

Chapter 364 Detective Smash

Ilea gave Trevor a glance when she was done looking through his headquarters. There had been some hidden areas she discovered but nothing other than more likely stolen goods came up.

“Happy?” He asked, stepping up behind her.

“Yea.”

He snorted. “I wouldn’t have taken you for such a lawful citizen. I know you Shadows do your fair share of shady shit.”

Ilea nodded. “I have probably killed more people than you have, many of them for worse reasons too. Morally speaking of course.” She said and shrugged. “I recommended you to Dale, just feel a little personal responsibility when it comes to you.” She smirked and jabbed his arm.

“Fucking hypocrite.” He whispered, glancing at her to see if she heard. “I have lines I won’t cross, Ilea. And that will stay that way.” He said.

“I was looking for slaves or torture, not the fact that you killed people.” Ilea said. “Don’t whisper around people like me. We can probably hear you. Or in my case, even feel your... distress.”

He sighed before he chuckled. “Noted. Way to make Shadows even more terrifying than they already were.”

I’m not exactly any random Shadow. Ilea thought but kept that to herself. If the deterrent of having a Shadow look for you can prevent people from becoming criminals, half the work was already done.

“Well then, keep up the honest crime my dear Riversong leader. Perhaps we will meet again.” She smiled under her bone and ash.

“I sincerely hope we don’t.” The man said in a bitter tone. “But I’m here if you need anything.” He added.

In case you need my help at some point? Ilea asked herself and motioned to Walter who had helped her look for hidden rooms.

They teleported up and joined the two waiting thugs.

Both didn’t look exactly comfortable. At least eager to get the job done.

“Lead the way.” Ilea said.

It didn’t take long to get to the nearby district. The two pointed out the three mansions and even informed them where they were currently staying just in case more help was needed.

“She really seemed grateful.” Walter said as he glanced at Ilea.

They were standing in front of an abandoned looking estate. The Graysword sisters had owned it apparently. Nobles from near Virilya. Likely fled the war and stayed in Riverwatch.

“I think I broke her leg because she spit on me.” Ilea recalled. “Not necessarily an appropriate reaction on my part.”

“Your power is an easy excuse. Others would have killed for as little as that.” The sorcerer said.

“And yet others would have ignored it.” Ilea replied, checking the metal gate.

He shrugged and teleported through. “Sometimes, violence is the only language people seem to speak.”

“That why you hide in your cave?” Ilea asked as she blinked to join him.

The garden was mostly just half frozen dirt. Any plants or flowers that once grew here were dead and gone. It was winter of course but some of the neighboring estates had quite the luscious assortment of greenery, despite the cold.

“Among other reasons.” Walter said. “I do deal with intruders. Sometimes I’m forced to do more than just break a leg.”

“But you’re protecting your family.” Ilea said, the two walking to the entrance.

“Murder is murder. Torture is torture. Despite the reasons. I don’t regret any of my actions but neither will I excuse them.” He said and knocked on the door.

Nothing happened.

“Nobody is in there.” Ilea said. She didn’t add anything to his statement, agreeing with the sorcerer.

She kicked open the door and stepped inside. No lights. “Dusty as fuck in here.” She said and blinked around a couple times, not finding anything suspicious. The furniture was gone too, indicating a tidy move out.

“Cellar?” Walter asked when she was back by his side.

The both appeared down in the cellar. “Just storage.” Ilea murmured before her ashen limbs started to smash into the floor.

Stone cracked and was moved aside, revealing another warded off and enchanted area. It did look rather pristine but Ilea could smell the scarce remains of blood in the air.

A rather small cube like stone room without any furniture. She could only imagine what had happened in there.

“I don’t think anything happened in here as recent as last week.” Walter commented.

“They cleaned up when they left.” Ilea said and appeared outside again.

Sunlight reached the city now, the ice glistening in the abandoned garden.

Walter stepped up next to her and crossed his arms. “Not here.”

“Probably not.” She confirmed.

