

Ilea left her former instructor to his passion and looked through her marks before she focused on one of them.

“Hey Cless, do you have time? I’d like to have a chat.”

“If we have to,” came the answer.

If we have to? Ilea wondered before she teleported to the girl, finding her standing at the top of a mountain.

Somewhere on the Naraza chain? She looked around and saw the steep cliffs on each side, spreading her wings and flying a few meters back.

“Why are you here?” Ilea asked.

“Can I not be here?” Cless retorted, her brows raised. “Mighty Dragonslayer.”

“What’s going on with you?”

“I’m kind of busy, looking for inspiration.”

“I… see,” Ilea said. *Going through a phase? She did grow quite a bit since back then. Didn’t even notice last time I saw her. She was so playful.*

“I found a way back to Earth. And I think we can use the tear that brought you here,” Ilea said.

“Really?” Cless said and jumped, her previous demeanor gone in an instant. “A way back to Earth?”

“Yes. Do you want to go back?” Ilea asked.

Cless crossed her arms and looked to the side. “I mean. Kind of. My parents probably miss me a lot.”

Right. Sure. They’re the ones who miss you.

“I can get you there and back,” Ilea said. “But it’s been a long time. Be prepared for anything.”

“I’m not a child anymore, Ilea,” Cless said. “I’m a well known artist.” Her voice didn’t sound quite as confident as she probably hoped for.

[Arcane Mage – lvl 158]

Ilea smiled. “Let’s go then, well known artist. I’ll fly you.”

“You don’t have to go slow for me,” Cless said.

“Sure,” Ilea said, and most certainly went slow.

The journey took a few hours, including a teleportation gate to Damwell. But they finally reached the mostly collapsed dungeon Ilea and her team had cleared out in one of their missions. *Golems, and an ancient trap. Can’t believe that cave in could’ve ended us.*

“Can you fly already?” Ilea asked.

Cless rolled her eyes and pushed away from Ilea, hovering in the air. “Of course I can.”

Ilea smiled. "I can see that."

"How will we get down there? It's full of rubble."

"I'll just clear it out, give me a minute," Ilea said and formed a flat shovel like form, made of black glass and hundreds of meters long and broad. She pushed it into the rubble, breaking through stone and debris, raising everything before she created a mound on the closest island nearby. Flying down into the new crater, she infused her eyes with Fabric Alteration and soon found the tear.

None from Scipio. Guess he was just looking for anything that could help Nes.

"I found it," she said to the approaching Cless.

"You really are something like a goddess now, aren't you?" the girl asked.

"I hope not. I'm still Ilea," she said and reopened the tear. "Ready?"

"Yes! I thought I'd find a way back myself first," Cless said.

Ilea smiled. "Off we go then."

Cless smiled and flew through the tear, followed by Ilea herself.

This time, they appeared in a forested area. The mana density was the same as when Ilea had appeared in her apartment. She was pretty sure this was the same place and closed the fissure behind herself.

"We're... back..." Cless murmured and started flying away.

"No flying," Ilea sent. *"We're going to get in trouble if we show off our magic."*

Cless glared at her but finally relented. *"Alright."* She landed and ran instead. A little too fast for a human girl.

Ilea sighed and followed the mark. She decided not to run, keen on keeping this area crater free. Checking for cameras and people, she did occasionally use Teleport. Cless had apparently come from a suburban area in London. The street names at least suggested something English, though Ilea couldn't be sure she was close to the metropolis in question.

Around fifteen minutes later, she found Cless crouching before a set of hedges, glaring at the brick house beyond. Two stories with wide windows.

"This your place?" Ilea asked, lightly placing a hand on the girl's shoulder.

Cless nodded then turned to look at Ilea. "C... can we go together?"

"Sure," Ilea said, glimpsing the name on the mailbox. *Michaelson. I wonder where her family is from.*

She saw a woman on the first floor through her domain, working at a laptop. Ilea carefully grabbed Cless' hand and squeezed as gently as she could. "It's going to be alright."

Cless gulped.

Ilea led her into the small garden, then to the bell, nodding towards it.

Cless took in a deep breath and rang the bell. Twice. In quick succession.

They waited for a while until the door opened, revealing the same woman Ilea had seen through her domain. She looked to be in her late thirties, the same blonde hair and blue eyes as Cless, wearing a black turtleneck and wide linen pants. She looked fit and wore no makeup, but Ilea could tell she was tired. A weary exhaustion that seemed to reach beyond the quality of the past night's sleep.

The woman focused entirely on Cless, her lips quivering as all of the exhaustion seemed to fade. "Cless," she stammered out and fell down to her knees before she hugged her daughter, sobbing as Cless hugged her back, tears rolling down her cheeks as well.

