

## Chapter 100: Optimisation

Anere reached behind her back and drew her bow, knocking an arrow in record time. The tarny in front of her reacted even faster, a bright flash blinding Anere for just a second, and then the tarny was right in front of her, fists sparking with lightning.

She had a split-second to react before a lightning-infused punch socked her right in the stomach, the energy of the strike coursing through Anere's body and shocking her system for a second.

Ararth reared back, attempting to swipe with his massive paw but met only air, another bright flash and the tarny was back where they had started.

Anere's arrow sailed through the air, unaimed, as she rolled off the back of her mighty beast, landing clumsily as the shock of the strike left her system. Her hand reached for another arrow but her fingers were shaking heavily.

Clenching her hand, she scrambled backwards, sliding behind a tree as Ararth charged the tarny.

Bringing up her status, Anere checked her health. Only a fifty health gone. Not much compared to Anere's total, but a good battle of attrition was all that was necessary to bring her to nothing.

A shiver ran through her body. Hopefully, that wasn't going to happen.

She could hear Ararth roar as her hand rooted in a pouch on her waist, feeling around until she withdrew a spherical, glossy ball of... something.

*Down the hatch.* The ball slipped through her lips and she swallowed it in one, now wincing at the vile taste. *Ew.*

It wasn't much, but it sped up her natural regeneration for some time. The best she could get without actually going to a Healer.

Peering round from behind the tree, she watched as Ararth moved with grace, the tarny sometimes zipping away with that blinding skill, sometimes narrowly dodging to counterattack with a lightning-infused punch.

Peering around from behind the tree, she watched as Ararth moved with grace, fighting the tarny. They didn't zip around the big bear, keeping their movements very visible but smooth and talented. They ducked and wove behind the large swipes of the great bear, peppering in lightning-infused punches of their own.

Only when Ararth saw an opportunity to catch the tarny off-guard did they press the emergency skill, suddenly zipping halfway across the clearing in a flash of light.

She knew Ararth was strong, but they were both just two levels off the gigantic power boost they both needed.

“Stop attacking us! We don’t want to fight you,” Anere shouted. Ararth paused, mid strike, and backed down himself.

The tarny didn’t listen, suddenly vanishing from their spot and appearing right in front of Ararth, punching him hard on the face as the beast moaned in pain, refusing to fight.

Anere raced around, loosing quick, consecutive arrows at the tarny, drawing their attention as the first two went wide.

The third struck its target, piercing their upper arm and catching them off-guard for just a second.

A second was enough, for the intrinsic understanding Ararth had of Anere meant he was on the tarny in a flash, coming from behind while they were momentarily distracted by Anere. His massive, fury paw grabbed the back of the tarny’s head and slammed them down into the dirt, applying his tremendous body weight so they saw nothing but dirt.

There were two things you were always taught when fighting a mage but you didn’t want to kill them; block their sight and incapacitate their hands. Unless you were fighting someone with very unusual skills or a highly experienced combatant, most essence skills required either line-of-sight or the use of hands to function.

Ararth took care of the second element, applying two of his paws to the tarny’s outstretched hand and crushing them into the dirt as well, although he was careful to not cause any permanent damage.

“I was being serious when I said we don’t want to fight you,” Anere said, approaching the now-immobilised tarny.

She reached into her pouch and pulled out a few, thick bandages, just in case. Dropping to her knees before her prisoner, her hands wrapped a couple of layers around the tarny’s head, tying the bandages at the back before insisting that Ararth removed some of his weight.

The tarny raised their head but were unable to see. That didn't stop them from looking directly at Anere, however.

"I understand you may have some... reservations about that fact, but I'm not lying," Anere said, adopting a gentler affectation.

She knew that what she was *supposed* to do would be taking the tarny in to be processed but she dismissed that thought as soon as it crossed her mind.

Her independence streak told her that would be a waste of a situation right here, and this could've been exactly what she was waiting for, and exactly what she thought the situation with Riza originally was.

