

Chapter 639 Steps

Ilea sped over the mountains, soon reaching the forested plains. She flew low in an effort not to attract any monsters, the marks in her mind guiding her way.

Fast!

“It is,” she said, her words lost in the winds but likely picked up by the Fae nonetheless.

When she saw Karth in the distance, she slowed down, using her non charged speed to fly the rest of the distance, teleportation allowing her to go through the forest instead. *This spot is probably fine*, she thought, standing atop a small forested hill overlooking a part of Riverwatch. Magic lit up within her dominion as she set her fourth Transfer destination. *Close enough to both the city, Karth, and the necromancers.*

Karth, she thought, looking at the high reaching mountain. *I wonder if Isalthar is already trying to find a way inside. How many Cerithil Hunters can you gather? How many are there even?*

She rushed past the city, moving through the forest with teleportation. *Can't believe this distance took me several days of running*, she thought, appearing in front of the Azarinth temple. Ruins, long forgotten in the eastern Navali forest. Her dominion now reached far below the structure, a single use of transfer bringing her into the very chamber she had been stuck in for months.

Her magic perception picked up some power coming from the walls, none of the grass actually grown back but she hadn't expected anything different. It was supposed to be a rare elixir after all. Even if there was any Bluemoon grass, the limitations would make it useless anyway.

Plant? Violence asked, moving out of her hood.

“Yeah. You don't happen to be an expert vegetation mage?” she asked, her ash carefully cutting into the wall, taking a piece of it out before she made it vanish.

No.

Space.

Not

Plant

“I figured. Good thing I do have a plant friend,” she mused, activating her third tier transfer ability.

She attached the Fae before they vanished, appearing within the domain of the Meadow. “Hey,” she spoke and summoned the chunk she had just gotten. “Can you cultivate this plant? It's called Bluemoon grass, some kind of moss. I ate it which made my body change to something that allowed for arcane healing.”

“*And you wish to use it on others?*” the Meadow asked.

“Preferably in a way that doesn't kill anybody. As it was, humans had a pretty high chance of dying after they consumed it. Felt fucking horrible for me too,” she explained.

“*I understand. I can work on it but I'm not very well versed in this realm's vegetation. Would it be acceptable if I asked the human Lucas for help?*” the Meadow asked.

“I don’t see why not. Surprised you need help at all,” Ilea admitted.

“I do not question my capabilities. But you humans always want results in unreasonable time frames. It’s simply more efficient to get the insight from a local. Perhaps some of the Dark Ones working to produce food on the first layer may be helpful too,” the tree said.

“Just make sure nobody gets their hands on the current version. It’s dangerous,” she said.

“And it may give them a powerful arcane healing class,” Meadow said.

“Which is a good thing. I would’ve rather not used the grass at all but the mental healing aspect my spells provide is super helpful in training, especially with Pain Tolerance,” she said.

“Did you not consider it a lesson to learn from hardships?” Meadow asked.

“You still experience the pain. You’re just not scarred long term by the experience. It’s a little different I think,” she said.

“Perhaps. Either way, I shall try to figure out a safe way for this to be grown and consumed, hopefully retaining its effects on the human body,” the Meadow spoke. *“I can tell you already that something like this will only work on lower level humans. As the body gets used to more powerful magical Classes, it rejects change to this degree.”*

“Doesn’t matter,” Ilea said. “It’s really just for the mental healing aspect.”

“Did you torture your students?” it asked.

“A little,” Ilea admitted, reforming the ashen Fae when Violence started to hover in circles.

“And you think the mental healing your own ability provided helped you get to where you are?” the Meadow asked.

“Yeah,” she said.

“I think you would’ve reached the same heights anyway. But perhaps you wouldn’t be the exact same person that you are now,” the tree said.

She sat down and closed her eyes, focusing on the stones that started to float around her. *Maybe you’re right,* she thought.

A few days passed, Ilea working on her Space Awareness with the two eldritch creatures, all the while training her others skills with both the Sentinels and the high level creatures down in the Descent.

Goliath called out to her when she stood up, ready to leave for Ravenhall.

“The armor, is finished,” he said.

Meadow made the mold vanish, a black set of armor revealed below, all of it hovering in place. It looked rather massive. Not nearly as large as the armaments of course but broader than anything Ilea had worn so far. The surface wasn’t smooth as she had expected but instead looked to be themed after the creature whose scales it was made from.

“Why make it look like scale armor?” she asked.

Goliath's eyes seemed to signal confusion. "Because it is."

Okay, Ilea thought. She didn't mind, the set looked positively terrifying. Additional edges protected the weak spots near her neck and joints. Compared to her moderate horns, the heavy scale armor had ones reaching nearly twenty centimeters in length. The helmet had a moderately large slit for her eyes, enough to see comfortably even without her dominion. The range of motion would likely not reach her lighter sets but this wasn't armor made to evade.

She stepped around the creation with a smile. "I'll look even more like a monster."

"Which is what you are," the Meadow spoke.

"Eh," Ilea retorted.

Monster, Violence supplied, appearing inside the helmet, white eyes staring out from the slit.

