

Chapter 515 Discovery

“Fair enough,” Ilea said.

He seemed to be taken aback by the answer, glancing at her for a moment before he shook his head and focused back on his search, the corners of his mouth slightly twitching upwards.

“What do you plan to do once you’re free?” Ilea asked Faith.

The woman glanced towards Benedict again but didn’t receive a helping hand, entirely overwhelmed by the questioning.

“I will become a healer in the Order of Truth,” she said finally, turning a little red as she glanced at the floor.

“You could always come to Ravenhall. I’ll make sure you get the education and Classes you want, and a position where you can heal however many people you want. No limitations, no blood rituals, or whatever other shady shit is going on in that Order,” Ilea said and smiled. “You don’t have to say anything now but my offer stands.”

“Eh... I...,” Faith stuttered.

“Here it is...,” Benedict finally said, taking the letter one of the others handed to him. “I hadn’t thought it important but I keep all the communication I receive.”

Ilea looked at the thing but couldn’t read it.

“I don’t speak Baralia,” she said.

He turned it around and started reading when Ilea held out a hand.

Benedict raised an eyebrow but handed her the document.

“You read it,” she said and handed the letter to Faith.

“I... no... I mean... I can’t... the secrets,” she said, looking between Ilea and the others.

“Can you not read? You speak both the native tongue and Standard fluently,” Ilea said and smiled brightly.

Benedict looked at Ilea, his eyes softening a little, some of the tension on his face gone.

“T... to all... Ac... Acolyt... Acolytes in Yi... Yinnahall. We seek to... expand on... a new spell and require exper... expertise in... space magic enchant... ments and runes. Any personne... l-” Faith was interrupted by one of the warriors roughly grabbing the letter, annoyed at her pace. The healer staggered back and covered her face with both arms.

Ilea hissed, her armor covering her instantly as she froze everyone and slammed the warrior into the bookshelf with a hand to her throat. “Just think about touching her again and I’ll rip off your head, slaver,” she said in a calm tone, her eyes meeting the woman’s as her hand tightened.

The warrior struggled for breath.

“Please,” Faith said, touching her arm, her eyes darting to the ashen limbs moving behind Ilea.

She let the woman go but kept her eyes on her.

The warrior looked scared and ashamed, stepping back to Benedict.

“Continue, Faith,” he said with a smile, glaring at the other woman.

“Apologize to her first,” Ilea said.

“I’m sure she understands, lady Lilith,” Benedict said. “Tensions are high and for some it’s more difficult to accept the breach of social norms.”

“Better now then, than when the city is burning. Apologize to her now,” Ilea said.

The woman gritted her teeth and finally spoke. “I apologize, Faith.”

“Good, well done. Not meant in the slightest but I’m sure you’ll get better after a few years without slavery in place,” Ilea said and looked towards Faith.

She read the rest of the letter with even more stuttering, Ilea encouraging her along the way.

“I need a map,” Ilea said after the girl was done.

The request had come from a priest, apparently a rank above acolyte in the Order. High Priests were the ones leading the Order in a single city and the Elders were at the very top.

Requests like these weren’t out of the norm but apparently Space Magic was a rare enough thing for Benedict to remember this specific letter.

He ignored her request, tapping his desk a few times.

“A map. Every minute I waste could be disastrous,” she said, not quite meaning it but the office wasn’t exactly a pleasant place to be in. She doubted a minute or hour would make much of a difference. It would be terribly unlucky for the ritual to happen at this very moment. And still, too much stalling wasn’t wise.

She entertained the possibility that Benedict and his men were just acting, leading her into a trap. But she doubted it, mostly because of Yinnis’ word. A slave trusted Yinnis and Yinnis trusted this Acolyte. It was good enough for her.

“What... what do you plan to do when you’re there?” Benedict asked. He met her eyes again.

“I will assess the situation and act accordingly,” she said.

“Meaning you will kill without restraint,” he said.

