

Chapter 793 Corpses?

“So that means the entirety of the Taleen network is available to us?” Indra asked.

Ilea stripped the bone of the last bits of meat, accidentally biting off a chunk of bone. The crunch was nice, the taste not so much. She swallowed and put the thing down. “I’m not sure if it’ll be a public thing. Not as of yet at least, but if you have something specific in mind, I could ask,” Ilea said.

Indra looked unsure. He fidgeted a little. “Well the... this Aki, is it possible for it to come here? To communicate with us? It would be... invaluable, to study that machine.”

“How is a machine going to help a necromancer?” Kyrian asked.

“Boy, you wield curses, you do not even start to comprehend the intricacies of undeath,” the man said, rubbing his temple.

“I don’t know why you want him here,” Walter said. “Though I’d be intrigued to meet the Guardian of Iz myself. I do believe we have quite enough of the Accords here already. I don’t want us to be responsible for diplomatic delays of international scale.”

“Aki doesn’t work like that. He’s a little more flexible than us meatbags,” Ilea said. “I’ll go ask one, give me a minute.” She grabbed her plate and opened a gate to the outskirts of Riverwatch, walking through it before she looked for a nearby executioner in the city.

It was dark but with her enhanced eyes she could quickly make out one of the machines running through the air. *Executioner or Pursuer*. She closed the gate and spread her wings, flying close enough to establish a telepathic connection. Ilea ignored the guards and guardians below trying to get her to identify herself.

“Heya, Aki. Can you spare one of your Executioners? I’ve got a few friends who are interested to talk to you,” she sent.

The Executioner looked towards her. “Yes. Wait here for twenty three seconds,” the machine said, continuing on its way.

“Thanks,” she sent and waved, greeting the team of flying guards that now approached her. “I’ll be gone again in a minute.”

“Lilith, of course. A safe journey to you,” the team leader said before she signaled and returned to the elevated roof the guards had chosen as their impromptu watchtower.

A different executioner showed up soon after. Ilea hadn’t checked if it had been twenty three seconds exactly, but she didn’t exactly give a shit.

“I’ll be coming with you,” Aki said.

“Cool. And you don’t have to focus too much on the split consciousness kind of thing?” she asked.

“You have two arms and two eyes. I have a few more of both. It’s as simple as that,” the machine said.

“I expected some jab at my inferior physiology,” she answered, touching the machine before she activated her third tier transfer, focusing on Walter. “Oh can you compact yourself a little?”

The Executioner curled up both its legs and arms. “I’m no the Meadow, Ilea. But perhaps I can learn from it, now that I am in fact far superior.”

“There you go,” she said as they vanished.

The machine hovered above a nearby table in the Vulture’s den, slowly spreading out its arms and legs again as it found purchase, looking around with its green eyes while its form straightened.

“That’s an Executioner,” Ilea said. “Aki can talk through them.”

“That I can. Greetings,” the machine spoke. “With the current mana density, I can remain here for eight minutes before my functionality will slow.”

“Can I charge you up somehow?” Ilea asked.

“I trust you enough to touch the core, so yes,” Aki said.

“Whoa, what is this thing!” Lucia said as she stood up. “How...”

Harthome joined her, the two walking around the tables to reach the large silver machine.

“A Taleen war machine with a complex enchanted core, able to sustain itself through ambient mana absorption. This is the most complex model that could be mass produced,” Aki explained.

Lucia shook her head with wide open eyes. “Mass produced. This is incredible. At three marks too. What’s the level?”

“Most of the Executioner class machines are at or around level eight hundred, though I would classify them as more dangerous than most monsters in that level range that I have documentation on,” the machine said.

“That’s all incredible,” Indra said. “But you have access to the entire Taleen network, right?”

The machine looked at Ilea before it glanced at the necromancer. “Indeed, though it’s too dangerous as of yet to open the network to the public. Security concerns as well have to be addressed, Lilith and her allies have managed to use the network with little ramifications.”

