

Chapter 790 Dinner

The suns were already rather low on the horizon, Riverwatch basking in the late summer evening light. Sentinels and Shadows still flew above the city, some of the local guard squads doing the same.

“How long do you think the meeting will take? We could get dinner together at Walter’s place,” she sent to Trian and Claire.

“At least a few more hours. I’ll contact you,” Claire sent back near instantly.

“Would be nice. No idea how long. The Taleen want detailed plans,” Trian sent.

“Detailed plans,” Ilea sighed.

“It’s good that you’re not the administrator, or Headmaster for that matter,” Kyrian said as he looked over the city. He wore a black long sleeved shirt and black pants.

“Yeah, I’ve been told similar things in the past few days. But you know, we wouldn’t be here without me surviving a sunlit corridor,” she said, leaning against a tree. This one was far thicker than the one that buckled.

“Not getting enough validation? Oh great Lilith?” he asked with a smirk.

She smiled. “Fuck off. You look good. I like the casual look. Got over your constant protection or what is it?”

“It’s been... I’m better. Yes. I can also store plenty of metal in some kind of space domain, or the Meadow says its one. Connected to my essence apparently, so yeah... easier to be like this when my armor is right there. The storage rings just weren’t the same,” he said.

“Right. I have something similar. But I can store everything,” she said.

“Of course yours is better,” he said with a laugh.

“My armor is a skill so I guess it’s different in the first place. Kind of strange that you can’t make your own metal yet,” she said. “We can fly a bit and then walk by the way. The others might join later.”

“Fair, let’s go then,” he said and followed, the two flying for a few seconds through the forest before coming to a stop, landing and continuing on foot. “I had choices for metal creator classes,” he said. “But they just didn’t seem as powerful as my main one. Infusing and empowering the metal I choose limits the amount I can control, yes, but at the same time it’s far stronger than anything I could create. At least it seemed that way from the descriptions.”

“Your metal is insanely powerful, yes,” Ilea said. “On par with what the Ascended threw at me.”

“Oh really?” he asked.

Ilea smiled. “Yeah. I think you’re a much better fighter than the ones I’ve faced. But I suppose they’re not exactly warriors.”

“I train with really good ones too,” he said and winked.

“Smooth. Now you can train with a bunch of Executioners. I still wonder if we can test ourselves against the Sphere Guardians. Not a priority for Aki right now, but yeah,” she said.

The forest got darker as the trees became more dense. They were already close to the mountain and the Calys mine.

“I’m more interested in facing all those elves, honestly. Far more natural fighters and they’ve been at it for centuries, maybe even longer. Their magic intrigues me as well. How do you even defend against something like sound,” he mused.

“You just let it hit you. Until the resistance is high enough,” Ilea suggested.

He laughed. “Sure. That’s your approach. Because you can just heal everything. Not everyone has that level of regeneration.”

“You’re pretty durable yourself,” she said.

“Yeah. But a level eight hundred elf?” he asked. “I don’t know about that. I’ll find out though, if they really come to the Descent.”

“Right. I’m happy to train with them too. Don’t see why they would refuse to come either. I bet Isalthar likes the chance to have the Hunters gathered in a central place, even though the Descent is pretty large,” she said as they reached the slope of the mountain, the trees more scarce here. She quickly spotted the hidden entrance, smiling at the lack of concealment. With all her perception skills and enhanced sight, it may as well have been a door. *Walter needs to upgrade his shit. Maybe that lady from that estate can help.*

“Just hope the Accords talk to them in time, but I suppose Aki is with them,” Kyrian said.

“Took two days to prepare. I’m sure there were some talks,” Ilea said.

“You don’t actually know anything?” Kyrian asked.

She shrugged. “I actually was in Io, you know? Preparing things.”

“For two entire days?” he asked, raising his brows.

Ilea teleported them into the cavern. “I also visited Felicia, alright?”

“Right. I might’ve been in the capital too.”

“So that’s why there was no fucking food in the Redleaf mansion,” Ilea complained.

“You have entire restaurants inside of your storage domain or whatever it is,” Kyrian murmured, looking away.

“Denying Lilith her food. You have some nerve,” Ilea said, knocking on the hidden entrance to the Vultures Den. This one at least was enchanted.

