

Chapter 650 Reputation

Ilea used her third tier transfer as soon as she had flown a few kilometers out of the city, finding a bush to hide in for the use of her spell. About twenty seconds later, she appeared within the Meadow's lair.

"Hello," she greeted the enchanters, floating smith, and unspeakable horror tree.

"Your visits are frequent, human. Have you perhaps missed me?" Meadow asked.

"Very much, my love. How are the children?" she replied, looking around.

"If you're open to reproduction experiments, I would not say no. However I'm fairly certain that I lack the necessary organs," the Meadow spoke.

"I'm sure someone with your otherworldly brain can figure something out. Plenty of magic after all," she said.

A breeze went over the black grass of the Meadow. *"I was talking about reproduction, not pleasure. We've done the latter many times already."*

Ilea raised an eyebrow. *"We did? I fail to remember."*

"We've trained hundreds of times, Ilea. Perhaps you can't recall because your brain was destroyed so many times. Or because you enjoy being ripped apart so much," it said.

Ilea rolled her eyes. *"Have you been reading smut?"*

"I assume you mean written depictions of the pleasures of the flesh? Yes. Iana lent me her collection. For research purposes only," the Meadow explained.

Explains this conversation. Can't wait for this thing to gain all the knowledge of humanity. Its sarcasm will destabilize the entire realm.

"You're a charming piece of landscape, but I think I'll stick to humanoids," Ilea said instead.

"How quaint. And here I thought you truly awakened," the being said.

"It's not you, it's me," she answered. *"I'm sure you have a type as well."*

"I'm a scholar of magic, not an animal driven by primal instincts," spoke the Meadow.

Ilea looked at the tree and smiled. *"I'm sure you can find beauty in romance nonetheless. It's not all about sex."*

An otherworldly sigh flowed through the grass. *"If only there was an equal to my infinite brilliance."*

"What about the Fae? You seemed thoroughly impressed," Ilea said with a smirk, sitting down to figure out the appearing puzzle of floating stone within shifting space.

The Meadow remained quiet for a while. *"I could never... the difference between it and I is as vast as the gulf between you and me."*

“You really know how to charm a woman,” Ilea said while rolling her eyes. *“It conversed with me, I’m sure it would be open to have a conversation at least. Or ten thousand of them, at the same time. I don’t know what kind of minds you two have.”*

“Ah... truly, a gift it would be to learn more from one such as they,” the being spoke. *“I shall try, young healer. Perhaps I will meet one of its kind again in a few decades. Enough time perhaps to think of a question.”*

“Don’t rush it,” Ilea said in a dry tone. She noted that Iana was still working on her armor’s enchantments, Goliath fiddling around with various materials from spacial containers now down in Meadow’s lair and his new old workshop.

I really wasn’t gone for that long, she mused, thinking about the events of the day. The Corinth Order would likely not pose a threat in the foreseeable future and she had made an impression on the royals, including people close to them. They’d at least think twice about an extensive conflict with her allies, knowing what she brought to the table. That or they’d try underhanded methods but the king seemed reasonable enough. He’d likely prefer the benefits of cooperation and trade to whatever he would gain otherwise.

Training for the night I suppose, and the next healing order tomorrow. Let’s hope they’re a little more reasonable or at least have poison capable of raising my resistance.

“The mists are retreating to the morning light,” the Meadow spoke.

Ilea looked up, blinking a few times as she stopped focusing on the space around her. With her enhanced senses coupled with dominion and space awareness, the increasing variations and layers the Meadow conjured for her training let her downright sink into some sort of otherworldly space pocket. Her ability had increased to the extent where she knew that her mind was barely even scratching the surface.

She knew rationally how truly powerful the Meadow was but it was simple to think of higher leveled magic users as simply packing a harder punch. With her space awareness, she was learning to glimpse into the bottomless depths of its capabilities.

‘ding’ ‘Space Awareness reaches 3rd lvl 8’

‘ding’ ‘Earth Magic Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 3’

‘ding’ ‘Space Magic Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 7’

“Thanks,” she said and stood up, brushing away some dirt below her ashen dress. It covered her up without the insane defensive capabilities of her armor, allowing for more efficient resistance training without ruining clothes and armor. *“You’re really quite terrifying,”* she added, looking at the tree as she cracked her neck and knuckles.

“You lack the perception to grasp my primal form,” the Meadow said.

“Oh really? Are you creating an illusion to prevent everyone around you from going mad?” she joked.

“Yes,” spoke the tree.

Ilea blinked her eyes, unsure if the being was just fucking with her. Either seemed perfectly reasonable to her. *Maybe it's both.*

She laughed at the idea of its presence alone literally killing her on the spot.

"Can you show me?" she asked.

"I'd rather not undress in front of you," the Meadow spoke.

"Understandable," she said and activated her long range teleportation. "Might be back again later. Thanks for the training."

"I'll be here," the being spoke, the enchanters waving her way offhandedly.

