

## Chapter 59

### Fangs for Nothing

Theo shuffled uneasily. His eyes felt heavy and sore as he opened them, trying to blink away the blur. He was *somewhere*. Dimly lit. Dead? Was he in the real world? There was something about the room that said *hospital* in his head. Whatever blankets were on his sore body were heavy.

And then, a bright light blinded his vision. A figure loomed over him in concert - was this a nurse, a doctor? He fought against his complaining body to try and right himself.

“Rise and shine, Mr Theo, rise... and shine.”

The voice was young and had a distinct scratchiness to it. It itched inside his laggy mind. The familiarity. It was...

As the light rescinded, the familiar green face of Bella, goblin Healer, was now in his face.

“All fixed! Pay up, Mister.”

With a deep breath, he managed to lift himself up on his elbows. Sitting across the room on a very small chair was the very visage of death. A large, armoured Knight of deep crimson with a flaming skull helmet. He watched as Humphrey passed some gold to the small goblin, who promptly turned and waved to him as she left the room.

Theo laid back down and closed his eyes. “Why does it feel like I ate a three-foot-long burrito made of tube socks and iron filings?”

“You have absorbed all your Equipment. It is most... concerning.” There was a hint of interest hidden away in the tone of the Death Knight.

“I changed into part-Monster and reset, huh?”

“It seems you are as reckless and impulsive as Sally.”

He furrowed his brow. Even his face ached. “Where is she?”

“Currently organising plans for tomorrow with the mobster. She was very angry with you. It has been several hours.” The sound of the Death Knight shifting on the tiny, pained chair vibrated around the room.

Theo lifted up his arm with great effort and checked his STAR. “She sent me thirty-seven messages.”

“In a row, yes.”

“I’ll save those for later.” He gingerly closed the Chat menu, not wanting to see what mean things she had to say about him. He felt his eyes close again, heavy against his wishes.

“Are you not going to ask?” Humphrey tapped his plated boot on the floor.

“What?” Theo’s mind was still fuzzy. “Like, what they’re talking about - if they mention me or have their own contained conversation about-“

“I don’t know what you are prattling on about.” Even with his eyes closed, Theo could see the flare-up on the helmet flame. “I mean your Class.”

He vaguely remembered selecting something. Tentatively, with some feeling in his gut about what the answer would be, he brought up his Character Information.

[Theo Undead Humanoid - Level One Vampire Lord]  
[Health: 100% Mana: 100% Stamina: 20%]

“Oh,” he said.

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Sally took a deep breath. Her voice was getting hoarse from shouting at goblins. It was perhaps unkind to yell at the little goobers, but the zombies were useless and planning and doing what she asked. It was perhaps even more unfair to be so mad at Theo. She had tried not to think about it.

Was she mad because she thought he had died briefly? The only thing that prevented that meltdown was the lack of a System message confirming it. Was she mad that he had cursed himself to be half-Monster half-Player like herself? It was nice to have a kindred spirit, sure, but she wouldn’t wish this kind of existence on anyone. Was she mad that he had stolen his tasty brains away and now she had no culinary interest in him? Yes.

Probably for the best, their long-term working relationship was eventually going to turn into bloodshed otherwise. She was mostly just jealous that he got to be a cool vampire.

She turned, and immediately all the jibes and vampire jokes she had stored up melted away on seeing him. The Death Knight followed behind Theo like a disappointed parent.

He approached sheepishly as she crossed her arms in a put-on show of displeasure.

“I know, I’m an asshole - sorry.” He rubbed the back of his neck.

She wrinkled up her nose at him. He was definitely more vampire-looking now. His skin had a pale, almost blue sheen to it. His eyes were sharper, despite how tired he looked, and his hair was a shade or two closer to black than brown now. He was still wearing his Novice gear, however.

“You are... but I’m mostly glad you’re okay,” she relented with a sigh. “I’m partly annoyed that you are Level One and we have big trouble tomorrow.”

“I can get a few Levels in the night. Humphrey said I absorbed all my items from before, and I’m a Vampire Lord - so not super weak.”

She rolled her eyes in response. “Sure you are, Blade. Here - in fact, have my sword for now. Tell me about your skills.”

“I have a whole bunch of passives,” he began, trying to speed over the details as he watched her eyes narrow further. “Resistances, low light vision. I have [Vampire Bite] but none of the other cool stuff.”

“Ah, you would have lost them because of your low Level, like Humphrey did.”

