

Ilea still sat on the bed, watching Wayland and Aki take in the Assassin.

“I have information on the attacks. Specific targets and locations. Not everything but I’m sure there is something in there that will prevent some people from dying. I also know where Elizabeth Pierce and Kerthin are, I can tell you about traps and enchantments on the way,” Fania spoke.

“What do you want in return? You’ve been a part of this operation, which means you broke several laws within Nipha,” Wayland said.

Fania glanced at Ilea. “I just want to live through this. The Accords have enough influence to make that happen. Nipha will look for scapegoats after this is over, and I don’t plan to go down in place of nobility.”

“*What do you think?*” Ilea sent to Wayland.

“*Her life is not much to ask. She knows that, which means her information is either useless, she doesn’t plan to share the truth with us, or she really is this desperate. I think it’s the last option,*” he said.

“*Why?*” Ilea asked.

“*The way she looks at you. She’s terrified,*” Wayland said.

“*She could just be acting. She’s been a part of this, Wayland. They tried to kill Cless. Two Sentinels died,*” Ilea said.

“*I’m a good actor too. You underestimate your reputation and appearance. You’re aware that you’re wearing your ash armor right now? With wisps of it moving on the bed and on your shoulders,*” Wayland said before he paused. “*There were hundreds involved in this thing, perhaps thousands. We will never be able to hold everyone accountable. Her life versus those her information could save is not much of a price to pay.*”

“*I don’t like it,*” Ilea said.

“*Then you kill her here and now. Or you let her talk and then kill her,*” Wayland said. “*That or you bring it to vote with the Accords. We don’t exactly have the time now but you’re Lilith. Or we get the information she has, put her with the Meadow, and let her go as agreed.*”

“*What do you think?*” Ilea asked.

“*She’s given up immediately. This woman is not an enemy we have to worry about. She’s an assassin that happened to be hired by our enemies. If her information can save a single life, the answer is obvious,*” Wayland said.

“*Then tell her that. Her information has to save lives,*” Ilea said. She was sure the woman had killed plenty, and she had stood by while people sacrificed slaves and kidnapped children. If she hadn’t arrived late, she would already be dead. *How many more will she kill, let suffer, and die?*

The man looked at Ilea and nodded before addressing the woman. “If your information helps us save lives, you will live,” Wayland said.

Fania looked at him for a few seconds. "That's not exactly guaranteed, is it."

"You claimed it would, so tell us what you know," Aki said.

"This is the deal you're getting," Wayland said.

She sighed, considered, and nodded. In the next few minutes, Fania once more confirmed the time of the upcoming attacks and several additional locations, quite a few targets outside of the Accords as well, mostly focused on Lys.

Fania glanced Ilea's way quite a few times, obviously on edge.

*You should worry about the Executioners behind you, not me.*

"Elizabeth and Kerthin are in a mansion about half an hour north from the destination of this gate," Fania spoke. "They're well guarded, the mansion itself enchanted against space magic intrusion, long range magic attacks, divination, and anything else that gold can buy."

"Can this entire thing be averted if we find them before the time of the attacks?" Aki asked.

Fania shook her head. "The mercenaries are paid, the former Baralia soldiers and nobles know their tasks. Those at least will fight to the end, as will Kerthin. I don't know Elizabeth well enough but I gauge that she is past the point of no return. This is her most obvious brush onto the canvas of history. One way or the other, she will stand amidst the flames."

"Slaves, servants, civilians in the mansion and around?" Ilea asked.

"There were plenty, yes. But I didn't keep track of everything. I was only there for a day. Escape routes I can give you," Fania said.

"They won't get away. But I'll take them regardless," Ilea said.

The Assassin asked for and received paper and pen, quickly sketching the layout of the mansion in detail, enchantments and the few patrols she was aware of.

"That is what I know," Fania said.

"The Fading are not what they used to be," Wayland spoke. "We will take you to the Meadow until the attacks have commenced."

"What about after that?" Fania asked.

"If what you told us prevents more people from dying, you will be set free, though conditions as to the territory of the Accords and future incrimination may apply," Wayland said.

The woman didn't reply.

Ilea opened a gate and gestured for her to step through.

Fania did, and Wayland left with her.

The man returned a few minutes later after Aki had asked Ilea to open another gate.

"We have less than forty minutes until they expect her back," Aki said.

Wayland nodded. "We expect Elizabeth Pierce to be present, including high level remnants from Baralia."

"What are we waiting for then? Get a few teams together, you're coming with us, Wayland," Ilea

said.

Sentinels and Shadows soon moved to the master bedroom, Ilea opening another gate to the Meadow's domain where more people came through. War machines, Dark Ones, and another two teams of Shadows. She even knew a few of them.

Ilea smiled when she saw a four armed being wreathed in shadow float through her gate. He wore a black metal mask with two horns jutting out from his cheeks. There were no eyes. Four short swords were on his back.

"I thought you were guarding the first layer," Ilea commented, meanwhile giving a side glance to the metal and light mage war machine she had fought in the Forged Dome.

