

Quest Progress Updated

Iris sat at a large wooden table in the inn's common room, nursing a mug of ale. Sera and Tanith sat across from her, chatting about what they would do once they arrived in Brightburn.

Iris leaned back in her chair and looked around the room. The inn was filled with people, some of them locals and others travelers passing through. The air was thick with the smell of cooking food and smoke from the fireplace.

She'd come back from the Reeve's House and visited with Mocha before settling the girl into the stables for the night. There were a few judgmental looks that her friend gave the other horses, and as Iris walked her to the stall, she could have sworn Mocha had grown compared to other horses.

Iris didn't think Mocha was still growing... but her horse *did* have abilities, and was clearly leveling up...

She shrugged. *Who knows. Anything's possible.*

As she took another sip of her ale, Iris heard the door open and turned to see a figure entering the inn. A man in armor walked in, quickly followed by another man in armor and a woman in what looked like... robes. The three wore hoods and took in the inn before moving to the counter.

Iris glanced back down at her mug and was about to take a sip before she heard a feminine gasp, followed by the newcomers talking.

"Erick! Look!"

"Is she?" a male voice asked.

"I think so!" the female replied.

Iris looked up just in time to see a wide-eyed woman nearly bouncing as she ran over to their table.

The woman's eyes widened as she reached the table. "Another terran!" she exclaimed, almost breathlessly.

Iris raised an eyebrow. "Excuse me?"

The woman giggled. "I'm sorry, I'm just surprised to see another one of our kind here! My name is Eira," she said, extending a hand toward Iris.

Iris just stared at it. "...Okay?"

The woman hesitated, looking confused before slowly lowering her hand. "Oh. I just thought you would be more excited to meet another terran."

Iris shrugged. "In my experience, it isn't usually a positive occurrence."

Eira looked a bit deflated. “Oh, well. Sorry to bother you then. I’ll... uh... go back to my friends now.”

With that, Eira turned and made her way back to the two men at the counter. Iris watched her go before turning back to Sera and Tanith, who were looking at her with raised eyebrows.

“Another terran?” Tanith asked.

Iris shook her head. “Just some overexcited woman. Nothing to worry about.”

Sera stared at the group by the counter that was trying to get a room for the night. One of the men was staring at Iris.

The high elf turned her attention back to the table. “Why aren’t you excited to meet another of your people? Weren’t you all brought here together?”

Iris shook her head. “I’ve met others. None are from the same place I am. I can’t explain it, but none of the other humans—sorry, terrans—I have met, have anything in common with me. Only that we’re similar people,” she explained, sighing. “Every time has ended with them trying to force me to do something or putting us in dangerous situations. No, I’m quite content with just Mocha and taking odd jobs, like helping the two of you.”

Sera and Tanith exchanged a quick glance before Sera spoke up. “Well, we’re glad to have you helping us. And if you ever want to talk about anything, we’re here for you.”

Iris smiled gratefully. “Thanks, Sera. I appreciate it.”

The group of terrans all stared at her as they walked into the tavern area and grabbed a table on the other side of the room. Iris rolled her eyes and lifted her mug to her lips, watching the three as they sat and talked, distracted by a waiter approaching them for their orders.

As she took a sip of her ale, she heard the door open again and turned to see the village reeve entering. The telv woman quickly scanned the room before her gaze locked onto Iris. Reeve Evelyn made her way towards her, a smile on her face.

“Good evening, Iris,” Evelyn said, reaching their table. “I’m glad we could meet up for dinner.”

The telv waved at a young telv boy, who quickly rushed over. “Take their orders will ya, let’s get some dinner over here.”

“Of course, Miss Evelyn.”

Iris smiled and gestured to the empty chair. “This is Sera, a traveling merchant, and her guard, Tanith.”

Sera and Tanith greeted Evelyn, and the reeve slid into the empty seat.

As the woman shifted to get comfortable, Iris took a closer look at the shorter telv and her soft features, with gentle curves and short pointed ears. Her hair was a warm

chestnut brown, woven into elaborate braids that cascaded down her back. Her eyes were a soft hazel color, framed by enviable lashes. Despite her position as village head, her appearance was humble and unassuming, with simple clothing and minimal adornments, but carried herself with confidence and authority. Her appearance was definitely deceptive, as Iris had already noted earlier. The woman seemed ready to charge right through any obstacle.

