

## Chapter 821 Octavia

*“A tree... and a dagger,”* Octavia spoke, confusion obvious on her face.

*“I’ll have to show you. But first, when do you think the Architect will return?”* Ilea sent.

*“I have not grasped the specifics of his plans, merely that returning to finish what was started is a part of it. As is the return of an ally. Someone dear to him, though I do not know who. It has been years since I discovered this, and while I know the results of his success would be catastrophic, what I felt of him was meticulous calculation. He will not rush, nor will he stop. Except if someone interferes,”* Octavia sent.

*“No timeline at all? He could be back already or in a century?”* Ilea asked, raising her brows. She had an idea of who the ally could be. The Ascended he had mentioned, the one Nes told her was likely Ravana Vor Itar. Octavia confirming that Ker Velor had plans for an ally to return lent some credibility to her claims.

*“Soon was what I had grasped. Though for a being of his age... that could be a year, perhaps ten,”* Octavia sent.

Ilea sighed. *At least she doesn’t think he’s back in this very moment. “How did you learn all of this? And do you have any proof?”*

*“I will have to explain some of my background,”* Octavia answered.

Ilea motioned for her to go on. The woman would have to explain everything to the Accords anyway but if the Architect didn’t return in the coming three days, Ilea wouldn’t call in a meeting for a divination mage with some vague ideas of a threat. She knew herself that Ker Velor was a threat. But so was Vor Elenthir, so was Audur, so was the Sanvaruun. And those were only a few she could think of. There were likely dozens if not hundreds of beings in and outside of Elos that had some interest in the realm or the territories her allies were living on.

*“I grew up in Ravenhall, though my father thought it reasonable to keep me hidden. The daughter of an Elder could be a valuable target. A liability, which is what I was for most of my childhood.”*

Ilea saw Adam’s eyes focus on the ground.

*“I lost myself in study, and found myself enthralled with the happenings in Viscera. When I was eight years old, I first sneaked my way down into Eregar’s Haven. Soon I would go there every day, and soon I started to discover things. Shadows came there to train, came to fight the monsters in the low level dungeons, and left again.*

*“I lived there. I explored,”* Octavia spoke and paused, glancing to her father before looking back to Ilea. *“Do you know Dagon? Is he alive?”*

*“He is,”* Ilea said. *“But I doubt he’d be too happy to see him.”*

Octavia smiled and Adam seemed relieved.

*At least he’s not entirely lost.*

Octavia continued. *“I started to find runes. Enchantments. The underlying structure of the Haven. The teachers knew little, and the Shadows willing to talk to me just thought it another construct*

*made in ancient times. Impressive, but nothing to be studied. They had all seen underground caverns near as or more impressive in their time. Due to my status, I had access to... and gained access to, the libraries in Viscera, both Dagon's and personal collections. But all I found was dust. Some of the runes I described were unknown even to experienced enchanters, the make up of the Haven lost to history, the name the only thing with a clue. Those few who listened and invested some time to study what I had found came up with nothing. Undecipherable, not worth studying, technology unattainable for their levels and resources, similar to the machines of the Taleen."*

*"Are you saying an Ascended made the Haven?"* Ilea asked. She ignored the comment on the Taleen, if anything Octavia's explanations confirmed that she hadn't spoken to the right people to find out more about the enchantments she had found. Though to be fair, even the entirety of the Shadow's Hand would've had nowhere near the resources of the Accords now, or even just the Meadow.

*"Perhaps. At least there is some connection to what I have learned in Kohr,"* Octavia answered. *"Eregar is supposed to be the founder of the Hand, though there is surprisingly little known about him. Perhaps he was Ascended himself,"* she said.

Ilea doubted it, though she didn't voice anything. She remembered Scipio had told her both he and Nes had known the man. *Nes might know more about the Haven itself then. If there is a connection to Kohr as Octavia claims.* Kyrian had remarked on the metal in the Haven, and even he had noticed how old the enchantments were. Ilea opened her eyes a little wider. *The connection to Kohr. Scipio talking of Sources instead of just a single Source. If she's right... fuck.*

*The artificial sun.*

*And I wondered what the fuck could power it. There's a Source. Right under Ravenhall. God I'm a fucking idiot.*

She grinned to herself before refocusing on the conversation.

Octavia looked at her, curiosity obvious though she didn't speak.

*"We'll have to check that story. Go on,"* Ilea said.

Octavia nodded slowly. *"Once I deemed myself strong enough, I escaped the city and traveled the lands, training and learning. I followed rumors and stories, trusted my skills. There had to be more out there, but the libraries of man offered nothing. And so I sought help from beings outside the Plains. I traveled west, beyond the Karthian Gulf, west further, past the lands of Elves. Have you heard of the Mava?"*

*"Fox creatures, yes,"* Ilea said. *"I know a being somewhat similar, but she's a Dark One."*

*"You are well traveled then. Most humans have not heard of their kind,"* Octavia said.

