

Chapter 754 Dancing Spells

“When did anyone decide this would be such an important event?” Ilea asked. She looked around the townhall of Morhill, everything remodeled to be a ballroom. At the moment however, there were rows of chairs set up with a main stage at the end of the near thirty meter long hall. People dressed in well cut suits and lavish dresses occupied the seats, magical lighting set up to dim the back and focus all the attention on the stage, a single painting of a dark winged fighter atop the partially visible head of a Trakorov on display for everyone to see.

Ilea stood at the very back, near one of the large windows overlooking the town below. The evening light still illuminated most of the buildings in the distance.

Claire smiled. *“Well, word spread and a few confirming stories... including your own presence at the gallery did lead credence to Cless’ little gallery. I don’t really understand why Violence would get involved in this but here we are. Who could expect a Fae taking from a heavily enchanted vault in my office.”*

“I expected you to be at least a little annoyed,” Ilea said, looking at the girl in question, dressed in a long black dress and standing near the wall of the room, both nervous and proud. William and a Shadow stood next to her.

Claire sighed. *“I wouldn’t have denied her if she had asked. I mean look at her,”* she said with a smile. *“Plus the Fae did leave out some of the more problematic works. He is smarter than he lets on.”*

“The thing literally talks in one word sentences because it would melt our brains if he would talk normally,” Ilea reminded her friend. *“Suppose a few more stories about me won’t matter much. It does feel a little strange... to have depictions of myself hung on the walls of some random noble in the Plains.”*

“The subjects depicted will get a commission. As does the city. And Cless of course won’t be able to spend all her gold as she wants, not until I decide she’s old enough. Or if she can argue about whatever she wants. She already mentioned ponies,” Claire said.

“I don’t see the issue with ponies,” Ilea said.

People started raising small plates with numbers written on them. The auction had begun.

“The issue is that she shouldn’t be too spoiled. She likes the attention. It’s on us to keep her grounded. Her Classes are quite remarkable and she will grow up to become a powerful divination mage at the very least,” Claire said.

Ilea touched her arm lightly. *“Come on. She’s already taking Classes with the Shadowguard and Sentinels. They won’t let her turn into a twat.”* Ilea glanced at the people entering the hall, more to join both the auction and the latter ball and festivities. Catering had already been prepared, the staff of the Golden Drake present with the cooks having relocated into a spacious back hall added by a group of architects, earth mages, and enchanters. Drinks and some starters were already being served. Light music was played by a group of musicians standing on a small stage at the right side of the room, all but the main stage remaining in dim light.

Alyris and her entourage walked by, a few of them giving the pair near the window a look or nod. Malkorn whispered something to the Empress before he walked over, bowing to Ilea and Claire.

“Apologies for the interruption. May I have a word?” he asked. His claws twitched ever so slightly, the lizardman still a little tense, his sharp teeth grinding slightly.

“Of course,” Ilea said and smiled. “Do you want another bout?”

He looked up. “Against you? No. I was looking for the Curse mage, I believe you two are acquainted?”

“We are. I haven’t seen him though,” Ilea said, glancing around the hall to check for Kyrian. *Probably still with Aliana.*

“He will be here for the ball,” Claire assured.

“*How do you know?*” Ilea sent.

“*Trian and Kyrian know they are supposed to be here for the ball,*” she said, her neutral expression not changing in the slightest.

Fear resistance reached the third tier. Or maybe Divination magic resistance? Both probably, Ilea thought, looking at the woman.

“*What?*” Claire asked.

“*Oh, nothing at all,*” Ilea answered with a smile.

“Thank you, Head Administrator. A pleasant evening to the two of you,” the massive lizardman warrior said before he returned to the Empress, the group receiving chairs from a few attendants.

Ilea did notice Syrithis turning her head in her direction, her arms crossed as she remained standing.

The monsters below Karth are far easier to read. And deal with.

The auction progressed with more people streaming into the hall as the sunlight moved over the valley, magical street lights soon turned on in the streets below the town hall.

Ilea was glad when the last painting had been sold, the hall brightening a little as the music picked up. Some of Cless’ creations sold for several hundred gold, the event of course turning into some kind of dick measuring contest between the various rulers and nobles in the Plains. They may not have a Meadow but they certainly had funds.

Alyris herself bought a painting depicting Ilea fighting a group of Rose Knights, her half elven companion not particularly amused at that fact.

At least she understood now why the wind healer had an issue with being here.

Ilea smiled at her when the chairs were being removed, the groups splitting up with some attendants wrapping up the paintings to be delivered at a latter time.

