

Chapter 691 Can we get a zoom on that?

The Meadow made the Void Lord corpse vanish. *“Thanks for the meal. You have a personal spatial domain now too, I see.”*

“Oh yeah, forgot to mention it. Think it’s safe?” Ilea stopped and asked.

“Safer than whatever else you’re using,” the being said.

“Good enough for me,” she replied and walked to Verena and Owl. She started moving the contents of her necklace and bracelet into her own spatial storage. The domain had a thousand units compared to the necklace’s two fifty and the bracelet’s one hundred. *Could gift these to someone now I guess.* “Hey Owl, getting used to the local characters I hope?”

“Greetings, Lilith,” she said and bowed lightly.

I feel like that’s the wrong way around.

“There is a lot to learn... but I feel, welcome. No longer trapped. The Meadow has shown me the local environment. The storms especially are quite fascinating. It’s difficult... to process all that I see, all that I perceive. You...,” she said and moved a little closer, one of her hands outstretched as if to touch her before she moved back again, fidgeting.

“What is it?” Ilea asked, squinting one of her eyes.

“Your... soul is...,” Owl said and looked away, her eyes glowing a little brighter.

“Ah yes, fires of creation I assume. You can see that?” Ilea asked with a smile.

The lich nodded. “It’s quite beautiful,” she said. Her hand twitched again.

Like a moth to a flame. “You can touch it if you can and not damage it.”

Verena gave her a look.

“Really?” Owl asked and moved a little closer.

“You know you don’t exactly behave like the Greater Lich you are,” she said and laughed. “Be careful though, you might get burned. It should be fine with your level though.”

The Lich didn’t have to be told twice, her eyes sparkling as she carefully pushed a hand into Ilea’s stomach.

Now that is fucking weird, Ilea thought. There was matter, she could tell, but somehow the Lich bypassed her clothes and flesh. Her soul perception showed a purely magical presence but nothing like a hand or fingers, just a mist like idea. Something that caught on fire as soon as it had entered the domain of her essence.

The Lich recoiled, her hand burning with the white flame of creation. The spell had brought the flame out with it. It started spreading on her arm as she tried to shake it off. “Hot,” she mused.

“Need help?” Ilea asked, white flames flickering atop her clothes now.

“No... the damage is... manageable. I wish to... observe, and learn,” Owl said and nodded towards the Meadow.

“Seems like you’ve got an attentive student,” Ilea sent to the being, her fires flickering out as she smiled.

“Indeed. There are many here actually. Apart from you and that one lightning mage woman. She’s even more unreasonable than you are. Though I must be honest. You’re an enjoyable student. I’ve not had a puzzle to solve as difficult as teaching you since the first eclipse I witnessed on Erendar,” the Meadow said.

“You now I gain another level for each insult you throw at me?” she asked.

The Lich burst out with bright purple energy. Death magic flared out in a sphere as Verena teleported back. Ilea simply stood there, her hair and clothes pushed back as she felt her skin decay just a tiny bit. Her regeneration healed the damage before she could tell how bad it was.

“Oh no... I’m so sorry!” Owl exclaimed, crouching down to Ilea with both hands raised. The white flame on her arm was gone.

“Hey, you did it,” Ilea said. She could see the Meadow’s barriers vanish, the creature having summoned a protective field in front of Verena. It turned out to be unnecessary but she couldn’t help but take comfort in its quick reaction. *“Thanks.”*

“While you are a child given power, she sometimes seems even less experienced. But she will learn, do not worry,” the Meadow spoke.

“I... did... but my power flared up again,” the Lich said in a disappointed voice.

“Well, you’re a four mark being. You wouldn’t normally have to be careful like that,” Ilea said.

Verena joined them again, seemingly unbothered.

The door to the enchanters’ home opened. Iana stepped out with somewhat disheveled hair. She yawned and looked around. “What’s the ruckus about?” she asked and rubbed her eyes.

“We found an ancient place called the Soul Forge,” Ilea said. “It’s mega enchanted. Soul, space, explosions, all sorts of fun stuff. My sophisticated approach of punching it until it cracks open didn’t seem particularly reasonable for once.”

