Although I don't remember praying mantises ever having any sort of hivelike structure.

In fact, I'm pretty sure they don't. So I guess these really aren't just oversized mantises after all.

Not that I really thought they were.

I watch them move about for a little bit before briefly wondering how exactly I'm going to go about leveling up in this room. And it doesn't take long to come up with an idea.

But first I'll have to test some things.

Like how good their hearing is, how good their smell is, and how far they can see.

Most importantly, I'll need to test how obvious it is to them when I shine a bright light in their pitch black cavern filled with a vibrant green forest that I have no idea how is living down here in the first place.

Then again, sometimes it's better to just blame the System for unexplainable things and move on rather than trying to figure out a logical reason for it.

The System does tend to have a habit of warping reality after all.

Anyways, time to get to work.

Chapter 18

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Planning and Assassination

Alexia Knight

I end up using this testing period to also regenerate more of my soul, since the majority of the testing doesn't really require me to use any skills. Except teleporting, since that's a convenient skill to have for sneaking around a giant natural tree house hive thingy.

My tests start out with simply trying to sneak up on the bugs, which fails rather quickly as they hear me by the time I step within five meters or so of them even when I'm walking as quietly as I can. And in each of the five times I tested them, they always heard me at around that mark before I teleported back out of sight, always making sure to have a good spot to hide within two meters of myself during the tests.

After that I run a test simply by standing up at the top of the cliff that has the tunnel back to the maze of spiders before waiting for one of them to see me. But they never do.

So their eyesight isn't as good as I was expecting.

As for their sense of smell?

I realize in the middle of trying to approach one while thinking of a way to test it that they don't have noses. And if they can still somehow smell without one, they don't seem to be able to do it well since they haven't smelled me yet.

Then again, I don't stink. I think.

After I reach a safe place I can't help but sniff myself, only to cringe slightly.

Okay, maybe being covered in bug guts and poison over and over again while wearing carapace armor and being cut open all the time isn't a very good way to smell good.

Maybe I can take a bath after I kill these bugs? They won't need that water anymore after all. And I don't appear to need to drink water either.

I should keep some of the water just in case I do though. Since for all I know, I might just be able to go far longer than before without needing water.

Well, anyways, I raise a hand and send a quantum bolt flying into the air above the forest, but surprisingly none of the bugs seem to even notice. Then I send another one closer down to them, in between the trees themselves without hitting any of the trees. And this one they notice, but only after it gets within a dozen or so meters of them.

They also can't seem to figure out where it's coming from, instead simply growing confused.

Alrighty then. Tests complete.

These creatures have no sense of smell, terrible eyesight despite their night vision, but great hearing. Although I'll bet their vision is better in the light just because of the fact that the scythid from before could see me across the river. That or they just heard me.

And they have sharp scythes.

My arm can attest to that.

I glance at my status.

Name: Alexia Knight			Species: Quantum Reaper(T1)		
Level: 20			Class: Quantum Reaper		
Soul: 1570/1687.5					
VIT: 58	DEX: 58	STR: 58	MAG: 77		MEN: 77
Racial Skills			*Active Skills*		
Passive Skills			*General Skills*		

Good. Regenerated a decent chunk while doing that testing, even if I did occasionally teleport.

I look down at the scythids who are now going back to whatever they were doing before I begin climbing down the cliff again. And once I reach the bottom, I quickly move into a bush before waiting for a scythid to get close without any other scythids nearby this secluded location.

One second passes. Then another.

Soon half a minute goes by with the only noise being the chitter of the creatures filling the forest until one of them finally approaches with its eyes on a random stack of food set here for seemingly no reason. And the moment it grabs it, I jump forwards while teleporting straight to it and stabbing it straight through the throat with my glaive. Then I grab it and teleport back close to the bush, dragging it the rest of the way in myself.

And that's one.

[Level 27 Lesser Scythid Defeated. User's earned EXP has been increased due to killing a being whose level is five or more higher than their own.]

[Eight points have been earned for killing a creature seven levels above you.]

I glance at my soul to find that it cost over twice as much soul to teleport something other than me.

Interesting to know.

I look at the corpse I dragged past the bushes with me before just tossing it into the cliff wall, making the start of what should hopefully be a rather large pile by the end of this.

Either that or I end up running and climbing the cliff like my life depends on it from a horde of bugs. Because my life *would* depend on it.

I look back out before crouching and moving up to the bushes as I hear the footsteps of another bug approaching. And when I reach the bushes and peek through, I find and hear the creature pausing in front of the food while tilting its head slightly in what I can only assume is confusion.

That has me tensing up slightly, since one thing I didn't think to test was their intelligence. And if they're smarter than mere insects… they may notice their people going missing one by-

The creature just steps forward and reaches for the food, not bothering with the fact that someone else was supposed to grab it.

Nevermind. Looks like they're stupid.

I jump out of the bushes while teleporting before stabbing it in the throat as it's reaching down, grabbing it, and teleporting back while jumping back into the bushes again. Then I toss its body over to the other one and return to my spot in the bushes.

This is a very nice and hidden location with only one way to get in outside of from above. So it's rather nice to use as a little hiding spot.

Let's see how many of these bugs I can assassinate before they notice me.

Chapter 19

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Progress and Fear

I smile at the System Message that I let play after killing the forty-third scythid and dumping their body with the others.

[Level 27 Lesser Scythid Defeated. User's earned EXP has been increased due to killing a being whose level is five or more higher than their own.]

