

Chapter 823 Extraction

Ilea sat on her ashen chair, watching the central platform on the ground floor of the arena. Not an arena for fighting for once. With most of the representatives of the Accords present for the emergency talks, coupled with all the allies and Mind Weavers, they required more space to seat everyone in a reasonable manner. *More a parliament at this point*, Ilea thought as she listened to Octavia's retelling of how she had gotten to Kohr, what she had done there, and what she had found out about Ker Velor, a name that most of the people present learned for the first time.

Octavia remained calm through it all, though Ilea didn't miss the increased heartbeat and the sweat on her brow. Surviving in Kohr didn't necessarily constitute to being a good public speaker, let alone to the assembled power. The Meadow, Aki's Executioners, war machines of the Pit, the Guilds of the Taleen, the Cerithil Hunters, the Shadow's Hand, the Medic Sentinels, and plenty of others. Perhaps the Mind Weavers would've been out of place in a meeting of Lys and Ravenhall, but here they barely stood out.

Whispers started after she had finished her recount, the first questioning glances and statements exchanged and thrown out when a powerful wave of mana flowed through the entire domain.

"Before questions arise, let us clear up a few things," the Meadow spoke. *"The accuracy of what Octavia Strand has divined from the being known as The Architect, or Ker Velor, will have to be examined, though I wish for a few members to speak up as to the potential threat this Ascended may represent not only to the Accords but to the entirety of this realm. Lilith."*

Ilea moved her head up from the hand she had rested it on. "I fought the guy, four mark. Not the strongest I've faced by a long shot but he was the only one who managed to nearly kill me with a trap he laid. I'm really more worried about his preparation and the potential of him snatching a sun from the sky, as stupid as that sounds. I've been to Kohr, we don't want that to happen to Elos."

"Nelras Ithom, former Monarch of the Sunlight Wastes and the Domain of Light," the Meadow said.

The war machine looked around the gathered crowd and hissed at some of the reactions, questions raised once more before another wave of magic silenced everyone.

"I fought him before. I was invincible... the most powerful of the Elves. And look at my pitiful state now... almost as humiliating as being born human," he spoke and glanced to Ilea.

She raised her brows. *"Get on with it,"* she sent to him.

He hissed again. "The only reason I talk to you here is because I want to see him destroyed. Him and everything he stands for, everything he has worked for, everyone who would ally themselves with him. I can confirm that what this divination mage has said about Kohr and the Architect is true. I do not know of his plans, but what Lilith has said about his power rings true. His personal power is no match for some of the beings present here, it is the technology he wields that should frighten us. A sunless Elos may as well be the end of this realm."

"I now welcome Nes Mor Atul to speak of what we may face, herself of the Ascended, the Navuun of Kohr, guest of Lilith. She has personal knowledge of the capabilities both of the Architect and the technology of the Ascended," the Meadow spoke.

Ilea didn't miss the frown on Ormont's face when Nes floated to the center of the wooden floor. She bowed to the people all around, the gesture calm and practiced. "Greetings, representatives and allies of the Accords. I am Nes Mor Atul, former Ascended and former member of the Olym Arcena of my home realm, Kohr. I cannot ignore the past history shared by the Ascended and the beings of Elos. Beings are present that have suffered greatly at the actions of the Ascended. Know that what has transpired in Elos several millennia past has caused great diversion and what may be defined as a civil war amongst our kind. I regret the loss of life and loss of habitable land resulting from the taking of a Source."

Her two white eyes shone bright as metal appeared from thin air, flowing like water and steadily building up a sphere that floated before her. "This is your realm. The continent we are located on is commonly known as Elos. For the purpose of this explanation, I shall refer to the realm itself with the same name. A planet set within a complex solar system of three suns, permeated for millions of years to the very core with what most beings here refer to as mana.

"After the devastating effects of the Source extraction in Kohr, the Olym Arcena placed extensive restrictions on the use of the process, all of which were voted and agreed upon. Centuries passed as we learned and grew, as we tried to rebuild and regrow what was lost. Many of our kind had already given up on Kohr and ventured out through the fabric, into realms unknown. One such Ascended discovered the realm of Elos.

"The unique position of both a thriving realm abundant with mana and the presence of not one but three suns rekindled questions of the process of extraction. Both as a way to document and study the process itself, but just as much as a way to humanely extract sources from other realms without causing widespread destruction and loss of biological and other life. By then, the wonders accomplished with the Source extracted from Kohr itself had to many in the Olym Arcena not only justified its extraction, but the extraction of sources beyond the realm of Kohr. Near unlimited energy. A single star capable of powering the most complex rune sets, enchantments, entire facilities dreamed up and built by the Ascended.

