

Chapter 66

My Date With Destiny

Being my own boss seemed to provide nothing but benefits, at least at first. Now, though, now that I see the way the auditors go through the guild hall, stopping and talking to all of my other mages, I almost feel the daggers sinking in.

Lowiski gave notes, apparently, she had some type of grievance with the resident spiritual nature mage and was all too happy she spread documents on what I did wrong and how I wronged her. All I saw were the first few pages, but those were damning enough as is.

Notes of Impropriety: Herbert Tobias Quencher (Guild Master Crossroads Branch).

29 August: Guild Manager extra frisky with his vegetables. He even had the audacity to slurp them in front of everyone who had gone into his office...

Wait? What? Lowiski was critiquing my eating habits? Well not my habits but the eating habits of my **Doppelganger** body that I was currently wielding. There was a pause as Trista took the document, looked at line after line of these alleged notes, most of which were just minor critiques. I mean, I kind of get it that the botanist might take umbrage with the way vegetables were consumed, but that is what they are for right? To be eaten? At least that is what I thought, yet here she was telling my business for everyone to hear.

Out of curiosity, I open up a tendril of my **Telepathy** and loosely attach it to Lowiski. This isn't enough to penetrate her mind and see her deep inner thoughts, but at least this should be enough of an attachment to get me a first hand account of what is happening.

"Yes, he did, in front of the Gods and everybody. Just slurped them." Lowiski says, her tone incredulous and full of righteous indignation.

"Out of a stew?" Trista clarifies.

“Yes.” Lowiski reaffirms.

“Is it that he didn’t ask permission to use your vegetables?”

“No, they were in the communal cabinet, so anyone could eat them.”

“Did he cook them all and not offer you any?”

“No, he offered me some, but only after he slurped them so loudly that he all but ruined my hunger.” Lowiski says, and it is clear that she is one bad weed away from going crazy with her mental garden over here.

“Uh-huh. Now can you please tell me...” Trista begins but then scans Lowiski for a second, and before I can even react, I feel a *pulse* of disruption mana wash over my mental connection.

*You have entered a contested battle of wills with Trista Preventine, of the Mage’s Guild Information and Acquisitions department. Trista is attempting to dispel your **Telepathic** hold on Lowiski. Warning losing, dropping, or otherwise disconnecting your mental link with Lowiski will be marked as red flag and warning sign that you, acting as the Guild Leader, were trying to eavesdrop and tamper with an ongoing Audit.*

At that message, I panic, but only for a second. As I see the spell being cast, and realize it is more of a bowling ball trying to strike down the pins of connection that is my mental link to Lowiski. How do you block a bowling ball? Simple, you create a gutter and divert the ball away from your pins. In this case, I use my own spell formula to gently catch, and then divert around the wave of disruption magic. Honestly, I think the entire thing is too much, but a quick groove comprising of two strings of mana appears, as I focus on solidifying the structure and let the misplaced attack go. Honestly, this was the equivalent of using a hammer, when what you really needed were pruning shears. I could see how such a design would normally be more than effective enough against traditional spells, as the wide width let it easily smash into most spell constructs, but not a connected tendril, which was why I just used two more tendrils as a means to simply divert the spell.

Critical Success.

Hidden Mage Quest Completed: Establishing Magical Dominance (Trista Preventine): You have stumbled upon a secret rite of passage available to all mages. The Rite of Dominance, in this your first attempt you were proven to be successful. Rewards: Experience, New Spell, a Title (Upgrade), and a New Skill.

Experience Gained: 250/250.

New Spell Gained: Dispel-Dispel: You have found a way to dispel a dispel cast at you and your spells and Traits.

Title: Beginner's Luck has improved to **Beginner's Luck (II)**.

Title: Beginner's Luck (II): All luck-based skills have an increased 9% chance of succeeding.

New Skill Gained: Magical Duelist has increased to level 1.

Skill: Magical Duelist is a Dexterity, Endurance, Perception, Intelligence, and Willpower based skill.

Seeing the updates, I couldn't help but think this was a great hidden quest line. Also the skill was not too bad as it looked like it might give me more time, or ability to interact with the magical combat system. It made sense that this would be an effect of my **Beginner's Luck** title that was improved upon, as the title seems to take into consideration that this is my first time trying something new, and giving me ample time to counteract what was happening. I felt the game purposefully slow down on me, while I went about constructing that new spell. Well, a new to me spell, I guess it made sense that someone else had learned the **Dispel-Dispel** before, as magical duels have gone on for a long time. The odds of someone coming up with the same or alternate spell would be difficult to believe.

