

{Lesser Vampire Bat – Level 48}

That's a strong bat.

Considering how just two quantum bolts were enough to kill one, they aren't too close to being a Class D species. So there's that at least.

I frown at the creatures before sighing and dropping from my kneel into a crawl to give me a more stable grasp of the platform while still keeping an eye on the bats.

Then I slowly begin to crawl across the platform in order to find more platform.

This might take a while.

Chapter 33

Reaching Ground Again

Alexia

I can't help but smile when I finally reach the ground, having spent who knows how long simply crawling along the invisible platforms while feeling for solid ground. Not to mention when I had to go down invisible steps.

The first time I had to go down them was a rather unfortunate event where I accidentally fell down the stairs, barely landing on the edge of the platform without falling off thanks to one of the many invisible walls around the path of invisible blocks.

Too close a call for my taste.

Would've been nicer if there were more walls along the invisible path, but that would just be making things too easy...

I stretch after finally standing up for the first time in who knows how long before checking the timer for the Tutorial.

Time Left Until the Tutorial's End

16 days, 22 hours, 2 minutes, 10 seconds

The end of the Tutorial's second week just passed...

I can't help but frown at that as I look up at the bright sun in the sky, my eyes directly meeting the sun with no actual damage or pain registering in them. Something I realized was a thing the third time the sun appeared, which seemed to happen every hour or two. That my eyes ignore the oversaturation of light just as much as they ignore the lack of it.

Another nice benefit to being a quantum reaper.

But... if I can't finish the dungeon within the next two weeks, will I be able to get back to Astrid before the Tutorial ends?

It might be a problem if I can't meet up with her during the Tutorial. I'm not entirely sure about that though.

Makes me wish one of those clones would reappear to answer my questions, but that's not likely to happen. And I've been so focused on asking questions about my situation that I didn't get to ask many questions about the Reset itself.

I sigh at that thought before looking around at the bright cavern, finding it barren of any monsters right now thanks to the light.

There aren't any other monsters here aside from the bats, but I still have to figure out which way the bats went. And while the vampire bats I killed on the way down here did bring me up to level forty-six, giving me another skill at level forty-five, I don't feel particularly comfortable going into one of the bigger caves. Not when a lot more vampire bats seemed to be going in those than the others.

Although I am very happy about Quantum Burst, since that skill in particular is quite useful against these stupid bats. Not only is it bright, sending a large pulse of quantum energy all around me in a dome shape, but it knocks the vampire bats away in the process of hurting them.

The new passive skill I got at level forty-five could've been better though. Since all Quantum Veil does is help cover me from divination and scrying. Which I'm pretty sure no one is going to be using right now anyways.

My frown returns as I look around the cavern, only to eventually go away when I settle on a cave close to me that isn't too big before going to head inside. But the moment I step inside of the cave, I get a welcome System Message.

[*New General Skill* – Exploration: Enhances the user's basic instinct to know which direction they should go when unsure, makes it so they always know which of the four cardinal directions are where, and may sometimes give the user an instinctive feeling directing them to a hidden location. Skill is automatically slotted due to free open slots.]

I smile at that.

It's about time. Been waiting to get that skill for a while now.

I quickly open up my various Skills lists.

[General Skills]

[Pain Resistance Level 4(6%)(T1)]

| Polearm Mastery Level 2(31%)(T1) |

| Forerunner (Unique) |

| Stealth Level 2(91%)(T1) |

| Survivor Level 1(14%)(T1) |

| Poison Resistance Level 2(39%)(T1) |

| Exploration Level 1(0%)(T1) |

[Active Skills]

| Quantum Bolt Level 4(21%)(T1) |

| Quantum Displacement Level 3(31%)(T1) |

| Quantum Reversal Level 2(12%)(T1) |

| Quantum Phasing Level 1(0%)(T1) |

| Quantum Burst Level 1(31%)(T1) |

[Passive Skills]

| Quantum Attunement Level 2(21%)(T1) |

| Quantum Singularity Level 1(2%)(T1) |

| Quantum Infusion Level 2(46%)(T1) |

| Quantum Adaption Level 1(9%)(T1) |

| Quantum Veil Level 1(0%)(T1) |

Alright. Now all I need are three more General Skills and I'll have a complete set of skills. Although I still need to replace Quantum Phasing, Quantum Singularity, and Quantum Veil for now. Since, while they are good skills, they just aren't usable by me at the moment.

I am kind of curious why Quantum Singularity is gaining progress in leveling though. Unless it's due to the dungeon areas? When I pass between them?

Either way, the skill isn't useful unless I run into something with a magic that directly affects reality. And I won't be finding one of those in a Tier 1 dungeon.

I walk over to the edge of the cave before sitting down next to the wall as I try to consider what other General Skills I should get. Which three I should use to fill up the last slots.

Most of the General Skills I know of off the top of my head aren't things I can get right now, whether that's because I don't have the equipment needed for it such as specific weapons, or because I'm alone and have no one to negotiate with. Which kind of just leaves Taming and Resistance skills.

But I don't have any food to tame anything with, unless I want to go killing a monster and then trying to tame another monster with its corpse.

Which I guess I can do.

What would I want to tame though? And do I actually want to tame a monster?

I frown as I cross my arms under my chest and raise my head to look up at the ceiling of the cave.

Such a dilemma.

The sunlight in the cave suddenly goes away, following which a bunch of bats suddenly rush out of the cave towards me, only for me to use Quantum Burst, sending a pulse of energy outwards in a dome from me, knocking into all of the bats that get near me and sending them dazed to the ground with whatever part of their body that touched the pulse glitching apart. Then I get up while summoning my polearm before rushing towards them to tear the things apart, glad that I can finally use my polearm again without having to worry about falling to my death.

