

64: Facile hydrodynamics

"Welcome back, my Lady," Garside's raspy voice sounded out. The old butler bowed in greeting as Scarlett exited the carriage in front of the Freybrook mansion's courtyard. "I presume the latest excursion fared well, judging from your early return?"

"It did," Scarlett said, glancing over the two other servants behind him. Marlon and Harriet. "Are the preparations finished?" she asked.

"They are. We have inspected all of the articles delivered by the blacksmith this morning, and it is all according to what you outlined."

Scarlett nodded. "Good. Bring it to the training ground for now. I will deal with it later on."

"As you wish, my Lady." The old man stepped to the side as Scarlett started moving towards the large mansion.

"What was that about?" Allyssa asked from behind her. The young Shielder and the rest of Scarlett's entourage, had exited the carriage right after her, most of their clothes somewhat dirty. Fynn's, especially, looked like they'd been rolled through mud several times over and left out in the sun to dry.

She had been a bit reluctant about having him ride in the carriage like that, but they hadn't brought a spare change of clothes so...

"I am planning on performing some experiments and required certain materials to conduct them," Scarlett answered somewhat absentmindedly. "I had put Garside in charge of guaranteeing their quality before I begin."

"Oh? What kind of experiments are we talking about?" Rosa asked, the bard hefting her hurdy-gurdy over her shoulder. The instrument, at least, was entirely devoid of any dirt on it.

"Perhaps you will see at a later time," Scarlett said as they crossed the mansion's courtyard.

It had been several days since they returned from Elystead, and they had been pretty active following that. Both Shin and Allyssa had gotten the go-ahead to continue the current contract with her after they had talked with the people at the Guild branch, which she was thankful for. Scarlett had also started letting Allyssa prepare one of the unoccupied rooms at the back of the mansion for her alchemy, which could apparently be pretty volatile.

In addition to that, Scarlett and the others had located and cleared two dungeons in the last few days. As this was a low-level area the items and artifacts you could get here generally weren't the best, but you could still earn a decent amount of money. Before originally going to the capital, Scarlett had managed to scrounge together items worth around 30000 solars in just about a week, after all.

Eventually she was going to exhaust the dungeons in this area, but that just meant she was making full use of the knowledge she had. And then she would just proceed to another area.

What they had just returned from was one of those dungeon runs. With her current party—who would all probably be over level 30 in game terms—clearing the dungeon had been no issue at all. Like Kat, Fynn could most likely solo all the dungeons in this area, considering he was close to level 40 at the start of the game.

Of course, that didn't mean he was exempt from some of the more unfortunate realities of dungeon diving.

Scarlett glanced back at the white-haired young man. This dungeon had been an underground cavern a few hours travel away, and it had been home to several overgrown alligators that the young man had ended up wrestling in the dirty waters of the caves.

She was just thankful *she* didn't have to do things like that.

After entering the mansion itself, their group split up in order to wash up from the trip. Scarlett went to her chambers to clean herself off and change from her 'adventuring' attire to a more comfortable dark-blue one-piece dress. Molly, the maid, had stayed near her quarters and offered to assist, but Scarlett brushed her off.

She assumed things like that were more common in this world, but Scarlett honestly found it bothersome having someone else help her with changing. That was one matter where she didn't really mind diverging too much from how the original might have acted, unless she was putting on some dress that was hard to do by herself.

Truthfully, she'd become more lax in general when it came to some of the details like that ever since returning from Elystead. Maybe it was because she had already partially told Evelyne the truth, and didn't feel as much pressure to 'blend in' as she did before. Although, considering how many of the original Scarlett's antics were essentially ingrained into her spine, there were still several things she *couldn't* diverge on even if she wanted to.

After changing clothes, Scarlett headed to her office and sat at her desk. After jotting down the loot they'd retrieved from this latest excursion—it was good to have it written down both for her own sake, and for Evelyne's later on—she took some time to look through her notes about the remaining dungeons in the Freybrook area.

Some of them had a couple of items that could prove a bit useful in the future, but there wasn't really anything she *needed* from them. For now, she was just checking the dungeons off in the order in which she felt most certain about being able to find them through her game knowledge.

The next one she was planning on locating was a hidden-away copse somewhere to the east that she was hoping Fynn would be able to find with his senses. That would hopefully save them the irritation of having to look for it for several hours. The entrance to today's dungeon had taken over four hours to find, which had been somewhat of an oversight on Scarlett's part. She would prefer if she could avoid such time wastes in the future.

