

One Day at a Time

Iris stared open-mouthed at the Umbral Seer, the Hierophant had just dropped several bombs on her.

“So, you do not know what stats are?” she asked.

The man shook his head. “If what you are saying is true, then it is something that we have not yet learned,” he explained. The moon elf gestured toward the parchment. “We know of three attributes: Capability, Control, and Constitution, but we do not know how to measure this within each person... yet.”

She sighed. “Alright. Well, thank you for the information you have given me. I would like to speak at a later date concerning the ceremony, it will help with my purpose.”

The Hierophant bowed his head. “We will be here, refining our craft.”

She stood and the man rolled up the parchment before passing it to her. “We take the privacy of the Excerpts seriously. While we will use what we have learned to help others, we will not give specific information about you or anything that could lead back to you.”

“Thank you. We’ll have to speak again. Soon,” she said.

The man smiled. “I look forward to it.”

Iris greeted Kaira as she left the chambers, the high elf leaning against a wall looking all cute in her green tunic and pixie cut. After a quick explanation, the woman was also curious about the ceremony. As the woman walked into the chambers to see her own Excerpt, Iris looked down at the scroll in her hand.

She couldn’t stop the smile that grew on her face. A newfound resolve had settled into her, one that was filled with the *rightness* of it all. Her purpose was true.

Iris looked forward to the ball now. It was just another step toward creating the Adventurer’s Guild.

Maybe I can ask Kaira to join me.

She felt her cheeks heat up as her thoughts turned to the woman wearing a dress.



As they walked out of the Temple, Kaira couldn't contain her excitement about the ceremony and the clarity it had brought her. Iris listened with a smile, happy to have helped the woman find a new sense of purpose just as she did. Together, they strolled through the streets of Brightburn, heading to the next part of their adventure.

As they walked, Kaira glanced over at Iris. “So, what are you planning to do about the ball?” she asked. “Do you have anything to wear?”

Iris’s breath hitched in her throat. *Can this woman read my damn thoughts?*

“I... Uh, haven’t really thought about it,” she lied. “I’m not much of a dress person.”

Kaira grinned. “Well, maybe it’s time to become one. You could really make an impression at the ball. Besides, you *have* to dress up. Or they wouldn’t let you in.”

Ugh. Dress codes.

Iris hesitated. “I don’t even know where to begin. I’ve never been to a ball before.”

Kaira laughed. “Don’t worry, I’ve got you covered. I know a great seamstress in town who can whip up a stunning dress in no time.” She leaned closer to Iris. “She was also changed by the Flash, and can use magic with her craft.”

That got Iris’s attention. “She’s a *magical* seamstress? Say no more! Thanks, Kaira.”

“Of course. It’s important to look and feel your best, especially at events like this. If you are confident, it will show,” Kaira said.

Iris nodded, feeling a sense of gratitude toward the elf. “I appreciate it. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

Kaira chuckled. “You’d probably be lost in this city. But don’t worry, after we’re done, I’m sure you will have a great time at the ball. And who knows, maybe you’ll meet someone special.”

Iris blushed. *I think I already have.*

“Lady Arden said that I have to bring an escort...” Iris mumbled.

The elf’s brows furrowed. “That’s unusual. But not insurmountable! First, let’s get you a dress.”

Iris couldn’t help but smile at the woman’s infectious positivity, even if the adventurer didn’t quite share the sentiment.

Kaira led Iris toward a small shop tucked away in an alley. A quaint structure that was well off the beaten path, and immediately Iris knew they were at the right place for what she needed.

Some great shit could be found in little hidden places just like this back home.

As they entered, the tinkling of a bell above the door announced their presence, and a high elf woman appeared from the back room. She was average height and thin, with sharp features and long braided blonde hair.

“Kaira, my dear!” the woman exclaimed, giving the other elf a quick hug before turning to Iris. “And who is this?”

“This is Iris. We need to get her a dress for House Arden’s ball,” Kaira said, grinning.

The woman eyed Iris up and down before nodding. “I can do that. But I don’t have anything ready-made. I’ll need to make it.”

Iris’s heart sank. “How long will it take?”

“Two days at least,” the seamstress said, looking over Iris despite the armor she wore. “I can make you something stunning, but it won’t be quick. Otherwise, you’ll have to go somewhere else. This is very last minute.”

Iris bit her lip. The ball was in two days. “Is there any way to make it faster? The ball is—”

The woman sighed. “I know it’s cutting it close, but quality takes time. If you want something that good, you’ll have to be patient.”

Kaira put a reassuring hand on Iris’s shoulder. “Iris here can use magic. Maybe...”