But as I'm killing the bats, something comes to mind.

Couldn't I try taming a vampire bat? Would certainly make for an interesting tamed monster, that's for sure.

I use another Quantum Burst when the bats begin getting up again, draining a lot of my soul in the process. Far more than a Quantum Bolt takes.

Well, guess it can't hurt for me to try. But I should be a higher level first.

So I continue killing the poor bats.

Chapter 34

A Bat and a Sneak

Alexia

It turns out to be far easier to kill the bats when I'm safe on the ground than when I'm high up in the air, for obvious reasons. So I end up gaining levels rather quickly from the creatures, gaining more levels from them in just a single day than I did from the spiders in that boss area over the course of multiple days. Probably because there are just a hell of a lot of these bats all over the place, and Quantum Burst does a good job of dealing with them even with the large soul requirement of the skill.

In the end, I don't stop killing the creatures for levels until I'm strong enough that I can just shrug off their attacks with my Quantum Body. Which is at about level fifty-seven. But I continue killing them after that anyways, just until I finally get the System Message for reaching level fifty-eight.

I stretch a little after heading to the closest cave to me, rather happy with my progress. And when I reach the cave, I begin moving through it in search of an interesting bat that I might be able to tame.

Let's see... if I remember correctly, to tame a monster, I have to either beat it into submission and feed it food until it learns to fear me, or I have to do something to gain its trust. And generally the latter is better than the former in terms of tamed monsters.

But I've never actually put this knowledge to use. Only learned about it in class.

A class that I kind of assumed at the time was a waste of my time, since I already had all of my General Skill slots filled.

Not that it stopped me from getting a near-perfect score in it despite that.

It did make it so I was perfectly fine with forgetting what I learned for the class afterwards though.

Which is unfortunate right now.

Honestly, having a bat as a tamed monster would probably help for scouting purposes. Any flying monster in general, actually.

I continue walking through the cave until I eventually find the bats all sleeping at the end of the cave. So I move further in, trying to stay as quiet as possible, only for them to still hear me somehow.

Stupid sensitive ears.

The bats all begin moving, fluttering around and flying straight towards me.

Then I use Quantum Burst, sending a pulse of quantum energy around me and knocking away all of the vampire bats, some of whom hit the floor and others manage to retain their flight. But the majority that it doesn't hit instead begin to fly closer to the entrance of the cave, afraid of the light.

Not that they matter. Especially since they can't really leave the cave when it's even brighter outside of it.

So while still keeping an eye on the other bats' magical energy sources, I focus on the bats that didn't fly away. Some of whom having been caught between a rock and a hard place. Literally. A large rock and the wall.

I frown at the bats, only for most of them to scramble to free themselves from the rock, quite literally ripping apart their wing in the process. Then they fly away, leaving only a single one behind.

Well this is unexpected.

I kneel down next to the crevasse between the large boulder and the wall, looking at the last bat remaining. One I honestly can't tell if is dead or not, simply because it's not moving at all.

Very unexpected.

Let's see if I can't tame this little fella.

Somewhere in Tutorial Block #108

Astrid looks out over the base from her spot on a tree, simply watching as the others sleep. Keeping guard from any would-be intruders.

The base has evolved from the original ruins with some stakes drilled into the ground on the outskirts and a fire with a makeshift shelter all the way to a much more established base. One with wooden spikes drilled into the stone, making up walls where the stone walls of the ruins don't cover, along with three buildings for sleep, and a single large fire at the center of the base.

The buildings were made as sleeping quarters and storage, one building for Astrid's original group, one for the princess's group that joined them, and one for the storage. Each built by the group members while the others were off hunting monsters to level up.

Astrid raises her gaze to find Cass jumping down from one of the trees while giving her a wave and mouthing 'Goodnight!' knowing perfectly well that Astrid can read lips. So Astrid brings up the timer counting down to the end of the Tutorial.

Time Left Until the Tutorial's End

15 days, 20 hours, 0 minutes, 5 seconds

It's already four in the morning?

Astrid blinks at that in surprise before focusing on the trees around the base, ignoring the golden eyed girl as she moves to wake up one of her group members for their turn at keeping watch. But Astrid's eyes quickly narrow when she notices a very brief movement in the trees.

Silence fills the base for several seconds, then she sees another movement, this time letting her catch sight of a flash of a man's head as he crawls across the ground, moving away from the base. One with brown hair and a cloak covering the rest of their body.

Without any hesitation, Astrid taps on the second cord next to her in the tree, sending a pulse of mana through it that rings a bell in the structure built for her group, then she begins jumping through the trees, keeping pace with the intruder. But she doesn't jump down to ambush him. Instead she follows him, leaving the others to prepare for any sort of attacks on the base thanks to her ringing of the secondary warning bell. One meant to signify a human intruder.

Astrid keeps as quiet as she can while she jumps from tree to tree, keeping pace with the man until over half an hour passes and she finds herself on the trees looking out over another base. And the moment the intruder gets out of the heavy foliage, the man having been trying to cover himself the whole way here with it, she recognizes him with a frown on her face.

Rodrick.

But he's not the only one she recognizes, as she immediately finds various other familiar faces amidst the people in the base she's arrived at. So she finds a good spot to keep an eye on the intruder, watching as he heads through the stone gates of the base made partially out of ruins just like their own, and partially out of stone, signifying that they likely have some sort of stone magic user amongst them. Or an earth magic user.

Then Rodrick heads straight for the crown prince, who's silver hair is obvious at any angle.

Astrid narrows her eyes slightly, leaning into the tree after adjusting her positioning as she begins reading their lips.

