

## Chapter 630 Broadening Horizons

Ilea couldn't help but giggle at the utter and pure discomfort she saw in the young woman standing before her. *Older than me probably*, she thought with a smirk, most of her face covered by ashen armor, just her mouth revealed for her to eat.

Many of the Sentinels knew how she looked but she liked that there was some mystery around her person. If only to have some privacy when exploring new places and visiting cities. Now that some Sentinels were already traveling the lands, she didn't want too many to spread information about her. Especially not to bards.

"What are you?" the woman said after she had gathered her courage.

*I am, the destroyer, the ashen knight of the Meadow*, Ilea thought, giggling even more. *I bet those Classes were actually the best available. Ah but fuck using a sword. What am I? Some basic ass hero?*

"I'm Lilith. One of the founders of the Medic Sentinel Corps. And who are you?" she said, the woman even more wary by now. Ilea noted that she had stepped between her and the other woman. *Protective, are we?*

"That is who you claim to be. I'm asking you if you're one of us," the woman said.

"One of you? What do you mean?" Ilea asked in turn.

"Human, of flesh and blood," the Sentinel said.

### **[Battle Healer – lvl 80]**

Ilea revealed her right forearm, an ashen limb whipping out from her back before it dug into her skin, pushing until blood flowed from her skin, dripping to the stone floor. "I'm as human as you and her."

The woman gulped.

"Pain Tolerance in the second tier allows you to ignore pain. I assume you learned that already," Ilea said, her limb receding before both the wound healed and ash formed on her arm again.

"We have. Why does it say that you're a three mark? Are you using an illusion?" the woman asked.

More of the Sentinels were joining by now, nearly twenty now in the hall.

*Trian wasn't kidding. The interest is huge... makes sense with the good reputation and powerful classes. Just hope he's not skimming on the background checks.*

She stood up stored the empty bowl. "I told you my name. Isn't it customary among humans to share their own?" she asked, not able to stop herself from channeling her inner Meadow knight just a little bit.

"Among... hu...," the woman said and took a step back.

"I'm Mila," the other one said, her black hair and eyes rather cute, especially with the freckles on her face. She was rather small and quite thin but nothing too out of the ordinary.

“Nice to meet you, Mila,” Ilea said, ignoring the other woman for now. “Where are you from?”

Mila glanced at her tense companion before she clasped her hand, eyes still focused on Ilea. “From Baralia. I was a slave there and fled south when the empire attacked.”

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Phoebe saw the change in the monster’s eyes. Something akin to empathy, sadness. How could a monster like that feel? *It’s feeding on our emotion... that must be it... our very humanity. An Ash Elemental that will consume everything.*

She wanted to teleport away but Mila’s hand prevented it. Turning her back would make the creature eat them both immediately. *How do they not see it?* she thought, looking around herself in disbelief.

The other Sentinels were joining them now, walking closer to the ashen monster who claimed to be human. *Are they not seeing the three marks? What is wrong with everyone?!*

“I’m glad you made it to Ravenhall. And to the Sentinels. I’m sure you will find a home here. If anything is bothering you, let me or Trian know, okay?” the monster spoke, already infecting Mila with her poisonous words.

“Thank you. I’m happy to be here,” Mila said and bowed her head.

Lilith appeared in front of the woman, Phoebe immediately punching her with all her auras and spells active, her strike sending destructive healing into the ash creature.

The monster didn’t react in the slightest, touching Mila’s chin and pushing it up. “You’re a Sentinel now, Mila. You bow to no one.”

Phoebe remained, if only to protect her friend, her heart beat quickening when the monster turned to look at her.

“You could’ve just asked for a bout if you wanted to test your strength against mine,” it said.

“Run away, Mila,” Phoebe said and teleported away, only to find that her spell didn’t work at all.

The terrible blue eyes sparkled. “It seems this young woman wants to have a bout with Lilith. Anybody else interested? I’m happy to train a little with you all, part of why I’m here are resistances, though I doubt any of you have what it takes to injure me.”

