

AN ASSASSIN'S ANTHEM

Chapter 17 - Water's Wrath

Riley chipperly headed back toward the burbling spring, the plan forming in his mind.

Hassan grabbed Riley's shoulder. "What plan?"

Riley spun and grinned. "I shoulda thought of it sooner. We're gonna clear this part."

"How?" Hassan asked.

"Gonna flood 'em. We'll make a dam down there. Then we'll dam off this 'ere spring." Riley grinned, spun, and began descending. Time to steal a pick.

"Come help. I'll steal a pick or two," he called as he descended.

Landing lightly, Riley jogged into the dark, following the same passages toward the mess he'd left behind.

As he entered the familiar place, he looked out to the aftermath. Roughly sixty kobolds were walking around with their guards, heading back to mine the side passage. At least thirty other goblins were there. One was chittering angrily while pointing at a pile of crystals.

Riley's eyes went wide. I could steal them. They'll charge and never stop looking. So, how do I do it?

He studied the levels and grimaced. The level two hundred and twenty began grabbing them.

Riley turned away, sneaking forward and grabbing some picks and shovels. Carrying them back to the tunnel, he stashed them and turned back to the problem.

The high-level goblin put them in a sack and headed into the forge.

A crooked smile spread on Riley's face. He looked at his ranger class. Sorry. I need more stealth right now. Then he turned his focus inward. Willing up the status, he swapped Ranger for Spellthief. It clunked into place after a minute. Opening his eyes, he looked back to the group and blinked, struggling to see. Ugh, do I need to swap back?

Giving himself another minute to adjust, he crept along the walls and headed to the forge.

Pausing just outside, he took a moment to look at his resources. Four charges of bardic and four stamina. He let out a long breath and wished he had more.

Leaning against the wall, he listened and crept towards the door. Then he paused and grabbed his duplicate coin purse. Always use a decoy. Grabbing stones, he filled it.

The high-level goblin walked back out into the camp. Riley slipped inside the forge, encountering a wave of heat and light from the nearby elemental, who was liquefying the metal around it.

Riley dashed past it, heading into a side room. Spotting the locked chest, it was an easy guess. He reached down and pulled out lock picks. Then he started picking, gently feeling for the pins.

Pushing down the three, he popped the padlock open. Inside sat the bag of crystals. Not bothering to count, Riley grabbed it along with a bar of glowing metal. Dropping his replacement bag in, he shut the chest and then rammed his pick into one of the pins, bending it.

Triggering Ambush, he vanished and appeared outside. Then he crept away from the crime scene, pausing next to the stolen mining equipment.

He opened the bag and tried to get a read on the metal.

Unknown Crystal: This will persist outside of the dungeon.

Unknown Metal: This will persist outside of the dungeon.

Not wanting to explain any of it to Hassan, he looked for a place to hide it. Looking down at his chest, he flushed. I guess there is a little room there. Nah, that can't be comfortable.

He looked for another spot, getting a good look at his altered form. Should I be calling myself a girl? I am one right now. It would set off a truthseeker's skills if they were better than me...

Riley smiled. A little practice is in order. Female pronouns for a while just to get used to it.

A goblin barked in the distance, pulling her from her musings. Riley reached under her skirt and found little pockets.

She began distributing the goods among them. "Thank you for the foresight! I'm glad we get along. It seems that you do know me well. You've been watching all along!"

You're welcome. Upgrade my skill! ~Beauty.

Riley grabbed the shovels and picks. She turned and jogged away from the goblins, hoping they wouldn't notice for another few days.

Reaching a bend, Riley dropped the tools and then jogged up the passage to find her manual labor.

Hassan dropped to the ground and squinted as he saw a form running up. "Why'd you run off?"

"Stole shovels and picks," Riley replied. "Bring the torch. We'll dam it up."

Hassan considered it. "And it'll work. What if the water just runs somewhere else?"

“That’s a risk.” Riley shrugged. “But it’s our best shot. We mighta clear it this way. And yeh said I’d get a fair share.” She wagged her finger at him.

“Of course,” Hassan said. “How fast can we do it?”

“Dunno. We’ll dam ‘er up, and know tomorrow.” Riley turned and walked down the tunnel.

Hassan followed, winding down the tunnel until they were near the large cavern. Riley handed him a shovel and started digging with her own. The sound echoed into the room, joining the cacophony from the other tunnels.

Hassan swapped for a pick. He began breaking the stone that Riley shoveled onto the mound. Time rolled by. The makeshift dam grew with every shovelful.

Sweat poured down both of them as the pile reached three quarters up the tunnel. Riley paused and wiped her brow. I need a strength class, even if it is just for digging. She looked over.

Hassan smashed the stone and paused, leaning against it while sweat rolled down his face. His black hair was matted onto his head.

Riley smiled. “You work more than I thought.”

Hassan nodded. “Life for the second son is not easy.” He stretched and then resumed, digging out more dirt.

Riley forced herself to do the same, piling the mound higher and higher.

The two worked without speaking. Any sound from the goblins or kobolds was drowned out by the mining noise that they were making.

Riley’s muscles were on fire, and her brain was in a fog as the dam reached the ceiling. The two continued, piling on another layer of gravel and dirt.

“Good enough?” Hassan murmured, wiping off the sweat while shaking his empty water skin.

“Aye. Let’s get it started,” Riley murmured, returning to the cliff.

“Do you think this will work?” Hassan asked as he walked alongside. “We could really clear the floor boss? Did you see it? What level?”

“I saw it, and I dunno. It’s over two hundr’d.”

“Oh. Over your limit,” Hassan said with a grimace. “What was it?”

