

## Chapter 643 Royalty

Everyone joined of course, too curious to meet the downright mythical healer that has come to so much wealth and power in the past years.

“Go on ahead, I will catch up with you,” Cecila Veyer spoke, the older woman gesturing forward.

Emmanuel didn't react. He chose to show weakness by meeting with Lilith instead of letting her come to him, but neither did he have to rush. “We will meet her together. If she is cooperating with the Corinth Order, we'll have a better chance to respond. Kyrie is gathering the remaining Kingsguard as we speak.”

*Don't ruin this Joel*, he thought and suppressed a grin. Perhaps they were in luck. He may even make a good impression on an important guest for the first time in his life.

The nobles walked together, some of them veterans who had fought together. Julianna was by his side, allowing herself a quick squeeze of his hand. *A three mark human*, he thought, memories of the creatures they had slain going through his head. *What kind of beasts has she slain to reach that power?*

They reached the outer part of the royal palace, the dome just beyond the marble corridor they were in.

“Fighting,” Katarina said, magic starting to flow around her.

“Stop,” Emmanuel said, staying as calm as he had been before. *Just as we expected*, he thought, glancing at his wife. *You're gorgeous.*

She stared at him, likely telling him to focus for once in his life.

He wanted to ask her if she remembered the abomination they had killed in the southern mountains. She had looked at him the same way back then.

Emmanuel Eilhart couldn't help but feel just a little bit anxious as he turned the corner, his fears immediately gone when he saw the tense spectators. Joel Fiore, the arguably strongest member of the Kingsguard and a long time friend of his laughed as he fought an ash clad warrior wielding an obsidian warhammer.

They reached the dome together, exchanging glances with the two Paladins of the Corinth Order, a High Cleric wearing civilian clothing, and two entirely absorbed trainees of the Kingsguard.

Nobody interrupted the duel, everyone watching the impressive display of Joel's magic. He rushed forward, a broad grin on his face, blue lightning flaring up on his body as his speed built. He vanished three times and appeared close to the ashen warrior, his charged fist rushing forward.

*He's not holding back. At all.*

Lilith instead seemed casual, her stance barely suggesting that she was in battle, the obsidian hammer casually held with one hand. She stepped to the side, her horned head turning slightly to look at Joel. Lilith swung her hammer as if it were a mere toy, the heavy handle impacting Joel's chest with a direct blow.

The armored man was flung backwards, rolling on the ground a few times before he skidded to a halt. His enchanted breast plate had a massive dent in it. Joel loosened the straps and ripped it off, spitting blood onto the thin layer of sand. He crouched low and charged his magic.

“Joel,” Emmanuel spoke up.

The man sighed, standing up as his chest healed, the deformation visible under his shirt. “It was just getting interesting.”

“You were about to get killed!” Julianna said and walked over to him. “Why can you not just sit out one fight!”

Joel raised both his arms. “I challenged her, and she accepted.”

Lilith turned towards them now, her ash armor receding to reveal a good looking young woman with long black hair and blue eyes, a cloak resting on her back. She wore casual clothing.

Emmanuel didn't miss that the clothes seemed straight out of a tailor's shop. *Storage items*, he thought, glancing at the necklace and bracelet, both partially hidden. She kept the hammer out, why, he didn't know. Lilith fought with ash, her body, and mana intrusion. Not a warhammer. *Another demonstration of power. She's not even using her magic.*

“Welcome to Halstein, Lilith of Ravenhall,” Emmanuel said.

### **[Battle Healer – lvl ???]**

The woman seemed unsure about what to do, glancing over to the Kingsguard she had just fought. “Joel, what's the process here? I'd like to avoid another incident.”

The man walked over, ignoring Julianna. “Bow deep, face touching the ground. You're addressing royalty!”

Lilith rolled her eyes. “Even I can tell you're fucking with me. Now tell me or I'll beat the shit out of you again.”