[Five points have been earned for killing a creature four levels above you.]

{Congratulations! You have leveled up to level 23! 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.}

Nice!

The chittering freezes for a moment from all around the forest before a wave of chittering echoes out and then everything returns to normal. Which I've learned by now marks their leader – who is a scythid spanning two meters in height with much sharper blades living in the main tree – giving out orders to their subordinates. Something that quickly made me realize that the leader was a Class D species. Since that's the bare minimum for actual intelligence in a creature.

The first Class D species I've seen in the dungeon.

I climb up the cliff before kneeling down at the edge even though I don't need to and looking down to watch the shift in the scythid's patrols. Something that's happened a few times before.

Every time I clear out too many of the bugs, making their leader aware that something is wrong.

Good thing the leader isn't smart enough to actually leave their tree and hunt me themselves. Because that could be a problem, what with it being level thirty-one and all. And a Class D species instead of E, making my advantage in species a little weaker than against the Es.

Sooner or later though I'll finish off all of the scythids on the ground and have to move on to the ones in the trees and on the leaves themselves. Which will likely be a lot more dangerous.

I look around the forest, checking out the numbers of scythids left and finding there to still be around a hundred or so. Although there are probably another fifty ish left inside of the trees from what I've seen the few times I passed by an opening to one.

And only around one or two dozen of the things are on the ground, the rest being on the large leaves making up little platforms high up on the trees.

Looks like my hunt will only stay on the ground for another hour or so.

I sigh at that thought, feeling more than a little frustrated at having been in here for what must be up to half a day already. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if the third day of the Reset has already started.

Then again, these things are making for good EXP and points.

Especially points, considering how much I've shot up the rankings by now.

I watch as the patrols shift around until they're set in place again. Then I study the patrols and the new jobs assigned to each scythid, making sure to also watch out for any of them that may be leaving the forest to my location, which actually doesn't happen often, before eventually jumping down to the hiding spot again.

Time to go back to hunting.

Somewhere in Tutorial Block #2

[#1 Alexia Knight – 543 points]

[#2 Lucas Nightshade – 467 points]

[#3 Leif Eriksson – 425 points]

[#4 Aurora Frost – 421 points]

[#5 Leonidas Silver – 397 points]

[#6 Isabella d'Aragon – 385 points]

[#7 Alexander Frost – 374 points]

[#8 Noah Kowalski – 373 points]

[#9 Nathan Briar – 369 points]

[#10 Damien Black – 365 points]

Aurora grits her teeth as she looks at the leaderboards, finding her position to have dropped since the last time she checked. And to make matters worse, the man responsible for it is the damned former king of Arcadia.

I hope that bastard drowns in a river in whatever dungeon he's in. It's just too bad we were all spawned in different dungeons, assuming the memory was speaking the truth.

The woman sighs after a few seconds before glancing at the top two positions and feeling just as much confusion as she suspects every other former Ascendant is feeling.

Just who is this girl? Some sort of former Ascendant who never managed to get a single legendary feat?

The Hound she understands being at the top of the rankings. After all, he's the Hound. But a random no-name girl without any Legendary Feats to her name?

That she can't understand. Especially since she's ranking even higher than the Hound is.

Maybe she has some sort of special elemental affinity that she wasn't ever able to use until now? I know just from my new class alone that there are new classes introduced to this Reset, so it's possible

someone of incredible potential but no actual ability to reach it got a chance from this Reset and is shooting to achieve the same strength as the Hound…

Even if the very thought of that terrifies the former Empress of Niflheim.

She shakes her head again and closes out of the leaderboard, focusing her attention once more on the stone bridge hanging between her and the other side of the lava-filled ravine. And more importantly, at the kobolds standing on the other side and all around the bridge itself. The lizard people simply patrolling it without doing much else thanks to the lack of anything attacking them at the moment.

Aurora kneels down while drawing an arrow from her quiver and knocking it onto her bow, her cloak billowing thanks to the heat wafting off of the lava down below. Then she draws it while aiming at the highest level kobold on the bridge.

Well, considering the danger of this Reset, it's entirely possible that this new girl could be killed by other people who are just jealous of her ranking.

And with that thought, she lets loose the arrow, sending it flying straight into the skull of the kobold before the thing's entire head explodes into fragments of ice that bombard the other kobolds around it.

Chapter 20

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

The Chase

Alexia Knight

Loud chittering echoes throughout the forest when an assassination fails on the upper floors of the 'tree house' and I'm forced to sprint out of the building after cutting the head off of the scythid. By the time I'm out of the tree though, I find dozens of scythids rushing towards me, all of which are higher leveled than me.

Shit. This didn't go well.

My gaze locks on the cliff before I begin running across the leaves towards it, occasionally teleporting and cutting the arm or head off of a scythid when one rushes towards me and almost hits me. But fortunately my own speed has almost caught up with theirs, so none of them manage to get a major hit on me, the worst they do being small wounds across my arms and legs. Wounds that heal quickly thanks to my soul.

The chittering continues growing louder and louder as more and more of the annoying bugs join the chase, with each of them slowly catching up repeatedly only to fall behind a little when I cut one down and teleport forward to regain some distance. Which is honestly a much faster way to kill them than the slow assassinations I was performing earlier, even if it's significantly less safe.

