

Chapter 372 Contact

Ilea led Walter through the tunnels, the markings on the walls leading her.

Maro had sneaked in behind them, avoiding the guards that were still very much busy with dismantling traps and searching through already looted rooms and halls.

They would find some things left behind by her.

“We could have gotten the others too.” Ilea said, glancing towards Walter.

“I trust you Ilea, it scares me but I do. And still, I won’t let Lucia and the others just meet a bunch of elves. They were our enemy for hundreds of years, as long as I can remember. Always a looming threat and never did they step up to try and talk.” He dismissed the idea.

“To be fair, you don’t know if they never did. Who in their right mind would try and side with elves?” Maro asked and twirled his finger near his temple.

“Smugglers, apparently.” Ilea replied, looking at him as she shrugged and smiled.

“Or you, a fighting obsessed mad woman who released a thousand year old necromancer from his prison and crypt.” Maro said.

“You two are stressing me out.” Walter said. “It was enough of a thrill to be involved in the mission earlier. This is magnitudes beyond. We are about to meet elves.” He said the last sentence in a quieter tone, as if surprised by it himself.

“We are.” Ilea said. “And I need to get some resistance training in too. They have insane magic power.”

Walter stopped suddenly. “If Riverwatch find out about this, we’re done.”

“I’m still somewhere around. Probably.” Maro said. “Let them try.” He smirked.

Ilea turned around. “I’ll write a letter, signed with my mana signature. Addressed to Alistair. And I will inform Claire of course. I don’t want her to organize the trading yet because she’s too far away and not the best person for the job. Not yet, not now.”

Walter thought it over and nodded after a while. “It’s a big risk.”

“Like summoning a demon into your halls?” Ilea asked. “Or taking one in? Or not attacking the weird healer that joined you suddenly?”

He just puffed air out of his nose and walked past her. “You’ve made your point. Let’s meet the fucking elves.”

Ilea grinned. “That’s what I want to hear.”

Maro gestured for her to go. “After you.”

“Scared?” She asked.

“A little, might pee myself.” He replied in a dry tone.

Ilea rolled her eyes but was quite amused by his antics. She was glad the necromancer had come as well, feeling a little less ridiculous about the idea thanks to his jokes.

They crossed the rest of the distance, running most of the way. The speck of light became visible again after a while, Ilea motioning for the others to slow down.

“We’re nearly there. I don’t want to surprise them.” She said and took the lead.

Isalthar and his group was waiting already, floating near the entrance with their various flying magic.

Feyrair of course was sporting dark red wings. He smirked when she came into the open. “Took you long enough. Come, let’s fight!”

“Please. A moment.” Isalthar said.

Ilea couldn’t tell if it was a command. The wording didn’t suggest so but Feyrair stood down immediately, his excitement gone. He didn’t even grumble to himself.

Walter and Maro stepped out, the latter actually a little further back.

She lifted an eyebrow at that but didn’t comment. “This is Walter, a dark sorcerer and leader of a small necromancer brotherhood that operates near Riverwatch.” Ilea explained and motioned to the man. “And this is Maro.”

Isalthar nodded to each of them, taking his time to look them over. “I am pleased, to make thy acquaintance.”

“Likewise.” Walter said, glancing over the elves.

Maro just nodded.

“Peculiar. I remember such symbols. Yet I had thought that Rhyvor was gone. Even before my own time.” Isalthar commented, facing Maro.

“Some remnants are still around.” The man commented.

Feyrair smirked. “Another one to fight. Death magic seems like a worthwhile addition to my resistances.” He showed his teeth and hissed.

“He’s like you.” Maro whispered to Ilea, completely aware that everyone could hear him.

“Nice of you to notice.” Ilea said. “I’m less brazen.”

“Really?” Maro asked. “Just because he uses red...,”

“It’s not just that. Maybe he will show you later.” Ilea said with a smirk.

Feyrair smiled back, his eyes gleaming with excitement. His red leathery wings flapped once, not changing his unmoving hover in the slightest.

Isalthar landed near Walter. “It is thee then? The one to provide future trade.”

Walter nodded. “Yes. Riverwatch isn’t keen on us necromancers but we can get goods in and out of the city. A new contract she secured us should make it much easier too.” He explained.

“They’re even less keen on elves so I hope you’re not planning on making a scene.” He added.

“I understand, the horrors my kind has brought upon you. I hold no guilt and yet I hope it may not stand in the way of cooperation.” Isalthar said.

“It’s not like we wouldn’t do the same if we could.” Walter said and chuckled, ending the noise nervously.

“Do not underestimate your kind, sorcerer.” Isalthar said, surprising the group. “The two standing next to you are living proof of your capabilities.”

“Outliers.” Walter replied and shrugged. “Should we discuss the details? The way your red warrior is looking at me is freaking me out.” He said and glanced at Feyrair.

“Your fear is not misplaced.” Feyrair said with a wicked smirk.

“Don’t talk shit dragonboy, It will only make me hit harder.” Ilea said and spread her wings.

