

## ~ Day 76 ~

Less than fifty of the one-hundred and thirty hobgoblins were of the ordinary variety. Although these normal hobgoblins who had integrated into the old tribe didn't have the bloodthral variant because they were uninfluenced by my blood before evolving, they generally had an experience lead compare to my newly forged followers.

But that hadn't stopped my original followers to easily overtake them in the race to grow and evolve, the power that runs through their veins giving them power beyond that of their peers, also allowing them to push themselves further. With this in mind, all the hobgoblins, bloodthralls or not, were extremely excited to see what laid in store for them in their next evolutions. Me included.

As for the three orcs, two of them were the twins, Rena and Grul, while the other was a recently assimilated chief from a previous neighboring tribe to our old settlement. None of the orcs under me had yet to experience evolution with my blood coursing through their veins, so I honestly wasn't sure what to expect.

With a simple hand gesture, everybody sat down, allowing a good few meters of space between each other.

"Where are the ones you picked?" - Me

I said as I glanced at the petite beauty to my side.

Pointing to three hobgoblin bloodthral, Mia indicated them as her chosen. Something I had asked Mia to do, was to figure out who from her squad were the best suited and talented for magic. She had personally gone around with the Minor Crimson Cores we had saved and tested not only the compatibility of each individual but also their innate talent for magic, such as magical thinking and attunement to sensing the ambient mana that was all around us.

Her choice where two calm-looking females and one lanky male who kept looking with uncertainty at everybody around. To my eyes and extremely sensitive aura, I could feel just how fickle this guy will be. Casting a questioning glance to Mia, the intent of my gaze obvious, she readily explained.

"This one has some odd confidence and social issues, however, his ability to understand magic could probably be even better than me." - Mia

Looking at the nervous hobgoblin in a new light, I suddenly became quite intrigued. In Mia's current temper and demeanor, the arrogant side of her that is, saying praises or complimenting was something unusual, to say the least. It could only mean that this hobgoblin was truly just that interesting, his condition even oddly enough sounding like some type of autism. I mean, if humans can get it, why can't equally intelligent sapient beings not also?

Lacking severely in certain areas, the hob probably shored up with completely different ways of thinking and interacting with the world around him. It could also explain why Mia believed he was suited for magic, possibly even meaning that he could become an extremely valuable asset in the future.

Handing a core to each of the three hobs, I watched them assimilate the faceted crystals into their bodies. The male and one of the females had a compatibility rate of "high", but surprisingly enough, the other of the two females had an "extremely high" compatibility with the crimson core, as high as Mia even had when she assimilated with hers. This was especially surprising when you considered Mia had a huge advantage in that she had eaten the magical herbs that grew around my core and the five off-shoots.

Mia couldn't explain this though, only noting that the hobgoblin girl had the uncanny ability to contain much more of the sanguine plague in her body than others. Mia herself had administered the sanguine blood within her body to the hob, so she easily noticed that the quality within the hob's body was better than the others.

Once the three chosen hobgoblins had come down from their highs of assimilating with a crimson core, I was about to give the order for everybody to start their evolutions, but two anxious gazes caught my attention. Rena and Grul were staring at me, the tension in their bodies obvious to any who laid eyes on them.

If someone uninformed or unknowledgeable about these greenskin twins were to make an assumption, they would probably guess they were afraid of the pain that was to come. However, this was definitely not the case. Their anxiousness was actually partly contributed to the fact that this would be their first evolution, having been born orcs.

But that wasn't all. During the long time I've been gone, the one order I gave them to train the tribe's warriors had been like mantras for them. Working not only themselves but also the tribe to the bone, Rena and Grul had for some reason desperately wanted to prove their worth to me.

I wasn't sure with elicited such a need and purpose, and even after floating the thought with Mia, I was still left puzzled by their fervor and hardworking mentality. I'm definitely not saying that I didn't appreciate it, but it was just odd to me, so I reminded myself to find the time where I could ask them personally.

Giving them both reassuring nods, they visibly calmed. It also didn't escape my notice the shared glance of determination that they gave each other just before their eyes glazed over, most likely reading a system prompt. I didn't know what the shared look they shot each other meant, but I couldn't help but feel that it meant a whole lot more than simply an ordinary gaze.

