

CHAPTER 12:

FIRST BLOOD

While everybody else was still picking themselves up off the floor, Sam rushed forward to meet the large lizard. Though he could handle the [Dull Claymore] similarly to how he could have a much smaller and lighter longsword, it was still unwieldy due to its sheer size.

Sam held the blade across the back of his shoulder in a modified Wrath Guard. He stomped down on one foot as the lizard rushed at him, twisted about, and brought the claymore down with all of his might in a slashing vertical strike reminiscent of an altered Zornhau maneuver.

The beast, however, was dumb and simple. It reared up when it would have been better off lying flat and met the guillotine force of Sam's blade.

Sam was alarmed at the damage it did. He was used to a blade only a few pounds in weight and much smaller. The inertial forces of such a heavy and long weapon were astounding.

With a reptilian shriek, its head split open, and the creature flopped about for a few moments before its body realized it was dead.

The screeching noise it made caused Sam's ears to ring and his vision to go blurry. Komachi clambered up onto his shoulder and said something, but he couldn't hear her.

You defeat a [Forest Lizard (Level 2)].

You gain additional Experience for slaying a Tough monster!

A pair of the [Forest Lizards] broke cover at the sound of their dying comrade and rushed Sam. Still recovering from the shriek, Sam barely managed to get his blade in line to block the first leaping lizard.

It crashed into the flat of the claymore, its jaws finding no flesh to rend and its stubby clawed arms too far away to do any harm.

A pair of arrows whistled through the air and took the second monster before it could join the fray. Sam struggled to keep the first [Forest Lizard] at bay, but the brute was strong, and he was caught off-guard.

Kale appeared at his side, bringing one axe down on the creature's back and another on the backswing to buy Sam some breathing room.

The bronze axes that Kale used didn't seem to pack the same punch that Sam's claymore did, because rather than killing the creature right off, it only carved into its scaly hide.

But that hardly mattered as the air turned bitterly cold and a spike of ice dropped from above the nearest lizard and impaled its head.

By then, Sam had recovered enough to perform an overhand strike on the pin cushioned lizard, cutting it in half and cleaving deeply into the ground.

It was over before most of the others knew what was happening. Three monsters were slain, one by Sam solo, one by a mixture of Sam, Kale, and Chris, and another by Sam and Kylie.

You defeat a [Forest Lizard (Level 3)].

You gain additional Experience for slaying a Tough monster!

You defeat a [Forest Lizard (Level 2)].

You gain additional Experience for slaying a Tough monster!

Level Up!

Your [Fighter] Job has reached Level 1.

+2 Strength | +2 Vigor | +1 Agility

+1 Bonus Point

Level Up!

Your [Fighter] Job has reached Level 2.

+2 Strength | +2 Vigor | +1 Agility

+1 Bonus Point

A warm glow flooded through Sam's body, filling him with a rush of power. Not quite the high that toppling a hundred levels with Raiko had been, but similar enough that he instantly hungered for more.

He had expected his HP to fill back up to full and to feel revitalized... but he didn't. In fact, he noticed that his HP was missing a few points.

He discovered the source of the damage on his inner forearm where the lizard he held at bay must have managed a few shallow scratches.

Komachi rang her little bell-wand and a chilling cold sensation seeped into the wound. Sam watched in awe as the shallow, bleeding wound knit itself together over the course of a few moments.

He hadn't lost much HP, hardly 5 points, but it was still surprising to see how fast healing worked.

"Hmm," Komachi said quietly, inspecting his arm. "Healing drains a lot of my MP."

“Everybody okay?” he called back to the others.

“What the FUCK was that!?” Darren cried out. “Those things are bigger than komodos! Why would we get sent here? I thought we were just going to be outside of a little hamlet or town like one of those stupid little video games where we get a tutorial quest.”

“Calm down,” Chris said, raising his hands and patting the air, “it’s okay. We’re fine, everybody’s fine, right? No wounds?”

Sam looked at the rents in his sleeve and the unblemished skin beneath. “I’m good thanks to Komachi.” He turned to nod at Kylie, who was looking at the lizard she had shot, likely saving his life in the process by drawing his attention.

By the green tinge on Kylie’s face, Sam could tell she was going to throw up. Sam knew she was the timid, non-confrontational sort, so getting into a fight, let alone slaughtering a monster, wasn’t going to be easy for her.

With a pat on Kale’s shoulder, Sam walked up to the rest of the group as they were struggling to their feet. Some of them looked like they might not be able to stand much longer.

The reality’s settling in, he thought to himself, they’re beginning to realize this isn’t just a game. It’s actually happening and there is a real risk of dying now.

Oddly enough, Sam found that he hadn’t felt more alive than he did at that moment that he saw the lizard rushing him. He was awkward still with the greatsword, even if he had the skill to back it up.

But he felt *great*. He had pitted himself against a monster and came out the other side. You couldn’t get a rush like that anywhere else. And the level up? *Damn*. It was unreal. Even if it didn’t heal him or restore his body in any way, the tangible feeling of getting stronger was simply amazing.

Sam craved more, but he settled for calming his nerves and keeping watch as the others collected themselves.

