

## ~ Day 108 ~

This time around, I was rather happy with the results since we had only spent a little less than four days down here and we had still managed to scrounge together so much EXP. And even though I wasn't the only one doing the killing, Mia and Bob also taking part, I was still getting a healthy influx of EXP as the ones they killed I could merely sap of their blood afterwards.

Ever since I had become a Strigoi, I had begun to think that I was essentially a black hole for blood as I could ceaselessly drink with **Siphon** on, without it actually having any physical effect on my body from taking in such massive amounts of blood.

But that was quickly debunked as we traveled through the lower layers and I had been drinking the blood in swathes, not leaving any corpses intact, no matter how low-leveled they had been. With that many creatures, I quickly reached and found my limit, as my body would simply refuse to take in anymore and refine it.

As such, I stopped wasting space on lower leveled creatures and only drank when the creatures was strong enough that it was worth it. That realization too reminded me of the battlefield we had passed on our way to Ebongrave. I now realized that if I had submitted to greed and actually went out to take the blood seeping into the ground, I wouldn't even have been able to drink a 1/10000th of all the blood there had been before reaching my limit which was rather unfortunate.

Well, since the harvest was pretty good this time around, I decided to ask for Mia's and Bob's level prompts to share with me since I was also intrigued by what their gains had been.

[**Bob** has slain 389 creatures!]

[**Bob** has been rewarded with 43954 points of EXP]

[Congratulations! **Bob** has reached levels 21-28]

[**Mia Tal'chor** has slain 201 creatures!]

[Mia Tal'chor has been rewarded with 28766]

[Congratulations! Mia Tal'chor has reached levels 29-33]

Grinning, I looked back at the two very proud-looking Drow and Draugr.

"Mia, you're almost there." I smiled. "And Bob, you're really giving her a run for her money. I wonder which one of you will evolve first."

They beamed under the attention, but Bob especially as praise was his proverbial weak spot.

"I think if we continue for a few more days, we both might actually be able to do so before we ascend back to the surface again!" Mia exclaimed chipperly with her shy and happy demeanor, completely forgetting our guide was here with us.

Realizing it, she fake coughed and returned to her distant and cold demeanor that she usually portrayed in public.

Chuckling at the antics of my capricious drow wife, I shot our guide an apologetic look as he looked completely flustered. All the casual talking about evolution had obviously offset the diminutive guide as I was once again reminded that our speed of progression was miles beyond that of any normal monster.

But I didn't spare him more attention as I redirected my gaze to Bob and Mia, curious to see how their stats were looking.

-Appraisal!-

Appraisal - Mia Tal'chor					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Mia Tal'chor"	STR	19	Skills	12

-Race-	Drow	VIT	34	Traits	7
-Sex-	Female	AGI	33	Titles	1
-Rank-	E+	DEX	23	Resistances	
-Level-	33/35	INT	32		
Health	214/214	CHR	50	Physical Resistance	10
Stamina	75/75	WILL	16	Magical Resistance	17
Mana	41/41	MAG	69	Mental Resistance	6
<b>Appraisal - Bob</b>					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Bob"	STR	58	Skills	10
-Race-	Draugr	VIT	68	Traits	5
-Sex-	Male	AGI	25	Titles	1
-Rank-	E+	DEX	31	Resistances	
-Level-	28/35	INT	12		
Health	299/299	CHR	7	Physical Resistance	15
Stamina	188/188	WILL	20	Magical Resistance	8
Mana	0/0	MAG	6	Mental Resistance	7
<b>Sanguine Champion</b>					

They were really shaping up to be something fierce, and not to mention the immense boost to their power they would get once reaching the 4th-tier. Mia especially, as she would become a mage monster of the 4th-tier, and remembering back to the insane power increase I got, it got me excited for the future.

Getting to my feet, I walked over to the other end of the tunnel we had been resting in. These small tunnels were the only ways to access the other caverns so it did prove a bit troublesome to use when the occasional beast horde of creatures would move through one of the caverns as we had to wait for them to file out another tunnel or move to the other side of the cavern.

The main reason as to why we had decided to rest in the first place was exactly because one such horde of monsters was milling about in the cavern we had to pass through if we wanted to descend lower.

Large, blue, and reptilian, these raptor-like monsters were swarming the cavern in search of food. Although the average ranking of the monster was barely E+ rank, they were in the literal tens of thousands. So trying our hand against them was the same as suicide, or well, for anyone that didn't have my ability off fending off attacks and escape options, such as flying and **Shadow Magic**.

But luckily, our guide said that the monster horde was one of the constantly migrating kind, so we needn't worry about waiting too long for them to pass, so we simply set up camp in the tunnel.

"Those reptilians haven't passed yet, but it seems like they've almost cleaned the cavern clean so it shouldn't be much longer," I explained as I returned back to camp.

Plopping down beside Mia, I took her into my embrace as she leaned up against me. Now that I had some time, I might as well get those two skills advanced.

-Skill advancement, Silent Flying!-

Skill advancement - Silent Flying
<b>Choose one advancement</b>
<b>-Soundless Flight-</b>
Flight becomes almost imperceptible to normal hearing. Effects enhanced by stealth capabilities.

It was to be expected that **Silent Flying** and **Muffled Flight** wouldn't have more than a single advancement choice when thinking back at their previous advancements, but that wasn't to say that the advancement here seemed lacking. The skill description actually said that the better my ability to stay hidden was, the better this skill would become.

That was quite good in its own rights seeing as I had the advanced skill **Stealth** and my general adaptability with **Shadow Magic**, which made it extremely hard to keep track of during combat. By now, I've essentially turned into a stealthy mage tank, something I didn't even would've thought possible.