“Then... well as I understand, the Cerithil Hunters have fought the Taleen for a long time. Do there... happen to be any corpses still around?” Indra asked, wringing his hands lightly.

“Indra,” Lucia said, shaking her head.

“I’m afraid the corpses are already claimed,” Aki spoke.

“What... why... by whom?” Indra asked, the necromancer taking a step closer.

“By the Cerithil Hunters that knew those who have died,” the Executioner said.

“Have you an idea of what they will do to them?” Indra asked.

“You’re being insensitive,” Ilea said. “They’ll eat them of course.”

The necromancer rubbed his temples before he sat down and started muttering to himself. “A tremendous waste of potential. What about other corpses? Is there anything interesting in the Taleen ruins?”

Aki looked at the necromancer for a few seconds before he answered. "There are. I had not considered the existence of a necromancer den friendly to the Accords. Perhaps this is an opportunity. I will discuss it at the next meeting of the Accords."

"Soylent Green," Ilea murmured, looking at her meal for a moment before she continued eating.

"What's that about?" Kyrian asked. He seemed the only one interested in her rambling, the rest asking the machine more questions, mostly enchantment and metal related.

"It's an old movie. I haven't even seen it," she said.

"What's a movie?" he asked in turn.

"Like moving pictures, projected onto a wall... or inside of a screen. If you show pictures at a fast pace, it looks to the human eye as if the pictures are moving. Like you're seeing a scene happening before you," she explained.

"Fascinating... so all this could be a movie?" he asked.

"Well, yes. I hope it isn't, because that would be weird. Fuck... now that I think about it, with all those enhancements, I can probably not watch movies anymore. They'll look like a fucking slideshow," she said, murmuring the last bit.

Kyrian drank from his mug before he set it down again. "I'm sorry. I didn't want to make you feel sad."

Ilea waved him off and teleported more food onto her plate. "Don't worry about it. I prefer flying and space magic to movies. And I can still read stories if I feel like it, so who cares."

"That is an interesting technology you just suggested, Ilea," Aki said, the machine looking at her.

"Probably won't work without electricity and photography, but maybe you can figure out some enchanted version. One that could work regardless of eye enhancements and however other perception other species have," she said. "The projections used in the keys and the Taleen gate control panels are more advanced already, I'm pretty sure."

"Light magic projections, yes," the machine said. "Something like that would be interesting."

"No, please don't add security cameras to the Taleen repertoire, you're already close enough to Skynet," Ilea said.

"Another movie?" Kyrian asked.

"Yes. But these references are not supposed to be questioned," she said and squinted at the man. "Just let me have my fun."

"Fair," he answered.

"Security cameras? Are you suggesting... light projections as a form of deterrent?" Aki asked.

"No. A recording device," Ilea said. "But it's not exactly needed when you have Guardians functionally doing the same already, with the added ability to react to what's happening. It's more a way to have evidence."

"I see through the eyes of the Executioners. Recording however... that would be quite a challenge. I'm intrigued by these technologies. Would you be open to expand on these ideas?" the machine asked.

“We can talk about it, sure. I just don’t know enough about any of them for it to make a difference. Ideas wise, maybe, but recordings are just scrying spells in a manner. I’ll tell you about some of the technologies we had,” she said and continued her meal.

“I would appreciate it, yes. The resources at my disposal would allow for quite a lot of testing and production. With the individuals in the Meadow’s Domain, we could do virtually anything,” he said.

That’s true. I mean what could we use here though? Microwaves? Cooking isn’t an issue with enchantments. Heating is even more efficient here than on Earth. Any machine for construction is useless with earth magic around. I assume they have the equivalent of 3D printers already. Screens, sure, but it’s really just a less complicated form of the holograms we have. Powerplants, planes. All seems kind of useless as ideas with magic being a thing already. I mean Destroyers are basically better helicopters. Anything transport related is pretty much useless anyway with teleportation gates being a thing.