*"How did you get past the Elven Domains?"* Ilea asked.

*"Domains? Their territories, yes. I can feel threats. Machines of the Taleen still hunt their kind, and rarely did I feel a presence far beyond my own power near me. I stayed close to the coast, and only dared walk the edges of the Sava desert. I learned later that the Elves that live there rarely venture beyond their territory. Unlike the ones farther east, as humanity has learned.*

*"The Mava are... curious beings. Gifted hunters and even more gifted wielders of magic. Curious and playful, though more peaceful than most beings I have come across in my travels. They had known some of the runes I had shown them, which is when I learned of the Ascended. Beings from*

*another realm. Strange monsters had been summoned, had tainted and taken over dungeons in the region, more than three thousand years ago. They had cleansed their lands and had found facilities made of metal deep below ground. Some runes I showed them, they had found, though they claimed the Ascended had been gone, that a war had been fought. A war that the Mava had not participated in.*

*I learned that an alliance had been formed, between humans, dwarves, and even Elves-*"

Ilea interrupted her with a gesture. *"I know all this. And that the third sun was taken."*

*"Apologies," Octavia said. "I had not expected anyone to know. But that means at least you, may believe all of this. After I had trained and lived with the Mava, I ventured out in search of what the Ascended had left behind. Partially for the sheer mystery of it all, but I felt that I had to, that my time in the Haven had led me to all this. My magic finally led me to one of the ancient facilities, where I learned some of the history you spoke of. And I learned of Kohr, though getting there proved rather difficult."*

Ilea narrowed her eyes.

*"A connection established, through blood. Through a summoning. One I paid for with monsters, and my own. I labored for years to finish everything, and finally I could go where I felt destined to be," Octavia said.*

*"Destined? In Kohr? Sorry but it's not exactly an upgrade from Elos," Ilea said. Why would she risk everything to go there?*

Though she supposed with fewer connections in Elos, she may take up the chance to go to another realm. Easier said now, with her space magic and plenty of anchors here.

*Octavia smiled. "I felt myself a hunter of history, an explorer that dared go where nobody remembered. To uncover secrets forgotten by most, if not all. And it had to be connected to the Haven. How could I resist? Though I was aware of the risks, of perhaps never finding my way back. I could speak of some higher purpose, of divination, of charity, to help the beings of Kohr, to prevent the plans of the Ascended, but all of it would be a lie. I didn't learn about the Architect until I had been in Kohr for years already. After I had met the Mind Weavers, the remnants of the Navuun as I later learned."*

*"You left for another realm, knowing you couldn't come back?" Ilea asked.*

*"I did," Octavia said and looked at her. "I feel that you understand, in some manner. You are an adventurer by heart, are you not?"*

*"I've taken some admittedly stupid risks. Maybe not as stupid as yours," she answered.*

Octavia grinned. *"Then I win?"*

Ilea thought about it and grinned back. *"I've fought a dragon."*

*"Even then, perhaps," Octavia said.*

Ilea didn't feel like arguing, though a part of her was intrigued to continue this discussion. *"So you learned of the Architect in Kohr?"*

*"I learned of many Ascended. The Old Ones as called by the Mind Weavers. I found some of their facilities through divination, others through trade of knowledge with Weavers who would communicate with me, though few there were. I learned of the Olym Arcena, and I found long rotten*

*remains of familiar armors and machines. Remnants from an ancient war. The same war I had learned of from the Mava.*

*“The Mava had taught me to speak,” she said, a slight smile on her face. “Through telepathy. A boon in Kohr, as I managed to befriend Mind Weavers, and through them, find my purpose.”*

*“To fight the Ascended?” Ilea asked.*

*“No. To tell those who would listen of my home. To teach them what I had learned in Viscera. To tell them of a world of grass and forests. And to bring them back. I too found activity in one of the facilities, things had been moved, new machines and metal bits added. I watched with my magic, and learned what I could. Which was when I saw the Architect. He was well shielded against divination, and he came for me as soon as he felt the brush of my magic. Distance and my long survival in Kohr allowed me to escape, with some knowledge of his plans,” Octavia said. “I was conflicted. My work in Kohr was nowhere near done, though I had grown up in Elos, had cared for many of its denizens, and I knew how to get to Kohr. Leaving was more difficult.”*

*“How did you leave?” Ilea asked, not mentioning how she had left. The transporter she had come across with Trian and Weavy had been functional, though she assumed using it would’ve stranded them in another random realm without her anchor in her house near Ravenhall. But someone that had time to study the device, perhaps she had found and used one. Her own search had been unsuccessful so far.*

*“I taught, and I studied. The runes used by the Mind Weavers are part the same, part abbreviated from those used by the Ascended. And I had memories, connections, places in Elos. Returning would’ve been possible for me alone. Perhaps, but I would not leave the others behind. I needed spells I knew my father wielded, and I required energy, in the form of magic,” she sent, glancing towards the lightning elemental.*