Evelyn placed her elbows on the table and leaned forward, her voice lowered. “I’ve made a decision about the creature you brought. You lot are leaving tomorrow, yeah?”

Sera nodded. “We are.”

The reeve smiled. “Good. From the direction you arrived... I am assuming you are traveling to Brightburn. I have a missive for the lady, this will request assistance with our... harpy problem. Further, Miss Iris, I put in a request for you to be rewarded for what you have done thus far.”

“Thank you, Reeve Evelyn. I appreciate that,” Iris said.

“Oh, just call me ‘Evelyn’. Most everyone does,” the woman said with a chuckle.

As they continued their discussion, their meals arrived at the table. The aroma of roasted meats, savory vegetables, and fresh bread filled the air. The presentation was immaculate, with the food arranged neatly on their plates and garnished with herbs and spices. It was clear that the innkeeper had put extra effort into the meal, likely due to the presence of the village reeve.

As the group chatted and enjoyed their dinner, the atmosphere of the inn became livelier. The sounds of laughter and conversation filled the air as other patrons joined in on the revelry. Evelyn shared stories of the village and memorable travelers that had come through, while Sera and Tanith regaled them with tales of their travels across the land.

The conversation turned serious as the topic of the harpies came up.

“Do we have to worry about them?” Evelyn asked gravelly.

Iris shrugged. “Honestly, I am not sure. They did not seem to want to leave the forest. But that didn’t stop them from attacking us as we traveled through. There is something off about the forest, though. It felt like there was more mana there than normal.”

The reeve’s brows scrunched up. “Mana? I’ve heard bits and pieces about this from travelers such as yourself, but we don’t get much news. It has to do with the Flash, yeah?”

Iris nodded her head. “Yes. And the cores—”

“The colorful orbs in the beasts?”

Iris smiled as she nodded again. “Yes. Here, let me show you something.”

She pulled some mana into herself and formed a **Spark** in her palm, the little crackling orb of electricity hovering in the air.

The reeve's eyes widened in surprise and awe as she watched the electrical spell hover in Iris's palm. “By the gods, that's incredible,” she exclaimed. “I've never seen anything like it before.”

Even Sera and Tanith who had seen her magic, let out small gasps of surprise as they focused on the magic happening in front of them. A few other patrons let out various exclamations of disbelief, but no one else approached. She did catch the three terrans staring intently at her.

Iris ignored the others and grinned, feeling a sense of pride in her abilities. “It's just a small taste of what mana can do,” she said. “But it's also why the cores are so important. They allow us to draw on and channel the mana all around us in ways that can be harnessed for a variety of purposes.”

The reeve nodded, looking thoughtful. “I see. And the Flash brought this? Including yourself?”

“It brought me, and the other terrans,” she said, gesturing toward the table that hosted the other three terrans. “It also changed normal beasts, and if I'm right... people. The only thing that makes sense to me, is that the harpies were once people mutated by too much mana into becoming those creatures.”

The reeve's eyes widened in surprise. “People turned into harpies? That's... that's quite a claim. Do you have any evidence to support this theory?”

Iris shook her head. “No, just a gut feeling. Hopefully, this lady you spoke of will send people to investigate further.”

Evelyn nodded. “Aye, she should. She's been a good liege. I hope those harpies stay in their cursed forest.”

“I cannot agree more. It was terrifying to see. If it wasn't for Iris...” Sera said.

Evelyn lifted her mug. “To Iris! Slayer of Harpies!”

Tanith raised his ale and repeated, making Iris and Sera laugh. The locals in the tavern let out a chorus of ‘hear, hear!’ followed by a bunch of laughter. The adventurer's cheeks blushed at the attention.

She loved it.

It also made her think. Eona and Lehelia in particular needed people like her. While she enjoyed soaking up the attention that her chosen profession garnered, it was too much for just her. The harpies proved that. She couldn't take them all down alone, and she had people to protect.

Eona needs adventurers, not just an adventurer.

Iris's gaze shifted between the faces gathered around the table, before eventually settling on the figure of the high elf merchant. "Sera," she called out, her tone firm yet respectful.

The woman seemed surprised by the intense stare in Iris's eyes. "Y-Yes?"

"You are in the Merchant's Guild, right?" she asked the woman.

Evelyn furrowed her brows as she listened in.

Sera's face took on a confused countenance. "I am. You know this."

