

~ Day 116 ~

Seeing my expectant gaze as Mia pulled on her dark robes, she nodded to me that she was ready. Although I had already expected that this Executrix Lana had already realized that Mia was an Elder Drow when we had been accosted on the streets by those nobles, also including the fact that we hadn't tried to hide her identity during our brief detainment, I still didn't wish to brazenly broadcast the to public that an unaffiliated drow was running around with me if I didn't need to. I mean, it would literally be like asking for trouble.

Whether or not that Executrix or the guards and other staff that have seen Mia's true appearance meant anything to them was still up for debate though as so far they've all had surprisingly mute reactions. Those cowed assassin escorts, Lana included, had no discernable reaction what-so-ever to the fact, and from everyone else assigned to us, it had only managed to attract stares - mostly unconscious ones at that.

I wasn't sure how to feel about all that though. Initially, now that I couldn't hide Mia's race from the regent and his servants, I had hoped that the status that came with being an evolved Drow might assure our safety or at least give us some leverage of sorts in our troublesome situation. But clearly, the regent has seemed completely unfazed by the fact as nothing about our situation had changed ever since.

Then, on the other hand, the dulled reaction at the fact that she was an Elder Drow might mean it wouldn't draw as much trouble from this city lord as I had originally feared. So it wasn't surprising that I was a bit torn about how to take it.

Coming back to reality from my drifting thoughts, I followed the two cowed escorts out of the carriage to meet a sight that awed my eyes. Marbled foundation with streaks of violets hazes made up most of the gargantuan plaza, making for a mesmerizing display of architectural craftsmanship.

Snaking roads dotted with armored guards, slanted walls, towering spires, and majestic towers flanked various magnificent buildings of the same marbled material.

The air was filled with the music of drums and the enlightening melodies of many different instruments. It all gave both an atmosphere of grandeur and excitement.

Moving along the overflowing streams of monsters, our precession found ourselves at one of the few checkpoints to the main stages. Although I had been expecting a long and tedious process seeing as I had been informed there would be multiple hundreds of contestants, each with their own teams, everything went exceedingly smooth.

Whether that be because of the fact that those two cowled individuals handled all things smoothly or that we seemingly had arrived quite early, I did not know. However, I appreciated it quite a lot as I had never been the one to enjoy lengthy queues, neither in my old life nor my current one.

As we were led to the waiting area, there were many open-aired booths assigned to the contestants. The whole ordeal was quite lavish in fact, maids and foods at your beck and call as we waited patiently for the festivities to begin.

Having nothing better to do whilst we waited, I scoped out the competition. While not all teams were going to fight on the first day as there were multiple different formats and rounds, the tournament lasting close to two weeks, it was mandatory that all contestants were present for the opening ceremony.

As such, I used **Appraisal** on each individual I could spot, who could in fact very possibly be my first opponent. This would both act as a smokescreen for leveling **Appraisal** seeing as even those with divination protection wouldn't be able to protest if my unabashed use of **Appraisal** failed or was discovered, but it would also let me scout the competition.

The overall scope of the main plaza was even larger than the Maldrak superstructure that was the Colosseum, but even so, every nook and cranny was quickly being filled up by monsters. Although this tournament would be more than a week-long event, it was still astonishing to see that many monsters gathered for just the opening act.

With that, it was rather hard for me to keep up with all the different monsters I wanted to appraise. However, once my gaze absentmindedly scanned over a particular status screen of one of the recently arrived contestants, I all of a sudden froze in my tracks.

Appraisal - Melane					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Melane"	STR	85	Skills	???
-Race-	Great Orc	VIT	72	Traits	???
-Sex-	Female	AGI	45	Titles	???
-Rank-	D-	DEX	47	Resistances	
-Level-	12/50	INT	???		
Health	630/630	CHR	26	Physical Resistance	14
Stamina	426/426	WILL	???	Magical Resistance	6
Mana	0/0	MAG	5	Mental Resistance	8

That name... that aura... it could only be her...

Remembering back to the time where my body was broken and mutilated, standing over the unrecognizable corpse of the demon who had tormented me, that cheery and uncaring voice was so vivid even now.