Ilea assumed she was missing something obvious but continued drinking instead. “Executioners seem pretty fucking good. Machines that can do pretty much anything.”

“Machines for sex?” Celene suggested.

“I’m pretty sure they can do that already,” Ilea said. “That metal is adjustable.”

“The fine tuning might be an issue,” Aki said. “This Executioner would kill you pretty much instantly.” He looked at Celene.

She smiled, giving Ilea a glance. “I mean we do have a healer here.”

“Just become strong enough so you can take it,” Ilea said and winked.

“The Meadow argues that supplying sexual stimulation to the species of the Accords through Guardian activity would reduce the birthrate of Awakened beings. I agree with its estimate,” the machine said.

“It would probably increase the overall mental health though,” Ilea said. “With everyone getting great sex.”

“We will evaluate this and discuss it in the next meeting,” Aki said. “Though specialized models would have to be constructed.”

“I volunteer for testing!” Celene said.

“Of course you would,” Lucia murmured, touching the silver metal. “The shield is inactive now, isn’t it?”

“Yes. There is no perceived threat nearby. This machine is in mana saving mode,” the Executioner said.

“Mana saving mode. That’s incredible. The technology to absorb ambient mana from the surroundings, achieved through enchantment... is it something you will share with the people?” Lucia asked. “It could change the entire school of enchanting.”

“It’s quite a well guarded and complex Taleen creation. For now it will remain within the Accords and its creations,” Aki said.

Lucia frowned. “And here I thought you would help out everyone?” She glanced at the other members of the Accords.

“You misunderstand. We will hire enchanters from all over the Plains and beyond. Even without that, I estimate our production capabilities to be far beyond the combined resources of humanity. The risks of sharing this technology at this time is greater than the possible benefits,” Aki said.

“Says you,” Lucia said.

“If you wish to be hired by the Accords, you merely have to sign an agreement. It is being drafted as we speak. The pay and benefits will be set at a comfortable minimum, increased depending on performance reviews,” Aki said.

“What the fuck kind of dystopian AI did I put into that sphere?” Ilea asked. “Do I have to encourage people to form unions now?”

“Any contracts are based on the principles of the Accords. Those comfortable with their existence are bound to be more creative, and most mundane tasks that require simple repetition can be accomplished by Guardians. We have discussed possible concerns already. It was one of the talking points with the Taleen. You would know about that if you had been present,” Aki said.

Ilea shrugged. “I get it, okay. You just sound like HR.”

“Do I need to know who this HR is, or is it merely another attempt at humor that will satisfy only yourself?” Aki asked.

She smiled, self satisfied.

“It’s another movie, isn’t it?” Kyrian asked.

“I’ll take you there at some point,” Ilea said. *If it’s still the same.* She realized she had been avoiding the search of a Transporter in Kohr. *Guess I don’t really want to find out.* She continued her meal, in a considerably less enthusiastic manner. The taste soon distracted her.

Walter smiled. “Realm travel? Are you capable of such a feat?”

“It depends which realm,” Ilea said. “But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. This realm is perfectly fine.”

“Please, just stop,” Claire said, resting her face on her hands. “Technology, sex machines, movies, and realm travel. Can we not just be happy with the entirety of the Guardian army and all of the Taleen facilities?”

Violence! The Baron exclaimed.

“The world is full of possibilities,” Trian said with a smile. “However I agree, spreading ourselves too thin is not a good idea. Not before we have secured our cities to withstand four mark attacks. Awakened four marks.”

“How would you even test that?” Kyrian asked.

Trian glanced at Kyrian and then Ilea. “Well, you two need to train more. Obviously.”

“Right. I would love to do that, if it weren’t for these constant meetings,” Ilea said, giving him a long look. “Contracts here, plans there, treaties over in that corner... next thing I’ll be spying on the Lily or something like that.”

“It’s good you’re a lousy spy,” Kyrian said.

