

## StoryLine-13

Okay, since I have to rest for a bit, let's look at this. I open my combat log and the last batch of notifications fills my vision.

Conflict Check failed
Sword vs Dodge skill Resolution - environmental factors

Conflict Check Successful
Lunge vs Block Skill Resolution - proximity - environmental factors

Conflict Check Successful
Sword vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - environmental factors
You cause 1.593 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Slicing attack:14.375 damage. Improper leverage: -75%. creature hide: -2 damage

Conflict Check Successful
Sword vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - environmental factors
You cause 12.375 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Slicing attack:14.375 damage. creature hide: -2 damage

Conflict Check Failed
Lunge vs Block Skill Resolution - proximity - environmental factors
You take 0 point of damage. Bite attack(blunt): 11.342 damage. Armor: -2 soak(100% effective): -36.225 damage Condition applied: held

You take 11.026 point of damage. Slammed(blunt)(held negate skill conflict): 49.257 damage. Armor: -2 damage, soak(100% effective): -36.225
You have gained a Debuff: Hairline Fracture, Left Ulna

Conflict Check failed
Sword vs Dodge skill Resolution - proximity - held - environmental factors

You take 11.026 point of damage. Slammed(blunt)(held negate skill conflict): 49.257 damage. Armor: -2 damage, soak(100% effective): -36.225 damage
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Conflict Check failed
Sword vs Dodge skill Resolution - proximity - held - environmental factors

You take 11.026 point of damage. Slammed(blunt)(held negate skill conflict): 49.257 damage. Armor: -2 damage, soak(100% effective): -36.225 damage
Debuff: Hairline Fracture, Left Ulna has been upgraded to: Fracture, Left Ulna

Conflict Check failed
Sword vs Dodge skill Resolution - proximity - held - environmental factors

You take 11.026 point of damage. Slammed(blunt)(held negate skill conflict): 49.257 damage. Armor: -2 damage, soak(100% effective): -36.225 damage
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Conflict Check failed
Sword vs Dodge skill Resolution - Held - environmental factors

Conflict Check Successful
Knife vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - Held- environmental factors
You cause 4 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Impaling attack: 8.05 damage(knife type, Straight edge: Maximum damage 5). creature hide: -1 damage

Conflict Check Successful
Knife vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - Held- environmental factors
You cause 4 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Impaling attack: 8.05 damage(knife type, Straight edge: Maximum damage 5). creature hide: -1 damage

Conflict Check Successful
Knife vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - Held- environmental factors
You cause 4 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Impaling attack: 8.05 damage(knife type, Straight edge: Maximum damage 5). creature hide: -1 damage

Conflict Check Successful
Knife vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - Held- environmental factors
You cause 4 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Impaling attack: 8.05 damage(knife type, Straight edge: Maximum damage 5). creature hide: -1 damage

Conflict Check Successful
Knife vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - Held- environmental factors
You cause 4 points of damage, Bleed Debuff added. Impaling attack: 8.05 damage(knife type, Straight edge: Maximum damage 5). creature hide: -1 damage

You take 11.026 point of damage. Slammed(blunt)(held negate skill conflict): 49.257 damage. Armor: -2 damage, soak(100% effective): -36.225 damage
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Conflict Check Successful, critical
Knife vs Dodge Skill Resolution - proximity - Held- environmental factors
You cause 40 points of damage, Severe Bleed Debuff added. Impaling attack: 8.05 damage(knife type, Straight edge: Maximum damage 5). creature hide: -1 damage

You have killed a Warg, 338 experience awarded
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Okay, I'm glad I didn't have that showing up as I went through it; it would have been discouraging. But while I'm glad it worked, I'd love to know the factors involved in me knifing it since I never trained in knife fighting. Grandmother only teaches it to guards who've leveled up their class and other combat skills because she claims that knife fighting isn't useful enough to bother relying on it.

[this will be moves to the previous chapter in the next draft. I considered not writing it at all, but I needed to work out combat and waiting until the next fight is a recipe for me never doing it]

I glance at my Stamina. Back up above a quarter. It didn't go up as much as I'd want. Probably a mix of looking over the log and not being able to relax with who knows what creatures lurking in the forest.

My options are to stay here until I have enough stamina to push until I'm out of the forest, which only works if I know where it ends. Or slow down, so getting there doesn't cost me stamina.

I look around at the trees, at the sunlight streaming through the leaves, the small animals running on the branches, and I find the decision harder to make than I expect.

If I don't think about the monsters that also live here, there's something peaceful about sitting here and watching nature. I don't know if I'd want to spend all my time here, but I hope I can convince my dad to give me some slack over time, because I'd like to come back. Walk around once I'm higher level, with better skills, so I don't have to worry about a level two monster killing me.

I get to my feet with my stamina having gone up a few slivers and set out toward Court at a leisurely pace.

