

~ Day 125 ~

Staring down my opponent; or rather staring *up* would be more apt, I wasn't sure what to expect from this fight.

-Appraisal!-

Appraisal - Maldrak					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Maldrak"	STR	205	Skills	???
-Race-	High Orc	VIT	???	Traits	???
-Sex-	Male	AGI	98	Titles	???
-Rank-	C-	DEX	92	Resistances	
-Level-	16/75	INT	???		
Health	1782/1782	CHR	???	Physical Resistance	???
Stamina	1103/1106	WILL	???	Magical Resistance	???
Mana	0/0	MAG	???	Mental Resistance	???

"So... my progeny has told me a lot about you." The tall and muscular High Orc said with a rumbling voice.

"Really now...?" I coughed awkwardly, not particularly wanting to chit-chat with Maldrak. "I mean, there's not much she should know..."

"Quite to the contrary, I believe that your recent... *growth spurt*, is rather intriguing and more than enough to talk about," Maldrak said, an unreadable glint flashing in his eyes.

I frowned. Of course, he would have a somewhat comprehensive timeline of how strong I was from when I was in the clutches of the now-deceased Mistress. So that would also mean that he knew that my abnormal power growth was definitely stimulated by some factor or another.

But what he wanted to do with that information, I did not know.

From what little I had gathered of rumors and such during my time in the arena, I had heard a little bit about how this 'king' was supposedly not only very powerful but also a character of great virtue, honor, and austerity.

But after what his daughter said when we first met and from what happened to allow my escape, he clearly was a lot more cunning and scheming than what had been otherwise let on. While not confirmed, I didn't doubt for a second that Maldrak had schemed not only the Mistress's death but also the other warlords' deaths without getting his hands dirty and losing public opinion.

Even though the city, Maldrak, was very primitive for a monster city, it was undoubtedly a potent place of power considering that literally millions of greenskins blindly followed whoever was king in the city. No matter if you were D or even a powerful C rank, you simply could not stand up against such numbers.

"Enough with the chitter-chatter, I'm not personally fond of it." I scowled, knowing definitely this wouldn't be the last encounter I had with Maldrak.

Seeing that we were ready, Tahl announced the fight to begin.

Launching myself at him, wanting to take him off-guard, I barely managed to catch the glint of his weapons flashing to block my assault. I was shocked at the speed he wielded his weapons, and I was instantly put on the back foot as I attempted to create distance once again, but failing spectacularly as his long straightened scimitar-like weapon and much shorter dagger rained attacks down upon me, ensuring that I would be unable to cast my magic and retreat into the shadows.

Shocked at the unending barrage of attacks hailing down on me while his tattoos began lighting up with a soft glow, I was scrambling for a foothold.

This wasn't just his overwhelming strength and dexterity doing a number on me. No, this was pure weapon mastery.

As greenskins moved up the evolutionary line, one thing became glaringly clear, especially for those going down from the orc to great orc path, that was their martial skill in wielding weapon would become unmatched. A High Orc though, brought that to a whole new unrealistic level.

I couldn't even see the blades as they whistled through the air, making me purely rely on taking some hits and using my body's natural perception and instincts to defend myself.

Finally finding a lapse in his attacks, I hooked his weapons in between my crimson claws, but not before his sword plunged into my arm and skewered my bicep.

Grunting, I stared daggers at him.

"I have no wish to antagonize you, Xavier." Maldrak suddenly said with his gruff bassline voice. "At least as long as you don't make me."

Scowling back at him, I thought over that. None of us moved, simply standing there in a deadlock.

"You don't really make it easy not to," I finally said. "Frankly, I don't take kindly to threats like the one before."

Smiling, Maldrak obviously seemed glad that I was finally listening to him and open for talk.

"It wasn't meant as a threat, so I must apologize if you took it as so." He replied cordially as if we were not in the midst of a heated duel with his blade run through my arm. "I would like to talk one day, just us two."

As my frown deepened, he added; "I have reason to believe that cooperation between us two might be quite... fruitful, and I truly wish you no nor your people harm."

There was a long pause as blood trickled down the edge of his blade.

