

Chapter 529 Deadly Spirits?

Felicia was still there, listening to Hector's rant as she nodded along. She finally found Ilea's eyes and patted Hector's shoulder one last time.

"You're back," she said with a bright smile.

"You... what did you tell that thing about me?" Hector asked as he approached her.

"You literally attacked it," Ilea said, standing her ground as he entered her personal space.

"Why wouldn't I? It's a fucking meadow with a tree!" he said.

"Hold on, what being are we talking about?" Michael asked.

"Endless Meadow," Ilea said.

"It's a four mark down that way," Hector said. "You brought the other dark ones here? Why?"

Ilea watched as the creatures entered the various halls.

"Did the mana density increase?" she asked.

"He destroyed the physical barriers. I cannot contain it fully," Meadow said.

"Was that you?" Felicia asked, looking at Ilea.

"No," she said.

"Welcome, humans. I have come to an understanding with Lilith. Should you be able to support our endeavors, I would try to repay you in kind," Meadow said.

"Wonderful... wonderful," Michael said as he walked towards the creature, his hands shaking slightly as he checked his armor.

He stopped ten meters in front of the destroyed gate and summoned himself a table and a few chairs. "I'm Michael. I see that Lilith has already taught you our language? That makes things easier. I have several points I'd like to discuss and possible payments for your information."

He nearly stuttered, his excitement palpable. Another Michael rushed past the group and joined his other self.

Another table appeared and more notes.

"Why Meadow?" Felicia asked.

The view back into Meadow's room was blocked by both rubble and fractures in space, likely there for just that purpose. Or perhaps a side effect of the being's presence.

"Looks like one," Hector said. "Yeah I doubt I'll get anything out of this. Hey Readleaf, any clue when Lys starts their siege of Baralia?"

"The last time I was in a war camp was before our meeting at the ruins," she said.

"Ah well. Nice meeting you, Lilith. Good luck with whatever you're trying to achieve here. I'll go loot the capital," Hector said and righted his hat.

“Do you have the storage ring from the Elder?” she asked him.

“Yeah, which is mine. I found it first,” he said.

“I’ll give you gold for it,” Ilea said. “Not like that guy had anything useful in there.”

Hector looked at her, squinting his eyes.

“Hundreds of books probably... spell descriptions, journals, magic items that need to be categorized and sent to merchants. All that takes time. Or... or you just get pure gold, right here, right now,” she said.

He summoned the ring and flung it her way. “Fifty,” he said.

“Twenty five,” Ilea said, taking the ring.

[Band of Knowledge – Rare Quality][Storage Capacity at 24/25]

“Forty,” he said.

“Thirty five, because you already took out whatever gold was in here,” she said.

“Thirty eight,” Hector said.

Ilea summoned the gold and flung it into his water.

He cackled and made the coins vanish as he bowed.

“Enjoy the war,” Ilea said.

“OH I will. Girl, any clue how long Ryse is out?” he asked Felicia.

She shook her head.

Hector rolled his eyes before he vanished.

“Does he not know how much a storage item alone is worth?” Felicia asked after he was gone.

“I have to admit, I don’t know either,” Ilea said and handed it to her. “I’m sure you’ll find plenty of incriminating evidence and interesting things in there.”

“You’re dropping off your work,” Felicia said but took the ring nonetheless. “I’ll take stock and will inform you of what I find.”

“I appreciate it,” Ilea said and looked up. “And he was so excited to find another realm.”

“He never struck me as reliable. Even more whimsical than you,” Felicia said with a smirk, running a hand through Ilea’s hair.

“Stop that, or I’ll assume you want more than friendship,” Ilea said.

“Who knows?” Felicia replied.

What?

The woman giggled before her armor switched to Baralia gear. “I think someone should be communicating with the officers choking on mana near the gate.”

“I really don’t feel like it,” Ilea said.

Felicia smiled. “I know silly. Go play with the monsters. I don’t want you back with any less than ten more levels!”

Ilea rolled her eyes and displaced both of them a few floors up. She grabbed Felicia's hand and activated Sentinel Huntress. "A mark. I'll be able to find you and you can call for help. Might be useful in the coming days."

Felicia made her glove vanish and looked at the forming runes. "I'm flattered," she said with a smile.

"Are you sure you're going to be alright? It will be clear you're not from Baralia," Ilea said.

"They will understand the consequences should they attack a Major of Lys. If anything this will be an opportunity for both myself and Gyffold," Felicia said in a confident tone.

"Stay safe," Ilea said and squeezed her hand.

"I will. Sorry for teasing you," Felicia said.

"Don't mention it," Ilea replied and vanished.

She felt herself blush a little as her wings spread outside in the freezing air. *Not sure how I feel about That.*

"*You wish to fight the Spirits?*" Meadow asked a moment later, its voice a little more subdued now that she was out of the temple.

"Yeah... I can level some of my skills higher by doing just that. I'll be back in a few hours though. Let me know if any new possibilities present themselves with Michael's help," she said.

"*I will. Try not to perish, Awakened Healer. I have experienced more than enough loss lately,*" it said.