Ilea stepped away from the two to give them space, waiting with crossed arms as she took in the garden. The grass and hedges looked wild compared to the properties bordering this one. There were no dishes in the sink, but the fridge was empty. *So she's taking care of herself more or less. I can't imagine what she's been through. Losing a child to such a strange phenomenon.*

She was surprised when she saw the woman get up again just a minute later, wiping at her face. "Please come in, whoever you are." She looked around and grabbed Cless' hand, going back into the house. She sat down on the living room couch, keeping Cless close to her.

Ilea didn't sit down.

"Are you with the government?" the woman asked, her voice slightly shaky.

"I'm not. I'm friends with Cless," Ilea said. "Or would you not call us friends?" she asked the girl.

Cless smiled, her eyes still teary. "No, we're friends." She laughed and nodded. "She brought me here, mum."

"Where were you? We looked for you everywhere," the woman said and sobbed once, catching herself again.

"I can do magic now," Cless said, a guilty look on her face as she glanced between her mother and Ilea.

"What happened to her and thousands of others seven years ago, happened to me as well," Ilea said. "There's a new energy here on Earth. I'm sure you're familiar with the discoveries and strange occurrences since this all happened?"

"It's all that's been in my head," the woman said.

"It's going to take some time to explain, but the gist of it is, a bunch of people were moved to other realms. Planets or dimensions, whatever you want to call it. I woke up in a forest, with only my pajamas on. There were strange monsters there, and there was magic. Cless here, happened to appear in the same realm as I did, and I happened to find her with a team of adventurers that I had joined. She mentioned London," Ilea said with a smile.

"I woke up in a strange dungeon, with monsters. An old man gave me a magic book and taught me magic!" Cless said, nearly stumbling over her words as she tried to explain her circumstances.

"This is... ridiculous, all of it..." the woman said.

Ilea sighed. "Alright. Look here," Ilea said and teleported one meter to the left, then formed ten spheres of ash. "Teleportation. And ash magic."

The woman blinked. "That... what..."

"Ilea found a way back," Cless said.

"You can do magic too?" the woman asked.

Cless nodded.

Ilea saw the mother opening her mouth, then she closed it, the look in her eyes changing slightly. She took in a deep breath and ruffled Cless' hair. "Well done." She turned to Ilea. "I'm Jennifer Michaelson, Cless' mother. I apologize for my demeanor so far. It's very unlike me. Would you like a cup of tea?"

"I prefer coffee," Ilea said.

"Coffee it is. Sugar and milk?" Jennifer asked as she walked to the kitchen.

Ilea nodded, knowing there was no milk in the fridge.

Jennifer noticed when she opened it. "I'm afraid I don't have any milk."

"Black is fine," Ilea said as Jennifer turned on the coffee machine.

"A different land. With magic. Can I see that again?" she asked.

Ilea spread her wings this time instead. "There's a lot of different magic out there."

"Mum, why is dad in prison?" Cless asked.

A cup fell against the counter top. "I..." Jennifer said, looking at Cless with confusion.

"She's a divination mage. Can see things through her paintings. Never told me she could see back to Earth," Ilea said and smiled.

"I didn't want to say," Cless said and lowered her head slightly. "I only got it recently!"

"I don't mind," Ilea said.

"But I didn't look often... only sometimes," Cless said. "You seemed angry."

Jennifer touched Cless' face. "I was." She paused, her hand still on the girl's face. "You grew so much," she turned back to the coffee before she started crying again, quickly collecting herself. "Torben thought the government was behind it. Many had thought this was a military experiment that failed. He tried to investigate. Broke into a police station, and later even tried to get into a military complex."

"Did he get in?" Cless asked, excitement in her voice.

"He was caught. And tried again when he was released a few months later. The sentence was longer that time. And longer when he tried again, in the south that time, two years ago and with a group," Jennifer said.

"I'm sorry you had to go through all that," Ilea said.

Jennifer shook her head lightly. "We didn't have to fight monsters. Besides. How have your parents handled all this?"

Ilea raised her brows. "I don't know."

They didn't even get my stuff.

Mark did.

“Can we show Ravenhall to her?” Cless asked.

Ilea smiled. “Sure.”

Jennifer walked over and handed Ilea the cup of coffee. “I’m sorry, dear,” she said in a quiet voice.

Ilea drank and smiled. “It’s alright. I’m glad you guys are still around and reunited.”

“We spent much of our savings trying to find out what happened. And Torben is set to stay in prison for another three years. I don’t know if they’ll be lenient. And you two can do magic... I don’t even want to imagine... the governments... oh no,” Jennifer said and rushed to the windows, quickly closing the shutters one by one, finally turning on the lights.

“Yeah. I don’t know if it’s the best idea for Cless to stay here. She’s essentially a teen with superpowers,” Ilea said.

Cless crossed her arms and pouted. “What’s wrong about that?”

“A lot of things. But really, do you want to stay on Earth, where there are no monsters and stuff, or in Elos? With the Baron and the Sentinels?”

“Elos of course,” Cless said. “It’s so much cooler.” She thought on it and smiled, looking between the two. “I could come back on vacation!”