"I just want some information and I'll let you go. Like, why were you here? And why were you alone?" Anere asked.

No response. She frowned a little.

"Okay. What about who you are? Or where your tribe is?"

The tarny actually *smiled* at that.

"Let me go and I'll tell you," They said, speaking for the very first time. They had an odd voice, but not unpleasant, Anere thought.

Anere nodded, and then felt silly because they were blindfolded.

"Ararth, get off. And you, rise slowly. Keep the blindfold on."

Both of them obeyed Anere's instructions, the tarny calmly getting to their feet and then slowly backing away.

"Stop! I didn't say you could go," Anere said, immediately drawing and aiming her bow. The sound was recognisable even when blind.

"I can't run. You have a bow and a bear," They said, and they were right.

"Okay. So... tell us what we want to know!" Anere said, trying to sound a little bit authoritative, mimicking her father.

"I need assurance that you'll let me go."

"Oh, um..." Anere quickly said, losing any authority she attempted to have as she thought. "Ararth, if either I get injured or they run before giving us information, Chase after them. Otherwise, start heading back."

The bear rumbled and looked between Anere and the tarny before sulkily retreating. Anere rolled her eyes at his attitude while also lowering her own bow and looking at the tarny.

“You’re free to go as soon as you tell me what I want to know.”

That lightning jump was fast, sure, but they couldn’t use it forever. That was the weakness of mages; once they ran out of essence, they were no stronger than a normal person.

“Well... My tribe is *far* gone. It’s just me.”

Before Anere could even think about what was just said, the tarny lifted their blindfold and vanished from sight in a sudden flash of light.

“Fuck!”

\*

Rays of sun streamed in through the large, glass windows, pouring a warm, white light on the large, wooden table.

Around it were only a handful of people; Klannar, Lefie, Meren, Adewyn, Andreyra, and, of course, Riza.

It was early in the morning and before everyone went off to complete their duties for the day, Riza had called them all here to gather some opinions on her approach.

First of all, a crash course in religion. Riza knew bits of pieces but she still needed to know about the nitty-gritty of it all.

Riza was far more experienced with organised religions—religions that had places of worship and periodic rituals to follow—but whatever the people of the Empire believed, it didn’t even have a name.

So, straight away, that made it harder to influence people’s religious views. You couldn’t just take the highest-ranking religious authority and declare something new and people would automatically follow it. Instead, you needed to alter the cultural zeitgeist itself. A far more substantial task, but not impossible.

However, Skaldurism, as Riza called it, wasn’t without its religious leaders, although, ‘leaders’ was perhaps the wrong word for it. In truth, they resembled an inquisition far closer; members of the Dominion who travelled around, making sure people were worshipping and practising in the right ways.

*If only the Dominion and Chosen had remained here, perhaps I could've used them...*

When asked if the tenets of the religion were written down something, like a book of rules, Klannar and Meren said no. They just learnt it all through cultural osmosis, apparently.

But Andreya said yes. There were actual religious rules written down somewhere, and that's how the inquisitors made sure people were practising the religion in the correct ways.

Did Andreya have a copy of this book? No, since she also learnt through osmosis herself, which seemed to be the case for just about everyone. You'd have to specifically be a theologian with the Dominion to even get close to a written form.

This was both good and bad news. It meant they lacked access and knowledge of a religious codex and thus couldn't use that influence belief, but it also meant they could subtly change the rules and the common person wouldn't be able to tell they were now worshipping a fork of the main religion.

Riza could use that. Her initial plan of finding or faking a religious leader was out the window by now, but more subtler strategies were making their way into her mind.

In fact, she recalled an example of proselytising from many years ago in her own world, of leaving religious books where people could freely find them and read them. Of course, the main problem with replicating that strategy was the near-universal illiteracy of people, and educating them would take longer than she'd like so she couldn't use that.

But she could subtly indoctrinate them in other ways. Imagery and symbolism, or creating religious educators who preached a slightly different version of the religion.

