

## ~ Day 82 ~

Spectating, I focused intently only the two figures facing off against each other. This fight was something I rather anticipated as not only was it Bob and Mia going head to head, brawns versus brains, but I honestly didn't have a guess as to who would win between them

But cooking their fight down, I could expect it mostly coming down to if or not Mia would be able to overcome Bob's mental defenses. That was mostly because she didn't really have anything else to offer other than her magic against the unbreakable brute that was Bob.

As such, I watched the scene with bated attention. I wasn't at all worried that either of them would get hurt since Bob literally treated Mia as his very own little sister, acting very much the part of a doting big brother, and Mia was equally fond of the big dumb brute.

"Begin!" Darkan announced, bringing me out of my thoughts.

Before Bob could even move, Mia conjured her bewildering magic. Through my magical sensitivity, I could feel the mana surging in her core, however, this time she was not only using her typical magic as she did with Frank in their last fight, but she was also using her signature ability; her **Bewitching Eyes**.

Tensing up upon being inundated in her magical tendrils of mind magic, Bob looked like he was struggling with an internal demon attempting to take over his body, leaving him completely vulnerable.

But although Bob was currently incapacitated, Mia wasn't faring much better as all her attention was completely focused on the one single goal of taking over Bob's mind. Falling to his knee, Bob's veins bulged and swelled under the strain, the intensity of his internal struggle clearly great.

However, he still wasn't succumbing, ever the unyielding.

Realizing that her efforts weren't going anywhere, the control over her magic slowly slipping away, Mia forced herself to begin moving. With one step at a time, her mental struggle was clear.

Having to focus fully on her tenuous magic while trying to coordinate and move was almost impossible. If not for the fact that I had the skill **Spell Formations** and that all my magic were relatively quick casts, then even I wouldn't have been able to do what she was doing right now.

Honestly, even I couldn't efficiently channel something like **Blood Shaping** while moving when I thought about it.

Stumbling, Mia almost lost hold of her magic, Bob almost on the edge of breaking through during her lapse of focus. However, she wasn't giving up.

Getting back her footing with intense determination in her beautiful ruby eyes, I marveled at the drow's resolve. Before now, she had yet to truly prove herself as a worthy fighter in front of me and seeing the opportunity to do so now, it was obvious she wasn't going to let it slip away.

Being shown such sentiment from the one I loved, I couldn't help but swell with pride.

But as Mia had almost reached Bob, he all of a sudden lashed out with a defiant push of his mind, his fist smashing into the dirt below with an earthshattering force.

The ground exploding with a thundering crash, he created a small crater where his fist landed, causing the already straining Mia to fall back over by the shockwave.

Now free of her mind-ailing magic, Bob got to his feet, attempting to get his bearings from his frazzled mind. But Mia who was extremely exhausted could only stare up at the confused giant looming over her.

As Bob was coming back to himself, she knew this was the last opportunity she had for victory. Pushing through it all, the exhaustion, the mana-deprivation, the pain, something... astonishing happened to the defiant drow.

Shocked, I could only stare wide-eyed at Mia who's eyes took on a new light. Shining brightly, with a light, even attempting to mesmerize me who was standing more than a dozen meters away, Mia's gaze burned directly into Bob.

With his defenses crumbling like they were nothing, Bob's eyes glassed over, now unconscious even as he still was standing tall.

"V-victor - Mia!" Darkan stuttered, the first of everyone able to come out of their stupors after a long moment of silence.

Roaring excitedly, everybody cheered for the exhausted Mia who just before crumbling fully to the ground was caught by me as I flashed to her side, holding her head in my lap.

Looking into those mesmerizing eyes of hers that still held some of the mysterious light used on Bob, she smiled back.

"Hehe - see M-Master, I won..." She grinned, the only words she managed just before trailing off into unconsciousness.