Still, I am happy with the outcome, especially now that I am just ten books away from leveling my secondary class again.

"Huh." Trista says, as a look of confusion crosses her features. She is still staring at Lowiski, at where I imagine she would be able to see the magical tendril still attached to her boney skull. Yet, all she does is look lost for a second, before shaking her head in defeat and then continuing. "That is odd..."

"I'm sorry what's odd?" Lowiski asks.

"Nothing, I must be just imagining things." Trista states, then continues with her investigation. "Now then, other than these journals, do you have anything else that you would like to present to us in relation to this ongoing investigation?"

“No, I think those records speak for themselves.” Lowiski replied back.

“That they do, that they do.” Trista replies as she takes the offered *evidence*, uses her Bureaucracy magic and recreates them in triplicate, handing a copy to her three co-auditors. Then with that, they leave the Nature Mage chamber and proceed to Hilda’s section. Honestly, I don’t know what type of magic she wields, other than it is extremely dangerous and volatile. Though I don’t know if that has to do with the elements that she uses, or if it is more a statement of her lack of control of said elements. Regardless, she is terrible and I can see why the Guild Master gave her a full quest for not breaking stuff within the guild. Looking at her tracker, I can see it hasn’t been a good month for her.

*Days Since Hilda has completed **Perform Magely Duties**: 0.*

*Days Since she last gained her daily bonus for **Perform Magely Duties**: 30.*

I quickly do the math and wonder if Hilda has ever completed this quest. As I doubt this quest was given when the Guild Master got here. And thirty days in a row without completing the quest, now that is a bit much.

I am almost tempted to avoid listening in on this conversation, particularly with the fact that I almost got caught a moment ago with Lewiski, but I can’t help but feel that there will be something to this. Also, that *Magical Duelist* skill seems amazing, so even if I do get caught, I hope I will be able to come up with a good enough defense. With my mind all but made up, I decide to open up a second **Telepathic** tendril and connect it to Hilda’s mind. Again, this is a loose connection and one I should be able to drop at any time. With my connection in place, I sit back and wait for the show to start.

“Good morning, my name is Trista...” Trista begins, but is quickly cut off by the overly brash Hilda.

Hilda for her part, is a short squarish woman that looks like she is at least half dwarf. “I know. I can tell the spirits have been talking to me since you first arrived.”

Spirits? We are in the spirit realm? What spirits is she getting in contact with? Also how? These questions and more go through my mind as I know for a fact no one else, spirit or otherwise has gone near Hilda.

“Yes.” Trista says, “so you know were are here to officially conduct an audit on this Guild Hall?”

"About time. I am here working my tail off day in and day out, and I don't get a single dose of recognition." Hilda begins.

"You don't?"

"No," though it comes out more of a *nuh*, than anything else.

"I see," Trista says, as she is clearly looking at the list of quests I created for her. The list that includes the old daily quest Hilda had for not destroying the office. "Might I ask what you think your job here is?"

"I am a demolitions expert. It is my job to come up with the biggest and deadliest of spells possible and train them to the next generation of students."

"Uh-huh," Trista says in a tone that I am quickly picking up as her, you are full of crap, but I can't say any of this to you. "You do realize that you are assigned to the Evocation wing, right?"

"Right, that's what I've been saying."

A slight pause, as I can tell Trista is just trying to regain her composure. "You do know what Evocation covers, right?"

"Right, it involves murder, mayhem, and above all explosions. I mean that last part is right in the name it is." Hilda says in a thick brogue that makes her seem like she is more than a little off her rocker.

"No, that is not correct. Evocation means and I quote: 'the act of bringing or recalling a feeling, memory, or image to the conscious mind.'" There is a slight pause, before she continues, "you are supposed to be using Mind magic, you are supposed to be coming up with better memory spells, to work on Illusionary spells like a simulacrum spell. You could also branch out and summon these *spirits*, as you claim."

"That is nonsense. I have access to all the elements. I am an **Elemental Evoker** after all, that is my class and everything." Hilda says and at that, I almost want to face palm.