She'd want these plastered around places where people always needed to go, so that was primarily places where people received food and water and firewood.

She could do even better, however. Not only in frequently visited places but places where people are more suggestible, such as clinics and schools. If they experience the benefits of life magic, they'd be more open to it, and if people are learning facts about the world, science, basic literacy, they're going to be less sceptical of the religion being taught as well.

To begin, they were going to need to design and produce pamphlets and leaflets and posters. That could be done by hand but the printing press had already been invented, although its products were not widely used; any books produced were produced by the Dominion, which also appeared to be a home for scholars. No doubt, to ensure whatever new ideas they thought up didn't contradict whatever the Empire needed people to believe.

Only a minority of books left the Dominion's clutches, and only a minority of those didn't end up owned by a noble.

That meant, there were plenty of printing presses left over when the Dominion left but few people who knew how to use them. The task of finding those people was delegated and once found, they'd check in on Riza for the designs and information.

After that, Riza really wanted to start working on a clinic. Not only would it keep people alive, she also believed the high, suggestible mood people would be in would make them perfect targets for subtle religious reinforcement.

So, the first thing she did was ask Andreyka how they had gotten a hold of Sylan the Healer back in Kratten.

"He was already in a nearby village we passed through before arriving. Whenever someone from the village got injured, they went to him. I was also given permission to train up one Healer for the eventual outpost in Kratten and he was very devout and eager to prove himself to Skaldur," Andreyka explained, and Riza nodded intently.

She could, of course, staff the clinic with her own people, but her own people were humanoid demons like Ascles, and she didn't think the common person would take too kindly to that.

Not to mention, all her humanoid demons would be far cheaper to use [False Life] on than to level them back up to the same power level they were when they had died.

Training humans up to level 8 was just economical.

Which meant more uses of the printing press. Anyone worth their salt in healing people were also capable of reading, apparently, since the majority tended to learn their trade via books sold by merchants, so they could just put out an old-fashioned job interview.

From her experience dealing with the nobles, it seemed like everyone was eager to get on the good side of this new, powerful Lord. Riza wasn't exactly complaining; it certainly made some things easier than they would be otherwise.

Unlike last time, Riza was going to be doing the interviews herself. Of course, Tiffany or Andreyra would be there to separate the truths from the lies, but only Riza had even a modicum of medical knowledge to assess that aspect as well.

One-by-one, Klannar, Meren, and Adewyn left to fulfil Riza's orders. Andreyra stayed, still having to manage every other aspect of the city, even with all the people now helping her, and Lefie was annoyed that Riza didn't let her go to help as well.

"You're a *Nolitos*. They take one look at you and they start thinking stupid things," Riza explained with a sigh.

Lefie frowned but didn't refute that statement. She crossed her arms exaggeratedly.

Riza inched closer and gently embraced the teen.

"That won't be the case forever. Once all these initial issues are taken care of, I will make this entire province a home to everyone," She looked straight into Lefie's deep, mysterious eyes. "I promise."

That seemed to please the girl, hugging Riza back earnestly. "You better," She whispered.

Pulling herself away, Riza was reminded of other problems she needed to take care of.

*For one, the justice system. That's a priority not only because of those still being detained in the barracks, but also because of my deal with Tanniya. She's not here right now, so that gives me a bit of time, but I can't delay it much. Better that I do it quickly.*

*And then there's also the builders.* She had checked in with Andreyra and the Lord's coffers were looking fairly empty. In truth, they barely had enough money to pay the rates that Riza had agreed to yesterday.

Which also made Riza ruminant on the exact economical nature of the society they lived in. In some ways, it was remarkably socialist in the free food and

water but money still existed and, clearly, there were those with supreme quality of life compared to the majority.

She wasn't a political philosopher, and wasn't aiming for any ideological ideal for a city or country. Rather, she adopted policies that would best help her achieve her goals.