Iris nodded. "Right, of course," she said with a dismissive wave. "How does a Guild *form*?"

Tanith sucked in a breath.

Sera's eyes narrowed. "Well, you need to have others in the profession that you wish to form a Guild for," she explained, her focus looking at her hand as she ticked off various requirements. "You need an actual headquarters and a dedicated support team to help run it. But most importantly, a sponsor. Usually, this is a city government. The Sovereign Cities make this quite easy for guilds, and that's why most of them are formed in one of the cities. For example, the Banking Guild is based in Marketbol, while the Merchant's Guild is based in Parholm."

Iris nodded. "This past week has really shed some light on something the world needs. Between the drakyyd attacks in Cosdale, the harpy attacks on the way here to Stillstead," she said with a pointed look at Evelyn. "Never mind the bandit attacks I keep hearing about. There needs to be an Adventurer's Guild. I can't do it all. There need to be other people like me who take on quests and missions from individuals, villages, or even towns to handle these things."

Evelyn lifted a hand. "That is what the local ladies and lords are for. The Guards and national armies."

Iris shook her head. "The various Guards are only focused on their small areas of responsibility, and the national armies are too cumbersome. Lords and Ladies would still have to muster their forces and ride out, after getting notice. How long will it take before Brightburn responds to the harpy issue? Days? Weeks?"

Evelyn nodded. "We'll be lucky if it's weeks. I'll need to prepare the men of the village for a potential fight."

"See? That's too long," Iris said dismissively. "If I had a dedicated group, I could take them. If there was a guild that handled requests such as your village's it would create a quick response to problems just like this. The Flash did more than just bring magic to the world, it brought a system that makes you stronger the more actions you perform. Making magic does the most, but killing monsters and beasts? That gives a decent amount as well."

Tanith narrowed his eyes. "What do you mean *stronger*?"

Iris shrugged. "I am pretty sure I am physically stronger than you right now, Tanith. Faster too. And that's all because of my adventuring. You could have that as well."

The man seemed to consider her response before nodding slowly. "I would like to learn more about this if you would be willing."

Iris smiled. "We'll have plenty of time on the way tomorrow. If Sera is okay with it, I'll sit with you on the wagon."

"That is acceptable. I have ledgers to go over," Sera said before she glanced at Tanith. "But back to this guild idea. You'd need more people like you. How would you get them?"

That made Iris smile. "All I have to do is show people what they could be, and I'm sure I can get enough. Magic is a powerful motivator. What do you all think?"

Evelyn let out a throaty chuckle. "Not that I can help much, but if what you're saying is true and there could be more people like you?" she said with a shake of her head. "My village could use 'em. These harpies have me worried. I have two dedicated guards. Retired men-at-arms at that. We cannot fight off a large number of the creatures as you described."

Iris turned back to Sera. "After we arrive in Brightburn, will you help me?"

The merchant's gaze sharpened as she sat there in contemplative silence. Iris didn't rush her, allowing the woman to take all the time she needed to make her decision. The rest of the table watched on with bated breath, waiting for the final verdict. After what felt like an eternity, the woman's face softened, and she gave a nod of agreement. Iris let out a sigh of relief, grateful that her idea may actually lead to something.

Sera lifted a hand to forestall any response. "I will help you," she said. "But, this may also be something my company is interested in. Or at least the House that we are a part of. I will send word to our headquarters in Strathmore once we arrive."

Evelyn raised a brow at that. "Fenren Merchant Company is part of a noble House?"

Sera nodded again. "Yes, Mister Fenren pledged himself and the company to House Reinhart." She smirked as she looked at Iris. "Which, coincidentally, is the House of a young terran princess."

Iris's eyes went wide. "Really?"

"Really. However, that's about all I know. It was big news within the company when it happened, but that was almost a year ago. Strathmore is also four hundred kilometers from here, and I've been part of the Lehelia branch my entire time in the company."

"Huh. Interesting," Iris said.

She took another swig of her ale, the plan forming in her head. She was determined. Forming a guild, couldn't be too hard. *Right?*

While Iris sat there mulling over all that she would need to accomplish, the others talked about Sera's company and rumors regarding the noble House that was the majority stakeholder—which was apparently how companies handled joining a House.

