

Chapter 914 Aftermath

“A lot has happened since you left,” Elfie said.

“Since I betrayed you, and our cause,” Seviir said in a whisper.

“The Taleen threat is no more,” Isalthar spoke. “Less than an hour ago, Lilith has defeated the Sanvaruun. The world is not how it was.”

Seviir stared at Ilea for a few seconds before he smiled and hissed. He bowed his head for a moment before he sighed. “It seems so. And I was here.”

Ilea smiled. *He really did change. But Elfie remains, as do the Hunters.* She focused on her mark on Aki and sent a message. “*Found some prisoners. Not sure how well they are, I’ll send them through to the Meadow.*”

“*Understood,*” came the answer.

Ilea walked over to the Mava. “I’m with the Accords. We’ll get you out and in touch with the Mava. What Skal did you belong to?”

The being grinned. “Skal of the elf,” she spoke. “Can you not just get me out of this city?”

“That’s what I’m doing, but I don’t trust any of you enough to set you out in this territory,” Ilea said and ripped away the grates, opening a gate to the north. “Your choice.”

The Mava didn’t hesitate, rushing through the gate without another thought.

Ilea moved on to the dwarf, listening to his continued prayer. “Do you hear me?”

His eyes didn’t focus, nor did he answer her.

“I won’t leave you here,” she said and removed the grates, opening a gate in front of her as he screamed, magic spreading out before he charged, and vanished into her gate. *Didn’t exactly intend this to be a trap, but I suppose it works.* She closed it and moved to the last prisoner. “Ress, you said.”

The orc looked up at her.

“I’ll bring you to a friend of mine in the north. We have teleportation gates, I’m sure we can get you back to the west soon enough. They might want to talk to you first. Is that acceptable?”

Ress sighed and slowly stood up. She looked at Ilea and grinned. “I had hoped to get out of here on my own, or to join the Ranok in Traka. Seeing you... it would have taken some time. I accept your offer, generous as it is, Lilith.” She bowed. “And I will work to repay this favor, as long as it takes.”

Ilea nodded and opened her gate. “Good fortune, on your journey.”

“And to you, warrior,” Ress spoke and walked through the gate.

Ilea looked at the metal bars and once more activated her domain. She checked the dungeons but found no other living being. “Just four,” she murmured and walked back to the others.

Isalthar glanced her way. “More than I had hoped for.”

She smiled at him. "Can we go back up? This place is depressing."

"It's been a while since I've seen the suns," Seviir spoke.

Ilea looked at him before she teleported all of them up and out onto the plaza where the prison entrance was located. She breathed in, the smell of burnt trees and ash still in the air. She saw Seviir wince and check around, tense even without any other elves nearby.

"I assume you want to leave this place as soon as possible," she said.

Seviir glanced at her. "Yes, though I am not looking forward to a meeting with Neiphato."

Elfie grabbed his shoulder. "The longer you wait, the more it will hurt."

"I have waited far too long already," Seviir spoke and looked at Ilea. "I feel only shame when I look at you, Val Akuun."

"Can almost hear him making fun of you now," Ilea said, a slight smile tugging on her lips.

Seviir smiled. "I would gladly bear it, were he still here."

"Go meet Neiphato then, and the Hunters," Ilea said.

He hissed his affirmation as she summoned a gate next to them.

Elfie gave her a nod and led Seviir through.

Isalthar remained, as did Ilea.

She looked up at the dome like roof of the hall, the golden lights dancing between the red and yellow leaves clinging to the gnarled and ancient trees along the high reaching walls. It was quiet, neither birds nor people in the vicinity.

"Was it always like this?" she spoke.

Isalthar sat down on the ground, Ilea raising her brows at the gesture. He smiled. "Tense and dangerous, magic and fights, the energy vibrant almost like one of your festivals, but with blood and battles. There was little time for calm. For contemplation. Only when I fled into the forests, could I breathe. It feels different now."

"Like a ruin," Ilea said.

"A ruin," he tasted the word. "To most humans, unknown, dangerous, forsaken. And yet to those of us who left, every ruin, every dungeon, meant safety. To an extent. Perhaps Verleyyna too, can now become such a place."

"There's still an Oracle here," Ilea said as she looked around.

"A complex problem. Do you wish to kill her?" Isalthar asked.

"She doesn't seem hostile anymore."

"I will attempt to contact her. The Accords will be interested as well, and you, if you wish," he said. "I do not believe the Oracle attacked on her own."

"That was not the Monarch, who fired onto Riverwatch."

"No. It was Verleyyna, the ruin you now rule," Isalthar spoke.

Ilea smiled. "I hope so," she said, the both of them quiet as they remained in the large hall.

The battle was over.

Ilea landed in a central square of Riverwatch, surrounded by government buildings. She saw that most of the Executioners and Destroyers were already gone, though a sizable garrison had remained, forces of the Accords in all shapes and colors. A teleportation platform stood in the square, groups of people periodically appearing. Civilians, she assumed based on their reactions and attire.

