

## ~ Day 126 ~

< Xavier Tal'chor >

"Wrong."

Swish - slap!

"Wrong again."

Smack!

"Gah!" I grunted with a dulling ache as I fell to the ground. "I thought I had improved?"

"You have, but you're still doing it wrong." Lana's cold tone rung out in the spacious hall.

Sighing, I rubbed the sore spot on the back of my head where the side of her blade had smacked me.

Lana had apparently been there to see my fight against Zev'vev and Aseth, and she was clearly all but impressed by my performance. And she readily let me know her discontent by pulling me back to the household to go through more... 'training' as my torturous teacher liked to call it.

"Why not just tell me what I'm doing wrong then?" I asked exasperatedly.

She paused, leveling her gaze with mine.

"It will have no significant meaning unless you figure it out yourself, the understanding you will gain from learning it intrinsically is vital." She said in the same emotionless tone of voice. "It's not something that can be simply told. How one's talent and ability isn't something that is understood the same for everyone. Each individual has their own ways of perceiving it, and I might hamper your potential by instructing you in the same perspective that I do my own."

With a grunt, I got back up.

"She's isn't wrong young Xavier." A melodic voice said from over by the side of the large and spacious hall we were training in.

Sitting there and leisurely drinking a cup of tea as she watched our training, Lady Eryanne smiled.

"Yeah, I know," I sighed. "But surely, isn't there some hint or advice to be given that could at least steer me in the right path?"

I wasn't grumbling because I was doubting Lana's ability to teach, it was just that it wasn't all that pleasant getting batted around like a fly to a swatter all day long. While I couldn't underestimate the progress I've made during this seemingly very short time with her, it was still infuriating that it was conceived in such a rough-handed way. But then again, I wouldn't shy away from some scuffs and hardship when it meant furthering myself.

With a thoughtful expression on Lady Eryanne's delicate face, she hummed.

"I suppose there is," She paused, mulling over her words with a pause.

"You're looking in the wrong direction of what you're seeking." She finally answered with a smile, sipping her tea.

I frowned as I pondered those words. But before I got to voice anything, the sound of the large doors to the hall being opened sounded out to let in a tall and very much picturesque version of Lady Eryanne herself. The figure was clad in the dark robes reminiscent of both The Order and a Dark Magus of the household, not quite giving away whether or not she was a **Dark** or **Shadow Mage**. Just one glance was enough to make me recognize her instantly.

Ilia Menethil, Daughter of Lady Eryanne, and next-in-line Matriach of the Menethil household...

Not sparing me more than a glance and Executrix Lana a nod, Ilia Menethil made her way up to Lady Menethil.

"Mother, the tournament has concluded." She proclaimed as she kneeled before her matriarch.

"So I've heard," She hummed pleasantly. "Splendid job dealing with that irritable Arachne. I swear those critters of Eldriach are becoming more and more conceited by each decade that passes."

Ilia didn't say anything to that, however, seeing as her mother had nothing more to say, she got to her feet. But just before she turned to leave, she paused with slight hesitance on her face.

"Mother, what are we to do with the prizes?" She asked.

"Why, we'll give it to young Xavier here." She said without batting an eye, sipping her tea leisurely all the while.

"W-what?" I suddenly spoke up with a slight stutter, having listened to the conversation reservedly until now. "Why give it to... I mean, I appreciate the gesture, but I only achieved third place..."

The very same sentiment was shared by Ilia with her widened eyes as stared at her mother, and if Lana had an opinion to this, she did very well to hide it behind her still ever so emotionless posture.

"Hush now," She chuckled. "While very rare and valuable, we don't have any use for a relic. Sanctioned Lords are such fleeting individuals, and you never know when someone with such a gift will sprout out from nowhere. As such, I believe it will most definitely benefit both you and us a lot more by handing it to you rather than letting it collect dust in one of our treasuries."

"But Mother, are you sure you wish to hand such a powerful instrument to an..." She paused, as if trying to find a way to be tactful but gave up. "Outsider?"

The Matriarch simply shook her head faintly.

"Young Xavier is hardly an outsider anymore, and besides, I have faith in his integrity." She explained.

Feeling rather awkward now, I rubbed the back of my head, unsure of what to say to that sudden proclamation. It wasn't that she was wrong at all as I felt beyond indebted to the Menethil household for everything they've done so far and that if anything, I was someone of my word, but the trust that Lady Eryanne put in me after barely more than a week of knowing each other was a bit too sudden for my expectations.

However, putting some thought into it, the Matriarch was undoubtedly an extremely cunning and wise person, having been able to see through me in practically any interaction we've had. If there were any's intuition I would trust, then it was the one of this woman.

"I see mother, very well then." Ilia nodded without any more doubt, clearly showing how much she trusted her judgment.

Turning to face me, the picturesque doppelganger of a younger Lady Eryanne, looked me up and down with a scanning gaze, taking in my visage properly for the first time. With just a curt nod of acknowledgment, Ilia turned to leave without another word.

Dusting off my messy training clothes, I gave a sincere bow towards Lady Eryanne.

"Thank Miss, I won't soon forget this," I said, genuinely feeling gratitude towards her.

"Think nothing of it, I expect our relations and goals to be mutual for the foreseeable future," She chuckled with a hand gracefully covering her mouth.

"Well, young Xavier, you wouldn't happen to have proper attire?" She asked suddenly, a smile curving her lips.

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The familiar creaking of the ostentatious carriage as it rolled along the cobblestone filled the silence inside. Whereas Mia was adorned in a beautifully tailored black dress that left her arms bare and fitted her small frame to flow down into a wave flounce that accentuated her face and features, both Bob and I was outfitted in matching black attire that felt wholly alien on our persons.

Not only had I never felt so finely clothed before, but I had practically been naked for most of the time I've been alive in this new life, not to mention Bob who went with the more traditionally barbaric fittings of an orc. But nonetheless, we both felt surprisingly comfortable in our new clothes as they had been tailor-made to our frames by the Menethil household's own master tailor.

And the master title here wasn't said lightly seeing as all three of our attires had been made in less than four days of time.

Sitting on the other side of the carriage, facing us, was Ilia and Eryanne, both dressed just as extravagantly as we. Those two beautiful drow women even went as far as to rival Mia's looks, which was saying something considering her stupidity high charisma, and physical appearance.

Breaking the silence, I couldn't help but let out a sigh as I stared outside as the many other opulent and grand carriages pulled into the same massive courtyard of the Ebonpalace.

"Are you sure about this Lady Eryanne?" I hesitated. "I hardly enjoy being put on the spot like this and being in the presence of some that powerful... I don't know if-"

"I told you before, you have nothing to worry about regarding Lord Nosferas." She smiled. "If there was a single person I trusted the most, then it would be that man. While pragmatic and stern on the outside, he's honorable to a fault."

Nodding slowly, I wrung some of the trepidation out of my hands. While I trusted Eryanne's words, there was something quite unsettling being in the presence of someone with the power to have a vice grip on a city filled with dozens of millions of powerful monsters with his power and authority alone. Plus, the fact that I hadn't even caught a glimpse of him yet.

"On that topic, where's Lana?" I remembered, thinking of how devoted that woman was to the lord in question.

"She will be attending the banquet, but she still has duties to uphold during this time." She explained. "You most likely won't see much to her though as she's never been one for parties."

She chuckled.

"Yeah, you don't say..." I chuckled with her.