*“So you don’t have proof? And Ravenhall was damn near wiped out for you to get these Mind Weavers back?” Ilea said.*

*“I regret what has happened,” Octavia said. “The threat however, remains. It is real, as real as the magic that allowed me to grasp it. And it is urgent that something is done.”*

Ilea looked at her and shook her head ever so slightly. The massacre was in the past. She had not been there, had only seen the chaos ensue, and she had seen the end result. Retaking Ravenhall with the Hand had somewhat united the Order, and the city was prospering again. She had known few who had died, and even those only in passing. A statistic. A horrible event in history, recent history to be sure, but history nonetheless.

There was no vengeance Ilea wished for. Not personally. Not anymore. But she knew others would demand the deaths of those who had been involved. She wouldn’t mind either. Octavia had surely assumed the lengths her father would go to, to help her, but would she have assumed he would go as far as betraying his Order? Adam’s shame was obvious, but he had fulfilled his purpose, and it seemed like he had suffered for his choices.

Ilea pondered for a moment, standing with crossed arms as she tapped her mantle with an index finger.

*“Do you trust them?” Ilea sent to Evan.*

The man had listened in silence, not reacting in the slightest. To her perception at least.

*“I know that her interest in the Ascended had been real. She tried to get knowledge not meant for her in the past. And I know what she said about her childhood is true. Ilea, I had feared this so called war had not been over. You said it had not been a war at all, perhaps it is time you reveal what you know,”* he said.

She considered. “Alright. There are too many pieces here that make this plausible. Based on the level of this threat, I think you should speak before the Accords.”

*“What does that entail?”* Octavia asked. *“This threat cannot go unanswered, and there are others I would talk to, should these Accords refuse to help.”*

*“I assure you, I’m taking this seriously. If the Accords don’t want to find out more, I will try,”* Ilea said. *“But I doubt they won’t. What you caused in Ravenhall remains however, which means I can’t let you go anyway.”*

*“I cannot risk being imprisoned,”* Octavia said, the Mind Weavers reacting to that as an unseen pressure appeared at the corner of Ilea’s mind.

She smiled. *“You brought them here. After all this time. Trust me when I say that you should tread very... very carefully.”*

Octavia considered, though any semblance of a smile was gone. *“You were joking before. How influential are these Accords. I believe the Mava are more powerful than the nations of humanity. Are you with the Golden Lily? Or the Empire?”*

*Should I just take them and move them to the Meadow’s domain? These Mind Weavers are nothing to me.* She could see the tense posture of Octavia and Adam. Both had survived in Kohr, same as the beings watching her. *“You spoke of the Taleen machines, right?”*

Octavia raised her brows in question.

Ilea opened a gate to Iz. *“Send me a few Executioners if you would,”* she sent to Aki.

Three of them walked out from the gate, looking around with glowing green eyes. One of them took in Ilea, the other ones looked around.

*“Adam Strand,”* one of the silver machines spoke. *“Care to tell me what I just walked into, Lilith?”*

Ilea shrugged. *“She will, before the Accords.”*

Octavia watched the machines with wide eyes. *“We will.”*

*“Great. I knew you weren’t stupid enough to attack me,”* Ilea said with a wide smile. *“Now let’s go North. Aki, there’s a chance that the Architect will return, possibly to take the remaining suns.”*

*“When?”* one of the machines asked.

*“No clue. A week, a year, a century. We better find out, and soon,”* she said.

*“I’m calling in an emergency meeting,”* Aki said.

*“Do that,”* Ilea sent to him. *“I have to speak to you and the Meadow, immediately,”* she said and opened a gate to the Meadow’s domain. *“I assume the tree is informed already?”*

*“Yes,”* Aki sent back. *“I will come through as well.”*

*“Wonderful,”* Ilea said. *“Please everyone, step through the gate. You’ll be welcomed by the aforementioned tree. Don’t bow, pray, or otherwise annoy it.”*

She glanced at Adam, the man not resisting the Executioner that stepped next to him, walking towards the gate without a hint of magic, eyes cast down.

Octavia followed, as did the Mind Weavers.

“Want to participate too?” she asked Evan. “You know one or the other thing that may be helpful in all this.”

He smiled. “Of course, friend. Already you have played a major part in the defeat of an ancient enemy. Let this be the second we fight alongside each other,” Evan answered. “For this, I will risk all but the Foundation itself.”

*“How did the machines of the Taleen...”* Octavia spoke. *“The Elves...”*

*“You’ll have time to learn everything. Focus on why you’re here, and keep your wits. Word of advice... don’t try to divine the Meadow,”* Ilea said as she watched them all go, locking eyes with the woman for a moment before she walked into the gate.

Ilea went in last, events set into motion. *Now, how the fuck does one find an Ascended?*