

# CHAPTER 16 – PERCEPTION CHECK

Luke bustled around the room collecting his throwing knives and looting the three bodies that had just tried to kill him. He felt no remorse for his actions, which was a worrying development considering his kill count was now up to 4.

At the moment, he was far more concerned with surviving the night. Likely, a significant degree of shock was involved.

As he looted them, he looked over his notifications to relieve that itching sensation at the back of his mind that would only grow more and more insistent.

He could stand to be mildly distracted now, but soon he was going to need every ounce of luck and focus he had to get out of here alive.

**You have defeated [Francis Conner - Human (G-Grade) Level 3, Gladiator Level 6]. Extra experience gained for slaying an enemy above your level. 48 LP obtained. 2 Fate gained.**

**You have defeated [Julian Daniels - Human (G-Grade) Level 3, Gladiator Level 7]. Extra experience gained for slaying an enemy above your level. 60 LP obtained. 1 Fate gained.**

**You have defeated [Kent Nelson - Human (G-Grade) Level 2, Rogue Level 5]. Experience gained. 22 LP obtained. 1 Fate gained.**

Luke let the surprise roll off him. Most of his enemies had been higher level than him, and yet he was able to best all of them while they had the advantage of an ambush.

**Level Up! Your [Rogue] Class has reached Level 6.**

Stat points earned: +2 Strength, +3 Dexterity, +1 Perception, +1 Free Point.

Level Up! Your [Human (G-Grade)] Race has reached Level 3.

Stat points earned: +1 All Stats, +1 Fate, +1 Free Point.

Level Up! Your [Rogue] Class has reached Level 7.

Stat points earned: +2 Strength, +3 Dexterity, +1 Perception, +1 Free Point.

Skill advanced:

Your [Novice One-handed Weapons (Crude)] Skill has advanced to [Intermediate One-handed Weapons (Common)].

Skill gained:

[Intermediate One-Handed Weapons (Common)]

(Rogue Class Skill)

*Your past use of swords, coupled with your recent displays of skill has unlocked higher mastery of one-handed weapons. Many types of weapons serve a Rogue's purpose to slay foes swiftly. Grants improved proficiency over one-handed weapons. Lacking deeper specialization, this skill encompasses a general variety of one-handed weapons. Adds a small bonus to the influence of Strength and Dexterity stats when using this skill.*

Skill upgraded:

Your [Novice Ranged Weapons (Crude)] Skill has upgraded to [Novice Ranged Weapons (Common)].

*So my skills increased as well. Both in rarity, and only one in advancement it seems,* Luke thought, feeling a sense of pride. His scimitar's novice skill enchantment had paid off, after all.

The skill upgrades were immediately noticeable. He could feel new avenues of knowledge unlocking in his head, as if a flower was opening up.

Most of the LP he had amassed was more from humans than monsters at this point. He didn't feel that pleased about that, but he absolutely wouldn't spurn the points. He would take everything he could get.

Luke wasn't some kind of paragon of goodness like Emma that would somehow manage to thrive without tarnishing her soul along the way.

It was only a mild balm to his soul that these three were also murderers. How the System decided who was a "known murderer" or not was something he wondered a lot about. Did that mean that other people knew, or that the System was aware?

How would anybody who killed another person avoid that?

Clearly, they didn't care about their Fate, considering each of them had sacrificed a portion of it for greater power. He should have received more for their levels.

At least looting their bodies helped to make the room seem less crowded.

There was nothing he could do about the bloodstains, but their bodies were gone and he didn't have to literally strip their equipment off them.

That might be a step too far, even for him.

Considering the loot they had on them, however, maybe not. These guys were *loaded*, especially considering that the assessment hadn't been going that long yet. They must have found a cache

somewhere or else had been incredibly lucky with the things they were hunting.

Luke paused. *No, they wouldn't have to be lucky if they killed people who were. These people were known murderers. They killed before.*

Unfortunately, Luke didn't possess some kind of magical inventory to put all this stuff in. The heavy armor would have to stay behind, which would further paint a picture as to what happened to the two Gladiators and the Rogue.

He couldn't take the armor, but he realized he didn't need to leave it behind, either.

Hauling the heavy armor up to the narrow window, Luke managed to push it out, so it tumbled silently into the void to crush some tree far below.

He waited for a tense moment, suddenly worried that he might get a kill notification of some poor soul wandering around in the forest.

After a few seconds passed, nothing happened. Hearing nothing but silence in the tower, Luke went back to going over the loot.

Anything Luke couldn't use, he chucked out the window. There was no reason to leave anything useful behind.

**Item: [Scavenger Falchion (Uncommon)]**

**(Weapon)**

*A short, curved sword that is suited to be wielded with quick, flowing attacks.*

As much as he wanted to, Luke didn't have time to inspect the blade closely. Its rarity was better than his current sword, and that seemed to equate to greater power.

*No kind of enchantment though,* he thought. He didn't need the novice skill gain enchantment anymore. Despite that, it was still worth it to swap to the new falchion.

But something held him back from throwing his old worn scimitar out into the forest far below.