The seamstress gave Kaira a look with narrowed eyes. “You told her,” she accused, throwing up her hands. “Of course you did. She’s cute enough—”

“Let’s not go there!” Kaira spat out, before sighing exaggeratedly. “Marlena... You can trust her.”

Marlena, the seamstress sighed. “Fine, come along dear. Let me see what I’m working with.”

Marlena led Iris into a private room and drew a curtain across the doorway, creating a cocoon of privacy. Turning to Iris, she spoke with a gentle but firm tone, “Alright, now I need you to undress. I need to take proper measurements to ensure a perfect fit.”

She pointed to a screen in the corner of the room and nodded for Iris to change behind it.

Iris stepped behind the screen and hesitated for a moment before turning back and peeking her head out and focusing on Kaira. “Hey, do you think you could help me out of this armor?” she asked, patting her chest as her cheeks turned slightly pink. “I don’t think I can get it off on my own.”

Kaira smiled reassuringly. “Of course, I can help you with that. It’s always good to have a partner help you undress... from armor.”

She moved over to Iris and began to help her remove the various pieces of armor, carefully unfastening straps and buckles. As she worked, Kaira kept up a steady stream of chatter, making small talk to put Iris at ease.

“Armor can be quite a nuisance, but it’s a necessary evil in our line of work,” Kaira continued as she worked on removing the last piece. “You never know when you

might need protection, right?" She finally unclasped the final buckle and helped Iris slip out of her armor.

The woman helped Iris slip off her chainmail and then set it neatly off of the side for her. Iris breathed a sigh of relief as the last piece came off, feeling much lighter without the weight of the armor on her. She quickly discarded her trousers and undershirt, leaving her standing in only her bra and panties

Out of the corner of her eye, Iris noticed Kaira giving her a once-over, and she couldn't help but smirk.

Yeah, girl. Take it in. I know I look good.

She enjoyed the attention.

Kaira caught Iris' smirk and raised an eyebrow in amusement. "You look amazing, Iris. I'm sure Marlena will make you a dress that will make you look even better."

Iris blushed heavily, and quickly turned and stepped out from behind the screen, immediately seeing Marlena's eyes narrow.

"What's wrong?" Iris asked, feeling an instinctive desire to cover herself in embarrassment.

"What is that undergarment you're wearing?" the seamstress asked.

Iris looked down at her bra and then back up at Marlena. "It's a bra," she said, feeling a little self-conscious. "It's just an everyday one, nothing special. It's just much better than what I could find here."

Marlena's eyes widened in understanding. "May I see it?"

"Uh, sure," Iris said while glancing at Kaira in confusion.

Kaira shrugged, looking just as surprised as Iris. Marlena reached out to touch the fabric of the bra, feeling its texture between her fingers.

"This is interesting," she murmured to herself. "I've never seen anything like this before. The design is quite simple, but the fabric is unlike anything we have here."

Iris nodded. "It's just a basic bra from my world. I didn't think it was anything special."

Marlena smiled. "On the contrary, my dear. This... bra is very special. I would like to recreate it for use here. May I take some measurements and study the design?"

Iris nodded in agreement, feeling a bit flattered by the attention her plain bra was receiving. She soon found herself standing there topless while the seamstress sat at her desk going over the bra with a measuring tape.

The woman turned her head slightly as Kaira asked where she could get something to cover Iris with. Apparently, standing there with nipples that could cut glass was a cue to grab a blanket.

Iris shrugged as Kaira handed said blanket to her, a smirk growing on her face. She lowered her voice. “You know, I didn’t mind you peeking,” she said with a wink.

Kaira’s eyes widened and Iris had to bite her lip to stop from giggling at how much the woman blushed.

The seamstress cleared her throat and stood up. She walked over to where a roll of fabric sat and unrolled a decent amount before carefully cutting it out and taking it to a tall table.

After she spread the fabric out over the table, she grabbed the bra and placed it down on top of it. Marlana concentrated as she began to cast a spell, her fingers moving in intricate patterns over the bra. Iris watched in fascination as the fabric on the table glowed blue as it began to shift and change, gradually becoming an exact match of the bra’s fabric.

The seamstress then began marking various measurements, jotting down notes, and making sketches in a small notebook. She asked Iris questions about the fit and comfort of the bra, and Iris found herself getting caught up in the excitement of having something she owned recreated in this world. The woman noted how the sizing was done, and hummed in agreement on how important that would be.

As Marlana worked, Kaira stood by, occasionally chiming in with her own observations and suggestions. As the two women discussed the project, Iris couldn’t help but feel grateful for their attentiveness and care.

