

Chapter 901 Bloodborne

Ilea drank from the glass and smiled. “We’ve come on the recommendation of Berrick Grainwyld. You are a weaponsmith?”

“Among other things, yes,” Zeriel spoke. “When it comes to presenting the weapons I’ve crafted, I am rather selective of my customers. I hope you understand and do not take offense.”

Ilea sipped from her drink, seeing Erik in her domain, the man walking over to another painting. “Can you lift the illusion?” she said out loud.

“Are you sure?” Erik said, not taking his eyes off the next painting.

“Yes,” Ilea said, feeling the spell wane. Only the part on her. Aki floated nearby, taking everything in.

The vampire’s eye twitched ever so slightly. “Again, I do hope you did not take offense, Dragonslayer.” His voice was calm and even, just like before.

“I didn’t. I just want to see some weapons,” she said.

“Of course,” he said. “Would you like another drink? Your revelation changes my recommendation. Please excuse my lack of perception. You may bring the drink with you.”

“Sure,” Ilea said and watched him summon another round drink glass, this one lined with a dark red metal going through parts of the glass. He summoned a heart the size of his head and held it above the glass, a gleaming knife of silver appearing in his other hand before he delicately cut into the organ. Drops ran along the knife before he made the heart vanish, turning the blade before he let the droplets fall into the glass. He summoned three bottles and poured from each into the glass.

Steam started to rise when the second liquid mixed with the first, the droplets of blood lighting up before the last liquid drowned out the light, a pulse of mana forming from the drink itself. Zeriel closed his eyes and raised his right hand above the drink. He spoke a whispered word infused with magic, another pulse crashing with the one from the drink.

The dark liquid swirled and cleared up in three seconds, no color remaining before a single sphere of red formed in the center of the drink, vein like protrusions growing out that soon connected with the metal bits lain into the glass. “Tear of the Wyvern, Miss Dragonslayer. My own creation. I would value your opinion. Do be careful, just in case. It is hot.”

Ilea grinned, almost wanting to generate some heat to show that the concern was misplaced. But she didn’t plan to break the First Rule of the Courts. Not without good reason.

She held the drink, raising her brows at the heat she felt from the touch. She consciously didn’t absorb any of it. *It doesn’t look hot. It’s not steaming anymore, and the magic has settled too.*

“Fascinating,” she murmured and took a sip.

Heat instantly lit up in her mouth and throat. She could feel the rage of a mighty beast rush through her, could feel the wings on her back, a breath of fire.

She smiled, drinking more. It was hardly comparable to the heat she could summon, let alone dragonfire, but she was impressed by the taste. Almost reminded of her first Classes related to fire, before she even got her ash.

“I like it,” she said.

The vampire nodded. “The last person to try it was a notable Vampire Lord. He reached near death and fell into a frenzy that required the intervention of four other Lords and Ladies to restrain him. I hope it did not disappoint.”

“Not at all. You’re more than a weaponsmith,” Ilea said with a smile.

“The battle of Garlund,” Erik said, standing in front of a painting.

Zeriel turned to look at him, the movement the least refined Ilea had seen so far.

“Not quite how I remember it,” Erik said.

The barkeeper summoned a comb and moved it through his hair in a smooth motion. “My apologies. It is a piece near two thousand years old, the artist, I’m afraid, has perished. I may remove it from the wall, if the artist’s choices are unacceptable for you, sir.”

“No, I like it,” Erik said and laughed.

Zeriel nodded, then appeared near one of the walls, gesturing towards it. “My creations are waiting inside. If you want a tour?”

Ilea joined his side, sipping from her drink. “Now I don’t even wonder what drinking my blood could incite, but what kind of drinks Zeriel could make,” she said, glancing at Erik. “Want to try?”

Erik took the glass and sniffed on it. “Hmm. A red tail.” He drank. “Aaah. I can taste youth. A rare talent, Zeriel Glarkson. It is good to know the tradition of blood infusion has not died out.”

Zeriel nodded. A metallic click resounded before the wall shifted away to reveal a broad room lit by the same dim yellow light, a polished wooden table at the center, its surface empty. Three walls were entirely covered in weapons. Pistols, rifles, cannons, in all possible sizes, some made of metal that looked silver, others brass, some gold, each decorated with delicate patterns, some looking as if they told stories through the metalwork. Many of the pieces reflected the light, some others were entirely black.

Zeriel walked over to the wall and grabbed one of the rifles. He looked along the barrel and checked the trigger and metal sights, pressing a switch that elicited a slight magical hum before he switched it off again. He walked to the table and laid the weapon down with delicate care.

“My weapons are made to withstand the blood power of the First Vampire. Only the best safety enchantments are in place, to prevent damage. I am terribly sorry to say that I cannot say for certain if your blood will leave my creations undamaged, and there is a limit to output, likely, and once again, I apologize, below your personal destructive capabilities,” he spoke.

Ilea walked up to the table.

