

Milena checked her leather armor, making sure everything was in order.

“You checked three times already, it’s fine,” Seth said with a frown on his face.

The two of them were waiting in one of the many training halls down in the Sentinel headquarters.

She gulped, thinking about the upcoming evaluation. It wasn’t the normal one they usually had.  
*Why is he here too? Did we do something wrong?*

Both of them turned to the steel gates that opened up.

Trian walked inside followed by a woman wearing white robes, most of her face shrouded by her hood.

Milena couldn’t identify either of them but she knew Trian was powerful. She felt like the same was true for the woman.

“Milena, Seth, please join us,” Trian said, gesturing them towards himself.

Seth rolled his eyes lightly and walked towards the two.

Milena followed a few steps behind him, her eyes focused on the ground.

“Today we welcomed a representative of the Corinth Order into our midst,” Trian said, gesturing to the woman beside him.

**[Healer – lvl ??]**

“We have heard much of your powerful Classes,” the woman said in a casual tone. “As I understand, you can remain or leave freely, which is why we’ve suggested an offer to the Medic Sentinel Corps. A student exchange program. You will teach what you learned here to our members and those of us will do the same here,” she explained.

Seth crossed his arms. “And why would we leave this place? Would we have to join your Order instead?”

The woman smiled lightly. “You would join our Order for the duration of the program and if you wish, beyond that. As to your compensation, you will receive five gold coins immediately and another five for each year you remain with us.”

Seth glanced at Trian before he looked at Milena. “Make it six gold and I accept,” he said.

The woman smiled, “Five gold and thirty silver.”

“Fifty,” Seth said. “The things taught here are surely quite valuable to you, if you came all the way from wherever your Order is located.”

“Very well,” the woman said. “And what about you?” she asked, turning her head towards Milena.

“I...,” she said.

“Come on, this deal is too good not to take,” Seth whispered to her. “And we can stay together.”

"I'm not sure," she said and looked to the ground. *Five gold pieces is a lot... but my parents wanted me to be here, not with some other Order.*

"I'm sure she'd be happy to join, she's just shy," Seth said.

"Let us talk in private, girl," the woman said and glanced to Trian. "Would that be acceptable?"

"Of course," Trian said and nodded to Seth. "Come on, we'll wait outside. You can already pack your things."

The two left, Seth giving her a last glance and nod.

"You seem unsure," the woman said.

"I'm just... there's a lot I don't know about. I couldn't stay in Ravenhall?" Milena said.

"No, but we would provide lodging much more luxurious than what you have here," the woman said.

Milena bit her lip. "I have to talk to my parents about that."

"Didn't you come here on your own accord?" the woman asked.

"I... yes... no of course. But changing to another Order is not a decision I want to make... lightly," she said, trying to avoid looking at the woman directly.

"You don't have to hide that from me, girl. But if your parents are to be consulted, I could talk to them directly as well. It may help convince them," she said.

"They... yes. But I'll talk to them alone first," Milena said.

The woman looked towards the door before she stepped a little closer. "I heard the training here is painful."

*What...*

"It... yes, I suppose that's true," Milena said, rubbing her arm.

"And yet you're staying? Our Order wouldn't demand that from you," she said.

Milena looked away. "I suppose... if I could convince my parents... I could maybe accept."

"So your parents were the ones who asked you to join the Sentinels?" the woman asked.

"What? I mean... yes. But if your training is good too, I'm sure they would agree," Milena said.

"You're fidgeting," the woman said, smiling lightly.

"Oh... yes," Milena said and stopped herself.

"You don't want to be here," the woman said.

Milena looked up. "No... no I do want to be here... it's just... hard. I was always one of the more talented students... but it's so much... and the training hurts. You always have to fight other students and the teachers," she said, tears coming to her eyes.

The woman came close and hugged her, a flow of warm healing calming her down.

"It's okay," she said and patted her back.

The woman let go and stepped back, Milena catching a glance at the black strands of hair and blue eyes under the hood.

She started giggling, tears now rolling down her cheeks. "You're her... aren't you? You're not from the Corinth order at all..."

The woman moved back her hood and smiled. "You figured it out. Nice to meet you, I'm Lilith."

Milena looked at the woman and smiled bitterly. "I failed then? You found out that I'm a fraud... what will you do?"

"Hmm... what indeed. Well, for starters, I want to tell you that you're not a fraud. You participated in most Classes, did your homework, and even excelled in some areas. I heard from Lyza that you have great intuition when it comes to treating injuries.

"Now you obviously didn't want to participate in the resistance training and constant battles. Why didn't you speak up? Did the faculty not provide an opportunity to do so?"

Milena wasn't sure. She felt the healing mana still flow into her, somehow calming the many thoughts that came to her mind. "I... I didn't want to be kicked out..."

"Did somebody say you would be kicked out if you didn't participate in the training?" Lilith asked.

Milena thought back. "The other students... Seth... it just made sense."

