My Infinite Mana System

Chapter 15: The Portal

The chamber was silent, except for the hum of the portal before us.

It wasn't a sound, exactly, more like a vibration in the air that pressed against my skin.

The structure itself was massive, carved with glowing runes that shifted and pulsed with an unnatural rhythm.

I stood with the others, staring at it.

Evelyn was the first to speak.

"is this it? The end of the dungeon? Where we would meet the final boss?"

Marcus scoffed, crossing his arms.

"It's never that simple."

Tobias stepped forward, his sword held tightly in one hand.

"No, i don't think so. It isn't that simple to get to the end of a dungeon that easy." His words were steady, but there was a tension in his shoulders that he couldn't hide.

"But i have never seen a portal in a dungeon, unless it is the end of the dungeon where the final boss is,"

I glanced at the others.

Evelyn's knuckles were white as she gripped her staff, and even Marcus seemed unusually quiet.

No one talked.

The portal's surface rippled like liquid, its glow intensifying.

Tobias nodded toward the portal.

"Let's not waste time." Without waiting for a response, he stepped forward, vanishing into the light.

One by one, the others followed.

Evelyn hesitated but went next, then Marcus.

I was the last to approach.

The pull of the portal was strong, like an invisible hand reaching out to drag me in.

As soon as I stepped through, the world spun.

Colors and sounds blurred together, and for a moment, I felt like I was falling.

Then everything stopped.

When I opened my eyes, I was alone.

The silence was deafening.

I turned in a slow circle, taking in my surroundings.

The chamber was gone, replaced by an endless expanse of shimmering black and silver.

The ground beneath me felt solid but looked like liquid, reflecting the dim light of the void around me.

"Where are they?" I said, my voice echoing strangely in the stillness.

Did the portal separate us?

Or are they close by?

But it looks like I am all alone here.

I clenched my fists, the weight of the situation sinking in.

"I joined a team, and in the end, I am all alone" I muttered, drawing my dagger. "Guess that means this means I will have to survive alone too."

The air around me shifted, growing heavier with each passing moment.

I tensed, scanning the void for any sign of movement.

Then I saw them.

Shapes began to form in the darkness, rising from the shimmering ground.

They were humanoid but grotesque, their bodies twisting and warping as they took shape.

Blackened, jagged exoskeletons covered their forms, and their eyes glowed with a sickly green light.

The first one lunged at me, its movements unnaturally fast.

I barely had time to react, dodging to the side as its claws slashed through the air where I'd just been.

I countered with a quick strike, my dagger slicing through its exoskeleton.

The creature let out a guttural hiss, black ichor spilling from the wound before it collapsed.

But there was no time to celebrate.

More creatures emerged, their glowing eyes locked onto me.

"Figures," I muttered, gripping my dagger tighter. "Of course, it's never just one."

They attacked in unison, a blur of claws and glowing eyes.

I ducked and weaved, my movements fueled by adrenaline.

My dagger flashed as I struck, each blow precise and deliberate.

The creatures fell one by one, but their numbers didn't dwindle.

For every one I killed, two more seemed to take its place.

Sweat dripped down my face as I unleashed a burst of lightning, the energy crackling as it arced between the creatures.

They convulsed violently before collapsing.

Ding!

[Stage One Complete. Prepare for the Next Challenge.]

"Huh-"

The creatures melted into the ground, their bodies dissolving into the void.

The oppressive weight in the air lifted slightly, but the reprieve was short-lived.

A massive doorway appeared ahead of me, its surface covered in glowing runes.

The light from the portal pulsed faintly, as if beckoning me forward.

I took a shaky breath, my body tense and my mind racing.

"Challenge?"