Moving from the economy to politics itself, the Empire was quite strange in this aspect as well. While the nobles definitely had financial power, and were able to maintain their life of hedonistic dependency on Ancients through their entrenched wealth, they actually held very little political power.

In fact, it was the Lord who basically held supreme control over an entire province. Apparently, from what Andreyra had read and relayed to Riza, the Lord was chosen by the Regent himself! Although, secretly, Riza doubted that.

Anyway, the Lord was chosen by the Regent and this conferred both political and financial responsibilities. For one, the Lord owned all property not just in Rensenfeld but across the entire province. If someone lived in a house, they paid rent on that house.

It was this income that enabled the Lord to pay farmers for their food and distribute it to everyone for free. Again, it was quite a socialist institution, which suggested it didn't arise naturally and was, in fact, implemented to fit an agenda, not that anyone particularly complained.

Of course, people also paid taxes, taxes which were far more nuanced than Riza understood them. And, of course, people complained about those taxes, which were primarily used to fund the Dominion and Chosen throughout the province. Andreyra had the precise numbers, but it was quickly apparent to Riza that running a city was not only complicated, but expensive.

Thankfully, with her driving out the demons from the province and killing the Demon Lord, the city was going to start expending less since the Dominion and Chosen were no longer stationed there.

However, for her plans in the future, they were going to need a lot more money. To begin with, there were still homeless people. They couldn't afford houses, couldn't take up jobs, couldn't afford shelter. They at least had food, but they could do better. Making all housing free was an eventual plan of Riza's, but getting rid of an entire revenue stream like that just wasn't feasible for them currently.

Which meant reducing expenditures. This directed Riza's eye towards agriculture. They were spending a fortune on crops and cattle that, sometimes, didn't even bear fruit, whether it was bad harvests or demon attacks. They could do a lot better.

Riza had the economic numbers but they only painted half of the picture. Daven and Tanniya were currently out and about, travelling from village to village to get details on everything about farming. What crops people farmers planted, what cattle they had, time and conditions for growth. Everything.

But she needed to do something else first.

\*

The nest was disturbingly quiet. With all the chaos of the past few days, slews of demons had been slaughtered for levels, and the sounds of life had all but vanished, with just the remnant demons left wandering aimlessly, awaiting their orders.

The demons brought in from Daven's caravan added some much-needed life and vibrancy to the nest, but it was nowhere near enough to replace the literally hundreds that had been killed. It was going to take months to replenish them all.

*To-do: work out an alternative, richer source of experience.*

But that wasn't the problem Riza was looking to tackle today. Instead, she headed down the winding twists and turns, with a small demon on her shoulder, navigating through the foggy corridors until coming across the vault that housed the seven liberated humanoid demons.

Seeing them here, Riza remembered that she hadn't actually cleared out the rest of the nests in the province.

*Shit. It's been so busy that and there's been no more demon sightings apart from the Demon Lord that I had just forgotten. Whatever; it's something else I can deal with. I can send Nussy and Jormy to tackle it all. Give the humanoid demons something to do.*

So far, each of the demons were currently standing due to [False Life]. That meant they all had levels of twenty-something and with a variety of skills.

Earth skills appeared to be fairly common, represented by three of the humanoid demons. Not a surprise due to its sheer utility.

There was an ice demon, a greatsword demon, a spear demon, and a poison demon. Since humanoid demons tended to work alone, they appeared to always have a skill set capable of offence.

Only the poison demon represented a skill tree Riza hadn't explored yet, but that was for another time. For now, she cleared the room of fog, brought up the ice demon's stats, finely adjusted the power of [Leech], and killed the demon over the course of a second or two.

She had to be careful not to create another zone of life.

None of the other demons reacted to this; they had been given their commands to never question Riza's decisions or actions, and to obey her always. But, just in case, Harold was there with her, ready to give orders once needed.

She hadn't really thought of it before, but this was the problem with [False Life] over [Raise Dead]; the lack of translation skills. Demons, once raised, followed their base instincts, which meant attacking humans. Riza was an exception, for the magic compelled them to treat her as their master.