They left again and checked out the second estate. One owned by a man named Colson. It was abandoned too but contrary to the first one, there wasn’t even a hidden area in the cellar.

“Leaving only Isyll.” Ilea said. “Should have asked for some more details.”

“I did, before I helped you look through the Riversong headquarters.” Walter commented as they walked towards the last current lead.

“And?” Ilea asked.

“Not much. Kevan Isyll. Noble from Salia, came here after the elves decimated his city’s people. Bought the estate and mostly remained inside. Few apparently even know how he looks like.” He said. “Explains why so little is known about him.”

“Salia.” Ilea murmured when they reached the gates. Bushes grew high here to provide some privacy. Little could be seen of the mansion from the street.

“Enchantment on the fence.” Walter commented. “Noise blocking I think as well as... smell blocking?”

“Might be he likes to cook incredible meals.” Ilea suggested.

“Bloody meals you mean?” Walter suggested.

The gate was closed and the metal bell that had been present on the previous mansions wasn’t here.

“It’s closed.” Walter said when he moved the handle.

Ilea blinked inside at the same time as Walter did. “Should we talk first or look through the house immediately?”

“We’re already intruding. I think if we go any further, a fight will be unavoidable. If he’s guilty or not.” Walter said.

“True. I’m better at monster hunting than this.” Ilea said. “Less, subtle.”

The man nodded slowly. “I’m aware.”

The heavy wooden door opened before they even knocked. An man who looked to be in his fifties glanced at them through the gap. Several chains were still in place. “What do you want? You’re intruding.” He wore a black suit and white shirt with added embroideries and a bow tie.

[Alchemist – lvl 143]

“We’re here to talk to Kevan Isyll.” Ilea said.

“The master is busy. He will not entertain any guests, not of the Shadow’s Hand either.” The man looked her up and down. “A good day.” He added, the door slammed shut.

“Lovely.” Ilea said. “He’s walking downstairs. There is more than one floor. Wanna check it out?”

“I suppose we have little choice.” Walter sighed.

Ilea nodded and blinked into one of the storage rooms. She made sure to look through each reachable room with her sphere. *Nothing suspicious yet.*

The house was extended into the ground with normal looking chambers for sleeping and dining. *Someone likes to be underground.*

Walter followed, waiting behind her.

She found the man in question a moment later, joined by the butler who informed him about something.

The reaction was minimal, neither did either of them seem particularly distressed to her Sentinel Huntress skill.

She motioned downwards and vanished once more. *What do we have here.* Glass containers in one of the lowest storage rooms held a red liquid. She didn't have to check to know it was blood.

"Good find." Walter commented in a whisper.

Ilea saw the man of the mansion look their way, through all the walls. She raised a finger to her mouth and vanished again, into the rather spacious hallway right outside the storage room.

Throwing one of the glass cylinders up in her hand, she watched the blood inside slosh from one side to the other. When she caught it again, a man stood in the hallway before them.

Straight long and black hair, a short and trimmed beard as well as black eyes that glared at her. He wore a suit of immaculate design, cut perfectly for his height and size. A vest instead of a jacket.

"Why are you here?" He asked, his voice tired. His stance casual, arms at his side.

[Mage – lvl 219]

"This is blood." Ilea said, holding up the cylinder of glass.

The man rolled his eyes. "Yes. Well deducted, I'm sure you will make a wonderful detective, Miss Shadow. Now please leave me alone. I have no desire to entertain guests, my butler will have informed you."

Ilea noted that the butler was gone, outside of her range. *Why didn't he come down too?* "A bunch of people died, their blood apparently sucked out from wounds on their neck."

A red tint seemed to flash over his black eyes. "That blood you have there is bought. Volunteers provided it. It is used both in Alchemy and Healing. I have remained in this house for the past year and I have no reason to justify myself to you. You're intruding on my grounds. I ask you to leave."

"He's polite at least." Walter commented.

