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Story by Paul Michaels

I Got Isekai'd! Well Shyt!

Chapter 163 Making it to the Fifth Floor

Once Quinus was done with his rest, he was woken up by Thomas. He quickly gathered his things and cooked up some of his food, which was mostly jerky and dried bread.

"So, did anything happen while I was asleep," Quinus asked as he started eating.

Thomas shook his head.

"Luckily, it was uneventful," Geralt replied.

"Yeah, but whatever that presence was isn't there right now. Maybe it's just an animal that left the maze?" Thomas suggested.

"That's what I'm hoping for," Quinus replied.

John was being quieter than usual as he finished eating his food.

After the group ate their breakfast, they gathered their things and walked to the stairway.

"Alright, let's get through the next two floors before the day is done. If we hurry, we'll have time to grab the crystals and set up camp on the fifth floor before we start our ascent," Quinus said.

Geralt and Thomas nodded their heads.

"Yeah, it'll be great. The sooner we get out of here, the better," Thomas replied.

John stayed silent, and the group went down the stairs.

They were greeted with another maze but could see more traps.

'Well, this will be annoying,' Quinus thought as he navigated the maze.

"Hey, what's up with John? He's been quiet since he woke up," Thomas asked Geralt.

"Just shut up and focus," Johnathan cut in.

Thomas rolled his eyes.

"Never mind."

The group traveled the maze and had to double back a few times before they made it to the stairway down to the fourth floor. Quinus was marking the walls with chalk so they knew how to get back to the surface once they collected a crystal.

"Alright, so far so good," Quinus said.

"Yeah, so far the mazes haven't been too difficult," Geralt added.

"Yeah, I almost wish there were some monsters in here just to break up the boredom," Thomas said.

"Yeah? How do you plan on killing a monster without your bow, Thomas?" Johnathan said in an annoyed tone.

"Hey!... W-Well, I guess you're right. I guess you're the only one who would have to deal with them? Sorry, John."

"If I'm the only one who can deal with monsters then I'll leave you all to rot... Because I don't have infinite mana, you know."

"It's ok, John. I can deal with the monsters if you're unable to," Quinus said.

"Yeah, yeah. Wait! But you don't have a weapon either. How can you deal with a monster?" John questioned.

"Depends on the monster. But I believe I can escape from almost anything, I hope."

John sighed and shook his head. He didn't believe for one minute that Quinus could take on a monster in unarmed combat. He wanted to retort, but he held his tongue and continued to follow Quinus.

They walked through the maze until they came to a three-way fork in the road. This was the fork where the adventurer had left a monster alive in the portal trap. John could tell by a rock formation that was drawn on the map that Marcus gave him and this was his chance to act.

'Now is my chance.' He thought as he readied himself to do what needed to be done.

"Your Highness? I think we should head down this direction," Johnathan said as he pointed to the right path.

"Why do you say that? What's wrong with the middle path," Quinus asked.

"Uhhh, it doesn't feel right."

Quinus looked at the middle path and studied the area.

"What do you two think?" Quinus asked as he looked at Geralt and Thomas.

Geralt thought about it and shook his head, "I can't really say, your Highness. All I can say is the air smells fresher from the left path. I don't know if that's due to a portal or not."

"Huh... Interesting... Thomas, your thoughts?"

Thomas was looking at the ground. His instincts were telling him to go down the middle path.

"Oh? Uh, sorry. The middle path looks like the path of least resistance, your Highness."

"Really?"

"Y-Yeah. It's more like a gut feeling... I wish I had a little more confidence in my instincts, though... I don't fully trust myself after feeling that presence yesterday."

Quinus was quiet as he thought about the choices.

'So, it's up to me to choose where we're going. Well, this is the first time Johnathan has spoken up so going down the right path doesn't seem like a good idea. If it is the correct way then I'll apologize... If Thomas was a little more convinced in himself then I would have chosen the middle path. But the fresh air coming from the left seems to indicate the presence of a possible portal trap that might kick us out of the labyrinth. Maybe we could sneak around it, if it is a trap? Yeah, we'll check the left route but if it's a dead end then we'll go down the middle path next.'

"Alright, we'll go down the left path first," Quinus answered.

John wasn't happy about that. "Are you sure, your Highness?" he asked.

"Yes, we'll try the left path and see where it takes us and if it's a dead end then we'll take the middle path next," Quinus said as he started writing on the stone floor with chalk.

"But that way is a dead end?" John yelled out.

Thomas and Geralt looked at John with surprise.

