

Chapter 724 Third Dinner

Ilea made a few stops on the way, knocking on well made wooden doors and surprising quite a few confused nobles. It didn't take her long to reach the most eastern parts of the Navali forest. *I wonder if the Drake population has recovered by now.*

She landed in a clearing, the skies clear, stars providing pale light. *Back then it actually mattered. Now I can see in pitch blackness.* Any creature with a shred of primal instinct stopped moving, either that or they ran away as fast and silently as they could. Ilea was by far the most dangerous predator in the surrounding forest. She hoped for some high level being to show up and fight her but her time in Elos would've likely been cut short already if anything like that was around.

A deep breath and her eyes opened again. *Quiet.* So much was going on. Teleportation gates, ancient dwarven relics, a living tree, meeting the Empress, beating her and her guard up in a brutal mock battle. It was a far cry from the simple exploration near the Azarinth temple. *Azarinth. When's the last time I've even thought of that name.* She summoned a crate. Books, notes, letters, trinkets, and a variety of foods were inside. She teleported items in and out and found the relevant letter a few minutes later.

Evan Trayne. Wanted to talk to Dagon about Scipio's whereabouts. Well I know where the latter is now. Is he the sand creator Elana mentioned so long ago? I hope he's at a higher level than Scipio at least. She stored the letter again, this time separately. The chest followed. *I heard about the Foundation in Riverwatch. Splicer was it? One of their Seekers of knowledge. I provided him with some books on the Azarinth order. Now I could share stories on the Navuun, the One without Form, Erendar, the true form of the Fae.*

Ilea smiled. Getting close to this area always made her nostalgic. *Four years maybe? Maybe one more or less. And ten times as much happened than in my previous life on Earth. The wonders possible through magic, wings, and teleportation.*

If there really was a key in the Foundation of Glass, she'd inevitably wind up there. Sooner rather than later. *But not quite yet.* She was a delivery girl after all. The fastest one around. Charged wings vibrated before she shot off, leaving behind a slew of terrified creatures. A high arc brought her out over the forest, the imposing form of Karth in the distance and the comparatively small city of Riverwatch visible thanks to the many lights in its streets. Deep below she knew there was Iz, but that could wait for another day or two.

Ilea twirled in the air and slowed down before she reached the city, impacting the ground near the broad river. Her ashen boots sank into the ground before she moved on, her ash receding as fresh clothes appeared on her body. *The Terminator has arrived,* she mused with a smile. *Just back from my fight with the Empress of Lys.* The fight brought her more pleasure than she had expected, as did the outcome. Training with ancient beings of unimaginable power had a way to skew her perception of herself. Especially in comparison to the rest of her kin.

She teleported a few times until she reached the city gates, two alert guards on the walls twitching when they saw her appear. They had their weapons drawn in the next moment. "Good evening," she said and spread her wings for a moment.

“Lady Lilith? May I see some identification?” one of the men said and held a Shadow badge in his hand a moment later. “That’s quite alright, welcome to Riverwatch. Let me know if we can do anything for you.”

Ilea summoned the piece again and stored it before she teleported through the enchanted wall. “I’ll be fine, have a good night.”

“You too,” the guard said. He looked to his peer and shrugged. “What?”

She didn’t stay to listen and instead moved through the city with her spells, not about to ruin any roofs or run through owls or worse. *Not tonight.* She appeared in front of Dale’s home less than a minute later. “*Evning,*” she sent to the man she saw inside, the parents up and working in the kitchen. Their daughter was asleep, the son likely off with his scouts. *Or was it Hunters?*

Dale came and opened the door, a smile blooming on his face when he saw her. “Telepathy too. I expect to see some horrible monster the next time I welcome you.”

“The options are there, trust me. I prefer staying vaguely human though. It’s good to see you, Dale,” Ilea said with a smile. “Sorry for the short notice, and for inviting myself. Thought I’d go for it if I’m in the area.”

“Don’t worry about it. I should say it’s an honor to have you here, but honestly, it’s just good to see you still alive. Come on in, it’s cold out,” he said and stepped aside.

“It is?” Ilea asked, looking down the street where two cats chased each other before they vanished into a side alley. She breathed in and went inside.

Dale closed the door behind her. “We’ll be done in a few minutes. Can I get you something to drink?”

“Any of Walter’s ale around?” she asked. “He should’ve opened some breweries in the past year.”

“The bard? I actually do as a matter of fact, his brands have blown up in the guard,” Dale said and went into the kitchen. He kissed his wife and got three bottles from an enchanted cupboard. “Here you go,” he said and handed her one, putting down the others on the table.

“Go talk to her, I’ll finish up,” Abby said.

“Thanks,” he said with a smile and sat down opposite the mythical creature also known as Lilith.

[Knight Captain – lvl 163]

“You made some progress again, I see,” Ilea said.

“As did you,” he said.

Their bottles touched before she took a sip. “You can tell?”

He leaned back. “No. I just know you.”

