

Now that the sun had risen, the monsters in the environment had begun to shift. The passive elemental sprites and birds were replaced with wolves and goblins. At the same time, I could see players, or at least chosen, engaging in battles with these creatures. Shaking my head, I put my sword away. There was no point in constantly practicing my skills in front of so many witnesses, given my circumstances.

Thus, the only skills that I practiced were those that I could do without disabling stealth. For instance, my enhancement skills, defensive skills, and the new detection skill. Although the detection skill consumed experience to use in its active form, I still had a decent stockpile of that, and there was always the slim chance that there was a treasure hidden on the side of the road. Of course, I didn't keep it active constantly, but only used it once every few minutes, making sure that I was able to scan everything in my surroundings.

After another hour or so of walking, I could see the fortress city of Decashear in the distance, positioned alongside a long, flowing river. There were more forests nearby, but none as thick as that which bordered Arcanhide.

However, soon, my gaze was drawn towards something else. In the distance, off to my right, I saw a goblin that seemed to be crawling out of the ground. Almost by instinct, I activated my detection skill, and saw the outline of a tunnel beneath the goblin.

At first, I thought that it was a tunnel used to invade the area, but that didn't make any sense. If they were going to use such a tunnel, they should put it in a more concealed location, or closer to the city. Having a tunnel out where anyone could see it, even if the entrance was disguised, was a foolish move. Not even goblins should be that dumb, right?

If it wasn't a tunnel meant to invade the territory, the only other option was that it was either a nest or a dungeon. But... the soldiers wouldn't allow a nest to exist so close to the main road, would they?

But a dungeon, on the other hand... soldiers had no power over where dungeons appeared, and they couldn't be destroyed even by great legends. Given that the entrance was so concealed, it should have been a newly formed dungeon, at that.

Thinking that far, my brows knit together. A new, unexplored dungeon had little value in terms of loot. Although they typically appeared at maximum capacity, the dungeon hadn't had any victims to accumulate wealth. Such information was rather limited in what I knew, but I didn't think that there should be anything special about this one.

After thinking so, I widened my eyes, a smile spreading across my face. Goblins were considered a race, even if a demonic one. I knew from experience that they had the potential to drop money, albeit in low quantities. If the loot options were the same for these, I might not be able to get equipment, but I could earn some cash.

With that in mind, I crept closer to the tunnel. The entrance was a long piece of cloth covered with dirt and grass, leading to a gradual, downward slope. Without knowing where to look, it was easy to miss the dungeon unless one literally fell into it.

I entered the dungeon, walking almost casually as I looked around. If these were basic goblins, they shouldn't have been able to see through my stealth, so I felt rather confident. Even if they did attack me, my armor should have been able to deal with them.

The interior of the goblin cave was much more complex than the Crystal Mole Mine that I had previously explored, with wooden supports and carved walls. Although the workings were crude, it was a clear distinction from the tunnels carved out by wild beasts. Hordes of goblins roamed the halls in groups between three and seven, wearing rags and wielding chipped, rusted weapons.

If there was anything truly worth complaining about, it was the smell. The stench of the cave almost made me gag, and I forced myself to calm down while moving deeper. *The first floor should be rather suitable for lower level players, once they are thinned out a bit.*

The sheer number of goblins within the cave would likely prove tricky at first, but I had no intention of fighting them myself. Instead, I looked around for a quiet passage, in which I summoned my animated shadow. It was time to put its combat power to the test.

The room that I summoned the shadow in was rather small and cramped, looking like a dormitory for the small creatures. On the bright side, this meant that they had no reason to come here shortly after entering their morning cycle, so the room had been empty upon my arrival. It was just a tight squeeze for me and my shadow to both fit in the room.

Once the shadow was summoned, I gave it the order to go and attack the creatures in the adjacent hall, watching as it walked out of the room. A moment later, there were screams sounding out, and a grin tugged at my lips.

I waited for a few seconds, until the battle was well and truly underway, before silently emerging from the room to observe. The shadow that I had summoned was tearing through the goblins, swinging its swords within the small space provided. Although the ceiling was lower than normal, it didn't seem to impede its movements much, crouching down or using horizontal swings whenever they approached. Additionally, it fired off shadow slashes and shadow spikes against distant targets.

More goblins surged into the cave, hearing the cry of their fallen comrades, but I simply watched from the sidelines. There were, surprisingly, quite a few goblins that managed to get hits on the shadow, either through using a bow or getting a lucky hit with a dagger. Although they made it briefly stagger, the shadow was undeterred.

Within ten minutes, the hallway was piled with goblin corpses, and I ordered the shadow to begin looting them. There were five rusted weapons of low value, which I simply threw aside, and four accessories. Among the accessories was a single necklace, and three rings. The rings were just like my own Ring of Bonds, only with a black stone instead of a ruby. As for the necklace, it was adorned with over a dozen goblin teeth, and could increase stamina while in a party.

Aside from these, there were a total of almost two and a half silver. Not... an incredible amount, but given the fact that I did basically nothing to earn it, I wasn't dissatisfied. Besides... this was only the first floor.