After looking over her notes, Scarlett then pulled out her status window.

[Name: Scarlett Hartford]

[Skills:

[Mana Control]
[Pyromancy]
[Greater Pyrokinesis]
[Minor Hydromancy]
[Greater Hydrokinesis]]
[Traits:
[Dignified August]
[Supercilious]
[Cavalier]
[Callous]
[Overbearing]
[Conceited]
[Third-rate Mana Veins]]
[Mana: 3149/4327]
[Points: 6]

[Skills Menu:

Upgrades

[Greater Pyromancy] (10 points)
[Superior Pyrokinesis] (25 points)
[Hydromancy] (5 points)
[Superior Hydrokinesis] (25 points)
[Greater Mana Control] (10 points)

New skills

[LOCKED]]

Her total mana was still pretty measly, all things considered. She couldn't quite remember what her base had been when she first arrived in this world—before she got her hands on the [Depraved Solitude's Choker]—but it had probably only increased by a few hundred points since then. It only increased when she actively used her mana after all, and that was still only at a rate of about 10 mana per day. Considering her goal was to reach a *minimum* of 25000, she still had ways to go. But more items would hopefully help her with that.

When it came to her skills, as she had upgraded her hydrokinesis to [Greater Hydrokinesis] a couple of days before she left the capital, she'd had a decent amount of time to start getting used to the upgrade.

Just like when she upgraded pyrokinesis last time, the difference between [Hydrokinesis] and [Greater Hydrokinesis] had been very notable. Now she could even put some real force behind the water she controlled, which opened up several potential—and very interesting—avenues for the future. She was quite excited about upgrading her two main skills even further in the future, when she gathered even more skill points.

That was of course another reason why she was clearing all of these low-level dungeons at the moment.

Scarlett glanced at the time. It might be a good idea to get herself something to eat soon. She had missed the meals back here in Freybrook while in the capital.

After that she could go and check on what Garside had told her about earlier.



Scarlett surveyed the items lying on the stone courtyard before her. It was an array of different-shaped metal pieces, ranging from palm-sized to anvil-sized. One, in fact, *was* an anvil.

She had relocated herself to the training ground that was behind the mansion and stood near the wooden targets that were set up at the far end of the grounds. Once more, she had changed clothes, now into a relatively simple set of black leggings with a white overshirt. It didn't exactly fit that much with her current preferences, but it was the first thing she had found now that her usual set of clothes for these kinds of things was dirty.

She should probably look into getting more clothes that weren't just different kinds of dresses.

To start with, Scarlett bent down and picked up a thin slit of metal that was on the ground. It wasn't anything special. Just ordinary iron, barely a millimeter thick. But it was part of what she had asked for in the request she had sent to one of the blacksmiths here in Freybrook.

A benchmark test, if you would.

She raised her free hand, holding out her index finger for no other reason than that it felt fitting. Then she conjured a thin stream of water in front of her nail. The action came a lot easier to her now than it had before she upgraded hydrokinesis, and something this minor didn't even come close to taxing her mind nowadays.

Slowly, she lowered the small little water-knife she'd created towards the edge of the metal piece she was holding. the liquid simply split on the edge as it reached it.

Well, that was somewhat expected. This was tricky to do correctly. She'd only ever tried it on paper up till now.

Intentionally letting the water vanish, she formed another blade yet again. This time, she put even more attention on maintaining the shape's rigidity. She also focused more on making the edge of the blade as thin and sharp—or what at least approached 'sharpness' when working with magically shaped water like this—as she could.

Interestingly enough, she had noticed that at this point, she could use her hydrokinesis to force water to act more like a solid. A bit like ice, maybe. She wasn't sure if what she was doing was just increasing the density or if that was even how newtonian fluids worked—she wasn't a real 'science person', and it was only thanks to Mythbusters that she knew even *that* term—but it worked, and that was all that mattered to her.

Although she had to admit that it was pretty hard.

Once more she tried cutting downward with her blade, and this time the water didn't split as soon as it touched the metal. Instead, however, it bent like a very watery piece of wire trying to maintain the shape she was commanding it to.

She tried asserting even more force, and even though the water became even more contorted around the piece of metal, the edge of the metal piece also started bending slightly under the pressure now.