"A woman was found dead, near your mansion. Bite marks on her neck. We're looking for the killer. You living so close, this blood right here and the growing distress you are hiding very well, are telling a tale. Kevan, did you kill those people?" Ilea asked casually.

He put his hand to his brow and shook his head lightly before he sighed. "Leave or I will remove you myself. This is my mansion, you have no right to be here."

Magic started pulsing around him. A deep red in Ilea's sphere. *If that doesn't scream blood magic.* "Sure you want to do this? I have no issue fighting you here."

"I will die one day another. Why not to a Shadow?" He smiled. "You won't believe me either way." He whispered to himself before he vanished into red smoke.

Ilea let go of the cylinder, her ashen limbs fanning out before sharp claws slashed into her ash. Her hands held onto his.

"He's draining health and mana!" Walter warned.

"Get out then, I'll deal with him." She said and saw Walter vanish. "What did you mean by your last line?"

The drain was mostly negligible, against her powerful resistances.

He ripped himself free and jumped back, showing incredible strength for his level. "It is of no consequence, Shadow."

The blood that had spilled from the cracked container ignited and flashed up in a powerful explosion.

The ash around her legs was slightly burnt away but reformed quickly, Ilea staggering back a step as she shielded her eyes.

Only smoke remained of her enemy before he appeared behind her.

She felt a familiar sensation, blood magic pouring into her, completely uninterrupted by her ash or bone armor. *The downsides of using mana intrusion.* She smirked and moved a little to the side before her insides erupted. Azarith Fighting showed her enough to know how dangerous his attack was.

One of her lungs was ripped through, her breathing interrupted for a second. He had gone for the heart but the movement shifted his spell.

Kevan appeared again across the hallway, sweat on his brow. "What are you?" He asked, neither angry nor annoyed. Confused perhaps. He relaxed from his fighting stance and looked at her. "I am no threat to you."

"Not exactly." Ilea said, her lung already reformed. "Now either you tell me what you meant or I'm going to slug you so hard, your brains will cover that wall." She explained and pointed at the stone behind him.

Kevan chuckled and shook his head. "You still haven't killed me, after all that." He seemed to consider something, looking at the ceiling. "What a horrible year."

"Stop whispering to yourself. You're not the only one with insane hearing." Ilea said. "Also stop draining me, it's ineffective."

"I know that. I just haven't seen anything so resistant to my spells yet. Have I not destroyed your lungs at least?" Kevan asked.

"One of them." Ilea admitted. "Did you kill those people?"

"I know the woman you spoke of." He said, dejected and uninterested.

"What about the rest, the investigators that came looking?" Ilea asked.

He shook his head. "I know of no investigators."

Walter appeared again, looking around at the blood below Ilea, the red fire still smoldering. "You were talking. Decided to check in."

"Dark Sorcerer. You reek of death." Kevan said offhandedly. "I'm responsible for her death, now end me, finish this monster hunt."

"He is?" Walter asked and looked at Ilea.

"Probably, but I'm not sure." She replied, ignoring the overly dramatic nobleman. "You say you're responsible but did you actually kill her?"

He sighed and vanished in smoke, appearing on the couch above.

Ilea rolled her eyes and followed. "Tell me."

A fire was burning in the hearth, luxurious tapestries and carpets lent the room a sinister atmosphere.

Light flickered over the noble's eyes as he stared into the flames. "She came to me, seeking help. Deep wounds on her neck, blood... flowing from her. I could not..." He stopped, unable to continue.

"Couldn't resist?" Walter asked a moment after he joined.

"He's a vampire?" Ilea asked.

Kevan looked up with a smile but he didn't speak.

"He isn't. A vampire wouldn't be this articulate. Nor would he be this weak. If the stories are to be believed. Few survive encounters." The sorcerer explained.

"They are granted... a curse." Kevan whispered. His voice was quiet, barely audible.

"So you have a curse from a vampire encounter and now you need blood." Ilea said.

"But he had blood in the cellar." Walter mentioned.

