

## ~ Day 125 ~

"H-HOW?!" Aseth shrieked, the uncanny clicking of the undertone in his voice vibrating.

Looking down, he held up his now lifeless amulet as he inspected it, incredulity and hatred burning in his eyes.

I simply smiled and closed the status window, very satisfied with the results of my newest skill that I had gotten for fusing **Appraisal**, **Blood Profiling**, and **Language Adaptation**.

-Codex!-

<u>Skill list</u>		
Name	Tier	LVL
-Codex- NEW	4	2/20

Divine the secrets of the world. Appraise any creature or object to pull up their information; success rate and amount of information acquired depends on skill level, power difference, and innate divination resistance. Creates a comprehensive profile on any creature, race, or item from the information gathered that with enough data can display weaknesses, strengths, and various traits of the target. Any mortal language encountered by the skill user will steady and automatically be logged so that the skill user will learn it simply by listening. Use of Codex negates or outright diffuses most low-level divination wards, talisman, and divination spells; this effect increases with skill level and power difference.

**Codex** was my first tier-4 skill, and boy was it powerful. Not only did it practically supercharge **Appraisal**, giving me much more information than I would usually have gotten, but it also gave me divination negation against both other's wards and attempts at gazing at my status.

I had just fused it with the two other skills today after finally getting **Appraisal** to max-level, and already, I had bypassed many of the talismen that others had which previously prevented me from peering at their statuses. But most relieving of all was that this skill even passively protected me against weaker divination spells and items that would try and peek at my status.

Twice today already, I had blocked other's divinations, proving that while divination is rather rare, it's still very much available to those strong enough here in the city.

But other than that, there was another revelation from fusing this skill. And that was the fact that the leap from a 3rd-tier skill and a 4th-tier skills was astronomical. Codex was basically in a whole other league compared to my other skills, not only in what is provided but also by the sheer universal use of it.

That made it reasonable why all my skills at the 3rd-tier had been so obnoxiously hard to advance, since the 4th-tier was a qualitative leap, very much like when a monster advanced to the 4th-tier. This revelation simply made me that much more excited for seeing how powerful my other skills would become, especially those focused on combat.

Still ignoring the Arachne's seething, I centered myself. Nevermind the fact that this guy, eh... I guess you could call him a guy... Pretty hard to distinguish with that near-perfect androgynous appearance, and then counting his otherwise... very non-guy-like lower spider parts.

Anyways, what I meant to say was that even though this guy seemed like someone who didn't have much between his pointy ears, couple with that overbearing arrogance, it didn't make me see past the fact that he was undoubtedly powerful, enough to make me realize that the odds were in no way on my side this fight.

"Stop ignoring me, you weakling!" Asethh seethed, finally pulling me out of my thoughts. "Fine, I'll just have to show you the disparity between a highborn and filth like you."

"Uhuh..." I droned with a roll of my eyes.

Seeing that both parties were ready, Tahl raised his hand.

"Begin!"

About to take the lead and charge at my opponent, I was suddenly stopped in my tracks from a deep and foreboding sensation slithering its way down my back. Around the giant Arachne, his hands started distorting the light around, the dark mana in his core dimming the light around him to create a haze of a bottomless abyss.

The sheer magical power on display here had me in shocked silence.

"Yield to the darkness," Asethh whispered with a hiss, but his words hummed in my ears so loudly it drowned out all my senses.

At that moment, the stage, the crowd, the plaza, even the sky, it all disappeared, replaced by an impenetrable and endless abyss. Shocked, I tried to make heads or tails of what had just happened, but nothing made sense.

Chilling, mind-numbing whispers echoed out into the abyss, trying to slither their way into my mind.

◁ Aseth K'or ▷

Watching that pathetic elf-like filth being engulfed by my **Eternal Domain**, I couldn't help but smirk. While it was definitely an extreme disappointment having to face such a weak and insignificant opponent, there was nothing quite like squashing weaklings as they realized that all resistance is futile in the face of their betters.

And after all that presumptuous and good-for-nothing lowborn did, I was by all of Tal'Zoroth's many names going to enjoy quenching this little lowborn's spirit in despair.

However, as the seconds ticked by, I quickly realized something was... *wrong*.

