

~ Day 82 ~

Deep within the decrepit tunnels of Eldriac, leisurely laying in a wide and open room opulently decked with mounds of pillows and expensive rugs like a Persian palace, a large figure relaxed. Wholly uncaring of the happening outside in the colossal underground city.

Long flowing black hair like that of abyssal silk, pale unblemished skin, salacious facial features that would put any seductress to utter shame, cold and dangerous but ultimately alluring eyes, and a body perfectly sculpted to entice any man or woman. Zath'ash Eralor was both a divine and unholy beauty.

However, she was not a woman for men of fickle hearts. From the waist down, the gorgeous beauty that was her humanoid figure no longer continued to be. Smooth and black chitinous skin, a large bulbous rear, and eight spindly legs extending from the sides, the Arachnid woman could both enchant and terrify a man to death.

Leisurely resting her large body, both human and arachnoid, on a mound of silks and cloths, she lazily ate what appeared to be glowing berries, a delicacy of the utmost caliber in the region.

Cauldriac Berries were beyond rare and costly, only growing in the deepest and darkest pits of the Eldriac mines, slews of workers dying every day simply to retrieve them as they have to battle against the abyssal creature of the depths, however, for someone like Zath'ash, the berries were nothing more than snacks.

As chittering could be heard coming from the hallway to her chambers, Zath'ash stopped eating, a frown creasing her delicate brow. There weren't many that dared disturb her, so whoever it was, she didn't need to guess.

"Ez'zath, what is it?" Her melodically sinister voice asked.

"My lady," A figure said, entering the chamber from a dark hallway entrance.

Standing even larger than Zath'ash herself, Ez'zath was a behemoth. Unlike Zath'ash though, he didn't look like a human sewn onto a spider's body. Still sporting a humanoid figure with a spider lower-half, his whole appearance was through and through arachnid.

As a lesser being compared to his master, it wasn't surprising that he looked as such.

Bowing deeply, Ez'zath showed his clear subservience to his master, even though she wasn't one of the noble lines of the Arachnids. But her lack of noble blood mattered not for Ez'zath as Zath'ash was something that made her authority and status even rival on of the noble lines.

She was a **Sanctioned Lord**.

"We have received word that a tertiary relic has fallen into the possession of the regent of Ebongrave." The servant reported.

"Oh, really?" She said, mild curiosity tinging her dangerously tantalizing voice. "But what would an old crone like him do with that. He doesn't have anyone to give it to as for as I remember. I mean, he definitely wouldn't give it to that damn necromancer, even if his life and title depended on it."

"Indeed, my lady. Astute as ever." Ez'zath nodded.

"Enough with the pleasantries Ez'zath," She sighed. "You know that I don't care for them."

"My apologies." He said, bowing. "But yes, it is clear that the regent has no use of the relic so he actually intends on putting it up as a reward for the tournament."

Frowning, Zath'ash asked. "Why? Is he expecting other **Sanctioned Lords** to be participating? We aren't exactly bountiful."

"Maybe, or it might be that he honestly might just not have anything better to do with it." Ez'zath proposed.

Glancing away, he paused, the chittering of his legs clearly indicating his nervousness.

"Does my lady not wish to acquire it?" He asked, hesitantly.

"What use do I have for it?" She asked confusedly. "I have already collected all my three tertiary relics and I'm just waiting for when the battle begins to I can obtain my secondary relics." She explained, stroking a beautifully intricate pendant on her chest nestle between her ample bosom.

"It matters not if it's in my possession or another's." She continued. "By any means, I hope another **Sanctioned Lord** gets their hands on the relic and complete their first heirloom stage so I needn't wait so long for the games to start."

Seeing that her servant clearly wanted to say something, she sighed. "What is it?"

"It's just that my lady, why not team up with Asethh and help him acquire this relic." He said hastily. "He's recently gotten his second tertiary relic, with the one from Ebongrave too, you could ensure each other's safety in the death games when the time comes."

Shooting her servant a piercing gaze, Zath'ash was not happy hearing him even mention that wretched man that she hated so much, not even considering he had asked her to cooperate with him. With any other servant, she would have had them tortured and executed already for even saying something like that, but with Ez'zath she knew that he only had her safety and well-being in mind.

This loyal servant had dedicated himself utterly to her, and she could not fault his worries.

"No, I'll never work with that man." She said tersely. "Never mention this again."

"My apologies Master." He said, bowing deeply as he retreated back into the shadows of the corridor.

"Put your back in it!" A thundering voice growled through strained grunts.

In a large and open field surrounded by an endless sea of tents in all sizes and shapes, two large figures were brawling, hands locked and dirt covering their sweaty bodies.

