

Chapter 439 Quiet Arrival

“What about these... machines from the Ascended facility in the Descent. Any clue what they do?”

“Impressive technology. Their runework truly is a marvel. No wonder they were involved in such large scale operations. We are not sure but it seems you have a tool that allows for magnification of a high degree. Another one made to project an image into thin air and yet another for ambient light.”

“Kind of boring. Sad there wasn’t a coffee machine.”

“Is that sustenance of some kind?”

“Yes. Yes it is. It’s like a mana crystal for humans. A dark brown liquid.”

“The Ascended did not strike us as a being in need of sustenance.”

“Yeah. Maybe some coffee would help that thing chill the fuck out,” Ilea murmured and stored the machines again.

The only thing left of interest seemed to be the Midnight Claw of the Red Church. “Any clue on this?”

“We suspect it is comparable to an elixir of some kind. One capable of shaping a path for classless humans more related to blood and its manipulation. It seems crudely made. Very old. Perhaps the Vampire you have faced and took this from had initially used it to gain such power.”

“He didn’t seem quite in control of it.”

“No. He did not. Had he trained his Mental Resistance as you have, perhaps the result would have been different. As it is, he was overwhelmed by an evolution not initially meant for a human body. Or perhaps a less arcane or blood related form of madness. We may never know.”

“Are you saying the Azarinth could turn me into a mindless zombie too?” Ilea asked.

“It is inherently a change that forces restoration and arcane pathways. If anything at all it will lead your mind to expand. Be wary of warnings associated with the mind however, should a choice like that present itself.”

“Like berserker classes? I generally avoided them because of that exact reason.”

“A wise choice. Great power for a human body but one that holds its own dangers. The part of us you know has now recovered sufficiently to separate once more. Would you like to know more?”

“Thanks. I think we talked more than enough. Thank you for all the advice, information and the training as well,” she said and bowed towards where she thought the Fae to be.

“And we thank you for the time you have spent with us, for the help you have offered without expecting a reward in turn and for protecting us when we were not able to do so ourselves. As slim as the chances may be, a majority of us hopes for your survival.”

“What does the rest hope for? Out of curiosity?” Ilea asked with a smirk.

“A variety of results. Splattered entirely by a Dragon, turned into a gem, fusing with an Ash Elemental, betrayed by a dear friend, surrounded by loving dogs, and a variety of other outcomes, few of which you would comprehend.”

“Speaking of unlimited potential. I could fuse with an Ash Elemental?” she asked.

“We will not elaborate on such endeavors. However a large part of us agrees that a date would be desirable should you ever follow that path. Your mind and essence would become something entirely unrecognizable. If you wish to preserve who you are, we suggest you refrain from such actions.”

“Well... who knows. Maybe I’ll grow tired of being me in ten thousand years. Dating you as an ash elemental might just be the thing I look forward to then. Nice meeting you.”

Greeting, the thought reached her as her eyes finally recognized something in the weird space.

“Hey, you’re back. Are you okay?”

Good

Leave?

Ilea nodded and waved at the unimaginable being she could not comprehend.

The space magic had ceased, her breathing and arms back to normal. Barely been choking anymore. Nice skill to have for sure. It will help with drowning as well. Weird that I never got it from the training with William.

Well

Done

“You mean talking to you and the others? I guess it went well. Learned some interesting things. Was it you to convince them not to share information on locations as well as creatures, higher evolutions, and levels?”

Baseless

Accusation

“It was you. Nice. Well, I don’t disagree entirely. So what are your plans?”

Stay

Then

Explore

“Weren’t you captured for what... centuries? And now you already want to go out again.”

Yes!

Ilea chuckled. “I like the spirit.”

Mark? it asked.

“You’re talking about the mark left by you?”

The Fae nodded.

Modification

Visit!

Ilea laughed. "Sure, if you want to. I'll try to learn about my soul so I can keep it there. Just be careful when you visit. You know the drill."

Yes

"Now that I think about it. Can I mark you too? I have a skill that allows me to put a Sentinel Mark on someone. Supposedly it allows for you to signal me. I'm not sure what else it entails."

Agreeable

Ilea smiled and used the skill on the Fae, watching as a small rune like symbol formed on its hand. It cost nearly two thousand mana to apply. Nothing else seemed to change.

General

Location

"It adds that too? I can't seem to tell where you are though," she said.

Home

Protected

"I see. Does it work through other realms though?"

Yes

Home

Special

"I could tell," she said and smiled.

"Anything else it comes with other than a general location and your ability to signal me?"

If

Close

Health

"That's good. Well, I'll test it with another friend soon. Glad you agreed. Do call for me if you find yourself in a bind on one of your adventures. I'm also happy if you want to join me on mine again at some point."

The Fae nodded.

Joy!

It hugged her face from the side, held close by her hand.

