

## Chapter 533 Arrangements

Claire listened in silence, pouring her third drink before she downed it.

Ilea summoned a meal and started eating, leaning back in her ashen chair.

**[Mage – lvl 262]**

“I see you leveled again,” Ilea said with a smile.

“Okay... but you understand that I don’t want that thing here? If you really manage to get it out of Erendar and Baralia,” Claire said.

“Of course. I don’t plan to have it anywhere near the human plains. If it’s hostile, it will just kill everyone around. And if it’s not, the beings it helps awaken will be hunted down by humans. I’ll find a place,” she said. “But as I said... there’s no way so far to get it here. And we need it to close the gate.”

“Is that why you’re considering it?” Claire asked. “To get further with the teleportation gate research?”

“A possible benefit, sure. But I trust Iana and Christopher to figure it out in time anyway,” she said.

Claire laughed.

“Hopefully, yes. You just can’t help yourself, can you?” she asked. “You help the Golden Lily, an organization likely responsible for Eve’s death, connected to hundreds of criminal organizations within the human plains and beyond...”

“For the purpose of preventing dangerous rituals,” Ilea interjected.

“Then you go on to support members of the Order of Truth, the very organization responsible for the aforementioned rituals...,” Claire continued.

“Because it was just a splinter group within the Order who orchestrated the rituals,” Ilea mused, shoveling green noodles into her face.

“You then go on to help Yinnahall’s more rebellious officials in overthrowing the local High King supporters with the goal of independence. A slaver city,” Claire said.

“Not anymore,” Ilea said.

Claire rubbed her brow and poured herself another drink.

“And what the fuck am I supposed to do with all this shit?” she asked, gesturing to the three large bowls on her table.

The bowls had held a variety of delicious soups prepared by Keyla. One was a potato based creation mixing in various other vegetables and a few daring spices Ilea hadn’t been able to place.

The second one had bordered on a stew, mostly using a monster boar’s flesh coupled with its bones to create a wonderfully hearty dish. The boars roamed small forested parts of the most southern Lys territories, their tastes mostly geared towards herbs and mushrooms that grew in their habitat.

Keyla had added those to the mix to make the dish savory but not overwhelming.

The last bowl had held minced pieces of a dangerous shark like creature that terrorized fishermen all along the coastline. Their level wasn't exceptionally high but the same held true for most seamen trying to make a living.

Keyla had informed her that the sharks were incredibly cheap, their meat tough, slightly poisonous, and most importantly downright appalling in taste. She kept the secret of how she turned those factors around to herself but apparently it had to do with fermenting.

Ilea definitely wanted more of that one.

Right now the bowls weren't quite as interesting to her anymore, holding approximately one thousand and eight hundred gold coins.

"I don't know, spend it?" Ilea asked.

Claire sighed, a pleading look in her eyes. "When will your terror end?" she asked in an exaggerated voice.

Ilea pointed at her with a fork. "Be happy I'm not dumping the twenty crates of treasure on you!"

"Who's gonna get that?" Claire asked, squinting at her.

"Trian. And the Sentinels. What self respecting headquarters of a mysterious Order doesn't have a vault with treasure?" Ilea said. "But seriously, he can use the funds and the members can check it for gear. I'm sure many of the metals could be used for the same."

"Yeah. Maybe the Shadowguard can have a look at the lower quality items. Though their equipment is becoming quite impressive as it is," Claire said.

"Is the information enough for you to write a request and handle the cities?" Ilea asked.

"It is. I'm just very busy at the moment. With both work and training. Would it be alright if some of it is handled by my assistants? They're trustworthy and I will only delegate the less important bits," Claire said.

"Of course. It's not like we absolutely need the influence in Yinnahall but right now is the time to strike. The impressions I left behind are strongest now. I'm sure they will have forgotten about me in a few months," Ilea said and continued eating.

Claire smiled. "Yes, I doubt that."

"Maybe you're right," Ilea said with a smile.