“Might get an evolution achievement for that. Or one of those titles you talked about,” he said and pointed at her. “You’re still a Wanderer. Did you get something new in the meantime?”

Ilea shrugged. “I forgot to check.”

“You just like the Wanderer one, don’t you,” he said. “And I see we’re seeing the Vultures.”

“Maybe. I might be able to switch it now, it’s been over a week since I got it I think. But I can do that at any point in time. If I really need it,” she said and checked the list. There were three new ones since last time.

- **Sun Defier** [*You think you're tougher than the sun. Maybe you are. You take less damage from the heat of stars*]

- **Mediator** [*You have an aura of calm about you. Beings will know you seek the end of conflict.*]

- **Poison Enjoyer** [*A connoisseur. You taste and feel the intricacies of poisons in your body.*]

Great. Well sure, if I walk into another sun corridor, I'll fucking know what to equip.

“I got a few new ones. But nothing really better than what I already have. I’ll leave it for now until I need to do something else,” she said. “Or maybe...” she glanced at Gourmet and Deviant. *Hey maybe that would help with my astral stuff.*

“Deviant? Really?” Kyrian asked when he saw the change.

“Leave me alone. It might help me train things,” she said and read the description again.

- **Deviant** [*You may learn to understand previously incompatible magics*]

“A deviant. Wanderer sounded nicer,” he said when the door opened.

The ruby eyes of grandpa bones looked at them, his skull head glancing between Kyrian and Ilea.

“Who is this one? Another three mark? Youth,” he spat. “Don’t tell me you’re married.”

“We’re not. I don’t see why that would be an issue though,” Ilea said. “You’ve even met him before. He’s Kyrian. Initially from my Shadow team, long time friend.”

“I don’t like married people,” the skeleton explained. “Good to meet you, Kyrian. How’s your digging?”

Kyrian shook his bone hand and smiled. “Can’t complain. Just recently dug into the capital of the Taleen.” He ignored the fact that grandpa ones seemed to have forgotten him.

The skeleton whistled. Somehow. “Now that’s some impressive digging. Come on in, Ethi... I mean Walter told us about your coming. He’s preparing food. Even have some of that fish the demon likes so much.”

Ilea smiled. *Right. Forgot how crazy this little coven was. Den? Necromancer cult? Whatever.*

“Vultures Brotherhood,” Ilea said to her companion.

“It’s beinghood now,” Granpa bones said as they walked down the stairs, Ilea shutting the door with a push of space magic. “It was personhood for a time but then Weavy isn’t really a person, is he?”

Ilea looked at him, raising her brows. *You’re not exactly a person either.* She chose not to bring it up.

“Beinghood. I don’t think that’s a word,” Kyrian whispered to her.

“You’re allowed to make up new words, you know?” she said as they walked through the damp and unsanitary corridors. She spotted several kinds of fungi growing on the uneven walls, unsure if they were meant for food or simply existed due to gross neglect.

Compared to the enchanted mansion they had come from or the domain of the Meadow, the place was certainly a downgrade. *“The beds here are fucking shit too, if you needed to know.”*

“I didn’t,” Kyrian answered.

“At least the common room is nice,” she said as they passed a few patrolling undead. The corpses wore battered leather armor, spears in their hands.

[Undead Warrior – lvl 95] – [Dead]

Nice.

“So, how are things down here?” she asked, glancing at the black cape around the skeleton’s back.

He looked back with slightly glowing ruby eyes. *“Too loud.”*

“I see,” she said. *Not one for conversation.*

They entered the common room, the smells and atmosphere changing instantly. From damp and dark dungeon like stone corridor to what one might find inside of an inn. The large hearth burned with wood, flickering flames and warmth welcoming any traveler that might find the underground den. Oil lamps added warm light to the hall, stuffed deer, bear, and monster heads adorning the stone walls. Wooden support beams intersected the assortment of tables and chairs. Stairs led down into the somewhat cramped but homely hall, the counter to the left extending near all the way to the back of the room.