"Don't get dramatic now. We barely know each other," Ilea said as she sped up. "How far can we communicate?"

"*You will soon pass the range of your ability to reach me. I too won't be able to talk to you anymore but as long as you don't go farther than your last battle, I can call for you,*" it said.

Long range communication. I wonder how much it can see. I guess it's fair to an extent to compensate for the lack of legs to move around.

Ilea slowed down after a while, nearly reaching the same desert she had fought in previously. The Spirits were gone, all the corpses too.

Freaky.

She saw bones poke out of the frozen ground, craters, crevices, and mounds remaining from the intense battle.

Should I try to level another skill than Force? It may be possible to help Meadow with a third tier but I won't just spend Core points for an uncertain result.

Skills available for [The Faen Valkyrie]:

- ***Spear of Creation***
- ***Burst of Creation***
- ***Phaseshift***
- ***Shrouding Cloak***
- ***Blazing Force Shield***

Spear, Burst, and the shield are purely combat focused it seems. I doubt Shrouding Cloak will be helpful in this case. Which leaves Phaseshift. Not the first time I've looked at it either.

She didn't outright dismiss the other skills but had to admit the spell had the most potential out of the bunch. It had its limitations but so had Displacement before it reached the second tier.

Please be good, she thought.

'ding' 'Would you like to replace [Force] with [Phaseshift]? All skill levels gained in [Force] will be lost.'

'ding' 'Be aware that all skill levels gained in [Force] will be lost if you proceed.'

'ding' 'You have learned the skill Phaseshift – lvl 1'

Active – Phaseshift – lvl 1

Expending a large amount of mana, you can temporarily unbind your body from the physical and pass through barriers. You may let spells and physical objects pass through you unhindered. Be aware that certain types of magic will retain some or all of their impact.

Category: Space Magic

Ilea checked her Class info, hoping the decision didn't cut her out of some evolutions.

Class 3: The Faen Valkyrie – lvl 190

- Active: Phaseshift – lvl 1

- Active: Flare of Creation – 3rd lvl 1

- Active: Displacement – 3rd lvl 1

- Passive: Space Shift – 2nd lvl 15

- Passive: Body of the Valkyrie – 2nd lvl 14

- Passive: Space Awareness – 2nd lvl 8

She made sure Force was still available in the list of potential skills and closed the menu.

Maybe not the best idea to level it against high level spirits, she thought and floated through the desert.

Or it's an absolute mega brain move, she wondered. High danger equaled high skill levels. Her second tier Devour Resistance had made that clear once again.

"So how did she do it?" Ilea asked, charging monster hunter.

"Mashed Potatoes!" she shouted, her voice traveling through the icy desert like a tsunami traveled through the ocean.

Her call had effects nearly immediately, Spirits of Death breaking out of the ice less than ten meters away from her.

No Astrals yet. That's good, she thought and checked the most important skills to level.

Destruction will have to wait probably. Blink and Sphere will get there. Perception too. Reversal is low... fuck. I need some high level creature I can just pump full of destructive mana. And Sentinel Huntress.

She immediately focused on the skill, trying to analyze the bones close to her.

Ilea already heard the monsters approach but as long as there wasn't a group of astral spirits, she doubted these mere spirits of literal death could kill her.

It's so fucking low... level eight? I should really investigate more.

Most of the ashen skills should come along nicely too.

Which leaves... the Valkyrie.

A spirit looking a little like a malformed scorpion smashed its tail into her chest, damaging her armor slightly as it pushed her away.

It attacked again, its tail passing through her this time.

"Phaseshift... it's pretty neat, isn't it?" she asked as she tried to displace the creature. *Ah yes. Spells don't really work while I'm in this form.*

Ilea made sure her healing worked during Phaseshift before continuing, not to be caught without her heightened recovery during the skill.

She deactivated it and appeared next to the tail.

[Spirit of Death – lvl 482]

She pushed and managed to displace the creature a few meters away. Not a massive success but it worked better against projectiles anyway.

Ilea proceeded to focus on her lowest leveled skills, mostly dodging spells and attacks. Phaseshift with its time to activate and subsequent cooldown to use limited it greatly but she just activated it whenever there were large amounts of projectiles coming at her.

The spell took about one second to activate once she triggered it. It cost about seven to eight mana to activate. The real cost came afterwards. The first second cost 75 mana, the second one 150, the third 600, and so forth. Ilea noted that the cost stopped increasing after six seconds, using up more than two thousand mana per second. Sentinel Core *really* pulled its weight here with its spell cost reduction but it was clear the skill wasn't necessarily meant to be used for more than five seconds.

Death magic still drained her health slightly but thanks to the skill, her armor remained undamaged. The reality was of course that her armor would prevent health damage in the first place.

Quite welcome really, she thought as she displaced herself through the growing hordes. Projectiles were moved away or sucked towards herself with her sphere.

Body of the Valkyrie requires actual damage... I hope this counts, she thought as thirty flashes of death magic homed towards her body, phaseshift activating before the energy clashed together.

Ilea blinked whenever possible, the skill often stopped by death magic auras some of the spirits possessed.