As the night wore on, Evelyn stood up from the table, signaling the end of the evening for her. "I should be heading home. Thank you all for the company with some good food," she pulled out a bundled scroll and held it out to Iris. "This is for the lady of Brightburn. See that she promptly receives it. The seal should ensure that you are permitted to at least deliver it on my behalf."

Iris nodded as she accepted the message. "I will make sure she gets it," she assured the reeve.

Evelyn smiled. "Then, with that... Safe travels on your journey, and please let me know if you require any further assistance before you depart."

The group bid farewell to the reeve as she left the inn, with Sera and Tanith retiring to their rooms soon after. Iris sat alone, lost in thought, and finished the last of her ale. Without even asking, a waiter set down a fresh mug.

"Courtesy of the group of three in the corner," the man said.

Her internal sigh turned into a verbal groan as one of the terrans got up from their table and walked toward Iris.

The man sat down across from Iris, a serious expression on his face.

He looked... Scandinavian.

Iris remained unfazed by the man's demeanor and his approach. She couldn't deny that he had striking features, with icy blue eyes that seemed to pierce through her. His blond hair was pulled back into a tight bun, accentuating his chiseled jawline and sharp cheekbones with just enough stubble to give him a sense of ruggedness. He wore armor that looked worn, as if it had seen many battles, and carried himself with the confidence of someone who had been in dangerous situations before. While he may have indeed seen trouble, she doubted he was the first owner of the armor. Or if he even purchased it himself...

Despite his imposing presence, Iris knew she had nothing to fear, and could easily use her magic to defend herself if need be.

"I apologize for my companion earlier. Eira can be a bit... enthusiastic," the man said, his accent confirming her earlier guess.

Iris simply nodded, acknowledging his words, but remained indifferent.

The man seemed to take her lack of response as an invitation to continue speaking. "My name is Erick," he said, extending his hand. Iris glanced at his hand for a

moment before finally taking it in her own. His grip was firm, but not overpowering. It spoke to a lack of levels. "And you are?" Erick asked.

"Iris," she replied, still unimpressed.

"You know, I couldn't help but notice that you could use magic. Eira is a bit of a magic user, herself. Is it alright if they join us?"

Before Iris could respond, another man in armor approached the table, silently taking a seat beside Erick. He was just as imposing as the first man, with the build of a fighter and a commanding presence. Iris couldn't help but feel a bit hesitant, her past experiences with armored men not being the best.

She decided to humor them, at least for the moment. "Sure, why not?" she said, trying to keep her tone neutral.

Erick grinned, seemingly pleased with her response. Eira, who had been standing a few meters away, hurried over to take the final seat at the table.

"So, where are you from?" Eira asked excitedly.

The unnamed man sighed. "Eira, stop pestering her."

Iris noticed that the man had soft, but still defined cheekbones. His jawline was average, but it worked well with his overall appearance. The man's brown hair was styled in a side fringe, swept neatly to one side of his forehead. It was shorter than Erick's but still fell just above his ears. The strands were neatly cut and styled, giving him a polished appearance.

Despite his shorter stature, he carried himself with a sense of confidence and ease, as if he didn't need to prove anything to anyone. Iris couldn't deny that he had a certain charm to him, but she remained guarded nonetheless.

He gave her a disarming smile that showed off some clearly whitened teeth. "I'm Galen. It is a pleasure to meet you, Iris."

Iris forced a smile onto her face, feeling awkward at the attention. "Nice to meet all of you too."

She glanced at Eira, the blonde had very similar features to Erick and she got a distinct impression that the two were related.

The woman smiled. "So..."

Iris rolled her eyes. "I would prefer to maintain my privacy on my origins."

Erick raised an eyebrow. "Is there a reason why you're so guarded?" he asked.

Iris hesitated for a moment before responding. "I've had bad experiences in the past with people who were too interested in my origins. I hope you can understand why I'm hesitant to share."

Not that elves are much better, but at least they're cuter.

Eira looked thoughtful for a moment before speaking up. "That's understandable. We didn't mean to make you uncomfortable. We just thought it would be nice to get to know each other better."

Galen nodded in agreement. "We apologize if we overstepped our bounds. We're just travelers passing through and it's not often we get to meet someone who can use magic like you."

Iris felt herself relax slightly at his words. "It's fine. I just prefer to keep my past to myself for now."

Eira's smile faltered slightly, but she quickly recovered. "Oh, of course. We didn't mean to pry," she said, trying to sound sincere.