Stunned, I could only look back at the still-standing Bob who was wholly knocked out, though not under magic anymore. Whatever had just happened, Mia had just broken through something within herself, either awakening a skill or evolving a trait.

Amazed by her efforts, I kissed her forehead, smiling broadly for all to see.

Knowing the desperation it took to awake something like a skill or evolve, which I've done once before in my life and death encounter with Gurok or back when Mika died, I could only be astonished by the sheer determination Mia had to show her worth.

Although Mia needed never prove her own worth to me as I already wholeheartedly loved that capricious drow, I knew this meant a lot for her, so I wasn't going to stop her; letting her achieve this.

But in any way, I wasn't complaining as I was sure as damn proud of her performance and determination.

Before long, we had gotten Bob and Mia moved gently out of the fighting field to rest and recover. With that, the tournament continued. Although Mia was supposed to fight in the next match, she was in no condition to do so.

However, we could just move onto the second bout of elimination rounds for now so both Bob and Mia could get some time to rest.

As such, it was now Frank versus Roc.

Unfortunately for the big ogre, he ended up losing again since having just evolved into his new form, it was obvious that he wasn't familiar with it yet. So Frank, coupled with his superior duelist capabilities as a great orc just barely managed to get out ahead in the duel.

Not long after, the next match was up, this time Bob against Rena. Seeing as Bob had only been knocked unconscious and hadn't really expended much of his strength, he was all good to go for this fight practically as soon as she woke up.

Like the one just before, this match was a heated one too. But in the end, Bob came out as a victor.

Even though the Draugr wasn't at D- rank yet, his formidable weapon, skill, and overpowering race were simply too much for the blood orc who couldn't even defend against him holding back with his blows.

Actually, after having watched Bob's fight, seeing him use all kinds of techniques and tricks to shift the advantage in his direction, I realized that I should probably try and ask him to teach, maybe even instruct me someday to help me get better used to my Runic Blood Claws as I've yet to become adept at using them yet.

Although Bob could be quite the knucklehead normally, when it came to fighting, he was a damn prodigy. It seemed like in fights, he had an endless variety of tricks to turn fights on their heads and to his favor, truly a warrior of every caliber.

Next up, Grul versus Frank. Being pretty damn similar in fighting style and physical builds, the fight obviously would in the end just depend on which of the two were stronger. Not surprisingly, Grul with his Blood Orc archetype and his special race ability easily ended out on top.

During their fight, I had also managed to briefly speak with Rena, who was excited to tell me all about her new trait. Apparently, the tattoos were tied to a trait called '**Crimson Ancestry**'. Surprised at the trait name, I was rather confused at what it meant about 'Ancestry'.

Also clueless about what it could mean, Rena wasn't much help in figuring it out. So in the end, we could only chalk it up to probably having something to do with greenskin evolution lineage as the more powerful greenskins grow, the more primal and ancient their power became. Almost as if tapping into a heritage.

With Mia having recovered from her exhaustion and had more than enough time to rest and restore her mana pool, it was about to continue the first eliminations. But before they started, I decided to take a talk with Mia.

"So, what did you gain from your fight with Bob?" I asked curiously. "I must say, it was damn impressive."

"My trait evolved!" She beamed, remembering back to her victory. "My **Bewitching Eyes** evolved into **Enthralling Eyes**!"

"Interesting, what's the difference?" I asked, wondering about that. "Your magic seemed a lot more powerful when you evolved it."

"**Enthralling Eyes**, like **Bewitching Eyes**, can induce mental magic on whoever I look." She explained excitedly. "But with **Enthralling Eyes**, my mind-controlling abilities have become many times stronger! I can even permanently take control of other living beings, whereas before my **Bewitching Eyes** were a constant drain on my mana pool if I used mind-control rather than just mind-affecting magic."

"Oh really?" I said, very impressed, the intrigue in my voice clear. If anything, that was quite the step-up as she could maybe now have permanent guards for herself.

