

CHAPTER 22 – FANCY MEETING YOU HERE

Shaking his head, Luke pushed to his feet and turned to his status to apply his saved up free points. He had been so busy fighting monsters and testing out his bloodline that he kept putting it off.

With his class evolution now in full play, he had a better idea of what he would need. And since nothing gave mana or stamina, those were the two areas he felt he needed the greatest improvement.

Damage output wasn't immensely important if he could continue killing monsters below level 10, but doing so would halve his LP gains and lead to slower leveling.

On the other hand, if he pumped his damage output further, he could kill the giant rats and their like faster. He would then need to rest to recover his stamina and mana.

Given how much tougher a level 10 was than a level 9, Luke opted to improve his staying power for the time being.

Considering his bloodline powers, Luke split his remaining free points between Wisdom and Endurance. The bulk went to Wisdom to pad out his low mana.

Status

Name: Luke Solus

Race: Human (G-Grade - Level 5)

Class: Thief (Level 10)

Profession: N/A

Vital Resources

Health Points (HP): 210/210
Mana Points (MP): 90/130
Stamina Points (SP): 150/170

Stats

Strength: 35
Dexterity: 56 (+2)
Endurance: 17
Fortitude: 11 (+2)
Vitality: 21
Perception: 25
Willpower: 16
Wisdom: 13
Arcane: 12
Fate: 28
Free Points: 0

With those free points assigned, Luke felt more satisfied with his vital resources.

The growth he experienced was insane. Unlike anything you could get on Earth. His body didn't even feel sore at all like he normally would from spending his evening at the office gym.

“It feels like a year ago I wondered what it would be like to have 50 Dexterity, and here I am.” Luke shook his head in amazement. His core stats were coming along very nicely, but he was letting several of them slip by the wayside.

If not for his titles and the fact that every human level increased all of his stats, he'd have several single digits in there.

As it was, the 10% bonus from [First-Rate Soloer] didn't change his stats too much. And it wouldn't for quite a long time.

Luke was okay with that. He was in this for the long haul.

Looking around with his shadow senses, Luke confirmed he was still alone, then took out a throwing knife from his belt.

In the pitch darkness, he could see just as well as he could in the daylight. Perhaps what he saw was a little tinged with purplish twilight light, but otherwise, his vision retained full color and everything.

In fact, unless he missed his mark, it seemed better than when he first gained it.

The throwing knife was small, without a typical handle. The black metal of the knife extended into the tang, the part that would normally be covered by a handle. It was lightly textured in a diamond pattern to give his fingers—now shrouded in gloves—something to grip.

Using [Barrage], Luke took aim and threw the knife in one smooth motion, blending all three actions together.

The black knife flew straight and true as any arrow might. In mid-air it doubled, then doubled again until 1 knife became 4. Each one flew directly behind the first like a murderous conga line.

Since he was aiming at the distant beam of wood that had long-since fallen into the room and created a pile of stone rubble, all four struck home without issue.

Luke cracked a wide grin. [Barrage] turned out to be an excellent offensive skill.

A glance at his belt told him that, yes, despite only throwing one knife, there were four missing. He frowned at that. He needed to find a way to increase his throwing ammunition capacity. Suddenly two [Throwing Dagger Belts] weren't enough for his purposes.

He wouldn't necessarily say no to three belts, but that would start to get cumbersome. Throwing weapons stored on his wrists or maybe on the inside of his cloak might be easier to manage. Truthfully, he wouldn't mind hiding them anywhere he could manage.

Instilling a trickle of mana into the belt to restore the lost knives, Luke stretched and limbered up since he had been sitting and resting for a little while.

His mana and stamina weren't close to full since he had just put free points into the stats. He figured he would rest a little longer after the next series of battles.

Unless the next thing he ran into was a gigant rat. He'd probably need to rest after just one of those fights, considering how much more durable those beasts were.

They also seemed to come with giant rats, as if they were minions. Maybe they were? Would he continually find higher level monsters who had their lower level variants as minions to provide it with backup?

That would make crossing the threshold from one step of power to the other a bit harder, but the only way to be sure was to go seek out more monsters and gather more data.

Luke decided to do just that.

Jimmy Christensen held up a gloved fist. The column of 5 behind him stopped after a few shuffling steps. It wasn't military precision, but it was the best he could expect from civvies.

Why Henry wanted him to lead this ragtag group of nobodies out to find one Rogue who slipped through the boss' fingers was anybody's guess. Jimmy was a soldier, through and through. He didn't ask questions.

Henry had been good to him since before the uplift, and he wasn't about to betray that trust now. However, 6 people for one guy? That was a bit overkill, even in Jimmy's uncultured opinion.

If he had a gun, and at least two other marines, the problem would be dealt with in short order. But this new world had magic and strange things that he couldn't wrap his head around.

He had thought about using a bow and arrow like some sort of Robin Hood, but it didn't seem natural. The interviewer, who reminded him a lot of his high school's army recruitment officer, had let him play with all the weapons before making a class selection.

