

~ Day 45 ~

Feeling the rough sandstone touching my skin-like carapace, I slowly scrub down the blood staining my body with the cloth rag. As I moved the cloth up and down my body, I felt all the small and large scars covering it, a testament to all the life and death battle's my body has gone through. When I reached the scarred stump of my left arm, I couldn't help but feel a sense of grim despondency at the seemingly hopeless peril I've found myself in.

It was to my great surprise that after the Mauling I hadn't actually died. While I was sure I was facing death the moment the reaver skewered me through and through, I had been wrong in an assumption of mine. What I hadn't taken into account was the fact that I was no longer human. That evidently meant that my organs weren't necessarily placed exactly mirrored to that of human biology.

Instead, my heart was more centered a lower than that of a normal human, which meant that the reaver's blade had missed my heart by only a hair's breadth. When I woke up after the encounter, I found myself being tended by some insane orc doctor that seemed to almost want to dissect me rather than tend to my wounds. If not for a few guards standing watch while I was getting tended to, I would've most likely been cut and split open to satisfy the manic orc's curiosity.

While I was beyond happy I hadn't met my end in this shithole, it had only gone downhill from there. What I had thought to be some grand event only held occasionally, was actually only the prelude to something much greater. Days of carnage and pain had followed, and the days and nights were starting to blend together. It had taken it's a toll.

It wasn't just the constants fights, as I also had visits by a particularly sadistic gremlin every now and then. The Mistress and guards seemed indifferent to Jeerbal torturing me, so I could only take the pain and hope my mind held together. The only reason why I hadn't succumbed to insanity or become a husk of my former self was my trait, **A Conqueror's Undying Will**.

It was the only barrier that kept me from fully spiraling into madness, but that's not to say that I was completely unaffected. My bloodthirsty had grown somewhat uncountable recently. I had trouble even restraining myself from assaulting the guards and had already dismembered

a hobgoblin maid that had brought me food by accident after I just finished an intense and close life and deathmatch.

Whenever I saw another living being, it was like a burning fire became lit deep inside my chest, screaming for me to tear open their throats and drink the gushing blood the would inevitably follow. I knew that before I even was captured I already had a certain bloodlust, a love for battle and carnage, but it was also completely under my control.

It wasn't simply because I liked killing, it was due to the addictive feeling of not only possessing power but also the sense of victory and success that always followed an intense battle. Now those feeling had vanished from my battles in the Arena, leaving simply an uncontrollable bloodthirsty. I wasn't sure if it would even be possible for me to recover if I ever managed to get out of this hell hole alive...

I had begun to worry that soon I might have reached the point of no return, and turn into something like Morgath, as I somewhat expected for him to have undergone the same circumstances as I. While I wasn't sure about his mental state as I haven't even seen his face, but he definitely wasn't all there, simply acting and moving like a puppet on strings or some kind of subservient zombie.

I was still hanging in there, not wanting to succumb, but the days of battle and torture could definitely be seen reflected whenever I fight. Now when I entered those fighting grounds I become like an indifferent but bloodthirsty drone, mindlessly fighting for some aloof queen, my only desire staying alive and slaughtering my opponents.

It's been more than twenty days since I've been enslaved to the Mistress. I haven't seen her ever since the first time, but that hadn't stopped her from continuously throwing me into this godforsaken arena to fight her fights. But these fights weren't just for entertainment as I had first guessed. Apparently, infighting between the warlords and other figures of authority in this city for things like more power and land is strictly forbidden. The only way to ascend and showcase their respective powers is through their servants.

We were truly only fodder, as each opponent after the mauling seemed to get stronger and more ferocious. The Mauling had only been a warm-up, a preamble for the real tournament. The fodder, meaning me and the other's who had fought in the Mauling, was simply some slaves the warlords off-handly presented for a sort of opening ceremony for the real fights.

But now and then you would be lucky enough to see a gem in the rough, or a hidden star amongst the usually pathetically weak fodder. They would be presented the opportunity to fight with the real line-up of the warlords. These were a lot stronger, and I was baffled that I had almost met my end once again already just the next fight after the Mauling.

Each warlord had ten warriors they would pit against each other in life and death battles in the Arena. Unfortunately, the Mistress had already selected ten warriors, and with me now the 11th, I had to choose one and challenge their seat... or die. It was this fight I had almost died in once again.

I had underestimated the beastkin, a female wielding two daggers who could move at insane speeds even greater than my own except for when I used **blink**. It had been a heated battle, and I could only curse the Mistress since if I had my magic available the fight would've been over almost instantly.

But there was actually a reason for locking down my magic other than to keep me in line as a slave. It was because the Arena didn't allow for the use of magic, as it's usually seen down upon in ritual duels as the ones performed in the Arena by greenskin culture. Luckily I barely managed to take down the beastkin by landing a grazing slash infused with **paralyze**.

Due to her build leaning towards primarily agility and dexterity, the little amount of paralytic compound that entered from the small wound I had caused was more than enough to slow her down considerably. After that, it simply became a trivial matter of cutting down my enemy, and so I took my spot as the 10th seat of the Mistress.

These line-ups of ten individual warriors from eight houses of warlords would be pitted together in a struggle for life and death. But this wasn't the only thing they were fighting for, as these battles are yet another prelude to something even grander. The Champions. Over the years and decades, the warlords of Maldrak have been collecting champions. Spearheads of their authority.

These champions were the true extension of their proverbial hands over the city; their power. Fights between the champions were what truly were the gems of the Arena. Each warlord can have at most three champions, the strongest warriors under their influence. The Mauling and the tournament of life and death was to find the strongest of the ten chosen warriors and give them the chance to earn the title of Champion.

If the strongest warrior of the ten of a warlord who already has three champions, then that warrior would need to challenge one of the three seats or die refusing to fight. All the warlords of Maldrak actually already had three champions each, except for the Mistress. I had found out that the Mistress was actually a new warlord, taken the position of the previous warlord by combat. As she was a relatively new addition, she only had two champions, who I've already met. Felendren and Morgath.

But even though she was the warlord with a deficit compared to the others, she was actually the one who wielded the most power. This was due to the oddity of her two champions. Both her champions wielded power beyond their ranks and levels, most likely because of the Mistress' tampering of their bodies.

Magic was forbidden in the Arena, but she had somehow circumvented that, causing a lot of discord and dissent of the populous. But seeing as she didn't actually break the ancient rules of duels, they could only keep their discontent to themselves. There were even rumors of her not even being a greenskin, which caused me to sigh in despondence from what I actually knew her to be.

But all the intricacies of Maldrak and greenskins was the least of my worries, as I pulled up my status with contemplation, excitement, and worry coloring my face.

Time was running out...