

Chapter 749 Knives and Noodles

The announcer called out the two fighters, Lily preparing her spells and auras to respond to the Sentinel. She felt her heart beating in her chest, the words from Edwin fresh on her mind.

“Begin!” the sound reverberated through the arena, mixing in with the cheers of the enthusiastic crowd.

Lily looked at her opponent, the Sentinel vanishing an instant after the battle start, her knives flashing in front of Lily’s face as she dodged backwards. She deflected two strikes but couldn’t keep up with the two weapons of her foe. Instead she used her pack, the wolves pouncing out of the shadows and towards Celeste.

She teleported again, avoiding the wolves before she threw the knives instead, forcing Lily to move into the shadows herself.

She came back out a dozen meters away and found one of her wolves cut apart, another one stabbed in its slightly ethereal head. Lily rushed forward with more of her wolves moving out, recalling the last one engaged with the Sentinel with a whistle. It jumped away when Celeste whipped forward her right arm, the chain coming loose before it wrapped around the wolf. A thrown knife entered the creature’s head, the being quickly dissolving into nothing.

Lily grit her teeth as she and her pack approached in a formation, three each moving to the left and right, one staying right in front of her. She watched as Celeste sheathed the one knife she held and twirled, sunlight reflecting off the metal bits of her freshly polished armor.

Two chains whipped out with quick motions, moving in unpredictable patterns one high and one low. The Sentinel walked forward, meeting the charge with moving steel. She took two quick steps and moved sideways, the chains whipping out with blinding speed, one ripping through two wolves in a single strike, the other taking out one on the other side. She twirled again to regain the momentum, the chains now past the approaching wolves and Lily.

She’s won’t stay there. Lily whistled, her wolves rushing out and away, only the one in front of her still running towards the battle healer. Lily herself waited until the last moment, watching the Sentinel disappear as she had expected.

Celeste appeared a few meters back and to the right, her chains whipping through where the wolves would’ve been, missing them by an arm’s length.

Lily ducked under the second chain and teleported forward, stabbing her knife at the woman’s neck. Her foe tried to block with her left arm but found herself unable to move it, two wolves pulling on the chain they had caught. Her blade found a space between the shoulder piece and helmet, biting into the flesh below. Lily didn’t let go, her wolves rushing forward when Celeste kicked her.

All the air left her lungs as she lurched backwards, still holding on to the blade.

Three wolves jumped the woman when she moved her shoulders, the chains falling to the ground before she grabbed for two more knives. She met the jumping wolves with her blades, one of them stabbed in its upper jaw and the other grazed on its leg. Two still bit down, one on her calf and the other on her right wrist.

Lily let go of the blade and transformed, her form growing larger until she pushed down the woman, two wolves still biting her calf and arm while Lily herself pushed her massive claws into the Sentinel's shoulders. She opened her maw around the woman's helmet and bit down, finding resistance in the form of one of her arms. Bone and metal groaned under her jaws and teeth, the helmet now gripped as well. The strength she could use was reduced by the blocking arm but she still managed to break through.

Her claws found purchase as well, biting deep into Celeste's shoulder until the combined effort of her wolf and her claws managed to rip off her right arm.

The crowd winced as the bloodied bit was pulled away by the monstrous wolf, Lily's large form still pushing down the struggling Sentinel with her claws glancing off her armor, teeth grinding against bracers and helmet. She did all she could, letting go once before she bit off the woman's hand instead, ripping on the second arm with her claws cutting down on her shoulder. She couldn't quite rip it off but the fight was over regardless. She moved her head to the side and lifted the woman off the ground, slamming her down with a spray of blood splattering against the thin layer of sand with the sand of shattering bones. Her wolves were rushing at the Sentinel again as Lily let go and jumped back, her own form returning to normal.

She went to one knee and coughed up blood, sweat pooling on her brow. *Too long.* She could feel every muscle in her body ache, whistling to send her remaining wolves at the downed woman.

Her eyes opened wide when Celeste vanished. She appeared next to her arm and kicked away the nearby wolf. A groan escaped her as she bent down with her injured leg and grabbed the piece of mangled flesh. She placed it against her bleeding shoulder socket and huffed, cracking her head in the process. Her other arm turned and cracked as bones realigned, the hand Lily had removed already back.

How.

Three knives were thrown at the wolves, two more in the Sentinel's hands as she rushed at Lily once again.

Lily looked at the black eyes now taking her in. The casual demeanor was gone, instead she looked at a hunter.