“Sounds interesting. When do we leave?” the woman asked, a cup of steaming tea in her hand now.

“We can leave whenever but I’d like to be able to return here instantly in case something comes up, and the cooldown is still going. About four more hours,” Ilea said.

“Great,” Iana said, turned, and left. The door closed behind her.

“She hasn’t slept much,” Aki supplied from above. The Pursuer was standing atop near invisible fields of magic, jumping from side to side.

“I figured. You seem more comfortable too,” Ilea said as she looked up.

“He’s wonderful. Very athletic,” Owl said and clapped her hands. The gesture didn’t create any sound.

“One of the most dangerous murder machines at that level I’ve encountered so far,” Ilea said.

“Think you’ll be able to protect the headquarters against a few thugs now?”

“Yes, although I’ll have to run on low efficiency. The mana density in Ravenhall is not sufficient to power the abilities of this body,” Aki said and jumped down. “I will simply have to train here. But even getting back won’t be easy. The Shadow Guard won’t exactly let me pass without questions.”

“Ah right. I didn’t really think about that when I got you. Hmm,” Ilea mused.

“Iana suggested a large box. I can make myself rather small after all,” said aki, the bladed extensions and six legs folding in on themselves, creating what looked like a deployable drone form.

Drop a few dozen of those onto a city and it’s a wrap, Ilea thought. It’s good the Taleen considered the Elves their only enemy.

“No way to get an energy core or something like that?” she asked.

“If that were such an easy task, more high level beings would roam your plains,” the Meadow supplied. *“At least Aki won’t experience pain in the low density.”*

“What about you Owl? Can you be in lower density or do you also require a shit ton of mana?” she asked.

“If I don’t use strong spells in quick succession, I should survive. For a few months, the Meadow thinks. I would be weakened however,” she answered. “Pain should not be a concern but it’s not a pleasant feeling. The Meadow simulated an area for me and it felt... very wrong.”

“The curse of being a Greater Lich,” Ilea mused.

“You know many actually consider it a curse. A funny coincidence I think,” Owl said and giggled.

I’m not sure that’s as funny as you think it is, undead. “Well, would you be up to have a look at the soul magic later?”

“I would be happy to help in any way I can,” Owl said. “Just know that my knowledge is more instinctual than based on theory. I am studying hard, but it will take a few decades to get a grasp of the basics,” she said and laughed, a hand going to the back of her head.

“That makes two of us,” Ilea said. “We’ll leave in about four hours then. I’ll work on a few skills too.”

“Good luck!” the Lich said and gave her an ethereal thumbs up.

“S... sure. To you as well,” she said and vanished.

“Did you just stutter?” the Meadow observed.

She appeared close to the tree, sitting down in the black grass with her mantle spreading. *“She reminds me of a friend from Earth. Very... energetic.”*

“Intriguing. What would you like to work on?” the Meadow asked.

“Hmm... now that we have enough keys. Seems like a bit of a waste to hold on to my core points. Nothing new showed up at my third evolution either, so I guess enhancing skills is my best option. Kind of wanted to wait until we got to Iz again but with the upcoming dwarven war machine tournament arc, it seems like that will take some time. And who knows how many Soul Wardens are still inside that bloody cube? Would be a waste not to get the levels for those fights,” she mused.

“It would merely be a temporary reduction in power. You did get your evolution. Can you enhance them all?” the Meadow asked.

“I have forty eight points. So nine skills I can enhance. Got a clue how I can get easy core points?” she asked. “You could show me your most powerful spells.”

“For such a simple purpose? The answer is no,” the Meadow said.

“Up for some fighting after I enhance them? Might be good to get a few levels despite your lack of murderous intent,” Ilea said.

“You know I’m always here to ground you,” said the earth mage.

“Hah,” Ilea exclaimed and went through her skills. Strike, Dominion, and Brawling are the better remaining skills in Arcane Eternal. Ah, should’ve done that before fighting all those Soul Wardens. What did I even get from those fights?

‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Awakening [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 8’

‘ding’ ‘Sentinel Core [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 9’

‘ding’ ‘Avatar of Ash [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 8’

Should’ve let them hit me more. Weak ass machines. So for Ashen Titan... well, nearly everything. Mantle, Core, Heart, Seal, and Embered Form. That’s eight total. And I guess Origin, because that one will take some time to level. That’s already nine though... and I kind of want to add at least Space Manipulation into the mix. And the Fires of Creation. Hmm.

Guess Brawling or Embered Form can wait. So either Precognition or Stamina reduction and physical conversion. First seems more important. Let’s go then.

‘ding’ ‘Archon Strike [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 1’

Active: Archon Strike [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1:

Send a destructive pulse of mana into your enemy with every attack using your arms, fists, fingers, legs, feet, or head. Your Intelligence stat enhances the damage potential.

2nd stage: The amount of mana used per strike can be regulated with a maximum of 1000 mana per strike. You may charge each strike with 1000 mana per second to a maximum of 5000 mana.

3rd stage: You may choose to use Archon Strike as a non intrusive attack, instead sending a wave of destructive healing onto your enemy. Due to the healing nature of Archon Strike it partially ignores protection against Mana intrusion. You may heal allies with Archon Strike. If used as a wave, the range of Archon Strike increases by 5.5m.

Category: Healing

About time I can heal with that shit, Ilea thought. It’s category is fucking healing after all. And I get range on the wave form. Well... not exactly overwhelming for the fact that I have to relevel it to thirty.

“You’re sure this is worth it right?” she asked the Meadow.

“Stop whining. You’re less than thirty years old. Your skills will be back up there in no time,” the being said.

“Fine,” Ilea mused. *For the elusive and mysterious fourth tier.*

‘ding’ ‘Arcane Dominion [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 1’

Active: Arcane Dominion [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1

Perceive everything in a sphere around you while this skill is activated. The higher the level the further the dominion reaches.

2nd stage: Arcane dominion opens your senses to the arcane. A paramount skill both on and off the battlefield. Elements and spells you control within your dominion have increased harmony.

3rd stage: You may use Sentinel Reconstruction on all beings within your dominion. Your element manipulation skills are improved by a static 50% when used within your dominion.

Category: Aura – Perception Aura

Okay. Alright. That’s a pretty big fucking bonus. I do hope that applies to Space Manipulation too... ah why should it not.

She could see the range of her dominion decrease with the skill change. The ash she created however felt considerably stronger. Ilea already started sending destructive mana into the Meadow.

“Done already?” it asked.

“No. I’ll let you know when you can rip me apart,” she answered.

‘ding’ ‘Eternal Brawling [Enhanced] reaches – 3rd lvl 1’

Passive: Eternal Brawling [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1:

You have adapted the fighting style of the Azarinth school to something you now call your own. Damage inflicted with your own body and related skills is 95.5% [955%] higher. Your arms, fists, fingers, legs, feet, and head deal a slight amount of arcane damage with each strike.

2nd stage: Getting used to fighting in close quarters, your reaction time is increased to accommodate your increasing speed and control. Your bones are steeped with mana, increasing both their weight and resilience two fold.

3rd stage: Eternal Brawling consists of more than offense alone. A true brawler knows when to stand and let an enemy strike. You gain knowledge about sustained injuries and damage from incoming attacks as they happen. For each time you get hit by an incoming attack you see coming, the damage done to you by the respective being’s skill decreases by 1.25% to a maximum of a static 20%.

Category: Body Enhancement – Arcane Magic

Even more reduction. That’s actually pretty good. Does the percentage rise with each level in the third tier?

She assumed the answer was yes, based on the uneven number.

'ding' 'Mantle of the Titan [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 1'

Active: Mantle of the Titan [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1

An armor of hardened ash protects you. Stronger than steel and forming to your will. The Mantle increases your resilience by 145.5% [1746%].

2nd stage: The strength of your Resistance skills also benefit from Mantle of the Titan. The Mantle is a part of the Titan's body. It benefits from natural regeneration. You can feel through your Mantle and you can heal it.

