we can hear them quite clearly.

Shea checks the situation by quietly leaning out of the cover.

A jet-black ground spider. It holds the head of a fallen cow with its two long forelegs. The instant the spider's big jaws snap closed, the cow's head pops open like a squashed ripe fruit.

"Uguuh!" Puke wells up in my throat, but I do my utmost to push it back.

Still, for hunters this scene registers as the moment when their prey shows an opening after getting engrossed with eating. Shea runs up to the spider while circling into its back, jumps, and swings <Corpse Eater> down at its rump.

The spider's body fluids gush as if a hose has been thrown open, dyeing Shea's Breaking Bone Mask blue-green.

"Humph, it's still eating, huh? For it to be so focused on stuffing its mouth with food despite its stomach having been cleaved open..."

The spider continues slurping the cow's brain while its stomach is rapidly losing its contents. Shea stabs <Corpse Eater> into its head.

"Teo, don't move too far away from me. These things have fast legs and easily scale any wall. You'll get caught in no time if you're careless."

Spiders around us are...oh, one's coming from the front!

Shea has already started to run towards it.

"Shea, another one incoming on your right!"

And one more spider charges as if to hurl itself into Shea's flank! It's a pincer attack!

"As if I'd let you!"

An arrow pierces the head of the spider scuttling across the ground at Shea's side.

"Fuck! What the hell's wrong with this thing!?" Elemia nocks another arrow and looses it.

That arrow cleanly hits the spider's head, crossing the first arrows already stuck in there.

"Bah! Even though I've hit twice! Will you piece of shit die!? Those were headshots!" While screaming, Elemia shoots one arrow after the other with an astounding speed.

One, two, and then three arrows embed themselves in the spider's back, rump, and head. The spider loses its balance, and crashes into the wooden fence after running a big curve, finally stopping altogether.

On the other hand, Shea deals with the spider charging at her straight from the front. The spider raises two legs with their razor-sharp claws, thrusting them out front. Shea brandishes her big machete while dodging the spider's attack at hair's breadth. One of the spider's legs, densely covered by a bristle, gets beautifully bisected.

Still, without having lost any of its fighting spirit, the spider used its remaining legs for a big leap at Shea. With nimble body movements, Shea severs the other legs, resulting in the spider having lost all its eight legs at the end.

Even though the big spider has now turned into rump-only, it still twitches with its torso and keeps snapping its jaws. Shea drives <Corpse Eater> through its head, tearing it apart.

But, that's not the end. The thickets rustle as a big number of spiders is obviously making a beeline for us.

"They aren't strong, just so annoyingly tenacious, geez. That's why bugs are so..." Without a moment's delay, Elenia shoots an arrow into the thicket.

The spiders keep attacking as long as they can move, even with their head shot or their legs cut off.

"<Corpse Eater> doesn't have enough curse power for this many opponents. I need another weapon."

"Lady Shea, field smithing at this moment...is that newbie going to be in time?"

"You think I'd party with a guy incapable of this much? Unlike you, he's my official partner." Leaving those words behind, Shea heads for the new spider arrivals.

I'm really thankful for her trust in me, but...to be honest, it's not like I'm confident over here. A weapon against spiders. In contrast to the wyvern hunt, this here is an irregular battle. I haven't prepared for anything like this.

...Isn't there some good way to handle it?

I need a weapon capable of attacking over a wide range in exchange for a drop in power.

Oh, that should work!

I return to the barn at full sprint. Inside I find a large amount of straw and a pile of mud. And—

—Just what I need! The two-handed sickle the village chief earlier used for mowing the grass. I'll turn this into a weapon by adding an enchantment to it.

At once I began to prepare for Liquefied Spirit Soaking. Liquefied Spirit Soaking is the most basic and quickest enchantment technique. First I need a crucible to put the sickle into it. Using an earth element called Golem Core, I build a temporary furnace by hardening the mud in the hut at an extremely fast rate.