Quinus glared at John, "And how do you know it's a dead end? Do you have some information that you are withholding from us?"

John froze in place. He quickly realized that he let his mouth slip.

'Fuck...,' He thought.

He had to come up with something quick.

"A-Ah, I mean it's so obvious that it's a trap. You and Geralt said it yourselves. It smells like fresh air from that direction. So I don't want to be teleported to the surface, only to run all the way back down here. Just because you want to go through a process of elimination," John argued.

Quinus was a bit surprised by his statement but he wasn't sure what his angle was.

"Then why are you suggesting we take the right path? I like to know your reasoning, Johnathan," Quinus asked.

Thomas and Geralt looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders. They weren't sure why John was acting like this. He usually never hesitates to answer, but right now he was struggling to come up with a reason for them to go down that pathway.

"Oh... Uh, well the right path seems like the path because there isn't any fresh air coming from it. Frankly, I would choose this path or the middle one just because they must go in deeper. And the less likely we'll be teleported out to the surface."

Quinus had to agree with his logic but he didn't trust going down the right pathway so that meant one thing.

"That's an interesting argument. So I have to agree... We'll go down the middle path first."

Johnathan looked like the wind got knocked out of him.

'W-What? How did that not work?' John thought.

Geralt and Thomas looked at John with confused expressions.

"U-Um, are you okay, John? You seem a bit nervous," Thomas said.

Johnathan was trying to come up with a backup plan and he started to realize he had another shot of pushing Quinus into the portal after they start their ascent out of the labyrinth after getting to the fifth floor. Who knows, maybe he could get him to go down to the sixth floor and push him in there. But that was going to be a tougher sell.

"I'm fine! Let's just go!" John exclaimed.

"Good, then let's get going. It will be nice to set up camp once we get to the fifth floor. Because we'll be at the halfway point," Quinus explained.

"Ah! I wish it was the finish line," Thomas whined.

"Well, luckily the Prince has marked all the turns and portal traps with the chalk so it should be quicker to get out of the labyrinth once we get the ether crystal," Geralt added.

Quinus smiled at the two, "Yeah, that was my plan, and it's not a foolproof method. So don't rely on the markings too much. This is a Labyrinth and it's rare for it to do this but it could try and pull a fast one on us by switching up its traps."

"Oh, I never thought of that," Thomas said.

Geralt nodded his head, "I agree, your Highness. We'll keep a lookout for the possibility."

Quinus looked at John and noticed he was still annoyed. The Prince just shook his head and started walking down the middle path.

"Let's get going, Johnathan. You don't want to be left behind," Geralt said as he followed Thomas and the Prince.

Johnathan didn't hide the annoyance on his face as he took a deep breath and followed the rest of the group.

They walked down the middle path for ten minutes moving around a bunch of traps until they found the stairway to the fifth floor.

"By the Goddess! Finally! Now we can relax and have a proper meal," Thomas said with relief.

"Let's go down the stairs first and find a place to set up camp," Geralt commented.

"No arguments here!"

Johnathan sighed. He was plotting what the best action would be. He concluded that when the group came to that intersection, he would use a spell called water wave to push the prince into the portal. And if Geralt or Thomas were in the way then it was their fault if they joined the Prince.

One of the other problems was the spell took a lot of mana. So he would need to save his energy.

'Well, I need to be careful, but the spell is more than enough to push him into the portal,' Johnathan thought.

"Johnathan? Are you okay?" Thomas asked.

John was brought out of his thoughts and he realized the others were staring at him.

"Y-Yes! I was wondering what the reward is going to be once we get out of here. Sorry," Johnathan lied as he recomposed himself.

"Yeah, I wonder what Rolf is going to tell me? Eternals are weird like that," Thomas said.

"We can worry about that later. Let's go down the stairs. And grab ourselves some ether crystals," Geralt said.

They all agreed and went down the stairs which were like a spiral staircase that had steps. They walked down the long set of stairs until they were on the fifth floor.

When they reached the fifth floor, the group was met with a different environment than what they were used to. It glowed with a bunch of different colors of ether crystals that were coming from these natural stone pillars that were everywhere on this floor. Most of them being no bigger than a six-sided die.

"Whoa, so this is what ether crystals look like?" Thomas said while staring in awe of the pillars of crystals.

"Well... They are impure ether crystals. Supposedly the pure ones are as big as a person and are worth a kingdom," Geralt explained.

"Yeah, and they are usually protected by the Dungeon Core's guardian," Quinus added.

"Dungeon Core's guardian?" Thomas asked.

