

Chapter 918 Dungeoneering

Ilea heard the screech of the other Cave Gellens but found their charging even more aggressive than before. Felicia would make short work of them, now that they were throwing away caution.

“There was one thing I wanted to touch on,” Aki spoke.

“Go on.”

“You left two divine artifacts behind with the Meadow. Seranthinil, the pole weapon you took off Noro. Both the way it behaves and the abilities it possesses, I think it would be a wonderful fit for Gael, once he is ready. He uses wild and blunt strikes, constantly breaking and losing his steel mauls and clubs. The weapon should return to its wielder, more efficiently than even with Silent Memory, and the magic it possesses would elevate Gael’s striking potential exponentially. His personality seems to fit rather well too, though that is more an assumption.

“And until he is ready, he could use it as a training utensil. He should be able to take a hit or two before the Meadow would have to intervene.”

Ilea didn’t take her eyes off Felicia, the woman summoning a whirlwind of air around herself to push the two injured creatures away slightly. She had lost her arm to one of their strikes but it didn’t slow her down in the slightest. If anything, she seemed more determined.

Ilea grinned. *You go, girl.*

Felicia teleported past one of the creatures and finally managed to cut through the leg she had been working on, reducing the Gellen’s available appendages to five.

Ilea smiled, only half focused on the conversation with Aki. “If you think he can handle it. Just don’t show him the weapon before he is ready, or he’ll get himself killed trying to conquer that thing.”

“I’m measuring both Gael’s defense and healing, as well as Seranthinil’s striking power. I’ll introduce the two of them once the challenge is most beneficial,” Aki spoke and paused again. “Are you interested in the shelter preparations throughout the continent?”

“You mean in case an Extraction actually happens?” Ilea asked.

“Not just for that potential event. Anything big really. Human settlements at least are generally built above ground. Any attack by four marks, be it dragons, void creatures, or a Monarch, would deal a lot of damage regardless of the response. Riverwatch proved that yet again.

“Of course evacuation would take time, but should the teleportation gates fail, it’s paramount that any settlement has their own shelters. Enchanted and deep enough to withstand even high level bombardment and spells that would strike above ground. I’m in talks with the respective leaders of Lys, Kroll, even Nipha, to share construction requirements and offer collaboration. Even Marrindayne is interested in extending their city’s perimeters down into the ground.”

“Sounds reasonable,” Ilea murmured. She hadn’t exactly listened, cheering quietly when Felicia managed a deep cut into one of the Gellen’s backs. *Her Fluctuation Saw is doing fucking work!* Felicia had complained about the high mana cost but it proved her most effective weapon against

the large creatures, and whilst she had offered some reservations about getting in close, Ilea had reassured her.

I knew it. She fucking loves getting right up in their faces. Ilea felt like the black blood now covering Felicia's armor was pushing her onward even more.

Damn, now I want to kill some high level Spirits with her, Ilea thought. She calmed herself, knowing Felicia's journey would likely not lead to the same heights as her own. *Maybe I can join in on some low level hunting anyway, without using any of my magic or something. She's having so much fun.*

"I can also report that I'm now fluent in English. I'm now working on French, Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean. There is an incredible wealth of knowledge available on the Earthen Internet. So, so much history, thousands of stories, philosophy, religion, science, and technology," Aki spoke.

"Did you figure out coffee?" Ilea asked.

"The Meadow is growing a variety of seeds in a controlled environment. I do believe it has managed to grow several variations of coffee beans already, though apparently the presence of mana may alter the seeds and subsequent plants somewhat. The taste may be affected, and as far as I understand, humanity on Earth has spent quite some time perfecting it."

"If we could figure it out, I'm sure the Meadow and a bunch of nature mages can do the same thing," Ilea said with a smile.

"I'm sure they will. Once the Meadow has learned English as well, we will start with the copying of books. We're collaborating in setting up some sort of library of the Accords, collecting knowledge from all the peoples included in our alliance before we copy and store it all in various locations throughout the continent."