“*Why does that Empress’ Guard look like she’s going to rip you to shreds?*” Claire asked.

Ilea waved at the half elf. “*I assume because I might soon be hanging from her bedroom wall.*”

Claire nearly choked on her drink, turning away before she masked her smile with coughing.

“*You’re responsible for this!*” Syrithis said, establishing a telepathic connection.

"I am irresistible, what can I say," Ilea said. *"I'm open to an invitation,"* she added with a wink.

Syrithis froze in her tracks, magic surging around her for a moment with a few guests nearby making distance. She shook her head. *"You're insufferable!"* She shouted into her mind and walked out of the hall at a brisk pace, the red dress she wore nearly flying over the ground.

Alyris walked past right after, following the half elf outside. She glanced over to the tow women with sparkling silver eyes, her look lingering on Ilea for a little longer than necessary.

Claire made wide eyes. *"No. No you didn't!"*

"Not yet," Ilea mused.

"Don't sleep with the Empress of Lys!" Claire said. She considered and downed her wine. *"I mean... the more I think about it. It could be politically beneficial."* She tapped her glass. *"If you're so eager... I could make a few more suggestions,"* she said and looked around the room with a different look in her eyes.

"You're losing yourself," Ilea said and spun, her armor replaced by a flowing black dress made entirely of ash. Her shoulders were bare, the misty material moving through the air with a dangerous lightness. She extended her ash covered hand to the woman in front of her.

Claire refocused on the woman in front of her, herself wearing a somewhat conservative blue dress. She tapped the side of her waist when a few runes lit up, the bottom part of her chosen attire flowing out, revealing more than a little of her left leg.

"Daring," Ilea commented as her friend put a hand into hers.

"Lilith, I assure you, it's merely a necessity to dance," she said. *"Perhaps this one time, I won't turn this into a lesson."*

"How very gracious of you, godqueen of Ravenhall," Ilea replied, leading the woman onto the extensive hall where a few pairs were already moving in tandem to the slow music.

"I'm rather sure that title is reserved for you," Claire said.

Ilea ignored the people looking at them, focusing entirely on the steps she had spent quite a bit of time learning. Her aura flared up as she followed the music, the movements controlled and in tune, far slower than what she had to deal with fighting a four mark. And still, there was something magical about it. She smiled as they moved, soon mostly focused on Claire as the steps came on their own. Nothing quite as impressive as the team competitions or the professional dancers performing between the fights but maybe that was precisely why she enjoyed it so much.

The ballroom filled slowly, more pairs joining as the music grew louder, the main focus changing from conversations and mingling to dancing. Ilea noticed herself adding a mist of moving ash into the mix after a while, her manipulation and domain allowing her to add mesmerizing patterns to her own movements, increasing the challenge a little in turn. She smiled when shards of ice joined in, William dancing past with Philly, his eyes locking with Ilea's for a split second, a curt smile on his face.

Flames and lightning soon joined, some of the lower leveled individuals organically moving to the edges as wind and moving silver joined ash at the center. *"Now's the time to add your explosions,"* Ilea remarked, twirling her partner before they slowed down, the piece coming to an end.

Claire laughed and finished with a few steps.

Ilea stepped back as both herself and Claire moved into the well paced crowd, all partners switched out. She found herself looking at a grinning Dragonkiller, sparks of lightning flowing onto Ilea's arms as they touched.

"Wonderful idea. Makes the whole thing more exciting," the Elder said. "A taboo in such company but I always knew we thought alike."

"Just remember, it's not a fight," Ilea said. If it really was a taboo, she didn't much care. Why shouldn't all these insanely powerful and experienced mages show off their magic a little?

Pierce moved in close as the dance started, the woman taking the lead. "Oh but it is," she said in a whisper, a broad grin on her face as she started to move.

Ilea was swept along by the obviously experienced dancer, spun time and time again as the music became more frantic and fast. Pierce tried to throw her into the air, her arms straining before she changed the move in a perfectly smooth transition.

The piece came to a crescendo of violins, flowing into a calm set of notes as the Dragonkiller moved in close one last time. "Seems I have to increase my Strength," she mused and let go, flowing into the mass of dancers, dozens of spells in the air, elements mingling in mesmerizing patterns, people showing off with their control rather than their brute power.

Ilea turned and came face to face with a familiar masked individual.

The half elf extended her arms in a casual manner, the music resuming as they moved in close.

Air and ash flowed around them as they spun and spun, the earlier aggression gone from the half elf, felt without a word spoken.

