

## Chapter 755 Era

Ilea craned her neck, biting her lips as a light moan escaped her. She started breathing faster as she grasped the sheets with her hands, her legs twitching slightly before she felt her muscles flex.

Felicia held her legs, looking up a few seconds later, a sheepish smile on her face. She moved up, stopping with her face above Ilea's.

"Don't look at me like that," Ilea said in a whisper, trying to turn to the side.

Felicia put a hand on her shoulder, stopping the movement before she went down and kissed her neck. "Not so beastly anymore," she whispered.

Ilea looked back with a grin, ashen limbs moving out from her back.

Felicia sighed, both of them lying next to each other, utterly exhausted. "We should probably get back... the suns will set soon."

"So very responsible," Ilea mused but the bite wasn't there. She wasn't entirely focused. "I'm hungry."

"Me too," the wind berserker said and stretched. "Do you have a bath in here?"

"I usually use the ocean," Ilea said as she slowly sat up. Her legs were still shaking. "But I do have a bath... yes. Might be nicer." She moved them both down and past the enchantments, the tub filling up with heating water a moment later. She helped it along with Embered Heart.

They soaked in the heat for a few minutes, Ilea relaxing her head on a perfectly shaped pillow of ash. She opened her eyes. "Let's go raid Keyla's kitchen. She's in the town hall."

Felicia sighed. "You want to show up there together, like some ravenous beasts?"

"Exactly. We might not even miss the ceremony," Ilea said.

"I'm sore," Felicia murmured.

"If only you knew a healer," Ilea mused and used her spell on both of them, quickly bringing them back to life. They stayed in the water for a few more minutes before she stood up and stretched.

Yellow eyes followed her every movement.

Ilea smiled and went down to kiss the woman, teleporting both of them out in the next moment.

"Ilea! At least warn me," Felicia exclaimed, covering her chest before a set of armor appeared over her body.

Ilea laughed and moved in close, herself still not wearing anything. "Who's going to see? The swordmouth tigers?" she asked, turning to the cave. Black wings spread on her back as her mantle formed in the shape of her dress. The same design she had gotten in Yinnahall, with a far more comfortable and durable material.

“Do you ever wear anything below that?” Felicia asked as she took flight as well, not wearing a helmet but otherwise ready for battle.

Ilea looked at her as she moved her wings. “That’s non of your business, Redleaf,” she said with a smile.

The woman rolled her eyes and followed, the two soon flying over the patches of forest in the valleys of the southern mountain chains.

Morhill was cast in shadow by the nearby mountains when two hungry women entered a busy kitchen near the town hall.

“Code black,” Keyla said after taking a single glance at Ilea.

All the cooks tensed up and finished what they were doing, resuming their work in a sped up manner.

Ilea got her first plate thirteen seconds later, sitting down on the kitchen floor with the armored Felicia next to her. She wolfed down the seared fish fillets in seconds as Keyla approached.

She crouched down. “I can set up a table or something too. Are you okay?” She glanced between the two of them.

Ilea nodded, both receiving another plate by one of the cooks. “*I am, thanks Keyla. I love you.*” She chose telepathy due to her occupied mouth.

The dragonlike woman laughed before she patted Ilea on the head, one of very few people allowed such a gesture. “You two eat your fill,” she said with a toothy smile, looking between them, her reptilian eyes lingering on Felicia for a few seconds before she stood up and got back to commanding the kitchen staff.

“Code black?” Felicia asked between bites.

“*No idea. That’s her,*” Ilea said.

“*Suppose you have to have an emergency plan for a hungry Lilith,*” Felicia mused.

Ilea didn’t reply. She didn’t care, entirely absorbed by the continuous stream of marvelous dishes. Twenty minutes later she sat in the kitchen with her entire system focused on digestion, her mind dulled and happy. *I should fund some restaurant award system here in Elos. Keyla wins everything.*

Someone opened the door to the kitchen and found the two women sitting on the floor. Claire took in the sight with one raised brow. “Took my advice to heart, did you?” she commented. “Greetings, Lady Redleaf. The ceremony starts in a few minutes, central town square. Would be nice to have both of you there.”

“I just ate,” Ilea said, looking up at the woman.

Claire crouched down slightly and offered a hand. “I can see that.”

Ilea grasped it while grumbling, Claire straining as she helped the woman up.

“You’ve grown again,” Claire said.

“More dense, yes,” Ilea replied. She offered a hand to Felicia, helping up the Imperial Major and head of House Redleaf.

“You should be there too,” Claire said to Keyla but the cook waved her off.

“Have to prepare for the next round,” Keyla said. “I have a reputation to uphold. Unlike some people.”

“Yes, yes,” Ilea said and straightened her hair, checking herself through her domain. She looked fine. “Let’s go then,” she said and teleported the four of them out, including all the cooks.

