

## Chapter 614 A simple spell

“I’m sure we’ll get the chance to see what else these isles have to offer,” Ilea said. “But I don’t want to keep you here.”

Kyrian laughed. “I’ve been here for a long time... another few days wouldn’t make a difference,” he said.

Ilea just looked at him before she flew towards the Taleen dungeon on the same isle. “Come, I’ll introduce you to the others.”

“The ones who managed to use the gate?” Kyrian asked.

“They’re here too. Talented bunch who worked tirelessly to get this done,” Ilea said.

The man gulped. “I hope you didn’t do that just for me.”

“I would’ve hired them to do it just for you. But as it happens, there were other reasons as well. I don’t have to explain the benefits of having a long range teleportation network on our hands.” she said.

“No, you don’t. But that doesn’t mean using the existing Taleen one. I would assume there are many measures in place to prevent outsiders from doing so,” he said, the three of them flying towards the rocky coast.

“Hence the other reasons, mostly to do with the Cerithil Hunters,” Ilea said. “When you were teleported here, I instead was moved to Iz, the once capital of the Taleen. When I was hunting with the Elves recently, we came across another portal that led there which let me use the various marks I left on people to find out where it was.”

“The capital?” Kyrian asked. “So that means you know where we are right now? Based on those marks?”

“Not just that. Iana and Christopher managed to copy the map of all accessible destinations within the Taleen teleportation network. We’re far northwest, very far. I don’t even know how close the continent is. Maybe there’s another one that’s closer, maybe we’re in the middle of a massive ocean,” Ilea said.

“Would’ve been a difficult flight,” Kyrian said and chuckled to himself. “I’m glad you came before I left.”

Ilea smiled. “Me too.”

“Now you’re using the gates to attack Iz?” he asked, looking at Feyrair.

The elf hissed. “Iz... it’s too dangerous as we are now. Even Isalthar, the strongest among us, could not face the armies.”

“That too. Which means we’ll have to get stronger ourselves. Mostly me, Fey, and Neiphato. The others are training too, but... well one does need a certain... character, to do what we do,” Ilea explained.

The man huffed. “Yeah,” he looked at them and laughed.

“Are you insulting me?” Feyrair asked with a hiss.

“I suppose I understand you a little better now, Ilea. And you, Feyrair, I will face you when I return,” Kyrian said and turned to look at the dragonling.

“Return?” Ilea asked.

“Of course. After I visit Ravenhall, take a vacation for a week or two. I certainly deserve it. But I won’t let you destroy the monsters of these isles all alone,” he answered.

“You’ve fought enough, you don’t have to help j-” Ilea started but he raised a hand, shaking his head.

“Please. I can make my own choices, Ilea. I won’t let you be the only Shadow to reach level five hundred. And I will help with Iz, if your group will have me,” Kyrian said.

“Are you sure? After everything you’ve been through?” she said.

He sighed. “I must look more fragile than I thought,” Kyrian said. “I told you, I want to get back at the creatures here who took me for prey to play with, I want to get back at those who set up these *fucking* gates. And if I reach the next evolution, maybe I’ll get something that would prevent a situation like this one in the future.”

“I get it. And sure, I told you, I’d be happy to have you travel with us. But take at least two weeks off,” Ilea said.

“You promise not to kill everything here in those two weeks?” Kyrian asked.

She smirked. “Can’t make promises like that, old friend,” she teased. “I’m kidding. We’ll focus on the Bluetails for now, get used to them. And I’ll show you to Ravenhall first.”

He grunted his approval. “Anywhere where I can bring the Vrayar? I don’t want to leave them here.”

“My house? They can’t teleport through doors or attack through walls?” Ilea asked.

“Neither. They don’t attack anyway, as long as they don’t feel threatened. I think they don’t know how to hunt because of me,” Kyrian said.

“Domesticated. Good, wouldn’t want the tigers to die because of them,” Ilea said.

“Ah yes, I remember, in the nearby cave. Surely grown up by now?” Kyrian asked.