"While many disagreed, the majority wished to proceed, in the hopes that removing a single sun from Elos would not trigger the same cataclysmic events recorded in Kohr. Calculations and simulations could not come to conclusive results and as pressure grew, the notion finally passed, only twelve years after it had first been raised. Ker Velor and Ravana Vor Itar were at the forefront of those who wished to proceed. The Architect as I knew him back then was not a being of empathy, only one of cold calculation. He considered progress and evolution and contributed much to the knowledge of the Ascended. A brilliant Navuun, and one of the minds behind the very process that has made me into the immortal being you see before you.

"Sacrifices for the sake of prosperity. To answer the questions of mana and life itself. To travel the stars and other realms, to advance beyond the concept of gods. He would not waste an entire realm of beings for the sake of mere power, but it's possible that the involvement of Elos in the destruction of Ravana Vor Itar has pushed him towards these actions. That or the Ascended herself. Contrary to him, Ravana held biological life in little regard. Subjects and tools for her to use. I believe the fundamental difference between their philosophies was that Ker Velor believed that the ingenuity and evolution of biological beings could lead to new understanding, while Ravana Vor Itar saw them as a potential threat to our kind. Competition to be wiped out before it was allowed to become a danger to our power.

"She was a young Navuun, chosen for both her brilliance and her resilience. Chosen by Ker Velor himself to become the first of the Ascended. While I believe that the being now known as The

Architect is entirely incapable of empathy, he holds Ravana Vor Itar in a different regard to most other beings. Not as I believe as a ruler, a god, or even a daughter, but perhaps as the next and necessary step of our own evolution. I could be wrong in this assessment as I have not met Ker Velor in over three thousand years. The last time, on the battlefield. Ravana was destroyed, by our kind, the Olym Arcena fighting amongst themselves while beings from Elos invaded our realm in turn.

“I do not know if Ker Velor decided for himself to resume in Elos what the Olym Arcena had started, or if he was pushed towards it by the wishes of Ravana Vor Itar, or perhaps a wish for vengeance. I do not remember him to be an emotional being, though I have previously observed annoyance and anger. Should he return, the main concern, as stated by Octavia Strand, is the continued extraction of Sources. The remaining two suns of Elos.”

She moved her hands as the sphere of metal expanded, sections added to indicate underground facilities.

“The process requires extensive preparation within the respective realm. Calculations as to the position of the sun, the alignment of the realm within the fabric, and most of all an extensive amount of mana, gathered for centuries through underground facilities usually built near or within deep reaching dungeons, where mana concentration reaches the highest possible yield. Of course such extensive facilities had to be built over decades, back then by many of our kind, each with their own research and experiments to conduct secondary to the overall goal of extraction.

“A mesh was built and aligned to the smallest sun of Elos. Centuries passed with little discovery and impact from the species of the realm, most of the sapient beings residing on or near the surface while our facilities were set deep below ground. The extraction itself was successful, the Source itself delivered to Kohr in the prepared container. However any calculations and simulations done to predict the consequences for Elos itself were not quite... accurate. A delicate balance had been upturned, entire sections of land destroyed instantly, others changing fast, others yet showing a more subtle reaction.

“The collection of data for long term observation has discontinued due to the breaking of the Olym Arcena, though many of you have seen the changes yourself. The North is only one example of the wide reaching destruction and ecological disaster wreaked by the process of extraction. I believe Ker Velor claimed the sacrifices were acceptable for the knowledge and experience gathered, but to others, myself included, the process had to be banned entirely. A question of ethics that finally ripped the last strands that had held our now immortal kind together.

“I have taken measures to watch changes in some of the facilities left behind by our kind, as I’m sure have others in this realm. Many facilities were entirely destroyed, by those who had been involved in the invasion of Kohr, or simply by monsters and time. It is impossible to use the current mesh for extraction, though a new one could be built, aligned for another sun. If what the divination mage has said is true, then the Architect, with or without allies, has built a new set of facilities within the last three thousand years. Few of our kind, even back then, could achieve such a feat, but he would be one of them, as monumental a task it is.

“Building the mesh and collecting mana are the required steps the Architect would have had to fulfill, though it is unclear to me how long either would have taken. The locations of the prior facilities were chosen for the mana density in the regions. With three thousand years to both build and collect, there is little to no indication of where the facilities of the new mesh would be located. Depending on redundancy, the destruction of one or several such facilities would also not ascertain

the prevention of extraction. With what I know of Ker Velor, he would prefer to wait a thousand years than risk failure due to external intervention.