She watched as the armor's hands moved up into a fighting pose.

And here I don't even know who's doing this, she thought, identifying the gear.

[Heavy Scorching Wyrms Armor – Draconic Quality]

Hopefully a little more durable than my Eternal Guardian armor is at this point.

Her bone set simply couldn't keep up with the spells a four mark creature could conjure up. Ilea knew that the problem didn't exactly lay with the armors themselves. For most people it wasn't exactly feasible to fight monsters that shredded through hundreds of sets of armor, and the flesh below. If the scales had anywhere near the durability the Wyrms showed, she might've just gotten her first set that could withstand the rage of a four mark being.

She made the set vanish and summoned it around herself, the gear not made to be individual pieces someone could get on, but a connected set summoned around one's body. Her hand closed into a fist, the fingers each covered by what seemed to be individual scales moving into each other as she opened her hand again. "It looks natural. If I didn't know how the scales looked before, I might think this was a part of its body."

"It is a part of its body," Goliath said.

Obviously, she thought.

"The creation of this armor set may not be so different than the birth of the creation these scales have come from," the Meadow added.

"Really?" Ilea asked, looking at the Fae appear on her hand.

Large.

"It is, right?" she said. "I hope it can withstand all my spells."

"It will recover, should it be damaged," Goliath said.

"Care to test quickly, Meadow?" she asked, displacing herself closer to the tree.

It formed a few walls for her to hit, Ilea using her mana intrusion abilities, changing her punches to pure physical damage and sending waves of arcane and cinders over the stone creations.

The integrity of the gauntlets didn't seem in question, the material not showing the slightest signs of wear. *Well it was insanely durable when I attacked it*, she thought, releasing heat into one of the

walls, the energy forming right above her armor, much like it had with any other sets she had worn before.

Flare of Creation manifested the same way as it would on her ash armor. Overall she seemed to be able to use her abilities without any downsides. The movements were just a little bit limited and she could feel the bulk more so than the weight being something to get used to. *With an added four layers of ash armor.*

“Let’s see how durable it is on the defensive side. Meadow?” she asked, a large stone spear forming a few meters in front of her.

The projectile impacted her, breaking against the scale armor. The next one was deflected to the side, the one after that making her stumble slightly. Each came with a significant increase in speed. The fourth spear made her slide back a few meters, the tip of the spear sticking inside the new set, not penetrating all the way to her skin however.

“Seems pretty good,” she said, the next spear punching through her chest, stopped by the back side of the armor. “Was that necessary?” Ilea asked as she ripped the projectile out, tossing it to the side.

“*We need to test the regeneration,*” Meadow said.

“Of course we do. I don’t need it to tank attacks from creatures at your level,” Ilea murmured.

“*You keep using the word tank. I know what you mean but was it something from your home realm?*” the creature said. “*Regardless, you have long proven that you need your defenses to withstand attacks of any creature. Even those as powerful as I am.*”

“It’s a military vehicle that’s supposed to be heavily armored, why later on the word started to be used to describe the ability to take damage. Along those lines anyway. Look, it’s already recovering!” she exclaimed.

“Perhaps because it is much thinner than the original scales,” Goliath mused.

“It’s too slow for a real battle of course but I don’t think it’s much worse than the bone armor I used before,” she said. “Iana can you enchant it as well?”

The woman looked up from her work and sighed. “Contrary to these two, I’m not some ancient enchantress. That material is more powerful than anything I’ve worked with before.”

“I suggest you try. I will help guide you,” Goliath said and bowed lightly.

The woman scratched her cheek. “I can try. But it might not be very useful in the end.”

“Should be fine. Durability or something would be good,” Ilea said. “Now that I think about it... Goliath did you add something for my mana intrusion? I didn’t feel a resistance when I used the spells.”

“Of course. The scale material on your fists is aligned to allow gaps. I thought about it before but because the material has to endure the power of the spells moving past, it needs to be incredibly durable. The heat required just to melt this... it should be fine. And if it isn’t, it will regenerate in time,” the smith explained.

“Works for me,” Ilea said, angling her fist to see the gaps. *Only relevant for mana intrusion, I suppose.*

She displaced the armor set close to Iana, the whole thing floating in mid air. *“That’s your doing right? The armor doesn’t float on its own.”*

“Who knows?” the Meadow mused.

Ilea smiled.

“The... rifle tool, requires another day. But I am confident about this version,” Goliath said.

They had tried two versions already but using her ashen limbs to deliver the beams into the eye placed within the tool hadn’t been a smooth experience. If anything it made the spell worse than just using the eye in her hand.

“I’ll be around then. Thanks all and see you later,” Ilea said. *“You coming?”*

The Fae shook its head.

Return

In

Time

“You have something more interesting to do?” she asked, crossing her arms.

Yes

Important

Work

Ilea squinted her eyes. *Sure you do. You’re just bored of teaching me.*

Violence!

“Violence to you too. Come around when you feel like it, I’m sure you’re always welcome,” Ilea said with a smile.

Friend! the creature exclaimed and vanished.

“Magnificent... instant long range teleportation... untraceable... perfect manipulation. It’s almost like... no... I’ll have to see it again,” the Meadow murmured.

