

## Chapter 369 Cursed Meeting

Pan had apparently not noticed any of the commotion. She was brushing her luscious hair in front of a mirror, her room huge and spacious. A huge bed and various expensive pieces of furniture surrounding it, coupled with warm light from magical lights embedded into the ceiling.

She turned her head when the door opened, looking at the dark Shadow clad in ashen armor.

“What is the meaning of this?” She asked, her voice confident, annoyed even.

She took a step towards Ilea, recognition flickering in her eyes. “You are Lilith. Come to learn about our order, have you?”

Ilea dragged in Mauro. “I’ve come to make sure you don’t get away.”

“Get away?” Pan glanced at Mauro and back to Ilea, taking a step back. “I’m with the Corinth order... you wouldn’t want to offend us. Do I have to remind you who I represent?”

Ilea stepped closer. “I know exactly who you represent. You represent an order that is happy to support slavers. I don’t recall slavery being legal in Dawntree or am I missing something?”

“Don’t throw me in with these savages. I was hired to heal, nothing else.”

“Nothing else?” Ilea asked. “Mauro... what did you tell me before? About her help?”

Pan’s eyes widened before she glared at Mauro with an angry look. “You dog. Barking whenever someone asks you to.”

“Do you deny it then?” Ilea asked. “To have helped in torturing city guards?”

Pan sighed. “I only did my job. What I was asked to do. If it’s anybody’s fault, it’s theirs.”

*Does she not even recognize what she did?* Ilea was baffled. “A proud member of the Corinth order, taking orders from... what did you call him, a dog?”

“I merely healed them. It is the duty of us healers, to heal. Wouldn’t you agree?” She asked, smiling at her.

An ashen limb lashed out and took her head. “I do.” Ilea spoke and heated up her core.

Half a minute later, she blasted the corpse and half the room, the fire digging deep into the stone, turning it to ash.

That too was disintegrated with her true creation, leaving nothing but magical energy behind.

Mauro looked on with wide eyes, trying to move away from her but failing.

“Stop thrashing around.” Ilea said and looked through the room.

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Corinth High Priest – lvl 120 / Corinth Mercenary – lvl 103]’***

“Interesting. Two classes from the Corinth order itself.” She murmured and found documents related to her mission here. Dale would likely just get in trouble so she decided to pocket it all.

*High Priest at level one twenty. And they're one of the big ones.* Ilea wasn't sure what to make of it. Class names of course were just a minor description. With her Medic Sentinels, she would have to deal with the Corinth order at one point or another.

"That's dealt with. Want to show me some hidden storage rooms before the guards find them and all the wealth goes to Alistair?" She asked. "We still have an hour or so until the meeting you mentioned."

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Mauro couldn't believe that Lilith just straight up murdered the healer. Was she sane at all? To attack a member of the Corinth order like this would spell her death.

Killing a Shadow was harder but rarely would those cases be heavily investigated nor punished. There was a reason the Corinth Order could send out pure healers and not worry about them.

She was powerful however, really fucking powerful. Even Nolan had been taken out with a mere couple of blows. Playing it safe had been the right decision.

Lilith wanted to know about hidden storage rooms and Mauro was honestly considering it. She already had his ring which contained the highest value non living merchandise. Nolan had left the actual trading to him a couple years ago and instead dealt with employment, acquiring goods as well as managing the territory as well as paying off people.

*The traps so far didn't bother her. She took down the hounds and just walked through the acid and poison.* Another problem was the fact that their highest caliber traps didn't really protect any storage areas. He couldn't exactly lead her into those.

However, Lilith had a storage item as well and what she had said about Alistair and the guards was true. If his plan worked out, he might be even wealthier in the end. The Gray Company was fucked, most of the members dead at this point but the connections were still there. He would simply have to rebuild. Perhaps in the east instead of Riverwatch.

"I can lead you to our hidden stashes." Mauro said, resigning. Some traps were on the way but nothing more powerful than what she had already shown to tank. She was a healer too, meaning he couldn't likely injure her continuously.

Lilith looked at him after going through Pan's room. "If we have time, point out dangerous traps too. I'd like to see what your organization was capable of."

*What? She wants to disable them. How though? She's shown no major enchantment capabilities nor mechanical knowledge.* He nodded and focused to keep his emotions hidden. *I can show you some traps alright.*

Mauro's hopes were dwindling. For half an hour, he led Lilith into the most dangerous, highest level poison and acid traps they had set up. She didn't even just survive them, she literally removed her armor to let them hit her body.

Not a single drop of blood was shed and the poison seemed to have no effect on her. The hidden stashes and storage rooms were emptied in mere moments.

Mauro was sure by now that she had some sort of perception that went through walls and chests, usually picking the most valuable chests and drawers immediately. To his horror, she simply ripped out the poison darts and spikes from the traps and used them on her arm, ramming them in time and time again.