'They still don't suspect anything from us,' Rodrick says with a smile on his face as he kneels next to the former crown prince. Then he gets a look on his face that Astrid thinks is him chuckling or laughing. 'They won't be ready, Your Highness. That I assure you.'

So they are planning on attacking us after all. Elara and the Princess brought it up as an unlikely possibility, but a possibility, nonetheless.

She purses her lips for a second before seeing the prince say, 'Good. Alternate with your sister to keep an eye on them until we strike.'

Guess it's a good thing I noticed him. But when will they be attacking?

Astrid continues watching for a little bit, only to find Rodrick going to eat by the fire. Then his sister begins moving over to the prince.

But neither of them say anything that might be useful to Astrid, so she quietly identifies everyone in sight – which she notices is several more in number than she remembered being in his group originally – before making her exit, deciding that it would be best to head back to the base and warn everyone. Then she can come back and figure out when they're planning on striking.

All in their low to mid-level forties. This could be a problem.

Chapter 35

The Third Boss

Alexia

I bow my head slightly to the bat corpse in front of me, respecting the poor fella that ended up dying instead of being tamed. Mostly because it was already grievously wounded, and I don't exactly know how to treat a vampire bat, much less have anything on me that can treat one.

Rest in peace, poor little bat.

Ignoring the fact that I probably would've killed it myself if I wasn't trying to get Taming.

I briefly nod my head at that thought before getting up and moving on to leave the cave I'm in back to the brightness outside. Only for said brightness to dim down again moments later, following which bats once again return to the main cavern.

Well, there are plenty of other bats around here for me to try taming. I'm sure I'll manage to at least get *one* of these vampire bats.

The things really do make the perfect tamed monster for me down here as well, now that I think about it. After all, they drink blood. They don't need water, or any food. Just blood.

So I can easily feed them with monsters.

I grin slightly while putting my hands on my hips and briefly using Quantum Burst to send a bunch of bats flying again that had moved towards me.

Time to get to work.

This should be fun!

One Day Later

I give up.

After my fiftieth – at least, I think it's my fiftieth attempt. It's kind of hard to tell after so many tries. But after my fiftieth attempt failing to tame one, I think it's safe to say I'm not meant to be a Tamer.

A pity. It would've been nice to have a flying monster as a scout.

I sigh at that thought before checking my status.

Name: Alexia Knight		Species: Quantum Reaper(T1)		
Level: 60		Class: Quantum Reaper		
Soul: 3,011/5,187.5				
VIT: 178	DEX: 178	STR: 178	MAG: 237	MEN: 237
<u>Racial Skills</u>			<u>Active Skills</u>	
<u>Passive Skills</u>			<u>General Skills</u>	

It is rather unfortunate that my level stopped going up as quickly as it was, but it makes sense considering that the strongest vampire bats down here are only around level fifty-one.

I climb to my feet from my place kneeling next to the dead three-quarters-of-a-meter-tall vampire bat before stretching a little and starting to walk towards the main cavern again. Then, the moment I step out into the light, I head straight for the largest cave in the cavern. The one I've been avoiding all this time simply because it had the most vampire bats and seemed like the most obvious place for their leader to be dwelling.

Once I reach the large cave's entrance though, the light in the main cavern goes out again. Then all of the bats begin rushing out towards me from the cave, only for a lot of them to end up flying straight into a pulse of Quantum Burst. And I repeat the skill a few more times after that, sending the bats flying

to the ground until the ones behind the front of the flock realize what's going on and fly back into the cave.

One thing I really wish this cave had was a Safe Zone. Because I kind of want to switch out some of my current slotted skills for the ones I got at levels 50, 55, and 60. Not to mention that sleep would be nicer to have in a place I know monsters won't attack me in, unlike the caves I clear out of bats.

Fortunately none of the bats seem to enter other caves aside from their own. Which is probably by design with this dungeon, otherwise people wouldn't be able to rest in here.

I glance at some of the injured but not dead vampire bats on the ground before looking at my soul and deciding I have some to spare, so I blast each of them with Quantum Bolts. Then I step inside of the cave after killing them, being careful of any vampire bats that might be above my head.

But I don't find any, to my surprise.

Where did they go?

I frown as I walk, but even after walking for several minutes through the cave, I still don't find any bats.

Okay, seriously. Where did the bats go? They couldn't have just disappeared...

My answer comes to me after another ten or so minutes of walking when I reach a large cavern spanning about a fifth of the size of the other one. But this one is just filled to the brim with bats, along with one enormous one hanging upside down from the ceiling.

{Vampire Bat – Level 55}

What catches my attention just as much as the bat though is the boss room notice that I get after entering the cavern.

[You have entered the Tier 1 Dungeon Crawling Cavern's Third Boss Room. The Bat's Den.]

Well this is interesting. First time thus far that I've found a boss monster that was a lower level than me.

All of the bats in the room seem to start moving at once, flapping their wings and dislodging themselves from the walls to fly towards me. Meanwhile the boss itself just slowly opens its eyes.

Then I use Quantum Burst and each one of the bats let out hate-filled hisses and screeches, some of them having been moving too fast towards me to stop, leading to them getting blasted by the pulse from the skill.

I raise a brow when all of the lesser vampire bats begin flying around me towards the entrance, leaving the cavern after I flash another Quantum Burst outwards.

The boss at the center of the ceiling finally dislodges its talons from the cavern's ceiling and begins flapping its wings with a loud screech that has half of the bats halting their current trajectory. But another flash of Quantum Burst and a Quantum Bolt sent their way sends those out of the cavern as well, managing to force them into ignoring whatever order the boss just gave them.

This might just be the easiest boss fight I've had so far.

