

## Chapter 747 Art

“It’s blue,” Edwin said, a frown on his face.

Ilea raised her brows, her arms crossed in front of her.

“And the shoulders are roses?” he continued. The man sighed. “This looks horrendous,” he whispered.

“What do you mean, it’s specifically designed for you,” Ilea said.

He sighed again and sat down in a nearby chair, both of them ignoring the chuckles from Balduur in the other room. Edwin just looked at her.

“Well blue, to show that you’re rebelling against your father,” Ilea said.

“He’s dead. I don’t need to rebel against anything,” he said.

“Well, true. The roses... turning a new...” she said.

“Don’t say it,” the man growled.

“Alright. Balduur only agreed if it was something interesting. This was what we came up with. He’s a busy man you know, and this thing would still sell for... I have no idea, how much is a very high quality set of light metal armor?” Ilea asked.

“You sound like a fucking noble,” Edwin said.

“No, that’s you. Being an ungrateful shit when you get free gear,” Ilea said in a calm tone.

He was quiet for a moment. “Fair enough.”

“So you want it? I could make an entry as the blue knight,” Ilea mused.

“I’m not refitting it!” Balduur shouted from the other room.

“I have other smiths, I don’t need you anymore, old man,” Ilea answered.

“So cold. So easily discarded. No respect in today’s youth, no loyalty,” the smith murmured, continuing his work.

“I’ll take it,” Edwin sighed. “Rose petal blue knight. Whatever, fuck. At least it will piss off the nobles even more.”

“Assassins are a good way to train poison resistance, you’re thinking ahead. Good on you,” Ilea said.

“You’re a lunatic,” he said and considered. “A very rich, very generous, and forgiving lunatic. But a madwoman nonetheless.”

“I’ve been called worse by far more important people,” Ilea answered.

“I appreciate you taking the time, and resources, Queen of humankind, oh great Lilith,” Edwin said.

“Refreshing honesty. Maybe you should go back to being drunk and passed out,” Ilea suggested.

He nodded and walked over to the armor, starting to take it apart. "It's easier, I agree. Less irritating. Less... everything."

"Sounds dull," Ilea mused. "Might actually change something if you feel irritated."

"Right. I tried to change things once. A lot of people died," Edwin said.

"Yes. Very dramatic. Get dressed Ocean Rose. You have a fight coming up," Ilea said and went to talk to Balduur as the man got dressed. She produced a supply of bone for more Sentinel armors in the meantime.

Her arm regenerated when Edwin stepped out from the back room. Balduur roared with laughter. Ilea herself just shrugged. "It's not that bad."

Metal spikes looking like thorns went around his neck and the leg guard resembled a downward facing rose.

"If you didn't slouch and actually owned it, it could look great," Ilea said. "Once you're fighting I'm sure it'll be fine."

"It'll keep you alive," Balduur said.

"Well, not for long," Ilea said. "He's in the main tournament. Soon you're going to face absolute monsters. But I suppose that's one silver lining."

Edwin looked up. "I suppose I deserve this."

"From what Jyraiur's been telling me, yes. You certainly do," Ilea said.

"You talked to him?" Edwin asked.

"He's waiting outside, yes," Ilea said.

His eyes went wide before he crouched ever so slightly.

"Edwin," Ilea said and walked a little closer. "You can't just teleport with me here."

His eyes went dull as he sighed. "I thought you got your revenge already."

"I did. But not him," she said and moved them both outside. "*Thanks Balduur!*"

"*Anytime I can make a noble look ridiculous, I will,*" he answered.

Jyraiur turned and looked at the two people. He stared at Edwin for a long while, a contemplative look on his face. He raised a hand to his chin and nodded lightly. "Not for you, no. Not at all... but the design... is intriguing. Who was the smith again?"

"Balduur. I'm sure he can make you something flower themed too at some point. Now go back to fighting," Ilea said, looking at Edwin.