“You’re never quite as interested in my long term teleportation,” Ilea said.

“Child’s play. Compared to the Fae. This realm is truly blessed,” it said, magic surging up as it seemed to do its own testing.

“I’ll see you around then,” Ilea sent and activated her third tier transfer.

She quickly checked her messages while flying to Ravenhall.

‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Awakening [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 2’

‘ding’ ‘Avatar of Ash [Enhanced] reaches 3rd lvl 2’

‘ding’ ‘Phaseshift reaches 3rd lvl 23’

‘ding’ ‘Space Shift reaches 3rd lvl 22’

'ding' 'Space Awareness reaches 3rd lvl 6'

'ding' 'Space Awareness reaches 3rd lvl 7'

“Did you gain weight? It seems like your balance is off,” Claire said, one hand touching her chin as her eyes pierced through the bumbling ash healer.

Ilea rolled her eyes. “Does everyone have to point it out?”

“Just don’t jump. You’ll damage my floors,” she said and walked closer, taking both Ilea’s hands into her own. “One, two, three, four...,”

The window to the office was open, a group of musicians playing outside.

“Isn’t that a little much?” Ilea asked, glancing at the window as she fucked up a step.

“Focus, darling,” Claire said. “I thought you were a high level warrior. This should be simple to you. I’ve employed them before. It sometimes helps with headaches.”

“You can just ask someone to heal you... wait can you even get headaches?” Ilea asked.

Claire closed her eyes for a moment. “Headaches aren’t only a physical condition, Ilea. You would know as much if you had to read through dozens of reports per day, written by utter imbeciles.”

Ilea chuckled. “If I were a normal human, that grip would’ve broken my hands.”

Embarrassment flashed on Claire’s face before she squinted her eyes. “You’re hardly normal. My explosions couldn’t break your hands.”

“Who knows,” Ilea said and twirled, led by Claire’s hand. “We haven’t tried in a while.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, you’ve been near indestructible on our last mission together. You’re a three mark now. And I’m sure the weight is not just for show,” the woman said, catching Ilea as she leaned back.

“Is this where we kiss?” Ilea whispered.

“You wish,” Claire whispered back, pulling Ilea back up. “Hardly enough skill to swoon me,” she judged.

“I can do other things,” Ilea said, her ash forming a field of floating roses.

“Charming,” Claire said. “But I know a barbarian when I see one.”

“Harsh,” Ilea retorted, focusing back on her steps.

They continued for a while until Claire asked for a break, sitting on the window sill as she looked out over the large central plaza.

Ilea leaned against the wall, looking out as well. The musicians were still playing. They used primarily string instruments. The singer wasn’t half bad either. A few adventurers had stopped to listen, joined by various workers and merchants. The suns would go down soon and while night didn’t mean no activity in Ravenhall, it would be somewhat reduced.

“You chose a nice place,” she said.

“Not enough time to enjoy the views. Don’t look at me, I’m putting time aside for these things as well. The employees are getting to a usable level at this point,” Claire explained.

“So they’re expert administrators?” Ilea joked.

Claire just waved her off. “Lives depend on the work we do. They need to be good.”

“Fair enough,” Ilea said with a laugh. “I hope you’re doing okay, with all the responsibility I mean.”

The Head Administrator looked over, smiling before she glanced back outside. “We’ve had this talk before, Ilea. This is more than I ever hoped for.”

“Sorry,” Ilea said. “It’s just that...”

“You would hate the job?” Claire guessed with a smirk.

“Pretty much, yeah,” Ilea admitted. “I’m just glad I have you guys taking care of these things. I don’t think any of it would’ve come to be otherwise.”

“We’re a team after all,” Claire said. “Even if it’s not exactly the intended Shadow formation anymore. But with you and Kyrian, we hardly need more muscle.”

“Good that you two have all the brains then,” Ilea said. “Speaking of what you built. I was wondering, now that the Sentinels are somewhat established and official...”

“*Trian, can you come to Claire’s. Not very important,*” she sent to the Headmaster.

“Called for Trian, let’s see if he shows up. I’d want to have his input as well,” Ilea said. She saw an armored man appear near a distant roof, wings of lightning spreading out as he advanced towards the central square. A knock resounded a few seconds later. “Could’ve just flown in.”

“Some people have manners,” Claire said, waving her hand towards the door.

Trian entered when the entrance opened up. “Lilith calls,” he said with a smile, stepping to the bar and pouring himself a drink. “Needed a break anyway. How are things?”

“In control,” Claire answered.

“Making new armor in the north. It looks fucking scary,” Ilea said. “Scale armor made from Wyrmscales.”

“You’ll manage to get it destroyed anyway,” Trian said. “Are you fighting naked under your ashen armor by the way? I’ve been wondering.”

Ilea smirked. “Keep on wondering, Sparky.”

He chuckled, moving one of the chairs a little closer. “Nicer view than my office,” he murmured, the sky taking on a near purple color, light reflecting off the distant snow covered peaks.

“Maybe you could hang one of Cless’ paintings. She made some good ones of me,” Ilea suggested.