Easily eclipsing two meters in height (6'5), with hulking muscles, rough and masculine features, a mane of large and puffy brown hair, and a pair of round bear-like ears on the top of their heads, the two figures were practically identical except for the age difference and size. The older looked to be in his fifties whereas the young looked to be barely eighteen.

But it wasn't surprising as these two were father and son.

Sensing a presence behind him, the father put a bit of his strength into his arms, the younger of the two all of a sudden finding himself with his world turned upside down, smashing into the ground roughly.

Turning around, the older man smiled broadly as he saw a large figure before him, equalling his own impressive size.

"Son! - You're back." He laughed heartily, splaying his large arms wide.

"Hello, father." The man said giving his father a big bear hug.

The eldest of his sons, Orca was not only of high status within the horde, but he was also the most promising youth, being a fully-fledged **Sanctioned Lord** who has already achieved much down this road.

Looking over his father's broad shoulder, Orca grinned.

"What's up little Konna, dad being hard on you?" He asked the dazed Konna rubbing a lump on his head from his untimely meeting with the ground.

"Yeah..." He groaned. "You know how he gets."

Looking pityingly at his brother, Orca couldn't help but shudder with remnant fear when he remembered back to when his father trained him.

"Son, how come you're back from your journey so soon?" His father asked confusedly. "Did something happen?"

"No, not anything in particular," Orca said. "It just that the spirits seem to be foretelling that the games might begin soon so I thought I should get back with the family before that."

With his face going stern, Urnos knew what his son was thinking. He prided in the fact that his son was a born shaman, having already reached incredible heights with the class with his tender young age. So even though the whisperings of the spirits were fickle at best, he would trust his son's divinations and foresight before anything else.

The games were a dangerous affair, and although he knew that practically none ever stood a chance of being a danger to his son's life, the world was vast and this might truly be the last time they dine together...

"Come - come, I'll get your mother to cook up a feast for us all." The older man said, cheering up discarding and hiding his worries so that he wouldn't trouble his son's heart and resolve.

It was his duty as a father to stand as a symbol, an idol, to never hold back his son's ambitions with his own concern.

"Great, I'm famished." He grinned. "It's been too long without mother's cooking."

Helping his little brother up from the ground, he was about to hug him but in the corner of his eye, he caught a figure listlessly wandering through the tents in the distance.

Adopting a sour and regretful expression, Orca looked to his father.

"How is uncle doing?"

With his father taking a complete turn from jovial happiness to badly hidden hatred, Orca winced.

"What about him?" He spat, looking to the gaunt and bedraggled figure in the distance.
"Child, don't tell me you still hold any good for that traitor?"

Not responding, Orca just looked at his feet, conflict clear on his face.

Uncle Warce, a great warrior and hero of the tribe turned traitor to his people, was once Orca's greatest idol, even more so than his own father. Uncle Warce had always treated Orca favorable, almost like his own son, and Orca loved the old battle-scarred man with all he had taught him and the good memories they shared.

However, one day, everything was turned on its head as it had been suddenly discovered that Warce had committed an act that was one of the greatest crimes an enlightened could possibly do.

He had sired a child with a monster beastkin.

To the enlightened beastkin, the monster side of the people was the greatest tarnish on their honor and there wasn't a single enlightened beastkin who wouldn't do anything in their power to kill a monster abomination of their kind.

It was a total disgrace to them that there existed a version of themselves that was **monster**.

So when it was found out that Uncle Warce had not only mated with a monster but also fathered a child with one, there had been an outrage.

Although the child that came from the enlightened and monster pairing had ended up as one of the enlightened, a child of Orca's same age and surprisingly of even greater shamanic potential to himself, the mere stigma of having been born from a monster was enough to have it executed.

But because of the fact that Warce was the son of the horde chief of the time and he was a hero to all within the horde, the child was spared and instead exiled, whereas Warce was allowed to keep his place in the horde.

But as stout as the man were, Warce would never leave his child alone, so he offered to exile himself with his offspring. But seeing as Warce had already been pardoned more than enough for his 'terrible' transgression, people thought some actual punishment was in order.

As such, the council of elders budded in, giving Warce an ultimatum.

Stay in the horde and exile the child, or both face execution right then and there.

Not able to sentence his very own child to death, Warce took the only option that would maybe mean that his child would get to live another day.

Ever since then, the man had been shunned and ostracized by all of the horde, and Orca could almost not bear to see the man he once saw up to being in such a state.

"Let's go, your mother is dying to see her son after such a long time," Urnos said, bring Orca out of his sorrowful thoughts.

Giving one last glance at his once idol, Orca turned and left.

Storming down the wretched halls of the Mortanis noble family, Asethh K'or was enraged. In his haze of anger and indignation, he barely noticed that he didn't know where he was going.

