

## ~ Day 125 ~

Kicking up a cloud of dust and rubble as the transformed lizardman decimated the ground beneath his point of impact, he hissed hatefully. He had intended to simply squash me right then and there, but of course, I wasn't so easy to catch as I had already disappeared both the spot and sight.

However, instead of setting up the fight slowly like I tended to do, I instantly pressed my counterattack.

Conjuring my crimson claws mid-swing, I bolted from the shadows with **Blitz**, the mind-boggling speed multiple times faster than what **Dash** had been able to do.

Barely managing to meet my attack in time, the hulking Zev'vev groaned under the awkward angle of the block with his large bladed bat.

Pressing the attack, I immediately switched up my weapon's form with the slightest control of my **Blood Shaping**, allowing it to slip through his block and take him by surprise as I ripped a large furrow through his chest.

I managed to get out of dodge quite easily with **Blitz**, avoiding the retaliating slam that rocketed the scene as his weapon connected with the spot where I had just stood, but it still sent shivers down my back seeing that absolute raw strength in that figure of his. Not even Bob's destructive might could possibly come close to this, but that was not surprising as the noble before me gave off the unmistakable aura of a C- rank monster.

Although he was clearly a very early and weaker C- rank than most, the potent difference between a D rank and C rank monster was present in its full glory.

I would never be able to match this monster in attributes at any caliber, so that was why it was imperative that I used my skills to perfection.

Not relenting, I cast myself in multiple shadows that split as I charged the shocked lizardman. Hurriedly, he scanned each of the shadows with his reptilian eyes flickering between them, trying to find out which I was in.

Throwing his weapon in a large arc to attack the shadow he believed I was in, he smiled ferociously as his attack met my block, dispelling the shadow around me and revealing that his guess had been right on the money.

However, that grin lasted only the blink of an eye as the other shadows reached him. But instead of revealing that there was nothing in them and they were nothing more than decoys, Zev'vev hissed in pain as he felt his sides being penetrated by something sharp.

Revealing to be two lanky blood puppets that I had hidden within the shadows, me being the real diversion, Zev'vev's eyes darkened, finally taking the fight seriously as he now doubted that he was actually in the winning seat.

He knew I was not even C- rank yet, and that had definitely gotten to his head, but now, he wasn't all that sure.

Throwing both blood puppets off by punching one with demolishing the other with a swing of his weapon, he looked at the shallow but bleeding wounds in either of his sides. Although the blood puppets in their agile and dexterous form were very deadly, they were ultimately still unable to pass the lizardman's impeccable physical resistances and sky-high vitality.

Then again, defeating the big ol' overgrown lizard through large lethal attacks had never been the plan to start with.

I continued the onslaught, disguising the creation of another blood puppet in the guise of my **Shadow Magic**, now peppering him with both my magic and physical attacks. Carving wounds into his flesh and leaving many glyphs in his body.

Becoming desperate to gain an advantage, Zev'vev threw out powerful skills left and right, dismantling the surroundings in his fury and distress.

Over the last week of training, Lana, the torturer, as I had dubbed her, had thoroughly beaten the bad fighting habits I had developed on my own out of me.

Before, I had been all about throwing one big combination of attacks and singular power moves at enemies and hoping for the best one after another, but now, every single attack I was dishing out was simply a way for me to chain into another series of attacks. Constantly keeping on the pressure rather than foolishly attacking my opponent with big and flashy attacks in a manner that would allow for brief pauses which would inadvertently allow my opponent to adapt and adjust.

While I was definitely giving him a run for his money though and I still remained mostly unscathed, that was not to say that this fighting with abandon was without cost. It was only by the skin of my teeth that I evaded some of the more destructive and crippling attacks thrown at me, and at the rate I was burning through mana, I wouldn't last much longer.

Not that I intended to keep this going that long.

Under his hastily thrown defense, it was more than clear that this monster was in a whole other league than his brother as I was launched through the air by the backlash of our clash and his pure brawn pushing me away with the swing of his weapon.

But before I was out of bounds, I conjured my shadow wings, righting myself in the air.

It was time to end this.

"GET DOWN HERE YOU FILTHY RAT!" Zev'vev shrieked, blood caking his body from many different wounds.

Throughout most of the fight, he had been screaming obscenities at me, but none of his words had really registered to me, even the many damage notification hadn't registered as I was completely engulfed in the fight. My focus narrowed to a pinprick, trying to follow and figure out what Lana had been trying to teach me all this time.

Of course, my fighting style had already changed beyond anything it was before, now not just utilizing my skills like a wild beast with immense power at its disposal, but as an actual fighter who brought out the full potential of all the power, I had gained so far. Quite evident by the fact that I remained still very unharmed and my opponent very much contrasted that.

Even though he looked incredibly bad, he was still nowhere close to being dead or incapacitated, however. From my estimations, he definitely had more than three-quarters of his health left, and I was running close to empty on mana. I've been using almost all my enhancing skills, and even **Blood Shaping** to manipulate my own blood to ever so slightly force my body out of the way of attacks, so at the point, I was now without much mana remaining, I would now definitely be taking hits, and cripplingly destructive hits at that.

But I didn't need more, I had done all that I needed.

Lifting my hand palm facing upwards, a crimson haze formed atop it, swirling with a primal intensity until I suddenly crushed my hand into a fist, executing the large conglomeration of spells that sucked out almost every last drop of mana out of me and forcefully converted some of my blood into mana to compensate.

A shocked murmur rained throughout the crowd as Zev'vev suddenly twitched and fell to his knees with a mouthful of blood.

I wasn't shocked though as that's definitely what dozens of **Rend** spell going off literally inside his body and past his trinkets' magic blocking effects at once would do.

Feeling rather woozy from just having executed that one technique of multiple spells castings at once which Lana had taught me, I slowly glided down to the ground and landed on my shaky feet. While incredibly powerful that technique, this was the only thing Lana had taught me besides beating out my habits. But even though I was still rather inept at using it with only a week of training with it, I had pulled it off.

Zev'vev was still conscious and kneeling upright, glaring daggers of hatred at me, but he was most definitely beyond being able to continue without doing permanent or downright lethal damage to himself.

"Winner, Xavier!" Tahl all of a sudden announced, much to the crowds' roars of enthusiasm that sprung up a mere moment later.

I was barely able to stay on my feet, but the quick support of Mia sneaking in under my shoulder kept me standing. Smiling at her, I looked back at the bloodied lizardman before me.

I finally allowed myself to be astonished at what I had just accomplished now that I finally got to really appreciate it. Just a few weeks before, I had been desperately fighting against this guy's brother, a D+ rank, albeit three of them at the same time to be exact, his brother was undoubtedly many times more powerful on his own.

However, with just the brief corrections of the things I did horribly wrong whilst fighting, a bit of teaching, and some skill fusions later, I had jumped that much in power; proving that level in fact was truly just one part of one's true power.