Without any hesitation, I raise my hands and begin firing Quantum Bolts straight at the giant two-meter-tall bat with blazing red eyes, only for the creature to move a wing in front of it and block the bolts. Or rather, it tries to block the bolts, making the bolts begin tearing a glitching hole through the creature's wing.

I blink at the sight of the bat beginning to fall down to the ground before it quickly climbs to its feet.

Uh, is this bat stupid or something? Why would it try to block an... oh. The light from the bolts.

Was it trying to shield its eyes from the light? That sounds like a rather large weakness for a boss to have. But then again, most people don't have the ability to see in the dark like me when they come down here. So it's probably more of a challenge firing attacks directly at the creature with such a large cave.

It also didn't seem to be as fearful and weak towards the light as the lesser vampire bats were, simply because it didn't fly away in fright.

I reach out my right arm before summoning my polearm and grinning at the large bat.

This will be a good chance to test my polearm mastery.

Then the creature lets out a screech, making a lesser vampire bat appear from a portal of darkness next to it.

I blink in surprise, only to find the vampire bat biting the lesser vampire bat's neck, following which its wing begins to heal a little.

Interesting.

What's with this dungeon and cannibalism?

Chapter 36

Defeating the Bloodsucker

Alexia

Putting the cannibalism aside, I rush forwards while swinging around my polearm to gather momentum before jumping through the air, sending a Quantum Bolt ahead of me as I begin to fall down towards the creature. And just like before, it raises a wing to block the light, getting its wing struck in the process. But unlike last time, it also lets out a screech and sends four small bolts of darkness around it towards me, making me raise my polearm to cut through two of them in a single swing. And right as the other two are about to hit me, I pull my weight back midair to send me into a spin, my head going

downwards towards the ground and making me narrowly avoid getting blasted in the shoulders by the bolts.

Then I swing my polearm towards the ground, striking it and pushing myself back up into an arc before I manage to land right in front of the vampire bat, where I swing my polearm once more, cutting straight through one of its wings and slicing the thing off.

I raise a brow at the surprising weakness of the bat's body, only to jump backwards again when it swipes its other claw at me with a screech of rage.

The bat lets out another screech, summoning yet another lesser vampire bat that it once again gorges itself upon to heal up. But this time the bat flies straight into the air, its wound already having healed from the blood.

So I let loose another few Quantum Bolts at the thing.

To my surprise though, it actually closes its eyes and begins to fly away from the bolts seemingly at random. Then it opens them again after the bolts pass by without hitting it.

Interesting. A boss that can learn from its mistakes.

Looks like this thing is really a Class D species after all. I was unsure at first, but if it can do that then it has to be Class D.

The creature stops moving around, its crimson eyes meeting my purple ones as we reach a bit of a standstill.

It's just going to keep healing if I let it, so I need to deal with any of the lesser vampire bats it summons to keep it from draining them. And while I'm at it, I should keep its fangs from me as well. Because that wouldn't be a pleasant time.

A vampire bat is – just like any other creature with the term vampire in its name – a creature that survives solely on blood, with no other nutrients needed. No water, no food, no nothing. Just blood. And a lot of vampire creatures often gain benefits from the blood they drink, similar to the humanoid Class A vampires that grow physically stronger, faster, and regenerate from drinking blood for a short time.

This bat seems to just regenerate.

The creature lets out a short screech, baring its few razor sharp teeth at me in the process as I frown at the thing.

Okay, this fight might be a bit tougher than I thought. But looking at my soul, I should have plenty needed to finish it.

Although that wouldn't have been the case if I had to fight off all of the lesser vampire bats.

Well, let's see if I can't get this thing to stop healing.

I raise one of my hands to send a Quantum Bolt, only to quickly throw my polearm with my other. And just like before, the vampire bit swiftly flies out of the way with its eyes closed.

Then it takes my polearm straight through one of its wings, making it let out a screech as it falls to the ground.

I grin as I rush forwards, dismissing and resummoning my polearm only to throw it again, piercing through a lesser vampire bat that it summons and sending it flying through the air. But it doesn't give up with just one, instead summoning three more afterwards that I deal with through a Quantum Burst after getting close enough.

The boss lets out a cry of pain as it too is hit by the pulse from the burst, but I ignore that as I dismiss and resummon my polearm again and throw it the remaining two meters between me and the vampire bat, skewering it straight down the center. Its cry of pain shoots up an octave again from that, only for it to turn towards me with hate in its eyes.

A shiver runs down my spine, making me immediately teleport to the side, following which two beams of darkness shoot out of its eyes passing through where I was just standing.

Holy shit, this damned bat really does know darkness magic...

I don't have the time to consider what that means right now though as I continue rushing towards the bat who now seems to be panting while slumping to the ground. Then, after reaching it, I summon my polearm back to my hand again before swinging it straight through the vampire bat's neck, killing the boss.

Then I let the System Messages from the battle flow.

[Level 51 Lesser Vampire Bat Defeated. User's earned EXP has been decreased a small amount due to killing a being whose level is five or more levels lower than their own] x13

{Congratulations! You have leveled up to level 61! Your Species has awarded you +2 VIT, +2 DEX, +2 STR, +2 MAG, and +2 MEN. Your Class has awarded you +1 VIT, +1 DEX, +1 STR, +2 MAG, and +2 MEN.}

[Level 51 Lesser Vampire Bat Defeated. User's earned EXP has been decreased due to killing a being whose level is ten or more levels lower than their own] x14

[Level 55 Vampire Bat Defeated. User's earned EXP has been increased a large amount due to killing a being whose level is five levels or more higher than their own.]

{Congratulations! Your Passive Skill 'Quantum Infusion' has reached Level 2!}

{Congratulations! Your General Skill 'Polearm Mastery' has reached Level 3!}

Seriously? Only one level from defeating a boss?