Out of nowhere, as I'm about halfway through the forest to the cliff, four different scythids jump out of a higher floor of the trees to land on the leaves in front of me, so I duck down under one of their scythes, swinging my glaive around to cut through their knee before I jump to my feet again. Then two of the others rush at me at the same time, one snapping their curved triangular mouth at me, just barely missing me as I duck my head backwards while the other swings both of its scythe arms down on me, one of them missing and the other cutting just barely into my neck but only leaving a small scratch.

My eyes widen at that, and I respond by sending a bolt of quantum energy at the one that almost got me before spinning around and swinging my glaive into the other, not hitting it with the blade but still sending it flying off of the leaf anyways as I focus my attention on the fourth one who is now rushing forwards. But this one I manage to bring my glaive up horizontally with both hands on it, blocking both of its scythes before I kick out its legs, redirect the things blades, and let go of my glaive to send a quantum bolt straight into its gut.

Then I teleport past the thing to regain distance on the ones chasing me.

I take a quick look at my soul to find it still over three fourths full as I begin jumping from leaf to leaf, having reached the point of the little leaf platforms where they start lowering down to the ground. And at this point, the scythids manage to gain even more ground on me purely because they weigh less than me despite me being generally considered rather small despite my physically fit nature and the leaves tolerate their landing better than my own.

After just a few jumps following which I jump once more straight towards the ground, I feel the magical energy of a scythid getting too close, but since I'm in the air I can't do much about it besides begin turning while raising my glaive. The creature is too fast though, and its scythes cut straight into my back, tearing into the wrapping making up the armor and slicing into me as I let out a short choke of pain before swinging my glaive into the creature, cutting through its side all the way from one end to the other.

Then I crash to the ground, not managing to land on my feet.

"Fuck," I mutter as I look up to find over half a dozen scythids already flying through the air towards me with many more following behind them.

I teleport two meters away, closer to the cliff right before they land, striking at where I was just at and causing some more confusion amongst them while I begin running with all the strength I have left, repeatedly teleporting along the way and burning through my soul in the process. But thanks to my wound, running is a lot more difficult now, and I'm pretty sure using quantum reversal will just end up draining me dry of soul entirely at the amount I have left, which is nearing halfway empty at a rapid pace.

Damn these stupid insects! I wish I could just set this entire place on fire, but there isn't any flint here for me to light! Probably because the dungeon itself didn't like the idea of someone burning down the forest and taking the easy way out without magic. And my quantum magic only leaves burns on things that survive it. It doesn't set things on fire.

Moments like these make me wish I had even the slightest ounce of fire affinity.

I continue moving, repeatedly looking back to find the creatures gradually gaining on me again until I finally make it to the cliff. Then I realize the issue of my wound stopping me from climbing. So I turn around and start firing off bolts of quantum energy at the approaching scythids, killing them back and forth while slowing them down until I get another level-up message.

{Congratulations! You have leveled up to level 25! 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.}

[*New Passive Skill* – Quantum Infusion: All of your physical attacks are now infused with a small amount of quantum energy from the environment, regardless of if the attacks were made with your body or through equipment. Skill is automatically slotted due to free open slots.]

My eyes widen in shock at the new skill. One of the best types of passive skills for most classes in combat, since it lets you use your magic without actually needing to use your mana. Or in my case, soul.

And generally this skill just stacks on top of the effects of equipment that already do the same, making them stronger.

I continue sending bolts of quantum energy at the enemies until I feel the wound on my back having healed enough for me to push through the pain and begin climbing the cliff. At which point I quickly teleport from one stable location to another until I finally reach the top of the cliff and look down, finding the scythids all rushing up faster than I did, gaining the ground they had lost due to my attacks.

Without any hesitation, I send several quantum bolts down at the ones closest to the top, knocking them back down to the bottom and killing a few of them before I start running towards the tunnel and then through it, ignoring the scythids that are finally starting to reach the top by this point.

I keep running and running, occasionally teleporting to speed myself up a bit until I finally make it back to the maze and immediately collapse on the ground covered from head to toe in sweat only barely being able to roll myself over to find the dozens of scythids standing outside of the area, many of them having continued past the barrier, disappearing in the process.

Who knows how long passes as the creatures chitter away at me from the other side of the barrier before they finally start to leave. Although not without leaving a few of them at the barrier to watch me, the creatures finally showing a bit more intellect.

My head drops to the ground, my strength finally leaving me now that I'm safe again. Or mostly safe, since there could technically be spiders somewhere around here.

But I don't sense any, so it should be fine. Plus they're weaker than the scythids and in fewer numbers.

I stare at the ceiling of the cavern for a long time before muttering, "Maybe I should just find a damned hidden exit…"

Too bad the things only appear starting at the halfway point of each dungeon…

Chapter 21

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Another Clone

Alexia Knight

I just lie on the ground for who knows how long, my wound having regenerated long ago despite me still feeling exhausted as I wait for my soul to regenerate. But eventually I find myself frowning as a System Notification appears in my vision.

Three days have now passed since the System Reset.
All surviving System users will now be given further details about the Tutorials.

The Tutorials are split up into ten thousand Blocks, each with billions of people in them. The location where everyone ended up was decided based on the location each user was at prior to the Reset, along with whether or not the user in question has a Legendary Feat.
Those with a Legendary Feat are sent into a dungeon located nearby the others who were near them prior to the Reset, in the same Block as them. Those who do not have a Legendary Feat are sent to the same location as those who are within thirty meters of them prior to the Reset.

The first runs of each dungeon done by the Legendary Feat holders in said dungeons must be done to completion, making it impossible for the dungeon runner to leave or anyone else to join their instance and help them. This is to challenge them at the System Creator's request to see if they are truly worthy of the Epic Class the Legendary Feats may or may not have given them at the beginning of the Resets.