“You're reading my mind,” the man answered, spreading his arms as lightning cracked around him.

“I believe formalities are not necessary in this case, Lilith. Or should I say, Ilea?” Emmanuel asked.

The woman looked over. “Glad to hear that. Ilea is fine, if you already know that much. I assume you're the King?”

*She seems disappointed? Well I'm not a three mark after all.*

“Indeed. Emmanuel Eilhart. I had hoped to invite you after your meeting with the Corinth Order. But it looks like that didn't go exactly as you had intended?” he asked, gesturing to the Order members. “You may join us,” he said, addressing the three.

They looked tense, more so than the last time he had seen them. Was it just because of Lilith's presence?

“You must be the Queen then?” Ilea asked, looking at Lady Veyer.

The older woman had a complicated expression on her face, one Emmanuel didn't remember ever seeing.

“Interesting... magic,” Ilea said and smiled lightly.

“I’m the Queen,” Julianna said and joined Emmanuel. “Julianna Veyer. It seems our inquiries managed to uncover the truth after all.”

“Inquiries? About me?” Ilea asked. “Didn’t think I’d be that interesting.”

“No need to humble yourself. It would be wonderful to welcome you in our palace officially. Our cooks are preparing a feast as we speak,” Julianna said.

Lilith smiled. “I hope you have better poison than the Corinth Order.”

Katarina grumbled something under her breath.

“Maybe you should introduce yourself as well,” Emmanuel said to the others.

“Katarina Elyse. I believe you know my dearest brother,” the woman said, not making a secret of her dislike of the man.

“I’m familiar,” Lilith said, her voice cold.

Emmanuel felt his instincts scream for a moment, a cold feeling going down his back. *It seems like Katarina isn’t the only one who has an issue with Michael. Never one for social skills.*

“Cecila Veyer, at your service,” Lady Veyer said with a warm smile on her face.

“Nice to meet you. Are you interested in a spar Lady Veyer?” Ilea asked.

*Why single her out?* Emmanuel wondered. She was an experienced and powerful mage but there were stronger fighters here.

The woman chuckled and waved her off. “My prime is long past, young healer. I’m sure you’ll find more formidable training partners in this very dome.”

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*Dangerous, that one,* Ilea thought and smiled back.

### **[Druid Healer – lvl 240]**

She looked unassuming, wrinkles on her face showing her age, her long hair a pale gray. She carried a gnarled wooden walking stick or perhaps a staff of some kind, her back bent a little. Simple black robes covered her body, various pockets added for easy access of whatever items were within.

Something about her bothered Ilea. Identify suggested level two forty, Veteran told her the same. But when she looked into the woman’s small eyes, she felt something more hiding within. *A worthy foe perhaps. Hiding from both of my skills? Maybe she has some kind of intimidation skill... but she’s acting the part of the old woman. Well, if she wants to hide it, that’s her choice. Just have to be careful around her.*

The King and Queen looked young, around thirty. Looks were deceiving however. All it meant was that they reached the two hundreds in their early thirties.

**[Fire Mage – lvl 265]**

Emmanuel Eilhart looked good, she wouldn't deny it. A chiseled jawline, short black beard, a well styled haircut and deep brown eyes. He seemed to be well trained too, an experienced warrior if the few movements she had seen suggested anything. The man wore a fancy gambeson in a deep forest green, golden embroideries decorating the chest and arms. He wore a few golden rings on his left hand and none on his right, a thin circular crown resting on his head.

She thought his title fitting. The Queen on the other hand looked glacial. She wore an armored black dress, linings of silver going through everything, forming complex designs and runes. Ilea could see the power flowing through the metal. *Enchanted or she's a silver mage.*

Her hair was blond, a single perfectly done braid going down her back, her skin pale. The Queen's green eyes seemed downright piercing due to the contrasting colors.

**[Silver Mage – lvl 248]**

*Guessed right*, she thought with a smile.