Behind the counter, several shelves reached up and nearly to the high ceiling, filled with bottles and jars. Walter’s collection, far more extensive now it seemed. The brewery he set up in Riverwatch must’ve born fruit. Ilea saw the barrels stored in the kitchen, a cellar added below with more. She smiled at the discovery, very much inclined to buy the entire stock.

Walter stood in the kitchen, hugging Lucia as they prepared dinner for everyone.

Harthome showed off a steel hammer glinting with magic, the large man sitting opposite the three initiates. Celene and Weavy sat at another table, the woman listening to the demon talk about a rune he had etched into the table with his claws. She moved a finger around the top of a glass of wine, seemingly lost in thought as the demon talked.

Eyn sat next to Harthome, one hand rubbing his temple as he flicked through the tome of runes. He was the first to notice them, looking up to glance at Ilea. Indra it seemed, wasn’t around.

“Hello,” came the voice of the boy. He looked less scrawny, his hair still a mess but his eyes showed no fear. Interested and perhaps even calculating. Something about him felt wild to Ilea.

“Hey. Nice spell. Weavy hasn’t gone too far, has he?” she asked with a smile.

“Walter is making sure I don’t turn into a demon. I don’t really see the point, but whatever. You two are strong... wow. And what’s that in your mind... it’s like a wall. I’ve never seen anything like it!” the boy sent, closing his tome.

Harthome stood up and laughed, raising his hammer as he shouted. *“Ilea!”*

The initiates turned around and smiled.

Still initiates? I wonder.

“You might see the point in the future. Being a demon might be fun, but I get his point,” Ilea answered the boy. *“The wall is my third tier Mental Resistance. You can try to get past it if you feel like it.”*

[Mind Mage – lvl 158]

“Are you sure? Walter says it’s dangerous, even against high level people,” Eyn said.

“You have my permission. Only against me of course,” Ilea said.

He smiled and put both hands onto his tome, whispering something to himself as he closed his eyes.

Ilea felt the pressure hit her. *Cute.* She smirked.

“Harthome, it’s good to see you. Show me that hammer,” she said and stepped down to the others, waving at Lucas, Ellie, and Naiir.

“Of course, here you go,” he said and threw the thing her way.

Ilea caught it with space magic, moving it into her hand before she inspected the metal. *“You’ve met Kyrian briefly before. He was in my shadow team, thought I’d bring him along. We just finished a long meeting with the Accords.”*

“It really wasn’t that long,” Kyrian said. *“Good to see you again,”* he said and waved, stepping down to sit down at the table. *“Weavy, Eyn, good to see you.”*

The demon turned around. *“Metal flesh. Yes. I remember you,”* he hissed. *“Mistress Lilith, you have returned for a visit. An honor, truly,”* he added and bowed. *“Deviant, you are. Indeed.”*

“I unlocked titles, yes. This one makes it easier to learn magics I’m not familiar with apparently,” she said, looking at the various benches and chairs. *“Nothing with metal?”* she asked, turning the very light hammer in her hand.

“You can have it if you like,” Harthome said as he walked over and leaned against the bar, looking at her with an approving nod.

“Thanks, but I found a hammer already,” she said, summoning Silent Memory. *“Behave, or I’ll store you again,”* she said as the silver strings flowed out, one going around her arm with the rest fanning out. She watched them and waited.

Harthome staggered back, nearly falling on his ass. *“Th... the... th... the si... si... Silent Memory!”* he shouted and started laughing. A manic sound. Then he passed out, just for a moment. He took in a deep breath, rubbing his eyes before he sat up and looked at the hammer again. *“It... not a dream. Ilea! What you have there is...”*

“A divine artifact made by Sanguerrihn, yes. I’m aware,” she said with a grin.

“It is supposed to... bring the end of times. A most dangerous creation... madness. To wield it, to bring it here... what... where have you found it?” Harthome said, staggering to get up.

One thorned silver thread moved over to him.

“Don’t. They’re not to curse or eat,” Ilea said to the hammer as if it understood.

The thread turned back, all of them moving back into the hammer, all but the one around her arm. Ilea made it vanish again. *“It took a while to make it less... angry, I guess.”*

“Angry... yes. It is not supposed to be wielded. The Silent Memory is chaos... destruction. Madness wrought into metal. Best forgotten, left in the dark. And yet you wield it. Ilea...” he started cackling, receiving his own hammer that he simply threw behind himself. “This is child’s play. Tell me how you found it!”