However, after proven worthy of their class through completing the dungeon they were sent to, they may do whatever they wish, just like all the other users.

At this point, nearly one fourth of all Legendary Feat holders have been killed in their dungeons.

My jaw drops open at the answer to one of the biggest questions I've had since the Reset.

I'm here because I have a Legendary Feat? Seriously?

I frown for a moment before sighing.

Guess that's actually a better answer than 'I'm here because I killed the System's Creator' would've been. So I can't really complain.

Another System Notification appears, replacing the first.

At the end of the first month of the Reset, the Tutorial will come to a close.
During this first month, System users may all accumulate points. These points will be used to determine their reward at the end of the Tutorial.
Furthermore, users may kill other users to steal a fifth of their total points. Those users killed by another user will simply enter a stasis for the remaining duration of the Tutorial, after which they will be sent to the new dimension just like everyone else. However, this rule does not apply to those who committed suicide in any way with the intention of doing so, including those who have others kill them to avoid a permanent death or those others deciding to kill them with the intension of making them enter stasis to avoid death without their permission.
The designation of the 'user' status includes any species Class B and above, while species who are Class C and below are considered 'monsters' by the System.
Identify has been updated in the Reset to be able to identify System Items.
New classes have been introduced in the Reset.
New skills have been introduced in the Reset.
New monsters have been introduced in the Reset, and some of these monsters may potentially evolve into new user species as they reach higher Tiers.
Previously attained Legendary Feats aside from the ones kept by users across the Reset have been reset.
All monsters are set to Tier 1 within the Tutorial and may not grow stronger than that.
All dungeons within the Tutorial are set to Tier 1.

A Memory of the System's Creator will be sent to each user to act as a guide for the duration of one hour.

That's a lot of new stuff.

More than I expected.

The notification disappears, following which a flash of purple light shines out of nowhere in front of me before the System Creator appears. Or rather, his memory.

"No, you were right, I'm him," he says, making my eyes widen in shock at his blatant reading of my thoughts. "At this point, any memory sent to you will be one of the original's clones. So you better get used to my reading your mind."

I don't think that'll ever happen.

"Too bad," he comments, almost making me do a double take at him. "Well, now that we're in agreement-"

What agreement?!

"-I can move on to answering your questions! Since that's what I'm here to do, right?" he continues, ignoring my inner shout. "Oh, and you'll only get ten minutes of questions since I'm a clone and not a memory."

My eye twitches and I finally sit up before muttering, "I really hate you…"

"That, I do believe, is a statement and not a question," he says in a sagely tone of voice that has me really wanting to punch him. "Do try not to waste your ten minutes with obviously inaccurate statements."

Is this guy just designed to piss me off?

"No, I'm not," he answers my thoughts, only making me even more angry in the process. "But you should stop wasting your time."

I take a deep breath before letting it out and taking his annoying advice by asking, "Why did you choose me to kill you? There had to have been at least a few Ascendants who already have Legendary Feats and far more knowledge than me who also had an affinity in the quantum element. So why me?"

He stares at me for a few seconds, his eyes flashing as he mutters, "Give me a second while I download the memories of my original from the System…"

It doesn't take long for the flashing to stop before he bluntly answers, "It was because the original was running out of soul to keep the rift open, and he couldn't regenerate more in the void. So he chose the first person with affinity to the quantum element that neared the rift and fit his basic requirements."

My jaw drops open.

That's why?! Just because I happened to be near it and fit the requirements? No large reason for it or anything?

"Correct," he states with a nod, "although I will note that your interesting parents did influence my original's deciding to go ahead and choose you, along with your temperament. Since not just anyone would suit the power you've been given."

I frown at that.

So it wasn't completely by chance then.

"What do you mean by my temperament?" I ask, deciding to comment on the parents thing after this.

"A laidback temperament without any ambitions for ruling the dimension," he states, the man's clone not having moved his eyes from me this entire time. He hasn't even blinked. Which I find rather creepy. "The type of person who would not destroy the dimension I have created, or the System itself with the power they were given."

Wait, so you're saying that if I did end up becoming an Ascendant some day and created some sort of nation, something that I really don't have any interest in, you would take the power away?

He finally moves his head, shaking it once as he says, "No. Having the ambition to do something and doing it are two different things. I do not care if you end up becoming a ruler or even the ruler of the dimension so long as you do not truly wish for that. Although even if you did gain an ambition for it, I would not be able to do anything as I cannot take away your power or undo what has been done. No one can."

My eyes widen at that, and I find myself staring for a few seconds, unsure of what to say.

Guess I really am stuck like this forever. Not that I really wanted to go back. I wasn't exactly attached to my humanity or anything like that.

Also, I guess Astrid and I have clear differences now, so people won't mistake us for each other anymore. Which is nice.

"What did you mean by my parents influencing your decision?" I ask, making him frown for a split second.

The frown vanishes just as quickly though and he answers, "I will not answer that question fully. Just know that both of your parents are Ascendants. Otherwise you wouldn't have been able to have a Class B Elemental Affinity in a special element like the Astral element."

Oh. That's… oh.

That's something to think about.

Putting that matter aside for the moment, purely because all it does right now is confirm that gramps was right about mom, I ask, "What's the difference between a Quantum Architect like you and a Quantum Reaper like me?"

