

Chapter 406 Strange Acquaintances

It took nearly half an hour to restore the little Fae to a completely corruption free state, Ilea working fast and efficiently to make sure she was done before it woke up once more.

The Enavurin reassured her that he could keep the Fae unconscious for as long as she needed but Ilea didn't know how exactly the little creature perceived things around it. And if mind magic had adverse effects if one is exposed for such a long time. Her training with Eve should have revealed something like that of course.

Still, even unconscious it might know what was happening.

She finished up and waited for a couple minutes to see if she had missed any of the corruption.

Nothing spread again.

"Hey, Gracken. You can release the Fae now. I think I took care of it all," she said with a smile.

"As you wish, Ilea," it said, the magic vanishing.

Ilea moved the Fae closer to herself and carefully rested it in her hands. It seemed alright, its vitals fine according to her healing skill.

"You there?" she asked, holding it up to her face.

Its hand lashed out and booped her nose before it vanished, appearing on the same spot but standing now.

Ilea had seen the devastating attack coming with her precognition but let it happen nonetheless.

"How is it doing?" the Enavurin asked.

"How you doin'?" Ilea asked, locking eyes with the Fae.

It jumped up and did a little pirouette before it landed and bowed to her.

"He's fine, or she, or whatever gender it has," Ilea said in her mind.

The Fae shook its head.

"I don't know what you mean," Ilea said.

"I believe the Fae do not possess the concept of gender," the Gracken suggested. "I am glad you are well, my friend," a joyous emotion reached her.

Is this a group chat now? She wondered and rolled her eyes. "Let me quickly check if there are more survivors," she said and looked at the Fae, "You can float, right?"

It turned its head to the side.

She spread her own wings and saw the creature nod in understanding.

Ilea let go of it and smiled under her armor, quickly checking the rest of the rooms. She hadn't heard any noise coming from them and checking through only confirmed everything was dead.

“You said a couple hundred years right? Since whoever brought you here was here,” Ilea said to the Enavurin, finding the Fae waiting for her in the main corridor.

It pointed to her.

“What is it?” Ilea asked.

Dulled thoughts reached her mind. Joy and want.

“You want something?” she asked, watching the thing float to her face.

It pointed at her shoulder and vanished, now standing on it and looking at her.

“You can stay there, sure,” Ilea said and watched it sit down, moving its legs as it tapped the ash with its little hands. *No fingers*, Ilea noted. *No mouth either*.

“A short time after I found myself here... so three hundred years. I do not have perfect recollection of the time that has passed since, my slumbers lasting for many years. Do you seek the creature?” the being asked.

“Yea, and slather some corruption into its face,” Ilea said.

She swore she heard a giggle coming from her right shoulder but then again nothing had resounded. “Don’t fuck with me, little guy,” she whispered, a feeling of innocence reaching her mind. “You know what you did, Fae.”

“Revenge... it is not a journey you should follow, young human,” the voice said.

“I don’t need to hear that advice, ancient one. I’d like to find out more about this whole facility first anyway. If it subdued you so easily, I doubt I could face it anyway. Not yet,” Ilea said.

“My blood was taken but I was not subdued, never directly engaged even. It used toxins to paralyze me and other than small wounds on my body, there was nothing I perceived,” it said.

“That’s even worse honestly,” Ilea grumbled in her mind. “So it didn’t even see you as a threat or something to respect, just another test tube.”

“I suppose you are right. It saddens me that I cannot share more about the being responsible,” it said.

“Do you want to get out then? Or get revenge? Back to your home world?” Ilea asked, back in the facility and soon reaching the dim layer and home of the Enavurin.

“I have pondered this question for a long while. It is comfortable here, warm and the pulse of life is strong. Hostile creatures will be waiting outside, terribly dull and territorial. I think I shall stay,” the Enavurin explained.

“Really? And what if the being comes back? Decides to get more blood or even just kill you... worse even, corrupt you?” Ilea asked.

“Then it shall be so,” the being replied.

Ilea was about to retort when a thought came to her mind. *No point*.

She glanced at the Fae and gave it a slight nod. *I suppose it tried already. Possibly even to get it out of the facility*.

“Why didn’t you help the Fae before? To escape its prison?” Ilea asked, her eyes still on the little creature.

“It offered no such wish and I cannot move outside of water. It would kill me,” the being said.

Quite logical, Ilea thought.

“Why didn’t you want to be rescued?” Ilea asked the Fae.

The being just shrugged.

“What did I get myself into...,” she murmured to herself.

“It is... uncommon for someone of one species to try and understand the thoughts and wishes of another,” the Gracken said. “A brain of your size could not possibly understand however.”

“Yes, yes. I get it old man,” Ilea said.

“You are offended? I apologize, it was not my intent,” the Enavurin said.

