

# AN ASSASSIN'S ANTHEM

## Chapter 18 - Floods

Riley climbed up into the crack, wriggling to get up. Emerging, she looked around at what had once been the spider's den.

"See anything?" Hassan asked from below.

Riley squinted and gently reached forward, grabbing the large, white thing in the corner. Ew! Spider's eggs. Blech! With a look of disgust and a desire to light the thing on fire, she crawled over and looked down.

"Well?" Hassan probed, brandishing the torch.

"Yes. It's all wrapped up. Catch!"

Riley smirked, cut the egg sack open, and tossed it at him.

Hassan snatched it from the air just in time to have little spiders start crawling out. Screeching, he frantically tossed it in the fire and began scraping the spiderlings off himself.

Riley laughed. The sound bounced around the stone walls, echoing and singing back into her ears.

"It's not funny," Hassan huffed as he wiped spider web off his face.

Riley kept laughing, not bothering to stop.

Quest Completed! Prank Hassan!

Priceless! ~ Beauty.

"Stop laughing!" Hassan barked.

Riley wiped her eyes. “Yeh shoulda seen yer face. Yeh thought there was gold!”

“Stupid spiders!” Hassan jumped up and down, squashing several of them.

“That was an egg sack, Maddie!”

Riley started laughing again, bending over as she gasped. Their efforts to find hidden treasures had led them to the den.

“Stop that,” Hassan huffed.

Riley wiped away a tear. “Too funny.” She looked down at him and smirked.

“Is there more up there?”

“More spiders, sure,” Riley replied instantly.

Hassan glowered back.

“I’ll get ‘em fer yeh, sir.” Riley gave him a jaunty salute, giggled, and started searching for more.

Leaving the room, she scaled up into the crack, using both sides of the rock to traverse upward.

Searching the other nooks, she found a small egg sack. “Found a treasure for yeh!”

“No! If you drop another egg sack on me, I will have you arrested!” Hassan shouted.

Giggling, Riley left the egg sack and continued scaling, finding nothing.

As she grew bored and started her descent, she heard a massive whump. The place shook.

Rapidly scaling down, Riley dropped to the floor and grabbed a torch. Then she bolted down to the waterfall that was no longer a waterfall.

The pool that had formed was bubbling as it began to lower.

“This is actually going to work,” Hassan said wide-eyed.

Riley grinned. “Aye. Jus’ wait for it.” She yawned and waited and waited.

The water swirled and churned, dropping down below the cliff. The stream vanished with it.

“Did we destroy the spring?” Hassan asked.

Riley nodded. “Looks like it.” She waited while the water got lower and lower. Silence dominated the place as the two waited.

Riley started kicking the ground. Seriously? Nothing?

Hassan lowered his head and peered into the spring. A tunnel led off somewhere. “We could explore it?”

“Aye,” Riley said, not having anything else to do. She crawled up the worn, wet passage.

After thirty meters, it opened into a smooth chamber of stone with a large crack running through it. Riley looked at the crack and realized. The water was pooling and spilling out of it.

She studied the crack and listened. A wave of steam billowed up from it. What? More steam began flooding the space.

An image of the elemental flashed into her mind. Oh, no! Climbing out, Riley shot back down the tunnel, sliding over the slick, smooth rock. A wave of warm steam pushed as she shot out of the tunnel.

Hassan jerked back in surprise.

“Run!” Riley barked, grabbing her pack. Then she grabbed a torch and raced up the passageways while steam billowed behind them.

“Steam?” Hassan asked.

“Elemental’s boilin’ it!” Riley shouted as she raced up the passageways. With the thought came the first notification.

You have assisted in killing a level 124 Kobold Miner. +31 XP.

Shoving the notification aside, Riley tore around a corner and raced upward as the steam billowed into the room behind them.

Hassan looked down the hall. “Will it be bad here?”

A massive knock rolled through the air as the ground trembled.

“Do we need to leave?” Hassan asked, edging closer to the exit.

“Just wait,” Riley whispered, leaning against the wall and pulling up the notifications again.

The list started to grow. Then, a massive one showed up.

You have assisted in killing a level 300 Fire Elemental. +300 XP.

Riley stared at it and watched as several others joined with a far lessened penalty.

“Maddie, yes!” Hassan shouted, clapping her on the back. “Well done!” He was beaming as he stood there, his focus on the notifications.

Riley nodded, her eyes lingering on the purse on his chest. I’ll just take that. And interest, of course. She smiled and took a seat. “May as well wait fer ‘em ter drown, too.”

Hassan took a seat, and then his focus shifted. Riley giggled.

Come on, Riley! Upgrade it! ~Beauty

“But I could get it refined or wait until level one hundred. Then it’ll be guaranteed to work!” Riley prayed back.

New Quest: Upgrade Pretty using your crystal.

Rewards: Guaranteed Success, and you avoid Beauty's ire.

Riley read it and looked up. "I don't get it, Beauty. Why? Why give a free skill? Why want me to upgrade it?"

The penalty stays in place. ~Disguise

Stop that; you are ruining everything! ~Beauty

Just do it, Riley! Please! Don't you like me? :( ~Beauty

Wait, did she just add a frowny face? Riley blinked repeatedly. Then she reached into a hidden pocket and considered it. It's not that high of cost. And she did add pockets to my outfit. Oh, why not? With that resolved, Riley sank into herself, embracing that happy stream. The crystal in her hand hummed along. As the two came into harmony, she willed it towards the skill.