She glanced at him. "We don't know if he had blood then."

"I didn't." Kevan admitted. "That is why I couldn't stop."

"Why attack us then? You could've just explained yourself immediately." Ilea said. "I was this close to killing you." She showed him two fingers close together.

He didn't say anything and looked back at the flames.

"You think he was set up?" Walter asked.

"Maybe. Seems like a sorry lad, doesn't care much about dying either. Any idea why someone would set you up?" She asked the man.

Again, he didn't speak.

"The woman wasn't found close by." Walter said.

"Could've dumped her there." Ilea suggested.

"I would have hidden her in here. Would have burnt her." Kevan said quietly. "If anything, I'm not stupid. Not so stupid as to discuss this here, with a suspect to the murders you are investigating."

Ilea waved him off. "I don't pride myself in being a detective. I pride myself in being indestructible."

He snorted before chuckling. "Amusing."

"Who knows about your... affliction?" Walter asked.

"Anybody could know. I'm not exactly trying to keep it a secret." Kevan said.

"The butler?" Walter asked.

Kevan shrugged. "Likely. The people who sold blood to me, the volunteers might know too as well as some guards and gangs that work in and around this district."

“Not much closer then. I guess the next step is checking in with the superiors of the various officials. Maybe they can explain why there was a single investigator assigned after so many deaths.” Ilea said.

Kevan shook his head. “In Salia, higher ranked guards could chose the jobs themselves. Made it easier for the administrative work. If that’s the same here, you are not going to find out much.”

“We could also just kill you and be done with it.” She joked.

“Or that.” He replied with a smirk. “I’m the obvious suspect. Blood in my basement, my unfortunate... situation, the murder happening nearby.”

“It’s too easy.” Walter commented. “I think somebody is trying to pin these murders and disappearances on the obvious outcast. Fled form Salia, needs blood, hides in his mansion.”

“Nobody would miss me.” Kevan added.

“Ah, don’t be so over dramatic, mate.” Ilea said and rolled her eyes. “You should go out and hunt some beasts sometime. Really takes care of that downtrodden mood.”

“I prefer trying new recipes with brewing. Or playing music.” Walter suggested.

“That’s good too I guess. Different strokes for different folks.” Ilea said and shrugged.

Kevan ignored them and stared back at the flames. “Good luck on your search.” He said when they had finished talking.

Ilea crouched down next to him. “What do you mean? You’re coming with us of course.”

“What?” He hissed.

She chuckled and stood back up. “You’re still the most likely candidate. Maybe your way to get out of a shit mood is killing and eating some random people.”

He grumbled and got up, straightening his vest. “Why am I always in a bad mood then?”

“Overeating?” Ilea suggested, leading them out of the house.

Walter chuckled at her mention but didn’t comment on it further.

She was glad the noble followed without much further complaint.

He frowned when she looked his way. “I just want to have my peace and quiet.” He grumbled.

“Of course, of course. I’m glad you understand at least.” Ilea said.

“Do you have a plan at all? I would suggest paying the local gangs for information.” Kevan suggested, weighing in on the mission.

“I think I’ll just ask Dale if he can pull some strings. See if the officials were put on the job or not.” Ilea said. “The local gang already didn’t know anything. At least the one we talked to.”

“The guard captain?” Walter asked.

“The very same.” Ilea replied.

“The gang led you to me?” Kevan asked a moment later.

They were moving up to the rooftops, Ilea looking around to find out where Dale’s guard station was located.

“They had some other suggestions as well. Apparently you’re known to be an eccentric noble that stays hidden most of the time.” Walter replied to the man.

“Great.” Kevan commented. “Come to a new city and just want to deal with my own things. It’s the same everywhere, isn’t it?”

“I have a place you might like.” Walter said and chuckled.

Ilea chuckled too. “Soon you’re going to be more powerful than the Hand itself.”

Walter smiled. “It’s all coming together. You’ll see.” He used an overdone sinister voice to deliver the message.