Ilea deactivated monstrous. The man whistled.

“Did she turn into some magical beast?” Abby’s voice came from the kitchen.

“No. Better,” he answered and drank from his ale. “What level does it represent? I heard some say it’s four hundred, some five.”

“Five,” Ilea answered. “I’m a space mage now too,” she added and raised her bottle without touching it. Then she made it disappear and reappear. She smirked and formed two gates and dropped her ale into it. The bottle kept falling, accelerating until she teleported it back out and drank from it.

“Seems useful. I’d love to have those spells,” Dale said. He was good at seeming unimpressed but Ilea knew him well enough to be able to tell.

She could also hear his heartbeat, feel his distress, and notice the changing tension in his muscles.

“I don’t suppose you usually use it to move around bottles of ale,” he commented.

Ilea waved her hand sideways. “More spells from four marks.”

Abby joined them a moment later, setting down a large dark red pot before she took off the lid. A hearty stew simmered inside, dark brown intersected by colorful vegetables and chunks of meat. “It’s probably not up to your standards, Lady Lilith,” she teased.

“I may be a monster but I would never say no to your cooking,” Ilea said.

Dale waved his hand between them. “Stop it or I’ll have to ask you for a duel, and neither of us wants that.”

“Yes of course, knight captain,” Ilea whispered in a respectful manner as he scooped food into everyone’s plates.

“Want to hear what I did earlier tonight?” Ilea asked.

“Indulge us,” he murmured, breaking off a piece of bread before he started eating.

“Empress Alyris of Lys, heard of her? Ruler of some small country in the east,” Ilea said. She too started eating. *Nothing better than third dinner. Pip and Merry would be proud.*

“It’s a small Empire I hear, maybe an island?” Abby asked. She looked to Dale for help.

“Dear you now I don’t travel much. I haven’t heard of it Lady Lilith. You see I am but a simple guardsman in this western town,” he said.

“Sure. Well, I delivered a letter. And one thing led to the next, so I’m deep below the Halls of Eternity or whatever the fuck they were called, fighting the entire Guard and the Empress herself,” she said and leaned forward. She chuckled and smiled. “Lads actually thought they had a chance.”

“You wiped the floor with the Immortal Guard?” Dale asked in a deadpan voice.

Ilea chewed and swallowed. “Literally. Yes. Well they did make me bleed at first, but I kind of let them. They’re definitely strong. For humans that is.”

“I will use this story against my recruits,” Dale said. “If that’s okay?”

“Hmm... I’d actually prefer if that one stayed between us. Don’t want to piss her off, she’s kind of important,” Ilea said. “But you can tell them about the Earth Elemental I fought in the Isanna desert. Thing left after it failed to kill me, just straight up merged into the mountains. I would’ve overwhelmed it with unlimited time, I’m sure of it.”

“How does an Earth Elemental even look like?” Abby asked.

Ilea gestured with her hands before she just formed it with ash. “Kind of a weird collection of shapes.”

“Fascinating,” the woman mused.

“But enough about me. How have you been? We haven’t talked since the issues with Baralia,” Ilea said.

“Things have calmed down again. Plenty of refugees have come to the city but everyone is pretty settled in by now. The guard is stronger than ever and we’re getting a lot of defensive equipment and help from Ravenhall. Barely any monster incidents lately, it’s quite... peaceful. We’ve managed to push back most of the monster populations in the surrounding forests too, with the help of Stormbreach. Thousands of refugees moved there when the Sanctuary Healing Order reestablished contact with Riverwatch. Various expeditions went west to try and resettle the various cities left behind but I hear it’s been difficult driving out the monsters,” he explained. “Funny thing that... a group of... Medic Sentinels, as they call themselves, went west just a few days ago. They passed through and asked for maps and information on local monsters, healed every minor injury too while they were at it.”

“Wouldn’t know a thing about them,” Ilea said. She squinted her eyes. “They didn’t make any trouble, did they?”

“No, miss. Exemplary behavior. One could tell they wouldn’t want to piss of whoever is at the top of their organization,” Dale answered.

“Yes. I hear the Headmaster can be ruthless,” Ilea said and continued her meal.

“Relations with Nipha have been a little more difficult as of late but Alistair would have to tell you the details. It’s more than offset by all the refugees and others that once again wish to live in a frontier city, that coupled with the help from Ravenhall, despite the distance,” he explained.

“Makes sense. Well, distance won’t be a problem for a long time. I met a tree, took it back with me to this realm, planted it, long story short, we now have working teleportation gates. Long range, top security and controlled by an alliance of cities, which I’m sure Riverwatch will be a part of soon enough. I’ll go talk to Alistair about all that afterwards actually,” Ilea said.

“That’s good,” Dale said and finished near all of his bottle.

Abby patted his back. “Don’t drink too much, darling.”

“I’ll be happy to show you around in Hallowfort, and Ravenhall. Once the gates are set up of course. We’re preparing a tournament in Morhill at the moment. Well I say we, but I’m not exactly involved. Better at fighting than organizing,” Ilea said.