Ilea smiled. “To be honest, I haven’t checked on them in a while. We’re more just neighbors.”

They reached the dungeon entrance, night having fallen by now. The mists flowed down the mountains and onto the lowest altitudes.

Ilea spread her ash into the miststalkers dancing closer, their tendrils of magic draining her health and mana.

The creatures turned to mist themselves when her reverse reconstruction overwhelmed them.

“You can’t kill them?” Kyrian asked.

“Oh no I can, but they’re hardly a drop in the ocean of experience I need for any levels,” she said.

"I see. The same applies to me," Kyrian said and turned around near the entrance, looking at the field of mist flowing onto the ocean, the water winning out a few dozen meters out. "They have a serene beauty to them, don't they?"

Ilea suppressed the joke sitting on her tongue and followed his gaze. "They do. But I think I like the storms more."

"Of course you do," Kyrian said and laughed, turning to the entrance where Feyrair already waited.

The rest of the group was waiting downstairs, Iana and Christopher tinkering with enchanted steel plates. Various tools and materials were spread out across several workbenches, a few tables covered in notes and large blueprints adding to the scene. Neiphato sat on the ground, wood growing around him in what looked like a miniature meadow.

*Guess I'm not the one with the future Meadow evolution,* Ilea thought, looking at the beautiful elf who opened his eyes in turn.

"Welcome back," he said and slowly floated up, the roots around him spreading out as he did so. "You must be Kyrian. It's an honor to meet you," he said and curtsied.

"Good to meet you. Another Cerithil Hunter?" Kyrian said as he turned his head to the elf.

"Indeed. And an ally to Ilea," he said. "I'm glad you survived."

"As am I," Kyrian said.

Iana glanced over and waved. "Hey Kyrian. Knew you'd make it."

"Iana, good to see you. It's been a while," the man said.

"I see you made some modifications... oh, it's not even the same steel anymore," Iana said and giggled. "Balduur won't be too happy."

Kyrian just grunted, chuckling to himself a moment later. "And you are Christopher."

"Yes. I eh... I heard you helped... against Arthur. We didn't meet but... thank you," the enchanter said.

"Arthur? How is that related?" Kyrian asked.

"I was working for him... not entirely by choice. Well now I'm working for Ilea," he said.

"Not entirely by choice?" Kyrian asked, his voice sounding entirely serious.

"Don't scare him," Ilea said, tapping his shoulder. "He can stop whenever he wants."

Christopher chuckled awkwardly. "I... I don't think I can stop."

"Not with all the progress we're making," Iana said.

Ilea summoned the key locator and displaced it close to Iana. "Speaking of which. You can have it for a while to copy the map. I'll show Kyrian to Ravenhall."

"You do not intent to search for the keys?" Neiphato asked.

Ilea glanced at Kyrian, the man looking between the elf and her. "Found something in Iz that requires a bunch of ancient Taleen keys. That thingy there helps us find them. And Neiphato, I doubt looking for those will be any easier than surviving in Iz, or at least facing several

Executioners. I think it would be best to train on these isles for a while. You have plenty of ways to get stronger here too.”

“I will give you a tour when I’m back,” Kyrian said. “Can you heal?”

Neiphato nodded. “Yes.”

“Good. Then the keeps would probably be best to level your skills, or are they already all in the later third tier?” the metal mage asked.

*He’s taking over*, Ilea thought with a smile.

“Can’t believe this human has a higher level than me. How old is he? A hundred, two hundred?” Feyrair whispered.

“Mid twenties?” Ilea suggested.

The elf just hissed. “Isles with all kinds of perfect high level monsters to fight. I see you’re not the only human with that kind of luck. Perhaps that is the inherent power of your species, instead of the magic we inherit.”

“Eh, there would be more like us if that was the case,” Ilea said.

“I was joking. I’m merely envious of his opportunities,” Feyrair said.

“Instead of crawling through ancient and empty Taleen ruins?” Ilea asked.

He hissed.

