

Chapter 502 Destroyers

“I guess your name isn’t exactly an exaggeration,” Ilea said. She was probably talking to a walking war crime. Then again, she had some experience in the area too.

“I’ve mellowed out over the centuries,” he admitted.

“Your level is quite pathetic for that age,” Ilea said with a smile.

“Killing humans doesn’t exactly get you to three hundred. I was quite obsessed with killing them but it seems history has already moved on,” he said.

“I admit that I haven’t studied a lot of history,” Ilea said, wondering just who this person would compare to on Earth. Churchill? Stalin? Or just an unknown ruler from a time long past? Perhaps not even a ruler. Just a man obsessed with war and killing. On Earth, one had to be a ruler or high ranking officer to have such a large scale effect on people. Here? A high level was enough.

Hector chuckled. “And yet historians already write about you,” he said.

“Good or bad, what do you think?” she asked, not having delved too deep into the thought so far.

“Life isn’t black and white. As always, it depends on which historians you ask,” he said.

“The Shadow who slaughtered half an army, left dozens of husbands and wives without their lovers, children without their parents. The one who destroyed a future for their people. Or the Savior of Riverwatch, instead protecting the lives of thousands,” he said.

“If we go further, we could talk about demons too. Or the monsters we’re killing here. Who knows if they have writing but perhaps they have stories of their own,” Hector said.

“You’ve given this a lot of thought,” Ilea said.

“You would too, with the things I’ve done. I did try to fix some of it, tried to pay reparations. It didn’t go well. The grief of a mother is not something that can ever be forgotten or paid off. Not even my death would bring their children back,” he said.

“What a bummer,” Ilea said.

Hector glanced her way before he started laughing. “I’ll have centuries yet to mull it over. Good that there are whores and monsters,” he said and bowed lightly.

“Are you implying I’m a whore?” Ilea asked with a light smirk. She could see that this man wasn’t a saint. Quite the opposite. But he had not killed her children, had not taken her lands. Ilea wouldn’t pretend that she was free of fault and so far his actions had proven either neutral or even good. Nor was she a paladin of justice, her whole life dedicated to a cause.

He shrugged. “Hey, nothing wrong with taking gold for sex. Your body is yours to do with what you want. However you’re definitely a monster. Just as much as me.”

“We can agree on that,” Ilea said.

“Well maybe not exactly as much,” he said, gesturing slightly towards Neely with a nod.

The black eel had finally crushed the beetle, working through the armor with her teeth and pure muscle.

“Is she eating the rock?” she asked.

“Why not?” Hector asked.

“She’s just going to puke it up again later. I’ve stopped trying to stop her,” he said.

“Hmm,” Ilea mused. “Where were those vaults?”

Her mana intrusion worked through the embedded enchantments, the defenses taking more hits than some level six hundred creatures.

When it came to their wealth, humans really didn’t shy away from expenses.

“Can Nelly move so far away from you?” Ilea asked as they entered the vault.

They teleported around, storing everything with quick and practiced ease as the acid traps filled the room. There were always traps. If someone managed to break in, the wealth would rather be destroyed than surrendered.

“No, she returned to a pocket dimension connected to me,” Hector said, the acid mixing with his water.

Ilea was knee deep in the liquid as she looked at an enchanted ring in her hand, storing it with everything else. “Interesting. And she can just move back into it?”

“Takes considerable mana on my part to move her, both in and out,” he said. “Speaking of considerable mana, your abilities really suit raids well. Even I would have difficulties breaking into this place.”

“Guess I’m a natural,” Ilea said, ignoring the acid that was up to her chest by now. It hardly mattered to her armor.

“You don’t understand... I doubt there’s more than five to ten people who could pull this off, let alone be able to withstand the countermeasures so easily. Are you interested in working together from time to time?” Hector asked.

Mana intrusion continued to be a major asset. “To raid other countries? I think I’m perfectly capable of starting wars myself, thank you,” she said.

“I mean ancient ruins, maybe cities of other species who are at odds with humanity. The Lily isn’t exactly fond of Elves and Dwarfs,” he said. “I guess I can just contact you if I find something hard to break into.”

“You talk like I’m part of them,” Ilea said. “I don’t exactly give a shit if you’re human or not, as long as you’re not an asshole.”

They left the self destructing vault, exiting into the large and luxurious hall that few people would’ve ever set foot in.

“I doubt you’re going to refuse the offer. Even I didn’t. If I might give you one piece of advice, don’t mention the species thing to the others. Even Helena might take issue with that. They *actually* think humans are in some way superior. Don’t ask me how the fuck they came to that conclusion,” he said.

“It’s because they’re human themselves,” Ilea said as if it was the most obvious thing.

“But squids have so many arms, and they can survive under water for much longer...,” Hector murmured.

“You want to be a squid?” Ilea asked.

“I’d be open to the idea. At this point however, I’m so used to this body and the Classes I have,” he explained.