“There is something I’d like to discuss with you two, in regards to possible training,” Aki said. “It should concern you too, Trian.”

“Oh?” Ilea asked.

“Yes. Once we’re back in Iz,” the machine stated.

“Ilea. The Accords left quite an impression. Well done. Syrithis would like to meet you. As soon as possible,” Felicia’s voice came to Ilea’s mind.

“Another meeting... it just never ends,” Ilea murmured as she stood up. *Can’t bring the half elf here. “Meet me at the southern gate of Riverwatch. In twenty minutes.”*

The lack of additional messages meant some flexibility was required. Ilea and Felicia agreed on ten minute waiting times. If one of them couldn’t make it, they would contact the other again an hour later.

“Did someone contact you?” Kyrian asked.

“Yes. Did the Hunters move to the Descent already?” she asked.

“They are still celebrating,” Aki said. “But Isalthar is informed that the Accords have agreed to welcome them, and that we are ready to discuss the specifics.”

“Good. Claire, how much of a political issue is an Immortal Guard visiting Iz and the Hunters?” Ilea asked.

“Why would an Immortal... oh... you mean her. I don’t see how that would be an issue. They know about the hunters,” she said.

“Thought as much. I’ll talk to her first. Maybe she just wants more information in regards to the declarations you sent out,” she said.

“Go for it. I’m tired,” Claire said.

“I will. Once I’m done negotiating with Walter,” Ilea said and squinted her eyes.

“How much do you want?” he asked, crossing his arms in a confident manner. He squinted his eyes in turn, dark magic making his pupils spread until his entire eyes were black. Magic sparks flickered on his arms.

“You don’t scare me old man,” Ilea whispered. “I want your entire stock.”

“My entire stock?” he said. “I will grant it for your entire assets in Riverwatch.”

“She doesn’t have the authority to trade that without me checking the contract and advising her. I advise against it,” Claire said.

“My advisor advises against it,” Ilea said. “I have a few hundred gold with me. How does two hundred sound like?”

“Deal,” Walter said.

“Perfect,” Ilea answered and summoned the gold, storing every barrel she could see within her dominion inside of her domain. “Claire, I spent most of my gold, can I have some more?”

“Yes, I saw. You really are an incredible negotiator,” the woman said and summoned a small box.

Ilea stored the contents. Exactly two hundred pieces of gold. “How rich are we anyway?”

“I’d prefer not to tell you, lest you offer even more next time around. I assure you the gold is invested according to your wishes. And certainly more efficiently than buying a few barrels of ale for two hundred pieces,” Claire said, though she didn’t sound like she cared much.

“If you’re not more annoyed then I’m actually kind of curious as to the amount we have,” Ilea said with a smile.

Claire gave her a look but didn’t answer the question.

“I’d call that a good deal,” Walter said. “We can buy proper beds now.”

“Finally,” Celene said.

“You could’ve just asked me,” Ilea said.

“I’d rather not rely on the charity of a friend,” Walter said.

“But getting her to pay two hundred gold for some ale is acceptable?” Kyrian asked.

“We’re talking about Ilea. She would’ve probably paid more,” Walter said.

“You know I’m here,” Ilea said.

Kyrian nodded. “You’re right. You’re being considerate if anything.”

“I can hear you,” Ilea added.

“That’s why she has me. And an allowance,” Claire said.

Ilea stood up and stretched, teleporting the Fae onto her shoulder. “I’m done being treated like a child. Come on Violence, we’re going to Riverwatch.”

Violence?

“I don’t know. More than here for sure,” Ilea said before she summoned a gate. “Nice to meet you all. Let me know if you need anything from me. You’ve got the marks.”

“A safe journey to you,” Walter said. “I welcome the business.”

Finally. Some good beds, Ilea thought, giving a slight nod to Celene, the woman raising her mug in an appreciative gesture.

The others said their goodbyes in turn, Ilea stepping through the gate and into the quiet hill near Riverwatch.