**Item: [Ruin Longsword (Uncommon)]**

**(Weapon)**

*A double-edged straight sword, missing a crossguard, hailing from a derelict ruin. When it was thrust through the stones, a sinister barbed vine twisted up the blade. This metallic vine adds additional slashing damage to this weapon's attacks.*

*Enchantments: Increased slashing damage wielding this weapon. Higher durability damage against uncommon-rarity equipment and below.*

The longsword was considered uncommon-rarity too, once again a step above his worn scimitar. With that enchantment, the [Ruin Longsword] was able to dish out even more damage than its rarity would otherwise be capable of.

He didn't necessarily plan on fighting more humans, but if he had to at any point, it'd be easier with the longsword. It was too bad it wasn't another scimitar. Even the falchion was more to his preference.

*I'm going to end up cutting myself on those thorns by accident, aren't I?* Luke thought with a sigh.

Thankfully, the gladiators had sword belts, and with a little work, he was able to modify them so that both sheathes hung from the same belt on opposite sides.

He would have preferred a sheath that was compatible with his baldric, but beggars couldn't be choosers.

With swords sheathed and attached, Luke looked over the only two pieces of armor he could wear.

**Item: [Climbing Gloves (Uncommon)]**

**(Armor)**

*A set of green scaled leather gloves that allow its wearer to climb difficult surfaces with greater ease.*

*Enchantments: Increases climbing speed and grip. Reduces SP cost while climbing. Instill with mana to repair durability. +2 Dexterity, +2 Fortitude.*

*Now that's what I'm talking about,* he thought as he pulled on the skin-tight gloves.

As he put them on, they felt strange. As if he wasn't putting them on right. Alice had taught him how to do the whole "instill mana" thing. Maybe that was what was wrong? Luke followed Alice's instruction.

A thin trickle of mana flowed from his wrists into his hands as if it was coming from sort of... he didn't know how to describe it. A node? A pressure point? It felt like it was gathered up just beyond the wrist instead of coming from deeper within, as Alice had described.

It didn't matter, the gloves suddenly felt like a second skin and the warm rush of the added stats suddenly took hold.

Unlike boring leather gloves from Earth, he could feel every groove and crack in the stone with these on, with the added benefit that they kept his hands warm.

Besides, the extra stats were immediately noticeable, even with his recent levels.

**Item: [Intern Boots (Common)]**

**(Armor)**

*A pair of sturdy brown leather boots issued by the Company for prospects entering the Assessment Test.*

*Enchantments: Improves resistance against traps.*

Luke would have been happy with a normal pair of boots if he was completely honest. The office dress shoes he wore had no tread, no

means of gripping anything at all, and it was only his Rogue's Dexterity that kept him from slipping and sliding all over the place.

With more glee than he had felt for a pair of simple footwear in a long time, Luke stripped off his shoes and slipped his feet into the boots.

As with the cloak and baldric, the boots resized to fit his feet. Feet and hands improved dramatically, not to mention his new swords, Luke headed to the door of his room.

He took a moment to listen. He hadn't been long at all, looting the bodies and looking at his notifications—even acquiring his mysterious Bloodline—had only taken a few minutes at most.

If only he had been able to pick up the stealth skill, too. It would be incredibly useful right about now. He didn't regret his choice. He had needed a damaging skill like [Lacerate] to defeat those assassins.

Glancing at the small window, he knew he could slip through it. What he could remember of the tower's layout suggested that he would have to get incredibly lucky to bypass so many rooms without being detected.

Luke looked appraisingly at the wooden door. He had already used one of his throwing knives earlier as a crude burglar alarm. He could do something better than that.

He shut the door and took out a throwing knife. After a quick glance at the door, he stabbed the throwing knife into the wood near the hinge, locking it in place. The door would move perhaps an inch or more before the handle bit into the stone and jammed. Then they'd have to break it down.

It would buy him a few minutes at most and hopefully lead his pursuers into thinking he was still in the room for a little longer.

While he didn't have the stealth skill, he did have something else at his disposal for staying out of sight. His nascent power over

shadows. He wasn't familiar at all with it yet. But if he had to, he intended on using them.

*Hopefully, my bloodline uses mana, and not stamina,* Luke thought, wishing that didn't sound so unlikely.

Knowing what was coming and dreading it with every fiber of his being, Luke used his 3 free points to enhance his Endurance.

He was going to need it.

*I hate this. I hate this. I hate this,* Luke mentally chanted as he slipped out the window the other Rogue had come in from. Using the man's own boots and gloves—delicious irony—Luke free-climbed the exterior of the tower.

Whether it was his enhanced stats or the gloves and boots, he had very little issue finding footholds and handholds as he lowered himself down and around to the bridge.

For a scant moment, he thought about climbing up instead of down to take out Henry and Marcy, but he doubted that they would be alone. He might be able to take out one of them, but not before they could call in support and then his only avenue of escape would be cut off.

He needed to get out before they noticed he wasn't dead.

It was rather likely Henry and Marcy themselves were well prepared, even on their own. If their thugs had uncommon-rarity weapons, no doubt they were far better outfitted.

After a long and rather uneventful climb, Luke dropped to the street level of the bridge. He clung to the shadows, waiting for the sounds of alarm. When none came, he moved on, keeping to the darkest patches of night.

He realized that as he kept to the deeper shadows, they clung to him like a trailing cloak of darkness, hiding him from sight.