"Trian's been waiting for me though. I should finally show up again. Thanks for saving my life again, little one. And for the company. Visit me if you get lonely," she said and stepped to the side.

The Fae let go and floated away.

Survive!

Joy!

Adventure!

They looked at each other and sent the last concept together.

Violence!

“See you around, Baron,” Ilea said and crossed her legs while floating. Her third tier blink activated, draining her mana into the complicated spell. It still used around half her mana but the charge time was considerably faster. While it took nearly thirty minutes when she first used it, by now that was down to a little below seven. *More mana equals a faster charge. Who would have thunk.*

She smiled at the Fae and waved, watching the creature mimic her motion with its stubby arm.

Damn, I'll actually miss the guy, she thought and watched as her surroundings turned white.

The option to explore the surroundings of the Fae's home had been there but she had thought it disrespectful. Already it had been a risk to take her there, she wasn't about to tread on their hospitality. *It's hospitality. Their? Who fucking knows.*

Ilea was back home. Her house in the same state she had left it in. A breeze moved the glass balcony door she had forgotten to close. A wet spot on the wooden floor showed the passing of time. She stepped outside and closed the door behind her.

It was night, the moons now terribly far away compared to a moment earlier. *That was quite the adventure.*

She took a moment to appreciate the sound of the waves far below, the cool wind and the fact that she had once again gotten away with her life. *A lot to think about and to plan. Should I go for three fifty as soon as possible? Or maybe get some more skill levels and third tiers?*

The good thing was that compared to her arrival in Elos, she now knew quite a lot of people that could give some counsel. Even the Fae had suggested waiting a little. She would at the very least get her Void and Blood Magic Resistances to the third tier.

Ilea blinked inside and down into her armory. Nothing seemed amiss and she thought about putting some of her newly acquired items on the walls. *Might as well give the stuff to Claire or Trian. It's little use down here.*

Any dangerous or valuable items would be safer on her person anyway so she blinked up once more and out into the cold.

Her bone armor had miraculously survived, mostly due to her foresight in storing it as soon as it was breached. The bent and damaged bone got in the way during dangerous battles. Her bracelet was there too. While she couldn't store it inside her necklace normally, she could transfer everything inside and then store it. Two items like that really didn't make much sense but she liked it nonetheless. As an accessory if nothing else.

Four levels to go, five third tier general points. I should use all of them before I get that third class... if the Fae were actually right about that.

She spread her wings and ascended, enjoying the flight from her house back to Ravenhall. *Didn't say hi to the cats. Hmm. Later maybe.*

There was a lot to talk about and even more to consider.

Ilea landed a distance away from the city, within the small forest surrounding the lake in the valley. She breathed in the cold air and smiled, reminded again of the training with Eve, Kyrian and Claire. All of them quite different now.

Trian had been too much of a prick to consider training with them. *Can't even believe he's the same person at this point. Claire kind of went where I expected her to go. Maybe a little less quickly,* she thought with a bittersweet smile. Eve hadn't made it and Kyrian might still be lost.

She walked through the forest and soon reached its outskirts, finding much of the surroundings devoid of snow. Wagons moved lazily on the road from Morhill, protected by groups of adventurers or even guards. Ilea couldn't spot a single imperial soldier on the road or the walls. *Shadowguards only,* she mused, watching their mostly bored expressions.

Becoming a guard really was the opposite of her goals. It was interesting however, to see their faces from hundreds of meters away. *I'm Eaglea. Good thing nobody heard that one. I've been around the Fae for too long, fighting monsters alone in a deep dungeon. Good thing Claire and Trian are used to me.*

She reached the gates and joined the waiting people.

"Shadow! Lady Lilith!" one of the guards called out.

Ilea looked at him and nodded. "What is it?"

"Please, this way," the man said and gestured her to come.

Ilea appeared by his side, drawing looks from the waiting travelers.

"Shadows don't have to wait. Please just quickly show me your badge and you may enter the city," the guard explained.

Ilea nodded and summoned her badge, throwing it to the man.

He checked it and handed it back. "Are you really Lady Lilith?" he asked with sheer reverence in his voice.

"Maybe I am," Ilea said and put the badge into her necklace. She still had her ashen armor covering her whole body, all her leather armors gone. She didn't wait for a response and instead just walked by and into the city. A couple of blinks brought her to the second wall.

It was enchanted, preventing her to teleport through. A simple jump over the walls worked well enough. She felt a magical resonance when she crossed the threshold and waved to the two guards she saw quickly flying towards her. *Flying even. They're getting better.*

The nodded as soon as they saw her and turned back.

Ilea appeared within a nearby store and looked around.

An older lady greeted her with a nod, not terribly distraught by the sudden appearance. "Leather works. Armors, packs, pants. Anything you are looking for, Shadow?"

She nodded. "Armor sets and comfortable clothes I guess. Generally inconspicuous."