"Wait, they still cost mana to use right?" I asked, remembering that nothing this good came free.

"Yes, I still have to use mana to enthrall others, however, it's only like giving away a part of my mana to keep the effect continuous, whereas with **Bewitching Eyes** the only option was a constant drain until I either canceled the effect or ran out of mana."

"I see, so just like my blood puppets," I mumbled to myself.

Noticing the expectant gaze of Mia as I rumbled through my thoughts, I chuckled and leaned in for a deep kiss.

"Well done my love," I spoke softly, my words awarding me with her blushing cheeks.

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Surrounded by practically the whole tribe, Mia, refreshed and rested, faced off against the lithe figure of Lily.

I felt it was rather unfortunate that Lily had to face off against Mia in the semi-finals since the drow countered her quite effectively. Lily, being a human specializing in speed and dexterity, having to close in before she could do anything was severely disadvantaged by the fact that Mia was a magic caster and a mental one at that.

Although Mia wouldn't be able to withstand even a single breath of close-combat with Lily, the human woman needed only be ailed by Mia's magic for her defeat to be ensured since her magical defenses were rather lackluster.

No matter how fast Lily was, competing against the practically instantaneous effect of mental magic while having no way to counter it meant that even though Mia was much weaker, Lily would lose due to circumstance and situational disadvantage. But such was fighting.

However, that was at least what I thought was going to happen. So when the fight began and Lily shot toward Mia without any hindrance or difficulty, I was shocked. Shrugging off Mia's magic like as if she wasn't even doing anything, Lily appeared before her with a sword to her throat.

"Sorry," Lily said, a sheepish expression on her face as if she had just done something unfair.

Shocked, Mia could only grumble unhappily when she realized that she had lost that easily.

"W-winner, Lily!" Darkan announced.

Blinking to the women's sides, I cast a curious glance at both.

"Care to explain?" I asked, a brow raised in question.

Sighing with an apologetic look, Lily pulled forth a token inscribed with runes from her belt.

"Talisman." She said simply.

Realization dawning on me, I guffawed. "The exact same way she got me back then, fu-fu-fu."

Casting both me and Lily a confused gaze, Mia was obviously not in the know. I moved to explain so that Mia would understand but was cut off by Lily before I could utter a word.

"Not exactly. Same concept, but different tool." She explained. "This is a magical talisman, inscribed with runes that absorb mana, not exactly the same as the one I used on you."

Remembering back to when I had first encountered the confident and tall woman, there had been a particular item in her possession that caused no small amount of intrigue from my part as I attempted to figure out what it was.

The small object she had used to suck out all my mana from the **Stagnation** spell I had tried to afflict her with seemed very similar to this one, but there was still some obvious differences that indicated that what she was saying was true.

But before I could voice my thoughts, something just hit me.

"I thought you only knew a bit of Rathian?!" I shouted bewildered as Lily had only been able to communicate with others of the tribe with only a bit of very rough and basic Rathian. But now, she was speaking almost perfect Rathian, utterly confusing me.

As both women now shared looks before adopting expressions that of them having some funny secret, everything clicked.

*Lily had tricked me...*

It all made sense now. All this time, Lily had been more than capable of speaking with everyone, and she had apparently taken advantage of me not knowing that.

While I had initially thought that Lily and Mia hadn't interacted much, it would appear that I was left completely in the dark about them talking with each other.

The small but odd changes in Mia had originally confused me ever since Lily came to the tribe, from Mia suddenly trying to impress me with walking awkwardly into my tent with high-heels that she had gotten from only-god-knows-where to using various salacious and nefarious techniques to get her will about something. For all this time, I had been Lily feeding her tips and tricks!

Although it was great that the two women seemed to have had made great friends, I doubted it boded well for me in the future... Sighing as dejectedly at the two giggling females making fun of my despondent expression, I couldn't help but reluctantly smile myself.

*Okay... I'll admit... it was kinda funny...*