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I see the light at the end of the forest and run three paces before stopping. I can't leave the way I'm dressed. Dad is going to kill me, if he finds out I fought a monster. His

reaction's probably not going to be great when he learns about my class, but it's going to be better if I can convince him nothing else happened, other than what led to me getting it.

I bring up my inventory.

My full inventory.

I let out a breath and consider what I don't want to keep. The wrapper's a no brainer, although I'd like to keep the address. It might not be around anymore when I start my journey, but it would be a place to check for supplies. Healing bars can't be the only thing they sell.

Hmmm.

I equip the journal and stylus. I open it and the page after Aaron's letter is folded over a few times. I open it quickly just to check, and it's a hand-drawn map, but once it's folded again, I'm looking at blank paper on which I can write.

If the stylus works.

It does, leaving a silvery line as I transcribe the address.

That's one freed spot without losing anything. Now to find seven more.

The pulleys, rope, pitons, and hooks are easy. Then it's the snare. Climbing and hunting aren't things I'll be doing anytime soon. Someone could make use of them at home, I'm sure, but not at the expense of my armor and weapons. Those I can convince Grandmother, or Grandpa Louis to say it's their gift to me for gaining a class. Dad still won't be happy, but even he won't force me to return a gift.

Pocket watch, oils, and maintenance tools, I'm keeping. And the whetstone. The binoculars? Hopefully.

Drop the bedroll and work gloves. I don't really need the pocket knife anymore, but it was Dad's gift to me the first time we went fishing, when mom was still around.

The fatwood isn't going to be of use to many, so out it goes, and my equipment takes its place. The whetstone goes in my personal inventory, so it's all in one place, and then I...

I need to throw something else out to store my traveler's pouch. If dad sees it, he's going to ask questions. One of them is going to be what's in it. There's no way I can avoid opening it to him and I'm in trouble big time again.

Firestarter, empty vials, binoculars or the tanned hides.

The hides can be used without question, as can the vials. Glass isn't the easiest thing to get. The binoculars, being able to look far is never something we want to throw away.

I'd love to keep the firestarter, it's just neat.

But that's not enough of a reason.

Out it goes, the pocket watch goes back in the pouch and the pouch in my inventory.

And I'm back to being Dennis, sixteen year old young man returning home from an uneventful trek in the forest.

Like dad's going to believe that one.

Hopefully, he'll be too happy I'm back in one piece to give me the third degree. Sure, one can dream, right?

I step out of the forest and the air feels warmer as the sun shines on me without interference. I soak it in for a minute, soak in the fact that I'm now safe. While Base can't act this far out, the tower means he knows what's happening and he can send guards to deal with it, or get the town ready when it's a wave and no one sane wants to take those on

without every able body pitching in.

He probably told dad I'm back and guards are on their way to escort me the rest of the way, so I might as well meet them halfway.

A few of the farmers are in the fields, but they don't notice me. It's not time for the harvest, but there's still stuff they need to do. The only time they don't work the farms is in the winter. Any other time, at the very least, they need to use their abilities to help the crops.

Court's wall comes into view without encountering guards, and the people I cross path with just nod at me like I belong on the road.

Is something keeping the guards busy? There's no way dad didn't demand Base send someone out to get me. He'd demand chains too, if he suspected what I've been up to. Okay, I'm exaggerating.

Still, where is my welcoming committee?

I take in Court, since this is probably the last time I get to see it from this side. The wall's stone with a coating that reinforces it. The watch towers add to the security. Base isn't infallible. Monsters can't get this close without him noticing, but people?

Well, we can be a lot sneakier than monsters if we set our mind to it.

The gate's open, with a few people coming and going and one standing in the middle of the road in front of it.

Wow, if dad got himself all the way to the city outer wall, he is going to be livid.

Only, that can't be him. Dad's not a big man, and neither am I, but the silhouette resolves itself into someone with curves. When she waves at me, I see enough to recognize her.

I'm torn between running and hugging her and slowing to show I don't have a care in the world.

So I end up just continuing to walk normally. The heat in my cheeks is due to the sun and not the memory of Rich's question, and how that made me wonder if me and Josie ever could...

"Hey," I say as I stop before her.

She smiles and her face lights up, her green eyes glimmering. "Welcome back." Her smile falters. "Are you okay? We were worried about you."

I shrug, even if all I want to do is tell her about the forest, the Warg, the power plant. I will tell her, but after. After dad, after my punishment. After I've figured out how to explain to her just how amazing it all was.

"I'm sorry. I wasn't supposed to be gone so long."

"But you are okay?" She searches my face. "You weren't here for your choosing day. Are you stuck being a farmer?"

I barely keep my mouth from opening. I can't tell her about my class before I tell dad.

She hugs me. "It's going to be okay. I'm sure being a farmer isn't going to be that bad."

I have no answer for her, because all I'm noticing right now is that she smells like lilac and pepper, that her breast are really comfortable against my chest, and that I hope she doesn't think I'm a perv for my body reacting the way it does to her.