Ilea laughed. “Well, his opportunities are yours now. And mine. So we better make the most of it. Don’t want to be a burden to Isalthar the next time we go to Iz.”

“We won’t be,” the elf said, his flames flaring up for a short moment before they subsided once more.

“Finding ancient keys. For what purpose exactly?” Kyrian asked.

“There’s some kind of being within Iz... a machine maybe, or a really old dwarf, who knows. The keys allow us to get more information, maybe something that would help us stop the Taleen on their unending attempt to destroy all Elves,” Ilea said.

The man just nodded to himself.

“Alright, let’s leave this place for now. Kyrian can you get your birds?” Ilea asked.

“Will do,” the man said and vanished.

“What a presence...,” Neiphato murmured, hissing a moment later. “I could feel his magic, suppressed and waiting to be unleashed.”

“Did you feel my presence too?” Feyrair asked.

“You are hard to miss, Feyrair,” Neiphato said with a smile.

The dragonling hissed. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Stop bickering,” Ilea said. “Iana can you two do the copy while I’m in Ravenhall?”

“We will return north,” Iana said. “You can get it there when we’re done. Should be just a moment with Meadow’s help.”

“Alright,” Ilea said, blinking outside to shoo away the closest Miststalkers before they started draining the Vrayar. She waited in them mist, seeing Kyrian approach in the distance.

He slowed down and landed, the birds following him and landing on the nearby rock, one on his shoulder, one on his outstretched arm.

“We really have to have a race at some point,” Ilea said. “I remember your flying wasn’t exactly... perfect.”

The man petted the bird on his arm. “Yeah, but now I have a skill for it. Plus the metal manipulation helps.”

Ilea walked inside, holding the gate open for him. “I met a few metal mages in the meantime, all specializing in silver, gold, or obsidian.”

“I can only control iron in various forms,” Kyrian said. “But most steel works well too. Much more resilient.”

“I see. I’m sure Goliath has some cool stuff for you to check out as well,” she said. “He’s a smith in the north.”

“I’ll gladly meet him,” he said.

Ilea stopped on the stairs, extending her ash to wrap around his arm. “Kyrian.”

He turned and looked at her.

She grabbed his arm. “Can I mark you?”

“Mark me?” he asked.

“It’s a spell I can use. I’ll be able to find you. And you can call for me if something happens,” she said. “I don’t... I don’t want to lose you again.”

“I don’t want to get lost again,” he said. “Mark away.”

A few moments later, the whole group stood in the entrance hall to the Iznakor dungeon. The workbenches and tools were gone, returned to Iana’s storage ring. “Ready?” Ilea asked, mostly for Kyrian.

He glanced at his birds and nodded lightly. “Do your thing.”

Ilea activated her third tier of blink, charging up the spell as the runes formed below her, the fabric of space breached to connect her to the anchor left behind in her living room. When the time came, she connected the group with displacement, her magic shifting space before she looked around and found herself back in her house.

“Welcome back,” she said.

Kyrian remained quiet, his birds screeching as they jumped onto the furniture. He teleported to the balcony, resting on the railing as he looked out onto the dark ocean.

Ilea checked the birds quickly, but finding nothing wrong with them despite the lower mana density. Granted, the difference wasn’t huge, nor were they particularly powerful.

“I will join the enchanters,” Neiphato said.

“Me too,” Feyrair added. “I have more ideas how to beat Meadow.”

“Do you now?” Ilea asked. “Well I’ll get you later, a few hours probably.”

“You don’t want to stay with him for a while longer? We don’t have to rush,” Feyrair said.

“I don’t think he needs a babysitter,” Ilea said. “Safe travels to you all,” she added and walked towards the balcony. Blinking outside, she joined the man and looked out onto the ocean. “Want to be alone?”

He remained quiet before he glanced her way. “I don’t mind.”

Ilea relaxed, leaning against the glass door behind her as she summoned some ale. A storm raged in the distance, her eyes picking up what would’ve just been darkness a few years ago.

“It’s amazing,” he said.