The two lowered their voices, and Iris **Focused** to try and catch what they said without distraction.

“Marlana, you’ll cut her in on this, Right?” Kaira asked the woman quietly, but not enough that Iris’s enhanced stats couldn’t hear.

“Of course, Kaira. Who do you take me for?” Marlana scoffed. “Five percent is more than fair.”

Kaira groaned. “Marlana.”

“Fine. Fine. I’ll have you know that twenty percent is exceptionally fair considering she didn’t even make this. She purchased it wherever she was from,” she said. “From whoever this Victoria seamstress is, it appears. I am curious what her secret is, though.”

Iris snorted, causing the two women to turn and stare at her.

She lifted a hand, ensuring to keep the blanket tight around herself with the other. “Sorry! Just had a thought.”

Kaira raised a brow as she smirked but she didn’t say anything before the two went back to their discussion while Marlana worked.

Finally, after what felt like hours, Marlana stepped back from the table with a satisfied smile. “I believe I have what I need. Thank you for your assistance, Iris. I will be able to create more of this fabric and make these bras for my customers. The dress I make will be free of charge and I will have a contract ready for you when you return.”

Iris tilted her head. “A contract?”

Marlana glanced at Kaira, who sighed and turned to Iris. “Marlana isn’t just stealing the design to use freely. She’s going to have a contract that gives you some of the profits she makes.”

The seamstress nodded. “I apologize if I did not make that clear,” she said. “Now, for this dress. What did you have in mind?”

Iris smiled, imagining the Renaissance-style dresses she’d love to wear. She focused on the woman. “Okay, picture this: a deep, dark blue that shimmers like the night sky,” she described dreamily. With a wave of her hand, a small ball of electricity sparked to life as she continued, “My magic dances across the midnight canvas like a tempestuous storm. A halo of stars dares to tease what lies below before the elegant embroidery of the sparkling neckline draws the immodest eye back to my face. From my shoulders, the sleeves billow like clouds of blue that venture no further than the ever-so-delicate lining of silver at my elbow. And a flowing skirt that sways like a breeze, swirling as I dance.”

She caught Kaira’s astonished stare and gave the elf a wink.

Marlana’s countenance melted into an expression of tender appreciation as she regarded Iris. “That was a beautiful image,” she murmured softly, as if seeing Iris for the first time. “I believe I can bring that vision to life, my dear. You will stroll into the ball like a storm, leaving the nobles speechless in your wake,” she declared with fierce determination, her lips twisting into a resolute grin. “Return to me on the morning before the ball, and the gown will be completed. I’ll make any last-minute alterations as you wear it.”

She paused as if in thought, then added, “Thank you, dear. I will ensure that we both make out well from this.”

Iris nodded but then hesitated. “Do you want to copy the fabric and pattern from my panties?” she asked, glancing down at her black hipsters. “I also know other styles.”

The woman raised a brow. “Yes, I do, actually. However, clean them first and bring them back in two days.”

Iris blushed at the request but nodded in agreement. “Sure, I’ll do that,” she said before quickly getting dressed with Kaira’s help and leaving the shop.

As she walked with Kaira down the street, she couldn’t help but feel a sense of excitement. Not only would she be getting a beautiful dress for the ball, but she would also be making some money from the new business because of the woman’s magic. And

who knew? Maybe her undergarment collection would become the next big thing in this world. *At least I'll be able to have more! Washing these every day was getting annoying.*

“Shall we take a stroll through the park before heading back to your inn?”

Her mind fell onto brand names. *Iris's Secret?*

No. That sounds lame.

“What are you thinking about?” Kaira asked with a smile. “Your face is all scrunched up in concentration.”

“Trying to come up with names for the lingerie business,” she said.

Kaira chuckled. “Well, you have plenty of time to brainstorm. Who knows, maybe you'll be the talk of Lehelia.”

Iris grinned, liking the sound of that. As they entered the park, she took a deep breath, enjoying the fresh air and the sound of birds chirping. It was nice and peaceful.

The layout of the park was expansive, with winding paths leading to various sections indicated by small signs, including a rose garden and a playground. Overall, it was a beautiful and relaxing place to spend an afternoon.

And it appeared that many others thought the same. Families and couples sat in the grass having picnics or relaxing. Young men and women lounged as they studied various tomes and books.

As Iris and Kaira walked past a large fountain, she noticed a group of men practicing something like martial arts in the large field behind it.

Kaira observed the men for a moment before turning to Iris. “Have you ever tried anything like that before?” she asked, nodding in the direction of the group.

Iris shook her head. “No, I can't say that I have. It looks interesting though.”