The machine gave her a glance and a slight nod, landing in the room with a slight thud as Ilea returned her attention to the four armed being.

"I was called upon by the Meadow. The Descent is secured by beings far beyond my power. Here I am," Ilas spoke and bowed.

"Infiltration?" a floating ant like creature asked, antennas twitching.

**[Illusion mage – lvl 230]**

"Infiltration," Ilea said. "You probably don't want to use this gate, lest the space magic will hurt you."

"If I can survive, Omdir Stonewirt will use the device," the metal mage war machine spoke.

"Your choice. I'm sure everyone here will survive it. Just unpleasant," Ilea said.

They informed the groups, some of them refusing to wait in the domain of the Meadow.

"Nobody will escape," Aki said. "I have Executioners ready for you in Iz."

"One last change of guards then," Ilea said, opening gates in the two areas of the castle where the non Accord teleportation circles were located. She returned to the top of the main tower.

"Four minutes until the next change," Aki said.

"More than enough," Ilea said and summoned Silent Memory into her hand.

She stepped onto the teleportation gate with a sizable group of various beings, most of them with some skill in infiltration and hiding. "*Get me into that mansion without being seen. Don't let anyone escape and inform our enemies.*"

"Understood," Ilas sent, the others affirming in their own ways.

Aki activated the gate, the group moved to their destination.

Ilea healed everyone as soon as they arrived, various spells activating instantly. She opened a gate to allow the rest of the groups through. Powerful illusions, shadow, and dark magic soon shrouded them before they moved. She teleported their party of nearly thirty beings from time to time, past the trees and to a set of open fields, the last bits of sunlight painting the growing grains in a golden hue. Already they could see teams of guards patrolling in the distance, torches lit with some spells visible. A few were even flying.

"*We are taking note of their locations,*" Ilas sent as they continued, some of the dark ones exchanging signs with each other, two people sketching maps.

They passed the first field and came onto a dirt road leading straight to a single point in the distance, Ilea spotting the first small buildings, still a few kilometers away. She spread her wings and urged the others to do the same or latch on, their spells still active as they flew over the road with increasing speed. The few guards they passed didn't notice, their levels below two hundred even, their gear suggesting an affiliation with Nipha.

*“Might be beneficial if you try not to kill everyone but instead apprehended them. I will come and collect everyone after. Do go for the kill if you can't keep them there,”* Ilea said, the large team reaching the main area of the estate, several smaller buildings and barns surrounding the lavish four story mansion at the center. A luscious garden extended at the back, parts of it visible to her as they took in the surroundings. The third and fourth floor were smaller, allowing a large terrace on the second floor, a few people visible on it.

One of them she recognized from the painting in the castle. *“Let's check for gates in the vicinity. Act at your own discretion.”*

The assassin hadn't mentioned one within the mansion but they didn't exactly trust her.

Ilea teleported the group close to the entrance and checked the enchantments. The anti space magic measures were similar to the castle they had come from, likely even by the same enchantress. Ilea used fabric tear to get them all inside. Her dominion could pierce many of the rooms, some of the people around her fanning out to explore on their own, another teleport bringing them into one of the protected rooms.

She appeared in a dark room, a single chair at the center with a man chained to it. Ilea healed him and her own mind, her white flame spreading through the room as more of her entourage left on their own. The tools she saw were burned away, her healing now focused on the man's mind. She didn't recognize him. And she was glad for it.

*“One of you stay here and protect him,”* she said and opened a gate to Iz.

Executioners and Hunter Praetorians stepped through, walking through the air as they took in the surroundings.

Ilea closed the gate and teleported the remaining people shrouding her with shadow magic. She worked her way through the enchantment protected rooms and cellars, mostly finding private chambers or storage rooms. One of the cellar sections contained what looked like a blood ritual testing site. Ilea found two men standing above an altar, both wearing blood covered ornamental armor made of what looked like silver. She hesitated, seeing as they looked near exactly the same.

***[Blood Mage – lvl 218]***

***[Blood Mage – lvl 213]***

“You have an uncovered spot,” one of them said, smearing more blood onto the bald head of the other.

“Thank you. But we have company,” the first one said and turned to look at Ilea, blood magic surging all around.

*“I'll take care of these, and the terrace,”* Ilea sent to the remaining four people around her, all of them teleported away by her before she activated her aura.

“And who are you to intrude the lair of the Shining Twins?” one of the blood covered bald men said.

Ilea looked at the mangled corpses in the hall before she charged her space magic and closed her fist. *More blood added to this horrible scene.* She wanted to burn it all but stopped herself, deciding that some evidence might be beneficial. Seeing how they were in Nipha territory.

*No teleportation gates in here. Time to talk to the lady of the house.*

A single use of fabric tear brought her onto the terrace, splatters of blood remaining on her black ashen armor.

She found a round table set atop the dark marble floor of the terrace, the guards immediately preparing their weapons as her anti teleportation aura spread out, Ilea checking the fabric to make sure nobody could escape.