“The ocean?” Ilea asked when he didn’t add anything else.

He chuckled. “That too I suppose. I spent years on those isles and you just moved everyone here with a single spell. Just like that. An insurmountable distance, thousands of monsters in between.”

Ilea smiled. “That’s space magic for you. It’s how I got Meadow to this realm as well. Otherwise it would’ve remained there. Or maybe I would’ve trained and leveled until I could do something about it.”

“To make this magic available to everyone... it would let us build settlements... anywhere. Trade and military support would change entirely, let alone adventuring. Most of the time we spent on our missions, was just travel,” he said.

“Well, the frontier will remain, no matter what,” Ilea said.

“All I did was kill things, and taking care of some birds,” Kyrian said and sighed.

“I mostly just killed things. Just happened to find and loot treasures on the way, and I met powerful beings that helped me out. You have the power now to do pretty much whatever you want. Even the members of the Lily won’t be able to stop you, those I met at least,” she said.

He looked at his hand and made a fist before he relaxed it again. “It’s true, isn’t it? I’m probably stronger than some of the Elders of the Hand,” he said and laughed. “It’s strange. All it took was a few years. Countless battles... dancing on the edge of death, every day, but in a way I feel like I don’t deserve it.”

“Does anyone deserve anything? We get dealt the cards we have and play them as we see fit. With ability and luck, we might succeed, or we might not. Not that the definition of success is standardized in the first place,” Ilea said.

“What you said about me is true for you as well. What do you plan to do with it all?” he asked.

Ilea just shrugged and sipped on her ale. “This.”

“Drinking ale on your balcony?” he asked and chuckled.

“Saving my stranded friend, funding people who can crack ancient technology for our use, fighting interesting monsters on isles so far removed from settled lands people don’t even know they exist. Seeing where the next adventure will take me, exploring the magic I have,” she explained.

He sighed. “It doesn’t sound quite as daunting when you put it like that.”

“It’s good I think, to know what we can do. To feel some amount of responsibility. But in the end, we are still human. I don’t think we’re made to serve a greater purpose, nor do I think I owe anything to anyone. We can do all that, but it’s a choice we make, one we can make on a daily basis. Just so happens that for people as powerful as we are, those decisions carry more weight. Maybe the life of another, or the fate of an entire city,” she mused.

“You’ve given this some thought,” Kyrian said.

“Well, I didn’t have the luxury to be stuck on an island for a few years,” she said with a smirk, winking at him when he glanced back.

“How lucky I’ve been,” he said in a dry tone. “Got anything without alcohol?”

Ilea summoned another bottle and used her poison resistance to eliminate the effects. “Should be non alcoholic now, not that something like this would have an impact on you anyway.”

He took the bottle and opened up his helmet, just revealing his mouth. Kyrian sipped on the ale and shrugged. “Not too shabby. Healing magic?”

“Poison Resistance in the third tier,” she said.

“Ah,” he mused and drank more.

“Ask Trian about resistance training. The Sentinels will be able to get you there. Thirty skills and ten of them maxed out,” she said.

“I’m pretty close already,” he said with a smile.

“Don’t like to reveal your face?” Ilea asked.

He looked at her and moved away the metal. “Habit. Lots of vulnerable parts in the head.”

“I know, but it feels nice. The wind, the salt.”

Kyrian smiled, taking a deep breath as he closed his eyes. “It does, doesn’t it?”

“What is it?” she asked, seeing the uncertainty on his face.

“I don’t know if I’m ready. So many people, shops, noises.”

Ilea touched his shoulder with an ashen limb, forming a hand at the front. “You can also stay here. But it’s the middle of the night. There won’t be quite as many people. I’m sure Claire can get you a quiet house somewhere too.”

“Giving away houses. Does gold have a meaning to you still?” he asked.

“Sure. I can change someone’s life or pay people well for the work they love doing. Best of all is that Claire manages all that,” Ilea said.

“Sounds exhausting,” he retorted.

“Right? She’s a saint.”