“Ilea what are you doing!” Keyla gasped.

“Just blame me if someone complains. Lilith sanctioned closure, for an hour or two. Come on, you all did a wonderful job the past few days, and before,” Ilea said.

Keyla sighed. “Very well. Everyone, suits and dresses,” she handed her storage ring to the group of cooks, each one in turn changing into a well cut outfit in their own style, the ring making the process incredibly quick.

The head cook herself changed into a set of light scale armor, black and yellow complimenting the beige colors of her own scales.

Ilea smiled, watching it all. “Wait, what about the wait staff?”

Keyla whistled towards the town hall, a group of fifteen people rushing out a moment later. They joined the waiting group with a casual demeanor, as if everything was planned.

*Sentinels and Shadows, not at all the true beacons of power in the south.*

“Where do you find staff like that?” Felicia asked.

Keyla gave her a look. “You train them yourself, pay them well, listen to their complaints, and provide the best working environment that you can.”

Claire chuckled.

“Should’ve seen that coming, noble,” Ilea said, touching her neck with a brief motion. “To the festival!”

“I do most of that too. Don’t have the time to train anyone myself,” Felicia muttered to herself as they walked towards the distant flashes of magic. Music soon joined in, various groups of musicians standing atop rooftops with Shadowguards or Sentinels nearby.

The central square of Morhill spanned over a hundred meters in both length and width, a large circular fountain set at the center. Near all the space was packed with people, small pockets open where performers showed off their magic tricks, illusions, and element manipulation. A wooden platform had been added to one side of the square, various representatives of the Meadow Accords, Ravenhall, and Morhill already present.

Their group joined the mass of people moving into the square, Ilea soon spotting a familiar fire mage in her domain. “*I want to check this out,*” she sent to the others.

“*Kind of have to be up there, I’ll see you later,*” Claire sent and vanished in the next moment.

Felicia followed and stopped when Ilea reached the edge of a performance pocket. “*The Imperials rented a balcony for the occasion. I should join them.*”

“*Of course,*” Ilea answered, looking at the woman next to her with a smile. “*We should do that again sometime,*” she added with a smirk.

Felicia's cheeks flushed a little, her heartbeat increasing in turn. "We..." "We, yes. We should. You know where to find me... but I suppose with teleportation gates it's a lot easier for me to go places too..."

Ilea grabbed her hand amidst the crowd. "I'll show you the north sometime. I know some very good spots."

"That sounds wonderful. Yes... oh, I think some of the officers have spotted me. I'll stay in touch! Thanks for... the evening," Felicia said.

"The same to you," Ilea said, considering if she should kiss the woman despite all the people nearby but she didn't want to make it into some kind of declaration. Them leaving together already implied enough. She was sure Felicia could somehow turn it into an advantage within the politics of Virilya but there was little reason to add fuel to the fire.

The woman gave her a last smile before she vanished towards the balcony occupied by the nobility of Lys.

More than a few of them glanced down at Ilea but she was more interested in the pyromantic performance of Jirayu, the mage twirling in place as his flames appeared in flying birds around him, each moving in a distinct pattern. Compared to the dancers, it was clear the man had thought about and trained his routine. Lines of fire joined in as the birds started moving in more erratic patterns, some touching the lines and exploding in small but controlled bursts of flame, Jirayu himself dancing in place, rhythmic movements adding to the performance.

Ilea clapped when he came to a stop, many of the nearby crowd cheering as coins were thrown his way.

The man bowed with a smile, quickly collecting everything as the circle around him closed, his performance no longer demanding people to stand aside.

"Quite impressive," Ilea sent his way.

Jyraiui looked around in confusion but refocused on the coins. "Collecting copper like some second rate performer. I should've been in the arena."

"Could've asked me, you know," Ilea said.

"You could've... wait... fuck..." his groans were muffled by the chatter around him, the performer punching the ground as he realized the missed opportunity.

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Helena glanced at the parting women. Claire Russel, former nobility of Kroll, head administrator of Ravenhall and one of the most powerful people in the Plains. Keyla Aranoth, head cook of the Golden Drake, experimental and dedicated. One of the best cooks in the Plains. Felicia Redleaf, new head of her House, quickly rising to importance and widespread respect within the capital due to her competence and her actions in the war. *And she's refrained from using her connection to*

*Lilith to the extent I would. Always seemed like she wanted that part to stay hidden. Old friends perhaps?* Helena smiled. She remembered the times when sentimentality prevented her from taking advantage of a situation. It felt like a lifetime ago.

Lilith herself she didn't exactly consider, the woman focused on some pyromancer's performance. *Just another adventurer at first glance.*

"You look particularly unpleasant tonight," Heron said as he relaxed, leaning against the balcony railings.

Helena looked at the drink in her hand. "I rented this space to think. And I don't remember sending out any invitations."