Ilea chose to make a chair of ash, sitting down at the table. She noticed the creaking when Kyrian sat down on the bench. “*Heavy bones, eh?*”

“*Not quite as bad as yours,*” he answered with a smile.

“You’re quite heavy, boy,” Celene said as she looked over. “Are you human?”

“I do believe I am,” Kyrian said, looking her way.

She downed her wine. “Boring.”

Ilea snickered. “Right. Being a three mark just isn’t impressive enough.”

“*Your defenses are strong. Wow,*” Eyn sent before he stopped his attempt, blood running from his nose.

“You’re bleeding again, Eyn,” Ellie said and offered a napkin.

“Thank you,” the boy answered and cleaned off the blood.

Ellie smiled and looked to Kyrian. “You wield curses, right?”

“That I do,” Kyrian said. “But I don’t know if I can show anything here without killing someone.”

“You can curse me a little,” Ilea said.

“Maybe,” Kyrian said.

“Nobody is getting cursed,” came Walter’s voice. He walked out with a plate in his hands. “You damn monsters keep your magic to yourself. This isn’t some gathering place of Cerithil Hunters or whatever.”

“Oh right, I could’ve invited a few of them too,” Ilea said.

“NO,” Walter said as the plate vanished from his hands.

“I can take care of that,” Ilea said, summoning the prepared dishes from the kitchen.

“Aren’t we waiting for the others?” Kyrian asked.

Ilea looked up from the steaming finger food. “But I’m hungry.”

“The mistress is hungry,” Weavy said and nodded. “Nothing shall interrupt her feast.”

“Nothing,” Ilea whispered.

“Fine, not like I can stop you,” Kyrian said and grabbed himself a plate as well.

“Thanks, Walter!” Ilea shouted and started eating. “Oh, I want to buy some of your mead and ale! The Taleen really liked it!”

“The Taleen,” he murmured. “Okay. Let’s... right.” He shook his head and walked back to the kitchen before realizing every plate was already gone.

Lucia giggled and grabbed his arm, leading him out from behind the bar and to one of the tables.
“Ilea, dear, can you get some mugs too?”

Ilea waved her hand, a dozen mugs vanishing from one of the shelves and appearing above them. She set them down with her space manipulation before summoning a barrel of ale.

Harthome laughed, ripping the thing open with his bare hands before he started pouring.

“I never really asked. How do you know the Vultures anyway?” Kyrian asked.

“She stumbled down here, exploring the Calys mine. What level was she? Forty or something?” Lucas said.

“Don’t say it. Makes me feel inadequate with my growth,” Naiir said.

“You wouldn’t feel so bad if you actually studied and went out there to kill monsters,” Eyn said.

“The way you talk about it, it sucks. You get hurt all the time, and you nearly died so many times already,” Naiir said, shaking his head.

“You’re just scared,” Eyn said with a smile. “You think she’s scared of anything?” he motioned to Ilea.

She gulped and smiled. “I’ve met beings that scare me. Trust me,” she said with a grin.

“Really! What?” he said and leaned forward.

“A... wait no. I don’t want to talk about it. Maybe it can somehow hear it and come here,” she said and shuddered slightly, thinking of the eye, then of the strange light illuminating her deep below the waters of Kohr. *Maybe that one was just lost. No, fuck that.*

“If she’s scared of it, I don’t want to even hear about it,” Ellie said and covered her ears.

“Covering your ears won’t do anything,” Eyn said.

“*He’s right you know,*” Ilea sent to everyone.

“You can do it too!” Eyn exclaimed with a bright smile. “See, I’m not weird!”

“You are,” Ellie said and looked away, blushing a little.

Interesting, Ilea thought with a smile. “*Don’t be mean to her. I think she likes you,*” she sent to Eyn. “*See, that’s why Walter’s lessons are important.*”

“*What do you mean... she... she... always teases me,*” he said, mind stuttering the answer. He looked down at his book. “*I’m... strange.*”

“*Strange isn’t bad, kid,*” Ilea sent. “*Strange is just strange. I’m strange too, look at my title.*”