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Ilea grinned, looking at the group of Sentinels, nearly all of them preparing for battle, ashen armors forming around their bodies, a few with other elements instead.

She jumped back and twirled, spreading her arms. "Then come at me, with everything you have."

The group silently charged, spreading out as they formed ranged attacks. They were young, their levels all still below one hundred but it seemed they had learned quite a few things already in their short time with the Sentinels.

*To be fair, I'm sure most of them have trained and fought before joining,* she thought, simply letting the ranged attacks hit her. She formed ash behind her, the material condensing into three clones of her that she quickly imbued with mana. *Break a few bones... in an educative manner. Don't kill anyone.*

The clones rushed out, quickly engaged in hand to hand combat with the enhanced and teleporting ashen battle healers.

Two broke through to attack Ilea directly.

*Now... don't kill them on accident,* she thought, catching a fist with her hand before she squeezed, the ash, flesh, and bone squashed to a meaty pulp, the man stumbling back as he screamed. *Not quite done with his pain tolerance training, I see,* she thought and glanced at the other one. A woman.

She had attacked with a few punches, mana intrusion moving past her ashen defense without much of an impact. The sheer difference in magical prowess was downright astronomical. Ilea smiled, seeing the look in the girl's eyes. Someone who had no idea what they should do.

*I'll help you out,* Ilea thought, stopping her ability to teleport before she quickly advanced, lightly body checking the woman. She watched the Sentinel fly off, bending over before she hit the ground and rolled a few times. The woman twitched and coughed up blood.

She blinked to the girl and checked her quickly. *Twenty broken bones... concussion, lungs crushed, and half her organs. A little more than I planned to do.*

"Think you're fine without help?" Ilea asked, crouching down next to the bleeding girl.

She spat blood onto the ground. "I... m... fine."

"Great work," Ilea said and lightly patted her head, checking again just to make sure she wasn't making shit up. *Their healing isn't bad.*

When she stood up again, she saw around fifteen Sentinels on the ground, bleeding and broken.

*Whoops*

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Phoebe teleported through the halls, tears in her eyes as she called out for help.

“What is it?” Trian asked, the man wearing his armor and helmet, having appeared in front of her.

Sidney and Aki rushed towards them from down the hall. “Situation?” the former asked.

“Li... Lilith... she’s killing... the students...,” Phoebe got out, focusing as much as she could, the terror still deep within her heart. The monster had summoned ashen copies of herself, the creatures slaughtering her fellow Sentinels.

Sidney opened her mouth but Trian held up a hand. “Come, let’s see what’s going on,” he said and whispered to Phoebe. “Think you can come back with us?”

She brushed away the tears and looked up. “Mila refused to come. We have to go now.”

The man touched her shoulder, the group teleporting towards the training hall together, Aki running after them.

Phoebe noticed that he didn’t seem tense at all, Sidney even with a smile on her face, the one she usually had when she beat up the students. *We’re safe now. You won’t die, Mila.*

Trian walked into the hall, looking around before he sighed.

A few of the Sentinels were still moving, all of them with broken bones, some even missing limbs entirely.

“I said play with them, don’t fucking slaughter them,” the ash monster spoke, looking at the group of ash copies.

Phoebe appeared next to Mila, checking her with her healing magic. *She’s alive!* she sighed, glaring at the monster.

“Ilea, is this how you greet new students?” Trian asked, his arms crossed as he walked towards the creature.

*Ilea? What is he doing...*

“Don’t engage her!” Phoebe shouted, eliciting a giggle from Sidney.

“I’m sorry,” the warrior said when Trian glared at her. She left the hall with a hand covering her mouth. “Holy shit...,”

Aki rushed in as well, seeing the slaughter.

“They’re fine. First ones had it much worse,” the monster spoke, dismissing her copies.

One of them seemed to look towards Phoebe before it vanished, sending a shiver down her spine.

“Yeah, they had your mental healing. You could’ve at least checked them, some seem to be bleeding out,” Trian said, crouching down next to one of the students.

