

Chapter 714 Planning

Ilea stood up and voted yes on the last of the four contracts, not a single person against any of the main resolutions.

“And with that, the main contracts are done,” Claire said. The physical papers moved past every council member by the Meadow, each adding a little of their mana as a confirmation.

“The question remains how this will all be announced. The peoples of Hallowfort will welcome the resources and opportunities this will open up, as surely will the Shadows and Sentinels,” Catelyn said. “But what about the rest of humanity?”

“Many will question our loyalties,” Sulivhaan said.

“The collaboration with a settlement of awakened non humans is problematic,” Elana said. “How much can you leverage the name of Lilith in the Plains?”

“Many consider her a hero, or at the very least a very powerful protector,” Dagon said.

“I don’t think Ilea would like more attention to her name,” Claire said and looked her way.

Ilea had thought about it too. “*So, what do you say?*”

“I still believe you’re focusing too much on me. It was you who brought everyone here. You’re the reason they trust me,” the Meadow answered. *“But if you think it the best course of action, I will agree.”*

“Thank you, friend,” Ilea said and stood up. “I agree, it would probably work with the name of Lilith. I know some high ranking generals, powerful hidden orders, and even the rulers of Kroll. But I think there’s a better way. More long term and wide spanning. The Meadow. Backed not only by myself, but by the Shadow’s Hand, the Medic Sentinels, Ravenhall, and Hallowfort. This treaty is not about Lilith, nor about any single settlement. We wouldn’t have the teleportation gates without its help, nor would Hallowfort have the same level of protection. I don’t know where I’ll be in five years, ten, a hundred. But the Meadow is millennia old, it will be here when I’m long forgotten.”

People exchanged glances before Catelyn spoke.

“The reputation of Lilith would still apply,” she said.

“And it’s a signal that this is something far greater than even her,” Sulivhaan said. “I have qualms about trusting the being called Endless Meadow with such a central position but I cannot deny the difference in sheer magical power and knowledge.”

“Would we not invite near religious devotion to a being most humans would never come close to comprehend?” Dagon asked.

“Even I have a cult following somewhere,” Ilea said. “So does Maro,” she added and glanced at Elana. “I don’t think that can be avoided with the kind of beings that are here.”

“A mediator more than a god,” Claire said. “The threat of its power would remain, a warning to all. It would mean our enemies do not only oppose our settlements, Lilith, the Shadows and Sentinels, but the Meadow itself. Once they learn who and what it is, opposition should seem like lunacy at best.”

“There will be many who would call us their enemies nonetheless. Perhaps especially because we chose to see a non human at our center,” Sulivhaan said.

“Then they’ll have to face me. Or change their backwards way of thinking,” Ilea said and glanced his way, his mask looking her way for a long moment.

“Anyone with any political or economic knowledge will understand the benefits,” Catelyn said. “We should not concern ourselves with those that fight us based on misguided hatred or a sense of superiority. The Feynor have fought the many awakened in the north for centuries. Showing courtesy to ignorance is not our way, and it never will be.”

“I agree,” Claire said. “It will open up the potential for other species to join this alliance, more so if they see it’s not only made for humans alone.”

Ilea watched the Ravenhall side of the council, but she couldn’t see more than a little bit of apprehension. Reasonable of course with the low power humanity truly wielded in this world. Something they had to get past if everyone was to thrive. *And something the Lily doesn’t understand. It’ll be interesting to see how they react to this. Surely Helena would consider the greater good. Michael would love to learn more from the Meadow. Velamyr couldn’t deny the importance of teleportation gates.* She hoped her considerations were founded in reality. It could very well mean an all out war if their convictions were deeper rooted than common sense.

“I will conquer all of you. Measly creATURES!” Twin exclaimed.

Ilea patted her head, looking at the large eyes. “Stop joking around, little one.”

A few of the attendees looked confused, some scared.

Apology. The being sent to everyone, including a sort of calm non confrontational emotion.