The crystal vanished as it flowed inside.

Pretty has upgraded: Rank F → Rank E!

Your appearance is better, but it could be even grander. Use 1 mana to get a little help from Beauty! (Upgrade me again!) Penalty applied: Unequippable. Beauty may alter your appearance at her whim.

What even changed besides cost?

She can do more with it. Smart thinking in there. ~Death

Riley smiled and then scratched her cheek. She blinked and felt her lashes. Is she making my lashes grow?

You're welcome! Distract him and steal those back so you can upgrade it again! ~Beauty

Riley shook her head. A ribbon of silver flowed up the hall and coalesced, forming a chest. Forcing herself to keep a polite smile, she watched the eager noble flip it open.

Hassan whistled and grabbed his pack. Then he counted and placed a dozen imperfect F-tier crystals, four perfect F-tier crystals, and two perfect E-tier crystals into his pack.

Riley stared at the crystals. We should just slit his throat. The thought drifted through her mind. No. We'll just steal it. The guards don't deserve to die. Forcing the rage aside, she pulled up her notifications to distract herself.

You have assisted in killing 66 goblins from levels 151 to level 220. (Variable penalty based on contribution).

You have assisted in killing 43 kobolds from level 100 to level 158. (Variable penalty based on contribution).

Your base level has advanced: 26 → 28!

Assassin has advanced: 21 → 23!

Ranger has advanced: 21 → 23!

Spell Thief has advanced: 10 → 12!

Riley smiled and turned focus inward, swapping Spell Thief for Ranger. The reason was simple: they were about to do a whole lot of running.

As it slotted in, she looked up to see a hand.

"Let's go," Hassan said with a wide smile.

Riley took it and stood. Spinning, she walked toward the blinding light streaming into the cave.

Text flashed up.

Quest Complete! - You helped purify the nearby place of power, clearing two levels.

Reward: Pick base experience, class experience, the new skill "Predatory Sight (E)," or a skill to upgrade.

“Predatory Sight!” Riley prayed with an eager grin.

New skill unlocked: Predatory Sight (E)

Your perception and insight are boosted by 5. This boost is not reduced by low light or no light.

Riley felt the skill flow inside and join with the thrumming river. Willing it into place, she assigned it to Ranger and walked forward, running into the group already there.

“There you are,” a guard said. “What took you so long?”

Roger stood and walked over. He pulled Riley into a hug and bumped a message on her back. “Amazing work. Did he share?”

Riley hugged him back. “No. I stole a few things.”

Hassan smirked. “We cleared the second level.”

“How?” Roger asked while bumping out another message. “Follow. I’ll signal when to run.”

“Steal?”

“I will.” Roger let go.

“We flooded them out using the spring water.” Hassan gestured to it.

Roger chuckled. “Smart. Sounds like my Maddie.”

Riley walked forward and looked out at the colorful forest below. Like a painting, the trees were all ablaze in a fall canvas. “Gods this place is pretty. A canvas painted bright. The sun above is shining. What a gorgeous sight. The forest flows like water. The leaves lilt out a tune. And all the while quiet. A peaceful afternoon.”

Roger stepped forward and looked out at the trees.

“How’d it go?” Hassan asked the guards. “How many?”

“Hold on there now,” a guard said with a chuckle. “We have our accord.” He stashed his purse under his shirt.

“What about Matt’s?” Hassan asked.

“He got separated somehow.” The guard turned and frowned. “How?”

Roger spun and winked. “The gods musta had other plans for me.”

“How’d you do, Pa?” Riley asked, still looking out at the forest.

“By meself, not well. Gave me level four hun’red right at the start. Seems a new one too.” Roger walked over.

Hassan turned back to the cave. “Will it become permanent?”

Roger shrugged. “Hard ter tell.” He glanced up at the sun. “Let’s get movin’ ‘fore night falls again.”

“Matt,” Hassan called. “You remember our accord?”

“Aye. We’ll discuss in town.” Roger said, turning back.

Riley began jogging down the mountain trail while walking through her mental checklist. Right. Steal a book from a mayor and everything from Hassan. Then we leave.

Dancing up and over a root, she enjoyed the boost to her stats, which made it a little easier. Then, she picked up the pace and began racing down the slope. I may as well try to get some sleep before I’m out in the dark again. With the breeze blowing through her hair, she ran down the slope and then darted through the forest, basking in the colors as she ran.

Riley Milvsky

Level: 28



XP: 40813

Bard (C)

Level: 23

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: 23 + 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: 21

Predatory Sight E Your perception and insight are boosted by 5. This boost is not reduced by low light or no light.

Pretty E Your appearance is better, but it could be even grander. Use 1 mana to get a little help from Beauty! (Upgrade me again!) Penalty applied: Unequippable. Beauty may alter your appearance at her whim.

Spell Thief (C) Level: 12 Inactive.

Dexterity: 135

Strength: 56

Speed: 76

Intelligence: 56

Charisma: 109

Stamina: 112

Mana: 123

Inspiration: 51