To give orders, however, Riza needed to verbally command them, something that was impossible if they didn't understand what she was saying. Hence, demons required a demon of equal or higher authority to obey, as that was their natural state of being.

This was why Tiffany was necessary to direct the worm demon and why Harold was necessary to keep these demons in check, at least until they learnt the language.

Next, Riza knelt down and cast [Raise Dead], altering the casting time so it only took two and a half minutes.

As soon as life stirred within the subject, Harold spat out a series of commands in that strange, warbling language the humanoid demons used, rendering the creature effectively lifeless. It was nothing more than a testing dummy for Riza.

*Okay, Mesandra. Let's see just what you could do.*

Plant

0th Tier

[Plant Growth]

Plants grow 5% faster

1m radius

Cost: 1 es/sec

#### [Plant Read]

Gain information about a plant

Cost: 5 es

*Just two: [Plant Growth] and [Plant Read]. Interesting that [Plant Growth] has a radius rather than just targeting one plant.*

*The only skills I care about are those that would enable someone to grow more crops faster. Anything beyond that is unnecessary.*

Riza went ahead and purchased [Plant Growth] to unlock the next tier. None of these skills were permanent—she just wanted to see what options she had to consider for a farmer build.

### Plant

#### 0th Tier

##### [Plant Growth] (1/10) -Learned

Plants grow 5% faster

1m radius

Cost: 1 es/sec

##### [Plant Read] (1/10)

Gain information about a plant

Cost: 5 es

#### 1st Tier

##### [Plant Command] (1/10)

Instil a command in a plant

Cost: 10 es

**[Plant Sense] (1/10)**

Sense nearby plant location and types

1m radius

Cost: 5 es/sec

Requirements: [Plant Read] (5/10)

**[Plant Resurrection] (1/10)**

Bring dead plants back to life

1m radius

Cost: 10 es

Requirements: [Plant Growth] (10/10)

**[Plant Focus] (1/10)**

Convert plant skills from radial to single target to increase intensity by 10%

Cost: 1 es/sec

*Four skills. Let's take [Plant Focus] for now.*

**Plant**

**0th Tier**

**[Plant Growth] (1/10) -Learned**

Plants grow 5% faster

1m radius

Cost: 1 es/sec

**[Plant Read] (1/10)**

Gain information about a plant

Cost: 5 es

## 1st Tier

### [Plant Command] (1/10)

Instil a command in a plant

Cost: 10 es

### [Plant Sense] (1/10)

Sense nearby plant location and types

1m radius

Cost: 5 es/sec

Requirements: [Plant Read] (5/10)

### [Plant Resurrection] (1/10)

Bring dead plants back to life

1m radius

Cost: 10 es

Requirements: [Plant Growth] (10/10)

### [Plant Focus] (1/10) -Learned

Convert plant skills from radial to single target to increase intensity by 10%

Cost: 1 es/sec

## 2nd Tier

### [Plant Control] (1/10)

Manipulate plants

1m radius

Cost: 10 es/sec

Requirements: [Plant Command] (10/10)

### [Plant Eyes] (1/10)

Whilst blinding your own senses, adopt the senses of a plant

1m radius

Cost: 10 es/sec

Requirements: [Plant Sense] (5/10)

### **[Plant Whispering] (1/10)**

Plants can retain and communicate information for up to 1 day

Cost: 1 es/min

Requirements: [Plant Read] (10/10)

### **[Plant Editing] (1/10)**

Change the genetics of a plant

Cost: 50 es

Requirements: [Plant Read] (10/10)

*Looks like [Plant Editing] gives me access to GMOs. I can alter the DNA of a crop to decrease growth time, makes it less susceptible to diseases, fare better in harsher environments, and increase its yield.*

*Only downside, I don't understand plant genetics and whoever uses this skill definitely won't understand plant genetics.*