“Or your parents could move,” Ilea said.

“We have our house. Our social security. Everything is here. And Torben...” Jennifer said.

“Jennifer. I happen to be somewhat of an important figure in Elos. I can get you a house five times this size and positions or jobs that would suit your skills, though I guess you’ll have to relearn some things. Plus there’s magic. And potential near immortality, if you level enough or become a vampire.”

“A vampire? You’re kidding,” Jennifer said.

“I can show you. But either way, Torben is in prison. You either stay here and wait for him to be released, or I get him out. And if I do that, you’ll either be living here with an escaped prisoner, or you come to Elos, and get to know another world entirely.” Ilea paused. “Think on it. But Cless, you shouldn’t leave the house until your mum has made a decision.”

“Would you stop us from staying?” Jennifer asked.

Ilea drank from her cup. “Why would I? I might get Cless out depending on what happens. And you two in turn, because I doubt you have the power to stop the efforts of a government. This one or any ones abroad.”

“I could fight them,” Cless said.

“And kill people who do their jobs? Then spreading chaos because everyone knows magic exists?” Ilea asked.

The girl opened her mouth and closed it.

“What about our things? Can we take anything?” Jennifer asked. “I need to write this down.”

Ilea teleported her laptop down into the living room. “Here you go. And sure. I can take most things. Probably not the entire house. Not in a single chunk. Don’t want to open an actual gate.”

“What about money?”

“Earth currency doesn’t have value in Elos. They use gold and silver. But Cless is probably filthy rich, with all those paintings she doesn’t pay her models for.”

Cless struck out her tongue. “I only pay those who need it! Like Robin Hood.”

“That’s not exactly how that worked,” Jennifer said. “So you still paint?” she asked with a smile.

Cless blushed.

“You should see her gallery,” Ilea said.

“I would love to,” Jennifer said and kissed Cless on her forehead. “I can’t believe you’re so tall!”

She considered, then looked at Ilea. “This whole ridiculous idea... of us moving to some... magical place somewhere else. It all depends on what happens with Torben. You said you can get him out? How? It’s not exactly easy to break into a prison.”

Ilea raised her brows. “No, but it is. For me. I can see through walls. And I can teleport things and people out of there. Easiest thing in the world.”

Jennifer seemed skeptical.

“You saw the laptop. Anything you need from the attic? There’s a spider near the small window this way,” Ilea said and pointed.

“Get me that spider,” Jennifer said.

Ilea did, keeping the little creature hovering in the air for Jennifer to see.

The woman smiled. “That’s the one.”

“You want me to put it out into the wild?” Ilea asked.

“No. Put it right back where it was. Free pest control,” Jennifer said.

Ilea shrugged and teleported the creature back onto its net, the spider remaining motionless for a moment before it started making new webbing.

“Am I going insane?” Jennifer asked. “Slap me.”

“You don’t want that. Cless, don’t slap her either,” Ilea said.

“My Strength is super low!” Cless said.

Jennifer pinched herself, then squinted her eyes. “I need to make a list. You should get him at night. The first guard change happens at eleven thirty. He’s in the east wing of the prison, second floor up. He has his own room. I can give you pictures as well,” she said and opened up a fresh excel file.

“You said you had room to take things. Can we take our car?”

Ilea raised her brows. “The Accords will want to study that. You could sell it to them in return for a house or something. I don’t know if it would even work in Elos. I can try to transport it. Might be too big.”

With Framework Disruption, it might actually work, Ilea thought, looking at the small car in the garage. “You don’t have to pack things up either. I can just store everything individually. Most of your things at least.”

“That is wonderful,” Jennifer said, Cless sitting next to her and looking at the screen. “We should burn the house down as well, when we’re done. Can you do that?”

Ilea looked at her. “Yes.”

“Without killing anyone in the process,” Jennifer clarified.

“I’m human,” Ilea said. “I’ll try not to kill anyone. They’ll be suspicious when it comes to Torben though, and I don’t want to ruin a security guard’s life.”

“You want to stage an escape?” Jennifer asked.

“Is there a window to his cell?”

“There isn’t. But there is one in the toilet.”

“Big enough for him to fit through?”

“Yes. Barely. But three steel bars block it. Five centimeters thick and redone nearly two years ago. You would need heavy tools to get through that,” Jennifer said.

“You know a lot about your husband’s prison environment.”

“I look for solutions. It’s what I’ve always done.”

“I can cut through the steel bars. Torben can go to the toilet and jump down, then we even have an impact on the ground. Any cameras around?”

“Yes. I’ll show you the layout.”

“Which just leaves Torben. How much will he freak out if all that happens?”

“I’ll admit he will be shaken, but just mention Cless and he’ll shut up.”

“I can do that,” Ilea said and looked at the screen as Jennifer started showing her all the information gathered on the prison.

Cless joined in as well.

Not the operation I expected. But here we are, Ilea thought and took some notes.