A red haired and pale woman sat on one of the chairs, taking a sip from a small cup as she glanced at Ilea and smiled. Elizabeth Pierce. She remained calm and seated. “And what would you be doing here, Sentinel?” Several rings on her hand glinted with magic, same as her necklace, earrings, and her light blue dress.

### ***[Rapier Master – lvl 285]***

Ilea watched as the others stood up, one a young man with shifty eyes, his back bent as he staggered back, nearly making his chair fall.

### ***[Blood Mage – lvl 209]***

Third was a tall masked woman wearing blood red leather armor, sparks of red lightning forming on her body as she stood up, muscles bulging. She growled.

### ***[Lightning Mage – lvl 304]***

The guards spread out as magic flared up and weapons were drawn.

“It’s over,” Ilea said.

Elizabeth smiled and stood up, silver full plate armor appearing on her body, runes glittering with powerful enchantments. “A lost beast, on her way to slaughter. It is not over until I say that it is,” she said and drew her rapier, a surge of arcane magic rushing out and striking at Ilea’s eye. A golden barrier appeared in the last moment, the magic stopped.

“Nice aim,” Ilea said as she watched the young man transform into a beast, the red lightning wielding woman starting to hover as she prepared a spell, three of the guards rushing at her with flaring auras, battle shouts, and weapons swinging. The rest charged their spells, none of them fleeing. “Enjoy the meal,” Ilea said and threw her hammer.

Silver threads flickered in the sunlight and rushed out, blood and guts splattering against the marble floor and the large windows to her right as people were dissected, bodies pierced and slammed to the floor, one dragged through the windowed side of the mansion. Red lightning surged up and was silenced as more threads rushed out, curse and bone magic visible in her dominion. Several threads stopped the advance of the four legged blood monster that had grown out of the man whose back had been bent.

It screeched as its legs were slashed through, its shoulders and face cut into.

Elizabeth deflected the thread coming her way, her blade flashing with magic as she jumped back and landed with a heavy impact.

More color was added to Ilea's armor as she walked forward, the large blood covered creature that had grown out of the blood mage reduced to a whimpering two legged cut up beast. Ilea sent an ashen spear into the monster's skull, ending its life while chunks of flesh fell to the ground.

"You b-" Elizabeth said when the remains of the beast moved, the creature closing the distance to the woman, pierced by her rapier before it bit down on her armored leg.

She screamed before the beast slammed her against the marble floor, three times until the stone cracked.

Ilea summoned her hammer back into her hand, the threads still residing inside the dead blood beast receding. Its red gem glowed ever so slightly, nothing compared to when it had fed on the high level sound magic beasts.

Elizabeth crawled on the floor with her right leg twisted, cackling to herself before she talked. "Your Sentinels are d-" a beam of white flame burnt into her armor, the enchanted metal itself melting but withstanding the released energies for a moment. The body within however burst immediately, the blood burned away before a melted silver husk remained, half moulded onto the dark marble below.

Ilea saw Executioners rush through the fields, the torches in the distance snuffed out one by one. She gave the silver husk a last look before she jumped off the terrace and spread her wings, flying up.

"*Check the corpses on the terrace for evidence, maybe storage items,*" Ilea sent to one of the Executioners.

"*Elizabeth?*" he asked.

"*She was among them, yes,*" Ilea said as she flew higher, watching the groups as she charged her wings. Two flying guards remained, one hunted by an Executioner, the other pursued by a dark winged being. She shot off into the distance, three teleports coupled with her momentum enough to reach the man. Ilea stopped him with her space magic, a level one hundred warrior. She opened a gate to the domain of the Meadow and threw the terrified man into it, continuing onto the already captured guards after she failed to spot anyone else that was about to get away.

Embered Heart had likely alerted everyone in the vicinity, that coupled with the now present Guardians. *Not long left until nightfall*, she thought as she threw the next person to the Meadow. They gathered up a minute later at the mansion, Ilea opening a gate to Iz for Aki to replenish his Guardians with those already charged up.

"Thirty two seconds left on the Executioners at the castle," one of them said.

"*You're pretty high maintenance,*" Ilea sent as she flew up.

"We can handle the situation here," Omdir spoke from within his war machine.

"*I would've already added a gate to the taleen network but your presence is less problematic,*" Aki sent back as she flew to the castle.

She landed near the gate and fiddled with the control panel until it activated, Ilea appearing back inside the master bedroom of Elizabeth's castle. It took her four seconds to reform the gates and get Aki a fresh set of Executioners. "*I've been degraded to your mobile teleportation gate,*" she sent.

"*Now that you mention it, we're working on something along those lines with the Meadow. And you are in fact the inspiration,*" the Executioner sent back.

*“Of course I am,”* Ilea said as she stored her hammer, white flame burning away the blood and bits of flesh on her mantle before she cracked her neck and once more sat down on the bed. A meal appeared in her hands as she resumed her wait.