"How have things gone in Ravenhall? Anything noteworthy?" she asked.

"The influx of people immigrating from various parts of the plains and the west has been steady. Just as much as our expansion into the mountain below. Our early estimates will have to be expanded soon enough but I doubt it will be an issue. Morhill's reconstruction and defense enhancements are coming along nicely," Claire said.

"Balduur doing a good job?" Ilea asked.

"He's one of many. The independence from the Empire attracts a lot of capable workers and adventurers. Some of them have contributed quite a bit of wisdom for defensive improvements, ways to deal with the local wildlife, and various other topics like plumbing. I believe it's some kind of frontier spirit. Even though we're not exactly near a frontier," Claire explained.

“Maybe just the independence then? I’m sure a lot of people who would’ve gone to the western cities have come here instead. Same with refugees or previous slaves,” Ilea said.

“Oh yes. Definitely. We provide a lot of options and opportunities without actually being in an area heavily contested by dangerous creatures. Or with a close proximity to Elves,” she said. “Though Alistair will surely have his hands full in the coming months anyway.”

Ilea finished her plate and stored it. “If the negotiations with the Empire go well, the ex Baralia cities shouldn’t be the worst place to live in.”

“Hopefully not, no. But it’s understandable that a slave wouldn’t necessarily want to work in the same place they had been exploited in for the past decades,” Claire said. “Though a journey south is dangerous and potentially expensive. Many may choose to stay nonetheless. You did well, interfering in Yinnahall as you have.”

“Thanks. I’ll visit them again to see how things are going,” Ilea said. “Trian isn’t around?”

“He’s out of town. Training mission with one of your squads, I believe,” Claire said.

“I’m so glad that the two of you are here to take care of these things,” Ilea said.

Claire smiled. “You say that every time you’re here. You provided the resources, the name, the knowledge, and in the case of the Sentinels, much of the initial training. Neither of us could have managed that. And it’s not like you’ve stopped,” she said and gestured to the gold pots.

“I just enjoy myself and bring you the spoils,” Ilea said.

“Didn’t sound like the war was particularly enjoyable for you,” Claire said and took a sip of her drink. “Well... I enjoy myself too. It’s sad that my father isn’t around to see where I stand now.”

Ilea smiled. “I’m sure he would be proud.”

“Oh not at all. He’d be absolutely livid. Me? The administrator of Ravenhall? Putting peasants into positions of power, investing and distributing wealth to improve everyone’s standard of living?” she said and laughed, looking a little embarrassed after she had calmed down. “I suppose... I’m a little unfair. He even took on dangerous assignments in the end, to change our situation and earn funds. Instead of just complaining until there was nothing left at all.”

“What about your mother?” Ilea asked, unsure how to react to any of that.

“She’s been well. I think. It’s difficult to tell with her but sometimes she lights up when Cless is around... or when she helps with the crops. But I’m not sure if she’ll ever be the same again,” she said.

Ilea smiled. “How do you think she’d react to everything that happened?”

“Mother... I’m sure she’d find some ways I hadn’t exactly done my work in the most efficient way possible. But I think she’d be proud. As long as I put in effort into whatever I did, she was there to support me. No matter if it was dancing lessons, or magic theory,” Claire said.

“You’re definitely putting in the work,” Ilea said.

“You didn’t mention yours often,” Claire said. “Do you never think of them? You didn’t come here willingly after all. They must be looking for you.”

“Maybe. Our family... wasn’t exactly that. I think they raised me based on a feeling of responsibility more so than anything else. There wasn’t much love around. In our world when

you're eighteen you're considered an adult. When that happened, their involvement pretty much stopped.

"I welcomed it in a way. I've always been rather independent and it just felt right to get a job and figure things out on my own. I do wonder if they even know about my disappearance," she said.

"I'm sorry," Claire said.

"Don't be. They'll figure it out, as I have," she said.

Claire smiled. "If they're like you in any way, they will," she said. "How long are you staying?"