That little insect was still just standing there, seemingly unfazed. Opening my senses, I was even more confused. The spell had taken root alright, but for some absurd reason, the mental tendrils of repair that was the **Whispers of Darkness** which resided within my domain did nothing to penetrate his mind.

But how?!

That made no sense, I had quashed C-ranks within seconds with this, reducing them to nothing but incompetent mind-less ragdolls and puppets.

But as the whispers tried to invade his mind, twisting into a scape of despair, it was as if they were hitting a wall. In fact, many of the whispers recoiled as if they were burned by the will residing within that mind and soul.

Growing apprehensive, I could feel a foreboding faintly crawl up my spine. And when the weakling who was supposed to be wholly incapacitated suddenly took one step forward, I unconsciously took one backward without realizing it.

*"No! How?!"* I screamed internally.

There was in no way that he should be able to move whilst under the effects of my domain. But as he took one step after another, the foreboding that was slowly creeping up on me, only grew.

However, no matter how hard I thought, there isn't be any feasible way that this should be possible. Now growing anxious, I relented to call out of **Sanctioned Lord** powers.

*"Leeching Creep"* I cast, causing the surroundings to dim.

As the minions formed from the darkness, they flew straight at him, clinging to his body as they instantly began siphoning away his mana to fuel their own brief and despairing existence. The pained and struggling expression on his face was clear as he still tried to take one step after the other. But he still wasn't stopping.

No matter though.

It was only a matter of time before he would collapse.

The tendrils of darkness could already be seen crawling up his mana veins with black, corrupting his mana and stealing it.

Any minute now...

Very soon...

...

He wasn't finished yet.

Now very worried, I took another few unconscious steps backward, him already having crossed half the distance.

Something was *very* wrong.

He should already be completely depleted of mana, but how was he still going and still fueling the Leeching Creep?! Looking closer with my mental senses, I was astonished by what I saw.

He was burning his own vitality to produce mana?!

Incredulous things about this weird elf-looking monster kept piling up, to the point where I realized that he was clearly anything but ordinary. Duel magics, unknown race, powerful skills and abilities beyond his rank, unbreakable mind, and now this.

Just what in the nine abysses was he?

Looking into those glossed-over eyes as he continued to stalk this way, my apprehension only grew ever greater. For each step, I was sure I could see something flashing in those crimson eyes of his. A flame, one with such intensity that it quelled my own darkness.

Even though he couldn't possibly see or locate me, those dead but undaunted eyes burned holes in my confidence. I didn't know what was happening, but before I knew it, I had reached the end of the stage, having unconsciously backed up all the way to the edge.

Frightened, I began infusing all my mana into the **Leeching Creep**. I was already running low from simply activating my strongest spell and skill, and perspiration trickled down my brow.

There was no way that this puny D+ rank could be this powerful.

It made no conceivable sense.

I had no actual physical combat capabilities, me being the **Sanctioned Lord of Gloom** and all. But all my spells and skills are powerful siphoners that control the battlefield and my enemies, death by attrition. So I could not let him get close, having to sap him dry of mana was the only option for me, seeing as his body was nigh-indestructible.

But as I saw shadow suddenly begin to form around his body, starting to transform it, an inevitable sense of doom crashed down upon me. He was pushing for his trump card.

Realizing that I was almost out of mana myself, I relented to my last-ditch effort. While Lord Mortanis will definitely heavily punish me for revealing this, I could not allow myself to be defeated by a mere lowborn.

Tapping my [**Greater Ring of Holding**], a large scepter suddenly appeared in my grasp. [**The Scepter of The Miasmatic Magus**]. The dark object practically hummed with power as I flooded it with my remaining mana.

With the dark mana being converted to miasma, I pointed it at him. Flinching as I stared into those eyes of his, I had never felt so terrified in my life before. Even Lord Mortanis was unable to frighten me as such. This was different.

Firing the staff, a bolt of concentrated miasma shot towards the staggering monster. Everything went silent as for a long moment he just stood still, dread beginning to drown my confidence and mind.

Collapsing, the demon that was the elf-like lowborn finally went unconscious.

Seeing this, I couldn't help but fall to the ground with a shudder. I stored the scepter and looked my hands that were trembling uncontrollably.

Never in Asetth's life had he ever felt so defeated before.

This was no victory...

At all...