Ilea appeared on a forested hill overlooking Riverwatch, looking up at the birds chirping away. *Didn't even notice me, hmm?*

The sky was mostly clear of clouds, the morning light shining over the forested plains and against the vast mountain of Karth. Carts and groups of adventurers were leaving the city below.

She summoned the Order of Balance invitation and looked it over. *Minister Genesis. Ominous name. Western section of Virilya.*

Not a lot to go on but she assumed the person in question was important enough to be found rather easily. The letter itself looked official enough, with a few signatures and wax stamps. With a lot of imagination and considerable space awareness use, one of the scribbles could be identified as the name Genesis. Ilea assumed a similar handwriting sickness to befall the healers of this land much like the one plaguing doctors back on Earth. With the magically enhanced lifespan, the effects would likely get exponentially worse.

To a point where I might be able to actually train my space awareness with this, she thought with a smile and spread her wings.

Her flight path took her near the walls of Riverwatch, Ilea glancing over the busy independent city, seeing a few flying mages and guards going about their own business. Some of the guards on the walls waved her way, likely recognizing the familiar armor and wings.

They may think I'm just another Sentinel.

The thought seemed comforting in a way. She hadn't considered it so far but the more Sentinels managed to get to a higher level, unlocking some kind of ash armor and wings, the less recognizable she herself will become. Before people thought her just another Shadow, which granted, she was. But now with her reputation, pretty much everyone who heard the songs or stories could put two and two together.

Until my own reputation will mix in with that of the Sentinels, Lilith becoming the legendary founder that may or may not truly exist, she thought with a grin. Ilea could certainly see how people would start to believe Lilith was more than one person. Especially with her flying speed and long range teleportation. The journey from Halstein to Virilya would take weeks for normal people, and still probably a few days for Hunter rank Sentinels.

She charged her wings and focused on the mark on Felicia, the location somewhere towards where Virilya should have been. A moment later she shot off into the distance.

None of the monsters or people she saw on the way managed to react to her passing, most likely not noticing anything until the sound would reach them. Her high Wind Resistance ability reduced that effect as well however.

She slowed down when she saw glittering light reflecting off the capital lake's surface, landing in the wilderness a few kilometers away from the distant walls.

Been a while since I visited, she thought, remembering the empty streets and siege weapons between the Baralia invaders and the hunkering Imperials. Back then it had almost seemed like a stalemate. By now she couldn't really think of a way for Baralia to have pushed through. *Calculated probably. The Empire surely knew about the political situation in Baralia and thought it more effective to wait out the siege.*

It must've taken some iron willed commitment and control of the nobility to allow for a one year shutdown of the capital. *I wonder what the Empress is like. Maybe she's a secret three mark?*

Ilea ran the rest of the way, now wearing a set of casual clothes. She reached the city walls a few minutes later, the guards letting her pass immediately when she showed them her Emerald adventurer badge.

"Looking for the closest Order of Balance temple," she said to one of the guards.

"Half an hour in this direction. Too many alleys, just ask on the way for specific directions," the woman said, pointing southwards.

"Thanks," Ilea answered, walking through the streets as she took in the sights. Some of the building had people working on them, others being painted anew. There were beggars on the streets but not more than any other time she had visited. *Hardly seems like there was a war.*

It had been a while since the siege had happened of course, and Lys was likely the most powerful country in the plains. They had thousands of mages to throw against any problem or infrastructure issues that may crop up. *And probably thousands of mages more from Baralia.*

A few minutes passed as she continued on her way, healing anybody with injuries she saw within her dominion, distributing some silver to the beggars she saw and buying some street food.

Ilea soon found a temple of sorts, a line of people queuing outside. She could tell that everyone had a malady of one sort or the other. Those she could heal she did, likely robbing the temple of a significant part of their work. Or their business, but she hardly cared. "Is this the Order of Balance?" she asked an older gentleman sitting on a nearby bench, a tree providing him shade.

"Hmm, yes. Indeed," he said, looking at her. "Are you going to join?"

"I don't plan to," Ilea answered, glancing behind when she saw something flicker at the edge of her dominion. She just barely managed to see the line of the teleportation spell. *Watching me? Well, we are in the capital. Probably one of the Lily's goons, whichever member found me first. Or an imperial?*

She didn't particularly care, turning her head when she found a cloaked figure staring at her through a distant window. The man opened his eyes wide when she cocked her head to the side a little, staring right at him. He vanished too.

A group of adventurers walked by in that moment, their body language somewhat tense and angled towards her. None of them made a move however, simply passing through and entering a nearby store.

“Is that her?” one of them whispered.

Ilea listened to the conversation, concentrating to focus on the subdued voices in the sea of noise.

“Can’t be... she looks too normal,” a woman said.

“Don’t let it fool you. Her description matches. We’ll keep an eye on her and inform the captain if she does anything suspicious. Don’t engage under any circumstances. You know what she can do,” a third voice said.

So much for anonymity. Maybe I should wear plate armor and carry my hammer. Next time I guess, she thought and entered the temple.