The woman nodded and led her into a rather large room with twenty odd stands. "Healer and ash. What's your name, dear?"

“Lilith,” Ilea said and touched some of the armors.

“Oh? It is a pleasure to finally meet my benefactor then,” the woman said and bowed lightly. “Anything you need will be free of charge of course.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll pay like everyone else. Materials and your work aren’t free,” Ilea said and waved her off.

The only other patron in the store tried hard not to look their way, his demeanor tense. A level sixty warrior.

New to the city maybe, she thought and picked three sets of gray and black leather armors. Those that seemed to fit the best.

“There really is no need. Do you need help with the sizes?”

Ilea shook her head. “I’ll pay,” she said with finality and continued on to the clothes. Her sphere and general perception allowed her to easily pick the pieces that fit her. Four pairs of black comfortable pants, four long sleeved shirts of which two were white, one black and one red.

“If you wish to do so. The three sets and the clothes you picked out come together at seven gold and fifty silver pieces,” the woman said.

She nodded and summoned eight gold pieces, putting them on the counter as all her acquisitions vanished. “That’s alright. Thanks,” she said and vanished herself, appearing on top of the building with a fresh set of comfortable clothes covered by a set of black leather armor.

Ilea turned to look behind her, the air flowing through her hair meaning that her ashen armor had been breached. *No you dummy, it’s resting below your neck. The Ascended would have found you already if he wanted.*

It didn’t hurt to be a little careful at least. As much as she would like a rematch, she wasn’t ready by a long shot. Neither would she want it to happen here, in the midst of Ravenhall. Where thousands would die trying to take that being down.

Hard to believe the Fae’s words. Even I could just walk in here and slaughter thousands before I’m stopped. If that is even possible.

She wondered if the creature had regeneration on par to hers. Both with Health and Mana.

Quite a lot of people here knew how she looked like below all the armor but certainly fewer cared now that she wasn’t clad in ashen armor anymore. Ilea could see the sewers below and below even that another street full of apartments, stores and people. *Expanding quite well, isn’t it?*

Ilea wondered if an apartment down below was more expensive than up here. Sunlight would be a privilege but the underground had a higher security against potential monsters flying in or attacking armies.

With magical light capable of mimicking sunlight, there should be plenty of expensive shit down there as well, she thought, looking at the central administrative building. It was still the middle of the night, the store she had visited by far not the only one open. Plenty of people walked the streets, many of them armed. Night had less power over people when many only had to sleep for four or five hours.

Dim light shone from within Claire’s office. *That one doesn’t sleep at all*, she thought with a smile.

The guard let her in after she showed her badge, nodding with respect. He was at least twice her size, wearing full plate armor reminiscent of a Dark One in the north.

Neither the size nor the wicked morning star on his shoulder intimidated her in the slightest.

She grinned as she entered, feeling his distress at her passing. *Smart, that one.*

Ilea slowly walked up the stairs.

“Come in,” Claire’s voice was subdued, inaudible to most humans.

Ilea opened the door and stepped inside, closing it behind herself with a small tendril of ash. She felt the enchantments snap back into place.

Claire sat at her desk, looking rather relaxed. A smile on her face as she looked at Ilea.

Cless was sleeping on a couch near the window, the whole area changed to allow for more painting supplies and canvases.

“Welcome back,” Claire said.

Ilea noted the field of magic active around Cless, likely filtering out the sound of Claire’s working and talking.

“Took you longer than expected.”

“Much larger a problem than expected,” Ilea replied with a smirk.

“Oh, I saw. Care to explain this?” Claire asked and summoned a painting that depicted Ilea standing atop the Trakorov’s head. She looked at it and then back to Ilea. “Or this,” she added, the canvas exchanged with a painting that depicted Ilea surrounded by bright light, most of her body burnt up.

She formed a chair out of ash and sat down, resting her legs on an ashen stool before she summoned a barrel of ale, pouring herself a mug. “That girl’s power is breaching my privacy,” she said and took a sip.

Claire chuckled.

“I will ask her to stop if it is a bother. Though she might not listen. Here at least I can store away the paintings. She couldn’t draw you the last couple of days, after you met once more with that large horned creature. I thought it had killed you,” Claire said.

Ilea waved her off. “That sweetie? Never. Interesting that she couldn’t draw me anymore. Do you know about the Fae?”

Claire smirked and sat back in her armchair. “So that’s what it was. Cless mentioned a companion, something she could not see but feel instead. She decided not to try and draw it. You met another Fae?”

“I did. And quite a few other beings and monsters. Is Trian available?” Ilea asked.

Claire nodded. “He’s been the most anxious about your return. I reassured him that you were still alive. Should I get the others as well?”

“Just Train is fine. I don’t plan to hold another interrogation meeting. You are plenty,” Ilea said and smiled, offering a mug to Claire.

The woman took it and lifted it high. “To your continued survival.”