"Might just resign if it's you saying that," he said.

"No you won't," Ilea answered.

He shrugged. "Suppose you're right. Come on fire wings."

Jyraiur nodded. "I'll watch. What do you plan to do after you lose?"

"I have no idea. Thanks for the armor, Lilith. But I suppose it's not you I should thank," Edwin said.

“No. But don’t lose too early, I want the legend of the blue rose to be born now,” Ilea said.

“I’ve seen some of the participants. Can’t guarantee it,” Edwin said and waved at her as they started walking towards the arena.

*“Do come by when you’re ready. I might have something interesting for you to consider,”* Ilea said.  
*“It’s perfect for someone like you.”*

*“How so?”* he asked.

*“Because it will piss off most of the established nobility,”* Ilea answered.

*“Color me blue. Which is the color of interest,”* he said.

Ilea smiled. She didn’t really know what to make of him. Something had changed since the last time they had met, that much was obvious. And seeing Felicia this relieved and happy was more than worth a set of armor and his snarky comments. She did prefer this Edwin to the miserable shit she had met back in Virilya. *Now, what did Lily say about a gallery?*

It didn’t take long for her to find it, some Shadowguards knew about it, as did a few adventurers she asked on the way. While using monstrous, casual clothes, and a hood of course. When she reached the building in question, Ilea was confronted with an interesting set of space magic. She raised her brow, knowing only three creatures capable of such a feat.

*“Violence...”*

Nothing answered.

*“Baron, I know you’re there.”*

*Defend*

*“What do you mean defend?”*

*Intruder*

*“I haven’t intruded. I’m standing in front of your... entirely disproportionate walls,”* Ilea said.

*Gallery*

“Yes. That’s what I heard, which is why I’m here. To see what this is about,” Ilea said. “What exactly did you do?” She saw people walk in and out without issue, the complex defense meant specifically for her it seemed. *Set up on the fly too I think... even one part of the Fae is that impressive.* She sighed, reminding herself that the god like being was really just a little shit that liked to pop other people’s eyes.

*Cless*

*Wanted*

*Gallery*

*“I didn’t even know you knew Cless. When did this happen?”* Ilea asked, more intrigued than anything.

*Divination*

*Magic*

*Source*

“*She painted you?*” Ilea asked.

*Attempt*

“*Right. So you went to look for her, I assume?*”

*Yes*

“*And you made friends?*”

*Yes*

“*That’s great. I hope you didn’t try to teach her your violent ways or something.*”

*No*

*Responsible*

*Fae*

The creature now appeared in front of her, apparently invisible to everyone else around them. A giggle went through her mind.

“*Responsible my ass. Can I go in and see? I promise I won’t stop whatever it is,*” she said.

The Fae considered for a moment. *Acceptable*

*You little shit*, Ilea thought. She watched the changing space defense. The complexity was easily up there with what the Meadow had shown her but the Fae’s power was limited. She walked inside and found Cless talking to a few well dressed individuals, all of them rather excited.

The girl ducked when she saw Ilea, getting out her book and flipping through the pages.

She appeared next to her and grabbed her arm. “*Don’t you try to run now. I’m not here to stop anything.*”

Cless looked down. “*Really?*” she replied in a natural way, not at all surprised by the telepathy.

*How long have you been talking to her, Baron?*

“Excuse me, what do you think you are doing? We were talking to Miss Michaelson,” one of the men said.

“You are being very rude, let go of her,” a woman said.

Ilea sighed, looking at the two Shadows that had approached as well. She whistled, freezing everyone in the room. *Now you know who I am and can shut the hell up.* She looked back to Cless and smiled. “*Yes. Really. Why didn’t you come to Claire or to me about this?*”

The girl shuffled her foot and kept looking away. “*Claire hid all my paintings... I didn’t want to ask... she said it would be bad for you if people saw them... but Violence told me it was fine... it said you are stronger than everyone.*”

Ilea sat down on the ground next to her. *"I see. Well I don't think most of the paintings are an issue. Are any Elves in them?"*

The girl shook her head. *"No. Violence said that they want to stay hidden,"* she said and nodded with a smile. *"Most of them are you! I wanted to show them... a lot of people are here because of you."*

*"Really?"* Ilea asked.