Ahead of the line stood a healer wearing dark gray robes, a sheathed short sword hanging from a belt around her waist. She seemed a little confused, checking the man in front of her with a healing spell. Some of the people in the queue were already leaving, thanking any nearby Order members for the help.

The woman looked around before her eyes fell on Ilea.

“Greetings,” the Shadow said, waving as she ascended the stairs. Most of the temple inside was made of stone, simple and sturdy. She assumed few if any had been destroyed in the war. *The doors are super sturdy too, and enchanted.*

“Greetings. I assume you’re responsible for this?” the healer asked, gesturing to the leaving people.

[Pure Healer – lvl 112]

“You think I just healed about sixty people?” she asked.

The healer looked at her and nodded lightly. “You are quite a high level healer. So yes. I ask you not to interfere with our business any further than this, though I suppose I can’t stop you.”

“I thought healers were supposed to heal,” Ilea answered.

“They are. But compared to you, I can’t heal fifty people in the span of a minute. It’s valuable experience and I can earn some additional coin. What can I do for you?” she said.

Ilea considered the answer and found she didn’t really care. Healers would find work easily enough, even if she healed literally everyone in this city. *Maybe then a few more would actually join adventurer teams.*

She thought about the prospect, covering the entirety of Virilya with her dominion and healing every person in it. The idea seemed both impractical and like a bit of a waste of her time. Maybe once the teleportation gates were around, the Sentinels could do a sweep through large cities every few months. *Would piss off the Orders though.*

“Are you still there?” the healer asked, not having received an answer to her question.

“Ah, sorry. I’m looking for Minister Genesis,” she said, noticing a few glances her way when she said the name.

“Minister Genesis? What business do you have with her?” the healer asked, obviously a little suspicious. “If you want to join the Order you can do that with Minister Veer, he’s in his office down the hallway.”

“That’s not why I’m here,” Ilea said, summoning the invitation and handing it to the woman.

“Y... w...,” the healer stuttered, gulping as she looked between Ilea and the letter. “Ye..s let me... I’ll bring you to her.. immediately. Apologies,” she fumbled and bowed. “I meant no offense, Lady Lilith.”

“Calm down,” Ilea said and took the letter back. “Just tell me where I can find her.”

“The main western temple, overlooking the lake. It’s really no issue. I can show you there,” she said.

“What’s in it for you?” Ilea asked, making the letter vanish. More healers had gathered around them, murmuring to each other.

“I... I’m an... admirer. It’s... an honor to meet you!” the woman finally got out, her whole body language coupled with the shade on her cheeks having morphed her into an entirely new character.

“I... see,” Ilea said. “Alright then, show the way, I guess.”

She watched the woman downright squeal in glee as she walked down the stairs. “Is it true that you met General Ryse? And that you fought the monsters in Seyna? I heard you infiltrated the Order of Truth before they could cause even more damage to their own cities.”

“You heard a lot of stories,” Ilea said, walking next to the woman who led her westward through the city.

The healer smiled. “Everything I could find... oh I’m sorry... this must be kind of uncomfortable,” she said and laughed awkwardly. “I just... when I heard about the Medic Sentinel Corps... I was overjoyed!”

“You could always go an try to join,” Ilea suggested.

“I... I don’t think I can go through that kind of training. If the rumors are true. And I’m already in an Order. We’re not supposed to just switch. I’m Julia by the way, I don’t think I’ve mentioned that yet. The training with the Order of Balance was already exhausting. I don’t know if I could go through that again... and actually fight each other... and monsters... no. No that’s not... not for me. I like the songs though! And I love to hear about your stories. Did you know that a few writers in the city have started to collect tales about you from front line soldiers and adventurers?”

Please, god.

Julia bit her lip and looked to the ground. “Hmm. I suppose it’s impossible to tell if the stories are actually true. Not if you don’t confirm or deny them. But you’re probably very busy so it wouldn’t make much sense. We have to go left here,” she babbled, leading them towards the walls.

“It’s just outside the wall, where the fishing port is. Did you really fight a demon horde right outside the southern gates?” Julia asked.

“I took part in a battle like that, yes,” Ilea said.

Julia squeaked, both her hands raised to cover her mouth. “I knew that one was true! And then you rallied the Shadows in the city to go and retake Ravenhall, didn’t you?”

“I had information from Ravenhall, but it wasn’t me who rallied them,” Ilea said. She didn’t mind answering some of the excited woman’s questions, if she actually led her to the Minister.

Julia smiled knowingly. “No need for modesty. I know it was you. Either that or you pulled strings from the shadows. The battle in Ravenhall must have been incredible. I heard there were tens of thousands of demons. Even creatures as large as our walls are high!”

Scouts must've shared that story. Or some of the Shadows who took part. I suppose it's understandable to take some credit after being part of that battle.

Ilea had simply experienced things by now that entirely overshadowed the battle for Ravenhall. She would certainly not share them with the young woman next to her, already entirely overwhelmed by her presence. She checked her surroundings but only found two rogue types following them. No sign of Maro. *Don't pass your cult curse onto me.*