“That just means you can summon elements from the different elemental planes idiot.” I say out loud, and then do a quick look around to make sure no one heard me. Fortunately, no one is in the room with me, nor are there any signs of a listening spell here. In fact, the only sign of a listening spell in place are my two tendrils of **Telepathy** that are out, speaking of which, I go ahead and drop the line to Lowiski, as I don’t want to constantly pry on her. Well more than I am already allowed to do with my **Angel’s Sight**. I almost think I am in the clear, when Trista stops and gives another sign that she has spotted my **Telepathic** connection to Hilda.

“Huh?” That is all the warning I get this time, before I see her casting a spell to once again disrupt my mental connection. The minute she lets loose her spell, I am once again hit with the same message.

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This time Trista has come in with a pruning shears shape of a dispel, this is a good choice, and likely the design she should have gone with the first time. The only difference is this time I decide to create a giant rock that I place right at the base of the pivot point and then continue to strengthen and harden the ball until is capable of standing up to the shears, or magical scissors being cast as a means to dispel the dispel. Then just like last time, I am met with another though slightly different system message.

Critical Success.

Hidden Mage Quest Completed: Establishing Magical Dominance (Trista Preventine): *You have stumbled upon a secret rite of passage available to all mages. The Rite of Dominance, in this your first attempt you were proven to be successful. Rewards: None, you have already beaten this person today, try again tomorrow.*

Well I should have known that not much would have come from this, as the quest clearly said it wasn’t repeatable, but I did notice the note at the bottom stating that I should try again tomorrow, meaning that I likely could get more experience by dueling the same people, I would just have to do so daily.

“Huh.” Trista says, as her **Dispel** is once again dispelled by my own spell.

“What is it, you see what I have been doing here? I have been forced to stay here, while the Guild Master refuses to offer me any quests to improve myself.” Hilda states, taking the momentarily dazed look on Trista’s face as a sign that she was wrong and that Hilda had just proven her point beyond all shadow of a doubt.

Hearing that, Trista shakes her head and once again focuses on the present. “We have recorded your complaints. I just have one more question to ask. Has the Guild Master made any advances towards you for the quests he offers?”

“I just told you that he hasn’t offered me any. Furthermore, even if he did, I wouldn’t mind. I mean a girl does get a little lonely...” Hilda said, her tone instantly going cringe. With that warning I make a mental note never to be caught alone with Hilda, while in the form of Guild Master Quencher. That girl is a psycho.

“Right, well we need to get going.” Trista says, then turns back and I can almost see the moment she breaks character and asks the two male auditors a question, “that is, unless you two wish to say for a more private conversation?”

“What?” The first male says.

“No, I’m fine.” The second male says, fixing their suit a clear sign that they are nervous and flustered by the suggestion.

“Don’t worry, if you two stick around, there might be a dirty secret I can dredge up to tell you.” Hilda says, in a come hither voice.

“A secret?” The first male asks, apparently not the brightest tool in the shed.

“Yes, I am aroused by men in suit.” Hilda says, “you might even say I am allergic to them.”

“Allergic?”

“Yes, you see they make my melt right off.” Hilda says, and at that I cut my mental connection to her and attempt not to throw up a little within my mouth, that was far too much. I almost want to cover up my ears from having heard all that, but I didn’t even use my ears to understand just how wrong that all was.

Just by the time I finally regain control over my own nauseous feelings that were overtaking me, I feel my stomach do a quick flip again.

Knock knock.

At that, I realize it is showtime, and that I am about to have to put on the performance of a lifetime myself if I want to keep this level of protection over myself. Right now, I have these repeatable quests all in the bag, and it will just take a little bit more effort on my part to keep this farce of an operation up and running.

“Come in.” I say, dusting myself off as I prepare for what is about to come next. It seems that there is a bit of a mix up, as it is just Trista by the door. The other female agent is nearby with some sort of divination spell going, one that appears to be viewing my personal office. I almost want to disrupt the spell, but then decide against it, as me actively dispelling a monitoring spell created by an auditor during an official audit would likely look bad.

“Hello, I am...” Trista begins, but then pauses as she looks like her breath has caught in her throat.

“You okay? You aren’t choking?” I ask, suddenly standing up wondering if she swallowed a fly or something.

“I am okay now. My name is Trista Preventine, I am here acting as the Mage’s Guild Information and Acquisitions department. It is my job to audit you, but I can see now that this would be a waste of both your and my time.” Trista begins, trying to add a bit of husky nature to her speech.