So stopping, Asethh tried his luck with the first of the large door engraved with depictions of decrepit magical conjurations. As a stench billowed out, hitting Asethh's nostrils, he almost emptied the contents of his stomach right there.

To his misfortune, the very first room he looked into was a corpse assembly.

"Who's disturbing my work!" A feminine voice shrieked, making Asethh's heart sink as he recognized it.

In the center of the large room looking like a mix between a torture chamber, a doctor's room, and a laboratory, a woman stood with a white apron smothered in blood, brine, pus, and a variety of other disgusting things.

On a large table before her, a huge abomination of sewn together flesh and melded bones lay, split open, apparently in the mid of some grotesque surgery.

"Ah, it's you..." The woman said, disdainfully when she realized it was the figure of Aseth who was standing at the entrance, gagging.

"What do you want?" She spat, clearly impatient.

"Urgh- w-where's Lord Mortanis?" Aseth asked, trying to hold his disgust and bile in.

Glaring at the pathetic excuse for a noble, she sneered.

"He's at the end of the hall!" She yelled, not sparing him another glance. "Leave, I have work to do, and you're letting out all the ambient miasma."

More than happy to leave that wretched but beautiful woman to her depraved work, Aseth skittered out of the room and down the hall, as fast as his spiderly legs could take him.

Gosh... how he hated this palace, the miasma and twisted death in air were suffocating to normal and living being like him. But unfortunately, for him, he had no choice in the matter of which patron he could choose. If he wanted to achieve true power, he could only bear with it.

For now...

Arriving at the opulent large doors at the end of the spacious hall of ivory bones and necrotic stone, he was about to signal his presence with his aura but the huge doors opened on their own before he even could.

To Asethh's horror, as the doors swung open, they revealed what seemed like an abyss of darkness. A thin veil of pure darkness covering the entrance.

Although he was now hesitating if he really wanted to have a meeting with the family head of Mortanis, Asethh toughened up and walked in. Showing fear and hesitation to a man like Lord Mortanis was a one-way ticket to the Underworld's ferryman. - *Or the Lord's assembly table...*

But the second Asethh stepped through the veil of darkness, he almost instantly regretted it as a surge of miasma engulfed his body. Unlike with the first room where the miasma was somewhat thick, in here, it felt like it was on the point of literally solidifying.

The film of darkness that had been at the entrance of the room had been in fact the veil that held in this incredible amount of twisted death.

Falling to the ground, Asethh strained under the miasma. He could've used his powers to resist it, however, he dared not do anything that might even contain a hint of threat or seen as disrespect in the domain of Lord Mortanis. Barely able to see the surroundings of the room, Asethh looked warily around until a deep and resounding voice spoke out.

"Why have you come to my chambers?" It said, the danger and twisted death in the voice causing chill to run down Asethh's spine.

"M-my Lord." He said, straining to bow at his waist.

"What is it?" The voice snapped. "I have matters to attend to."

Collecting his bearing, he remembered back to this morning. Anger and injustice started flooding his mind, it suppressed the immense fear he was feeling in the presence of Mortanis.

"That damned fossil of a regent won't sell me the Relic," Asethh said as if he had been done some great injustice. "No matter how much I offer him, even with the funds you've gifted me

for my vassalage, he keeps rejecting my offers; saying that if I want the relic, I have to win the tournament."

"Who does he think he is!" Asethh screeched, the indignation and injustice of an honorable nobleman like himself being rejected by a commoner.

"Once I claim my remaining relics and ascend to become a Promethean, that damned undead will learn his rightful place; as a mere minion under the boot of a necromancer. And I'll finally rule Ebongrave, as is rightfully mine." The voice proclaimed with anger slowly beginning to seethe from its tone. "However, is that really why you've come and disturbed me? Just because you can't handle your own failings?"

"I-I, uh..." Asethh stammered nervously as now that he realized, he really hadn't thought it through as to why he came here. He had been so angry from being refused, he had just come storming here, expecting Lord Mortanis to be able to somehow fix it.

"Can't you do something about it?" He asked nervously.

"What should I do about it?!" The voice bellowed suddenly, resounding in the hazy room of darkness and miasma. "I do not care whether or not a slob such as yourself gets your relics. Fix the matter yourself, you miserable imbecile."

As a gust of miasma all of a sudden stuck Asethh's body, he was sent flying out of the room, his body tumbling through the air as his legs skittered across the ground.

Stopping dozens of meters away, he groaned, sending a scathing look at the closing doors of Lord Mortanis' chambers.

-You damned necromancer! If not for the fact that my pitiable family is so pathetically weak, I would never have submitted it under yours!- Asethh thought to himself indignantly as a noble such as himself could be treated like that, glaring at the large doors all the while.