“We will stand behind the Meadow. More so if it helps with the acceptance towards any and all Awakened,” Catelyn said. She glanced between her council where everyone approved.

“As do the Sentinels,” Trian said.

Claire glanced between Dagon, Elise, and Sulivhaan.

The librarians nodded.

Sulivhaan did as well.

Pressured or convinced? Ilea wasn’t sure. Of course he had to agree in the setting and considering the circumstances. Most humans would likely agree, just to gain the ability to use the teleportation gates. But it would take time and effort to get actual acceptance. People discriminated against those from other countries or cities already, how much worse will it be with non humans? *Or Elves. A bridge to cross in the future.*

I suppose they managed to accept the lizardmen at the very least. And most humans at least know about dwarves.

“Any name suggestions?” Claire asked.

“The Meadow Accords,” Elana said.

Ilea smiled. “I like that one.”

“If none are in opposition, we will declare the official creation of the Meadow Accords, all members to be equal under the laws defined, all matters concerning everyone to be discussed and voted on here, in the domain of the Meadow, should it be reachable,” Claire said, the words written on the stone plates floating near the large table.

“*Let’s hope you don’t get your god status back,*” Ilea sent.

“*You’re supporting me. If anything it will confuse your devout followers,*” the being answered.

“We will prepare the appropriate paperwork,” Claire said. “For those in the Plains.”

“And we for those in the North,” Catelyn added.

“It won’t be enough,” Elana said. “The people need more than a vague political statement. They need a show.”

“What do you suggest?” Ilea asked.

“What else but a tournament? A show of power and wealth, potential glory and gold for the masses, and an opportunity to invite the representatives of potential allies and business partners. Festivities if you will, as excessive as possible,” she explained.

“A good place to showcase the teleportation gates as well,” Claire said. “Without excessive travel, the amount of people to participate should be unprecedented.”

“As would be opportunities for attacks, information gathering, assassinations, declarations of war,” Wayland added.

Trian smiled. “But we have you. The Medic Sentinels will provide security.”

“As will the guard of Hallowfort,” No added.

“I’ll be there too,” Ilea said.

Violence!

“*You want to help? We could use someone to detect runes, spatial tampering, and stuff like that,*” she said. *Though I should be able to feel most of it myself.*

“Would it be acceptable to host this event in Morhill?” Claire asked. “It has a lot of accommodation and we’ve been expanding for the future hub location anyway. Most humans would be uncertain about coming to the north, nor do I think it best to get them close to the Meadow. Not already.”

“Our people would want an opportunity to see the peaceful lands of the south,” Catelyn said. “I think it best, though the security of the event would be guaranteed with the presence of the Meadow.”

“As central as it is, it’s paramount we don’t stake everything on its existence. Our institutions are capable on their own, let’s have everyone know that,” Sulivhaan said.

“Ravenhall will carry the necessary costs. The benefits should more than offset any investments,” Claire said.

“Contracts for every Shadow available will be added too,” Sulivhaan said.

“I offer my services as a defensive measure too,” Aki said. “Though my abilities will be somewhat limited near Morhill.”

“More than enough to deal with anyone who would interfere,” Ilea said.

“I c... can help too,” Owl said.

Ilea glanced at her. “We’ll need some kind of disguise for you or people will freak out. Maybe a very large coat and a hat?”

“If you think that is enough?” Owl asked.

“It would be best to have Owl on standby,” Trian said. “In case anything comes up that would require a four mark Lich to interfere. Though as Ilea said, I doubt this would happen. We arguably have enough power present to oppose the armies of all the Plains.”

“Civilian casualties is what we want to prevent. Our enemies will want to sow chaos and mistrust,” Wayland said. “Lilith has proven to be virtually immortal. They will not strike at her, or any of the leaders.”

“Get the Pit involved then,” Ilea said. “They’ve been experts at defending their city against high level threats. They’re security experts if I’ve ever seen any,” she looked towards Bralin, the dwarf watching with Goliath from a distance.