Rain still fell, though the winds were not as present with the walls and buildings all around.

One of the Centurions found her, green eyes shining bright. One of the models equipped with a voice module. "I'm sorry about Heranuur."

She smiled.

"What?"

"I'm sure he would've thought it funny too. A Centurion saying what you just said," Ilea explained. She nodded to the platform in the busy square. "Already returning people?"

"The immediate danger has passed, and we have an assessment of all the remaining elves of Verleyyna. With the city grounded, the threat is manageable. Beside potential Oracles. Erik has agreed to remain for some time, accompanied by some of the best barrier mages and enchanters. Riverwatch will be equipped with a powerful barrier system, and new walls."

"Long overdue."

"It was not a priority, with Guardians stationed and teleportation accessible. The sight of Verleyyna convinced more than a few to help. Donations are coming in from all over the Plains."

"Isalthar is looking to contact the Oracle, or Oracles, if there's more than one in there. He suggests they won't attack if I don't want that. Maybe the Monarch had some control over them," Ilea said.

"Do you plan to stay?"

Ilea saw the first groups of people glancing her way. She couldn't exactly hide her status anymore, being a four mark. At least she felt comfortable enough with her powers now to stand here, among normal humans.

"We were in the middle of watching a movie. Kyrian and Aliana still around?"

"They are, should I inform them of your presence here?"

"*Back to the movie?*" Ilea sent to the man.

"*Yes. Been waiting for you,*" Kyrian sent back.

"I'm fine. Let me know if anything else comes up," Ilea said to Aki as she focused on Kyrian's mark.

"Will do. Oh, and the prototype Watcher is done now. If you want to take it with you."

"Sure. At the Meadow's?"

"I will arrange it," Aki said and nodded. "Thank you for the quick intervention. It would've been a gruesome battle without you."

"It still was," Ilea said. "Oh and Aki, I used my healing quite a lot, maybe you can find some useful data. Seemed like people were fine afterwards."

"I will look into it. And good on the warning with your flame. I could... feel, its heat, from here."

Ilea smiled. "You didn't close your eyes."

"Did you expect me to listen to a warning from you? I'm the Guardian of Iz."

"Not quite a Dragonslayer."

"Not yet," Aki spoke and turned away. "Will want to see it again in the future. The Meadow is more interested now as well. I believe it is envious."

"Didn't expect anything else," Ilea said and opened a gate to the North. "Can you tell Kyrian I'll be there in a few minutes?"

"Of course. Safe journey through the fabric, to you all," he said, walking off.

Ilea stepped through the gate, finding the freed prisoners already gone.

"An elven domain. Felled by the Primordial Flame," the Meadow sent. *"Sometimes I wish I could see and walk the world the way Aki does."*

"Can he not record with his Watchers and let you see?"

"Mere visuals. There is so much more to perception."

She smiled and sat down on the ground of the northern landscape. The suns were low on the horizon, visible now that she was in the North. *"I can show them to you right now, if you want me to."*

"For a very brief moment," the Meadow sent.

Ilea raised her hand and counted down from three before she summoned the yellow flame. It came to life before she snuffed it out less than a second later. *It still feels a little strange to me, but I'm getting more used to it,* she thought and grinned. *"Are you alright?"*

"No," the Meadow answered. *"I... need time. To understand what I just perceived."*

"Feel free to process it, and let me know when I should show it to you again," Ilea said before she checked her messages from the battle. The kill notifications, she scrolled past immediately.

No skills had leveled up, neither resistance nor general. She assumed she needed a greater challenge than a mere elven domain to work on her skills at this point.

'ding' 'You have stood against Verleyna and survived – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'You have defeated Verleyna – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'You have defeated the Monarch of Verleyna – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'You have been accepted as the Monarch of Verleyna – One Core skill point awarded'

Enough for an additional Class modifier in every Class now. Hmm.

She decided to still wait with choosing the modifiers, her present abilities still not feeling perfectly natural to her.

“I will,” the Meadow sent after a while, sounding absorbed. *“You’ve become a terrifying creature, Ilea.”*

“You sound exasperated,” Ilea said and stood up before she summoned the silver pole previously wielded by Noro.

[Seranthinil – Divine Quality] – [Find balance in the chaos]

That description is even weirder than Memory’s.

“I am. Confused perhaps. And scared, to know any creature out there could attain this level of power, simply by punching enough things, for long enough.”

“Hey, I didn’t make the rules,” Ilea said, feeling the silver pole tremble with magic as it tried to resist her will. She didn’t mind, not letting it strike her either. The weapon didn’t feel quite as unhinged as Silent Memory had been, but then it wasn’t controlling a mound of flesh and corpses to kill her. *Thinking of which.* She summoned the hammer and threw both weapons a few meters away.

Silver threads spread out from the hammer, the pole hovering in mid air before they clashed, flashing away in the next moment before they left scrapes and furrows in the ground. *Like two angry floating kitchen utensils.*

“That staff…”

“It was wielded by Noro, one of the Monarch’s underlings,” Ilea sent.