“The Glarkson III, white steel and silver alloy inlaid with Red Hyne and Niameer steel. Level eight blood core enchantments, four times framed. Enchanted glass sights for up to five times magnification. Chargeable with a magazine of five pellets. A high precision weapon with destructive force.”

Ilea gestured towards it and received a nod from him in response. She grabbed the rifle and felt its weight. To her enhanced body, it felt like a toy. As if a stick she could easily break in two, which was likely true as well. She looked down its sights before glancing at him. “I was thinking, something a little heavier.”

He nodded again, a few buffs coming to life before he walked over to the wall and grabbed a massive cylinder shaped weapon, eighteen barrels set around a smaller cylinder still twice as thick as Ilea’s arm. His movements were considerably less graceful as he heaved the thing onto the table.

Ilea set down the rifle.

“The Glarkson Mark Eight. Intended as a device for stationary defense against monster hordes or sieges. External cartridges containing eight hundred pellets each. The fire rate reaches four thousand per minute.”

“Four thousand?” Ilea asked. She grabbed the weapon as best she could and held it to the side of her hip, the size not exactly allowing for a different way to carry it. “There’s no handle.”

“I would add them. I’m afraid it was not intended to be carried,” he said. “Apologies for that oversight.” He bowed his head slightly.

[Glarkson Mark Eight – Primal Quality] – [Finish the fight]

“How much is it? And a few dozen cartridges?” Ilea asked.

“It is a single piece, like everything you see here. A price would have to be negotiated, however if you may allow me to taste your blood, we may be able to trade without the complexities of gold and silver.”

Ilea smiled. “I want the piece.” Setting it down, she raised her arm and summoned a piece of moving volcanic glass. She pushed it into her finger until it pierced through. She kept it in to prevent the cut from healing, getting a few drops onto the small glass spear before she floated it towards the Vampire.

“We should move to the testing facility. I do not wish to damage these rooms,” Zeriel said and led them down a flight of stairs and into a long hall of enchanted stone and metal. The heavy doors closed behind them.

“I’m a healer,” Ilea said when he hesitated.

Zeriel received the volcanic glass and moved it close to his nose. He gulped, instantly licking off the blood.

A pulse of mana extended outwards.

“Oh... oh...” Zeriel fell to his knees before he touched his eyes. “It burns...” he spoke, then screamed, then laughed. A manic laugh.

Ilea healed him, but found nothing wrong, the changes she could see were his, somewhat similar to when Elfie had entered a dungeon for the first time. *Strange*. She felt like despite the nature of this change, she could affect it, perhaps even reverse it. If it became necessary. Though she could tell it would require an immense effort.

“OH yes! Oh by THE FIRST. GIVE ME MORE!” Zeriel shouted, his muscles bulging before he ripped off his shirt. His teeth grew out farther, a crazed look in his eyes before he shot off towards Ilea.

She didn't move, halting his advance with Fabric Alteration.

"PLEASE!" he screamed, stuck as sweat rolled down his brow.

Ilea could feel the heat coming from him. She could see the blood pulsing through his veins. His magic had exploded compared to before.

"Fascinating," Erik spoke as he walked closer, a few spells flashing out from him. "His magical output near doubled. His regeneration can't keep up, but your blood is fueling it too."

Zeriel laughed. "MORE! MORE! MORE!"

"No, lad, I think more would burst your heart," Erik said.

"I think I can reverse it," Ilea said.

"Oh? Your cosmic magic, I presume? Are you sure?"

"No. Just a feeling," she said.

Erik nodded, then waved his hand. Thirty circles of blue arcane light appeared below and around the Vampire. A pulse went out in the next moment, Zeriel left dangling in the air, his eyes falling shut.

"Knocked him out?" she asked.

"I did. We should drain his blood," he said and casually sliced off one of Zeriel's legs. "Don't worry."

"You cut off his leg," Ilea said, though she could see what Erik was doing. Large swaths of blood splattered to the ground, the wound already closing as new tissue formed. Zeriel didn't react, his vitals stabilizing near instantly.

"That's your blood," Erik said. "Perhaps you should sell it."

"You ever sold yours?" Ilea asked. "Doesn't seem safe in the slightest. He lost control entirely."

"Mine is both less chaotic and less powerful. But also more dangerous to lower level Vampires. Yours seems to vastly increase regenerative capabilities. Heat generation too, and heart rate. It destroys them, but regenerates them even faster. Mine just allows for a short burst of magical power, with high and prolonged damage to their bodies."

"I guess it'd be better to have a vial of this than dying to a monster," Ilea said. "Didn't think I'd become a potion at some point. Do they hook up powerful people and animals to continuously drain their blood and heal it back?"

"It's only logical, but such behavior goes against the Four Rules, as uncivilized. There has been debate about this, but the First Vampire himself shares plenty of his blood to alleviate concerns. Blood is generally ingested to heal and recover, or to flee from an inescapable situation. Powerful blood is not generally used as a combat enhancement. Too much control is lost. We both know that an Awakened is near always more dangerous than a powerful beast, even at twice its level."