That's sad.

Although at least I leveled a couple of skills in the fight.

I hear the noise of a chest hitting the stone ground, bringing my attention to a pitch black chest with a bat's head engraved on the front, its eyes glowing with that same eerie red as the actual bat.

Okay, maybe the boss's loot will give me something worthwhile.

Chapter 37

An Egg and a Chase

Alexia

This... is not loot.

I stare at the egg that appeared floating above the chest after I touched it before identifying the thing.

Elemental Pet Egg

Description: *This egg passively absorbs the mana of the user who bonds with it, eventually hatching into an Elemental Pet. The species of the bonded pet will be dependent on what boss was defeated to obtain this egg.*

Stats Bonus: N/A

Requirements: Must be Alexia Knight to hatch this egg.

Item Tier: 2

{Tier raised from 1 to 2 due to random chance caused by the solo defeat of the boss}

The tier of the item takes me aback for a moment, only for me to immediately reach out and grab the egg. Then the egg begins to just disappear into my hand as if it were never there.

[User has bonded with an Elemental Pet, making the Pet soulbound to them. As the Pet is currently in its incubation period, it will passively absorb a small amount of the elemental energy of their highest Class affinity that the user gives off. After the Pet absorbs enough energy, it will hatch.]

Wait a second, what? That's not something from before the Reset... a soulbound pet?

I stare at the chest for several seconds before eventually shrugging and looking around the cavern for a way to move on through the dungeon, not really noticing anything going on with my soul. But then again, I guess it's taking my quantum energy, not my soul. And elemental energy is something everyone with an affinity naturally generates on their own without even thinking about it. Almost like a biological, or rather, a magical signal unique to them.

Which does make me wonder how long it'll take for the egg to hatch, but I have more pressing issues right now.

I begin walking over to a corner of the cavern where I notice a decline in the surface of the floor, only to eventually find another hole covered in cobwebs. Which isn't a good sign, nor does it bring back good memories.

I glare at the hole in the ground for several seconds before eventually sighing, sending a Quantum Bolt straight down to clear the cobwebs a little, then jumping in.

Here's hoping it's not a repeat of the last time.

Okay. Not what I was expecting, but still not a very pleasant place to be.

I look around the area I landed in, some sort of large cavern filled with random pools of purple liquid that I'm assuming is poison judging by the creepy looking bubbles of gooey purple that keep popping from time to time on the surface, not to mention the whole purple color in the first place. And lots of other things in this dungeon seem to love their poison, so it only makes sense.

Although, I don't see any monsters in the-

My thoughts are interrupted by the sound of skittering legs, followed by the sight of a scorpion entering the cavern and immediately turning its sights on me.

Never mind then.

I summon my polearm as I identify the scorpion and almost stumble in the process.

{Nightshade Scorpion – Level 67}

Right. Because a regular monster in the next area should be twelve levels higher than the boss of the last area.

Yeah. That sounds about right.

Maybe.

Probably not.

I throw my polearm at the thing, making it stretch out its bladed tail at the last second to parry it, sending it flying past the creature until I recall it to my hand again. Then the two-meter-long arachnid hisses at me while rubbing its two dark purple fore-limbs together.

When I saw the term arachnid-type monsters in the dungeon's description, I wasn't exactly thinking scorpions. But I guess they're classified as arachnids too, so...

The creature begins rushing towards me, ignoring the pools of poison as it passes through them seemingly unharmed. Unlike the walls that are splashed by the poison and begin to sizzle melt a little, showing that whatever ground the poison is under is likely something specially made to be immune to it.

I throw my polearm at it again along with a Quantum Bolt, and it manages to parry the weapon once more, but all it ends up doing when it swipes its claw at the bolt is making large chunks of its claw glitching apart and exploding, making its hissing increase in volume. Meanwhile I continue sending more

Quantum Bolts at the thing, each of which it tries to block with little success until I finally kill the thing after blasting it apart with nearly two dozen Quantum Bolts.

[Level 67 Nightshade Scorpion Defeated. User's earned EXP has been increased a large amount due to killing a being whose level is five levels or more higher than their own.]

{Congratulations! You have leveled up to level 62! Your Species has awarded you +2 VIT, +2 DEX, +2 STR, +2 MAG, and +2 MEN. Your Class has awarded you +1 VIT, +1 DEX, +1 STR, +2 MAG, and +2 MEN.}

{Congratulations! Your Active Skill 'Quantum Bolt' has reached Level 5!}

A level in Quantum Bolt. Not half bad.

I open my status.

Name: Alexia Knight		Species: Quantum Reaper(T1)		
Level: 62		Class: Quantum Reaper		
Soul: 511/5,362.5				
VIT: 184	DEX: 184	STR: 184	MAG: 245	MEN: 245
<u>Racial Skills</u>		<u>Active Skills</u>		
<u>Passive Skills</u>		<u>General Skills</u>		

Okay, bad. Very bad. I need to find a safe zone otherwise I'll run out of soul faster than I can convince Astrid to go out for donuts. Which is fast.

I look around the cavern at the three different exits, each on opposing ends of the others. Then I start sprinting around the pools of poison towards one, avoiding the tunnel that the scorpion came out of.

Only to end up passing through the tunnel and finding myself in a room full of half a dozen scorpions.

Maybe picking directions isn't my best skill.

I turn around and begin running away as the six scorpions all start charging towards me, and when I get back to the cavern I was in, I suddenly feel a sensation tugging me towards the other tunnel in the room – the one that the first scorpion didn't come out of between the two remaining tunnels.

Thank you very much exploration skill.