Iris just nodded, not sure what else to say. She took a sip of her drink, hoping that the awkward silence wouldn't stretch out too long.

Galen leaned forward slightly, looking at Iris with interest. "So, what kind of magic do you use?" he asked, unable to hide what seemed like an almost childlike excitement at the idea of magic.

Iris tensed, not sure if she wanted to reveal that information. But something about Galen's gentle expression and genuine curiosity made her want to share.

Bad Iris. Stay away from humans. It's only a matter of time before they try and get you to join them 'because humans/terrans have to stick together!' Screw that.

"I have the ability to manipulate lightning," she said finally.

Galen's eyes widened in surprise. "Really? That's incredible. Eira is the most magical person we've seen yet, and even she can't do magic like that."

Iris took in the woman again. "Interesting."

Eira's head jerked slightly, she appeared to be offended.

Ignoring the woman, Erick leaned forward, his eyes shining with excitement. "Iris, we could use someone like you," he said earnestly. "We're on a mission, and having someone with your skills would make all the difference."

There it is...

Iris crossed her arms, skeptical. "I am sorry to disappoint, but I am already under contract to escort someone."

Eira raised a brow. "Those two you were with earlier? The elf girl? That can't be important. What we're doing *matters*."

"I keep my word when I give it," Iris said, her eyes narrowing. "I wish you three luck, but I must get some rest."

"But! This kingdom is oppressing its people!" she said, just a bit too loudly.

Erick placed a hand on Eira's shoulder, attempting to calm her down. "Eira, please," he said before turning back to Iris. "We understand your commitment, but we are fighting for a cause that is much bigger than any one individual. The people of this kingdom need our help."

Iris shook her head and stood up. "Sorry, but I'm not one for crusades. I've been in this kingdom ever since the flash, and I don't know what you've seen but it isn't nearly as bad as you're making it out to be."

Galen's demeanor grew dark. "That's because you're a woman in a matriarchal society."

Iris shrugged. "Then leave," she said. "There are other places you can go."

Eira ground her teeth together. "It's not that easy. But the prince is building up—"

"Woah, I'm going to stop you there. Politics? Not my thing. I'm not getting involved in some coup or rebellion or whatever. You guys do your own thing."

As she turned to walk away, she heard Eira say some snide remark but she ignored it.

Iris continued walking towards the stairs, her mind already drifting towards the comfort of her own room. She could feel the tension behind her, but she didn't turn around.

"Iris, wait," Erick called out to her. She paused but didn't turn back to face them. "I know you said you're not interested in joining us, but can we at least talk about it more? Maybe over breakfast tomorrow?"

Iris hesitated, then turned to look at him. "I appreciate the offer, but I'm afraid I have other plans tomorrow morning."

Erick's expression fell. "If you change your mind, we'll be here."

Iris nodded curtly and continued on her way up the stairs, not looking back again. She didn't want to get involved in whatever they were doing, but she couldn't help feeling disappointed at having met yet more terrans that only wanted to use her.

Are there any decent humans that came to this world?



Iris found herself inside Mocha Latte's cozy stall, holding a brush in one hand and running it gently over the mare's glossy coat. The sound of the brush moving through her hair was rhythmic and soothing, and Mocha leaned into the touch with contentment. As Iris brushed, she talked softly to the mare, telling her about her day, the people she met, and the strange encounter with the trio of strangers who had tried to recruit her for their cause.

Mocha listened intently, her ears perked forward as if she understood every word. In moments like these, the two shared a unique bond that went beyond mere words. Iris felt a sense of comfort and companionship in the presence of the horse, who seemed to understand her in a way that no human or elf ever could.

As she brushed, Iris felt the tension in her muscles ease and her mind start to clear. It was as if the simple act of grooming Mocha had the power to wash away all her worries and anxieties, leaving her feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.

Mocha let out a soft nicker as Iris brushed her mane. "You always know how to make me feel better," Iris said with a smile. "It was a long night, girl."

Her horse shook her head, causing her mane to swish back and forth. Iris laughed. "I know, I know. You had to carry me around all day while fending off thirsty harpies, then hang out with a merchant who doesn't understand you, and now I'm making you stand here and listen to me complain."

Mocha nudged her head against Iris's shoulder, and she rubbed her nose. "Thanks, girl. I don't know what I'd do without you. We don't need no stinkin' humans. Elves are perfectly fine," Iris said ruefully. "That's another thing. When we get to Brightburn, I think we need to try and start an Adventurer's Guild. We'll need more people to help us, but I think we've done some good things, yeah? We can create something good, teach others how to be as awesome as us."