“Perhaps it’s best to get more parties involved first, I agree,” Claire said. “Riverwatch is already deeply connected to us. If we can involve their guard, most people wouldn’t question the integrity of a Dark One guard, Aki, or the Sentinels. The preparations will take months anyway. If all are in favor, I will initiate contact with the Pit and Riverwatch, for their representatives to meet here and discuss their integration into the Accords.”

“Add Stormbreach and maybe even Yinnahall to that,” Ilea said. “And we can hire Healers from the Corinth and Balance Orders.”

“Are we not stretching ourselves too thin?” Dagon asked.

“No. You’re right but with teleportation networks, the distance becomes irrelevant. Even defenses can be built up quickly if materials and people can be moved near instantly. We will have to move around a lot to get everything set up,” Sulivhaan said.

“I’m pretty quick,” Ilea mused. “And I’m sure the leaders of those places wouldn’t be opposed to a gate near their settlements that would lead to Morhill, or even near Ravenhall. I assume there will be more than a single hub?”

“One official one,” Claire said. “But of course there will be hidden gates all around. Only Morhill will have gates inside the walls. It’s a risk but with the adventurer density we expect, and the additional security measures we’ll install, it should be the city best suited to handle an attack.”

“Then we shall start planning everything right now, announcements, plans, security, mercenary contracts, and all related measures. I suggest a rough draft before we meet with our contacts and return here again in two week’s time,” Claire said. She could barely contain the grin on her face.

“All in favor?” Catelyn asked and everyone confirmed.

“Let’s show the world who we are,” Claire said. “Meadow I need a presentation board.”

Ilea sat back and watched the show with a glass of wine. The poison was laughable of course but it tasted nice enough. She still preferred ale. Her tasks in all this would be the errand girl, both because most of the rulers knew her or at least about her, and because of her speed. She would bring Iana and Christopher including the materials for the connecting gates to the relevant cities and help them set everything up while she delivered letters to the people in charge. One of the simplest tasks really in everything that was being discussed.

They had added Bralin to the planning, the dwarf commenting on the extensive map of Morhill and the surrounding landscape presented in a three dimensional stone conjuration floating in mid air. He added his own rock to the Meadow's creation, with comments on choke points, issues, the best places to build arenas and walls.

It became more and more clear to Ilea that most everything they discussed could be provided by the Meadow alone. At a moment's notice even. Barriers, surveillance, teleportation, walls, enchantments. But of course the being couldn't span the whole continent. *Not yet at least*, she thought and squinted towards the tree's location.

The fact didn't really matter however. They had so many potential allies and resources that she had a good feeling about the plans. At least it was unlikely for Audur to show up in the south, more so than here. Ascended and Monarchs they could potentially handle even without the Meadow, or so she hoped. *I really just want to fight them again. Especially that arrogant ass elf. Just one punch in his perfect face to wipe that superior expression off.*

Noro she was just interested to fight again, to see if she could hold her own now, with all the advancements since last time. *I should probably fight some more monsters between now and the tournament. Just to get my skills back on track, enhance the rest of my skills, and get more levels. Iz seems like a good place to start.*

She could feel Feyrair's mark closer now. He had been informed by the Meadow about the happening and waited currently.

"*You wanted some violence, right?*" she asked the Fae on her right shoulder.

Violence?

Y E S

"*Alright then,*" she sent and stood up. A few of the attendees glanced her way but she addressed Claire. "*I'll get some fresh air and training in. Think I'm still needed here? Otherwise I'll come see you once everything is ready.*"

"*Go work your magic,*" the woman replied, an excited look on her face still, stacks of neatly organized documents and books in front of her. "*I'll contact you through the mark.*"

"*Great.*" Ilea sent. "I'll be taking my leave to work on my magic." She expected a few of them to notice but every single attendee waved, nodded, or said their well wishes. Some of the Hallowfort representatives even bowed.