"Yeah, the Dungeon core's guardian is the most powerful monster in the Dungeon and will protect the Core from anyone and they will try to prevent you from stealing its ether crystals. It's said that ether crystals are converted mana of dead monsters and adventurers. But some say that it's a byproduct of a world crystal," Quinus explained.

"You read that boring ass book? I couldn't make it past the fifth page," Johnathan said with disgust.

"I can see why you would find the 'Alchemy of the World and Dungeons' boring. But it's actually quite interesting and has some information that could be vital to surviving a Dungeon," Quinus argued.

"Psh, whatever. I just want to learn about magic. And not some dry history book," John said.

"Then you're going to the wrong Academy, John," Geralt commented.

The group walked over the uneven ground, carefully picking their steps so they didn't step on any of the smaller ether crystals that were growing from the ground.

"So, which pillar are you going to grab the crystal from?" Thomas asked.

"Well, there are a few possibilities. I think I'll grab the yellow one," Quinus said.

"Why is that, your Highness?" Geralt asked.

"Matches my eyes," Quinus said with a chuckle.

"Heh, well, I can't argue with that logic," Thomas replied as he was looking at the pillar, "Then I'll go with the purple one," Thomas said.

"The blue one seems appropriate for me," Geralt said.

Johnathan grabbed a green one that looked like it was the biggest. While everyone else quickly grabbed the ether crystal from the pillar. Once the crystal was pulled out of the pillar, they all seemed to lose a bit of their glow except for the Prince's crystal.

"Huh? It came out easier than I thought," Quinus said as he was studying his ether crystal closely.

John was annoyed that his crystal lost almost all of its glow.

"What the hell?...", John said.

"Maybe the quality isn't great?" Geralt said as he looked at John's crystal.

"Well, I'll just take a few more just in case," Johnathan said.

Thomas had a worried look on his face, "But the Eternal said to only grab one... What if the Dungeon becomes pissed and sends monsters our way?"

Johnathan waved his hand dismissively, "Don't worry. We'll deal with whatever comes our way. I think that's the best course of action. Besides, what's the worst that can happen?"

Quinus shook his head as he watched John quickly grab another crystal from the pillar. And once he pulled it out not only did the glowing light disappear, but the crystal started to disintegrate within seconds.

"Ah, crap! These aren't very durable," John complained.

"No... It has something to do with having the ether of your first crystal getting channeled through your body and it will destabilize the new one... I found that info in the Adventurer's Guild's manual," Quinus commented.

"You read that useless thing too? It's a waste of time." Johnathan muttered as he pulled out another crystal. Only for it to disintegrate.

"I don't know, John. The Prince seems to be right about a lot of things... You should probably listen to him," Thomas said.

Johnathan didn't comment and tried pulling out another crystal. But as soon as it left the pillar, the ether crystal started to disintegrate.

"Gah! So, I'm stuck with this pathetic rock. Damn it!...", John complained.

"That's what happens when you don't listen," Quinus said as he started walking away.

"Well, you can set up camp. I'm going to grab a few more of these, hopefully, I find one that won't turn to dust and is better than my first one," John said as he started grabbing more ether crystals.

Thomas and Geralt both sighed.

"Let's go before John gets mad at us," Geralt said as he turned to leave.

Thomas nodded his head and followed the two to a flat part of the ground to set up camp.

John watched them and once they were out of sight, he sighed.

"Those idiots are siding with the prince? Well, it would be a shame if they got caught in a portal trap that had monsters in it," John muttered to himself as he continued pulling out crystals only to have them disintegrate on him.

"This sucks...", John mumbled.

It took him twenty minutes to grab all of the ether crystals from the pillar. And none of them stabilized as the dust fell to the ground. John was frustrated. He didn't want to admit defeat but no matter how hard he tried, the crystals would always disintegrate.

"Damn it... Why did I pick the biggest one?" John complained.

"Hey, John! Food's ready," Geralt yelled out to Johnathan.

John grumbled as he started walking toward the campsite.

"So, did you find a replacement crystal?" Thomas asked.

"What do you think, idiot," John snapped.

Thomas winced a little from the insult.

"I guess not," Thomas replied.

"No, I didn't find a replacement. So, I'm stuck with a shitty crystal," John snapped again.

"Geez! Calm down... It's not like we keep the crystals after we leave this place. The Eternal uses them to tell us a fortune or something," Geralt said.

John frowned and looked around.

"Speaking of which. Where is the prince?" John asked.

"Oh, the Prince is checking the perimeter. He wanted to make sure nothing was around," Thomas replied.