The last woman seemed to have a perpetual frown on her face, her black eyes cold as they stared at her. She wore a fine silk dress, black just like her hair.

*Michael's sister apparently.*

**[Metal Mage – lvl 242]**

*Seems to run in the family, I wonder if she dislikes him because he got gold*, Ilea thought. *Or she just acted out the comment before to get on my good side. I'm meeting nobility after all. Let's hope to keep this as short as possible. At least they're preparing a feast. Maybe I should hire a few bards to sing songs about my food and drink preferences.*

Joel she had already met, the lightning mage at level two eighty, so far her favorite person in Halstein by a long shot. Direct, brawler, well trained, handsome in a rugged kind of way, knows what he wants. She nearly didn't have the heart to show him more than a bit of her power, though she an inkling that his spirit wouldn't be beaten down so easily.

"We had heard about your arrival, and subsequent meeting with the Corinth Order. The tense expressions on your companions suggest something unexpected may have transpired. You mentioned poison?" the king asked.

"I'm an outsider," Ilea said. "It seems someone may have wanted to use me in their schemes. I think it's best if the Head Paladin and High Cleric explain our presence here."

*Delegate responsibilities*, she thought with a smirk and stepped aside.

The three Corinth members bowed deeply.

"High Cleric Donnavon, Paladin Bryce, and you are?" Emmanuel asked.

"Paladin Naomi, your majesty," the woman replied.

Ilea only listened to the conversation absentmindedly, making sure they weren't spinning a new tale as she twirled her hammer, winking at Joel.

He joined her a moment later, garnering a glare from the Queen. "Sure you don't want to start a brawl? They've been sitting around with their politics for decades. Barely remember the last time his bloody suit got any dirt on it."

“You know him well?” Ilea asked.

“We were adventurers at one point. Well nobility too, but it’s good to get real experience. Lets you appreciate all the fancy crap you grow up with. Being in the Kingsguard isn’t half bad, don’t get me wrong. I just wish there were a few more monster attacks around the city,” he mused.

“Could take a vacation. I know a really nice spot, few islands in the west,” Ilea said with a smile.

“If only. Can’t be gone for more than a few days at a time,” he sighed.

*Well if only there was some kind of teleportation network available to solve this issue,* Ilea thought, smiling to herself.

The conversation was growing more tense, Donnavon apparently sharing sensitive information with the royals, naming loyal followers of the Corinth doctrine. A bunch of armored warriors and mages had arrived in the meantime, a respectful distance away from the talking group, most of them looking at either Bryce or her.

She spotted the rogue who had been training with Joel when they had arrived. “Looks a bit like you,” she said, the rogue looking away when he noticed her stare.

“Kyrie is my brother. What do you think?” Joel said.

“Handsome lad. Seems very reserved. Devoted to his duty?” she asked.

“I’ll take the compliment,” Joel said. “Don’t get me wrong, Ilea. We will both fight you if you try anything.”

*I could kill everyone in this room. Except maybe that Druid. But who knows. She seemed uncertain too.*

“I’m not here to start a war, Joel. I very much dislike participating in them,” she informed him.

“Expected a less serious reply,” he said. “Care for a tour of the city later? I know of a few wonderful spots.”

“Intriguing. Perhaps I’ll take you up on that offer, brave Kingsguard,” Ilea mused.

The Queen walked over a moment later, a tense expression on her face before she smiled. “Do you prefer Lilith or Ilea?”

“Doesn’t matter to me,” Ilea said.

“Lilith then. I’m aware that you came to meet with the Corinth Order as a representative of the Medic Sentinel Corps, but perhaps you would be interested to talk about potential agreements with the Kingdom as a representative of the Ravenhall council?” she said.

*Even know about that one, hmm? Well, I do talk to much.*

“I’m not in a position to make such arrangements, I’m afraid,” Ilea answered. “I suggest you contact the Head Administrator.”