3rd stage: Increases the defensive capabilities of all ash and ember you control. Increase the ash used to form your mantle by up to a static 500%. The additional ash used requires conscious manipulation. You may use Mantle of the Titan to defend willing allies. Amount of required ash dependent on size of the target.

Category: Body Enhancement – Ashen magic

A two hundred percent increase in the third tier. Well, I suppose that nearly cancels out the fact that the resilience in itself dropped because of the level loss. And of course the main bonus... hmm. Shrouding allies in the mantle seems ridiculously strong. Coupled with my healing they'd be nearly as resilient as I am. If they're within my dominion and for as long as the mantle holds of course.

Ilea wondered if her armaments or ashen copies were considered willing allies too. A quick test confirmed that yes, her living armor and ash itself could now be protected by her ash. For her armaments however, the entirety of her available mantle ash was needed and even then the layer remained quite thin.

Ash protecting more ash, Ilea thought and dissolved her armored copies. Two were the maximum she could make with her full mantle and limbs active at the same time.

'ding' 'Titan Core [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 1'

Active: Titan Core [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1:

Ember glows within you raising your resilience, speed, Strength, Intelligence and Dexterity by 55.5% [555%]. You learn how to generate and store heat within your Titan Core. This effect has a separate mana requirement.

2nd stage: The longer you fight with Titan Core active, the deeper it roots. Each minute of fighting adds 15% more power to the skill with a maximum of 150%.

3rd stage: Familiarity with the skill removes its upkeep. You can choose to increase your weight by 25% [250%] for each passing minute to a maximum of a static [750%], increasing your natural health regeneration, heat generation, and resilience by the same factor.

Category: Aura – Body Enhancement

Hmm, two fifty instead of a hundred. And the cap was increased too, oh and more resilience. Not sure how much that will make a difference with the already insane resilience bonuses I have. Ah well, a faster charge is welcome but the reduction on the main buffs is pretty shit. Down from seven hundred percent.

'ding' 'Embered Heart [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 1'

Active: Embered Heart [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1

Increase the heat in your body and release it in a blast around you.

2nd stage: The embers run deep. The heat you may reach is only limited by your very life. Your resistance to heat held within your body is doubled.

3rd stage: Focus on release to change the blast into a cone of destruction sent out of either arm. You may store heat within any ash you control, the more ash used, the higher its potential to hold heat. Ash not connected to you releases its stored heat upon a strong impact in a blast around it or when you will it.

Category: Body Enhancement – Ashen Magic

What's the change exactly? She summoned her notebook and flicked past the pages. *Here it is. Within ANY ash, that's new. And the last bit, when you will it. Wait does that mean...*

Ilea formed an ashen sphere about ten meters away and activated Embered Heart. *It's forming heat,* she thought with a grin. To push heat into ash, she had to be connected to it physically. It seemed that wasn't the case anymore. *Coupled with my eyes. And I don't need an impact anymore, so.*

A chaotic explosion of heat and flame rushed out of the sphere. *Oh... now this... is wonderful.*

The range at which she could form heat inside her ash was still somewhat limited, but a minefield of floating ash just became a possibility.

'ding' Tempered Seal [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 1

Active: Tempered Seal [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1

Burn the inside of whatever your body hits with a surge of heat and embers or release the attack in a burst of fire and cinders.

2nd stage: The flame burns on. Targets hit will have fire burning through or on them. Time and consecutive attacks will increase the effect. When using your arms, fists, fingers, legs, feet, or head, you gain the ability to send pockets of heat within your enemies alongside the initial surge of heat and embers. Activate these pockets to cause a violent explosion of fire within the affected targets. Can be activated three seconds after pocket formation or until heat is lost.

3rd stage: Tempered Seal burns away all that stand against it, damaging mana intrusion capabilities of defensive enchantments, natural- as well as manufactured armor. You may add heat to existing heat pockets or form more. You may add a static 500 mana to a new or existing heat pocket every second.

Category: Ashen magic

Hmm. Not quite as impressive as the 1000 mana for Archon Strike but it will make a difference in battle I suppose. Ah and it might help with my jet boot situation, she thought and smiled.