Chapter 21 End Game Revealed

A planar incursion? I opened my map and located Simba on the river bank not far away. I fast walked to Simba’s location. It sounded like we were going to be invaded and it was going to be a disaster for the small village.

I found Simba peering into the water and he was using his vine entangle spell as a fishing pole. I watched in amazement as a fish came up and tried to snag the bait on the end while another vine lashed down to the water and stunned the fish. The fish was then transported to the shore, added to a pile of flapping other fish. Simba directed his attention to me and the spell ended and the vines evaporated to dust.

“One of the children in town asked me to get her some fish and this is a great way to level up my spell level and control.” Simba’s tail twitched in irritation at being interrupted.

“The child wouldn’t happen to be the overly talkative elven girl?” I asked guessing.

”Indeed, Savannah is her name Tallis. I suppose you are here because of the recent world wide announcement? You don’t have access to the forums yet so I can summarize for you if you wish.” Simba asked slightly mockingly.

”Please do oh great and powerful feline seer of the outside world.” I said returning his condescending tone.

Simba leaped four feet up to a branch on a nearby tree. He was now almost eye level. “Well Tallis incursions are are major part of game play. There are nine realms in the game. This realm is by far the biggest and is constantly expanding. The other eight realms are the fire, earth, water, air, beast, insectoid, undead and ascendant. To reach the ascendant realm you need all eight keys, one from each of the other realms.” Simba paused, waiting for a question so I asked him one.

“So where is the key in this realm?” That was a good question right?

Simba chuckled. “Oh like it is that easy! The first phase of the end game is finding it! You need to research in grand libraries, explore remote ruins, conquer difficult raid bosses just to get clues to it’s location!” I thought for a bit before asking.

”So why would they put out the ‘end game’ of this world. I mean wouldn’t it be better to let players find out in their own?” I wasn’t going to invest in searching for whatever artifact this was but it definitely made me feel small in the world.

“It was a secret until the testing. But an enterprising test player spent hours in the grand libraries researching clues and discovered the basics so the admins released some details. It has only spurred on interest in the game. The admins are holding 1% of all profits to the first player to claim the Ascendant realm crown.” Simba finished a little smugly.

“Wow I responded. How much will that be?” I asked curious.

”Depends how long the game runs but most likely it will be in the billions of dollars…American currency.” Simba replied. My thoughts were to how cut throat the game was going to be due to this. “There is already 49 million in the account and a web site showing the steadily increasing amount. Don’t worry the rulers of the other realms have special coding. They will always be 100 levels higher than the highest level player character in the game. It means it will require a global player effort to invade and capture the keys in the other realms. Besides global incursion rifts the only way to travel to the other realms will be with this realms key. So the first player rush will be to find it. Developers are estimating it will take players four or five years to find the key and then another year to acquire it.” Simba added.

I had brief illusions of finding the key myself but dropped the foolish notion. So if the world was constantly expanding and the developers thought it would take years to find the key… “so the key isn’t accessible right now Simba? It is in one of the areas yet to be revealed?”

Simba nodded in agreement, “That is the consensus on the forums.”

“So what does this ‘test’ incursion mean for my village of Malcom?” I asked returning to the reason I had sought out the feline’s wisdom.

”Not much. Incursion portals only open near large cities. The NPC defenders will not be enough to hold back the wave so players need to participate to stop the incursion. If they don’t then the city may fall, giving the planar entities a foothold on this realm. The NPCs from the other planes are highly intelligent and are coming here seeking this realms key. Unlike most games the players are not guaranteed to win.” Simba looked a little arrogant, him being a basic AI himself maybe he was hoping the NPCs would win?

”So oh wise and powerful king of the jungle what do you advise me to do?” I asked finally feeling a little more comfortable.