That was how he ended up as a Gladiator wielding a tower shield and a sick mace. With his full Strength build, he could have caved in the engine of a car with a few hits.

As it was, this world was a bit sturdier than the one he came from, but he was still a powerhouse.

Jimmy was one of Henry's elite. That was why he was babysitting the civvies who showed promise and, above all, loyalty.

More than anything, it was a test to see if they could be relied upon to do what was necessary in defense of the realm.

The world had vanished, leaving a power vacuum the likes of which would never be seen again. Henry was positioning himself and that saucy little minx of his to reap the rewards of this new world. He would take his loyal few with him into this new world of magic and mayhem.

"What're we waiting for?" Elsie hissed behind him. She was an Archer, only level 4, but she was besotted with Henry in the way that young girls with daddy issues always are.

Jimmy motioned two fingers ahead. They had gone over the simple signs, things that this group could understand without risking exposure by talking.

Elsie didn't like being ignored, but Jimmy didn't have the time to school her. They were making good time, largely because the storerooms beneath the settlement were cleared out.

Nothing but cobwebs, old rooms, and a few signs of battle long ago.

Glenn Caldwell, a strapping young man with rich ebony skin and a gaze that could bore a hole through tungsten steel, knelt beside Jimmy.

Whatever ability he used was invisible to Jimmy's eyes. Glenn touched his fingertips to a patch on the ground, rubbed it between his fingers, and nodded. "He went this way."

"Move out," Jimmy whispered.

At his word, Glenn ghosted ahead into the darkness.

The Rogue had an embarrassing lead on them, but Glenn was an excellent tracker. As soon as he had hit level 5, he went straight to Henry to ask what skill he should pick.

After a little guidance, he ended up with a tracking skill that let him track just about anything. If he had something from them, then it was as good as planting a tracker on the poor fool, and nothing was better than a little bit of blood.

They had scoured the Rogue's room, trying various patches until they found a few droplets that were almost impossible to distinguish from the rest. Gretchen, a level 5 Mage, had been able to lift up the blood from the stone so Glenn could work his magic.

The Rogue had made good time. If this was back on Earth, he'd be long gone with little to no hope of finding him again unless he was stupid and returned to the scene of the crime.

In Jimmy's opinion, they usually did.

All sorts of theories for the disappearing Rogue were circulating back at camp and Henry was growing more impatient with every retelling.

If he made an edict to stop gossiping, it would only add to the Rogue's legendary status as "the one that even Henry couldn't stop" and yet, if he did nothing, it would only confirm the rumors.

So the Boss Man grinned and bore it for the time being. He sent Jimmy with a detachment of 5 out to kill the guy. It wasn't glamorous, but it was what he was good at, so Jimmy didn't mind.

He would have preferred Peter, Edwin, and Gary, but Henry could only spare one of his elite officers and Jimmy was it.

"How could he even get down here?" Elsie whispered in a hush.

"Kent had climbing gloves," their weakest member, Austin told her. He didn't even have the sense to be quieter than her. "He must have used them to climb out and around the bridge and underneath. These areas seem like a breeding nest for all sorts of creepy crawlies."

Elsie shivered, the arm holding the lantern swaying slightly at Jimmy's back. His shadow stretched long in front of him. He would give their position away if anybody was looking for them, but there wasn't much alternative.

It didn't matter how good that Rogue was. They had numbers on their side, with Jimmy as the spearhead. A few hits with his mace, and that'd be it. Rogues weren't exactly known for having much HP.

These tunnels and storerooms beneath the settlement bridge were utterly black. No windows and very few openings to open air meant that even during the midmorning they were submerged in the abyss.

So far, nobody had lost their nerve.

It would have been good to have some monsters to fight along the way. Austin, Rochelle, and Elsie could use a few levels. Enough to bump them up to level 5 and get their first skill selection.

For some strange reason, this area was completely empty of monsters. And yet, there were some signs of them.

Maybe the Rogue had slain some of the monsters and got some easy experience. Jimmy didn't think so. He was confident that there was no way that Rogue could have cleared them all out by himself.

Henry already had a list of skills he wanted each of them to specialize in. Jimmy had it stuffed in his breast pocket beneath his bronze breastplate. He was a soldier. Listening to orders was part of the job, after all.

Glenn appeared at the edge of the light more than an hour later. He was hunkered down beside a shut trap door, Slav squatting as if he meant to stay there all day.

When Jimmy sidled up to him, Glenn put a finger to his lips and pointed down at it.

Is he here? Jimmy mouthed.

Glenn nodded and made a motion with his hands.

They were close. So very close.

With a rapid-fire series of silent commands, the rest of Jimmy's group lined up in attack formation. They would be exposed going down after the Rogue, which didn't matter much. They had superior numbers and so far, there was no sign that he knew they were on his trail.

This was going to be a walk in the park.