

As it stands, Elos could use more self aware beings, even if it might mean more competition to humanity. Not that we can really compete with the existing races. Everyone is busy dealing with the monsters around them. But even if we find some way to move the insects through the gate without them dying or turning to monsters, how the fuck would we move the meadow?

Ilea didn't question the positive impact Meadow once had on Erendar. Right now the realm was filled with spirits that did nothing else but fight each other and everything they came across.

That's like if every human was like me, she smirked and landed a few kilometers away from the previous action. Ilea was sure a world with more sapient creatures was automatically better. Of course they had ways to make life miserable for everything around them and themselves but Elos proved quite a bit better than what she saw in Erendar.

Spirits came soon and she resumed her training.

Whenever too many Astral Spirits showed up, she would change locations.

The creatures either didn't care about pursuing her or had no way to even do so. Meadow informed her that the Astral Spirits only showed up when a large amount of mana was used in a certain area. For example a few thousand death magic spells.

Meadow assured her that the beings could randomly show up too but generally didn't care with something like Ilea's passive magic output. It was a possible explanation why they didn't pursue her.

Their drain abilities luckily had a somewhat short range, allowing her to mostly avoid that problem during her fights. Ilea was really just a conduit to summon spirits of death and through them the Astral beings, residents of Sephilon.

Ilea returned to the temple after three hours, checking her gains as she entered the structure through the hole in the wall.

'ding' 'Sentinel Huntress reaches 3rd lvl 9'

'ding' 'Azarinth Reversal reaches 3rd lvl 23'

'ding' 'Eyes of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 21'

'ding' 'Phaseshift reaches lvl 2'

...

'ding' 'Phaseshift reaches lvl 11'

'ding' 'Displacement reaches 3rd lvl 2'

'ding' 'Space Shift reaches 2nd lvl 16'

'ding' 'Space Shift reaches 2nd lvl 17'

'ding' 'Body of the Valkyrie reaches 2nd lvl 15'

...

'ding' 'Body of the Valkyrie reaches 2nd lvl 18'

'ding' 'Deviant of Humanity reaches lvl 15'

'ding' 'Deviant of Humanity reaches lvl 16'

'ding' 'Monster Hunter reaches 3rd lvl 5'

'ding' 'Veteran reaches 3rd lvl 8'

'ding' 'Death Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 12'

...

'ding' 'Death Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 14'

'ding' 'Astral Magic Resistance reaches lvl 18'

...

'ding' 'Astral Magic Resistance reaches lvl 20'

'ding' 'Astral Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 1'

Astral Magic Resistance – 2nd lvl 1

The power of the stars, harnessed and used to wreak unimaginable destruction. Few beings are able to channel this power through their bodies. It would not come as a surprise to find a human, of all beings finding a way to modify their weak vessel for its use. You should not let your encounters fool you, this school of magic is quite extraordinary and just as rare.

2nd stage: You have faced enough wielders of Astral Magic to warrant a second tier resistance. Your body is much less likely to disintegrate against this powerful school of magic.

'ding' 'One Third tier General skill point awarded'

The second tier bonus was helpful, even during Phaseshift.

Quite a few levels for the little time I spent with the monsters.

She had to admit that the danger she had faced against the Queen was much higher than what the spirits managed.

If the Astral versions had been sapient, fully driven to hunt her down with their powerful abilities, there might be actual danger but as it was, she hardly thought it possible to die against them. Precognition, high level healing, high resistances, mana gained from enemy spells, two teleportation abilities, and her simple winged speed worked together to make her night unbeatable for the enemies she faced.

The Spirits of Death could pin her down if she allowed it but their simple mindedness made sure they couldn't capitalize on that benefit.

The fact of course remained that both the death and astral magic damaged her armor and health. If enough monsters worked together they could kill her in less than ten seconds without her

regeneration and evasion. A being even of her level would be downright disintegrated if it took the same damage she did, let alone one with lesser resilience and resistances.

Ilea assumed that was a major part of the danger and level calculation. The high enemy levels made up another part of the equation. It would all slow down in time, as it had with the Guardians and Specters. But for now the magic governing her skill advancements still considered the Spirits of a high enough danger to reward her with frequent level ups.

If I make one dumb mistake, I'm dead. Problem is, I won't, she thought as her wings settled behind her, the tail swaying slightly.

"Hey there. You don't look so good," she said to the group of heavily armored people that had reached the throne room.

All were close to or slightly above level two hundred. Their mismatched gear suggested adventurers rather than military. There were ten people all in all, two healers with sweat dripping down their faces, one barrier mage who kept a dome around the group, and a variety of mages and warriors that currently just focused on fighting the high mana density.

They all tensed up when their eyes met Ilea's ashen form.

Various whispers in the native tongue escaped them, the name Lilith audible a few times.

"I'm right here," Ilea said and waved. "Who are you?"