He actually looks a little surprised by that before smiling as he answers, "One is a builder of the universe and the quantum, the other a destroyer. My class focused on messing with and altering the universe and reality itself. Your class is that of a reaper. A destroyer. A hunter. And a fighter."

So basically yours wasn't a combat focused quantum class and mine is?

The man flinches slightly, probably due to my oversimplification, before he begrudgingly answers, "That is accurate."

I smirk.

"You will never be able to alter or control the System yourself, but should you wish to, you could destroy it once you reach the same level of strength I was at," he continues, seemingly avoiding the subject. "I understand you will never do that, however. And that was the absolute minimum requirement my original had for his killer. Even if he were to have lost his chance to die."

Well, he's not wrong there. The System may be cruel in a lot of ways, but I would never destroy it. Especially considering that we'd all be at the mercy of monsters and all the dungeons would be freed if that happened.

Would basically just be sentencing everyone to death.

But his last words do lead me to one of the most important questions of all.

I narrow my eyes slightly and ask, "Why did you have me kill you instead of free you?"

Chapter 22

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Reasoning and Species

Alexia Knight

The clone doesn't say anything for several seconds before eventually narrowing his eyes and answering, "Because my original grew tired."

I blink in confusion at that.

"Tired?" I ask, unsure of what he means.

"Yes, tired," he repeats with a nod of his head. "To clarify, my original was over one trillion years old."

My eyes widen in shock at that, and I find myself glad that I'm already sitting down.

"Just… what level were you?" I can't help but ask. The man just smiles at me without answering though, leaving me feeling disgruntled.

Nothing I can say if he doesn't want to answer though. And I can understand wanting to die if he'd lived over a trillion years. Especially if he spent the last three hundred years of that locked in a liquid-filled tank being experimented on, showing him the depravity of those he had uplifted with his System.

In fact, that actually makes the System Reset make a lot more sense as well.

Take the power away from the scumbags of the universe and see what happens.

If the System's Notification is anything to go by, a fourth of the former Ascendants are already dead. So it certainly seems to be working.

I doubt it's much of a permanent solution though, since more scumbags are just gonna rise out of this Reset to replace them.

The clone doesn't say anything in regard to my thoughts, just saying silent.

This guy is just leading me to come to my own conclusions, isn't he? Not giving me any specifics and instead throwing out random bits of information…

His smile grows wider at that, making me want to slap him.

Well, whatever. He's not going to answer any more questions along those lines, and thinking about it now is wasting the remaining minutes I have to question him.

"Would you mind telling me who my parents are?" I ask the next question, albeit one that isn't as pressing in my opinion.

He shakes his head, "No. That is for you and your father to figure out on your own."

I blink at the way he phrased that.

For me *and* my father to figure out… meaning my father doesn't actually know about me? Or Astrid?

He once again doesn't answer.

"Do you know where Astrid is?" I ask with a frown, and he mirrors it for a second, his eyes flashing before he answers, "Your twin is nearby the dungeon entrance outside of the dungeon."

"And is she safe?" I continue, feeling a little bit better knowing that all I'll have to do is complete the dungeon or find a hidden exit and I'll be able to find her quickly enough.

"Her team is doing better than average," he answers without giving any details away, but this time it's enough to make me relax. Until he adds, "And you won't be able to find a hidden exit in this dungeon. There aren't any until after the first clear of each dungeon."

My jaw drops.

The hell?!

"This dungeon run is meant to be a challenge for you, and the original did not want Legendary Feat holders running around unchecked at the start of the Tutorial," he explains, basically saying almost the same thing the System Notification did. "If you can clear the challenge, you can leave the dungeon. If not, you'll either be dead, or stuck in here until the end of the Tutorial."

Well that's annoying.

He raises a brow and asks, "Would you rather all the former Ascendants go around killing the users at the very start of the Tutorial with their higher rarity classes and more advanced knowledge on skills and magic in general?"

No, I agree with the decision. That doesn't make it less annoying for me though.

If the System didn't do that then it would end up with a lot of the Ascendants just going around using their knowledge and Legendary Feat perks and class advantage to kill everyone they saw, taking their points and leaving them in stasis for the duration of the Tutorial. And that would just lead to those Ascendants ending up at the peak again right off the bat.

Doing it this way, while it technically gives them an opportunity to grow strong thanks to the dungeons, it also culls their numbers a bit.

Actually…

"Why did you let people retain a single Legendary Feat, anyways?" I can't help but ask, curiosity taking over for a moment.

He frowns at that and answers in a disgruntled tone, "The System itself enforced that."

I raise a brow.

So you didn't have absolute control over your own creation?

The man refuses to look me in the eye.

Interesting.

"Do you know what sort of skills my class will give me as it levels?" I ask, but he just shakes his head and says no. So I move on to ask, "What are the differences between a quantum reaper and a human?"

"You should've led off with that question," he says, making me understand he'll be answering it. "Unlike humans, quantum entities do not require food or water to survive. Instead you take your nutrients directly from the quantum energy around you. Your bodies are also no longer fully in the normal reality, making you constantly on the border between the quantum realm and the normal realm. This in turn makes your body more susceptible to magical attacks and far less susceptible to physical ones."

Okay, finally got my confirmation on the nutrients thing. Meaning I can bathe in the water pond without caring about saving some clean water in case I needed to drink it.