“I haven’t killed anyone here yet,” Ilea said. “What makes you think I’d do so there.”

“Your reputation. You believe them to be preparing a ritual of frankly insane proportions. People can act brazenly when they believe to be doing good,” he said.

“And yet you can’t imagine them using such a ritual? Maybe because they believe it to do good?” Ilea asked.

“The theoretical possibility is unquestioned, Lilith. But I know many of the members in this city. I know the priest who asked for this aid....” he said and paused for a moment. He gulped and stood up, looking at her. “Allow me to come with you. I can get you inside with less suspicion. Let me talk to them, find out if what you said is true.”

Ilea thought about it for a moment. She could just go and destroy everything and be done with it. But something stopped her. Perhaps it was a curiosity, to know what he would do upon finding out the true plans of his superiors, or maybe she wanted to give him a chance to prevent the deaths of

people merely caught up in something they did not understand. He had shown care when interacting with Faith, had tried to mediate between the hot headed guardians and Ilea.

“Do you know if there are any enchantments against teleportation in place?” she asked.

He shook his head. “Some temples have minor defenses like that but I doubt Priest Barrett ever thought it a need to invest into defensive enchantments. However I can’t be certain.”

“You can come with me. Including your guardians. We won’t go through the main entrance however, I can’t risk them getting warned and executing the ritual immediately,” she said.

The man thought about it and nodded finally. “Just let me talk to them before you kill anybody... please. No matter what we find.”

“To a reasonable extent,” Ilea said, not promising anything.

He nodded. “Stay in this room Faith, don’t inform anyone of what y-”

Ilea stopped him with a gesture. “She’s coming too of course.”

“She could be injured if fighting breaks out,” he said.

“Then have these three protect her,” she said, not mentioning that she herself would intervene if the girl was in danger. She wouldn’t risk leaving her behind either. Faith was too frightened and inexperienced, potentially capable of ruining the whole thing.

“Then let’s go, now,” Ilea said. “Do you have another robe for me? Just for the way there,” she said.

“In the next room over... yes. Are we going alone? No allies?” Benedict asked.

Ilea considered it. She’d meet up with Hector in about an hour but her shot was now and finding him would be annoying. *Should’ve put a mark on him, not that he would’ve allowed it anyway.*

She dismissed the thought, deciding it was wiser to go alone. Ilea was sure she could destroy the ritual one way or the other, even with ten people at her own level of power in the same temple. People she doubted the Order had. Benedict of course didn’t know what levels the High Priest of Yinnahall and Elders had.

With how sloppy the rituals had been, Ilea didn’t think anybody with high level space magic had been present, meaning she could likely displace herself out in case the opposition proved too powerful. The ritual itself could be disrupted and delayed with a single cast of Heart of Cinder, as long as she managed to hit the floor.

The only risk was discovery and potentially people escaping to set up another ritual in another place. Hector was unpredictable however and she decided to include Benedict in her plans should it turn out that he wasn’t actually deceiving her.

Hector would at the very least tarnish her reputation.

Let him have fun with the nobles.

She stored all the documents on Benedict’s desk and shook her head. “I’m plenty.”

One of the warriors said a few words not specifically directed towards her.

Shut your fucking mouth you idiot!

Mya glared at Sloane, the idiot insulting Lilith in their native tongue.

She could just be pretending not to understand. Is she really this dense?

The woman glared back, the two waiting as Benedict went to grab a robe for the battle healer.

“If what she says is true, we have to stop it,” Mya said to the others.

Lilith didn’t react, either really not speaking Jissu or being a damn good actress. With her short temper and behavior in the previous talk, she doubted it.

“She’s a fool. A young bitch who thinks herself unstoppable because she killed a few beasts. It happens all the time and then they die or vanish,” Sloane said.

“Either speak Standard or shut up,” Lilith said suddenly.