Ordering my shadow to enter stealth once the last of the bodies had been looted, I looked around the first floor for any secret rooms or passages. While I didn't find any, I did find one treasure chest tucked away in a room near the back of the first floor. Inside the chest was a small bag containing ten silver coins. With this, I was back over two gold.

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to use my shadow to explore, because there was no way to share senses with it. Instead, I had it walk alongside me as I moved about, looking for the next floor myself. When I found it, I was shocked... and slightly concerned.

The second floor's ceiling was far taller than the first, a full five meters. Additionally, the monsters were no longer basic goblins. There were now trolls mixed in, together with goblin wizards. Thankfully, the monsters weren't as tightly packed as before, but this would still be a difficult fight for my shadow.

Once again, I moved off to the side, ordering my shadow to begin the battle. It charged towards the first of the trolls, using one of its swords to cleave off an arm while the other thrust into its chest. The nearby groups were alarmed, multiple trolls moving in for support while the goblins began to cast magic.

I clenched my fist, watching bolts of fire and ice shooting at the shadow. I hadn't given it any techniques related to evading attacks, so they crashed directly into it. Its body staggered only for a moment before resuming the battle fiercely.

When a large troll swung a club at the shadow's head, it countered with a binding slash. In exchange, another troll smashed into its head from the side. The shadow managed to kill five trolls before dying... which I thought was rather commendable. Of course... I wasn't done, and summoned another shadow to resume the battle.

The dungeon monsters were confused at how the slain foe returned to battle so quickly, screeching out unintelligible commands at one another. Despite there being fewer opponents, the battle this time lasted more than twice as long as the first. In the end, it took me four shadows to kill eighteen trolls and seven goblin wizards.

The loot... was honestly even worse than the first floor. Honestly, I had some hopes that maybe the trolls would drop a better weapon, but it seemed that they were still fairly low level. With almost two more silver, I began looking around, encountering three more areas with similar numbers and results.

Overall, I was starting to feel as if this dungeon wasn't worth my time. When I entered, I had been hoping for a much more sizable haul in terms of currency, only to be sorely disappointed. In the first chest that I found on the second floor, I found a pair of Troll Hide leggings, worth about ten silver. When I reached the second chest, I was already considering turning around and giving up on the rest of the dungeon.

I didn't have much hope upon opening the second chest, though I looked in surprise when I saw a potion and skill book sitting inside. The potion was a Troll's Blood potion, which increased the recovery speed for one hour, and was worth thirty silver.

The skill book, however, my hands shook as they reached out towards it. There were very few skills that a troll could give without being a boss. The ones typically known were Power Attack, Berserk, Resilience, and Regeneration. If I managed to get a Regeneration skill book here...

*No, it could also be a magic related to one of the goblin wizards.* I thought to myself, reading over the cover of the book. Immediately, I felt my expression drop. It was the Berserk skill book, which greatly lowered Intelligence to increase Strength and Stamina.

I didn't want such a skill that would weaken my other abilities, so I simply threw it into my inventory. At the very least, it was worth thirty-five silver. Moving on, I wasn't sure if there would be a third floor or not, but I went to check.

Indeed, there was, though the monsters here moved in even smaller groups, consisting of a single large ogre and two trolls. I could only see two groups in the first room, so I commanded my shadow to attack. The first pair of trolls were easily slain, though it looked like my shadow was having difficulty dealing with the ogre. Its damage wasn't enough to land a deep wound, while the ogre could kill it in three swings.

Once the first shadow was slain, I summoned another, and sent it to fight the second group. Meanwhile, I pulled out my bow, calmly taking aim and sniping the ogre. There was a flash of light, and a hole appeared in the ogre's chest. Since I used Assassinate, my stealth was not broken, and I began to take aim at the second ogre fighting my shadow.

Another arrow, another death, and my second shadow finished cleaning up the trolls. Looking around, I was surprised to find that other monsters hadn't come running at the sounds of battle. *Are they really so thinly spread?* I asked myself, doing a quick calculation. The goblins of the first floor were only level five, but attacked in large groups. On the second floor, the monsters increased to level fifteen, while the ogres here appeared to be level twenty-five.

While I was thinking about that, I helped my clone clean out the rest of the floor, which only had a total of seven groups of monsters. However... this time, my eyes widened at the haul, a surprising thirty silver. Additionally, there were two chests on this floor, which contained a pair of bone boots worth twenty silver, a Power Attack skill book, and over two and a half gold.

My hands clutched the book when I saw it, eyes wide with glee. This was one of the books that I had planned to purchase from Decashear, so its appearance here had saved me some trouble. I learned the skill book immediately, stashing the boots in my inventory to sell later.

Looking around the dungeon's third floor, I saw that there was a thick, stone door that reached all the way to the ceiling. Recognizing this as the boss room, I started to turn around, intending to leave the dungeon. After all, the individual loot from monsters wasn't worth all that much, and I couldn't get any good gear here.

As I walked away, though, I remembered the money that I had found in the third floor's chests, clenching my fists. *The boss shouldn't be too hard, right?* I asked myself, assuming that it would be a level forty monster at most. If that was the case, I could easily kill it and claim whatever loot it dropped. It might not be much... but it also wouldn't take me long to do. With that in mind, I decisively turned back, heading towards the boss room.