Without an ounce of hesitation, I sprint straight through the room while occasionally sending Quantum Bolts back towards the chasing scorpions until I reach the tunnel and pass through it. Then I find another large cavern with only two scorpions and a few pools of poison in it, along with a single tunnel leading out of it aside from the one I entered through.

So I sprint through the cavern, teleporting twice just to avoid the pools of poison and the scorpions trying to block my way. And once I make it to the tunnel, I sense something swinging straight towards my head, so I duck right before a sharp tail flies by, swinging some sort of purple liquid along with it. Then I continue running straight through the tunnel until I make it to a small cavern, passing through the usual fluctuations in space in the process as I enter a Safe Zone.

I quickly turn around, only to let out a sigh at the sight of the monsters slamming into an invisible wall made up of partially see-through purple and blue energy. Quantum energy belonging to the System no doubt.

I let out a sigh of relief before backing up to a random wall, leaning up against it, and sliding down to the ground.

Alive.

And now I can switch out my skills.

Chapter 38

Swapping Skills

Alexia

I fold my arms over my stomach while lightly tapping my elbow with a finger as I look at the list of possible skills floating in my vision.

[Unslotted General Skills]

N/A

[Unslotted Active Skills]

| Quantum Echo Level 1(0%)(T1) – Allows the user to create a brief echo of their previous attack through quantum entanglement, letting them duplicate one attack at a weaker level than the original attack. |

| Quantum Resonance Level 1(0%)(T1) – Allows the user to use the quantum energy in their body to create a resonance throughout themselves that increases their physical strength, speed, and regeneration for a limited amount of time. |

[Unslotted Passive Skills]

| Quantum Aura Level 1(0%)(T1) – Creates a field around the user that distorts the space within the field by a minimal margin, making it slightly harder to accurately hit the user. |

All three of them are quite good, but of the skills I'm wanting to replace, two are passives and one is an active skill. Which means I can't use one of the actives.

And I need the other four actives, since burst and bolt are my main attacks, displacement is useful since it's teleportation and that's always useful, and reversal is great for when I get a crippling injury or poison that I can't wait for my soul to heal. As for echo or resonance...

Ugh. This is annoying having to choose. I never reached the level where I *had* to choose between different Class Skills before the Reset, so this is the first time I'm going to have to not use a skill I want just because of the slots having been capped.

Although... I think I've heard that a lot of Legendary Feats' perks give extra Class Skill slots. So maybe I can complete a Legendary Feat and get one?

Like being the first person to clear a dungeon in the Reset? That could work.

Hopefully.

Assuming I actually end up being the first one.

I purse my lips in thought before eventually sighing and deciding on switching out Quantum Phasing for Quantum Echo, strictly because the second attack coming when the enemy doesn't expect it will do more than just a slight increase in my physical capabilities. Meanwhile I replace Quantum Veil for Quantum Aura.

Then I close out of the menu while leaning my head back against the stone wall. And out of curiosity, I check on the time remaining for the Tutorial.

Time Left Until the Tutorial's End

14 days, 15 hours, 4 minutes, 1 seconds

I've been in the dungeon for over fifteen days now.

That's a lot of time for something major to happen outside of the dungeon. I hope Astrid is okay.

She isn't exactly the most social of butterflies. Not that I'm one to talk. But I am at least decent at socializing even if I don't particularly like it.

Astrid on the other hand just can't socialize very well at all, much less like it.

In general, I often tend to be in charge of socializing. Or at least, I used to be. She's been making an effort to improve her socializing skills on Gramps' request, simply because I won't be with her every day of her life. And I agree with that sentiment.

But if I had to guess, she's probably staying in her own corner away from the other members of the team only interacting with them when she has to.

I kind of hope she's improved her socialization a little bit over the last two weeks though.

Then again, my social skills have probably deteriorated a bit after being left alone in a dungeon full of monsters for over two weeks straight with nothing to talk to but ten minutes with an incredibly annoying dead guy who could read my mind.

I sigh at that thought, briefly wondering just what I'll end up finding when I finally get out of the dungeon. And hoping that it isn't anything dangerous.

Maybe I'll find Astrid welcoming me into the group? The others should know I'm in a nearby dungeon, or at least assume that I might be considering how I wasn't with them. Even if it might confuse them a little bit.

Possibly more than a little.

I begin to feel myself slowly nodding off, and I let it happen, strictly because I'm currently inside of a Safe Zone.

And I need rest anyways.

Somewhere in Tutorial Block #108

"Let's go over the plan one last time," Alara says as Astrid and the others sit down in the building around her, having Cass keep watch outside. "We've learned from Astrid that the Crown Prince is planning on attacking us in the morning seven days from now, right after everyone splits up to go on their regular hunts. He'll then capture his sister and kill everyone else since he believes we're too high in level for him to control." Astrid watches as the girl moves various rocks across the very crudely made dirt map on the ground. "To counter this, we'll have the hunters loop back around once they enter the forest to go into the trees surrounding the base. Then we'll wait for them to strike, at which point we'll strike back, taking them by surprise." She looks up. "Everyone got it so far?"

Astrid nods her head, and she sees the others doing the same out of the corner of her eye.

"Good," Alara says, following which her friend, the third princess, continues the explanation for her, "Aidan, Cass, Shelly, Vicki, and myself will stay in the trees attacking from a range while Astrid will take one of the leaders of the other groups working with my brother as soon as she can before they can react. At the same time, Alara and Reginald will strike at William and the leader of the group with William, and the rest of you will be split between support at the back and close combat attackers at the front."

After no one says anything for several seconds, the princess finishes, "If everything goes according to plan, we should at the very least have hurt them enough to make them flee. But we will still need to keep an eye out for unexpected issues, since Astrid wasn't able to find out all of their skills while spying on them."

