

Chapter 631 Orders

“I think she already offered me a slot,” Ilea said with a grin.

Trian poured himself a cup of tea, raising an eyebrow her way.

“I’d love a cup,” she said, displacing the one he held into her hand when he suggested she take it.

“Such useful abilities,” he murmured. “Kyrian is still alive?”

“He is, yes. Training with Fey and Neiphato,” Ilea said.

“The Elves, yes,” Trian said, sipping from his own cup. “Anything special about being a triple mark now?”

Ilea shrugged lightly. “Not really. I mean it’s cool, but I haven’t gotten my third Class there. Getting the skills to the maximum will take some time as well. Otherwise... I mean I got some really nice upgrades but nothing life changing,” she said and looked at the ceiling. “Wait no. I literally can’t age anymore, so I guess that’s life changing technically.”

“You’re the first immortal I meet. I expected more, to be honest. You’re just an enthusiastic fighter,” Trian said.

“Healer,” she corrected.

“Berserker,” he said. “Let’s be honest here.”

She smiled. “Fair enough.”

“The communication change to your mark was quite surprising too. It helps... knowing that we can call for you at any time,” Trian said.

Ilea winked. “Just let me know when you have a bad dream. I’ll tell you a bed time story of ten words or less.”

“I mean it, Ilea. I’m glad to call you a friend. Thank you,” he said and smiled.

“You’re making me uncomfortable,” Ilea said. “But you’re the one leading the Sentinels, so if anyone deserves a thanks, it’s you.”

“Let’s do both,” he said.

“Both is fine,” Ilea said and rolled her eyes.

“So, any other reason you came? Or did you really just want to scare the newcomers?” he asked.

She thought about it for a moment. “Hmm... resistance training would be nice. How many Sentinels are Hunters already?”

Trian summoned a book and leafed through. “Twenty three students between two and three hundred. Eighty four are Medics, between one and two hundred. The other forty seven are Apprentices.”

“That many already... what’s the rank for above three hundred? Gael must be getting close I’d wager,” Ilea said.

“Not quite. His growth has slowed down considerably in the past months. He’s been primarily taking jobs in and around the former Baralia. Few of the monsters there provide enough danger to get him higher. A good thing too. I think he needs experience more than levels right now, lest he die to the first really dangerous thing he comes across,” Trian said. “The rank for after three hundred is Veteran.”

“And after that?” Ilea asked.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves here,” the man said with a smile. He sighed and crossed his arms. “I’ll have to get out there too, you’re right. Can’t be the headmaster of the Sentinels if I’m not going to be among the strongest.”

“If they start a mutiny, I’ll be there,” Ilea said with a grin. “And if they’re stronger than me by then... well, they fucking deserve it.”

He chuckled. “That’s not how an organization stays effective. And we make sure to teach them that too. There’s more to leadership than power.”

“Did they teach you that as well? In nobility school?” she asked.

“There is no such thing. My parents did teach me more than just magic, if that’s what you mean,” Trian said. “Though the Alymies are one amongst many. Were... one amongst many. I’m sure you saw enough from your time with the Redleaves.”

“Sorry for bringing it up,” she said.

He just waved her off. “It’s okay. In regards to your resistance training. You’d be a massive help to the Sentinels around, and I’m sure they’d benefit from seeing you and training with you too. But for your personal power... I’d think it would be more efficient to find a four mark in the wild to play with,” he suggested.

“I know a few already,” Ilea said.

Trian didn’t even blink.

My friends are getting to used to me, she thought and squinted her eyes.

“Ilea, you’d need to become a literal dragon to surprise me at this point.”

She pointed at him. “Careful what you wish for!”

He poured himself another cup and raised it towards her. “To your dragon evolution then. Just don’t forget where you came from.”

“Earth?” she asked.

“I always forget that you’re not a native. Even more impressive to see your growth... or maybe less so. Who knows,” he said. “I was always warned from people in the northern tribes. Not the north you know, the northern plains. Growing up in harsh conditions and constant struggle, it’s a good way to get stronger.”

“Earth wasn’t exactly that. Not for me,” she said.

“Would you go back?” Trian asked.

“If I can keep my magic? Sure. For a visit. But this is my home now,” Ilea said. “And you are my family.”

“No siblings, cousins, parents waiting for you?” he asked.

“Parents,” she said.

“Doesn’t sound like you care. Well, whatever your relationship was like, maybe it’s worth giving it another shot. Take it from someone who can’t anymore,” Trian said.

“You know, I’ve been trying not to think about it too much. Maybe I will, if I get the chance. But I sure as hell won’t risk anything I’ve built here to work on the barely existent relationship with my parents. If they’re even still alive,” she answered.

“I understand. I wouldn’t want you gone either, if there was a choice involved,” he said.

“I’ll think about helping the Sentinels a bit. My main focus will be on my skills though, especially Space Awareness,” Ilea said. “I’m sure I’ll be bored soon enough.”

“Doors are always open to our generous founder and benefactor,” Trian said with a smile.

“Doors can hardly stop me at this point, Trian,” Ilea said. “Anything else I could help with while I have time?”