“You talk like there’s an actual possibility,” Ilea said as they finally exited the building, the street ahead half flooded with corpses and water.

Hector glanced at her. “There have been many attempts. Elves, Dragons, wolves, many forms seem more desirable than being human. To some. I agree that actually being a Dragon would be quite something, though the likely required mana density must be annoying. Even Elves can’t exactly enter a dungeon without issue,” he said.

He knows about that. Interesting.

“However it’s different being born human and being born a wolf. Turning from one to the other is bound to be messy and imperfect,” he said.

“Is that how Werewolves came to be?” Ilea asked.

“How would I know? They’ve been around for millennia. Could have been a botched transformation experiment on low level people or wolves, a fusing ritual, or maybe just the result of some rather savage sexual desires.”

Ilea chuckled. “Or you know, they could just be monsters born of mana.”

“Or that. That’s always an option. I mean mana is always involved anyway,” he said.

“You have more vaults?” she asked.

“A few, yes. We can clear the districts leading up to them if you don’t feel like a sentimental child anymore,” the man said.

“I almost forgot you’re a massive piece of shit,” Ilea said.

“It’s important to remind people, otherwise they might expect things like decency and mercy,” Hector said.

“What a horrible fate that would be,” Ilea said.

“We’ll talk about that again in fifty years, oh benevolent and holy Lilith,” he said.

“You’re just a grumpy old man, Hector. Maybe you should pick up a book written in the last century from time to time. You might learn a few things.”

“I don’t like reading,” he said.

“Really? I’m surprised. You did strike me as a highly educated man,” Ilea said.

He shot a beam of water her way that harmlessly pushed into her ash.

“And I thought the other members were easily irritated,” she said.

“Oh I’m not irritated. I haven’t been irritated for a long time. It’s in the interest of humanity as a whole to keep it that way,” he said.

“And you’re humble too. Maybe I *should* have a nice dinner with you,” she said.

“We could invade a few palaces together, just to see how they react when we sit on their thrones,” he suggested.

Ilea snickered. She wouldn't cause that much trouble for Claire but the idea did sound quite fun.

“I thought people would learn at some point but they still always attack me. It's like people above level two hundred have no sense of self preservation,” he mused.

“They should be the ones with the highest sense of it,” Ilea said.

“Adventurers, Shadows, Pirates, yes. They live in danger. I'm not talking about them. A noble who hasn't seen a threat to his life in a decade can grow ceaselessly confident,” Hector said and shook his head.

Ilea could see it of course. Experiences and memories got muddled with time.

She assumed the nobles had access to good Classes and magic too, and perhaps even specific dungeons where they could easily level themselves. It was definitely enough power to keep a comfortable position in a government.

The two of them fought for another few hours, occasionally stopping to raid a vault or noble House for treasure. The latter usually had little left, probably powerful enough to survive the blood magic or even having left beforehand. They wouldn't leave behind their entire wealth in a doomed city after all.

She got a few hundred more gold pieces out of it and several crates worth of treasures. She would have to go through it all at some point but for now she just stored it.

Ilea was fighting one of the many Rock Beetles that had invaded the city, its defenses finally cracking after Storm of Cinders and Flare of Creation had burned away its regeneration and powerful carapace.

Their offensive capabilities were minor, the earth magic easily dodged, even in the dense city where whole houses were used to try and crush her.

Hector showed up while she was inspecting the remaining rock armor.

“I found something curious,” he said.

“Another vault?” Ilea asked, twirling a piece of black rock in her hand.

“A survivor,” he said.

“Oh really? In the lower levels?”

“No, they're in one of the towers,” Hector said.

Ilea glanced at him. “You explored the towers without me?”

He rolled his eyes. “No. I stuck to the lower levels like you suggested. They were throwing explosive fireballs down. I wouldn't have noticed otherwise.”

“That IS interesting,” Ilea said. “You want to go talk?”

He shrugged. “Would be a break in the monotonous fighting.”

It's been nearly a day, Ilea thought and sighed. The city wasn't just wide spanning but many layered too, densely built and populated.

"Sure, let's see who this is," she said.

Hector smiled at that, apparently happy with a change too.

Ilea chucked away the piece of rock and joined him. "Let's fight up the tower at least," she said as he pointed her towards one of the two dozen large structures.

They landed a minute later, Ilea no longer feeling any major urgency to clear out the city as quickly as they could. It just wasn't feasible. She also disliked Hector's suggestion to just collapse and flood everything.

Nara's population may be gone but the city itself still held incredible infrastructure. With an infusion of gold and people, it could be repaired. Its walls were standing even now, with thousands of level three to five hundred creatures inside.

Ilea also doubted if his way would actually be more efficient mana wise. She had an inkling that he was just annoyed about her being more efficient in the close quarters and narrow streets.

The tower was connected to dozens of buildings on the lower levels, its base however was firmly dug into the ground, reaching both the highest and the deepest compared to everything around it.