"How many books from Earth can you take back with one trip of your altered machine?" Ilea asked.

"It depends entirely on the length, but I'll add storage extensions as soon as you bring it back to me. Mark has helped set up various online store and research subscriptions as well, though the volume of knowledge on Earth is staggering to say the least."

Ilea smiled. "Not that most of the internet is worth your time."

"Culturally, all of it is relevant, but yes, I am prioritizing certain topics," the machine spoke.

Ilea saw Felicia cut into the stomach of the third and last Gellen, the large insectoid creature collapsing on top of her. She saw Felicia through her domain and grinned as the woman slowly cut her way through and out of the creature.

She finally broke out of it, her face covered in black blood. Felicia spat and flew out with a twirl. She found her severed arm and reattached it, most of the wounds on her body already healed, her armor however showing dents and cuts alike.

"Well done!" Ilea shouted.

Felicia raised her arms and did a curtsy. "More coming!" she said back and cracked her knuckles, the air vibrating with her voice.

Ilea smiled and summoned herself a new bottle of ale. *She can do it.* Already, she was wondering what kind of Evolutions Felicia would get at three hundred. What kind of third Class she could get if she managed to knock out the requirements. *We'll have to find some suitable enemies for her to face. We'll have to get her a healing Class too of some kind, and I'll have to spar with her again.*

“I’ve finally talked to Garonoth as well,” Aki said.

“You did? How’d it go?” she asked, unsure if the dragon would be interested in the machine, potentially aware of the ancient history of the Taleen.

“Not great at first, but I managed to start a conversation when I suggested philosophical theories instead of practical issues. I did manage to steer the conversation towards the topic of Ker Velor, but Garonoth remains uninterested in the potential danger. He maintains he will deal with any invaders to his domain, once such problems come up.”

“Yeah, he didn’t strike me as incredibly proactive. Almost merging with the mountain he’s hanging out in,” Ilea said.

“I will keep the conversation going as he is willing,” Aki spoke. “Speaking of conversations, Nelras Ithom has been requesting one with you since your defeat of Verleya.”

Right. Didn’t he talk about introducing me to the Sunlight Wastes and his former Light Domain once he deemed me ready?

Ilea wasn’t quite keen on seeing another Oracle anytime soon, but with a former Monarch who had been willing to fight the Ascended, and with her recent title of Monarch in turn, it could be helpful in the grand scheme of things.

“I’ll talk to him soon,” she said and followed Felicia down the tunnel she had chosen.

Felicia didn’t quite manage thirty nine kills in the end. However she also didn’t have to be rescued, instead fleeing from a group of six Cave Gellens with a deep cut through her spine, flying thanks to her magic alone.

[Wind Mage – lvl 265]

“Thirteen levels,” Ilea said as she crouched down next to the slowly healing woman.

Felicia had managed to get out of the cavern, the suns much lower on the horizon compared to when they had entered.

Felicia twitched. She smiled, spitting out blood. “Thirteen... scho far,” she spat out.

The Gellens didn’t pursue past their nests deeper in the caverns, leaving Felicia to recover.

Ilea summoned a meal and started eating, sometimes feeding a spoonful to her heavily injured girlfriend. She had agreed only to intervene with her healing if absolutely necessary. Like this, she could likely get a few more achievements for her future evolutions.

“I assume you’ll manage to get back on your own?” Aki asked.

“Sure. I’ll let you know when we want to go back inside,” Ilea said with a smile.

They ate and half an hour later, Felicia could move again, slowly sitting up before she sighed. “I’m filthy.”

“Yes you are,” Ilea said. “A bath? And then a movie?”

Felicia grinned. “You’re still on about that.”

“You said you were busy, not that you didn’t want to visit Earth.”

Felicia looked away. “It’s just... frightening, I suppose. Going to another realm.”