It sounded like genuine confusion, just the way Ilea felt about the whole situation. “Well, either way. I need to go deeper and find what caused the corruption to spread suddenly. Did you feel a large group of humans come through in the past two months or so?” she asked.

“Yes. Not as resistant to my magic as you are. Yet I did not meddle, as they meddled not with these waters. The frame of time would suggest they are the cause for this occurrence. A trap perhaps, or a deliberate action?” it suggested.

“Your blood can be used to make more corruption?” Ilea asked. She wasn’t about to kill the creature just because it held an ingredient for something dangerous.

“I will adapt and modify the blood within me. It should be no trouble to make it useless, now that I know of the existence of such a vile purpose,” the being spoke.

Ok, Ilea thought and just sent an approving thought their way. “Blood Manipulation is another one of your abilities... makes sense now that I think about it,” she said.

“Indeed,” the being said.

The Fae was climbing her head in the meantime, using the ashen horns of her armor as supports.

“So I understand correctly that you just want to hang out here and think for the next... thousand years,” Ilea said.

She got an affirming thought back.

A smile spread on her lips before she chuckled and then started laughing. The movement of her head made the Fae jiggle around as it tried to hold on.

She calmed down again and sighed. “And what do you want to do, little guy?” she asked, talking to the Fae currently standing on her head.

It sat down and hugged her head from above.

“You want to stay with me?” she asked.

The creature nodded.

“I know you guys are pretty tough but don’t do anything stupid, ok? I’ll have to fight a lot of beasts,” she said.

Joy

“Really? Your friend didn’t seem to think the same way. Did you know them? Found it in the same dungeon, just a bunch of layers higher,” she explained.

The Fae didn’t seem to understand the question, tilting its head to the side.

“It’s fine. Hey Gracken, are you not going to be lonely if I take your only friend with me?” Ilea asked.

A seriously confused thought came into her mind.

Why do I even ask. Well, might as well try.

“Do you know how I can get third tier general skills and a third class?” she asked. It had known quite a lot about Resistances, maybe it could offer some more.

“Class... you mean the flows we choose. I possess merely one and it cannot be changed. I suppose your species is offered choice in this, unlike most. I must tell you that I do not possess the knowledge you seek. As to the third tier resistance, there is a way to advance abilities to such degrees with time and effort. Centuries, decades perhaps with great risk. I have had little use for battle in my life and thus have only achieved two abilities to reach such heights.” the Gracken provided.

“Any chance you want to share that knowledge with me?” Ilea asked with a smile.

“You have helped a being most unknown to yourself. A commendable act. I shall tell you what I know. The first ability I have advanced past the second tier was Meditation. Yet I do not believe you will be capable of such, not with your brain as it is and not with the lifespan that limits humanity,” the being said regretfully.

“So you just meditated for a shit ton of time and considered concepts and magic I could not comprehend?” Ilea asked.

“Essentially, yes,” the being replied.

“No point system or something like that? I’ve gotten Soul Magic Resistance before through sheer exposure. And an elf told me I was on the right track for third tier skills by just getting more,” Ilea relayed the bits of information she had gathered so far.

“The nature of mana is... varied. You may find a way where there was none for me. Fire magic, soul magic, curses... as well as the void and space... resources previously unknown to me. The Enavurin are ancient yet with further understanding, yet more questions arise. If the path was known to the creature you call elf, then I suggest you pursue it. As my way will be unattainable for your quickly distracted mind,” the being explained.

“I understand. But that means it is possible to attain third tier non class skills with prolonged exposure and vast understanding?” Ilea asked.

“Vast understanding... greater than I presume the sum of your knowledge is at this time. Or feats that would require more time than a lifetime would provide you,” the Enavurin said.

So you’re saying there’s a chance? Ilea smirked, tilting her head to the side.

“Either way, what does it do? The third tier of Meditation?” she asked, very much interested. If she ever got the opportunity to raise a general skill to the third tier, the first one would undoubtedly be this one.

“It... I shall use plain terms for your benefit. It enhances what you likely perceive as Wisdom... Judgment, Knowledge or Understanding. I believe there are many ways different species see the interpretation of their own abilities,” the being said.

“You mean the stat, Wisdom? That increases mana capacity and regeneration? Oh, speaking of, do I need ambient mana... ambient life force to regenerate it or does it regenerate for me even in areas where there isn’t any mana?” Ilea asked.

“Many large questions from someone so young. I shall share what I have found, yet do not take it as truth. As I have said, the ways of life are vast, diverse. We speak of the same Wisdom. I do not believe a creature needs ambient mana to form it within them. Yet I am unaware of a space or being that is untouched by it. Even death itself is a form of life,” it explained.

The Fae on her head rolled around before it fell to the ground.