“Since this a test of the incursion event the NPCs will be able to hold off the beings. Once the leader that emerges from each portal is slain the remaining monsters will scatter and need to be hunted down. Some may reach you…” he paused, “but most likely not. The nearest portal will be 250 miles away. But the rewards are pretty high for assisting in repelling an incursion. You may want to travel south and participate.”

“Thank you Simba. I think I am going to focus on leveling here instead. Now that Galana is back I am going to try out our own little dungeon and continue to build up our little village.” I left the little cat and walked away thinking.

I opened the updates that I had never looked at for exploring dungeons. I could have as many companions as I wanted but just one NPC. And the NPC could die permanently…companions could be resurrected at cost. The cost was 1 platinum coin per level of the companion, quite steep but it made sense so players didn’t use them as fodder. But in an update there was more… you needed 1 point of divine reputation for each 10 levels of the companion. You received divine reputation from quests from the gods.

So should I level up Jaesmin and bring her with me? Should I even risk Galana in the dungeon? I needed to think on this. It was getting dark and cold out so I returned home and snuggled with Jaesmin in front of a fire.

So many things to think on. I wish I knew more about what state my body was in the real world. My ultimate goal was to make enough money to return. That was if the admins were telling me the truth and it was possible to do so.

I decided tomorrow I was going to go hunting scorpions again. I fell asleep on the couch with Jaesmin. When I woke the fire was out and the air was slightly chilled. I untangled from Jaesmin and went told her to work with Sanso today. I was going out on a ride.

With Titan saddled I mounted and was prompted.

Would you like to make Titan your character’s mount?

I had to go to the updates and find out what caused this. Simba was never around when I needed him. Finding the update notes it said players could only have one land mount and one air mount. Changing mounts had the old mount be permanently erased. I decided to click no for now. Titan was a great mount but if I found a better mount I didn’t want him deleted.

Titan was acting aggressive after I said no. Maybe I should have clicked yes? Well it was for his own good. We ran full gallop across the plains and toward the scorpion dessert. The run got Titan out of his foul mood.

We began our normal harvest of the scorpions and Titan was harder to control. Checking and apparently only player mounts responded with 100% control. Otherwise I had rely on my riding skill. Stupid developers. I was still good enough to work on the scorpions.

A few hours later deeper in the dessert I found a skeleton cloaked in rags. I cautiously approached and two massive scorpions with bright red markings erupted from the sand. I thought I could use the same tactics but these scorpions had a ranged poison attack thrown from their stingers. And boy did it burn!

It also had a splatter effect and Titan didn’t appreciate it either. He was becoming increasingly difficult to control the more damage he took. Fine! I went to the damn prompt and added him as my mount. With that settled we were able to circle and attack. Avoiding the ranged attacks for the most part we whittled them down and eventually killed both of them.

Titan had also turned into a big baby, constantly nudging me for affection as I dismounted and search the scorpions and skeletons. I checked an update I had skipped called ‘mount affection’. There were three negative affection ratings, a neutral rating and four positive ones. Each level accounted for 10% speed and damage. So at the worst mount affection you had -30% to damage and speed. At the highest positive you had +40% to speed and damage while on the mount. I was currently at level 1 positive.

Death of the mount dropped the ‘mount affection’ by one level. The good news was mounts respawned immediately at player respawn points. I was slightly irked with these changes even though it was currently to my benefit. I was sure all these changes to the game were making real world players drool but keeping track of everything for me was becoming an issue.

The scorpions were level 30 elite red spitter scorpions. That didn’t make sense since the poison came from their tail and not their mouths but oh well. I was able to get just a carapace in loot from both. The bone skeleton was more interesting. It had a signet ring noted as a quest item and a scroll with a map.

I was prompted to integrate the map and said yes. The scroll remained but my map populated with an area to the south. There was a tag on the map and it said, ‘Red Crystalline Cavern’. Another dungeon maybe? No. I checked the icon on the map for the location and was the icon for city ruins. Excellent. I packed up the scroll and loot and decided to do some quick investigation before returning to Malcom.