“Once the mana is gathered and a sufficiently runed, enchanted, and forged vessel is prepared, the process can be initiated. Depending on the Source, the duration can vary extensively, though the more mana present in a star, the faster the process will be, due to various feedback loops. With the remaining two suns of Elos, the duration based on my knowledge from three thousand years ago, would last between one and seven hours.”

“*Can the process be interrupted?*” the Meadow asked.

“Any interruption would in theory lead to catastrophic changes in the respective sun,” Nes answered.

“What kind of changes?” Aki asked.

“The theoretical name for such an event was supernova. Essentially an explosion resulting in the death of every living being in the entirety of this solar system. Though while catastrophic, interruption of the process of extraction would theoretically require more than ten times the energy of the star itself. The entire process is built on redirecting the energy of the star itself, essentially using it to power the process. Some of the mana is lost, though even the Source taken in Kohr had powered every conceivable creation by the Olym Arcena.”

“Can both suns be taken at the same time?” Aki asked.

“Not by the same mesh, though I do not know if the Architect has applied any changes based on the data gathered in Elos. I deem it unlikely, though the same was true for someone returning to Elos to extract another Source in the first place. Finding and destroying the mesh, if one such exists, is the only way to prevent the extraction. That or destroying Ker Velor himself, though considering the resources available to him, centuries or even millennia of preparation, and his extensive paranoia, I deem the former more reasonable,” Nes said.

“What if we offer him a Source as bait?” Ormont asked.

“We have one of those?” Helwart asked.

Dozens of people looked to the dwarf, talking erupting all over.

“We took it back to Elos,” Ormont said with a sad smile below his beard. “I don’t suggest we give it to him, but perhaps we could lure him.”

“Ker Velor would’ve chosen to wait even if a Source had been offered to him the day after he had started his plans. He is meticulous. And he will choose a higher probability of success over potential risks, always. If you manage to destroy enough of his facilities, he may consider the option, but that is the only way I see where he could even remotely be interested. That or if he is pressed for time, which I deem unlikely. In that case I assume he would’ve come to look for the Source himself,” Nes said.

“Who’s saying he didn’t?” Pierce asked.

“Why should we even want to give him something that powerful?” Helwart asked. “And if we do have a Source ourselves, how come we only learn of this now?”

“Because I am powered by it,” Aki said, his eyes glowing a little brighter.

Helwart raised his metal arms to his hips. “That’s a bummer. Kind of need that machine army, don’t we?”

“I prefer to keep existing, yes,” Aki said. “But I agree, even if we were in the position to offer a Source to Ker Velor, the only reasonable consideration is to bait him out. However that is connected to a lot of risks. Risks we should not take until every other measure has been taken.”

“We’ve initiated the search for both Ker Velor and the facilities that would be part of this new mesh. I suggest the Accords set the prevention of another possible Source extraction to a high priority task. In the event of an extraction, we will have to prepare for the resulting events. I hope those here who have been present during the extraction three thousand years ago will remain to share what they had learned, including Nes Mor Atul,” the Meadow spoke.

“Of course,” the Ascended spoke.

Scipio nodded in turn.

“We will remain to discuss potential plans for prevention, response, and retaliation, including all factions within the Accords and without. Scavengers and scouts should be ordered or otherwise incentivized to look for unknown Ascended facilities while high level individuals will be sent to examine the known facilities for potential clues,” the Meadow spoke.

“Ilea,” the Meadow sent, apparently to her only. *“With your previous encounter, you would likely play a part in the defeat of Ker Velor himself, and other possibly involved Ascended. Your plan to grow in power is reasonable and encouraged by both me, Aki, and the representatives I have talked to. However, I would like to encourage you to seek potential allies as well. Should the threat of Source extraction be real, every species living in this realm would be impacted.”*

Ilea smiled. *“I will try what I can, but I doubt the Domains or the Fae would move based on this alone.”*

“I have communicated with Twin. They will not, but perhaps you will be more successful with Violence,” the Meadow said. *“Or with the Mava. I suspect Octavia’s words can be trusted. And she claimed the Mava are difficult to move, though you have a way with such issues. We will inform you once we find suitable targets for you to fight.”*

“Thank you, guess I should prepare myself for a trip then,” Ilea said.

“When you are ready, and once the Accords allow for Octavia to leave. You being with her would vastly improve the chances of such a vote to pass. I expect you to have about an hour until then,” the Meadow said.

“Perfect,” Ilea said and stood up. *“You can summarize everything discussed later.”*

“Of course. Until your return, Ilea. Good luck.”

She teleported out of the arena and opened a gate to Riverwatch, quickly flying to the bunkers and taking the gate to Morhill, moving on to Ravenhall right after. There was one thing she had to stock up on if she planned to meet a species of foxes. Even more so if she planned to convince them to help out.