“Didn’t know you had turned into a healer,” the ash being said before she sighed. “Alright, alright. I hope you’re not being too soft on them, Trian. You know what’s waiting for them out there.”

Phoebe had managed to stop the bleeding, some of the internal damage quite complex to heal however. She felt an overwhelming power expand suddenly, filling her with warmth. Her mind calmed, her breathing slowing. She watched as her friend’s bones mended, the bleeding stopped immediately. A glance to another Sentinel showed his arm reforming in seconds.

“His treatment is important,” Aki said. “Don’t worry, Lilith, the combat instructors don’t share his father complex.”

“I don’t have a father complex,” Trian said as he looked at the Sentinels.

“Whoa, that was insane,” one of them murmured.

“I was dead before I could make a move,” another one said before they both laughed.

“They wanted a bout, so I took them on,” the ash being said.

*Could it... actually be? Phoebe thought. No... no I couldn't have... gotten the Headmaster involved for no reason... screaming for help...*, she was glad her ashen armor covered her surely beet red face.

Mila sat up and looked around. She giggled. “Now that’s what I expected! Did you see that Phoeb?”

“I... did,” Phoebe said, her eyes firmly locked onto the ground.

“You know how dangerous it is to train with humans at that level, especially when there are this many. I do hope you extensively tested those copies before sending them against our students,” Trian said, stepping closer to the being that may or may not have been Lilith.

“You’re not seriously comparing Sentinels to normal humans, are you? I kept an eye on everyone’s health, don’t worry too much. Though that girl over there did nearly die,” the woman said, pointing at one of the Sentinels.

The girl jumped from side to side, punching the air a few times. “Good as new. And I was nowhere near dying!”

“No bouts against more than one of the students from now on,” Trian said.

Lilith sighed, rolling her eyes. “Even if they’re above two hundred?”

“Especially then. Do you have any idea how many people I have to turn down because they think you’re some kind of deity? Don’t make it worse,” the Headmaster said.

“Yeah, yeah. Hard to believe though. I’m obviously just human, right everyone?” Lilith asked.

The Sentinels looked at each other.

“Of course. You’re just insanely strong, is all,” one of them said.

“Yeah, remember when we watched Gael fight? Didn’t seem human either,” another one said and laughed.

*They can't be serious. After what they just saw?*

Phoebe felt confirmed in her belief when she heard Trian’s sigh.

“Just... yeah, no more group fights, alright?” he asked.

Lilith gave him a thumbs up. “Sure,” she said with a grin.

“And maybe hide your status. I know you can,” he added.

“How did you know?!” Lilith asked.

He pointed at her. "Now I know. So please do," he said and rubbed his brow. "This alone will lead to a hundred more applications, I can already hear the stories," he added and looked at the Sentinels. "Please refrain from talking to outsiders about what you saw here. I have enough work as it is."

*I'm sure that will stop them*, Phoebe thought. She could tell that he knew that just as well when he glanced her way.

"I'll be in my office if you need me," said one of the most powerful humans in Ravenhall, leaving the training hall like a defeated father who failed to reign in his rebellious child.

"Lady Lilith, may we see the ashen warriors again?" one of the Sentinels asked.

Lilith laughed. "Of course!"

*Fuck, she really is a child*, Phoebe thought, looking at the woman when she suddenly glanced her way. *Adult. Powerful, all knowing, Lilith, praised be her name.*

"She's pretty amazing, isn't she?" Mila asked, grabbing her hand again.

"You know you don't have to hold me," Phoebe said.

"You were scared. So I held you," Mila answered, not caring for any weird or judging looks from the others.

Phoebe realized that there were none however, all the Sentinels either talking to each other or watching Lilith with their own thoughts and opinions. Now that she had calmed down a little, she noted that a few seemed reserved as well, likely not sure what to make of the legendary founder.

"I have to speak to her," Phoebe said, trying to take her hand back.

Mila didn't let go. "I'm not leaving you alone."