Mocha let out another soft nicker, and Iris couldn't help but smile. She leaned against the mare, feeling her warmth and comfort. It was moments like this that made her grateful for the simple things in life, like the company of a good horse.

The sound of the stable door opening caught her attention. She turned to see Tanith, the handsome elf merchant guard, entering and heading toward the two horses for Sera's wagon. Iris greeted him with a smile.

"Hey Tanith," she said, putting the brush back into its spot in the saddle bags. "How's it going?"

Tanith smiled back. "Can't complain. Just getting the horses ready for us to leave. You need any help?"

Iris shook her head. "Nope, just having some girl bonding time. Isn't that right, Mocha?"

Her horse replied with a happy nicker that made Iris smile.

Tanith chuckled. "Looks like you two are having a good time. I won't keep you then. But we should get going soon. Sera is eager to hit the road."

Iris nodded. "Got it. We'll be ready to go in a few minutes."

As Tanith turned to work on the horses, Iris finished packing up her belongings and checked her bow and quiver. With that settled, Iris carefully lifted the saddle onto

Mocha's back and fastened the straps, making sure it was secure before giving her horse a pat on the side.

She looked over, seeing Tanith leading the other two horses out of the stables. Iris gave the straps a few more tugs, just to be sure, then backed up and looked at her majestic steed. Mocha shifted, as if ensuring it was tight enough and then nodded her assent.

Iris looked up at Mocha. "You *are* growing."

Mocha neighed. Iris took it as a 'No shit, Sherlock.'

Iris rolled her eyes. "You're as big as a warhorse now."

Mocha blew out some air derisively.

She laughed as she lifted her hands placatingly. "Sorry, you're much cooler."

Mocha snorted in amusement, and Iris grinned at her beloved horse. She knew that Mocha was more than just a companion to her. The horse had been with her through thick and thin, always by her side no matter what. They had fought together, traveled together, and shared many quiet moments like this one.

The horse nodded her head before leading Iris out of the stables, and the adventurer couldn't help but think that perhaps it was a bit backward.

Oh well.

Mocha gave her a look before turning her head as if showing Iris that Tanith was already finished hooking the horses up to the wagon. Tanith and Sera turned as the pair approached.

"Good morning, Mocha!" Sera greeted.

Iris frowned. "I'm here too!"

The high elf merchant giggled into her hand before coming over to pat Mocha, who was eating up the attention.

"Mocha and I got to know each other yesterday. She's amazing, aren't you?"

Iris rolled her eyes.

Tanith walked over with a serious look in his eye. "Now, since we are ready to go, is everything alright, Iris? Those other terrans were asking about you this morning. I told them you were busy preparing to leave."

She sighed. "They want to recruit me for their cause or something. I told them no, but it seems they don't want to give up."

Sera's brows scrunched up. "A cause? What cause could they have?"

Iris shrugged. "I don't know... some prince or something. They are helping him and think my magic would be helpful."

Tanith and the merchant shared a significant look before turning their focus back to Iris.

“A prince? Iris, you’ve been in Lehelia for a year, now. Have you heard of a prince before?”

Iris couldn't help but think about all the times she had sat at the bar of Helda's inn, listening to the Cosdale innkeeper's complaints about politics while sipping on her drinks and occasionally scanning the room for any cute boys. The woman would often warn Iris about the dangers of getting involved in the wrong things and tried to encourage her to focus on her own goals. In the end, Iris mostly ignored the woman in favor of getting drunk.

Probably should have paid more attention...

Iris fidgeted. “Uhm, I was more worried about drinking myself silly and finding cute elves. I don't like politics. Or focusing on horrible situations.”

Tanith sighed and Sera seemed vaguely disappointed. Like a mom who walked into your room after telling you company was coming over and you were still in your pajama pants and tank top.

“Iris, this isn't really politics... Well, it kind of is...” Sera explained, wobbling her hand back and forth. “But the important part is that Lehelia doesn't have a prince. The only prince they could be talking about is the Marauder Prince, and he is nothing more than a pirate and a terrorist. His bandits are the ones that roam the lands and prey on merchants and travelers alike.”

Iris could only respond one way to that. “Well, shit.”

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