"We should probably go for the meeting now." Lilith said after she had raided one of the last storage rooms.

*Years of work, a lifetime's worth of wealth... all lost in an instant. Just because this Shadow decided to take this job and come look for us.* He held on to a smidgen of hope still. If nothing else worked, he would make sure both of them were killed.

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*These fuckers were rich.* Ilea had put everything into her bracelet, to be better able to sort it at a later time. Metals, artifacts, magical items, potions, armors, weapons, clothing, exotic animals, class and spellbooks as well as history books and other treasure.

Some of it was sure to help her Medic org, the rest would go to Claire for further investments or into her house.

Mauro pointed the way and she ran through the dark corridors. Most of the way was dark, rarely traveled it seemed or perhaps kept that way intentionally.

*Glad I took this fucker with me, otherwise this would have been impossible to find.* Neither her Sentinel Huntress skill nor her Sphere showed anything in the darkness, running in silence.

The tunnels became more and more crude, parts of it even collapsed. Ilea blasted through with her ashen limbs as well as Heart of Cinder, the focused version quite effective for the job.

She was very much aware that Mauro hoped to somehow turn the elves against her, if they even showed up. Still, he had led her to all the storage rooms and traps, helping her get most of the wealth as well as protect the guards and hunters that would enter their hideout later on.

Ilea had to speed up, running through the tunnels until light became visible in the distance. A tiny speck, clear and bright to her enhanced senses.

"We're coming up on the meeting point." Mauro said.

They exited out into a cave overgrown with moss, roots reaching over the walls as well as trees growing in the distance. Light came in from above, several cracks in the ceiling over a hundred

meters above letting in air and the sun. Thin streams of water flowed in from some of the cracks, pooling into creeks that led farther down into the caves.

***‘ding’ ‘You have entered the Garden of the King dungeon’***

Ilea slowed down and looked out into the expansive cave.

It stretched for hundreds of meters with exits visible that led both outside and farther down into what she assumed to be Karth.

“Where do we meet them?” Ilea asked the man still held by her ashen limbs.

“They will find us.” He said simply, the edges of his mouth quirking up ever so slightly.

She felt them arrive before she saw them, magical energy flowing over her. The sphere lit up when four light sources appeared.

“Oh, a new human. And she has bound the smuggler. Fascinating.” A voice spoke, excited and quick.

Blue eyes, a warm smile and a hat covering his ears. The elf that spoke wore human clothing, simple black pants, a shirt and jacket on top.

***[Mage – lvl 322]***

*Interesting.* “Greetings.” Ilea said, smiling back at the elf.

“She’s the enem...,” Mauro exclaimed and was muffled by ash entering his mouth.

“Human Healer” Another one of them spoke, his eyes completely white but focused on her. He wore a simple white robe that glowed brightly in Ilea’s Sphere. His hair flowed freely behind him, as if carried by wind, white as snow. “Thou does not fear our kind?”

***[Healer – lvl ??]***

Ilea was intrigued to say the least. A healer amongst elves and one she had yet to catch up to. “I have friends among your kind.” She said. *I am inside a dungeon. Now let’s see if Seviir and Hera fucked me over.* The ash on her helmet receded to reveal the rune like carving on her cheek.

A third one of them laughed, reptile like red eyes glaring at her as his flowing red hair changed to a dark orange before her eyes. “You’re entirely too weak to carry that title, healer girl.” He wore dark red scale armor, his helmet covering his face but letting his hair flow freely.

***[Warrior – lvl 289]***

Ilea looked at the last one of them, noting the tears flowing down his face. His skin was pale, more so than she had ever seen with an elf. His eyes were covered by a strip of black cloth, his hair of ethereal quality, light partially going through as if unhindered.

***[Mage – lvl 262]***

“Your level is lower than mine, fuckwit.” Ilea commented, not taking the red haired elf’s comment very seriously.

He was about to reply when the white haired one spoke up. “Not a title bestowed to those of strong body alone but those of great spirit and... compassion. You know of the hunters?”

Ilea winked at the red haired one, his hair getting dark red. She noted the twitching muscles, even below his armor. "I know Cerithil Hunters... are you hunters too then?"

Mauro was watching on with disbelief in his eyes, ash still covering his mouth.

"We are. That human, he is bound yet our associate. I ask you to explain the circumstance he is in." The white haired healer said. He sounded old. Neither demanding, nor anxious.

"He is part of an illegal smuggling company. They kidnapped humans and sold them as slaves, tortured city guards and provided assassins for pay." Ilea explained, glaring at the elf.

*This might be a difficult fight.* She couldn't help but get a little excited. Even escaping them might be dangerous. She hadn't felt that way in a while. Alone against a near impossible opponent.

*Don't engage if there is no reason. They're hunters, not part of the domains.*

"Is see." The healer said. "And you oppose such actions?"