"Lady Lilith! We are adventurers from Gyffold... the guard made a posting at the local guild, for anyone brave enough to explore this place," one of the higher level people said.

"Aha. Well good luck. Don't go out of the city. You'd be eaten alive," she said and blinked down to the vaults.

"How's it going?" Ilea asked when she appeared close to Michael.

He barely glanced her way. "Very well... yes... thank you."

A third Michael had joined the two, all currently occupied with a single piece of paper and the runes drawn onto it.

"Welcome back, Lilith. An impressive display of resilience," Meadow said telepathically.

"Thanks," she replied in the same way, noticing a few of the insect creatures glancing at her from the destroyed entrances.

"Do they have food left?" she asked.

"There is enough for a few of your weeks. And I'm sure more could be supplied from your realm," Meadow replied.

"Good. Yeah, if you have anything to trade," she said.

"The mage Michael is providing gold for information on various magic theories. It's quite peculiar that your species has found interest in such an element. Though the concept of currency is certainly quite useful," the being said.

"I saw them taking away bodies earlier. I managed to retrieve the corpse of the Queen when she died," Ilea said.

"The return of their leader should lead to some trust. I suggest you offer it to the survivors," Meadow said.

“You don’t care for it?” Ilea asked.

“Zaiked is no longer awakened. I shall remember her but I have no use for her remains,” the meadow replied.

“Huh,” Ilea said and turned away, walking to the survivors.

Some of them retreated to the back of the hall but most actually remained, their various forms of eyes staring at her.

Ilea formed an ashen altar before she summoned the body, placing it down slowly before she stepped back.

The clicking noises were quite agitated, some of them moving their bodies in ways she hadn’t seen before.

“They’re showing great volumes of emotion,” Meadow supplied.

“I guessed as much,” Ilea replied and lowered the altar slowly, making her ash disappear.

“Did you manage to increase more of your abilities to the third tier?” Meadow asked.

“Not yet. But I should get there in a day or two with a few of them. I don’t suppose you know how to unlock the fourth tier?” she said.

“Good. Your question is difficult to answer knowing so little about your species. Have you unlocked Core skill points?” it asked.

Ilea didn’t see a reason to lie. *“Yeah.”*

“That is good. It means you have either reached a level threshold or unlocked an additional Class. How many options are available to you?” it asked.

“Three currently. Leveling a third Class skill to the third tier, a stat boost, and a skill boost. Plus five locked options,” Ilea said.

“You can see the locked options. That confirms that you gained an additional Class before reaching the normally required level for Core skill points. It should also mean that the locked options will become available once you reach said level,” the being said.

“Why are you talking like you’re not sure?” she asked.

“I have studied various awakened creatures since my own awakening. The pale ones for example are born at level one hundred. The horned beetles on the other hand at one hundred and fifty. They each are given a single Class upon their birth. The Rainbow Wisp was unique in that it was born without a Class but powerful resistances to ward off the dangerous nature in this realm. Their limited ability to cast and comprehend magic lead to a few preferred Classes but in the end they all perished due to the eclipse,” the being explained.

“You’re rambling. Species are different. Is that your point?” Ilea said.

“Indeed, young healer. I presume your own kind is not given a Class upon their birth?” it said.

“Yes. Why the assumption?” she asked.

“You have faced several two Class Pale ones and prevailed, despite your level. The Queen was powerful within her species yet she could not slay you. You stand against level six and seven hundred Spirits without danger to your life. It means your current levels are far beyond what your species usually achieves. Beyond the classification your level represents.”

“Requirements are different depending on your species. Your kind starts their life without a Class and thus should have more variety in the abilities they choose. With your comments on the third Class, I have to assume you are immediately offered two. And you have achieved a third, which should be rare for your kind. Harder to achieve than a Pale One gaining their second even.”

“I see that this information is not what you seek. There are differences in requirements for various species. Some things have remained a constant, I have found. The limit of ten skills to each full fledged Class, or the third tier skill limit of level thirty. Few ever unlock an additional Class beyond their species’ limitations. But when they do, they receive Core skill points, just like you have. It is fortunate that you have done so before reaching the level threshold,” Meadow said.

“How so?” Ilea asked.

“You would not receive Core skill points during this period at all,” it said.

“Really? So every point I get is a bonus one compared to if I didn’t already get a third Class?” she asked.

“Precisely,” Meadow replied.

“And once I unlock all options I can advance skills to the fourth tier?” Ilea asked.

“Not yet. But you should receive a way to enhance your skills further. The fourth tier itself is not easily achieved. Beside myself, there are only two beings I’ve known who have managed to reach it and shared the information with me. So far I believe only one skill per Class can be advanced, and only once you have enhanced every single skill with Core skill points,” it said.

“There’s a way to enhance skills with Core skill points?” she asked.

“Yes. You should receive the option once the level requirement is met. I suggest you refrain from spending any of your points until that option presents itself,” Meadow said.