Trian summoned another book and opened it. “Don’t want you to steal work from the others. You’re beyond overqualified for most of the jobs we get anyway. Or entirely too dense.”

“I am very dense,” Ilea admitted. “In a physical sense.”

“Maybe it makes it even worse, your brain more and more compressed by muscle,” he murmured, flipping through the pages.

“You’re starting to sound like Meadow, old friend.”

“I’m sure we’ll understand each other very well then. I mean there are plenty of areas you could be helpful in. Dangerous dungeons, unknown creatures attacking settlements, cavern exploration, enchantment testing on a downright indestructible human. I’m sure the Shadows and adventuring guild have more than enough jobs too, if that’s what you’re looking for,” he said, looking at her now.

“Hard to say how long those take. And the ones in Baralia were pretty boring, I won’t lie,” she said.

“Perhaps when the gates to the north are established, you’ll get more exciting work. Another thing I have are invitations to the various healing orders. Addressed to the founders of the Medic Sentinel Corps,” Trian said, summoning a few letters, the seals already broken.

“You didn’t go? What do they want?” Ilea asked.

He sighed. “No. I didn’t. The pressure they put on Lys wasn’t enough considering Ravenhall’s independence and the deals the council managed to establish. It was obvious that the orders weren’t happy about a new player in their little game but with recent events, it hardly matters.

“The Corinth Order is struggling to regain their footing, their resources reduced greatly due to the rebellion in Dawntree. The Order of Truth is gone, whatever will come from its fractured remnants either irrelevant or firmly on your side, mostly due to your interventions with the blood rituals. The Sanctuary healing order from Stormbreach vouches for us, which leaves a few smaller ones I can deal with and the Order of Balance.

“Corinth and Balance sent invitations, the former more likely to be a trap. It’s hard to say what either really want.”

Ilea looked at the letters. "I've run into plenty of Corinth healers and their associates before. Bunch of absolute shits."

"They've waged wars before over new healing orders trying to establish themselves. Unchallenged in the west, before the devastating Elven attacks. I assume they would either try for an alliance, or something stupid. Like kidnapping or killing us," he said.

"You don't seem particularly worried," she said.

Trian smiled. "Well. I won't ever visit any of their temples and as they are now, they won't dare a strike on our headquarters or Ravenhall. No, actually they might, but it will end badly. If you go and visit, I'd assume it would end even worse."

"For all they've done, they still provide healers to the local populace. As much as I'd like to slap around some arrogant fools monopolizing healing magic, I don't know if it's for the better," Ilea said.

"They provide healers, yes. But at the same time, they prevent others from providing services in their territories, let alone learn healing magic independently. I'd wager they've killed more healers in their time than they have trained," he said. "And in time, they will make a move. The council is aware of the situation of course and Ravenhall obviously has our back." He tapped his desk a few times, looking at her.

"What are you thinking?" Ilea asked.

He paused for a moment before he stood up and walked over to a cabinet, opening a bottle of scotch. "I hadn't considered it. Mostly because you dislike these sort of affairs. But the way you are now..."

"You want me to go? Stir up some trouble?" Ilea asked.

He poured himself a glass and looked at her. "You could just go and see what they want. Your presence and obvious power alone will send a message. And I'm sure you will act in the interest of all healers, should you discover something... let's say, ethically questionable. Before we continue on this talk, you're positive that there is no danger to you from one of the oldest healing orders that is still around?"

"With what I've seen... I think I could fight the entirety of the Lys imperial army. That is, if unknown parties haven't stayed hidden until now. Which is certainly possible. I could fight all the Lily members I've seen so far, likely without much issues, but there could be more, let alone the founders. The same could be true for any faction, really," she said.

"No... the Lily considers you an ally. The same is true for Lys. Either that or someone they'd rather have an unproblematic relationship with. They're aware of the destruction that would be caused should a direct conflict happen. The Corinth order however... doesn't much care for destruction and death. And little makes them more angry than independent healers. If they had unknown veterans hidden away, by now I think they would've made a move," he explained.

"Even if they do, I'm pretty sure I could escape at the very least. But you're right. If they had someone as or more powerful than me, they would've already destroyed this place and slaughtered everyone," she said.

He took a sip of scotch. "You're terrifying."

Ilea grinned. "I can be, when I need to be."

“Good thing you can be manipulated with good food and interesting monsters,” he mused.

“Better than a wish to become the Empress of womankind,” she said.

Trian sighed. “Might not be worse than what most people get right now. The way there though, that’s a lot of death and suffering.”

“That title is the last thing I’d ever want,” Ilea said.

“Makes you an even better candidate,” he pointed out. “But we’ve moved away from the point. Here’s the invitation. Their now main temple in Halstein. I should point out that disproportionate application of violence and destruction will create tensions with the kingdom of Kroll, an important trade partner.”

“I’m sure we’ll figure it out, should it come to that,” Ilea said.

“Of course. Claire might be getting bored without any diplomatic incidents anyway. Do be careful anyway, should you visit,” he said.

“Sure,” Ilea answered, storing the letter. “What about the Order of Balance?”