“It is a divine artifact, like your hammer.”

“It is. Gravity and space magic, I think.”

“And time,” the Meadow added.

“Felt like it defied some rules back when I was first beaten to near death by that thing,” Ilea said.

“Merely powerful magic. Same as I assume is the case with your fire, and yet it feels the same to me right now. Entirely beyond my understanding.”

Ilea gulped. She found that thought more unsettling than anything. Even the Meadow thought her fires to be entirely beyond reason. And she had them around her very soul.

Trust your instincts, she told herself, breathing deep. She smiled. *“You always felt like this insurmountable being of knowledge. Strange that I have something you can’t comprehend.”*

“Your Primordial Shift already left me with some confusion.”

“Yeah, but this is different, isn’t it.”

“Does it scare you? Knowing you walk in the unknown?” the Meadow asked.

Ilea looked at her fist, then towards the mountainous terrain where she knew Hallowfort to be. *“A little maybe. Exciting at the same time. I mostly just want to get used to them, get a feel for it all. I already fought a few times with all my new abilities, but I still feel like a dragon that hatched half a week ago.”*

“I am here, should you wish for help or counsel,” the Meadow sent.

Ilea smiled. *"Thanks. I really appreciate it, Meadow. Everything. It's been quite a journey since I got you back from Erendar."*

"That it has, and it continues to be," the being replied. *"Do you wish for me to keep watch of your divine weapons? They have quite a temperament."*

"If you don't mind? You could also inquire if there's anyone who could and would want to wield either. I like the hammer, but compared to my spells, I really don't see much of a reason to still use it." She felt the same about her amulet, but wanted to hold on to it still. At least she could infuse the barriers with her cosmic magic.

"I will keep it in consideration."

"Thanks. Can you move me inside? Or teleport Aki's prototype here?"

The machine appeared a few meters away. A floating sphere made of silver metal, three small green glowing eyes set within. Various small attachments made it look like some kind of medical device.

"The machine will be autonomous as soon as it travels through to your realm. Teach or provide what you think could be useful and return it here after an hour, or whenever is convenient, I will adjust and implement what I learned," it spoke.

"Sounds like a plan," Ilea said. *"I hope you don't get hacked or something."* She nodded towards Hallowfort. *"See you, Meadow."*

"Goodbye, Val Akuun."

She rolled her eyes and activated Teleportation, grabbing on to the machine before she focused on Kyrian.

A moment later, she appeared back in Riverwatch, to gentle rain pattering against a stone arch above a set of dinner tables out in the road.

Kyrian raised his glass, the man wearing his heavy metal armor, his chair made of his own steel, Aliana sitting opposite him with a plate full of meat between them, sat on one of the round wooden tables.

"And she returns, triumphantly. The hero of Riverwatch," Kyrian said.

Aliana smiled and grabbed a piece of meat with her hand, biting down while looking at Ilea.

Ilea raised her brows, thinking back to the ritual she had seen in Verleyyna. *Maybe we're not so different after all.*

"You don't seem bothered by the title," Aliana said.

Ilea tilted her head slightly. *"I did take down their city. And killed their Monarch."*

"You did. And the battle was quick. I hope Helm's Deep won't be so anti climactic," Kyrian said.

Ilea grinned. *No spoilers for you.*

"What's that?" Aliana said and pointed at the sphere.

"The new translator," Ilea said.

"That is not exactly what the purpose of this machine is," Aki said.

“You’ll do fine as a translator, I believe in you,” Ilea said and patted the thing very lightly. She saw the green eyes glowing a little brighter.

Kyrian laughed. “You want to return then?”

“Sure,” Ilea said, focusing on her anchor in Mark’s apartment.

They all appeared a moment later, including the plate of meat.

Mark jumped, spilling some of his drink as he cursed. “You could announce yourself at least.”

“Apologies,” Ilea said, letting go of the now flying machine. “Do you need instructions?” she asked, looking at the thing.

It turned. “I will ask as soon as I require instructions or help.”

“Suit yourself,” Ilea said. “Do you understand English already?”

“Only rudimentary. Are there books I could look at anywhere?”

Mark got up. “Sure. I think I even have a dictionary somewhere.” He smiled and looked at Ilea. “You alright? Anything I should be concerned about? Got a situation back there?”

“Just a small issue, and already resolved,” she said and sat down on the ashen couch.

“A small issue,” Kyrian muttered to himself as he joined her.

Mark raised a brow but went to crouch down next to Aki. “A flying robot too. Are you sure you’re not bringing a robot invasion to Earth?”

“Don’t give him ideas,” Ilea said as she started making a drink.

“That is stage seven of the plan,” the machine spoke. “We are at stage one. Please show me the books, human slave, I mean, friend Mark.”

He touched the silver sphere. “This guy is funny.”

Not even connected, Ilea thought, which meant Aki put that joke in there, just in case. “Learned from the best. I’m still waiting for the day when I find out he’s not joking.”

Mark gestured for the robot to follow. “Would still be funny. Just darker.”