The Death Knight chose to ignore her and looked off into the village square, now bathed in dusk.

“Apparently a proper Vampire Lord is like Level Twenty-Five or something.” Theo gave a sheepish grin, which Sally did not fail to notice now included a pair of fangs.

“Alright,” she stomped, “hold down the fort, Humps. I’m taking fresh meat here out to kill and eat some Monsters.”

“Head South-East,” Humphrey nodded, “if you are after Humanoids there may still be Cultists at this time of night.”

“Perfect. Jackie is currently bending the ears off of Henkk at the Garrison. Go make sure she isn’t trying to fleece him.” With a salute and awkward wave, she nudged the Vampire into following her.

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Sally tripped over a tree root in the waning daylight. “So one of the Warriors had a [Sword of Frost]? I guess that is one mystery solved.”

“Yeah,” Theo nodded, “and I didn’t die from the Fireball as I had a necklace that reduces self-damage from spells.”

“Hmm.” Sally stopped to frown at the Vampire. “You had a lot of little convenient secrets, huh?”

“A few.” He stopped too and grinned, which again revealed his fangs. “Not anymore, of course. I lost all my Inventory.”

“But you absorbed what you had on? Your weird meme build?”

He nodded once again, and then they continued walking. “I still retained [Novice Strike], but I just need something to deal really low damage, as my wooden sword did.”

“Can’t you just punch people? Your Strength Stat must still be off the charts for your Level?” She knew hers was also higher than intended for a zombie.

“Huh, true.” Theo removed the Rare Sword and gave it back to Sally. “It sure is weird not being able to see my Stats, though.”

“*Right?*”

She was slightly envious of his better vision in the low light. Stumbling in the woods near night-time was perhaps not an ideal way to spend the end of the day, but getting the jump on the Cultists would smooth the quick Levelling adventure process.

Bringing up her STAR menu, she was a little disappointed to see there had been no messages from Chuck.

[Sally: there are some terrible people in this world]

[Sally: might have made some enemies]

[Sally: also Theo died]

She waited a few seconds, narrowly avoiding walking straight into a tree - and also ignoring the concerned scowl of the Vampire - as she stared at the UI.

[Chuck: What? How??]

[Chuck: are you okay?]

[Sally: yeh, he is a vampire now]

[Chuck: like a cool one, or...?]

[Sally: not yet. I'm his mentor tho]

[Chuck: good luck - oh]

[Chuck: I will send you a mail about the thing]

[Chuck: night]

[Sally: night chuckz]

"There's some kind of mail feature?" She asked out loud, not surprised that she didn't know but already knew what the answer would be.

"I know that was rhetorical. But yes." He waved his hand in the air in frustration.

"Unfortunately, I can't offer you tech support as I can't see your menus."

"Humphrey and Bella could. Maybe if I just open and close it really fast lots of times?" The zombie repeatedly jabbed the STAR, causing the menus to open and close in her vision.

"I'm not sure that-"

"Oh, there we go!" Notifications popped up as a familiar twinge in her head came - this time only a brief amount of pressure before it cleared.

[14 New Mail Messages]

"Why do we have these if there's a Chat?"

Theo shrugged - or at least the grey shapes near his head moved up and down. She scrolled through; some of them looked like boring System messages or hate mail from that diner Cleric. The most recent one was from Chuck, which she read through.

[Hey Sally,]

[Chat is pretty terrible for long-form text, and I know you'll end up walking into a tree if we are texting back and forth. Some things never change.]

Anyway, I had a Quest to deliver logs to some goblins near Sanctuary. Like an actual helping-the-monster-village Quest. The rest of the Foxes hadn't heard anything like it.

We did it, and we received some kind of... goodwill currency with Sanctuary, and they are friendly to us now.

Took a bit to convince the girls since they lost their friend there, but things are changing.

You are making a change in the world. Players and Monsters could live more equally.

We are doing some errands to help with the Village defence - see you tomorrow.]

[Chuck]

"You alright, Sally? Your eyes are leaking."

She nodded and wiped her face. "Yeah, just a little bit of rain."

The Vampire put his hand on her shoulder to stop her. He moved his face down closer to hers, a slight glimmer of red reflecting in the back of his dark eyes.

He opened his mouth to whisper to her. "Quiet now. There are a couple of cultists patrolling just through the way. Let's go eat."

Sally shuddered as he moved away. A wide grin crossed her face.