As the piece moved on, Ilea grinned at the woman. "*Daughter of Isalthar. Why don't you show off a little?*" she asked as ashen wings formed on the back of her dress, mist like and ethereal as she willed.

Syrithis raised her head a little, the air around her changing as she pulled on Ilea's arm, the two flying up, twirling with the music as black wings flowed in a gust of changing winds. They moved from side to side, flowing over the crowd and soon joined by other brave pairs, some fairing better than others.

Ilea found herself turning forward, their dresses adjusting in mid air before they came to a perfect halt with the last note of the music.

A barely audible hiss came from the half elf before she vanished into the crowd.

She smiled to herself, the satisfied hiss not something the constantly fighting and brooding Elves she knew produced very often.

Her next partner was a well dressed brown haired and bearded noble, red lightning flowing around him as he bowed. "May I have this dance?" he asked with a serious expression, the hint of a smile tugging on his lips.

"I like the shirt," Ilea said, letting Trian take the lead.

"Thank you. I will refrain from complimenting you in company of all these important individuals, Lilith. Lest there be rumors," he said as red lightning spread from his back, the man leading her into the air with a confident and smooth motion.

Ilea was reminded of the bouts they had early on, her hunting him down with both of them teleporting through Eregar's Haven, through the forest in the southern village, them flying together through the Great Salt, the realm of Kohr. They twirled and spun, the familiarity with each other allowing them to try more difficult maneuvers, adjusting on the fly as they flew, ashen lightning surrounding them.

They twirled down to the ground hand in hand as the piece came to an end.

"Thank you," Trian said in a whisper, staying close for a moment before he moved away, his eyes locked with hers.

Don't make me fall for you, Ilea thought as she watched him flow into the crowd. She looked up to see another lightning mage opposite her. *Oh thank fuck.*

Joel Fiore smirked, extending his hand towards her.

Ilea smiled back. *There goes my faint feeling of romance.*

The dance continued for over half an hour, some in the outer circles soon moving out and watching from the walls, people returning to conversations and laughter, others choosing a more relaxed manner of dancing, farther apart from the magical spectacle at the center of the large hall.

Ilea was about to take a breather herself when she came face to face with two yellow eyes, flowing black hair, and a perfect smile.

Felicia wore a flowing black dress, her pale skin revealed at her shoulders and arms, hands covered in black gloves. She moved closer and extended her hand.

Ilea suddenly felt the heat from all the spells around her, the music flowing into the background as they came close. She could feel the breath of her dancing partner on her shoulder, Felicia's lips parting lightly. They remained on the ground as many others flew back up. Air mingled with ash in an intricate dance, more instinctual than controlled.

"Scandalous, to start such a spectacle," Felicia said in a whisper, her face still quite close as she started, the noble taking the lead.

Ilea followed, unable to formulate a response. She felt herself going through the motions, entirely focused on the eyes of her partner, her neck, her shoulders, arms, the hint of legs below her flowing dress, the powerful magic flowing all around them.

The music ended, their hands still linked, neither of them letting go.

"I could use some air," Ilea suggested.

Felicia opened her eyes further, smiling a little wider.

They vanished a moment later, appearing above the structure. Ilea moved them out into the wilderness before she activated her third tier blink, the two moving a little closer together as the magic manifested below and around them.

The fabric split and realigned, the two appearing in a familiar living room. Ilea's arms moved around the woman as she felt Felicia doing the same, a crack of wood interrupting them for a moment.

Felicia moved her head back a little and raised her brows. "I don't know if your house can take it," she said in a whisper, breathing in before she gulped.

“I don’t care,” Ilea said as she moved them up to her bed, ash flowing out and away from her body, reinforcing the bed frame and floor. Their mana intermingled as their faces moved in closer. She paused for a moment, their eyes closing before they kissed. It felt as if a spark of lightning flowed through her.

Felicia moved away with slightly cloudy yellow eyes. “You know this will cause... quite a few rumors... I don’t want to take advantage of you, Ilea... I just-” she was interrupted by Ilea pulling her closer, both of them quickly beyond caring about the political implications and their somewhat complicated relationship.

Ash moved away from her body, Ilea carefully moving behind the woman, looking for a way to get rid of the dress.

Felicia turned around with a smile, moving her arms around Ilea’s neck. “It’s made with storage items in mind.”

Ilea felt Felicia’s legs brushing against hers a moment later, their bodies meeting as they kissed again. Intimate, eager, perhaps the first time she felt vulnerable with a partner since arriving in Elos. And yet it felt right. The low suns lent dim light to the underused home, hushed breaths intermingling as the giggling pair fell into the bed.