"Guhuaa! This is no mud... Ueehh, it's probably cow...uheee!"

Although it causes mental damage, it's no problem as building material for the furnace. I fill the furnace with a blue salt solution, add Atolrahz roots and a White Wing Stone, and then heat the furnace with coke while allowing for a violent wind intake through a wind stone. The result is an ultramarine liquid bubbling with a temperature much higher than boiling oil. Immediately following, I dip the sickle's tip into the liquid, and at the same time as the steel turns hard and robust, it's also endowed with extracted mana.

With the sickle's blade now releasing thick smoke, I engrave a four-character seal, which is a prayer

for a sylph's divine protection, onto it. An enchantment of whirlwind (Dust Devil). I tie a rope I found in the hut to the sickle, completing an impromptu sickle-and-chain weapon.

The whirlwind enchantment will get stronger the more wind exposure it gets. In other words, the more you swing it around, the sharper its cutting ability. I christen it as 『Whirlwind Scythe - Improvised』——

Carrying the roped sickle, I dash towards Shea. Three ground spiders are coming at Shea from the left, right and front. She's being literally flooded by spiders. Elemia is frantically firing arrows, preventing further spiders from attacking. It looks like the number of spiders is far bigger than estimated.

"Shea!"

"Teo, throw it!"

I throw the sickle at Shea, causing it to fly while whirling around. Shea picks it out of the air, and while rotating together with the sickle without killing its momentum, she mows the sickle sideways, capitalizing on the trick behind a sickle-and-chain weapon.

A loud howling as characteristic of the wind attribute can be heard as the sickle cuts through the air. The spider, which has been in the attack range of the sickle, is sliced apart in upper and lower body halves.

"Neat. Now it's perfect for putting some ham in-between."

"Please don't say such disturbing things."

"Looks like this can cut them apart in one go as long as I hit 'em while spinning it powerfully. Yep, this should get the job done." Shea comments while holding onto the rope's end, and whirling the sickle-and-chain weapon around at its maximum attack range.

As the sickle's pointed end draws an arc with a buzzing, it grazes the head of a spider, cutting it off in passing just like that. Continuing, the sickle, which rotates at a high speed, slices the big spider apart into small pieces, resulting in its body fluid gushing out as if it's a wine barrel that burst.

"Guuhh..."

I bite down the surging bile with my back molars. If I barf here, I'll disqualify myself as Shea's partner...

"Ooeeeeeh..."

Elemia's puking! The pretty elven girl has fallen prostrate near a bush, and keeps vomiting bile.

"You alright?"

"So what if I puked! Don't worry about bullshit! I'm the type of woman who gets strong after vomiting!" Elemia gets up and wipes her mouth with a sleeve.

Contrary to her delicate, sweet appearance, her mental power is definitely a force to reckon with.

"Rather than that, newbie, are you the type who unexpectedly gets things done when it counts?"

"W-Who knows?"

"That's the village chief's sickle over there, isn't it? It might be partly owed to Lady Shea's strength, but at this point I feel like watching a slaughter festival from hell." At the end of Elemia's line of sight, Shea is vividly brandishing the wind sickle.

Each time the sickle passes a place with a spider, body parts and fluids are scattered into the vicinity.

"Haha...somehow it looks fairly decent to me."

"Say, can you enchant something for me as well?"

"Something?"

"Newbie, it's your selling point, right? So just let me check your skills!"

"I don't really see any need to have my skills checked by you, though."

"I'm your elder as a hunter! Don't worry about the small stuff! Hey, come on, please?"

Elemia unfastens one of the quivers affixed to her belt, and pushes it against me.

"What's the enchantment on these arrows?"

"Rupture (Gimlest)."

Rupture is one of the basic earth enchantments. It hardens the metal, and raises the penetrative force. It's suited for hard enemies, but isn't the best choice against spiders.

"Hmm, what should I do...?"

While holding the quiver and pondering, I rush back to the barn. I guess I'll add a second enchantment layer on top of Rupture...