"Not long. I mostly came to dump the gold and news. More spirits to fight and training with Meadow to be had," Ilea said.

"I won't hold you back then. Just know that you're falling behind with your dancing lessons," Claire said.

"I'm aware of that," Ilea said with a sigh. "As are many other things but shit just keeps happening. Oh speaking of which, did you contact Helena yet?"

"I'll wait until the situation in Baralia has somewhat calmed down. It's not exactly smart to reveal ourselves after you bring a hostile four mark into our realm," she said.

"Really? You don't trust me?" Ilea asked with an exaggerated pout.

"I trust you to figure it out somehow. But until you do, I'll hold my letters," Claire said and made the gold vanish.

"I know I said I wouldn't but can you hold on to the treasures from Baralia until Trian is back?" Ilea asked.

"Of course," Claire said, her eyes widening when the first crate appeared.

It took them a minute to transfer everything.

"You really did raid the vaults of whole cities..." Claire murmured.

"I told you about the pirate," Ilea said.

"The Destroyer... indeed. Well maybe he should change his name to something more treasure related," she said.

Ilea rolled her eyes.

"I'll be on my way back then. Don't burn the place down," Ilea said.

"I'm not quite as powerful as you are," Claire said.

The way back to Baralia was largely uneventful. Ilea was somewhat familiar with a few of the landmarks, allowing her to find Gyffold without any detours.

*I could just take a peek at Baralia itself, see how the city is faring,* she thought but finally decided against it. She'd surely have to get involved. Right now it was between Baralia, its High King and Lys, plus any additional parties that may or may not participate.

Ilea would focus on her own growth and her cooperation with Meadow to have the space tunnel closed before the whole kingdom had to be evacuated due to a spirit invasion.

*Though seeing how they're not even interested in following me more than a few hundred meters, they'd be pretty disinterested in staying here.*

Her continued experience with the spirits lowered her view of their intelligence even further. The main problem she still deemed possible was some of them accidentally going through the portal and finding themselves unable to get back.

*Like some kind of ten meter large tornado death fly stuck in someone's room. Not a pleasant experience.*

Ilea would be able to deal with most creatures but she neither felt responsible to stay in Gyffold for an extended period of time nor did she particularly feel like that. Right now she reaped plenty of personal benefits from her endeavors, coupled with the potential closing of the gate.

“Come on, don't be afraid little one,” Ilea said, gently pulling the ant creature a little closer towards Meadow.

*“It is in distress,”* the incomprehensible landscape said.

“Yeah I can see that,” Ilea said, using her healing to try and calm the creature.

*“I believe it thinks to be a sacrifice,”* Meadow said.

“You did that? Eat sacrifices?” Ilea asked.

*“I would push them away but some have tried, yes. I do not consume creatures,”* Meadow said.

“Yeah not yet. I'm sure you'll reveal your eldritch fleshwarper capabilities soon enough,” Ilea said and knelt down next to the large ant creature. “It's fine,” she said, gently touching its carapace.

“You're not a sacrifice.”

*“I am no flesh mage, Lilith. Nor am I aware of a magic type called eldritch,”* it said.

The ant calmed down a little, feeling the mana going through it. Its heart rate slowed down a tiny bit but it still seemed stressed.

Ilea didn't feel too bad about it. They had after all explained their intentions with a page of her notebook. She knew the creatures weren't animals but intelligent beings and her goal here was to get them to safety. Though she had to admit, she was glad they didn't look particularly cute.

*“It's a type of fiction, written by some racist ass author back in my realm. Went with the incomprehensible horror type of monsters. Stuff that makes one mad, or just plain weird shit. Often in relation to tentacles,”* she explained through telepathy. Michael was still around after all.

Her talks with Meadow had gone far enough for her to reveal her otherworldly birthplace. The creature hadn't offered much of anything in regards to how she had gotten to Elos, itself only finding out about other realms a few decades ago.

