

CHAPTER 110: MAD MANDRAGORA MARATHON!

As the towering trees finally toppled into place, Sam surveyed the damage and realized that hauling all of those things would be the hardest part out of all this.

With [Heavy Blade], I could furnish us an entire palisade of these trees in less than a day!

It was a heady thought to have. Procuring resources seemed like an impossible task until he realized that he had the perfect ability to do it with.

And even when his MP ran out, he had a huge sword and tons of Strength.

Just looking at the damage he'd done to the forest of trees was impressive as all hell. He had expected a tenth of the trees to fall that were now lying on their sides cushioned by broken branches and other trees.

If only we had a Carpenter! Sam thought. They could make homes in no time at all. But nobody had any Professions, and that was the reality they had to live with.

Sam walked up to one of the cross sections of those massive black trees. Their wood was as dark as ebony. It looked stained, far darker inside than outside.

As it turned out, cutting down trees that would have shaded most downtown buildings back home was easier than moving their dead bulk. Sam heaved on just a single tree, but it barely budged. His muscles strained to their limits, and with effort he could roll the thing, but it was just a single tree.

And it was hard to roll something more than a hundred feet tall with any accuracy.

“I’ll have to cut them up into house-size chunks,” he thought aloud. “Or else try to cut them all up here, but....” Sam looked back at the [Forest Tile]. The tree stumps were already being reclaimed by the forest.

Moss was growing over the bare stumps, and Sam could sense something deep within the forest stirring to life.

“Or I could go get CC and see if we can store one of the trees,” he told himself. Sam figured he’d go look for Komachi, where the cat was the mimic was sure to be close at hand.

But before he could, he heard a familiar sound. Sam turned back toward the [Forest Tile].

The mimic burst out of the trees and scampered by on dozens of paws. He raced a group of mandragoras through the forest and had a good lead, too.

Perched on the chest’s lid, Komachi played her new instrument from the Zuu boss monster, casting [Haste Mazurka] across all the training participants.

So that’s where she’s been, Sam thought. Then horror struck as he realized he was cutting into the same forest that Komachi was within.

He could practically hear her cry out as one falling trees shadowed her tiny body, “*Maaachiii!* Why it gotta be like dis man?” Fortunately, no such thing happened.

The musical notes danced across the creatures and mimic alike. They even twirled around Komachi, signifying the broad reach of the spell.

No doubt that was part of the challenge. Imparting haste to not just one ally, but many that were all moving at once.

Besides, they seemed to be having a good time, Komachi especially.

He hoped his cat Bard was earning both Experience and skill ups.

Then Sam noticed something strange. A couple of the trees were receiving the effect of [Haste Mazurka] as well.

He almost missed it. It wasn't like you'd be watching the trees for magic. How and why could they be receiving a buff?

A tomato mandy fell, tumbling end over end.

One of the hastened trees rumbled. Dirt flew into the air from roots that tore themselves from the ground. The living tree's clawed branches reached for the prone creature.

Naturally, as just about anybody would, the tomato mandragora screamed, stunning the far larger plant monster.

Raiko darted by, dozens of mandragoras clinging to her willowy frame. Cursing, she scooped up the fallen tomato and kept running.

The living tree lumbered after her.

Now *that* was an enemy Sam was suited to slaying. He hefted his greatsword and charged after her, the dullahans following suit.

The [Treant] wasn't fast, but it didn't need to be with its colossal size. And though Sam's [Heavy Blade] might make short work of it, he couldn't charge it and run at the same time yet.

With his much shorter legs compared to the [Treant's], he had to sprint just to keep up. Raiko, meanwhile, kited the damn thing with ease.

He saw Raiko reach for her sheathed katana, but one of the mandys clinging to her began to slip, so she held off and kept going.

If she got hit, then one of those mandys would get hit too. Sam doubted they'd be able to survive the strike, and the Ninja likely arrived at the same conclusion.

Fortunately, the haste effect fell off of the [Treant] when Komachi spun around and realized what was going on.

The mimic swerved around, chasing after Sam and Raiko, seemingly enjoying himself just like any dog let loose for some zoomies.

“Komachi, I could use a little speed here!” Sam called to his mimic-mounted cat.

Komachi cast another [Haste Mazurka] on Sam, granting wings to his feet as he tore up the ground.

The dullahans surged with musical notes as well as they began to catch up to the [Treant] just as another tore itself free and lumbered after them.

Sam turned to the newest threat and skidded to a halt as he charged [Heavy Blade]. The [Treant] rumbled straight for him, his silver blade a beacon for the angry tree.

The blade's aura lengthened and solidified around it, granting a sharper and longer edge. The [Dullahan Greatsword] wasn't designed to stab, its tip was rounded into a sharpened crescent.

But what it was very good at was slicing. And as Sam lined up the strike, he released [Heavy Blade], sending the doubled length of his sword arcing toward the towering creature.

The [Treant] reached out with a skeletal limb and its arm was severed along with its body.

For a moment or two, the [Treant's] roots, which had become unsettlingly ambulatory, danced around as its upper body wobbled back and forth.