"You want to come with me? Holding hands?" Phoebe asked.

The woman nodded with a bright smile.

Phoebe felt her heart skip a beat, clearing her throat before she walked over to Lilith, pushing past a few Sentinels.

"It's a later stage addition to my ash creation spell. I'm sure some of you will get something similar in time. I told them to break a few bones but not to kill anyone," Lilith or Ilea explained.

She looked at Phoebe when the two had walked close enough.

"You have a question?" Lilith asked.

"I'm sorry," Phoebe said and bowed her head lightly. "I'm Phoebe. I'm sorry for thinking you a monster."

"Always trust your instincts. When you're not sure about someone or something, it's better to just fuck off and get a clear head, information, or training. I just recently found a Leviathan in the deep ocean... warning to you all, don't go too deep. That thing scared the everliving crap out of me. It's eye was this large," Lilith said, turning around and forming a mist of ash with pupil like features. "Everything told me to run. And so I did," she said and turned back to Phoebe. "You did well, getting help from those you thought capable."

She stepped closer and whispered in her ear. "But it wouldn't have made a difference."

Phoebe felt the hairs on her back stand up, unsure how to take the comment when the woman started laughing.

“You’re evil,” Mila said, squeezing Phoebe’s hand.

“You’re a good team,” Lilith said before she answered a few other questions, the Sentinels speaking over each other to get anything out of her, be it about their magic, her magic, monsters, the songs, or anything else.

Phoebe came to the conclusion that Lilith, or likely Ilea, was really just a human. And she learned that humans could become more powerful than she had ever imagined. Beyond even the monsters in stories told to ill mannered children. She really thought she had met humanity’s best before. Scouts of Lys, Shadows of Ravenhall, or the Sentinel faculty. Now she wasn’t so sure anymore. The possibilities had just broadened significantly.

*Some day... I’ll pay you back for this, even if I was the idiot,* she thought with a smirk, listening to the ridiculous fairy tale about a talking tree.

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“Absolutely insatiable,” Ilea sighed, sitting down opposite Trian before she summoned a meal.

“I don’t remember giving you permission to breach my anti teleportation measures,” he said, leaning back as he activated a heating plate to warm some water.

“Get better enchantments,” she said.

He sighed. “Why has fate placed you in my path?”

“Don’t flatter yourself, sparky. I’m the best thing that ever happened to you,” Ilea said with a grin. “But seriously. Sorry for scaring you like that. I really did have it under control, I’m not a lunatic.”

“I’ve hurt people on accident before. You spend a lot of time fighting unimaginable monsters, battling alongside elves and magic trees. Just be aware that the people here are only human,” he said.

She smiled. “I know. You think I’m a monster too now?”

He turned around and added dried leaves into the now boiling tea pot. “Oh absolutely. You’re the most monstrous monster I’ve ever met really. And I’ve fought Mind Weavers.”

Ilea waved him off. “They’re hardly worth a mention. You should’ve seen the Daughters of Sephilon. Now those... those were monsters.”

The man chuckled to himself. “I’m sorry. Dealing with everything... I can get a little tense.”

“No reason to apologize. I’m happy you take it seriously. Though I do hope you get out enough? When’s the last time you fried a monster?” she asked.

Trian sighed, leaning back a little. “Few weeks? Lots of work here.”

“Maybe take a break sometime, let the others take on a few responsibilities, or hire more help. I’m sure there’s plenty of people who would love to work in the administrative part of the Sentinels,” Ilea said.

He nodded slowly. “I’ll set aside some time... and will talk to Claire about it.”

“I don’t know if she’s the best person to consult in regards to a healthy work life balance,” she said.

“You’d be surprised. She’s been taking a day off every week. And one additional day she goes out on training missions with me or the Sentinels. More the latter recently,” he said.

“Hey, that is actually surprising. Maybe she can give me more dancing lessons if she has free time,” she said.

Trian snorted. “Oh no. You misunderstand. Her free time is just as organized as her work. You’ll have to schedule an appointment either way.”