"You've failed to have me assassinated in the past. Don't act so cold. I can tell when you're not in a good mood," he said.

She looked at the set up stage. Nothing grand. Wood, a few banners here and there. Something one would find in a town like Morhill. And yet she was here. The Empress of Lys was here. Half the Lily was present. She had even seen Maureen watch the tournament disguised as an adventurer.

*How could I be in a good mood?* The world was about to change and everyone was celebrating. *Long range teleportation, brought to us by some creature from an unknown realm.* A being that could wipe out half of humanity if it used its magic against them.

"You cannot stop it anymore," Heron said as he walked next to her, a light smile on his face. "Whatever our chances, whatever the risks. Things are now in motion that neither you nor me have seen. The next decade will be quite interesting."

She didn't disagree. A part of her looked forward to it. Helena was bad at losing. She knew as much, and wanted to have this balcony as some sort of solitary space to be miserable. Heron's uninvited presence cut through that but she was too proud to send him off as well. He knew her too well and could use it against her in the future.

*How dare you make me excited again without my permission,* she thought, looking down at Lilith, the incomprehensible woman walking through the crowd with hundreds of eyes on her, uncaring for anything but the next mundane performer. "Infuriating."

"Did you eat dinner?" Heron asked with raised brows.

Helena whipped her head his way and glared.

She had of course, otherwise the square would be coated in blood. Then again she didn't know how she would fare against entire groups of Sentinels. The tournaments had proven they were remarkably tough, even more so for their respective levels. She mostly scoffed at the catastrophic failure of the other Healing Orders. If they had such powerful Classes as an option, why had they never chosen to train their people?

"Welcome, citizens of the Plains," a voice rang out from the many enchanted devices set up around the square.

Helena already tuned out the speech, the presence of all the rulers here more courtesy than interest. They already knew about the Meadow Accords, about the teleportation gates. She watched the various groups speak, the fox and her council introducing themselves to the stunned and excited crowd, followed by the dwarven war machines. *What a quaint little circle,* she thought with gritted teeth, looking down at her swirling drink. *When did I get so old and bitter?*

She smashed the glass in her hand, the sound entirely drowned out at the cheers of the crowd. Heron remained in calm contemplation.

“... teleportation gates available to everyone for use. Through Morhill you will have access to the frontiers of our lands. The Isanna desert, the North, the cities of the west. Monster attacks will be repelled by adventurers, Shadows, and Sentinels.”

*Get on with it.*

“Various gates are already present in the city. From this moment on, they’re open to the public. Depending on the countries and cities involved, there will be a fee to pay but it should remain more than reasonable compared to the physical journey. The safety of the gates has been tested by Lilith herself. May you find your way through the Plains, merchants, travelers, and adventurers.”

The speech ended in a decidedly neutral stance, as if the potential conflicts and tensions weren’t clear to the speakers. Well chosen, Helena supposed. If any large scale struggles arose, it would be blamed on whatever country or settlement involved instead of the Accords.

*And everyone will want their hands on that piece of magical technology.* Helena wondered who would figure it out first. If anyone did at all. The Taleen ones had been around for long enough and nobody had managed to duplicate anything remotely similar. However now there were human mages around that could be made to share information. There was documentation to be stolen, and there were much safer environments to study the gates compared to a Taleen dungeon. Plus now they knew it was possible for humans to produce. At least that was the assumption. That or the Meadow provided everything.

*I will have to face it again. Or have other people go interact with it.* She schooled her face, hiding away the slight smile that threatened to break out. She was afraid. Terrified even. *Finally.*

Helena was aware that there were monsters out in the wilds she could go face tomorrow but it always struck her as madness to engage in such activities when they simply weren’t a necessity. And her entire order would fall apart, devolving into petty squabbles and bloodshed until one of her underlings gained control. No, she was right where she needed to be.

Cheers, music, and excited conversations drowned out her thoughts, the celebrations fanned once again by the various announcements she had already known about. Merchants would be scrambling to change their entire businesses, nobles will be pushing for regulation or bans to prevent losses, guards will be looking for more favorable positions in remote towns once teleportation becomes more widespread. The implications and possibilities were many, too much for anyone to ignore. Helena had plenty of considerations to worry about herself.

“And so a new era begins,” Heron mused.

“The era of prosperity? Of teleportation? Or the era of the Meadow?” she asked.

The man smiled. “Only time will tell. I shall return to my Empress. May you find favor in the coming chaos,” he said and bowed lightly.

Helena mirrored his gesture, a new drink in her hand as she watched the celebrations. She finished it and vanished. *To work then.* Six of her assassins appeared close to her as they made their way to the Virilya gate. Investments to get a gate near Myrefield had already been made. Far enough away to remain somewhat safe of course but they couldn’t ignore the benefits. Nobody could.