Seeing that there was nothing else coming at them, he checked his notifications and, after a few initial fumbles, found out how to apply the bonus points.

He only had two, but he threw them both into Dexterity. He didn't like how he handled the claymore, overextending himself and swinging like he was using a bat instead of a blade.

His HEMA tutor would laugh him out of the building if he had seen.

Pulling up his stats, Sam couldn't help but grin from ear to ear. Hardly more than a few minutes into this world, and he was already progressing.

[Status]

Name: Samuel Hunter

Race: Human

Legend: [Adventurer (Lv.0 - Unranked)]

Job: [Fighter (Lv.2 - Unranked)]

Path: [Void (Lv.0 - Unranked)]

Profession: [N/A (Lv.0 - Unranked)]

Health(HP): [50/50]

Mana(MP): [35/35]

Attunements

[Void Mana] (F-Class Apocalypse Gate) (★★★★ Legendary III)

Physical Stats

Strength(STR): 13

Dexterity(DEX): 9

Agility(AGI): 8

Vigor(VIG): 14

Awareness(AWR): 7

Magical Stats

Arcane(ARC): 6

Control(CTL): 3

Resonance(RSN): 8

Mind(MND): 9

Insight(INS): 4

Sam's smile slowly turned into a frown as he realized something very odd. A couple things, in fact. Neither his Path, nor his Legend received a level, and his HP and MP remained the same despite increasing his Vigor.

Maybe Vigor doesn't raise HP? It could instead add some sort of damage mitigation rather than increasing his total HP.

Even after gaining 2 levels, he still only had 50 HP. That dramatically changed his outlook on losing 5 HP from a scratch he could hardly remember feeling.

If 10% of his HP could be wiped out without feeling it, how much would he lose if he broke a bone? Or worse, lost a limb?

Despite putting both bonus points into Dexterity, Vigor remained his highest stat. Strength was just one away from Vigor, too.

At a glance, that seemed like a solid stat spread to have for a melee. But then, Sam wasn't sure how important the magical stats were for his Fighter Job. He could only guess that his Path would make more direct use of magical stats.

He had Void mana, but not any spells or abilities for it, so how exactly was he supposed to *use* it?

A high-pitched voice pulled Sam from his thoughts. "What the hell are you doing?" it screeched.

He looked over to see Kale using his axes to messily skin the nearest lizard. The Fighter looked up with a grin. "I'm harvesting its meat! And maybe it's skin too. I kinda hoped the system would just... like teleport the drops into my Inventory but no go. Seems we're doing this old school!"

There was no denying that Kale was having the time of his life. Being wheelchair bound, he was a huge gamer, and they had played all sorts of co-op games together over the years. It was little wonder he took to this new life nearly as fast as Sam did.

After harvesting from the lizards, Kylie did indeed throw up. Along with a few others. In the Scout's leather gloved hands, she held up items looted from the lizards. [Forest Lizard Claws] and [Forest Lizard Tail].

"I can't believe I did this," she said, bemused. "I just... felt like I knew how."

"Some skill you got?" Kale asked.

She nodded mutely. "Our dad used to take us hunting as kids in upstate New York... I hated it, but it was something he was passionate about, so I stuck it out." She swallowed hard and looked away from the corpses, tucking away the loot she gained as well.

“And as soon as I saw what you were doing, I saw something appear and instantly knew how to do what you were doing.”

“What’s it called?” Sam asked.

“Skinning.”

“Does that include butchering the meat, too?”

Kylie nodded.

“Well,” Kale said, looking at his bloodied gloves, “at least we won’t go hungry.”

“I’m not eating that raw,” Chris said. “You remember that poke bowl place? Bro, I was *glued to the toilet for a week* after that. No thanks. We need to cook that.”

“You got a fire in your back pocket?” Kale asked.

“I *had* a lighter, but... it’s gone. Hey, wait a sec!” Chris turned to Darren. “You still have your wallet, don’t you?”

Darren shrugged. “Yeah?”

Chris turned to look at the rest of the group. “Anything *useful* in your pockets? Anybody?”

There were a lot of people checking their pockets and shaking their heads.

Now that they had gotten a chance to take stock without something new and strange or deadly coming at them, the group began going through their pockets and what they had left from Earth.

Anything that you might be able to consider *remotely* useful was just... gone. Keys, lighters, knives, pepper spray, water bottles, all gone. But useless junk like wallets, purses, driver licenses and credit cards were still intact.

There was nothing left of his old life. It had all been in his pack on the beach. He kind of liked that.

Sam peeked into his Inventory and spotted the [Camping Kit]. He knew it contained the supplies to set up a camp, including firewood and the like.

A normal person would want to save it for a rainy day, or when it was absolutely necessary. But Sam wasn't normal. He didn't see any reason to hold off on using something just because it might be useful later.

Consequently, he would usually arrive at a boss in most games, completely unprepared and without any potions or repair items that would help him out.

But on the flip side, he also never finished a game with an inventory full of useful junk that he never got to play with.

“We can set up a temporary camp here,” Sam said, digging out the [Camping Kit]. “I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm *starving.*”