Her knife came up to block the strikes but Celeste now moved without regard for her own health, simply ignoring the counter strikes that glanced off her armor or left shallow wounds. Lily felt the first stab in her arm, the next biting deep into her stomach. She winced at the pain, two more stabs sliding in past her ribs, the blade remaining inside. Another two stabbed deep into her shoulders, her arms slumping down. She fell to her knees and looked up, seeing the Sentinel back with her chains, whirling the heavy links in the air above her. She felt the air whistle when one of the chains whipped past just above her head, her jaw shutting with a quick motion as her vision blurred. It hurt. Everything hurt. She looked down and saw blood pooling below her. Lily tried to grab the bloodied black dagger but couldn't move her arm far enough, then she fell forward, barely feeling the impact of her head on the sand.

A loud voice resounded but she couldn't hear anything, a strange feeling spreading through her until the pain suddenly eased. Warmth flooded her, the familiar feeling making her add her own healing with the little mana she had left. Metal clang to the ground as the blades were removed from her body.

Lily rolled onto her back with her eyes open, taking in fast breaths as the phantom pain made her grit her teeth.

“Not bad. Pretty nasty that monster form. Just have to prevent a teleport and you can go to town,” the voice of Celeste came from the side.

Lily turned her head and found the woman crouching next to her. “Your armor is shit. And you should get that pain tolerance sorted... though I know it’s near impossible without... help.” She glanced up to the terrace and returned her attention to Lily. “Don’t think about it too much. For me it helps to have another fight right after, makes you focus on something else. That or drinking.”

Celeste offered a hand and Lily took it, the woman easily pulling up the savage wolf before she slapped her shoulder. “Don’t know how I would’ve fared without my armor, I’ll be honest.”

“How did you... ignore all that... your arm... your face,” Lily stuttered out.

Celeste just looked at her. “What do you think we do all day?”

“Rip off each other’s arms?” Lily asked in a borderline mocking voice. She shook her head lightly when the woman didn’t reply. She repeated the question in a more serious tone.

“Usually it’s cutting. It’s important to learn how to deal with that kind of injury. Plenty of monsters can do worse than what you just did in even less time. It’s damn near impossible without healing, but you do have a spell. Maybe work on that more, might come in handy,” the woman said. She started collecting her daggers and knives, some of them looking like they belonged in a kitchen.

Lily watched her, more people in black armor standing nearby, giving both of them a few looks. She felt more healing magic before the other Sentinels left, the two people she assumed to be Shadows gave each other a look and left as well.

She sighed and glanced up to the terrace. *More to think about and consider. I’ll definitely watch her other fights.*

Cless finally shut the door to the gallery. It had been a long day. Only the nice compliments had kept her going!

The big Shadow men had made themselves comfortable on chairs they had brought in. Their task was to protect the paintings at night.

She wrung her hands as she looked their way.

“Something wrong?” Charles asked. The man was nice and he liked to talk more than the other one. A light floated above them, magic conjured by the man.

“Is... is it okay?” Cless asked. She felt the little Fae sit down on her right shoulder. The right shoulder was always the best one. She knew that.

Charles smiled. "We were paid until after the auction. Don't worry. At this level we don't need a lot of sleep or anything else."

"Okay." Cless smiled at him and waved to the two. Charles waved back. She knew many Shadows by now and they were all hard workers, and very strong. She summoned her magic book and started sketching with the blue ethereal pencil appearing in her hand. Her hand moved quickly, the depiction exactly as she remembered. She activated her spell and felt the magic flow through her. She could tell that Baron Violence came with her, the two of them appearing in front of the large building Keyla had chosen as her restaurant during the festival.

She ran up the stairs while giggling, the guards letting her through, some of the people waiting in line giving her strange looks. She stuck out her tongue and ran faster so that nobody could catch her. Cless nearly collided with a woman dressed in black, the waitress dodging to the side.

"Cless," she said, her tone cold.

She froze and turned around, her eyes focused on the ground.

Fear

"I told you not to run inside," the woman said, her arms crossed.

"I'm sorry Miss Veria," Cless said, feeling her heart pounding. A hand came to rest on her head a moment later.

"No go. And no running or you can eat somewhere else," Veria said, a smile on her face as Cless looked up.

She nodded, smiling too before she nearly ran again.

No! The Baron's voice stopped her.

Cless took in a deep breath and forced herself to walk slowly, big steps taking the stairs until she found the entrance to the kitchen.

The chefs were rushing around as she waited near the door, knives cutting through vegetables and meat faster than she could follow with her eyes. Magic lit up here and there, fire mostly but also ice and water. She even saw one of them use smoke. Keyla stood at the center of the moderately sized room. Her reptilian eyes darted around the room as she occasionally shouted an instruction. She herself was handed ingredients, plates, and pans, making adjustments or giving her approval. She had long spotted the girl waiting near the door. "Cless, close the door."

Cless did as the scary dragon woman said. Veria was to be respected but Keyla was to be feared. She was the monster of Ravenhall. Both she and the Baron knew. But her food was so so good. She waited without saying a word, knowing that if she interrupted the cooks she wouldn't be allowed in the kitchen for a whole week! It had already happened four times.

