

AN ASSASSIN'S ANTHEM

Chapter 14 - Dungeon Floor One

Riley poked his head out and studied the group of goblins.

The goblins bickered and hit each other, forcing some back into the shadows. The stronger ones grabbed half-burned and half-raw food from the fire.

Riley studied them and the fire, which kept lighting the place up. So, I can assassinate the ones on the outside, but the fire will ruin it very quickly. He frowned as he looked at it. The hypnotic flame danced.

Wish I had the fog now, Riley thought, and then realization hit him. With a growing grin, he targeted the fire and triggered Conjure Water. The fire hissed; steam and smoke billowed out, causing several goblins to cough and lurch away.

Riley used Ambush and slit the throat of one. Pulling the body back into the shadows, he focused on the next goblin on the outside.

Creeping up, he thrust his knife into its neck and pulled it away. Blood poured down the goblin, leaving a trail as he dragged it away. Dumping it next to the other, he searched for the next victim, sneaking around the edges.

Like most predators, Riley stalked the edges, searching for the weak and exposed. As a small one got shoved back, he slammed a knife through its neck and pulled it back to the wall. Setting it there, he crouched low and crept up on another.

The goblin raised the meat to its lips. Riley reached forward and slit its throat, sending blood pouring down. As he silently lifted the goblin, he heard one snort and grunt.

Dumping it with the others, he waited for another opening and retreated to the other side of the fire.

Then he waited. A goblin reached for the meat and then was kicked by another. As it rolled, Riley pounced, driving his knife up under its ribcage. With his gloved hand, he clamped its mouth shut and waited for it to stop thrashing.

As it went still, he dragged it back away from the flames. Then he resumed his hunt, cutting down yet another goblin that had been shoved away.

As the ring began getting smaller, the other goblins seemed apathetic. Riley prowled to the area behind the weakest-looking one and waited.

After five minutes, a goblin shoved it, and Riley pounced. Slitting its throat, he dragged the goblin back and lowered it into the pile. Then he crept forward and jabbed with his knife, sending it straight through the goblin's neck. Grabbing it, he dumped it with the others and squinted into the smoky room.

Along with the boss, there were thirteen lower levels. After checking each, he frowned at the dimming smoke while looking back at the flame. Should I try it again?

As he sat there planning his next move, ribbons of silver began coalescing as the pile beside him vanished. He reached down and opened the chest, pulling out the two glowing crystals with his resonance.

Carefully stashing it in his purse, he turned back and triggered Conjure Water, dousing the flame again. Smoke and steam billowed up while the goblin began barking like a dog.

All of them stood and began searching. Riley swapped a knife for his sword. Then he leaned against the wall as one moved closer and closer. Darting forward, he slit its throat, sending a stream of blood splattering across the floor.

The other goblins charged at the noise. Riley turned and ran, sprinting up the corridor with the roaring horde behind him.

Rounding a corner, he used Ambush to jump the spike trap and bolted past Hassan. Then he stood next to him and extended a sword through their barricade.

Hassan lowered a piece of wood. The goblins surged around the corner and slammed into the wood with a crunch. Hassan began stabbing through the wood.

Riley did the same, stabbing back and forth repeatedly. Six goblins died as they were impaled and were unable to move. Then, a crack rang out as the barricade snapped.

Hassan jumped backward and raised his shield. The barricade came crashing down, and Riley used Ambush while chopping at nothing.

Appearing behind the last goblin, he chopped through its shoulder and kicked it into another goblin.

Burning a charge of inspiration on Dancer's Form, Riley dodged a swinging club and rammed his blade between another goblin's ribs.

The goblin stumbled away. Riley ripped it free, sending a rain of blood and viscera around him.

A goblin raised its club and swung, squealing furiously. Riley used Ambush and drove a knife under its ribs, shredding its heart. Then he threw the goblin into another, sending both rolling across the floor.

Hassan bashed a goblin with his shield, sending it rolling. With blood dripping from his hands and the blades, Riley ran and swung, slicing through the prone goblins.

The highest-level goblin swung his club with fury, slamming it into Hassan's shield, which glowed vibrantly as it took the impact. Grimacing, he lashed out, cutting a notch into the goblin's armor while it raised its club.

Riley ran, jumped, and slammed his knife into its back. The knife slowly cut through its thick skin and then clattered as Riley leapt away.

Spinning, he used his sword to cut down the final weaker goblin. Then he turned back as a boom rolled through the room.

Hassan staggered backward. The goblin leapt and brought its club down hard, smashing against the shield once more, knocking Hassan onto the ground. It charged forward and lifted the club.

Hassan raised his shield and tried to scramble out of the way. "Gods condemn --"

"Die," Riley whispered as he triggered Psychic Spike, draining half his mana. Blood burst from the goblin's eyes and ears, and its club bounced off Hassan's shield.

He rolled as the goblin began swinging recklessly. Backing away, Riley grabbed his bow and pulled out an arrow. Nocking it, he took careful aim while Hassan rolled away.

Releasing the string, he sent the arrow soaring. It sunk partially into the goblin's skin. Enraged, the goblin charged in his direction.

Sneaking away, Riley frowned and looked at his bow. Hassan retreated out of reach and debated what to do. Then he reached down and grabbed a rock. He threw it at the goblin's head, bouncing it off with a loud thunk. Then he reached down and did it again.

Riley grabbed a rock and did the same, opting to wear the creature's stamina down without losing arrows. Stretching his arm, he threw and smacked it

against the goblin's skull. Then he reached down to the sandy, rocky ground and repeated it.

Like a rainstorm of stones, the blind goblin flailed and tried to pursue the two, who slowly burned all its stamina.