“Fire elemental. ‘Twer nasty.”

The two went quiet as they ascended again and then took a break, munching on a few rations and refilling their skins from the spring.

Riley finished eating the hard bread and jerky. She wobbled as she stood.

“Just block it a bit,” she said, shoving against a large boulder.

Hassan joined her, shoving and failing to move it. Growling, he cleared a path and tried again.

The boulder thudded over and then slid, half-blocking the stream. Riley sighed and looked around for any big rocks.

Failing to find any, she was forced to trudge back into the passage to get some. Carrying one down, she plunked it down into the stream.

Hassan grabbed the pickaxe and attacked the floor, carving a trench toward the cliff. Riley continued dumping large rocks in the spring.

Minutes turned into an hour. Then, the first bit of water followed the trench and fell, splashing down onto the rock below. Hassan grinned.

“This side now,” Riley said as she dumped in another stone.

The backed-up water began flowing through the channel, washing away gravel and rock chips. Then, it rolled off the cliff, cascading down to the ground below.

Stretching her burning arms, Riley wobbled and dropped her next rock, smashing her toe with a thud. “Condemn it,” she hissed as she leaned there.

Grabbing it, Hassan tossed it onto the makeshift dam. “Good enough. I’m so tired I could sleep in here. We’ll check it tomorrow.”

Riley nodded and followed up into the passage. Too tired to do anything else, she sat and drifted off to sleep, enjoying the sound of the water.

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Riley snuggled against the warmth next to her. It was the only nice part of this horrible bed, which was like sleeping on solid rock... rock. Riley blinked and snapped awake.

Blushing, she took her head off Hassan’s shoulder and began stretching. She pulled up her notifications. A smile spread across her face as she saw her experience from her efforts the day prior.

Activity experience granted to Assassin, Bard, Ranger, and Spell Thief.

Assassin has advanced: 20 → 21!

Bard has advanced: 20 → 21!

Ranger has advanced: 20 → 21!

Spell Thief has advanced: 6 → 10!

Waving them off, she stretched and smiled. I finally got enough sleep. She stretched further, bumping the teen next to her.

Hassan jerked awake and blinked groggily, rubbing his eyes. “Oh gods, we’re still in here. I thought I dreamed that.”

Riley giggled and forced herself up, stretching out the stiffness before she turned and walked back down the passage.

Arriving, she looked out at the stream and sighed. Most of the water was flowing through holes in the small makeshift damn up top. A small amount plunged over the edge.

Failing to see if it was pooling, she headed back toward the destroyed picket and fire. Hassan grabbed her hand. "I can't see in this, Maddie."

"I'll get a fire going," Riley replied as she led him up.

Entering the small cavern, she squinted and headed toward the remaining embers. Riley grabbed some splinters and fragments and took them to the fire. Propping them against it, she blew and slowly kindled back the flame, igniting the splinters.

Then she turned and added more. Hassan leaned down and rekindled his torch. Tossing on some of the wood, Riley began gathering the rest for the damn.

"I'll check," Hassan said, grabbing another stick. Then he walked down the corridor with his torch flickering.

Riley grabbed a few more pieces of wood and followed, looping down to the stream.

Hassan held out the torch and peered below. A small rivulet of water rolled down the tunnel. "Want to check?" he asked.

Riley dumped the wood and grabbed her rope. "No. Won' change nothin'." She untied it and coiled it back up. Then she walked over and tied it to her bag.

Hassan grabbed the wood and wedged it into their dam. Riley made several more trips.

With each one, the water backed up a little further. The small stream over the side began to spray more and more water.

Riley enjoyed the smell and sound while using the pick to expand the trench and fill the dam further.

“Maddie,” Hassan said after an hour of work. “Off that side.”

Riley looked down at the water rushing around her freezing feet. “Okay.” She jumped across the stream and shook her moccasins. Then she smashed the wall above the stream, sending rocks crashing on the damn.

The water pooled and slowed further and further. More and more of it diverted and shot off the cliff. A chunk of the wall broke free and slid over the mess, further blocking the water.

Riley didn’t stop. Hassan joined, collapsing more and more stone to seal leaks.

After another hour of smashing stones, Riley wiped away the sweat and walked back. She pulled out some jerky and chewed on it while her stomach grumbled.

“That’s a workout,” Hassan said as he joined her. Then he paused and stared at her. “I can’t believe you got me to do this. No one stays in them, you know?”

“That’s cause they didn’ wanna win. They jus’ wanted a bit o’ progress with no risk,” Riley said with a wink. “We’re gonna win. An’ yer gonna give me my share.” She scowled at him.

“I promised you that,” Hassan huffed.

“My pa’ll hold yeh to it,” Riley added.

Hassan went quiet and nodded. “I’m sure he will. Don’t worry, Maddie. If we can get this? We will win.” His eyes gleamed as he pulled out an apple. He took out his knife and cut the apple in half, offering a piece to Riley.

Riley took it and enjoyed it while watching the water spray over the cliff.



“How long do you think it’ll take?” Hassan asked.

“Nother day to finish ‘em all,” Riley said, finishing off the apple. “We can go searchin’ while we wait.”

“I really hope this works,” Hassan murmured as he took another bite of apple.

Riley Milvsky

Level: 26

XP: 36282

Bard (C)

Level: 21

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: 21 + 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.

Spell Thief (C)

Level: 10

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.

Ranger Level: 21 Inactive.

Dexterity: 116

Strength: 52

Speed: 63

Intelligence: 62

Charisma: 103

Stamina: 85

Mana: 104

Inspiration: 47