"Sure, sometime later." I finally relented after thinking this over. "Let's get this over then."

Before he could respond, with a sickening tear and spurt of blood, I tore my arm free from his blade, almost ripping it fully off.

Already disappearing and reappearing dozens of meters away, I looked down at my arm at was dangling by then shreds of skin, flesh, and sinew.

As gasps rang out through the crowd, I saw the healer and judge by the sidelines looking flustered. While this would definitely be a crippling wound to many, this of course wasn't one to me.

So simply waving the healer and judge off, I refitted my dangling arm to the base of where it had been gouged, watching as the tears rapidly regenerated.

Ignoring the crowds' awed and disgusted murmurs, I faced my opponent who looked on with curiosity at my arm, just standing there. Not wanting to waste this apparent lull in the fight that he had given me, I threw in my trump card right out of the gate and started flooding most of my enhancing skills with mana.

It was more than clear to me that I wouldn't stand a chance against this monster of a warrior. While I might've been able to overcome most other monsters with his kind of outrageously high attributes, they were the least of his strengths.

Feeling the shadows slowly creep up my body and fog my mind, **Stygian Transformation** had almost finished activating when Maldrak suddenly sheathed his weapons.

"I concede." He stated simply.

Shocked, I stopped **Stygian Transformation**.

"Why in the hell would you surrender?" I asked incredulously.

"I've gotten what I came for." He said simply with a smile, turning to leave. "I will send word soon so we can figure out a time and place, I look forward to what we can sort out between our... *ambitious* selves."

Stunned, I just stood there, looking at Maldrak's back retreating off the stage.

Even Tahl, the always collected and stoic minotaur too was stupified. Before now, not a single contestant had surrendered, so this was quite the surprise considering it was the last match of the quarter-finals.

Frowning, I wasn't sure what to make of it. Either he genuinely wanted to be on good terms with me, or he had other motives behind giving up here.

"W-winner, Xavier!" Tahl finally announced, bringing me out of my wandering thoughts.

I just sighed.

Pondering why this cunning and scheming individual did the things he did, could wait. I had other things to take care of now.

Getting off the stage, I checked my already fully healed arm. I had only an hour or two before I had to go up against my next opponent, and I had a pretty good guess as to who that would be.

"So, you're the unabashed little pup who doesn't know how to keep its filthy nose out of things where it shouldn't be?" The large arachnid figure said, a slight eerie clicking behind every syllable he spoke.

"Urgh, I really hate spiders..." I muttered to myself, shivering a bit as I looked at the massive one before me.

To me, spiders had always been the worst of the creepy crawlers.

"What was that?" He scowled. "Nevermind, I have better things to take care of. Go surrender like that dumb orc, I have actual highborn to fight rather than mere rabble like you."

Ignoring the overly arrogant words I've ever so slowly grown immune to since coming here to Ebongrave and meeting the lovely lot that was nobles, I wanted to test out something new that I've been quite excited to use.

-Codex!-

As the skill activated, the arachnid's constant arrogant babbling all of a sudden stopped.

Looking down, Asethh frowned as one of the ostentatious amulets hanging off a necklace started glowing.

"Again? Lowborn truly never lear-!" He suddenly stopped his tirade as the glowing didn't abate, simply growing stronger and stronger until it gave off a buzzing hum.

"Wha-?" He managed to get out before the amulet suddenly fizzled out with what looked like mana sparks, going dead and searing the ostentatious woven armor where the amulet touched on his chest.

Appraisal - Asethh K'or					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Asethh K'or"	STR	45	Skills	15
-Race-	Arachne (Whisperer)	VIT	122	Traits	12
-Sex-	Male	AGI	105	Titles	???
-Rank-	C-	DEX	88	Resistances	
-Level-	31/75	INT	155		
Health	1335/1335	CHR	22	Physical Resistance	15
Stamina	680/680	WILL	???	Magical Resistance	???
Mana	1910/1910	MAG	286	Mental Resistance	???

[Use of **Codex** was successful!]
 [Data has been logged]
 [Forging creature profile]
 [Skill - **Codex** has leveled from 1/20 to 2/20]