The girl beamed now. *"Yes! You're really famous! Like the Queen! But you have wings... and fire!"*

Ilea smiled and roughed up the girl's hair. *"Well I'll be even more famous now, thanks to you."*

*"Is that bad?"* she asked, her hands touching as she slouched slightly.

*"I'll manage,"* Ilea answered. *"So... I don't think I've seen all of them. Care to give me a tour?"*

The girl looked up smugly. *"Personal tours are ten silver coins!"*

*"You're making money off of this?"* Ilea asked.

*"Violence said we have to pay the Shadows... and rent too. It's all very complicated. We had to prepare for a long time,"* she said, pride mixing with some residual confusion.

*A girl and a Fae try to rent out a gallery space. Why not.*

She summoned the ten silver coins and handed them to the girl. *"One guided tour then, if you would."*

*"Thank you,"* Cless said and took the money. *"I have to check for a date and time."*

*"Can I just walk around and look?"* Ilea asked, holding out her hand. *"I'd like the money back please."*

Cless frowned but handed the coins back. All but one. *"That is the entrance fee."*

*"Do I not get something for being the model of most paintings?"* Ilea asked.

The girl considered then looked to an empty space in the room. She nodded, then nodded again, then wrote something down. *"We never signed a... pact for royalfees but... you can enter for free!"*

Ilea looked at her with raised eyebrows.

Cless was silent for a few seconds.

*"And! You can come to the auction! For free,"* she said, then looked to the empty space. *"There is... nourishment, there."*

*"Nourishment you say?"* Ilea asked. *"I see the Fae has learned quite a bit about non violent negotiations."*

Cless handed back the silver piece and smiled. *"Enjoy the gallery!"*

Ilea sighed. She didn't now how to argue with a literal Fae chosen child. *"Violence, I'll try to explain this to Claire but I better hope your space pockets can keep you hidden."*

*Invisible*

“*Not quite,*” Ilea said, though she had to admit even for her it was near impossible to tell where the critter was. If she hadn’t known it was close by, she would’ve never spotted it. And even now she only noticed something abnormal about a specific section in the space around them.

“*Thanks Cless. I will,*” Ilea said and walked past the silent group of people that had watched the two nod, shake their heads, and exchange coins back and forth. *Another story waiting to be told,* she thought and entered the circular hallway. She felt something settle on her right shoulder but decided not to glance over.

*Apology*

“*There’s no reason to apologize, Violence. But you could’ve just asked,*” she said.

*Mission*

*Interesting*

It giggled.

“*Stealing the paintings from Claire you mean?*” she asked.

It sent an affirming thought.

“*Well, I can kind of see that. And to be honest... these really are too good to stay hidden,*” she said, looking at a depiction of herself fighting a group of Undead Rose Knights. *Tremor. Dead and left behind, buried below the northern stormscape. Elfie was still a little shit then, and Maro was stuck in his necromancy machine. How long would Elana have been down there I wonder.*

*Humble*

“*I’m not talking about the subject. Though to be fair, I do look incredibly cool and sexy,*” she said.

*Cute*

*And*

*Pretty*

“*We have different views on my person. Probably just the age difference,*” she mused, moving on to the next painting. That one had her fighting hordes of corrupted creatures down in the Descent, the first layer overrun and on fire. A large burning fox was visible in the background with a dozen Dark Ones engaged with creatures of the depths.

“*Oh... I like this one a lot,*” she mused.