Acting dead? Ilea asked herself, finding its vitals very much fine. *Sorry little one, my friends would be angry if I ignored this ancient soup of knowledge.*

“There is no mana where I’m from. Nothing. I got the first notification in my mind when I suddenly awoke in these lands one day,” Ilea said.

“Peculiar. I doubt your words without proof. A lack of ability will make it impossible to sense that which you do not understand. Much more permeates the space we inhabit than we will possibly ever perceive. Organs, abilities and knowledge may help us find the truth,” the being said.

“And yet it is something I had not considered, not ever. You have shared a new perspective and theory with me, as impossible as it may sound to me right now. I thank you,” the Enavurin said.

“Sure, happy to expand your unending horizon,” Ilea said with a smirk.

“I begin to understand your humor. It is highly irritating and yet not unpleasant. Peculiar,” the being said.

The Fae was rolling away by now, still on the steel floor and moving towards the stairs leading down.

“You’ll get dirty,” Ilea said in her mind.

You’re dirty.

“Little fucker,” Ilea murmured with a smile before she focused on the Enavurin again. “What about the second skill?”

“It is related to thought. I do not know the word it would translate to in your language, yet I am almost certain you do not possess it. The impressions I have related to you previously would have not impacted you as much as they did,” it explained.

“Hmm... no chance of me learning it?” she asked.

“With a lot of time and study... perhaps. Little is impossible and even that I doubt. Yet it is used for introspection and understanding. Should you ever wish to focus on it for perhaps five thousand of your human years, I could offer you some tutoring,” the Enavurin said.

“Sure, I’ll come back as soon as that happens,” Ilea said, her tone making it quite clear how she felt about that. Then again, she had little understanding of what it meant to be immortal. Age wise at least.

The mental equivalent of a chuckle reached her mind. “Young one, may you prevail in your endeavors. You are good at heart, untainted by ignorance.”

“Don’t flatter me, I’m a monster. Just like you. To many at least, most of all our enemies,” Ilea said and prepared to leave.

Still have those stat points. Wisdom it is, she thought and gave herself another one hundred mana. A single charged punch of her Absolute Destruction.

“To me you are not and neither to your new companion,” the Enavurin said.

“Alright... anything else I should know about this facility, the corruption, the Fae or the world itself? Something that you deem important,” Ilea asked.

It remained quiet for a moment before it spoke into her mind, “The gift of life is rare, nurtured and formed for time untold. Trust in your instincts,” the Enavurin said.

“Ok, cheers to that,” Ilea said, very much aware of that truth. “Sure you don’t need anything? Food, books or company? I could throw you some monsters,” she asked.

Be on your way, came the response, fleeting and much less clear than the words from before.

Overstayed my welcome in this one’s house it seems, Ilea thought. She wasn’t exactly unhappy about the circumstances. She had learned about the corruption, some of the purpose of whatever built this place. The fact that they were around three hundred years ago, which seemed rather recent when she considered Maro and Hallowfort.

Additionally she saved another Fae, the third one now. And she found out her essence, whatever that was, was in fact marked.

This one seemed much more playful and expressive than those she had met before. She wasn’t sure if it was due to the marking or because it simply had a different character altogether. They were intelligent creatures, that much was obvious, finding themselves in hidden places, trapped or taken.

Their levels was incredibly low compared to what they could do. That was the main reason she didn’t mind it coming with her. Its decision helped of course and the fact that Ilea wasn’t exactly in need of stealth at the moment.

Who am I kidding, that little guy is probably sneakier than I’ll ever be, she thought and followed the Fae down the stairs. It was lying at the bottom, sprawled out and waiting.

She sent a wave towards the Enavurin but was pretty sure it had severed the connection altogether.

Unsocial. That’s what happens when you let your kids spend a thousand years underwater without any company.

About an hour invested, Ilea passed the fourteenth layer, having learned some new things and having gotten a new companion.

“Do you call yourselves Fae?” she asked the creature that once again appeared on her shoulder. “Or do you have individual names, like Roger or Stephanie?”

It tilted its head again but didn’t reply in any meaningful way.

“I’ll call you little guy, is that alright?” she asked.

The Fae shrugged, accepting the status she placed upon him.

“Alright little guy, do you have anything to share about whoever captured and kept you here?” she asked, following the steps.

Her Huntress skill picked up faint traces of magic now. While it was mostly gone, she was pretty sure her companions had come through here.

A flash of anger washed into her mind, terror, fear and then anger again.

“You don’t think very fondly of them, I see,” she said and walked down several flights of steel stairs. Why a being that must have had a way to teleport in and out of such a facility had the need for stairs was a mystery to her.

The little guy shook his head.

“Well, me neither. Plenty of people from Hallowfort died already to this fucked up corruption, enough to at least rip out some arms, don’t you think?” she asked.

This time the giggle was a little more graspable, turning into manic laughter.