“You’re lazy is what it is,” Dale said. “But well, I suppose you are *really* good at fighting. Just know that if you had signed up to the guard, you’d know the basics by now.”

“I’m rich, Dale. I have people for that,” Ilea said, trying to do her best impression of the Empress.

“Gold is temporary, administrative skills are eternal. Nothing beats a well organized guard and a good schedule,” he said.

“Want to bet on it? I say I could beat that. With my fists,” Ilea said and raised her bottle.

“Adventurers,” Abby said and shook her head. “You always think with your fists.”

“Don’t bother, love. She never learned anything about the more sophisticated things in life. I bet she thinks bathing in blood keeps her young,” Dale mused. He got up and went to get a few more bottles.

“It actually does in a way. I’m literally immortal. Age wise that is. I can still die... *technically*,” Ilea said. “Thanks,” she added, opening the second bottle.

“We could take that vacation you mentioned a few months ago,” Abby said and touched Dale’s arm.

“I’d love to have you at the tournament,” Ilea said. “And if another demon summoning or something like that happens I’ll protect you personally.”

“We could take Alaina,” Dale said.

“No. Just us. We’d be chasing after her the whole time,” Abby said.

“Alright then. I’ll see if George can look after her for a week or two. She does like Verena a lot,” Dale said. “You’re gonna set up the gate soon? It’s safe I hope?”

“They’re safe, yes. Well they weren’t at first... those testing sessions were bloody I tell you. Lungs and guts all over,” Ilea said.

“Please, we’re eating,” Abby said.

“Right. Apologies,” Ilea answered. “But yes, they’re safe. We’ve got the best Meadows working on it. The stew is delicious by the way, thanks Abby.”

“A compliment by Lilith herself. I wonder if that will be part of an evolution if I ever get there,” the woman said.

“You joke but some of the Sentinels did have my name in their Class requirements,” Ilea said.

“It wasn’t a joke,” Abby said. “You show up with three question marks to Identify. That’s not normal. Not normal at all.”

“She is quite strange, isn’t she?” Dale said. “Well, know that you’re always welcome here. If everyone else kicks you out because of your ash and space magic tendencies.”

Ilea sat back and finished her plate. She sighed with a smile on her face. “I appreciate it, Dale. I really do. And you can call for me whenever you need me. I’ll be there as fast as I can.”

“See, my inclination to help out has rewarded me with the help of Lilith,” Dale said to his wife.

The woman looked away. “It’s pure luck. It doesn’t count.”

He continued in a whisper and addressed Ilea. “She says I help too much.”

“You do,” Abby said.

“But it’s worth it,” the guard captain answered.

“Not when you’re home late,” she retorted.

Ilea quietly sipped on her ale. The Empress of Lys she could handle, but this, this was far beyond her powers.

“Let’s leave this for now, we have a guest,” Abby said finally.

“I agree,” Dale added. “So, teleportation gates. That’s quite exciting.”

“Indeed,” Ilea said. “But I’ve got some other stories too. I know it’s late of course...”

“Don’t worry about it. I need less sleep with every level, and Abby can sleep in,” Dale said.

“I will excuse myself in an hour or so however,” Abby said. “No matter how exciting your adventures are, Alaina will still wake me up tomorrow.”

“Of course. So, can I talk about dragons in here or is it a forbidden word like in so many other places?” Ilea started.

She left a little over an hour later, wishing the two a good night after they’ve had a few more drinks. *Less phased by the stories than last time. I guess you get used to it at some point, or they just can’t appreciate the difference between a Young Elemental and an actual Dragon.*

Ilea walked through the somewhat quiet city until she reached the more central parts. A group of rough looking adventurers dropped their conversation when she walked past the alley they were gathered in and gave her a look. “Evening,” she said.

One of them took a step forward but was stopped by a much larger man. He shook his head and waved at his own neck. “Blue eyes, black hair, healer, high level. Don’t risk it,” he whispered after she had walked past.

“*Smart man,*” Ilea sent straight into his mind.

“Did you hear that?” he asked in a whisper, his friends looking at him with confused expressions.

Ilea decided not to fuck with them any further, maybe because she’d just had a nice dinner. *That attitude is just... how do people like that survive as adventurers?*

She soon reached the central government buildings and found Alistair in his office. The letter Claire had prepared for him had apparently been a little more extensive than the ones for the various random officials on the way. She waited with a drink as he scrambled to wake up and gather all the require officials to make major decisions in the city. Some of them gave her looks but most were more than respectful, either having seen her before or at least understanding what she had done for the city.

The decision was mostly about the installation of a teleportation gate before the festivities actually happened. They would have an easier time getting to Morhill than most others and could get to offered talks in regards to joining the Meadow Accords.

Ilea left less than an hour later, thanked by the man himself before she left the city. Her wings brought her towards Karth and the Calys mines. She was in the area after all.