Isalthar faced Walter and gestured for them to step aside. “We shall. I appreciate your consideration.” He glanced towards Maro too.

The necromancer shook his head. “I’m mostly here for the fighting.”

Isalthar sighed, neither audible nor visible.

Ilea could tell only through her sphere and the slight change in air pressure in front of his mouth. She chuckled at that and noticed a slight twist of his head. *Perceptive, that one.*

“I am torn.” Ben said. “Hmm.” He apparently decided on Walter and joined the two.

The last elf floated nearby but didn’t seem to be particularly interested in any of them.

A high pitched sound suddenly came from near Isalthar, chunks of rock cut out of the ground before they levitated before him. Again, the air moved and pieces of stone fell down, leaving a table and four chairs that slowly drifted to the floor.

Walter gulped audibly but took a seat nonetheless. “Why do I agree to these things?” He grumbled to himself.

“We intend no harm.” Isalthar reassured the man.

“That’s what they all say. Now, let’s discuss what you need, where we could get it and when you would like to visit.” Walter sighed, getting his pack he had gotten back in their crypt, removing pieces of paper and a pen.

Isalthar focused on the man with an unreadable expression.

“I want one of those pens. Mine is nearly empty.” Ben said immediately, taking a seat. “Also food. Do you have a way to store it freshly?”

“You have more than ten pens.” Isalthar said, confusion apparent in his words.

“Yes but what if they’re all empty suddenly?” Ben asked and shook his head. “Walter, right? I’m Ben. It’s a pleasure to meet you. I hope you understand the importance of this. We have to eat wild beasts if you cannot deliver food to us.” His expression screamed urgency.

“Don’t you love eating people and animals?” Walter asked as he wrote down something. He glanced at Ben. “How many pens?”

“Five... no ten.” Ben said before he looked at Isalthar. “Ok five. We do like eating humans, animals, elves. There is something beautiful about the fresh blood, the still pulsing muscles, the warmth. Variety is the spice of life. I heard a human say this a couple decades ago. A marvelous saying if you ask me. I most certainly agree. I am old, Walter. Older than many a human and trust me, I’ve eaten many things. New flavors and experimental dishes are most welcome. If you lack a storage item, I might lend you one so you can provide fresh ones.”

Walter nodded. “Food is easy enough. Do you plan to trade in gold or wares? Knowledge might be valuable too. Rare spells and classes as well as geography. Perhaps even ways to defend ourselves against the domains.”

“All are reasonable. Simply ask what you wish in return.” Isalthar said.

Ilea stopped listening by then. Walter was in his element already and took it seriously. *We’ll see who sits on that trade throne.* She thought, feeling a little bad that she had pushed this onto him. On the other hand, he might be able to win them as friends as time went on. Having Maro and Isalthar defend the Vultures would likely make them one of the most powerful human organizations. Mostly human that was.

“You are so easily distracted from what is important.” Feyrair said, glaring at her with a big grin.

“He seems to like you.” Maro commented. “Just take him out on a date first.”

Ilea rolled her eyes, “My Heat resistance needs a couple more levels. Feel like setting me aflame?”

Feyrair grinned. “Only in a fair bout. I will not steep so low as to use my magic for your advantage alone.”

“Fair enough.” Ilea said, ashen wings forming behind her, limbs fanning out as she went into a crouch.

Magic erupted from Feyrair, his form shifting before he stood there, once again in his dragon like form.

Maro hovered up, stunned as he looked on with a shocked expression. “Wonderful.” He finally got out, the word whispered.

The dragon like being gave him a look before it once again focused on Ilea.

Come on then. She thought and advanced, running at the beast and tanking the white flames that washed over her a moment later. She blinked back and simply let the elf do his thing.

Healing and ashen armor took care of the damage, the fires not quite enough to get past her resistances coupled with her regeneration. Her third tier Sentinel Core transformed a big chunk of the attack into mana she could straight up invest back into healing.

The only thing going down through this was Feyrair’s mana. With how massive and powerful the swaths of flames were, it was likely that the spell’s cost wasn’t negligible.

Ilea’s bone armor occasionally took a tiny bit of damage but even with the slow recovery speed, she decided to keep it on. The armor repaired itself in the downtime, only sustaining minor singeing in the first place.

“You are not attacking...,” Feyrair complained, stepping sideways as his dragon head kept its focus on her, red reptile like eyes squinting at her as he puffed out white flames from his nostrils.

“Seems like I’m winning so far. Is that what you do usually? Just wait and burn your enemies from a distance? I had expected more to be honest.” Ilea taunted, looking at her hand that she held up in front of her face, as if to check her nails below the bone and ash armor.

A low growl came from Feyrair before he chuckled, the sound more akin to a rumbling. “Very well.” He said and vanished, appearing right in front of her, the air displaced and a massive clawed hand slamming into her.

Eight ashen limbs in addition to the left wing helped block the attack, Ilea more prepared for the sheer force of the strike and the following white hot cutting and melting properties of his massive claws.

She crouched and was moved sideways, the talons ripping through her ash, stopping only on her armor, right before they touched bone.