His eyebrow twitches at my thoughts, but he continues talking anyways, "Some of your body will also be affected by the quantum state of it through glitching back together when separated from your main body, but keep in mind that this only happens sometimes. Meanwhile your senses will be clearer than they were as a human, especially your eyes which simply no longer need light to see since you're looking from a halfway point between the normal realm and the quantum realm."

That would certainly explain why I can see perfectly fine in the dark. Also would explain the whole 'some of my blood glitching back into my wounds' thing.

"Every other difference will be one you must learn about yourself or discover as you advance in Tier and receive the Racial skills," he says, making me frown for a moment before I nod my head.

He's already given me more than I expected he would, so I'll have to be content with that.

His image begins to glitch out, making me frown.

"It would appear as if our time is out," he states before nodding his head once, "farewell once again, young reaper."

Then he vanishes in a flash of purple light.

Shit. There was still a couple things I wanted to ask him.

I sigh before looking at my soul and finding that it's regenerated a decent chunk already even if it's not full yet.

Guess I can ask him the next time one of his clones appear. For now I'll just finish regenerating my soul before going back in to deal with the bugs.

Because I have a long way to go if I want to finish this dungeon before the month is over, and it's likely to only get harder from here on out.

Chapter 23

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Continued Hunt

Alexia Knight

My next trek back into scythid territory starts with me jumping forwards, teleporting straight to the edge of the spider's area and using the rest of the momentum to cut the heads off of both scythid guards before they can even make a sound. Then I begin jogging through the area, making sure to go as quietly as possible while still keeping my speed up.

Once I reach the end of the tunnel, I find a couple other scythids standing guard, both of which I dispatch with bolts of quantum energy, making me quite happy about my higher level that I got from the chase before. Even if the chase itself was rather unpleasant.

I walk over to stand at the edge of the cliff before tapping my chin in thought.

If I try going back up to their little tree houses of leaves and bark, it'll just end up with another chase. So the best thing to do…

I dispel my polearm, sending it back to wherever it goes when it's not summoned before I raise both of my hands and begin sending quantum bolts straight at the scythids on the leaves, killing them back to back. And as expected, it only takes about four or so of them dying for the others to realize where I am and begin running towards the cliff. But I continue blasting them with quantum bolts, significantly reducing their numbers as they run. And even when they start climbing the cliff itself, I just continue firing away.

Now that their numbers are much lower, and my level is a lot higher, I can finally do this. The 'easy' way out.

Of course, I leave the System Messages muted as I do this to not interrupt me. And once the scythids begin making it past halfway up the cliff, I turn around and run straight into the tunnel, not stopping until I reach the spider's area at which point I turn around to find the scythids already catching up.

But it's pointless now that I'm here.

I just raise an amused eyebrow at the rather angry creatures before letting my System Messages flow through. Although I keep the exact kills muted, leaving only the total points I got, the total number of kills, and the level-ups.

[Lesser Scythid Defeated.] x38

[Sixty points have been earned.]

{Congratulations! You have leveled up to level 26! 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! You have leveled up to level 27! 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 4!}

{Congratulations! Your Active Skill 'Quantum Displacement' has reached Level 3!}

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

Some skill levels mixed in. Nice.

Too bad the scythids aren't giving me anywhere near as many points, or as much EXP, now that I am catching up to their level. In fact, at this point I have caught up to the majority of the creatures' levels.

On that note, I open up my various skill's lists.

[General Skills]

|Pain Resistance Level 2(46%)(T1)|

|Polearm Mastery Level 2(11%)(T1)|

|Forerunner (Unique)|

|Stealth Level 1(91%)(T1)|

[Active Skills]

|Quantum Bolt Level 4(1%)(T1)|

|Quantum Displacement Level 3(1%)(T1)|

|Quantum Reversal Level 1(11%)(T1)|

[Passive Skills]

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

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

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

Yeah, Quantum Reversal isn't going to be used very often until I reach a higher level, or maybe even a higher Tier and the price in soul isn't as large compared to my total soul. And Quantum Singularity is useless to me unless I happen to run into some sort of natural reality affecting magic, or maybe someone with a Legendary Feat that gave them a class focused on that type of magic.

I did manage to get Stealth back thanks to my little assassination work on the scythids. And that skill helped me stay unnoticed, raising my ability to just blend into the background in a figurative manner.

One issue with getting general skills for me is that a lot of the general skills I had from before the Reset are ones I can't get right now. Whether that's because I don't have mana, or I don't have the necessary weapons, I just plain can't get them.

Which makes is a pain to figure out which general skills to go for.

I should at least get Survival soon by the end of the first week, since all it takes is surviving in the 'wilderness' for a week to get it, not receiving any help from other users in the process. And that skill should… wait a second, that skill isn't actually as useful for me when I don't need food or water. Seeing as it can't exactly reduce my need for something I don't need…

Although the resistance to natural weather and tougher body when it comes to taking damage from naturally occurring things should still help a lot.

I don't have any equipment or materials to do first aid, so that's out. Especially since my soul heals me faster than my health used to, making it kind of useless.

At this point the only general skills that come to mind that I *can* get are taming ones, strategy based ones, negotiation, *politics* – which I'll never bother with – and exploration type skills. Seeing as I can't use mana, so magic related skills and spell crafting are out, and I don't have any weapons besides my polearm, so other weapon proficiency skills are out too.

One thing I wanted to ask the clone was about my affinities, but we ran out of time before I could. Which was rather unfortunate.

I sigh at the thought before watching as the majority of the scythids finally begin to go back through the tunnel again. Then I glance at my status, finding my soul to have been decreased by about a third of my total soul, so I walk over to sit on a rock again.