The painting depicted herself standing in front of an expanse of black grass, a crystal tree at the center of the ceremonial hall. It felt strange to look at. Uneasy. She noted that few people remained to look at this particular canvas. *As if... it feels similar. Far less intense, but there is something there that manages to capture the true essence of the Meadow.*

Ilea remained in front of the painting for a few minutes, admiring the strange colors. She realized after a while that the depiction itself seemed slightly magical in nature. There was no magic generated or emitted by the colors on the canvas but as she walked closer, she could see the magic emanating from her own body strangely affected.

*Not enchanted. It’s something else.*

She shook her head after a while and continued down the hallway. A familiar figure sat in front of a painting of the Krahen Isles. He had remained unmoving since Ilea had entered but she had expected to run into him at one point or the other during the event. Lily was in the city after all.

Ilea chose not to sit down on the flimsy stone bench and instead stepped next to it.

Roland didn't look at all like she remembered him. The top of his head was shaved now, a beard adorning his face. He looked... tired. It was the best way she could describe it. Something she had seen in some of the people she had met on her journey. *And you were so alive back then*, she thought, remembering the man who had painted her long before the first piece in this hallway had been created.

*Journey to Salia. And everything that happened after.* She was glad none of the pieces reflected what had happened in the western cities. What had happened to the man sitting next to her.

"It's been a while," she said and looked his way. "You look like shit."

Roland only looked up a few seconds later. He barely even saw her before he nodded ever so slightly and turned back to the painting.

Ilea could've asked him a lot but just looking at him answered a lot of questions. He only had one axe left, the top bit coated in patterns of blood, some older, some more recent. His leather armor looked battered. It may have even been the same one she had last seen him wear. Old and new blood clung to it much the same, though attempts at cleaning were obvious. Not for the new bits.

"You want to grab a drink?" she asked.

He didn't respond.

"Watch the tournament?" she asked. "Lily has another fight soon."

That got a reaction. Roland looked up with slightly panicked eyes. "A fight? What do you mean?"

"She's in the latter rounds of the pre two hundred tournament. And she's been doing well," Ilea said.

He shook his head. "No... she's..." He looked at his hands. "She can't... she's just a little girl," he whispered, as if he had to remind himself.

"Oh boy," she murmured, scratching her head. *This is not my thing. "Any suggestions Violence? You've surely studied the human mind for millennia."*

*Violence*

*"I expected no less from you. Might actually not be the worst suggestion. Maybe if he sees her fight,"* Ilea sent back. "She's not a little girl. Not anymore. Come, I'll show you."

"Ilea... I can't. What if I... lose it?" he asked, fear in his eyes now. He sighed. "It's been... difficult... to control."

"What do you mean? Your berserker stuff?" Ilea asked. "You're aware most of these paintings are about me, right?"

He looked at her and blinked his eyes.

"You didn't?" she asked. "Did you even identify me?"

He shook his head.

“Well whatever. I can take care of it if you lose it. Trust me,” she said.

“How could you? Even with your healing, I-” Roland said before they appeared in the air outside, Ilea gently grabbing him with her space manipulation while her wings spread and kept them in the air.

“Like this? For example?” she said.

Roland had wide eyes, trying to stretch his arms and failing.

“You saw the monsters in those paintings right? I did kill most of them,” she said with her brows raised, her mantle spreading to cover all of her. She set them down in the street and let go of him. “Sorry about that.”

“No... I. If you... if it's not a problem, I think I'd... like to be there,” Roland said.

“I mean that was the idea. Lily can take care of herself, Roland,” she said and teleported them through the city. She stopped in front of the arena and quickly found the ticket booth, more to find empty seats if any were available.

“The Savage Wolf fight? Yes... only twenty three left. That'll be one silver coin each,” the man said.

Roland sighed. “That's expensive.”

“I'm inviting you obviously,” Ilea said and handed over the pieces, receiving small pieces of paper in return. *Good thing photoshop and printers aren't a thing here. Who even makes these? Paper mages?*

She didn't stay to consider, motioning Roland to follow her up the stairs and into the arena.