John grimaced as he missed out on an opportunity to push Quinus down into the sixth floor.

'Fuck... I had to try and find a better crystal. Ugh, well, there is always tomorrow and that's my last shot,' John thought.

That was when Quinus walked up to the group.

"So... You're back for dinner," Quinus said as he looked at a defeated ten-year-old boy.

"Y-Yes," John said as he avoided looking at Quinus.

"I'm surprised you didn't clean out the rest of the pillars of ether crystals," Quinus said, poking fun at John's expense.

"I wasted enough time trying to prove you wrong... Your Highness," John replied.

"Hmmm...", Quinus nodded as he sat down next to Thomas and Geralt.

"Well, anyway, let's eat. It's been a while since we had a warm meal," Thomas said.

"Yeah, dry bread and jerky can only do so much," Geralt agreed.

"Thanks for sharing your hotpot," Thomas said.

"My pleasure. I still need to come up with a way to make it lighter though. There's no way I can carry it if I'm wearing my armor and weapons," Quinus replied.

"That would be a great invention, your Highness," Geralt said.

Quinus smiled, "Thanks. But, I can't take all the credit. A lot of the design was thanks to the dwarven craftsmen. As well as having the help of alchemists, who created a special alloy. It collapses well, but the weight is the issue."

"Really?" Thomas asked.

"Well... technically yes. But the dwarven blacksmiths made most of the design. I just took their work and managed to downsize it," Quinus explained.

"Huh... No one told me you were also a master blacksmith," Geralt said.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. I just drew up the plans and hired people to put it together," Quinus replied.

Johnathan was silently eating his stew. He didn't really care about what the Prince was talking about. All he was doing was plotting on how to push Quinus into the portal.

"So are we doing four-hour shifts again?" Geralt asked.

"Yeah... We'll do the same shifts. Once you two are done eating, get some rest. Johnathan and I will take the first shift," Quinus said.

Johnathan looked up and noticed Quinus was giving him a stare.

"Fine....," John replied with his usual tone of indifference.

"Yeah, I can't wait to get some sleep," Thomas said.

"Heh... Same. I'm not used to doing such strenuous tasks. I guess my mother was right to say that my father was spoiling me," Geralt commented.

Quinus smiled, "You'll get used to it. It just takes time and practice."

"Yeah! I never wanted to become a knight but this is making things interesting," Thomas commented.

"Same here," Geralt agreed.

John was getting more and more annoyed by their conversation. So he just ignored the rest of it and went back to eating his food. It took about a half-hour before everyone was done eating and cleaning up.

Geralt and Thomas lay down in their blankets and went to sleep. Quinus sat there and started meditating. While John was playing with another water ball he conjured up.

"Johnathan. You're bad at hiding your feelings. But, I don't want to talk about your motives. I will just say this, don't mess with me and I won't mess with you," Quinus said.

"You don't have to remind me... Your Highness. I am perfectly fine without your warning," John replied.

Quinus opened his eyes and stared at Johnathan, "I hope you can keep that promise. Because, if you try anything, you won't like the outcome."

"Is that a threat?" John asked.

Quinus chuckled, "Just a fact."

Johnathan snorted and didn't bother saying anything as the rest of their shift was uneventful before they woke up Thomas and Geralt. Johnathan fell asleep pretty quickly. But Quinus stared at the ceiling.

"Your Highness, are you okay? You haven't slept yet," Geralt whispered.

"Yeah... I just feel like I'm all alone sometimes," Quinus said.

"Really? I'm sure your mother and father love you dearly. And I'm sure almost every lady in the kingdom would kill to be your wife," Geralt said.

Quinus chuckled, "That's not what I'm getting at... But thanks."

Thomas was listening in and grimaced.

"It must be tough being the heir... Everyone has an agenda or they either want to be friends because he's the Crown Prince. Or they hate him and want him dead," Thomas said.

Quinus looked over at Thomas, "Well if I die... maybe I'll be reborn in another world."

"You're talking nonsense, your Highness. Tertius is the only planet created by the Gods and Goddesses. We are the chosen people, remember," Geralt said.

Thomas laughed a little, "Yeah... There's nothing but chaos in the heavens if there were more worlds. The Gods and Goddesses would surely fight over who gets the other worlds. Or maybe they will create a new set of gods and goddesses."

Quinus looked at the two and smiled. 'If only they knew... But I guess they are normal boys just like the rest of the people I run into.'

"Well, I'm going to get some rest. Goodnight," Quinus said.

"Goodnight, your Highness," the two said.