"They told you you'd be kicked out if you didn't participate?" Lilith asked.

"N... no... Seth did think so... the others... they just looked at me sometimes... or made a comment. I didn't want to disappoint..." Milena said.

"You didn't want to disappoint the expectations from the other students? Or from your parents?" Lilith asked.

She stayed quiet.

"What about yourself? What do you want?" Lilith asked.

Milena looked at her. "I want... to explore magic. I want to fight monsters... and I like the Class I got here. I really do... but..."

"There's no need to be ashamed. Alright, listen. You're a Sentinel like everybody else here," Lilith said and carefully touched her shoulder. "But we Sentinels share these concerns with each other, so that we can help. For now I think it's best if you take the day off and think about what You want. You got a Class and that makes you one of us. If the training is too much, we'll find something else you can focus on. Not everybody has to be a regenerating battle maniac and monster hunter. Okay?"

Milena nodded lightly.

"Who's your favorite teacher?" Lilith asked.

"Wh... I... they're all great," Milena said.

Lilith smirked. "Come on. Everybody has a favorite."

Milena thought about it. "Lyza."

"Alright. There you go. So you think about what we talked about today and you think about what you want to do. And tomorrow you'll talk to Lyza and you'll figure something out together. And if

you don't want to stay with the Sentinels, that's okay too. We don't force you to stay here and neither should your parents. You have the Class and plenty of knowledge. If you want to be an adventurer, I'm sure you'd do very well. So, give it a good think, okay Milena?" Lilith said.

She nodded a few times before balling her hands into fists. "I will."

"Good," Lilith said with a smile and turned towards the door.

"Miss... ma'am... what will happen to Seth?" Milena asked.

"Seth just proved that a few gold pieces is all that is needed to get him to leave. We don't force people to stay but neither do we want those who have no interest in this organization and what it stands for," Lilith said. "Don't worry, he will simply not be a Sentinel any longer. Though I suppose it depends on his reaction."

"But... the Class... everything he learned here," Milena said.

"What about it?" Lilith asked as she glanced back at her. "Do you think we gave you those Classes?"

She turned around and shook her head. "We only showed you the path. You did the actual work. You fought monsters and put yourself in harm's way to fulfill the requirements. If Seth wishes to share what he learned here, I believe it would be beneficial to whoever listens. But after hearing him, I doubt he would. Perhaps he can sell it to an information seller and that's that."

*But all the techniques... the classes... first aid.*

"What's our main goal, Milena?" Lilith asked.

"To train more healers that can fight monsters themselves and help adventurers or Shadows with their missions," she said immediately.

"And how does keeping secrets help with that?" Lilith asked. "If anything we'll be getting more healers and students. The only reason the Sentinels aren't public knowledge is for protection. But soon that won't be necessary anymore, not with level two hundred Hunters."

Milena looked at the woman before she focused on the ground. "Thank you," she stammered out.

"Thanks for being honest. And do let us know if others are in a similar situation. You're only here to suffer on your own conviction, not because someone else wishes it. I'll see you around," Lilith said.

"Li... Lilith... may I... see your wings? I heard... no I'm sorry. Forget about it," Milena said, stumbling over her words as they slipped out.

*What did I...*

She watched as the woman smiled, ash forming around her until her armor was complete. I looked smooth and dangerous, more so than even Gael's. Dark gray wings spread on her back, flapping once to show their size and power.

Milena couldn't help but squeal lightly, her hands before her face as she looked at the woman leave the hall, her ash vanishing instantly.

The gates were left open and she had the day off. *I like her.*

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Ilea welcomed Seth in the adventurer guild, a room rented for the day.

“I’m glad you made it,” she said.

The young man looked around. “Milena didn’t come?”

“I’m afraid not. Now I want to ask you a few questions before we discuss the rest of our agreement,” Ilea said.

The boy gestured for her to continue.

“Why did you join their Order?” Ilea asked.

“What does it matter? I’m with yours now,” Seth said.

“It matters because I need to understand if you can be trusted,” Ilea said. “The Corinth Order wouldn’t part with its secrets easily. You will be living within our facilities and you will learn things. I don’t want you to walk to the next Order to sell ours.”

The boy smirked. “They never set up rules. I don’t think anybody told me to keep any secrets. It’s really quite funny. I just pretended to be interested in their teachings to get access to the free lodging, food, and information. I endured the training and got my Class. That’s all I really wanted. I’m willing to follow your rules as long as I receive what you promised.”

“Perfect,” Ilea said with a smile. “Your status as a Sentinel is thus revoked. You can use this room for the day,” she said and summoned a silver coin. “It’s not quite as much as promised but I’m sure a resourceful young lad like yourself won’t have any trouble getting into an adventuring group.”

“What does that mean?” Seth asked.

“I’m not with the Corinth Order,” Ilea said.

He frowned. “You played me? Lied to me?”

“Yes. Just like you did,” Ilea said and smiled.