The way she talked and moved, Mya doubted she was just a young mage lucky enough to find a short path to high power. *And the songs. It can’t all be true but surely she’s as strong as an Elite. Above two hundred for sure.*

Her way of freezing them in place had left a deep impression on Mya. Even strong beasts couldn’t do that easily. At the very least the woman was experienced. And she was a battle healer, something that could change how she approached fights altogether!

I want to see her fight, Mya thought but didn’t voice it. They were about to commit treason but with Benedict, that wasn’t exactly a rare occasion. The pay would reflect the increased risk, all three of them knew that.

A storage item too... if she gets captured or killed, I’ll make sure to reach her corpse first.

She glared at Sloane again, unsure what the woman planned. If she ran away and babbled to the wrong people, they could end up dead. She was underestimating Lilith, even after being attacked personally.

Assassins are cheap. With a storage item promised, some would surely bite even with someone above two hundred as the target. And Sloane has plenty of connections.

Lilith took the robe and made it vanish. Mya barely blinked and suddenly the gown was covering her as naturally as the armor she herself wore.

Now I want one even more, Mya thought and stared at her.

“What is it?” the healer asked. “Lead the way,” she added, nodding to Benedict.

He did as she commanded.

“Your storage item is very convenient,” Mya answered as she followed, not seeing a reason to lie.

“It is. Maybe you can find one during the coming siege,” Lilith said.

Mya smiled and nodded.

She doubted the Empire would ever reach Yinnahall. The army of Baralia wasn’t something to take lightly. If it really came to a siege, the High King himself would come and destroy their efforts, not

that Yinnahall would fall easily even without him. Benedict lacked the practical experience to gauge how a real battle would take place.

If Lilith told the truth and the Order caused the fall of Nara, she was even less worried about the war.

Benedict led them through the streets at a fast pace. The temple in question wasn't very far away but it would still take them some time to reach it.

"Point me in the direction," Lilith suddenly said.

Benedict nodded and pointed before Lilith led them into a side alley, checking for something before she looked at them. "Don't resist my spell."

Mya felt something manifest around her before her view suddenly changed. She grabbed her warhammer and looked around.

"How far is it?" Lilith spoke in the darkness.

"At the pace we were walking, a little more than an hour I think," Benedict said.

"What was that spell?" Mya asked.

Lilith didn't reply, instead she used it again. And again.

A minute passed with them appearing in various cellars, empty rooms in random houses, sewers, and alleys before Lilith stopped.

"Check if we're close," she said.

Benedict nodded and walked to the edge of the alley, looking out before he returned.

He corrected the approach and distance, Lilith continuing to move them around.

Mya was sure now that this spell was what allowed Lilith to reach such power. If she could do this to monsters in a dungeon, it would be easy to navigate them into traps or down a cliff. She had heard adventurers boasting about using strong shields to accomplish similar results, effectively avoiding the true battles that let them rise in levels.

Sloane was right that people like that lacked experience and would die against the first monster against which their tactics and magic didn't work.

However Lilith could teleport monsters and herself, she could stop others in their track and thus would easily escape such a situation. And she was a healer! Even if she got injured, it wouldn't be the end.

They reached a large room with a dining table in the middle and windows on both sides.

"Is that it?" Lilith asked and pointed, stepping closer to one of the window rows.

Mya watched Sloane steal a few of the expensive looking silver ware, putting them into her belt.

Really, now?

She rolled her eyes and watched Xavier slap the woman's wrist when she reached for more.

Lilith didn't intervene and Benedict was too nervous to say anything.

This could very well mean his expulsion of the Order, or worse. This sucks. But what if she's right? Not like we have a choice with her powers.

“That’s the one... there are more guards than usual... and I believe they’re not the usual ones. I knew some of them. Something is definitely strange,” Benedict said.

They retreated from the window again to make sure they wouldn’t be seen. The streets were busy and thin curtains shrouded them up here but vigilant guards might still spot them.