Time for another break.

After that I can go back to hunting again.

Chapter 24

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

A Successful Hunt

Alexia Knight

It ends up taking a couple more hunting trips, along with two more level-ups, to clear out the majority of the scythids. And surprisingly, their leader still hasn't left their little tree house yet. So after I finish dealing with the scythids that rush to the cliff this time, clearing them out, I jump down, no longer bothering with stealth. Then I start walking over towards the largest tree located at the center of the forest, where I find something rather surprising.

The moment I step inside of the tree, I find the leader of the scythids lying almost inert at the center of the tree.

Huh?

{Scythid Hive Queen – Level 31}

I stare at the thing for a few seconds, briefly wondering why a large praying mantis bug is called a hive queen for the second time since I first saw it before eventually just shrugging and blasting it with a quantum bolt.

The thing lets out a quiet, pained screech, but doesn't move almost at all despite it. So I repeat the attack over and over again until I finally get the System Message about its death.

[Level 31 Scythid Hive Queen Defeated – User's earned EXP has been increased due to killing a being whose level is above their own.]

[Three points have been earned for killing a creature two levels above you.]

After killing it, a wave of loud screeches echo out from a few corners of the forest as I stand tensely for several seconds, just *waiting* for the scythids who made them to rush me. But nothing ever does. I just end up standing awkwardly in the room by myself.

I frown.

Uh… this is awkward.

I leave the large tree before heading towards the places I heard the screeches from, only to find scythids lying dead on the ground in each place without a single wound on them.

Huh.

Wait a second, could that be it? Are the scythids and their hive queen all connected, so that if the queen dies then the rest die too? Or if all of the scythids die, then so does the queen?

A rather odd setup, but convenient, I guess.

If I had to guess, the hive queen really was just very stupid. Because it should've been able to tell where I was during my assassinations if they were all connected, even if it wasn't through a hive mind.

Although it's also possible that the significant number of scythids dumbed down the reaction she got from one of them dying? Or maybe it wasn't an instant reaction?

Either way, she's dead now.

I walk past her corpse before deciding to go look around the entire forest just to make absolutely sure everything here is dead.

Then I can take a bath.

Somewhere in Tutorial Block #108

Astrid grimaces as she limps back into the camp her team had set up, just slowly letting the claw wounds on her leg heal with her health. And the first thing she finds is Aidan standing in front of a campfire holding a piece of meat on a stick while glancing at her, letting the meat burn in his momentary distraction.

"Shit," he mutters after realizing he had accidentally lowered the tiger meat into the fire, the man immediately raising it back out again.

Astrid shakes her head at him as she continues limping through the camp towards the dungeon on the edge of the island.

"She still hasn't come out yet!" Aidan calls out, not turning his head to look at her.

Despite his words, she still continues walking over to the edge of the island looking over the small stairs on the side of it towards the dungeon, where she eventually sits with a sigh of relief, letting her legs dangle over the edge.

Ever since the group got the System Notification with information about the Reset, they immediately turned around and went back to the Crawling Caverns dungeon since it is the most likely location for Alexia to be at. Then the group set up a base camp while occasionally going into the jungle in groups to hunt the monsters on its outskirts.

Astrid just listens to the sound of the fire as she stares at the dungeon entrance, letting her wound slowly heal in the process. But no matter how hard she stares, her sister never appears from the dungeon. So she eventually lies on her back, staring up at the two moons high in the night sky.

Still not used to seeing two moons up there…

She continues to gaze up at the moons until rustling sounds begin coming from the bushes nearby the camp, making her sit up only to find Alara and Shelly arriving with Rob trailing the girls. And all three of them are carrying tiger corpses.

Astrid feels them identifying her, but she just ignores it and identifies them back, since the group has already decided to go ahead and keep up with the others changes in levels at this point. Especially since it will get them out of the habit of not identifying other people.

{Alara Blake – Class: Flame Dancer – Level 17}

{Robert Carter – Class: Combat Healer – Level 12}

{Shelly Walker – Class: Arcane Archer – Level 14}

They all leveled up at least once.

Astrid glances at Aidan when she remembers she didn't identify him upon getting here.

{Aidan Ashford – Class: Combat Mage – Level 15}

Hmm.

Astrid opens her own status to look at her level.

Name: Astrid Knight			Species: Human(T1)	
Level: 18			Class: Shadowblade	
Health: 301/350			Mana: 405/690	
VIT: 35	DEX: 51	STR: 51	MAG: 69	MEN: 35
Racial Skills			*Active Skills*	
Passive Skills			*General Skills*	

As she's looking at her status though, she feels a pinpricking sensation on the back of her neck from her Danger Sense Passive Skill, making her immediately close out of it and turn her gaze to the jungle again right when a tiger jumps out of the bushes. Then she uses her Shadow Leap skill to teleport over to the shadows of the jungle as she draws her sword and swings it straight through the lower leveled tiger, cutting it clear in two. And by the time the tiger's corpse hits the ground, her sword is already sheathed again, the girl walking back into the camp like nothing had just happened.

"I wish I had a teleportation skill…" Aidan mutters for the umpteenth time after seeing her use her Shadow Leap skill. And just like the other times, she responds without looking his way, "It's not teleportation. I'm passing through the shadows to shorten the distance to it, and it costs a significant amount of mana to do."

He just waves away her explanation, muttering that teleportation is teleportation no matter how it's done.