Eventually, the [Treant's] roots moved too far in one direction while its untethered upper body moved in the other, and the creature crashed to the ground with a bone-shaking rumble.

That didn't spell the end for the [Treant] though. It reached out to Sam with more of its limbs.

Sam didn't have time for another [Heavy Blade], so he sliced back and forth, working methodically to cut the [Treant's] prone form down to size.

Halfway through, he received a notification for its death and decided to move on. He could come back for it later.

Still hastened by Komachi's buff, Sam followed the mandragora screams and the thumping footfalls of angry [Treants]. What the mandragoras had done to piss them off, Sam could only guess.

He didn't even know that some of the trees would be monsters. It seemed a statistical abnormality that he hadn't accidentally killed one as he felled all those trees earlier.

With a cut-off colorful curse, Raiko bonelessly skidded across the forest floor, inadvertently stunned by the mandragoras she was trying to keep safe.

The sight of Raiko falling sent the dullahan into an empowered state. He couldn't tell if it was rage or something similar, but a crackling aura of electricity shot up their bulky armor.

One dullahan pulled ahead and rammed a [Treant], then began carving into the monster with its greatsword, preventing it from going after Raiko and the mandragoras.

"Boost me up!" Sam shouted to one of the dullahan nearby. As he came across Raiko and the [Treants], Sam stepped up onto the dullahan's offered hands and was thrown into the air.

Sam charged [Heavy Blade] for as long as he hung in the air and released it in one splintering vertical strike, adding gravity to his colossal Strength and the sword's immense weight.

The [Treant] was split down the middle like firewood. The creaking sound reverberated through the forest like a gong in a silent monastery.

Slowed by the [Treant's] woody flesh, Sam landed gently on the ground in a crouch.

The remaining [Treants], while monsters, were not stupid. They could see the way the tide was turning, and the remainder fled deeper into the [Forest Tile] until they were lost among their less ambulatory brethren.

You defeat the [Treant (Level 25 - Copper)].

You gain substantial Experience for slaying a Tough monster!

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Level Up!

Your [Swordsman] Job has reached Level 22.

+6 Strength | +6 Vigor | +3 Agility

+3 Dexterity

+2 Bonus Points

Your [Heavy Blade] Ability reaches (★ Common III).

Sam grinned at the quick upgrade to [Heavy Blade]. He had used it enough, but it still felt good to see a new ability increasing so soon after getting it.

“Everybody okay?” Sam called out.

Several dullahan were circled around Raiko and the mandys. They parted to allow Sam entry into their little sanctuary.

Komachi, even riding atop the mimic, was still small enough to walk right between their legs.

“What the hell was that about?” Sam asked.

Raiko groaned, sitting up. Was she... slightly on fire?

She pulled off the [Black Garlic Mandragora], set him aside, and patted out the fire on her side. “Treants spawn in [Forest Tiles]?” she guessed. “And aren’t fond of mandragoras. Or perhaps, they were upset with what you were doing?”

“So I’ve gathered,” Sam said with a grin. “You’d have thought with all the trees I toppled just a few moments ago, I would have snagged one or two for some easy Experience.” He slid the greatsword back into its sheath. “Maybe that’s what riled them up, or was it our new troublemakers?” Sam looked at the mandragoras meaningfully.

They appeared overly innocent, looking anywhere but at him. The garlic mandy snuggled up to Raiko and set her ablaze again.

“Dammit!” she cried.

Sam reached out and snapped his fingers, using his Fire affinity to snuff out the flames. He had never tried it at such a distance and was surprised when it worked.

I’ll keep that in mind.

“Thanks Sam,” Raiko said wearily.

“No problem.”

He wondered what he could do if he tried to control the Metal mana within the [Heavy Blade] ability as well. Would he be able to control it even better? It was hard to maneuver once it was fully charged, and if an enemy was fast enough, they'd dodge it.

Even if they weren't, it wasn't the sort of ability he could just fully charge at will. Any creature with two brain cells to rub together would see what he was doing and try to avoid the attack.

It helped that [Heavy Blade] greatly increased the striking distance of his sword, but he'd need to find inventive uses of charging it so he could get the most out of the ability while retaining the element of surprise.

Could I charge it while it's inside the [Biting Sheath]? Sam filed that away for later. He'd only get one chance to do it, but the element of surprise would be complete.

If done properly, there wouldn't need to be a second attack.

Komachi pawed the garlic mandy. He fully expected some of her fur to catch fire, but there was no such effect. Perhaps all his... oils were used up, tormenting Raiko?

Once more, Sam threw the extra bonus points into Vigor and Strength.

Sam looked at the ring of dullahan and nearly burst out laughing. Each of them was facing inward and giving him a thumbs up.

He wasn't sure if it was a sign of respect or they were just showing general approval of protecting Raiko, but it looked so silly on the headless suits of armor.

“Why... why are they doing that?” Raiko asked, glaring at Sam. “Did you corrupt my boys?!” She then barely covered a laugh.

Sam shrugged. “Guilty.”