What should I use? What would work well?

Oh, right. I got the wyvern nitrate sacs from before. I retrieve a mortar from my backpack, and start grinding the sacs. After a little time, I add a Nektar solution and a phosphoric acid-alcohol solution to it. Using this mixture, I apply Liquefied Spirit Soaking once more.

—A fire-earth double enchantment, 'Exploding Rupture' (Vanflare).

Even if I say so myself, it's quite a technically advanced enchantment - honestly, a really decent creation.

I run back to Elemia while carrying the quiver.

"Nice timing! New spiders have just come out of the woodworks!"

Just as Elemia says, I can see ground spiders closing in after scaling the fence.

"Whoa, those are huge..."

Those are the biggest spiders so far. Their size when spreading their legs might reach the same size as the barn I've been working at moments ago.

"This beautiful Elemia shall check your enchantments, newbie!"

Elemia takes the quiver from me, and immediately nocks one of the new Exploding Rupture arrows onto her bow. After setting her aim, she lets the arrow fly at a large spider which is dashing our way.

The arrow deeply penetrates from its head all the way into its rump with a dull bang. At the same time, the exploding enchantment activates, and causes the spider to loudly burst from within, scattering torn chunks of its entrails all over the place in a very flashy manner. A rain of spider fluids pours down on Elemia.

"....." Elemia stands stock still, in silence.

Gooey fluid trickles down from her pretty, blond hair.

"I've connected the two attributes through a seal of balance, but I might have gone a bit too far with this..."

"....."

"You okay?"

"Sir Teo! Thank you!"

All of a sudden I've leveled up from newbie to Sir Teo!

"What's wrong with you all of a sudden?"

"Nothing's wrong. I've finished my check of your field smithing. You're the perfect sure-kill technique, a living success route, a must-have for my career!"

"T-Thanks..."

"Sheesh, why haven't you told me earlier!? No wonder that Lady Shea is walking around with you! I misjudged you because you're such a modest guy!"

Roughly wiping the liquid off her hair, she nocks another arrow, and fires it into the thicket. A loud explosion comes back in response.

"Wahahahaha! What's this! It fuckin' rocks! I've won! My victory is set in stone! Come at me! Are you shithead spiders afraid or what!? This Morning Mist Shooter Elemia is going to...ooe——ehh!"

After reaching her peak in tension, she suddenly pukes. However, Elemia's eyes are gleaming dangerously.



"This works! Yahooo! I won at life! Lady Shea, I'm going to cover you! Watch me!"

The ground spiders have been on the verge of cornering the hume settlement into annihilation. But now the huge spiders with their inexhaustible appetite and overwhelming life force are fated to get annihilated in reverse. By Elemia's arrows and Shea's deadly sickle.

The spiders' numbers went far beyond any estimation, but currently their numbers keep dwindling at a breathtaking rate as they get sliced apart or turn into living bombs.

Finally the last spider falls, tolling the success of the hunt. And yet, big spiders explode as they roll across the ground, puddles of slimy body fluids stain the soil, and spider legs that are still twitching despite their owners already being dead - a scene as if depicting doomsday.

Elemia flops down on the spot, gasping heavily, "...These are amazing, really." She looks totally spent.

Shea also tosses sickle on the ground with a thud after making sure that no battle-able spiders are left. Taking off her mask, she exposes her dark-skinned, beautiful face.

"Good grief...finally done, huh?" Shea spits out a deep sigh as she sits down on a patch of grass in a place located slightly away from Elemia.

As expected, even Shea must be exhausted after all this...

"I'm hungry. I guess we should eat something."

...or so I thought, but Shea calmly suggested that we have lunch.

"You're hungry? No way! You gotta be kidding, Lady Shea!" Elemia cries out in shock.

Sooner or later she'll get used to Shea's antics. Still, Shea is talking about food, but I sure don't want to become a hume who gets hungry in a place like this. While resisting the urge to puke, I vow in my heart to never ever get used to this.