Mya knew she would normally try and escape at this point but it would put Benedict at risk and she wouldn’t allow it. Even Sloan wouldn’t. *Hopefully.*

“I’ll check it for enchantments and then get you,” Lilith said and vanished without waiting for a reply.

“We should leave, now,” Sloane said.

“No. I fear there really is something afoot here,” Benedict said.

“Yes, the ritual they wanted space magic people for, what’s the big deal?” Sloane asked.

“She will hunt you down if you leave,” Benedict said.

Sloane ground her teeth, unsure about her decision.

“Mya we-” she started when Lilith appeared again.

Already, Mya thought.

“We move, now,” she said before Mya’s vision changed again.

They appeared between the walls and the temple itself before vanishing again. Next was an empty room with dirty robes. The washroom. Mya smelled the blood the moment they vanished again.

Two more empty rooms followed before she felt a powerful aura suddenly expand next to her.

Ashen limbs expanded out of Lilith’s back, wings spreading at the same time as she crouched, preparing for battle. The robe was gone, replaced by the smooth and lethal looking ashen armor. The moving wisps gave it an ethereal note, something not quite natural.

She felt goosebumps as she took in the view.

They vanished one last time.

Mya appeared in a large hall without windows. The smell hit her first. Blood. Lots of it. She saw the cages next and the dozens of people working. A wagon filled with corpses stood to the side of the cages.

A roar resounded next to her and she couldn’t move anymore. The sound was nothing a human could produce.

‘ding’ ‘You have heard the call of Lilith. You are paralyzed for three seconds’

Mya could only watch as a black blur of ashen limbs slashed through chains, guards, mages, and the ground. A surge of powerful fire and energy brushed over the bloody stone floor, digging into it with an explosion of debris and sound.

She could finally move again but didn’t know what to do, spells were thrown at the monster but vanished and hit the soldiers instead. *Soldiers, why is the army in one of the temples?*

Mya took a step forward, seeing the runes on the ground, the corpses. *Is this real?*

Faith gasped as she took a step back, the others entirely speechless.

Dozens of soldiers rushed in from a side room.

The ritual is disrupted, we need to leave now, Mya thought but her eyes were focused on the ashen being. Somehow the chained people in the cages appeared outside of them, members of the Order instead appearing within, some with missing limbs or broken bones.

Lilith slammed into the hastily erected shields and broke through in an instant, her limbs and hands lashing out with perfect precision and deadly spells.

The soldiers answered with their own spells but it was too late, their bodies cut and ripped apart, their heads and chests smashed in with single punches. Mya was sure some of them were Elites, knowing a few of the differences in their armor.

It didn't matter to the woman, each of them dying all the same. It was over in just a few seconds, a single soldier remaining as he staggered backwards. An officer and Elite, holding the open wound on his shoulder.

"You won't get away with this," he said.

Lilith held out a hand, the man's eyes opening wide as he took another step back.

"How?" he asked when she reached him, her hand closing around his throat.

She turned towards the group of healers and mages in the cages, some of them cowering, others appearing at another spot in the cage, trying to teleport away but failing.

"Halt! Stop this madness!" Benedict shouted, his voice cracking slightly as he stepped forward.

The songs were true, she's a monster... Lilith is real.

Mya remained where she stood, not daring to attract the beast's attention. Her eyes had changed. When they held an almost casual carelessness before, now they were ice itself. A deep fury that meant only death to those who stood in her path.

She gulped, feeling the cold sweat dripping down her back. Just now did she notice the deep furrow in the stone floor, parts of it still glowing with molten rock. Smaller cuts and furrows covered nearly all of the ground in the hall. *When did she do that?*

Lilith carelessly slammed her fingers into the officer's neck, violently ripping off his head before she dropped both parts, her ash lashing out into the corpse and ground around her before she calmed down, her ash covered chest heaving as she breathed, the limbs moving steadily behind her.

Don't move... just stay still... she's an ally...