Ilea’s response came quickly, as the other eight limbs slashed into various parts of Feyrair’s huge body. Wings, eyes and his jaw were primarily aimed at but his quick movements avoided any major damage.

He could however not avoid Storm of Cinders, flowing into him as well as her reversed healing, sending destructive mana into his connected talons.

The white fire that burned on them and pushed against the constantly reforming and healing ash provided a constant flow of mana for the healer to use.

She noted that the exchange was in her favor, grinning as she held up her arm to the incoming second arm slamming down on her.

The blow made the ground crack in various places under her ash covered armored bone boots.

Ilea held the position, feeling the heat of the fires burning, right before she felt the next attack coming. Another cone of flames, enveloping her entirely as it melted away the very stone she stood on, even partially damaging the thick leathery skin on the dragon’s arms.

Smoke rose as he disengaged and disappeared, growling once more as the scorch marks on his long dark red arms cleared up.

She too was smoking, the combined effort enough to get to her bone armor where his talons had pushed down. The armor stopped him however and the cracks and blackened parts were already repairing itself before ash covered them once more.

He roared, white fire surging around his whole body, his red eyes slowly turning white as he glared at her.

The heat around his form increased ten fold, Ilea instinctively taking a step back. Her own fire spell was charging up within her chest but little time has passed so far in their brief exchange of blows.

She waited, his form tensing up as swaths of fire scorched the ground below his palms. Molten rock was left where he had stood, his form appearing next to her.

Ilea had followed the movement, not teleportation but a burst of speed similar to what Dale could do. Enough to surprise her, had it not been for her Azarinth Fighting perception.

The blow landed, sending Ilea skidding to the side. She was prepared to take it, her once more damaged ashen wing reforming as she came to a stop and looked his way.

His claw had cut deep, past her armors and into her skin. The familiar feeling of Mana Drain still lingered as the wounds closed, halfway to the bone on both her arm and torso.

Ilea grinned, watching him move once more. Her ash had reformed already but her bone armor was heavily damaged still.

The heat of his presence made the air singe, each touch to the ground melted a chunk of stone.

Again, Ilea decided not to dodge, instead forming more ash to help soften the blows. Ashen limbs slashed out at him, delivering further blows.

Her own arms moved to block the claws coming from both sides, cutting into her and past her defenses. She felt mana return to her, still topped off thanks to her opponent's constant contributions.

The talons once more stopped before they reached her own bones, tearing flesh and burning it, leaving nasty wounds behind that would likely incapacitate anybody without a high level of Pain Tolerance.

Ilea felt it and ground her teeth, her skill bonuses and high level of Pain Tolerance still leaving her nearly stunned by the intense feeling.

She pushed through, her Heart of Cinder releasing at the same time as she forced her arms to the side. The added sphere of fire and heat helped her get free of his grasp.

Immediately, the damage to her body healed and the pain subsided, her mind focused and ready. Ash once more covered her, the bracers of her bone armor now damaged too.

Feyrair staggered back from the blow, the heat slowly subsiding as the white flames stopped flaring up. His eyes turned red again, blood running down his maw.

Several wounds showed on and near his wings as well as small cuts on his thick armored body. He heaved and nearly collapsed where he stood, a look of defiance in his eyes. Defiance and joy.

"You... survived it." He said and turned back into an elf.

Feyrair went to one knee, several wounds on his body showing. He still heaved, every breath a difficult undertaking.

"Need a heal?" Ilea asked with a smile as she appeared next to him.

"I... do." He said, each word strained and with a long pause in between.

An ashen limb extended, the heavy damage to his body healing thanks to her skill. "You're in better shape than I thought." Ilea commented, seeing his anatomy thanks to her recovery magic.

"The last... form I used." He said, his voice already sounding relieved. "It has ramifications beyond healing."

"So you can't fight anymore?" Ilea asked, disappointment in her voice.

"Not at that power. Nor for a day at least, perhaps longer." He looked up to her with a little shame in his eyes. "But I can use powerful fire spells if you want to level your resistance."

"Sure, that sounds great." Ilea replied and glanced at Maro. "You can continue to use Death Magic on me too."

“Me as well... if you could heal the decay?” Feyrair asked as he glanced first towards Maro and then Ilea.

Maro floated down next to them. “Impressive burst of power. You were nearly three times as fast.”

Feyrair nodded. “If she didn’t have Mana and Health Drain resistances, which I assume you do?” He sighed when he saw her nod. “It would have lasted much longer. The way it stands, this one really covers all my strengths with countering abilities.”

The necromancer chuckled. “I can’t even damage her anymore so you have that on me. You’re below level three hundred. May I ask how something like that is possible? I had assume me and Ilea were outliers already.”

“You may.” Feyrair said and got up from his half kneeling position. “Would you like me to use fire magic on you as well?”

“Thanks, but no. Even with Pain tolerance, I’d rather not see my skin melting.” Maro said.

The elf looked at him then, his eyes squinting before he hissed. “Very well. As to my power, I suppose it is merely a matter of class rarity and skill levels. I have switched classes over the centuries, giving me some unique modifiers.”