*And, besides, [Way of Plant] with [Maximise Mastery+] and [Manifold Mastery+] combined with [Plant Growth] would be good enough on its own anyway.*

*Let's run the numbers really quickly...*

*[Plant Growth] is half the time to grow. Multiply by 5 and then 3. One thirtieth of the time to grow.*

*Actually, if this is all I'm using them for, they could take [Lone Wolf] instead. That makes it... One seventieth the time.*

*Once Daven and Tanniya returns, I can learn the exact timeline and conditions for crops but for now, let's just make some assumptions that everything takes between a month and six months to grow.*

*If this farmer grows them, that turns into half a day to two and a half days. That's incredible.*

*Downside: essence cost. If they stockpile essence, they'd need a minimum total of 9,072,000 essence. Or, they'd need to regenerate 210 essence a second. Both are impossible at such a low level.*

*Therefore, batteries.*

Riza brought up her entity manager to check respective regenerations. Regeneration calculations were already done, they were a part of the calculated cost.

*Ascles regenerates the most but that's only 81 essence a second, outside of Nussy.*

*Which means, I'd need a team of two to replace the agricultural industry; a low-level farmer and a level 25 blood specialist with [Heal+]*

*Except... [Heal+] with [Maximise Mastery+] and [Manifold Mastery+] would only be 15 essence a second.*

*Which means, I'd need a plant-blood hybrid to have the necessary regeneration for this.*

Riza sighed heavily. Of course, it was never going to be so simple.

\*

A pencil fell from Riza's loose grip, her body splayed lazily on a plush, comfy chair in the study. The walls were lined with books, but the only book she was interested in for the past hour or so was the worn-in one on her thigh.

She leaned back, staring up at the ceiling, thinking of nothing.

*To-do: invent the calculator.*

Her hands were tired from all the scribbling, her mind exhausted from countless calculations and speculations.

She had worked out an initial build for a farmer. It went to level 16, took the [Lone Wolf] and [Way of Blood] boons to regenerate 440 essence a second. That was more than enough to sustain [Plant Growth] indefinitely but the effect of [Plant Growth] would be about two thirds in actuality, since the farmer couldn't use both [Meditate+] and [Plant Growth] simultaneously without [Essence Congruency] and that required many more levels.

But, this got Riza thinking. Outside of [Essence Transformer] (passive), the only other blood skill necessary was [Compatible Blood]. However, it was 3rd tier and was a hidden skill, requiring five other blood skills at level 10. That meant four blood skills that did not contribute to the build.

Hence, Riza wondered about alternative builds, where every skill was useful.

This brought her attention to [Practised Essence], a 2nd tier metamagic skill.

Hidden Skill

5 metamagic skills (10/10)

**[Practised Essence] (1/10)**

Metamagic skill intensity is increased by 2% for every 10 metamagic skill levels

By necessity, the minimum level was 15 for both [Lone Wolf] and [Way of Blood] but in replacing the redundant blood skills for the required metamagic skills, that meant there was now one free skill.

And, in return, what was the new essence regeneration? 1764 essence per second. Ten levels and a whole boon cheaper than Nussy while still generating effectively infinite essence. Incredible.

But thoughts still swirled. Why did the farmer have [Way of Blood] when [Essence Transformer] was the only blood skill? Since [Meditate+] was doing so much heavy lifting, what if the second boon was [Way of Metamagic]?

The advantage of this was [Plant Growth] also becoming more effective.

At level 15, for both boons, total essence regeneration was 888 essence a second. Very good.

And thus, Riza's final idea occurred; just how low level could she get the farmer while also being very effective?

Firstly, [Way of Metamagic] was gone.

The minimum level was 11 to have all the skills. Assuming it was a humanoid demon, 20 stat points would be allocated to non-spirit stats to bring them up to 5. The rest brought spirit up to 36.

In total, the essence regeneration was only 10 essence a second. Pretty great at level 10, and Riza was all too familiar with just how insanely strong [Lone Wolf] was at higher levels.