"*And you still imply I'm the main figure in these Accords. I will say this, Ilea, I accept the official name, but personally I will call them Lilith Accords,*" spoke the Meadow.

"*All I really did was sign, but whatever pleases your god brains,*" she answered. Twin had already left her shoulder upon her declaration, Violence holding on while dangling his legs.

"*Whatever keeps your sense of independence satisfied,*" the being retorted. "*To the elf I assume?*"

“Yes. *To the elf*,” she answered before anybody else could ask to join.

Ilea appeared a moment later at the outskirts of the Meadow’s domain, a Fae on her shoulder and black wings spreading behind her.

Feyrair sat on a large boulder, his red hair flowing in the wind much like it would in a shampoo commercial, his reptilian eyes glancing her way upon arrival, a slight smirk lifting the corners of his mouth. “Earlier than expected.”

[Beast Warrior – lvl 472]

“You waited for me? Also what’s with the level, weren’t you at like four thirty a few weeks ago?” Ilea asked.

“I enjoyed the quiet,” he answered. “And yes. The question is more what you’ve been doing in those weeks, barely a difference. Somehow you feel even a little weaker.”

“You’re evading the question. What did you fight? That might be useful for me as well,” Ilea said, tilting her head slightly to the side.

The Elf avoided eye contact as his scale armor formed to cover his face. “No.”

Ilea raised her hands. “No? What do you mean no?”

“I... would like not to talk about it. The... everything... is dead. No benefits left. Let us leave it at that,” he said.

She squinted her eyes at him, unsure what his strange behavior meant. *Is he... embarrassed?*

“Now I’m even more curious,” she said.

The elf shrugged. “That is not my concern. Has the faction meeting concluded to your satisfaction?”

“I’ll get back to this... at some point,” Ilea said. “And yes, it has. We’re already looking to expand on allies and an official announcement is going to happen soon. Teleportation gates and all. We haven’t brought up the Cerithil Hunters yet, Dark Ones alone are going to be difficult to accept for a lot of humans.”

“I understand. And so would the other Hunters. Whenever you deem them ready. I’m sure we could work something out, though I understand if the involved factions would prefer never to cooperate. We are exiles after all,” Feyrair said. “Why do your auras seem weaker?”

“We will work something out. Worst case you can have a base with the Meadow or Sentinels. Much easier to stop humans from attacking you than it is Monarchs,” she said.

Violence, the Baron confirmed.

“I enhanced some of my skills with core points. They get reset to the first level in the third tier. With some enhancements. Just gotta level them again, which is partially why I’m here. Audur is still around, as are the Monarchs,” she said.

“Can’t ever get enough,” the elf said with a smirk. “Well I’m getting closer to the third mark. I’m not going to stop anytime soon. Will the metal mage be joining us? He was promising.”

"I didn't ask," Ilea said. "*Meadow, can you ask Kyrian if he wants to join too? Hunting monsters, exploring a bit, some Taleen stuff maybe. No pressure.*"

"*He expresses gratitude and says it is understandable if you wish to spend some alone time with your Elven friend,*" the Meadow answered.

"*Really? Get him out here,*" she said.

"Hi," Kyrian said, giving her a nod and waving at Feyrair.

"Cursed one," Fey said and nodded back.

"*What was that about alone time?*" she sent to the man.

"*I mean... you two... no?*" the man sent back, already strategically covered in steel armor.

"*Oh no, you're right, I just wanted you to join,*" she said, watching as he froze up in the air. He turned his head slightly and made a weird sound. "*Join in training, because let's be honest, the others couldn't keep up with us.*"

She expected him to remain confused for a few seconds but he was back near instantly.

"We can't exactly keep up... dragonling... congratulations on the growth. Did you find a promising dungeon?" he asked.

"I will not speak of it," Fey answered.

Violence.

"Yes, you're right. We've been standing around for too long. Let's find something to fight. Any suggestions?" Ilea asked.