Garret turned her way with a focused expression. The cook was always serious. He handed her a plate with yellow noodles and seared meat, green herbs and bits of mushroom sprinkled on top. He raised a small can and poured a dark liquid on top with a practiced motion before he grabbed a fork from a nearby shelf, spinning the weapon between his fingers and finally stabbing it into the noodles. "Enjoy the food, little one."

Cless bowed her head. "Thank you!" She opened her book and grabbed a set of gloves before she took the hot plate and rushed out, Violence opening the door with his magic. "*Let's go!*" she said

through the connection, feeling the space magic before they vanished and appeared on the roof top of a nearby building.

She giggled to herself as she sat down, her legs dangling off the edge. She was only allowed to do this when Violence was around, otherwise the Sentinels said it was too dangerous. Falling down would hurt her. Not a lot but a little. She didn't like to get hurt. Cless understood that some of the other students did it on purpose to get stronger but she didn't understand why. How could getting hurt make one stronger? It just hurt.

She forgot what she was thinking about when the wind changed and she smelled the food in the plate she still held with her gloves. A moment later she dug in, nearly crying at the incredibly nice taste. Cless had no idea what it was but it was nice.

Violence sat on her lap and held up a single noodle, inspecting the thing before a part of it floated into its body, another bit simply dissolved as the Fae tilted its head to the side, small hands grabbing for another bit of noodle.

"Do you like it?" Cless asked with a stuffed mouth.

No.

Long.

Unwieldy.

The Fae tried holding up the noodle with its two stubby hands but it simply drooped down and fell, floating back up with the power of space magic, rejoining the quickly dwindling noodles on the plate.

"You don't like noodles." Cless nodded. She understood, slurping up more of the food. It wasn't easy to eat, especially when it was this delicious!

She finished the food, the Fae returning the plate before it appeared again on the rooftop.

"*What do you want to do? Watch the tournament?*" she asked.

Night

No

Battles

"*Oh. That is sad. I'm sorry, Violence,*" she said and patted the creature's head. It felt so nice. Like her teddy, but that one was still at home and she couldn't get back for some time. At some point she knew she could do it. She had to show off her paintings, and her magic!

The small creature drooped down a little before it raised a hand to its chin.

It looked up.

Visit

Friend?

"*You want to go?*" Cless asked.

Come

Too

"I don't know. Claire said I shouldn't leave the city," she said.

Ask?

Cless looked at the creature and nodded. *"We can ask her."*

Office?

Cless opened her book and drew the stairwell leading up to Claire's office. She couldn't get inside the room directly, because of magic in the walls. Her spell manifested a moment later.

Walking up the stairs, they knocked but nobody replied. *"She's not here."*

Violence floated up and crossed its arms.

It pointed to itself.

Search

Cless

Wait

"Okay," Cless said, watching the creature vanish.

She sat down on the stairs and opened her book, looking through the different sketches and spells she had inside. William wanted her to train with the others sometimes. It was fun to use magic but fighting was exhausting! And she sometimes got hurt or hurt others. That she didn't like. Painting was nicer. Or exploring.

Violence came back a few minutes later.

Allowed!

"Allowed?" Cless asked.

Allowed

The Fae nodded and pulled on her hand before it appeared on her shoulder and pointed.

Morhill!

She smiled and sketched the gallery. The Fae led her through the city after that, through several slightly crowded alleys until they came up on a large building. She could see the magic inside the walls. Two guards stood at the entrance, both wearing black, very large, and their faces covered my metal.

One of them glanced down at her but didn't say anything.

"Can I go inside?" she asked as she looked up, straining her neck to see the steel helmet.

"I'm sorry, little one. Only a select few are allowed into this building," the man said.

Violence appeared in front of her and floated up.

The two guards went down to one knee at the same time. *"Greetings, revered Spirit of old."*

Friend

It pointed at her.

“I understand. Please enter,” the guard said and opened the thick metal door.

Violence giggled and led her inside.

“Are you sure this is allowed?” Cless asked.

They were in a large hall, four guards standing near the walls, two glancing their way. They focused more on the floating Fae than on her.

Violence led her to the center of the hall where a stairwell led down into another room. More guards were there and a round platform stood at the center. She rubbed her temple. There was a lot of magic here.

Meet

Friend!

They stood on the platform when magic flowed through the surroundings. The walls changed. Teleportation. Cless now saw an expansive cavern, pillars reaching up to the distant ceiling. Violence teleported her again until they stood on strange black grass. She touched her head. The magic was very strong here! It was so strong that she had to sit down.

“Greetings, little artist,” she heard in her head.

Cless looked up and saw a sparkling tree in the distance. “Hello,” she sent back.

Violence giggled and pointed. *Friend!*