At this, I realize what this is, it can be summarized in one simple word, entrapment. The whole thing, the breaking away of the male auditors with Hilda, the overly aggressive nature of Trista, and the fact that her partner has been spying on me for some time now. It all points to this all being a last ditch set up. Still, I want her to press this, I want her to overreach.

“Uh-huh. Look I think you might have the wrong man.” I begin but am smoothly cut off.

“I do. They are all terrible when in comparison to you. What do you say, will you give me a chance?” Trista says, in an act that is clearly going too far.

Shaking my head, I let out a sigh, before crossing my arms to respond with an indignant tone. “First of all, you do realize this is Entrapment, no doubt you would argue that this would just prove that such a proclivity to conduct action like this would only work if I had them in my very soul, but know it won’t work. Also, secondly, a bit of career advice, you are terrible at seduction. If you want to seduce someone, you do it with your eyes, with your body, not just words.” Then with that, I proceed to show her exactly what I mean. Since this is the body of an older male, I do not mind using this avatar in such a lascivious nature. At that, I stand up, then turn away for a second, only to flip my head forward and lock gazes with her. With that, we share a not just a look, but an entire moment.

Smoldering Intensity.

I can all but feel the tension forming between us, as the skill I gained almost a week ago, *Seduction*, is now coming into life and being wielded with reckless abandon.

“I uh...” Trista starts, but then clearly blushes as the coloring and energy of her cheeks brightens.

Seeing her, I go a bit deeper into the act, just to show what it is like. “Shh.” I say, holding up one finger to my lips as if I am trying to share an intimate secret with her. In my mind I am channeling my inner *Rahul*, and it is paying off in a big way as I can all but see the way Trista is suddenly trembling. Seeing that I have made my point, I sit down in my chair and then purposefully break the spell I had over her.

“Now that is how you *Seduce* someone.” I say, with a matter-of-fact tone.

“Right.” Trista says, as she fans herself for a moment. Seeing her, I realize that I might have pressed a bit too hard, as her vitals are rising and her heartrate is spiking.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes,” she says automatically, then with a pause, she then realizes her own words, “wait, if I said no, would you give me mouth to mouth?”

“Ugh.” I say, cringing away from her and her really bad attempt to seduce me a second time.

Seeing my revulsion, she panics, “no, wait. I’m sorry, that was me that time. But I should close out the audit first before we get to that.”

“What?” I ask, trying to keep up with her sudden train of thought.

“Have you now or ever used your position of power to seduce the women under your employ? This includes but is not limited to the creation of specialty quests that would help them level at an exceptional rate.” Trista says.

“No. I have never done any of that to my subordinates.” I respond, a feeling of revulsion filling me as I try to answer without vomiting at the comment.

“I can see it now that you wouldn’t need to use such quests to get these women to fall for you. I feel we have enough to close this out right now, don’t you think so too?” Trista said.

With that, the second female auditor came into the room. She still had her spell running, recording everything that was said.

“She was here to record everything. She was my second set of eyes.”

“So you like to watch?” I ask, once again falling into a cheesy line from *Rahul and the Maiden VII*, the one where he seduces the Duchess.

At that, the second female auditor’s knees buckle. Okay, this is a bit ridiculous. Either their willpower attributes are exceptionally low, or the *Seduction* skill is just that powerful. Either way, this is nuts, these are my auditors for goodness sakes. Then as if catching herself, the second auditor speaks her minds.

“I don’t mind watching, at first. But after a while, I too will need to play.”

“Whoa, whoa there. We are done here right?” I ask.

“If you mean the audit, then yes, we have found a few discrepancies with your guild, none dealing with you, your operation, or your healing department. As for the others, well there were some comments made, but I can understand them now.” Trista begins.

“Yes, those comments from Hilda suddenly are a lot easier to understand.” The second female auditors states.

“Now that the hard part is over, what do you say we go out and *celebrate*?” Trista asks.

I can’t tell if this is part of her bad acting, or if this is something she is truly adamant about. I do a quick scan of the Guild hall to see everything. The two male auditors are apparently trapped in Hilda’s office, the muscular one is desperately trying to free them from the locked room, while the other is playing a game of keep away from Hilda. Lowiski is petting her vegetables. The receptionist is still by her desk. Zero is still actively reading books, and that is everyone.

I pause, as something is wrong with that statement, but I can’t figure out what. Until a moment later, when it hits me. “Where is Cassiopia Spiritlight?”

Yes, I asked for myself in third person, but in this case I needed to as my Simulacrum is apparently missing.