Kaira smiled. “Perhaps we should try it out one day.”

“I don't think I'd be very good at it, but it could be fun,” Iris agreed with a chuckle.

The guard captain gave a playful smirk. “Perhaps I could give you a private lesson.”

Iris choked on her own spit. “Y-Yeah. That would be lovely.”

Lovely? Get control of yourself, Iris.

The elf tried to hide her smile by looking away.

As they continued their walk, they passed by a group of musicians playing instruments under the shade of a tree. The melody was beautiful and Iris found herself getting lost in the music.

Kaira gestured to the well-manicured grass and the two found a spot to sit down while listening to the music.

The sun was warm on their skin as they relaxed on the grass, enjoying the beautiful melody. Iris closed her eyes, letting the music wash over her. She could feel her worries and stress melting away with each note played.

Kaira leaned back on her hands, watching the musicians with a contented smile. "It's amazing how music can make you feel," she commented.

Iris nodded in agreement, still lost in the music. The sound of the instruments was so beautiful, it was like they were creating their own world. A world that was peaceful and calm.

Such a stark contrast to the dangers she kept finding herself in. It all seemed perfect. Too perfect.

She needed to do something to keep it.

"Kaira?"

"Yes, Iris?" the woman asked, her tone expectant.

She turned and faced the elf, immediately enraptured by the ice-blue eyes that sparkled in the evening sunlight.

"I was wondering," Iris began, her heart pounding in her chest. "Would you like to come to the ball with me?"

Kaira's brows shot up in surprise before a smile slowly formed on her lips. "The ball? As your *escort*?"

Iris blushed, feeling embarrassed. *Get it together! You've never been this timid. Where's that badass forward chick who isn't afraid to flirt with anyone cute?*

She took a deep breath and instantly felt a rush of nervousness. "I know we just met... but I thought it would be nice to go with someone I had a connection with..."

Damn it. What is wrong with me?

Kaira smiled warmly, her eyes softening. "I would love to go with you, Iris. Thank you for asking."

Relief flooded through Iris, and she returned the smile. "Of course."

They sat in silence for a few moments, listening to the music and enjoying each other's company. Iris couldn't help but feel grateful for the new friend she had made.

Finally, the musicians finished their song, and Kaira stood up, stretching her arms over her head. "We should head back now. It's getting late."

Iris nodded, standing up as well. "Yes, you're right. Thank you for coming with me today, Kaira. I had a great time."

The elf gave her a grin. "I really enjoyed myself too," Kaira said, glancing up at the darkening sky.

As they strolled through the park, the setting sun cast a warm glow over the trees and the gentle breeze carried the sweet scent of blooming flowers. Kaira's black pixie cut danced in the wind, framing her sharp features. Her pointed ears twitched in the breeze, and the small silver cuffs at the top of each ear glinted in the fading light.

The two women chatted effortlessly about the upcoming ball, with the elf sharing stories and tips on how to navigate the high society of the city. To Iris, it was everything she needed and made her think that maybe Kaira had dealt with the nobility before.

That will be beneficial.

As they reached the edge of the park, Kaira turned to Iris, her eyes full of warmth and kindness. "Let's get you back to your inn, then I should try and see Marlena before she leaves for the day."

Iris winced. "I should have asked you before we went there for a dress."

Kaira's laughter was like music to her ears as she took Iris's hand. "It's no issue, I promise," she said before glancing away for a moment. "I'm just excited that you asked me."

"Me too," Iris replied, unable to keep the smile off of her face.

Kaira gave Iris's hand a gentle squeeze before pulling her along. "I'll help you walk, just to be safe," she said slyly. "Can't let anyone come and snatch you away from me."

Iris giggled. "We wouldn't want that!"

As they strolled hand-in-hand along the busy streets, Iris couldn't help but bask in the comforting presence of Kaira. The elf seemed to exude a calming aura, which put Iris at ease amidst the chaotic world that enveloped them. She stole furtive glances at the shorter guard captain, fully aware that Kaira was conscious of her gaze.

Finally, they arrived at the entrance of Iris's inn. Kaira turned to her, her face beaming with a warm smile. "Have a good night, Iris. Perhaps... we could see each other tomorrow?"

Iris felt a jolt of excitement at Kaira's suggestion. "Yes, I would love that," she replied, feeling her cheeks flush with anticipation. "I had a wonderful time today."

Kaira's smile widened, and her eyes sparkled with amusement. "So did I," she replied, before leaning in and placing a light kiss on Iris's cheek. "Sleep well," she added, giving her hand a gentle squeeze before turning and disappearing into the crowd.