-Skill advancement, Soundless Flight!-

[Skill - **Silent Flying** has been advanced to **Soundless Flight**]

[For advancing a tier-2 skill, you receive 3 skill points!]

Moving on, I opened the advancement tab for **Swift Flight**.

-Skill advancement, Swift Flight!-

Skill advancement - Swift Flight

Choose one advancement

-Soaring Flight-

Soaring through the air. Greatly increased flying speed and maneuverability. Can consume stamina to allow for greater speed.

It was unsurprising, but I wouldn't mind the boost to my flying capabilities. Although flying in combat is oftentimes an advantage but with my fighting style, high defense, and **Blink**, it becomes rather ineffectual in actual fights against something like a single opponent.

Especially because my ability to move around in the air is much lower than my speed on the ground, also, against competent foes, they would exploit the fact that if I was limited to such movements.

However, flying frequently makes for a perfect way to disappear from sight, leaving my opponents scrambling to find me while my blood puppets brawl them on the ground and I attacked from the shadows. One prime example of that was my fight against the great orc fire mage where I used my shadow wings a few times to befuddle and confuse my opponent.

-Skill advancement, Soaring Flight!-

[Skill - **Swift Flight** has been advanced to **Soaring Flight**]

[For advancing a tier-2 skill, you receive 3 skill points!]

-Status!-

Status					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Xavier Tal'chor"	STR	31 ⇒ 32	Skills	25
-Race-	Strigoi (Blood Fiend)	VIT	136 ⇒ 142	Traits	9
-Sex-	Male	AGI	98 ⇒ 100	Titles	4
-Rank-	D	DEX	35 ⇒ 36	Skill Points	12 ⇒ 24
-Level-	22/50	INT	36 ⇒ 37	Resistances	
Health	1231/1231	CHR	36 ⇒ 37	Physical Resistance	27 ⇒ 28
Stamina	334/334	WILL	54 ⇒ 55	Magical Resistance	29
Mana	355/355	MAG	115 ⇒ 120	Mental Resistance	32

Now that I had some extra skill points with the good amount I already had, I began thinking it was time I used **Synergize** on some of my skills to make space, but the hesitant words of our guide broke through my pondering.

"My Lord, I hope you don't mind me asking," He asked, clearly flustered. "But, is the reason why you've braved the Abyss because you intend the fight in the tournament?"

Looking at our guide, a rather scrawny-looking ratkin, I rose a curious eyebrow. I hadn't heard anything about a tournament other than the absentminded conversations around the city, but I had unconsciously believed that to be some small thing going on in the arena of the city. I mean, if there were a monster city, there were also places where they could let loose of course.

When I had initially asked our previous guide of places to train, we learned that there were two ways of gaining general tangible power in Ebongrave. Either in the Abyss or the life and death Arena battles. Since the latter left a bad taste in my mouth from ugly memories of a time past, I decided to not venture down that road this early. However, I wasn't going to completely shy away from it merely because of petty apprehension. I would take it one step at a time.

But as such, I had thought the idle chatter about this 'tournament' was just something small for competitors of the arena.

"I'm not sure those life and death battles in the arena are suitable for what we're doing here." I threw a glance at Mia and Bob, indicating that the reason we were down here was for more than just myself.

"No-no, my Lord, I didn't mean the arena battles," The ratkin said hurriedly. "Lord Regent of Ebongrave is holding his annual tournament in the city's plaza with extravagant prizes. That's why the recent flood of monsters coming to Ebongrave has been unceasingly increasing over the last few weeks."

"Oh?" I muttered.

Thinking back, I do distinctly remember grumbling over the fact that the streets on the upper rings were steadily increasing with the influx of new monsters.

"I do not believe I've been properly informed about his tournament, care to enlighten?" I asked.

"Y-yes of course my Lord!" He straightened his back, his whiskers twitching ever so slightly. "The tournament is a leader format. So the qualifiers are the leader's followers going into group battles against other leaders' followers. Once the qualifiers are over, you head over to the second part of the tournament; the duels of the leaders themselves!"

"Unlike life and death battles," He continued. "Maiming and killing your opponent are prohibited and any violation of the rules results in the execution of the offender. With that

said, the rewards being in the top one hundred are extensive. Most of the participants will be invited to the regent's castle for a party, and there's even one of the legendary relics for first place."

At that last mention, both my own and Mia's head snapped up to bore holes into the now frightened ratkin.

"Relic you said?" I muttered, absentmindedly touching the ornamental jewelry on my ear as it almost hummed sentiently.

Mia knew exactly what this meant, and she shared one meaningful gaze with me before I broke into a wide smile.

"You know what?" I chuckled. "We might just join this tournament..."

"When does it start and how long would it last?" I asked, worrying about the time frame set we had set about when to return home.

"I-I, um, it starts in eight days and can take anywhere between a week to two weeks to complete I believe..." The ratkin stuttered, regaining his composure.

I cast Mia a questioning glance which she quickly picked up on.

"That should work Master, I set up the bulletin application's deadline with the recruitment market from anywhere between three days to two months so we have ample time before we need to leave with our new workers." She explained.

"Fantastic!" I exclaimed, happy to have a woman in my life that knew how to manage things so I didn't screw things up. I definitely wouldn't have expected to be staying in Ebongrave longer than two or three days, but we were already long past that.



But as I was about to move in and give Mia a big smooch, the alarm bells of my unfolded senses notified me of a group of strong figures approaching our location.

Smile fading, I stood abruptly up with a deep frown on my face.

"We have company," I spat. "And not the friendly kind."

Everybody got to the feet as I glared at the smug face of the Lycan on this tiger-wolf mount who was approaching in the distance, riding side by side of a host of much more powerful figures.

"Fucking nobles..."