Everyone glances at Astrid, and she grimaces at the attention before they refocus on the princess again. Meanwhile the princess looks at Astrid as she says, "Miss Knight, can we count on your for your continued surveillance of my brother and his associates?"

Astrid nods her head without saying a word.

"Thank you, Miss Knight," the princess says with a smile before turning back to the others and saying, "Then that should be everything. Everyone, please go about your day from here on as if this

conversation didn't happen. And try to leave the tent inconspicuously so you don't draw any attention from any spies watching the base."

A wave of agreements run through the assembled people as Astrid lets out an inaudible sigh.

I knew that prince was gonna be trouble the moment we first ran into him.

Astrid then looks towards the dungeon despite there being a wall in between her and it.

If Lexi were here, would she have been able to handle all of this better...?

She continues to stare in the direction of the dungeon for a few more seconds before sighing again.

I miss her.

Chapter 39

The Final Boss Area

Alexia

I end up sleeping for about eight hours just to get a full night's rest in case I don't find another Safe Zone any time soon before I get up again and leave the Safe Zone to deal with the monsters that've been in the cavern right outside of the tunnel to it. But when I make it to the cavern in question, I don't actually find any scorpions in it. Which is surprising.

Where did they all go?

Strange. I was sure I sensed at least one magical source in this cavern...

My eyes are drawn to one of the pools of poison when I notice bubbles going to the top of it. And not the same bubbles as the other pools. The bubbles in this one are coming faster, and the bubbles themselves are smaller.

I narrow my eyes for a moment before focusing my senses on the pool. But the poison itself seems to be magical, so I can't sense for anything inside of it.

Despite that I'm absolutely sure there's something hiding in the pool.

So I do what any reasonable person would do.

I walk up to the other side of the cavern from it before climbing up the wall a little bit and sending a Quantum Bolt straight into the pool, making a scorpion shoot up out of it while screeching in anger. Then I send several more Quantum Bolts at it to kill the thing.

[Level 67 Nightshade Scorpion Defeated. User's earned EXP has been increased a large amount due to killing a being whose level is five levels or more higher than their own.]

Nice. Free EXP.

I leave the cavern without so much as glancing at the dead corpse before passing through the tunnel and into another cavern where I deal with more scorpion monsters. Then I continue navigating my way through the caverns, marking the walls as I do so just to make sure I know which way brings me back to that Safe Zone. But after clearing out several more caverns, I end up finding something rather odd. A much larger tunnel branching off of the cavern I'm in than before.

Right as I begin walking up to the cavern though, I notice something odd with my Quantum Attunement senses. Something in the air.

A very faint rift in space.

This must be the boss area.

I purse my lips before considering what to do. It's obvious that I'm too low a level right now to deal with this boss considering how the regular monsters of this place are at higher levels than me, but at the same time, I kind of want to know what level the boss is...

After staring at the boss area for several seconds, a thought comes to me.

What if...

I summon my polearm before swiping straight at the rift to the boss area, cutting the thing open with the quantum energy inside of my polearm.

Oo, does this mean I can enter and leave a boss area without getting stuck in there?

Because that would be a very nice benefit to quantum energy if that were the case.

A roar echoes throughout the caves. One louder than anything I've ever heard in my entire life.

I grit my teeth before reaching my hand through the open rift I made with my polearm, just to see the System Message it gives me.

And the moment I see it, I yank my hand away out of fear.

[You have entered the Tier 1 Dungeon Crawling Cavern's Final Boss Room. The Nest of Night.]

[You have left the Tier 1 Dungeon Crawling Cavern's Final Boss Room. The Nest of Night.]

I feel abject terror run through my body at the thought of just how close I was to ending up stuck in the final boss room with a level 100 monster. Something at the peak of Tier 1.

If I hadn't figured out how to rip open the rift, then there's a good chance I might've recklessly gone inside just out of pure curiosity...

I clap my face once to snap myself out of it before taking a deep breath and heading back to find a different way through the tunnels.

I'm going to have to grind levels for a while just to be able to fight that thing, so this set of caves is probably gonna be my home for several days.

I continue walking through the tunnel I'm in for a while, half in a daze at the mere fact that I'm already at the boss of the entire dungeon. A fact that has me both terrified and excited at the same time.

Excited because it means I might just be able to finish this dungeon before the Tutorial ends. In fact, I probably will be able to.

Terrified because it could easily lead to my death if I'm not fully prepared when I get inside of there.

So I'm not going in there until I either run out of scorpions to kill, or I reach the max level of Tier 1. Although I'm not sure how I'm going to advance while inside of a Tier 1 dungeon. Normally to advance you need to complete an ascension quest. Something you get when you reach level 100 that is related entirely to your class.

And I get the feeling the ascension quest for a quantum being isn't exactly going to be a walk in the park. Especially considering that I'm a Quantum Reaper, which, according to the dead asshole, is a purely offensive class for quantum beings. One meant for solo fighting as well.

So the quest is likely going to be very difficult.

Although at the very least quantum is the most versatile element I've ever seen in my life. It can heal, mess with time and space, has powerful attacks, and can even debuff and buff from what I understand. It's really the most powerful element in the world.

Something that's plainly shown just by the System itself, since the System uses the element, and so does its creator.

My thoughts come to a grinding halt when I reach the next cavern and immediately find level seventy-four scorpions inside of it.

Oh. Yeah, I guess it'd make sense that these things would continue climbing in levels as I move through the caverns... even if I've already found the boss area.

I slowly begin to back out of the tunnel before they notice me, only for them to notice me by the time I take my second step backwards.

So I start sending Quantum Bolts their way.

Well, at least they make for good EXP and points.