The adventurer was left standing at the door of her inn, her fingers lingering on her cheek, and feeling a mixture of emotions that she couldn't quite put into words.

She stood there, watching Kaira's retreating form until she disappeared. She finally turned and entered the inn, a small smile playing on her lips, making her way towards the bar. Sera called out to her from a nearby table.

“Iris! Over here!”

Iris walked over to the table, Sera waved a hand for Iris to take a seat. The adventurer smiled and pulled out the chair next to the merchant and sat down. She glanced between Tanith and Sera. “Hey, you two. What's up?”

Sera grinned. “We have information. I didn't expect you to not be here when we returned,” she pointed out. “You were gone a lot longer than I suspected you would be. Did you spend it with the Guard Captain?”

Iris felt her cheeks heat up. “Yes, Kaira showed me around this part of the city and we visited the Temple and a seamstress for a ball gown,” she explained. “We just came from the park where we listened to some musicians.”

Sera nudged her playfully. “Ooh, sounds like a date to me.”

Iris rolled her eyes. “No... the date is when we go to the ball together.”

Sera put a hand over her mouth as her eyes filled with glee. Tanith raised a brow. “You certainly waste no time. Well done. We were worried that would cause us issues.”

“No, I...” Iris hesitated. “I actually want to go with her. Not just because of what Lady Arden said.”

Sera's expression softened. “I'm sure it will be a delightful evening,” she said. “Now, our information.”

Tanith sighed. “We managed to get *some* information. A representative from the Merchant Guild is going to meet us in the morning to explain the rest.”

“The Merchant Guild?” Iris repeated.

Sera nodded. “The Guildmaster of the Merchant Guild is the highest-ranking member of the Guilds here in Brightburn. He leads the city's Guild Council.”

Iris squinted her eyes as she tried to figure out the significance of that. “Can you fill me in on what you guys were able to accomplish today? It sounds like I need some backstory.”

“Of course,” Sera replied, lifting her mug toward one of the barmaids and pointing at Iris. “We spent the day gathering information on the political landscape of Brightburn, and it turns out that there are a lot of players involved.”

Tanith took over. “Three main factions are vying for power in the city. A noble faction aligned with Lady Arden, another faction of nobles aligned with the lady's biggest rival House, and the Guilds. They each have their own interests, and they're constantly at odds with one another.”

“Lady Arden represents the ruling noble House, and she’s trying to gain an advantage over the merchant guild and her rivals by forming alliances with other Houses,” Sera added.

“How does this affect us?” Iris asked.

Sera took a deep breath. “If she sponsors us, then she will expect the Adventurer’s Guild to be firmly on her side. It will give her a seat on the Guild Council.”

Iris sighed. “There isn’t much we can do about that, is there?”

Both Tanith and Sera shook their heads. “No, there isn’t. We either accept her help and slip into bed with her politically, or we don’t and we need to find another city.”

“I guess this meeting at the ball just became even more important,” Iris said, thinking about the potential consequences of their decision.

“Exactly,” Tanith agreed. “We need to gather as much information as possible and make a decision that’s best for the Adventurer’s Guild.”

“I understand,” Iris said with a nod. “Let’s hope this meeting with the Merchant Guild will give us some more insight.”

The three of them continued to discuss their options and plans for the next day, with the information they had gathered weighing heavily on their minds. As they talked, Iris couldn’t help but steal glances at the door, thinking about Kaira and that kiss, wondering what it meant.

She smiled softly, feeling a warmth spread through her chest at the memory. But she quickly refocused on the conversation at hand, realizing the gravity of the situation they were in.

“We need to be careful,” Tanith said, breaking her out of her thoughts. “We don’t want to get caught up in this power struggle.”

“Agreed,” Sera added. “We need to keep a low profile, at least until we figure out what we’re dealing with.”

Iris nodded. “I understand. I’ll be careful.”

Good,” Sera said, finishing off her drink. “Now let’s get some rest. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow.”

The three of them paid their tab and made their way to their rooms. Iris followed Sera into their room and quickly doffed her armor and set it up for the next day.

Finally settled, with Sera already asleep, Iris got into her bed and got comfortable.

As she lay there, she couldn’t shake off the feeling of unease. She knew that their mission in Brightburn was important, but it seemed that the political landscape may make things more complicated than she had expected. And then there was Kaira, the

enigmatic guard captain who had captured her attention in ways she couldn't quite explain.

With a deep sigh, Iris closed her eyes and tried to push her thoughts aside. Tomorrow was going to be a long day, and she needed all the rest she could get.

I'll figure it out. I always do.

There was bound to be some type of bad luck she could defy and twist into something beneficial.

Just take it one day at a time.