“As long as I don’t die, you’re safe,” Ilea said.

“What if I say something stupid and you get mad, then leave me behind?” Felicia asked.

Ilea pointed her spoon at the woman. “If I get mad I could take you there and leave you behind anyway. And I’d leave you in Kohr. Or Erendar if I’m really pissed.”

“A death sentence,” Felicia said, nodding along.

“Almost certainly,” Ilea said. “Which is why we should watch a movie.”

“Extortion,” Felicia said.

“Threat of murder, really, but call it what you want,” Ilea said. “Please?”

Felicia smiled. “Alright. But first, the bath.”

“Yes!” Ilea teleported them both into her home south of Ravenhall.

“Oh my... Jesus... is that blood? That smell,” Torben exclaimed as he shot up from the couch and stumbled away, rushing to open the double doors of the balcony.

“Right. I forgot they were still staying here,” Ilea said and pointed. “That’s Torben, and Jennifer is probably somewhere around as well. They’re Cless’ parents.”

“From Earth,” Felicia said and smiled. She waved at Torben. “Felicia, nice to meet you. Apologies about the blood. I’ll go clean up now,” she said and teleported down.

“Sorry about that. She was hunting,” Ilea said, practicing her space magic in addition to her balance to prevent her weight from destroying the floor.

Torben’s eyes went wide. He sighed. “Sure... it’s just... it’s a lot. Magic and all that.”

Ilea paused. “How are you holding up?”

“I... I don’t know,” Torben said as he glanced behind her. “Jennifer seems to be adjusting fine, but she’s always been great with change and difficult circumstances. But... there’s magic. You know?”

“Yeah,” Ilea said and grinned. “I know.”

“And Cless has... all these powers. And I don’t want to just see all of this as normal. I’m trying... Aki helps, but... he’s like some kind of AI machine,” Torben said, the last bit in a whisper.

“He’s a dagger actually, but ignore that. Take your time to adjust. Do you need anything?” Ilea asked. She could see that what he really needed was someone to talk to, but she had a date coming up and really didn’t feel like being his anxiety sponge. They weren’t exactly close.

Torben blinked at her. “A dagger? I... no,” he rubbed his temples. “I think time is all that I need. Sorry. I didn’t mean to hold you up.”

"It's fine. Maybe you'd want to see Ravenhall soon? You've been here with a green eyed machine, your wife, and Cless. Might be good to talk to some normal people for a change?" Ilea suggested. *More normal at least.*

"Maybe you're right," he said. "They've been feeding the tigers out there. With fish that Cless has caught... with runes she paints." Torben raised his hand and mimicked the drawing of runes.

"Yeah. A change of scenery might help," Ilea said. "Tell Aki when he gets back."

The machine in question walked up from the kitchen stairs, wearing a red apron and carrying a steaming pot with a thick soup. "I heard you," he said, setting the pot down on the table.

Ilea looked at him. "Why are you wearing a chef's hat?"

"It was Cless' suggestion. And Jennifer said it made the Centurion less scary."

"It suits you, I think," Ilea said.

"Not any less scary," Torben said. "More so, really." He sighed and went back to the couch before he sat down and picked up the book he was reading.

Stats and Classes, an Introduction, Ilea read on the cover, the author listed as the Meadow itself.

"I'll go take that bath. Let me know if anyone here goes insane. I might be able to heal that," Ilea said.

"Will do," Aki spoke as he set the table. "They're late again," he complained as he went towards the door. "Ilea, do you two want to join for dinner?"

"We'll eat on Earth, I think. But thanks," she said.

"Eat on Earth. The world has gone mad," Torben murmured right before Ilea vanished to join Felicia.

The bath was nowhere near hot enough for her tastes, but she supposed with Felicia there, it was a worthy compromise.

It took a little longer for them to get back to the other realm. Ilea smiled when she appeared, stretching as she made sure not to twitch and accidentally break through the floor.