Regenerating 10 essence a second was interesting. Since a level 10 [Plant Growth] cost 10 essence a second, she had to do some interesting stuff with [Alteration Mastery] to improve the skill.

Namely, the build accounted for [Range Compression]. If, for example, you used [Manifold Mastery] to multiply both the range and intensity by 10, but then used [Alteration Mastery] to divide the intensity and cost by 10, you end up with the same standard 100% increase but with 10 times the range.

[Range Compression] would bring the range back down to the default level while boosting the intensity, all while not affecting the cost at all.

That was the idea, anyway.

Plugging in some numbers, if she made [Plant Growth] cost 9.92 essence a second, she could improve the effect to 1973% increase. That would shorten a month's worth of growth to just 35 hours. Although, that's 35 consecutive hours, and people need to sleep and also alternate between [Plant Growth] and [Meditate] so conservatively, that was a week's worth of time.

A big improvement, yes, but the radius was only 10 metres and it didn't shorten the time to a point where a single person could completely replace an entire farm.

In fact, now that Riza broke down the effects of different metamagics, she realised she was going about metamagic the entire wrong way.

[Range Compression]. It was that single skill that completely revolutionised her outlook on it.

She created an example skill to run through her thoughts.

**Stab**

Deal 100 damage to an entity

50m range

Cost: 10

[Maximise Mastery] would double both the damage and cost to 200 and 20 respectively.

[Manifold Mastery] was strictly better. It would double the damage, *range*, and cost for 200, 100, and 20 respectively. Same cost, higher range.

Therefore, if you used [Range Compression] to bring the range back down to the same that [Maximise Mastery] would give you, assuming 20% increase per metre reduction, that was 2,200 damage, 50 metres range, for 20 essence.

Even better, use [Alteration Mastery] to bring the cost back down to the default cost.

#### **Stab**

Deal 1,100 damage to an entity

50m range

Cost: 10

Damage multiplied by 11 without changing either the range or cost, through clever use of [Manifold Mastery] and [Range Compression].

But you could go even harder. Riza looked to [Leech].

#### **[Leech] (10/10)+ -Learned**

Drain 220 points of health from a living entity

80m range

Cost: 10 es/sec

Now, if she maxed [Manifold Mastery] and [Seeker Mastery] while bringing both the range and cost back to normal, she got:

#### **[Leech] (10/10)+ -Learned**

Drain 9900 points of health from a living entity

80m range

Cost: 10 es/sec

This was now her default [Leech]. If she wanted it even stronger, she could apply [Maximise Mastery], use [Alteration Mastery] to do essentially the same thing, or reduce the range with [Range Compression].

With this new mathematical knowledge, she redid the maths for [Lone Wolf]'s [Plant Growth].

*It costs exactly 10 essence a second with a 10 metre radius. That would turn a 30 day growth time into... 11.4 hours. That's very good.*

*[Meditate] basically doubles it to 23 hours. People need to sleep so let's say 36 hours to grow and harvest 314 metres squared of crops. That might actually be enough to replace an entire farm, but I'm unsure whether it can replace the entire agricultural infrastructure of the province.*

*At the very least, there's still cattle.*

But Riza wasn't done yet. There was still one, final calculation to do.

*What if we replace [Lone Wolf] with [Way of Metamagic]?*

Doing it this way, regeneration totalled 19.6 essence a second. Optimising [Plant Growth], it would cost 19.3 essence a second and shortened a 30 day growth period to a 3 hour one.

*Holy Shit*, Riza thought when she first did the calculations. She double-checked, just to be sure.

Same numbers. It would shorten a 90 day growth period to a 9.5 hour one.

*That's basically a full-time job with plenty of free time if you live where you work. I don't even need the data; I just know this would revolutionise farming.*

*And only level 11 as well. Just one boon. A sufficiently strong beast demon would be enough to get a level cap that high.*

*This is progress.*