"Right," she said. "Suppose he could use it in a new drink creation."

"There is all manner of non combat application, but I won't go into details," Erik said and laughed.

Ilea held Zeriel before she gently moved him down onto a bed of ash. His vitals were stabilizing with most of his blood replaced by his high regeneration.

“Can you ask for green prints of his weapons?” Aki spoke up for the first time since coming to Marrindayne.

“I don’t think he would share them,” Ilea said.

“For your blood, he might,” Aki said.

So there will be guns around after all. She decided to trust Aki and in extension the Accords. Already, they had cannons and war machines. She was sure they would implement reasonable legislation. And by now, Aki certainly had the machine power to enforce it.

“How long until every adventurer is sporting one of those rifles?” she said.

“It hardly makes a difference for anyone above level two hundred. But now that we are here, I believe it is inevitable for Vampire technology to come to the East. I would like for the Accords to have a head start,” Aki said.

“Suppose you’re right. Except if the Courts don’t want to be included via the gates,” Ilea said.

“There are too many benefits,” Erik said. “If you do not present an obvious threat, this development is inevitable.”

“It depends entirely on the Courts and their leaders,” Aki said. “The Accords are not interested in territorial expansion through conquest or war.”

“Nor are the Courts. As far as I know,” Erik said. He smiled.

“Looking mighty self satisfied there, old man,” Ilea commented, patting Zeriel’s brow, his leg fully recovered. He shivered now, but his vitals were fine.

“What should I say,” Erik said and crossed his arms. “It is always exciting to be present when history is made.” He laughed, which woke up the weaponsmith.

Zeriel looked around with blood shot eyes, his hands shaking. “Wh... where...”

“Your testing hall. Dragonslayer,” Ilea said and pointed at herself. “You drank my blood. Freaked out. He knocked you out. Feeling alright?”

The vampire sat up on the ashen bed, summoning a bottle from which he drank. Deep. He then summoned a glass and drank from that too. A thick yellow liquid.

“I must apologize,” he said, looking down at himself before he summoned a new set of clothing. “To have shown myself in such a state, to esteemed customers. My deepest apologies,” he said and stood up, bowing before he stumbled slightly.

Ilea stabilized him with her space magic.

“Is that... space?” Zeriel murmured before he slightly shook his head. “Please. If you may wait at the bar. I will be with you shortly.”

Ilea smiled. “Sure,” she returned with Aki and Erik in tow.

A few minutes later, Zeriel returned, mostly back to his stoic self.

“Another drink?” he asked the two as he teleported behind the counter. “On the house.”

“Sure,” Ilea said, soon sipping from another creation, this one far lighter than the two before.

“The Mark Eight, and twelve cartridges of eight hundred pellets each, for one liter of your blood, Lady Dragonslayer,” Zeriell said.

“Deal,” Ilea said. “How much for green prints of your weapons and detailed enchantment documentations?”

He narrowed his eyes, then bit his lower lip. The weaponsmith started pacing. “I cannot share all of it. I simply cannot. No.”

“Whatever you can share. Name your price. My friend here would be very interested,” Ilea said, not specifying who she meant.

“If you agree not to sell within the Courts, should you actually manage to make anything,” Zeriell said.

“Deal?” Ilea sent to Aki.

“I can promise that. Yes,” he sent. “Eregar, would this be considered an offensive act to the First Vampire?”

“I don’t see how. He would likely trade the same to get Ilea’s blood,” Erik answered.

“I want to make sure. It may be considered uncivilized behavior. This deal is off until we have talked to him,” Aki said. “Perhaps we can reach technological exchange without Ilea’s blood in the first place.”

“It shouldn’t be an issue, but we’ll have to think about it,” Ilea said. “We should return soon. A day or a few days.”

“I will be here,” Zeriell said. “I’ll have the handles added to the Mark Eight later tonight, and will be awaiting your blood.”

“I’ll make sure to come grab it,” Ilea said with a smirk. “When was that battle thing with Isidelia?” she asked, looking at Erik.

“Soon. We should leave in the next hour if we intend to be on time,” Erik said.

“Sounds good,” Ilea said. She pointed at the strange table with holes. “Is this a game?”

“Indeed,” Zeriell said, mixing himself a cocktail before he walked out from behind the counter. “I will explain it, if you wish to play.”

“Let’s give it a shot,” Ilea said and sipped from her drink. “I do get why you like them,” she sent to Erik as Zeriell summoned colored spheres and engraved pistols.

Erik smiled. “Agreed, though you chose a fine establishment for a first impression. And I must warn you,” he said and laughed. “You’ll lose.” He grabbed a pistol and twirled it with a smooth motion.

Ilea smiled, grabbing one herself whilst trying not to crush it. “Right.”