Shaking the wandering thoughts from my head, I noticed the first hob starting to adopt the white hue of evolution. Before long, others followed suit. In the clearing at the edges of the marshes that we've appropriated for our camp, groans and screams of pain started sounding out.

Already expecting this cacophony of noise, I had made sure with an ample amount of scouting that no dangers or opportunistic creatures were in the vicinity. Those I did find, I swiftly took care of, all the while setting up able-bodied scouts to make sure the evolutions went unhindered and camp undisturbed.

Knowing that this would take a while, I sat down in a meditative pose and closed my eyes. With my mental capabilities and stats, it was easy to shut out the sounds of the dozens of greenskins. Before long, the ambient mana all around me started stirring, swirling. It wasn't anything extreme, anyone who wasn't naturally attuned to mana would barely be able to sense the disturbance.

Inside my core, the small and ethereal crystal residing within my body was chock-full of a red and purple-dark substance. It swirled like vicious blood and smokey shadows. It was my mana, the mental representation in my mind could be compared to a small pond. The water inside was the mana, and the pond's size was how much it could contain.

Like the ambient mana outside my body, the mana within my core was swirling in tandem. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the water within the pond was actually shrinking. Not evaporating, but actually condensing. Pulled out of my meditation a couple of hours later, I was greeted with a prompt.

[Skill - **Mana Condensation** has reached LVL: 2]

This was the newly acquired skill I've gotten, and also the one I've been wanting to buy for almost two months now, constantly having to put it off for multiple reasons. But now that I had an available slot in my skill list and the sufficient skill points, I finally bought the damn skill.

Skill

-**Mana Condensation**-

Condenses the mana within your mana source, increasing the potency.

The skill didn't actually increase the spell power of my magical abilities or my control over mana. While it was a mental exercise, and I supposed it did help me learn more about the intricacies of mana, the skill's real purpose was to increase the efficiency to which my mana was used.

Instead of increasing the total amount of mana I had, the skill condensed it and made it more potent. By doing this, I needed a lot less mana for each spell formation or any general use of magic to gain the same effect and power that I would've had without the condensed mana.

This wasn't to be confused with **Blood Conversion** though, as the mana that came from that skill wasn't as cost-efficient as the condensed mana was, but instead actually did increase the power and strength of whatever spell that was used to cast with it.

I was immensely happy with the new skill I picked up during the journey we've set out on, but there was one small drawback to the skill.

It was so damn exhausting and time-consuming.

Not only did I need to use my full mental focus on the skill and visualization of my core, but it also took hours upon hours to see even the slightest result. That wasn't to say that I was defenseless during that time. Segmenting my attention from my natural and honed instincts, I could focus on the process while my instincts took care of alertness and my danger sense.

The skill was for sure a long-term potential type ability, and I doubted it would have any actual effect on my combat abilities in the foreseeable future, but the sooner I had it and the sooner I started getting my mana condensed, the sooner I would be getting the substantial rewards I could glean that laid away down the road.

Pulled from my wandering thoughts, I exited the meditative state. They had all finished with their evolutions. In front of me, stood no hobgoblins, nor simple orcs. Tall, muscular, both lean or bulky, gruff faces crested ivory-white ferocious tusks, crimson skin, and black runic-looking tattoos running up and down their bodies.

For a few seconds, I even thought the hobgoblins had skipped an entire fucking evolution, jumping straight to great orcs. But looking closer, they hadn't. With **Appraisal**, it became apparent that they were no great orc, but actually orcs with the bloodthral variant.

-Appraisal!-

Appraisal - Hobgoblin					
Information		Attributes		Traits. Titles. and Skills	
-Name-	"???"	STR	25	Skills	10
-Race-	Orc "Bloodthral"	VIT	40	Traits	4
-Sex-	Male	AGI	24	Titles	0
-Rank-	F+	DEX	24	Resistances	

-Level-	1/35	INT	10		
Health	202/202	CHR	8	Physical Resistance	8
Stamina	113/113	WILL	10	Magical Resistance	5
Mana	0/0	MAG	5	Mental Resistance	5
<b>Sanguine Warrior</b>					