Melane, King Maldrak's daughter.

But it wasn't just the surprise of seeing her here that stunned me, but rather her growth during the two and a half months since last seeing her.

It was as if she had hit right through the proverbial puberty of her monster race. By all means, she was still very much in her adolescence, however, how did that make sense? Not only was she already extremely powerful for a great orc at her level, but she clearly still had room for growth as she had yet to hit full maturity.

Did that then mean she had either already hit her growth spurt into the power of a great orc, or would she, with time, simply grow even more powerful?

But even more worryingly than her status were the people surrounding her. One lumbering heavily armored ogre, two very similar great-orc females, a single small furry creature I had no idea what was, and one immense, and arguably the most terrifying greenskin I've seen to date.

As tall as Bob, lean and heavy muscle, coal-dark green skin, a mane of magnificent black hair like that of Melane, menacing bone and metal armor like some barbarian knight, this greenskin screamed danger on both a physical and spiritual level.

Amongst the many other crazy strong monsters around, his presence quickly cemented itself amongst those who were the real monsters.

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	???

"King Maldrak I assume..." I muttered to myself.

Although the **Appraisal** had gone through without a hitch, the gaze that all of a sudden met mine from across the plaza took me off-guard.

For a long tense moment, all sounds were drowned out as we exchanged cold stares.

But as our gaze broke, I could see the high orc confide in the much smaller great orc to his side, Melane, casting a finger in my direction. As she also got sight of me, her eyes narrowed for a second then suddenly went wide - and to then go mischievous.

Seeing that look give me an involuntary shiver down my spine, and I hadn't the faintest idea why.

Something was seriously... *off* about this girl...

This lasted only a handful of seconds though as they too found their own booths, disappearing from sight and letting me mull over why in the ever-living fuck they were here.

However, instead of giving me time to calm down from the unforeseen development, another notice perked my attention and yanked me from my thoughts.

At first, I frowned in confusion as I could feel in the distance, slowly approaching, the power of my blood; The Sanguine Plague.

I was about to ask the cowed figures why one of the orcs that had been detained with us was coming here, but then realized it was in fact not any of the twenty orcs who followed us to Ebongrave.

This was an unknown resonance... yet... familiar...

As this someone harboring my blood came ever closer, the monster in question finally came into sight. And what I saw was anything but what I had expected.

A large group of lizardman, a group who had left quite the sour impression on me over the last few weeks. The Sinlore Household.

However, it wasn't just the many noblemen who managed to catch my attention, but the single dreary-looking individual who walked in their midst, dragging his clawed feet along the marbled ground. Scaled like the lizardmen, but distinctly different, this monster was undoubtedly the one who bore the power of my blood within him.

Tall, scaled, and equipped with some mighty-looking horns, this 'lizardman' almost looked more like the draconic side of his reptilian race. His appearance was quite mystical as it was much more humanoid than its more feral-looking lizardman counterpart, but also including the undeniably regal look that he bore in nature with his race.

-Appraisal!-

Appraisal - Draz'ag					
Information		Attributes		Traits, Titles, and Skills	
-Name-	"Draz'ag"	STR	106	Skills	???
-Race-	Lesser Dragonewt	VIT	62	Traits	???
-Sex-	Male	AGI	58	Titles	???
-Rank-	D-	DEX	62	Resistances	
-Level-	6/50	INT	28		
Health	539/539	CHR	31	Physical Resistance	26
Stamina	401/401	WILL	???	Magical Resistance	22
Mana	0/0	MAG	12	Mental Resistance	12
[Afflicted]					

"Christ... his stats are all over the place and way too high for his level and tier..." I thought to myself, wholly bewildered by this.

But the fact that he was **afflicted** made no sense and I would clearly remember ever willingly giving out my blood to such an intriguing individual - and so would Mia.

Then it finally clicked.

I had met this individual alright... however, even now knowing this, it just invited a whole slew of new inexplicable questions.

If this monster truly was the very same monster I thought it was, then the implications could be far-reaching, much more than I personally would like.

"It would seem that today is a day of familiar faces - you odd goblin..." I muttered to myself, not taking my eyes off this Draz'ag.