“Sounds good. So that’s it? I just level up to unlock the options and then enhance all my skills? Then I get to the fourth tier?” Ilea asked.

“There may be a simple level requirement but I am not familiar with your species. You likely are one of few who would ever seek such knowledge with the intention of achieving the requirements,” Meadow said.

“I don’t know about that. I’m pretty sure there are humans out there with insane levels of power,” Ilea said. She liked fighting, yes. And she had really good Class combinations but that was pretty much it. She just wouldn’t believe that there was nobody above four, or five hundred.

“There are those who excel. Your kind has high potential but few will ever scratch even what you have reached. It is simply not in their nature to do so,” it said.

“Was Zaiked one of the creatures with a fourth tier skill?” Ilea asked. “I’m curious.”

“No. Zaiked gained her second Class much earlier than her peers but while she was the strongest one alive when you arrived here, she was not comparable to those who came before. Centuries ago, when this city was thriving and survival on Erendar was difficult for their kind but possible.

“Her kind had to reach level five hundred to gain Core skill points without a second Class and thus all the options for their use,” it said.

“They start at one hundred and we start at zero, meaning I’ll get those options at four hundred?” Ilea asked with a smile.

“Your early ability to have two Classes and the adaptability that provides easily makes up for one hundred levels. I would not be surprised if it takes you even longer to unlock all options. My assumption is five hundred however. As it was for at least four species I have helped awaken,” the being said.

“That’s not exactly fair. Low level humans are super weak compared to Elves or the Pale ones. It’s much harder for us to reach high levels than it should be for them, with such a start,” she said.

“I do not know the Elves you speak of but the Pale ones are near extinct. While your species thrives, capable of even responding to my call through the fabrics of space. Have you not slain a Pale one sixty levels above your own? Your kind likely requires shelter and is highly vulnerable when at a young age but the potential for growth and adaptation is truly remarkable,” Meadow said.

“I won against a Pale One with two classes. And no enhanced or fourth tier skills if what you said was true. Not exactly an incredible achievement. Well... we’ll see what happens at four hundred. Otherwise I’ll just have to go for five,” she said with a grin.

Not like I’ll stop anytime soon.

“Amusing. It should be possible, with how you fought those Spirits. You shouldn’t undervalue your achievement however. Zaiked was on par with the same Spirits you fought today, her lower amount of Classes are no indication for lesser power. Even a being limited by one Class could challenge you, as the Astral Spirits have shown. The power of individual Classes is somewhat proportionate to the possibilities available.” it said.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“It means that a level one hundred Pale one should match the power of a human with two level one hundred Classes. Just as much as a blind creature at that level should match when at the same level. The further you push beyond the normal ranges, the comparisons become muddled. Thus you are able to battle Spirits at much higher levels, just as Zaiked could. Perhaps she could have even matched other Pale ones beyond five hundred but it is difficult to say. The more abilities are unlocked, evolved, trained and mastered, the harder it is to rely on factors like levels or amounts of skills and Classes to compare your strength,” Meadow explained.

She mostly agreed. With monsters she could get an idea of their danger due to the level they showed but even with them it became more and more convoluted. A death spirit at level six hundred hardly compared to a Specter of Rot for example.

Ilea noticed that after some form of ceremony, the insects in the vault started devouring the corpse of Zaiked. She turned away and ignored the process, accepting it as a cultural custom she was glad humanity did not usually possess.

“How many Classes do you have?” Ilea asked.

“Five. Though I have awakened with them all,” Meadow said.

“Damn... speaking of powerful species,” she said and laughed, crossing her arms.

“Power comes at a cost,” the meadow said. *“It’s a joy to have found not one but three Awakened with the ability to converse with me. One of you has proven hostile but you and Michael remain, each with their own set of questions, desires, wishes, and goals. But both of you accept my existence and are not driven mad by my very presence. I see and feel through magic, but conversation has been so very scarce in the last two centuries.”*

Ilea smiled. *"I'm sorry. I guess I was just awed by your high level."*

"I cannot fly, as you can, nor do I find joy in consuming food for there is no need for nourishment. The killing I am forced to do brings me no satisfaction, only the loss of those who never found awakening," it paused. *"Apologies. I did not mean to overwhelm you with my own shortcomings."*

She laughed and displaced herself a few times until she stood next to the tree.

"What are you doing, Lilith?" the Meadow asked, still using a copy of her own voice.

"It's called a hug," Ilea said, squeezing the hard magic tree before she let go. *"It's supposed to be comforting."*

The whole room vibrated for a moment before it calmed down, fireflies disturbed before they found their place again.

"I am not a mammal, Ash mage Lilith," it said. *"But. I find appreciation for your simple gesture. Its meaning is understood but I am not in need for your emotional support. I have endured millennia without a conversation, I merely tried to contextualize your perceived weakness."*

"Sure," Ilea said with a grin.