Hefting a large stone, Hassan threw it. A crunch echoed through the cavern as it broke bone. Riley launched one of his own, throwing it at the squat creature's mouth.

Teeth chipped and shattered from its mouth as the green-skinned creature staggered and swung once more. Then Hassan smashed a stone into its skull.

The goblin fell and landed with a heavy thud. Riley let out a breath of relief. Okay. I can see why he wants to leave. I can't take anything that level. How do I do this, Dad? Just pick off weak stuff and run away?

Riley nodded to himself. Fighting fair is overrated. And I do have a sling.

Hassan grinned, laughing wildly as he watched the body dissolve and form a chest. "We did it. We actually made it through the first level."

"Is that rare?"

"Yes! Those legends about staying in here are impossible. Sure, the right classes can pick off the weakest ones, but they eventually get caught. Then you'd better be fast enough to leave." Hassan reached forward and flipped open the box. Silver streamed out of it, hitting them both in the chest.

Riley glanced over at his notices.

Your base level has reached level 24!

Assassin has reached level 18!

Ranger has reached level 18!

Bard has reached level 18!

Spell Thief has reached level 6!

The text vanished as Riley looked back to the chest and saw two glowing crystals with tinged colors. One was red, and the other was white.

Perfect Advancement Crystal (F) - You may use this for a chance to advance F-tier skills, augment a class, or gain experience. This crystal resonates with Riley Milvsky, granting more experience or increasing the chance to 100% at any level.

Glancing at the other, Riley saw the white one was attuned to Hassan. He nervously walked forward while eyeing the beautiful red crystal. It's so beautiful, and I could augment my class.

"Sorry, Maddie, but my family needs these. If your Dad accepts my offer, I'll ensure you are covered." Hassan grabbed both and slipped them into his purse. Then he slipped that under his shirt.

Riley scowled as his anger blazed, roaring and churning like a river. I'm going to rob you blind, Hassan.

Hassan turned as he sensed the tension. "I mean it, Maddie. Talk to your dad. I'll ensure that you get your share and far more." He held out a hand. "Come on. Let's check the last room for anything else."

Riley forced himself to take the hand. Then he walked down the stone tunnel into the remains of the camp. The fire was just a few embers after his mess. Still, he went through the tents, trying to find anything.

Failing once more to find anything, Riley headed down the corridor and peered into a glowing room with an underwater stream that bubbled along. It flowed into a tunnel in the wall. Beyond that was a cliff that dropped down to a passage below. The sound of metal hitting stone echoed from it.

“We can just head up top,” Hassan said as he kicked at rocks. “Was hoping for something.”

Riley took a moment to drink from the stream and clean off. He idly pulled up some rocks and found nothing exciting about them. So, he turned and studied the only other passage. “What if they hid something in there?” he gestured to the tunnel that the stream flowed into.

Hassan blinked and shook his head. “I’m not drowning today. I’m leaving.”

Riley giggled. “Come on. Just a little swim.”

“Nope.” Hassan turned and walked back up the passage. Then he stopped. “Are you coming?”

“In a minute. Go ahead. I just want to see what it’s like. Then I’ll leave,” Riley lied.

“Fine.” Hassan continued walking.

Riley studied the water while lifting his makeshift torch. Failing to see much, he reached into the water and searched for something. Bumping into some round object, he pulled it up and then rolled his eyes. A rock. Fantastic work, Riley.

Sighing, he chucked it off the cliff and listened. It clattered moments later. Keeping low to the ground, he waited and then heard steps.

A goblin scouting party emerged below. One held up a torch. Riley’s mouth dropped in dismay as he looked at the level one hundred and fifty Scout and its five level one hundred soldiers.

I can’t take that... But they can’t climb this. And if it tries, I shove it off. Riley grabbed his sling and then began spinning it around his head. It was time to snipe the scouts.

Riley Milvsky

Level: 24

XP: 31417

Bard (C)

Level: 18

Inspiring Song F Bolster your allies with magic and music. Strength and Move Speed increased by 1 for one minute. Costs five Bardic Inspiration and impacts allies within ten meters. The radius of influence expands by one meter for each additional inspiration spent.

Psychic Spike F Wield your mana to cause psychic damage to a target. Cost varies based on allocation.

Conjure Water F Gather water from your surroundings or attempt to send it into the air. Cost varies based on amount.

Assassin (C)

Level: 18 + 12

Assume Disguise S +30 charisma. Enhance your current disguise by altering your displayed information and taking on the disguised form. Grants +5 levels to the assigned class. Perception and Insight suffer -250 levels against your disguise and -50 levels against your deception or stealth. Penalty applied: Gods' Oversight.

Dancer's Form B +10 speed. +2 levels to assigned class. You may use a charge of inspiration to boost your movement speed by an additional 5 for a minute.

Death's Cloak A Slain enemies will grant experience to your base level and active classes. +3 levels to the assigned class. Perception and insight suffer -25 levels against you. Penalty applied: Covenant.

Ambush B +10 speed. +2 levels to the assigned class. Costs one stamina to use. On use, you teleport to a shadow within 20 meters. Penalty applied: Covenant.

Ranger (C)

Level: 18

Pretty F Your appearance is so boring when it could be ever grand. Use 1 mana to get a little help from Beauty! (Seriously? Upgrade me already so I can give you rewards!) Penalty applied: Unequippable. Beauty may alter appearance.

Spell Thief (C) Level: 6 Inactive.

Dexterity: 114

Strength: 48

Speed: 68

Intelligence: 48

Charisma: 96

Stamina: 96

Mana: 102

Inspiration: 42