Ilea didn't know if it simply was a worse space mage than the Fae or if there weren't just worlds between them and both were insane. She assumed the latter, still knowing very little about the magic despite her many advancements in the past weeks.

*“Tentacles are very useful and versatile limbs. You use something similar when attacking with your ash,”* the being said.

*“True,”* Ilea sent back.

A strain of life magic came from the shattered gates and brushed over the ant.

*“Truly... your healing is hindering the collapse,”* it said.

*“Yeah... I can see it better now too,”* Ilea said, focusing on the weird strain the ant was under.

A heavy mana burden of the surroundings. The creature was barely above level one eighty, a wonder that it could survive in this place at all.

She walked back to the waiting insect creatures while mulling things over.

*“Do you think it’s enough?”* she asked.

*“You saw yourself, didn’t you?”* Meadow asked.

Ilea had hoped she had been wrong. *“Yeah. This one would implode the second it stepped through the gate.”*

*“Is there no way you could enhance your healing?”* the Meadow asked.

*“I don’t think so. Maybe another evolution but you doubt one will happen at four hundred. Nor would I reach that level anytime soon. What if we raise their Arcane Magic Resistance?”* Ilea asked.

*“It’s possible... with you here... it would take weeks. You would not benefit much from helping them along,”* Meadow said.

Ilea shrugged. *“A few hours a day... you can continue teaching me anyway. I just heal them while you do.”*

*“They won’t like it,”* Meadow said.

*“Yeah, it’s either starving, death by spirits, or some painful mana exposure,”* Ilea said.

*“May I use your notebook again?”* Meadow asked.

Ilea summoned the thing before it started floating. By now she could understand some the process Meadow used to move the book. Most of it still made no sense to her.

They had tried using her third tier Displacement through the gate but the spell had failed, manifesting behind the phenomenon both on Elos and in Erendar.

Her demonstration of her third tier blink only confirmed the solid structure of the spell, its extended casting time and complex structure making sure its destination was unchangeable, even for Meadow.

Placing her third tier Displacement into the air in Meadow’s room to have it examined didn’t lead to any major revelations either. The spell would work in moving the survivors but its range and apparent realm limitation made it irrelevant to their efforts.

*“I noticed your level has been rising again,”* Meadow said. *“Does that mean your third Class did not yield a solution?”*

*“I trust your information. So I’m going ahead with advancing my Classes. I also felt like destroying some of the spirits. It’s frustrating to constantly get beaten down,”* Ilea said. *“Plus the healing*

*works. If they advance their Arcane resistance far enough, I'm sure I can bring them through without issues."*

*"It truly is fortunate that your healing works in the way it does. Your body was changed to allow for such, was it not?" Meadow asked.*

*"An elixir, yes. With a high death rate. I don't think humans could wield arcane healing otherwise," Ilea said.*

*"Which means in some ways You are an eldritch being, are you not?" Meadow said.*

Ilea squinted her eyes.

*"Sure, whatever... living grass," she said.*

*"There is a tree too... an a creek. I think I look rather well rounded, not incomprehensible at all," it said. "I mean you have ashen tentacles on your back. Like some kind of growth."*

*"Okay. I get it. You're the normal one. I'm sure you'll get an interview as a cashier at the local pharmacy," she said.*

*"Pff. I would be overqualified as a seller of things. I can literally regrow lost limbs and mend otherwise fatal wounds. I can bend space to move hundreds of objects at my will," Meadow said.*

*"Hospital logistics then and maybe a doctor assistant," Ilea suggested with a nod.*

*"Assistant??"*

*"Well you lack the education on human anatomy, extensive knowledge on existing medicine, an a degree. That piece of paper IS important, you know," Ilea said sagely.*

*"I have learned your language in the span of hours... you're mocking me, human," Meadow said.*

*"What? I thought I was the eldritch being here. So don't overstep your position here. Or I'll eat you," Ilea warned.*

*"You'll find it impossible to digest me," Meadow said.*

*"Oh just you wait...," Ilea said, squinting her eyes.*