Larger monstrosities already started to show up, interrupting her in her search through the various bones.

I wonder if this one is still around as a spirit, she thought, holding a large skull in front of her as spells flashed through her. She learned that holding the skull extended Phaseshift's effect onto it. As long as the object wasn't too big or alive, it seemed to work.

The skill needed a second to deactivate too, in which offensive abilities and teleportation still weren't possible. The three second cooldown afterwards further limited its usability.

One thing she was sure about by now, was that her ash armor and other resilience bonuses to her body still remained active within Phaseshift, otherwise the damage should have been much higher according to her estimates.

She wasn't quite sure about the alive part either, still speculating on the status of the spirits.

Can they awaken too? Or are they more just a manifestation of the element? Maybe they'd just get better at whatever they're doing now. Devouring life.

Higher level spirits were present now, in the six to seven hundreds even. The larger monsters didn't seem to care for the lower leveled ones, trampling or rolling over them as they tried to get the small human.

"Why are you so focused on me? I can't be more than a little snack," she said when the first Astral spirits showed up.

There were two at first, arriving not by teleportation but incredibly fast flight. The sudden stops didn't create the shock waves they really should have.

Ilea was glad they targeted both her and the death spirits, otherwise she might've had to leave earlier than planned.

One annoying thing she learned was that astral magic delivered nearly its full damage despite Phaseshift. It didn't disintegrate her armor or flesh but it straight up burned into her health.

Ilea just had to pace herself, keeping an eye on the spirits and her health to make sure she wouldn't dip too low. Health at zero meant death, even for her.

It just proved near impossible to get her there.

Even with four spirits firing full barrages of astral magic at her, she only ever got below ten thousand. Her third tier healing was active constantly of course.

It felt surreal to her, floating through the many creatures and attacks, that without her healing, she would be entirely disintegrated in four to five seconds.

Good luck fighting that without my recovery, she thought and smiled.

She allowed the death spirits to pin her down from time to time, when she deemed the situation safe enough. Her pre Astral spirit battling confirmed that a use of Heart of Cinder was enough to make distance, if it was charged for more than five seconds. That in turn allowed her to displace herself again.

Heart of Cinder sadly couldn't be charged during Phaseshift but whatever heat she had accumulated before would remain.

She found however that that wasn't necessary at all, the creatures immediately rushing towards the Astral Spirits when she changed into her ethereal form through Phaseshift. It was clear they didn't perceive her the same way someone with eyes did.

Ilea wondered how light even reflected off of her when her skill should literally disconnect her from the physical.

My brain works too... and my eyes... weird.

She could tell there were explanations in relation to her space magic, her awareness allowing her to grasp some of what Phaseshift did.

It didn't so much move or remove her from the physical but instead changed the space she occupied to suit the skill's description. That was also why most of the magic still had an effect on her.

The headache she didn't get thanks to her healing made her anticipate the probable Space Awareness levels she would surely accrue by studying her abilities in more detail.

Ilea started to avoid more of the astral beams when additional Astral Spirits appeared. It became clear after about twenty minutes that the Spirits of Death would soon be destroyed by the flying pale blue creatures.

But they were still here? Which means the Astral Spirits left last time... before they destroyed the spirits?

Ilea displaced herself a few times to get away from the spirits' attention, blinking a few more times to make some distance.

She watched as the Astral beings burned down the remaining Spirits of Death who didn't stop charging at them until the very last one was destroyed.

"There shouldn't be any left... if the star spirits destroy the death spirits," she said.

"Meadow?" she asked.

"Apologies. I was unsure if you were addressing me. What was the question?" it asked.

She repeated her musings.

"Yes. The failing in your assumption is that Death Spirits can be destroyed by Astral Magic," it said.

"They can't? But I did get kill notifications," Ilea said.

"As do they. Physical representations of Spirits can be destroyed even with more mundane weapons and magic. If I interpreted your spells correctly however, you may hold a way to end their existence permanently," it said.

"My healing?" she asked.

"Precisely. Spirits of Death can be killed and they can be killed. The experience you gain should be a little higher should you manage to permanently destroy them," Meadow said.

"Is that why they charge ceaselessly?" Ilea said.

"They destroy all that is not them. All that has a pool of health," it said. *"No matter how dangerous their enemy might be. With what I've seen and interpreted, I believe they do not consider danger to their existence."*

"Can they awaken?" Ilea asked.

"I have failed to achieve a Death Spirit Awakening so far. Though I cannot accept its impossibility," Meadow said.

"You're trying to awaken them? What if they still want to devour everything even after that?" she asked.

“Then so it shall be. I merely lead creatures to their awakening. Your concerns however are likely misplaced. Once sapience is reached, most beings gain some sense of self preservation. It means after all, the attaining of awareness itself. Questions as to why the consumption of all living creatures is necessary will be raised. I think it more plausible that they will find it pleasurable and life sustaining to devour other beings but not their single drive.”

“Assumptions on your part,” Ilea said.

“Based on a lot of experience and information. Either way I will not cease my efforts,” it said.

“Fair enough,” Ilea said.