"Some of them, yes. Slavery, torture and assassination. Though the latter might be fine under certain circumstances." Ilea explained.

"Marvelous... the diversity in morality. Splendid... even among those considered powerful." The hat mage said, summoning a notebook and starting to scribble.

"As you know of us, you perhaps know of our plight?" The healer asked.

Ilea looked his way. "The Taleen and their unending machines as well as the oracles and their senseless reign." She said. If they weren't Cerithil Hunters, at least now she assumed they would attack.

"Precisely. Though such information... rarely is shared. I would be interested in meeting the hunters you know." The healer said and continued. "Supplies, if not gathered ourselves can be difficult to acquire. No elf would trade with the cursed, few humans remain willing to trade or even talk. Dark Ones and Dwarves alike shun our kind."

"I can see that." Ilea said. "What would someone as powerful as you want to trade for anyway? Did you buy those humans?"

"I don't like her tone... she speaks as if to demand respect. May I show her our power?" The red haired one asked, not in an angry or annoyed tone. Excited perhaps.

"I am sure she will accommodate you. After our talk. He is in constant search of challenging battles. Perhaps you too, share this... trait." The white haired one explained. "Though powerful we are, no craftsmen, smiths or tailors remain amongst the cursed. It is through tools made by human or dwarven hand that we enhance our chance of survival in the depths left behind by those at constant war."

"So you don't buy humans to eat?" Ilea asked.

The mage in human clothes chuckled. "Ropes, enchanted fire spheres, armor repairs, good meals cooked by professionals. Even we appreciate the mundane. There are many of us who don't care but after hundreds of years, it gets tedious to just eat raw meat and constantly run around in the darkness, relying only on magical sight. I like the comfort of a feather filled bed just as much as any other mammal. Your kind has perfected such wares and thus we sought a trader."

His explanations made the most sense to her so far. Ilea could see how trading for mundane things like that could be an issue. Shadows and whole city's guards would be hunting them down immediately if they showed up. Not that this particular group would have much trouble dealing with them all but maybe they would rather stay discreet and not murder thousands.

"Thank you." Ilea said.

The healer opened his eyes a little wider, brows quirking up. "For what would thou thank us, human?"

"For not taking what you needed with force, causing death and destruction." She said.

"It is of nobody's benefit to slaughter those alive and thinking." The healer said. "Yet you hold one we need. Your plight is commendable. Inconsequential to us however. I ask you to release him."

Ilea smiled. "I could say the same about your plight."

"You speak the truth. Dost thou hold the trader hostage?" He spoke the words in the same slow manner, no indication about how he felt.

She was pretty sure it was a threat however. "His trading company was destroyed. I dismantled it myself. However much I would like to fight you, I'd rather work together with the hunters of Cerithil. Perhaps we can find an arrangement."

Ilea let the ash flow out of Mauro's mouth. "He however, must pay for his crimes. I'm sure I can provide you with what you need today."

The man coughed a couple times before he glared at her and back to the elves. "She is lying, our company is fine and we can continue to provide what you need. At a lower cost than she will. She is just a Shadow anyway, unable to produce the goods you need and smuggle them out of the city. Kill her and I promise, the next ten deliveries are free of charge."

The healer looked over at the elf whose eyes were bound.

The tears had stopped, yet he was facing the two humans. "Uncertain. Fearful. Liar." The words were spoken with long pauses in between, the voice sounding mournful, spoken with deep and conflicting emotion.

"What? You're wrong... I've been trading and smuggling for decades... she's not even that old, all she does is fight! She's a mercenary, paid by whoever has gold!"

"And yet... she is a healer. And marked as as Guardian of Cerith. One we are meant to trust, not a title easily given and without reason. You speak of gold and yet are not merchants those most interested in its splendor?" The white haired healer asked, each word hitting Mauro like a blow.

"I am interested. In your proposal, healer and guardian. Though it is unfortunate, that our trading partner has been... removed, you pose an alternative. How do you suggest we proceed?" The healer asked.

Ilea thought about it, tapping her cheek. "First." She said, an ashen limb moving out towards Mauro.

His armor of ash formed as he struggled against the limbs holding him.

Ilea's own ash penetrated his, slashing through him a couple times until she heard a noise resounding in her mind. "I'd rather he doesn't share anything about this conversation. His life was over when I found him either way."

She grabbed the body and made it vanish, to be burnt at a later time.

"I'll have to think of how we could set this up. I hadn't planned to cooperate with any elves for the foreseeable future. A trade agreement with Cerithil hunters might be the first step." She thought about it and paced around a little. "First though, I'd like to fight the red one. Would be a waste to not take you up on that offer."

"We will reside here until an agreement has been reached." The healer said. "If battle is needed to clear your head, human, then so it shall be."

"Yesss." The red haired one said. "Finally, a human who can appreciate the finer things in life." Power and white flame exploded out of him before he flew at her with an explosion of speed.