“Less problematic. They’ve backed and worked with various smaller Orders in the past. I assume they’d want to establish territory definitions and trade for information. They mostly focus on the local population, their healers doing little to no adventuring work, let alone direct monster subjugation. As long as we don’t compete with their temples, I doubt major tensions should arise. Even if we did, I doubt they would take direct action... though it might create entirely new issues with Lys and Nipha. For both us and Ravenhall. Not necessary, nor the goal of our organization,” Trian said.

“Live and let live. I can meet, I suppose. Don’t think we should trade away knowledge on our Classes. Not with the difficulty of obtaining them. Would be an issue if they forced people down the path of a Medic Sentinel or Ashen Medic,” she said.

“I wouldn’t worry. They have surely found plenty of Classes requiring high pain tolerance, resistances, and death. The requirements needed for Medic Classes are impossibly high to ever be achieved by an unwilling party. Otherwise there would be plenty of similar ones around already. People have tried, with varied success,” he said.

“They require training by the Sentinels or me personally anyway,” she recalled.

“Wouldn’t make a difference. Another requirement will be used instead. The Class name might be different, but it would likely remain similar in essence. Which is also why I doubt they would even want to trade for that. It’s not a secret that high risk and danger will provide good results. We however could surely benefit from the collective healing magic and medicine knowledge they have gathered over the centuries,” he explained.

“Why haven’t we established trade yet if that’s the case?” she asked.

“Wasn’t needed. We have plenty to work with. But as we expand and might train non combat oriented healers too, less extreme methods would be beneficial. If we plan to go that route,” he said.

“Local independent healers or more within the guard would help the city. And we wouldn’t need the help of any other Orders,” Ilea suggested.

“Sites in Riverwatch, Morhill, and eventually Hallowfort would let us expand as well. The north especially will be an interesting prospect. The various governments will be more inclined to allow

our presence if we directly help the locals, instead of just sending in high level battle healers on the premise that they will fight monsters in the area,” Trian said.

“Sure. Whatever gets more healers out there, preferably the monster killing kind,” she said. “I’ll meet them, establish contact and see what they’d want for Class information. Maybe they’re using elixirs too.”

“Ancient Orders like their elixirs and their rituals. You won’t get either of that, but basic healer classes and spells would already be plenty,” Trian said.

“I’ll see what I can do. You mentioned Stormbreach too?” she asked.

“The Sanctuary Healing Order, yes. You must’ve left an impression,” he said with a grin. “The Lady of Benevolence... sent her regards.”

Ilea smiled. “The old blood spirit. How are they doing?”

“So that story is true. Claire mentioned it. They’re doing well. With help from Riverwatch and Ravenhall, both politically and with resources. Plenty of refugees are looking for a new beginning. An established settlement with houses to fill under the protection of an established healing order is enticing. I assume the Corinth Order failed to destroy the Order due to the spirit itself. Is she that powerful?” he asked.

“Good to hear they’re doing well. She’s close to three hundred. Not exactly impressive, but I suppose she’d be more than capable of fending off a halfhearted attack by some lower level humans,” Ilea surmised. “Or she had deals and backers, who knows.”

“I see. I’ll keep an eye on the situation. I’m sure Claire is already digging her claws into the potential ally. Same with Dawntree,” he said.

“I wonder if Alice stayed,” Ilea mused.

“Alice Forkspear? She’s there, yes. Claire mentioned her in one of the council meetings. One of the few nobles who neither fled the city nor opposed the rebels,” he said.

“Still around...,” Ilea mused.

“What is it?” he asked.

She shook her head. “Ah, suppose I had hoped she’d go a different path. Away from all the crap that got her into the position I found her in.”

“Easy to fall back into the roles we were raised for,” Trian said, finishing his drink.

“You’re not in Lys though,” she said.

“I just said it’s easy, not that everyone has to follow that pattern. And... the position I’m in... well, it’s not exactly the complete opposite of what a nobleman would do,” he said with a grin.

Ilea nodded, thinking back to the girl on her back as she ran through the eastern part of the Navali forest. Her only concerns back then were Drakes and bandits. Quite a small world it was.

“Her butler still around? Jaime?” she asked.

“I have no idea,” Trian said, summoning a stack of documents. “Eighty three... no four... Dawntree, let’s see. Leadership... associates... here it is. Jaime, yes. He’s the only known ally to

Alice Forkspear, both mentioned to be of little danger. Reported by Levi Walken, member of the Shadow's Hand."

Loyal to a fault. Good man that one, Ilea thought. She narrowed her eyes. "Wait, the annoying leaves mage?"

"I don't know him, nor his magic," Trian said.

"Pretty sure it's him, yeah," she said. "Any news from the Lily, while we're at it?"

"You'd have to ask Claire. Though nothing was brought up in the last few meetings, so I assume it's quiet on that front," he said. "No news on Michael either. Speaking of which... it might be good to inform Halstein of your coming beforehand. Or he might suspect an attack."

"Can you do that for me? I'll go there at some point in the next few weeks," she said.

"I'll have a letter written and delivered. That might get other interested parties involved too, just as a warning," he said.

Can never just be a quick and easy thing with humans.