It wasn't any knife slicing through butter, but she hadn't really been expecting that either.

While [Greater Hydrokinesis] gave her a lot more freedom with what she could do with her magic, she had quickly realized that it didn't magically make her proficient at it. Or well, technically it did. But there were limits to it. For example how she had issue just getting this right.

She felt like she had the *power*, but not the *precision* to do what she wanted now. Upgrading [Mana Control] further might be able to help with that somewhat.

If she wanted to cut through this metal with her hydrokinesis, for example, with more practice she could probably create a decent enough blade of water and just force it through. One problem was that she had no idea how viable of a tactic that actually was in this world. For all she knew that could be one of the most inefficient ways of attacking possible against the people here.

Another possibility was using the water more like a saw, or maybe even like a water jet cutter. She had imagined herself making the water move back and forth at extreme speeds to replicate the effect, walking around and cutting through everything with it.

Of course, after actually trying it she realized that was *considerably* harder than just making the water act more solid. And mana expensive.

Not to mention she had some major doubts about effective that really was too. She was pretty sure that water jet cutters back in her world didn't actually use pure water, after all. They had some abrasive substance mixed in with the water.

Although maybe she could replicate that somehow even in this world?

She had lots and lots of interesting ideas, but many of them were currently limited by her current skill and had questionable usefulness. There was also a limit to how much pressure her hydrokinesis could create, which was the most important deciding factor. And she had no idea where that limit was.

She did have an idea on how she could measure it, in a pseudo-scientific way that did not at all speak for her general intelligence. But she'd always lived by the adage that "if it works, it ain't stupid", and she would continue to do so until it no longer worked.

...Or she actually had to get serious about things.

Putting the metal slit back on the ground for later, Scarlett shifted her attention to a small iron ball lying on the ground. She picked it up and gave it a small shake. It was lighter than it

looked because it was hollow inside, filled with water now instead of metal. There was one section on its side where it was clear that a hole had been before.

She closed her eyes as she held the ball in her palm.

Although the idea of her becoming some kind of water samurai with her hydrokinesis was pretty awesome, this experiment was one of the things she had been most curious about. She'd tried lifting a bottle of water before, which had worked without issue. So she assumed that her ability to control water wasn't entirely limited by sight. As such, she had been curious exactly how much she could do with that.

For some time, she stood there, trying to get a sense of the water inside the iron ball in her palm. Eventually, she succeeded, albeit the connection felt somewhat hazy compared to what she was used to. The ball floated up as she moved the water, though it did feel like there was a certain lag to the motions because she was moving the water itself and not the ball the liquid was pushing against.

Nonetheless, the sphere was moving back and forth through the air at her command. She tried putting some force behind it and aimed the ball at one of the wooden targets. It struck the target with a pang, but it was nowhere near strong enough to get through the magical barriers enchanted onto the wooden dummies.

She would have to explore the limitations of this particular use of hydrokinesis further. For now, she wasn't banking on making a weapon out of it. But what she *was* interested in was if she couldn't couple this with some of the potions or alchemy that Allyssa used.

She tried using her hydrokinesis to make the ball fly again to bring it back to her, but—perhaps because of the distance—she couldn't establish a connection with it and to go and pick it up herself eventually. After putting it back on the ground next to all the other things she had here she turned to the anvil.

Somehow, the blacksmith had created a fist-sized hole in its side and made it partially hollow on the inside. Through the dark hole, she could see vague reflections off a surface that she assumed was water. There were a few other items similar to this, but the anvil was her focus. It was the true benchmark, in a way, for her abilities.

She took a step back, so as not to be next to the anvil if it were to topple over, then she raised both hands in front of her, trying to move the water inside the anvil. It was much easier when she actually had a hole to see some of the water through and she saw the water moving.

At first it just stopped as soon as it reached the top of the anvil. But she pushed on. She felt one of the veins on her temple expand as she clenched her teeth, giving it all her effort. Finally, she saw the anvil rise just slightly above the ground just as she lost control and fell down to her knees.

She panted heavily as she eyed the anvil. She'd never been one much for the gym, but she imagined this was how it was when you tried to bench something just above your limit.

Remaining like that for a short while longer, just enough to let her heart calm down somewhat, she stood up again and turned to the rest of the items.

The anvil might be a bit much, but she still had lots of things to experiment with.