Two massive gates with detailed carvings lay half open at the top of a broad set of stone stairs. Something had splintered the wood and broken in. Or out.

Ilea could spot the enchantments etched into the door, any effect they might have had gone.

Both teleported inside, Ilea sending a few dozen small ashen spheres at the cursed humans after she had confirmed their status. She wondered if a survivor could perhaps hide in their midst by just acting like they did. Aggressive, frenzied, frothing, and instinctive.

The answer was probably no.

Hector looked around as their heads and chests exploded, shredded by ashen projectiles. Anything that got close was pierced by ashen limbs.

"Element creation is a marvelous thing, isn't it?" he commented.

"My ash is more tolerable than popping people like balloons," she said.

"What's a balloon?" he asked.

"It's a ball you fill with a gas that's lighter than air," she tried to explain.

"So it floats," he said and nodded. "I believe there were attempts once to have them carry people."

Ilea moved on, clearing out a few smaller rooms before she used Monster Hunter.

Hector appeared next to her.

"Were they any good?" she asked as the first monsters rushed out of the various open doors and hallways ahead.

"No idea. I didn't think much of the idea. Still don't. Your comparison to my magic doesn't lead a lot of credibility to it. Have you looked into it?" he asked.

"Balloons? No. I agree with your assessment. I think teleportation is a much more viable way of transportation," she said.

“Or ships,” he said, a torrent of pressurized water slicing through fifty approaching creatures.

Ilea nodded. The increased storage space with ships could still be more efficient, depending on how much mana a teleporter actually needed.

The platforms the Taleen used weren't exactly massive. Even if they could be used non stop, a large vessel back on Earth might still come out on top for reasonable distances.

She still assumed that the human plains would benefit greatly from a teleportation network. The coast was long but most large cities lay far into the land.

Even she needed several hours to travel between Virilya and Ravenhall, and her current speed was close to what some fighter jets could manage according to her previous Core skill point achievement. Teleportation would be beneficial even if they had technology from Earth.

They found the main stairwell and continued their battle. Anti teleportation enchantments prevented them from simply going up that way. None of them managed to prevent Displacement but the main reason they were even here was to clear out the city of monsters.

“The Space is distorted over there,” Ilea said, looking out through a sizable hole in the wall towards a group of towers quite close to each other.

“The ritual site?” he asked.

“Probably,” Ilea confirmed.

They had fought up the tower for the last twenty minutes, reaching the thirtieth floor.

Hector was sure the survivor had been close to this level. One of the highest in this particular tower.

Ilea's sphere was often cut off, the nobles who had occupied this place either particularly rich or paranoid. With everything she had known about Baralia, it was probably both.

“You want to go now?” he asked.

“Let's find this survivor fir-” Ilea said, seeing a small ball of fire rush down from somewhere above.

“There they are,” Hector said and chuckled. “I think that was two above?”

Ilea nodded, the two of them continuing onward.

The stairwell to the thirty first floor was blocked with rubble, the teleportation enchantments however still in place.

Ilea displaced both herself and Hector inside, finding the latter quite challenging. She wondered if it was because of his level or the enchantments.

“I tried to resist,” he said, seeing her questioning look.

“Ah, I see,” Ilea said.

“We should actually take a break soon, to train resistances for each other's magic. My ash res is in the second tier but maybe you can break it through to the third,” he mused.

“We've got company,” she said, seeing the man rushing down towards them. He must have sensed them just as she had seen him after appearing behind the barricade.

“Oh I know,” Hector said. “Are you okay with a trade there?”

“Resistances you mean. You’re getting two and I only get water,” she said, quirking up her eyebrows.

“You get to spend time with me, isn’t that prize enough?” he asked with a charming smile.

“Ah yes, now that you mention it. You have to pay for that too,” Ilea replied.

The pirate rolled his eyes. “How about fifty pieces of gold?”

“A hundred, Space Magic is quite rare,” she said.

“I was already being generous. You’re filthy rich if you think fifty gold is worth some resistance training,” he said. “Sixty.”

“Seventy five,” Ilea said.

“Deal,” Hector said and summoned the coins within a blob of floating water.

Ilea surrounded it with ash and stored everything as soon as the water changed back into mana.

“You’re filthy rich too,” she said.

Hector just shrugged. “I’ve looted more gold today than I’ve made in the last year. It’s possible I’m feeling a little generous.”

“Or space magic is *really* rare,” Ilea said.

“Doesn’t mean resistance training is worth that much. Most people don’t bother with that,” he said.

“I don’t get that,” Ilea replied.

Hector nodded. “Agreed. It’s so easy after you have Pain Tolerance in the second. I guess some people think themselves humiliated if they get injured... even if it’s paid for and painless.”

“If all you do is sit behind walls, you may not find it very valuable,” Ilea suggested. She herself really didn’t get why not everyone with wealth or a certain amount of power heavily trained their resistances. They could even form groups with one or two healers and just trade with each other, not paying a single piece of copper.

The Sentinels would benefit greatly from that.