“Claire, was it? We have already been in touch. Meeting in person is however my preferred method to talk about such matters. It’s easier with a few bottles of wine and good food,” the Queen said.

“I suppose you’re right. I’m sure you’ll find an arrangement that works in due time,” Ilea said. *And stop bothering me about trade deals.*

“She doesn’t seem to speak your language, Julianna,” Joel said.

The Queen glared at him for a split second before she smiled again. “I’m sure we will, Lilith. I hope to have you join the feast regardless, and I apologize for the lack of hospitality shown by our countrymen.”

“I’ll be happy to join,” Ilea said with a smile.

Joel breathed out when the Queen had returned to the others.

*Attempt at my life equals a lack of hospitality? Fancy that.*

“We can leave now if you want to? You may as well have told her to fuck off,” Joel said.

“I’m somewhat invested in this whole Corinth business,” Ilea said. “A lack of hospitality is somewhat offensive after all.”

The man huffed. “Understandable.”

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Emmanuel looked at the growing plate of Lilith, a thin limb of ash moving around the table, adding more as she ate with abandon. He allowed himself a glance at Julianna, her smile wavering slightly when she noticed his look.

*She’s envious. I should’ve known. I’ll get you a personal feast later.*

He was pretty sure the best approach to Lilith was acting more natural around her but he couldn’t allow himself to do so too much. Joel had a certain reputation and this time it was very much in their favor to have him meet an important guest first but it wouldn’t make for a very royal sight if they behaved like adventurers. Lilith wasn’t the only person in the hall after all.

*I hope their claims can be proven by the guard.*

Several teams were already investigating, Bryce and Donnavon suggesting targets and potential allies for their Order’s sake. Removing corrupting elements was always beneficial, and cooperating with the side that would come out on top would strengthen their devotion to the crown. Favors for favors. And luckily for today, the balance rarely tipped as overwhelmingly towards one side.

*A plot to start a conflict with Ravenhall, the Head Paladin supporting a High Cleric, and most importantly, Lilith, the three mark monster.*

The news of an independent Ravenhall was surprising but very much welcome as soon as it was revealed that their leadership wasn’t simply an uncoordinated rebellious group like the one in Dawntree. Lys accepted their independence and lost a lot of influence in the southern plains. Of course the territory they gained in Baralia more than made up for that but with the geographic location, Kroll might actually be able to apply more pressure on the Empire in the coming decades.

“I heard of your exploits in the south,” he said, looking at Ilea.

She glanced at him, cleaning her mouth with a napkin.

“There is a rumor going around, that you found and freed Queen Lumian,” he said. *The crown returned. You faced not only the Abominations.*

He remembered the Specters protecting the lower parts of the dungeon. Creatures their whole team couldn't face. Even for training it was deemed too dangerous. *If one had followed us up... we wouldn't be sitting here.*

“You heard about that?” Ilea asked.

“You're hailed a hero in the southern regions, though I hear the people only dare whisper your name,” he said.

She glanced at him with a questioning look, drinking from her ale.

“They say you terrorized a group of adventurers and that you abducted a young girl as payment,” Emmanuel said, a few people on the table tensing up. He knew she wouldn't be bothered by any of that, and he knew none of it was true. Well she may have scared the locals, but even with his power, it happened before. He couldn't even imagine what low level humans thought of her, when they saw her use her magic. *I do wish to see it too. Ah the downsides of kingly manners. Perhaps we should organize a tournament.*

“Sophia talked? Maybe I should visit her again,” Ilea said with a grin. “As to the girl. It was her choice.”

He smiled, enjoying the looks on the nobles sitting at the long table almost as much as she surely did. “Where is she now?” he asked, to avoid potential incidents and pointless discussions with people lacking the ability to detect sarcasm. Something he had to learn the hard way.

“She's training to become a Sentinel,” Ilea said, luckily not pushing the joke any further.