Felicia looked around. "Doesn't look that strange," she said before she walked to the closed blinds and touched them. "Strange material." A moment later, she looked out between them. "What are those? Moving metal boxes?"

"Cars," Aki's voice came from Mark's guest room, the silver machine floating out. "Greetings you two. Ilea, can you send me back?"

"In twelve and a half minutes," Ilea said. "Don't want to leave her alone here."

Felicia moved away from the window, her yellow eyes wide as she looked at Ilea. "This realm is your home?"

Ilea grinned before she touched the woman's cheek. "No. This was my home, but not anymore."

Felicia smiled. "Thanks for taking me."

“Of course,” Ilea said with a smile and looked around. “Mark still in Elos?”

“You say that like anyone but you has the ability to travel here,” Aki’s machine said.

“Right,” Ilea murmured before she summoned a few of Cless’ paintings. Landscapes and people mainly, though some showed spells and monsters as well. “You two, help me choose where to put them.”

Decorating took longer than twelve minutes, but considering the empty walls of Mark’s apartment, it wasn’t too difficult to improve. Ilea made a few volcanic glass nails and pushed them into the concrete with her thumb. Perfect to hang the paintings. “There you go,” she murmured with a smile, though she wondered how often Mark would even return here at this point. But then she supposed his apartment had become the de facto base of the Accords on Earth. And of course their movie theater.

She brought back Aki, taking Felicia with her before they returned. Walking over to the kitchen, she found and grabbed her phone. “Let’s get pizza.”

Ilea found that her favorite pizza place was still around. They hadn’t even updated their website.

“What’s Pizza?” Felicia asked.

“You’ll see,” Ilea said and sat down on the ashen couch, ordering five separate ones. *Now. What movie are we going to watch?*

Ilea would’ve liked to stay the night on Earth, but sleeping, even on an ashen bed, seemed too risky to her, so she brought herself and Felicia back to Elos.

She woke up when the first sunlight drifted in through the blinds of Felicia’s room in Virilya.

“The dragonslayer wakes from her slumber,” Felicia said, herself standing in front of a full body mirror as she buttoned up her imperial vest. Her hair was already done, put up in a bun.

Ilea rolled over in the bed and took in the sight. “You look like an empress. I like it.”

“Are you suggesting treason yet again?” Felicia asked.

Ilea appeared behind her and hugged her very carefully. “I could make you the Empress. You know that.”

“As appealing as that might be, I have a meeting to get to,” Felicia said. “And being Empress would mean a lot more of those.”

“You mean you don’t want the responsibility for a vast empire and millions of people?” Ilea asked, staggering back, stunned in shock.

Felicia raised a brow, then smiled. “It was fun.”

“It was,” Ilea said, relaxing her pose before she yawned.

“You have plans yourself?” Felicia asked.

Ilea thought for a moment, trying to remember what she had wanted to do. “Right. I have to have a chat. Human elven Monarch to soul carrying War machine former elven Monarch.”

Felicia grinned. “Well then, I won’t hold you back any longer, Monarch,” she said and bowed.

“Who’s treasoning now?” Ilea teased.

“My relations with you are quite literally a matter of existential security to the Empire of Lys,” she said. “And so I am allowed *some* leeway.”

“So you’re saying I’m just an asset to you?” Ilea asked, stretching as she looked out the window.

Felicia walked up to her and hugged her. She moved her face close to Ilea’s ear and whispered.

“What else would you be?”

Ilea smiled. “I’ll see you soon.”

“Keep in touch, Monarch,” Felicia said with a smile and vanished outside, waving before she flew off and towards the central district of the capital.

Ilea finished her stretches, using a field of space magic between herself and the ground to make sure she wouldn’t damage it. She was nearly confident now that nothing would happen, but with Felicia’s room, she wanted to be sure.

Ilea activated Teleportation and focused on her anchor near the domain of the Meadow. *Time to meet a former Monarch.*