It isn't until Astrid makes it back to the ledge and sits down again that she realizes her wound had finished healing before the monster's arrival. Most likely while she was considering her status compared to the other members of the team's levels.

She opens her status again and looks at it for a few seconds before closing it and focusing once more on the dungeon.

Please come out of there alive, sis.

Chapter 25

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Pond of Restoration and an Unpleasant Surprise

Alexia Knight

The very first thing I do after checking the forest for monsters and finding it vacant is rush straight to the lake before jumping in without even taking off my armor. Because my armor really needs some cleaning as well.

And almost immediately after entering the water, I feel a tingling sensation run through me, making me realize my mistake. So I immediately identify the water.

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

Pond of Restoration

Description: *A pond located within the middle of a Tier 1 dungeon with regenerative properties. Anyone who enters the pond will gain a temporary boost to their mana stat, feel fresh of energy, and their Tier 1 or below System Items will be repaired.*

Stats Bonus: +10% Health Regeneration.

Requirements: None.

Item Tier: 1

-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-=-

I relax again after seeing that, smiling again.

Didn't realize the pond itself could be a System Item. Also didn't think to check if the pond wasn't just a regular pond of water.

I should probably start getting used to identifying items just like I identify monsters. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if I'll have to get used to identifying other users as well, strictly due to the fact that I'm pretty sure it's gonna be necessary to survive.

Although I'll have to find users first to get used to identifying them.

Anyways, I look at my armor to find the damaged spots repairing themselves rather slowly.

Okay. This I can work with.

The only question is if I can take the pond with me.

After letting myself clean up, relax, and get my armor repaired in the pond for a bit, I get out and begin walking back to the main tree of the forest. All while casting a pitiful glance towards the pond that I really can't take with me. For obvious reasons, seeing as it's a pond.

Once I make it back to the main tree, I head to the back of the bottom floor of the tree before finding what I'm looking for. The only exit to this large cavern aside from the one I entered through.

A large hole in the ground covered in cobwebs.

I can't help but grimace at the thought of jumping into that cobweb infested two-meter-in-diameter hole, but a quick glance at my level on my status makes me feel more prepared.

Name: Alexia Knight			Species: Quantum Reaper(T1)	
Level: 29			Class: Quantum Reaper	
Soul: 2,475/2,475				
VIT: 85	DEX: 85	STR: 85	MAG: 113	MEN: 113
Racial Skills		*Active Skills*		
Passive Skills		*General Skills*		

Alright. My level should be high enough to deal with whatever is in this cobweb infested hole. Which is probably a bunch of spiders considering the cobwebs.

Not so surprising considering arachnids are the main type of monsters for this dungeon.

I take a deep breath before jumping into the hole and letting myself fall for a little bit through the cobwebs, making the effort I just put in to clean myself completely ruined again. After several seconds of falling though, I reach my hand out and dig into the stone wall, the tips of my fingers sparking slightly with quantum energy thanks to quantum infusion, letting me bury them a bit in the wall to slow my fall. Then after it's slowed enough, I let go again and continue falling, repeating this process a few times after that.

Eventually I clear the hole, falling into a large cavern where the very first sight that greets me before I even land on the large, web-covered hole directly beneath the other one in the cavern is the massive spider standing at the center of the cavern. One spanning *at least* five meters in length and three meters in height.

{Arachnid – Level 50}

And at the same time as when I identify the terrifying creature, another System Message plays out in my head.

[You have entered the Tier 1 Dungeon Crawling Cavern's Second Boss Room. The Spider's Lair.]

"What the *fucking* hell?!" I shout, not bothering with being quiet since the spider has clearly already noticed me, what with all its incredibly loud hissing. Not to mention the dozens upon dozens of other smaller spiders rushing towards me, all lesser arachnids like the ones in the maze.

And all between level 30 to level 40.

Whoever designed this dungeon should be fired. Who the fuck makes a random boss room that shoots up twenty-

My thoughts are interrupted when I hear a cracking sound, bringing my gaze to my feet, where I'm still standing on a layer of webbing over another seemingly endless pit. And as I look, I find the layer of webbing slowly cracking from my weight.

"Shit," I mutter, following which the layer of webbing splits in half, making me fall straight down despite my attempts to grab at it. But the sight of the lesser arachnids almost reaching me make me change my mind about trying to not fall.

Okay, maybe it's a nicer place down here rather than up there.

I can't help but nod my head at the thought, using my own sense of humor to block the terror I was just feeling as I fall. And this fall lasts quite a bit longer than the other, without me ever leaving the boss room. Meaning that this entire place is one massive boss room.

Well that's just peachy.

I find a pond that can heal me and my armor, then I end up stuck in a boss room with a boss twenty-one levels above me.

After a few more seconds of falling, I dig my hands into the wall again, just like with the last hole I fell into. Then I repeat the same process I did there until I finally end up dropping into some sort of tunnel full of cobwebs.

I look around for a moment before glancing up through the hole at the sound of skittering coming from it, likely signifying the approach of some of those lesser arachnids. Because I can't see the boss fitting down this hole. It's just too big.

Although I'm not going to risk it.

I look back down at the tunnel I'm in, finding an occasional tiny spider moving across the floor spanning only an inch or two in length. But when I try to identify it, I don't get anything. Meaning that it's too weak for the System to even consider a Class E species. Like most regular insects and animals.

Well, nothing else to do but take a walk through the cobweb infested tunnel.

So I begin walking through the tunnel while being careful not to make too much noise.