Chapter 40

The Hidden Boss

Lucas frowns as he watches the leaderboards without so much as blinking.

How? Just how is she...

[#1 Alexia Knight – 1941 points]

[#2 Lucas Nightshade – 1737 points]

[#3 Leif Eriksson – 1625 points]

[#4 Aurora Frost – 1621 points]

[#5 Isabella d'Aragon – 1598 points]

[#6 Leonidas Silver – 1575 points]

[#7 Alexander Frost – 1484 points]

[#8 Noah Kowalski – 1469 points]

[#9 Nathan Briar – 1393 points]

[#10 Damien Black – 1265 points]

The gap in points between us has been skyrocketing... does that mean she's gotten stronger? Maybe a lucky item? Or a good area in a dungeon to farm, assuming she's in one?

Lucas shakes his head at that thought.

Of course she's in a dungeon. She wouldn't have been able to catch up to us much less be at the top of the leaderboards if she wasn't.

The Hound frowns before closing the leaderboards and opening the timer on the Tutorial.

Time Left Until the Tutorial's End

9 days, 2 hours, 40 minutes, 11 seconds

Two more days until the last week of the Tutorial. At this rate the girl is going to win first place in the Tutorial, and I won't be able to do anything about it...

His frown grows as he raises his head to look at his surroundings. At the large castle standing at the peak of a mountain, and at the hundreds of goblins patrolling around the castle, many of whom are hobgoblins and shamans.

Lucas even notices several ogres amongst the goblins – a Class C species that is almost on the level of a Class B species evolved from goblins.

The man raises his hand and summons black flames radiating an eerie black light above his hand before looking at the castle again.

If that's the case, I can't hold back.

Then he throws the ball of flames towards the closest group of goblins.

Even if I have to take a risk, I will pass that girl.

Alexia

I stare at the pool of poison for several minutes as I consider what exactly I should do about it. Because I have already cleared out all of the monsters in this area, with the exception of the boss area and whatever is down this pool of poison. Even if that took me five days to do.

A rather exhausting act, but worth it.

I open my status as I continue staring at the hole.

Name: Alexia Knight		Species: Quantum Reaper(T1)		
Level: 82		Class: Quantum Reaper		
Soul: 6891/7,112.5				
VIT: 244	DEX: 244	STR: 244	MAG: 325	MEN: 325
<u>Racial Skills</u>		<u>Active Skills</u>		
<u>Passive Skills</u>		<u>General Skills</u>		

Although I'm not going to be reaching the peak of Tier 1 before entering the boss area. Not unless this secret, whatever it is, has monsters in it.

Which it might, to be fair.

I'm not really sure what's down there though. Just that I get the strong feeling that there's something there. Most likely from my Exploration General Skill. A skill that leveled up while I was down here killing scorpions, alongside Poison Resistance.

But... is that Poison Resistance level enough to jump down into a pool of poison?

Probably not, and even if it is, I'd rather not test it. Even if my armor is resistant to poison as well.

So I raise a hand to send a Quantum Bolt straight at the pool of poison, setting the target of the skill in my mind to be the poison itself. And after doing that, the bolt strikes the liquid poison and makes the outer edges of it glitch out a little. Something I realized I could do while killing scorpions on this floor.

After all, all the skill says is that I could shoot the bolt at a target. It never said the target had to be a living creature or even a solid thing. And quantum energy isn't solid energy at all.

Quantum energy is quantum energy.

I fire several more Quantum Bolts at the pool of poison until the entire pool is empty enough for me to see the hole beneath it. A hole that is suspiciously lacking in any sort of poison, with some sort of faint blue barrier with a few droplets of poison sitting on top of it covering the hole.

Now to see if this hidden area is a hidden boss or not.

I'm honestly a little surprised that this dungeon had more than one hidden area though. Normally that doesn't happen. Ever.

Probably another change to the System.

I jump down into the pool of poison, being careful not to land in a spot with a lot of poison remaining. Although even while being careful some of it gets on my skin and has me hissing through my teeth as it quite literally burns through my skin, somehow turning my flesh into a gaseous state that climbs away from my body. But it isn't much of it, so it doesn't do much damage. And the damage it does manage to do is very limited and doesn't last long.

So I just let my soul heal the few wounds caused by the poison before I kneel down next to the barrier and stick my hand inside. But nothing happens, unlike what happened with the boss room. So I summon my polearm and swipe it at the barrier, cutting through it and leaving glitchy purple spots on the edge of the otherwise blue barrier around the opening I created. Then I stick my hand in that opening to find a System Message sounding in my head.

[You have entered the Tier 1 Hidden Area, the Cavern of Poison.]

Sounds like a hidden boss. Which also means more EXP for me, and more levels to get before I take on the boss of the dungeon.

I jump down into the hidden area, confident that I'll be able to leave again with my newfound ability to cut through those pesky rifts. And then I fall. And fall. And fall some more. All the way till I grip the wall to slow myself down and then continue falling straight down into a large cavern, splashing in a large puddle of poison that has me shouting in pain.

Then I realize my mistake as I look up at the hole above me while trying to grit my teeth to stop the shouting.

How am I going to get back out of this cavern now? It's not like I'll be able to climb all the way up to the ceiling of the cavern while fighting...

My attention is drawn to a large creature moving through the little lake of poison around the island I now realize I'm standing on. An island in the middle of the cavern that has small puddles of poison all over it.

Okay. Yeah. This may have been a bad idea.

Whatever the creature is, it looks rather large as it moves underneath the poison lake, just barely not surfacing. But even with it staying under the poison, I can see two glowing red eyes in the lake at the creature's front.

{Poisonous Mana Eater – Level 92}

I blink at its name before muttering, "Well, shit."