“Milena...,” he murmured before his eyes met Ilea’s. “You bitch.”

Ilea displaced him in front of her, grabbing his neck with her hand. “Now, now. Seth. I think you’re smarter than that. Stop it and leave with your life.”

He considered for a moment and stopped his movements. “Okay. I’ll go... just let me go.”

Ilea did so. “And think carefully about what you do in the future.”

Seth glanced at her and nodded, grabbing the silver coin before he left, slamming the door behind himself.

He walked down into the common room and went to one of the registers immediately.

Seth ground his teeth before he put down the silver coin, talking to the receptionist.

He received an adventurer badge soon after, sighing as he glanced at the patrons of the inn.

Ilea waited upstairs, watching his moves with a slight smile on her face. *The first ex Sentinel to join an adventurer group.*

Ilea thought about the conversation she had with Trian earlier, glad no further actions had been necessary.

The boy would surely feel some resentment, but at the same time they had provided his Class and all the other benefits for free. In time, he would understand that and hopefully appreciate it.

She made her way back to the Headquarters and informed Trian.

He remained silent for a while afterwards.

“I’m glad he took it somewhat well. Should we inform Milena? She might want to join the guild with him.” Trian asked.

Ilea thought about it for a moment. “I’ll leave it to you. He acted a little manipulative towards her. Maybe it’s best she doesn’t know his whereabouts.”

He nodded. “I’ll let her make her decision first anyway.”

“Sure,” Ilea said and stretched.

“More ash training for you?” he asked.

“Later maybe. I have something else in mind. See you around,” she said and blinked upwards.

Ilea reached the experimental teleport facility a few minutes later, making sure nobody had followed her. She stepped onto the platform and pushed mana into it, deactivating her space magic resistance in the process.

Bright light flashed before she found herself in Meadow’s cavern.

“*It’s you, welcome,*” Meadow said.

Christopher and Iana glanced at her but focused back on their work a moment later.

“*Say, Meadow. The Blue Reapers living in the nearby caverns... you don’t suppose they’re mindless beings unable to awaken?*” she asked.

“*Hmm... you intend to hunt them. I’ve found that they’re perceptive when it comes to the mind but they have treated me as an enemy the moment my telepathy has touched them. At the moment, I’m focusing on other beings,*” Meadow said.

*That’s about as much of an okay as I’ll get from it,* Ilea thought. “*Then I’ll go visit them. It’s been a while since I was there. By the way, I found my four mark. And killed it.*”

“*Congratulations on your achievement of murder,*” Meadow said.

Ilea ignored the remark and teleported towards the Reaper caverns.

It took a few blinks to reach the deeper sections of the nest.

*Now, let’s see what you have,* she thought, reaching the first group of creatures.

They attacked instantly, both lightning and powerful mind magic hitting her in quick succession.

Neither of the respective defenses yielded.

The lightning flowed over her armor before she redirected it out into a nearby wall, a finger pointing at it.

She used Monster Hunter on the creatures, smiling when she saw them freeze up. “Yeah, I’m back. Remember me?”

Ilea blinked next to the three creatures, using her ashen limbs to smash through the two by her side. The one directly ahead, she squashed with a single and powerful stomp.

Blood, bones, and guts flowed out, the tunnel returning to a serene calm now that the creatures were dead.

Ilea continued through the nest and soon reached a more populated area.

The Reapers attacked her mind before she could even say hello. This time however, she wasn’t overwhelmed by their efforts.

Her sphere revealed that there were around thirty of the creatures in the cavern ahead.

*Their mind magic is pretty good. Feels like they’re combining their power for a more coordinated attack.*

Her defenses were quite powerful however, too much to crack for the creatures. In a short time at least.

Ilea calmed herself and sat down, focusing on the powerful magic attacking her mind. She didn’t think the low level reapers were everything hidden inside that nest, nor that their numbers would remain at thirty.

It was a prime opportunity to level her resistance. She focused on her breathing and Meditation, thinking about the past week with everything that happened.

Ilea’s meditation was interrupted by the first Reapers walking into the tunnel.

Lightning flared up in front of their heads. The bolts slammed into her with blinding speed, their energies spreading over and through the ashen armor.

She grinned, unimpressed with the display of power.

*Their mind magic is the only thing that seems dangerous at all,* she thought and disabled her Lightning Magic Resistance. That way, she might actually get a level or two out of it in the end.

She kept an eye on the monsters with her sphere, spreading her ash in a perimeter around her. None would be allowed to come closer but she did welcome their spells. For now.

“Your mind is quite impressive,” Meadow said.

“Thanks, trained it with the best of them,” Ilea replied. “And my arcane healing lets me take care of damage to my mind.”

“I can perceive that,” Meadow said. “Was the four mark you killed awakened?”

Ilea turned her head slightly to glance back. “No. It was before becoming a monster. Human I think. Something corrupted her mind or she went mad. Maybe she even died and the dungeon took over. I have no idea how that works.”