

Chapter 426 Threshold

The only thing they found left behind by Cynthia was a scrap of a heavy plate chest armor. The dark green dye made Ilas sure it had been hers.

Ilea hadn't voiced her doubts and instead tried to find a trace or anything else with the piece, unsuccessfully due to the passing of time and surrounding gore.

She felt the dark one had calmed down considerably, staring at the piece as if he had found an inner calm.

"Can you read it?" she asked, flipping through the pages of the ancient book they had found.

"I am not an expert," he said and looked through the pages. He shook his head a little after a couple of minutes. "I only know some of the words... not enough to make sense of it."

Pride

Madness

Corruption

The Fae supplied a couple words as it floated close to the book, the pages moving on their own.

Truth?

Betrayal

"Sounds like a thrilling story. I'll ask Elfie to translate it at some point. Anything relevant to the corruption we faced or the beings who made this place?" Ilea said, watching the Fae move through page after page.

It shook its head after another couple minutes.

Speculation

Reverie

"He was part of the red church then?" she asked.

The Fae nodded in response.

"I'll ask Elfie to translate it at some point," Ilea said and stored it in her necklace.

"Do you want to keep looking?" Ilea asked.

"I have found what I came to find," Ilas said. "Though... it seems wrong to leave all the corpses behind."

"I can help you burn them up," Ilea said.

"You have done enough. I will build a pyre, in this layer," he said.

"For all this? That will take you days, there isn't even any wood here."

"Longer, likely. I choose to do this however. It seems... right, to me. I understand if you think it unnecessary and wasteful," the dark one said.

Ilea shook her head and smiled. “Not at all, Ilas. Do what you need to do,” she said and looked up. “Will you require help to get back to the first layer?”

He shook his head. “I have grown much since I have last come here. I shall find back.”

“Ilea... I owe you everything I am, for this. For your help. You set me free,” he added.

She waved him off. “Just promise me to find your way back up and to find a new purpose in this world. Be it protecting the first layer... or gardening. Now that this is taken care of.”

The dark one went on one knee and bowed deeply. “I will. Thank you, Ilea. Sentinel of ash.”

It's actually the other way around, she thought with a smirk. “Come on, I don't want to fight the otherwise peaceful spirits. You can help me get out of here.”

He nodded. “Of course. I doubt you'll need assistance with traversing the layers?”

“I'm fine, thanks,” Ilea said as they came out of the facility.

The previously crowded space was completely empty by now.

“Is my perception acting up?” Ilea asked.

“I sense none either,” Ilas said, apprehension in his voice.

Joy, the Fae sent and giggled. It landed on Ilea's shoulder and hugged her face.

Ilas kept the shroud up when she saw a single Spirit fly closer.

Friend, the Fae sent.

“You can disable your spell,” she said to the dark one.

Ilas nodded, the saturation in the surroundings increasing as his shadow magic vanished.

The Spirit came a little closer before it bowed to them.

Ilea waved and watched it slowly disappear.

“What was that?” she asked with a chuckle.

“Perhaps they remained because of the Vampire,” Ilas said.

“Hmm,” Ilea nodded and patted the dark one's shoulder. “Well, we're done then. I'll be traveling around the Descent a little longer so catch me between exits if you need anything.”

“I will. Though I shall remain self sufficient from now on,” Ilas said and bowed to her again.

Ilea focused on not rolling her eyes as she waved and departed with the Fae.

The near reverie from the dark one annoyed her a little. She preferred Maro's or Elfie's company, their snark keeping her humble and down to Earth.

“So... we have a bunch of stuff to do now. Lots of violence. I suggest you start with space magic on my eyes,” Ilea said, deactivating her resistance and armor.

The Fae giggled and started without complaint.

Violence!

“Hmm, so... we’re at number seventeen. Let’s start with the Zanedin Hunters. Time Magic Resistance and maybe some Blood Magic... Blast and Curse is already at level twenty... alright?”

The Fae nodded enthusiastically.

“I’ll have to use my armor though, their attacks are a little much otherwise.”

Sad

“I know, I’m pretty fucking weak, right?” she sighed.

The Fae shook its head but didn’t comment on it, likely understanding the sarcasm.

The two moved up to the sixteenth layer and continued their training, Ilea quickly finding the small groups of Zanedin Hunters left behind, all of them corrupted.

She spent several hours leveling her Time Magic Resistance, sometimes even deactivating her armor of ash if only one of them remained.

The Fae had a hard time injuring her with her armor up but still dealt a little damage, helping with her Space Magic Resistance.

She finished off the last of the corrupted creatures before checking her progress.

‘ding’ ‘Blood Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 12’

‘ding’ ‘Blood Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 13’

‘ding’ ‘Space Magic Resistance reaches lvl 6’

...

‘ding’ ‘Space Magic Resistance reaches lvl 8’

‘ding’ ‘Time Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 11’

...

‘ding’ ‘Time Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 20’

“That’s nine general skills at level twenty of the second tier,” Ilea said as she looked through the messages, feeling her eyes explode.

A familiar sensation by now but it seemed the Fae wasn’t getting bored of it yet, dodging the tiny ashen swords wielded by the ash Fae.

“So, do you want to pop my eyes for another three days or should I get the tenth skill against the Storm Griffin on layer fifteen?” Ilea asked with a smirk.

Death!

Death!

Death!

“Alright there Theoden, I too choose the flying calamity,” she said and prepared.

They reached the exit to the fifteenth layer, Ilea glancing at the Fae. “You should wait here, that thing is dangerous, even for us. You should be able to see from here.”

It nodded and appeared near the ground, looking out through the mostly destroyed exit.

“Shouldn’t take more than half an hour with that ridiculous monster,” she said and looked up.

The upgrade to her eyes let her quickly make out the dot in the distance. She even saw the wings and legs.

It was moving towards her.

Here we go, she thought and appeared near the ground thirty meters away. Close enough to the exit so that she could simply blink back to the Fae. Her third tier wings should help with the constant barrage as well.

She was here to take damage but the Storm Griffin was one of the few creatures in this dungeon that could completely stomp in her brains. Not something to take too lightly.

Ilea was at least somewhat sure the creature wasn’t out on a furious murder spree, judging by their last encounter.

Holy shit that thing is fast... comparable to my charged wings evens, she thought and soon saw the Griffin’s eyes focused on her. Still hundreds of meters away.

A shiver went down her spine before her precognition kicked in, informing her about the coming attacks.

She didn’t do anything about them of course, her armor opening up to let the weaker wind blades slash into her skin directly. Her resistance deactivated.

It cut nearly to the bone.

Yeah, that won’t take long. That thing could’ve even helped against the Elemental, she thought and smiled.

The Griffin moved on to more powerful attacks rather quickly this time, either because it remembered her or because it could tell Ilea was looking at it.

It was also apparent that her flying skills had improved vastly, making her able to dodge even the faster attacks more reliably.

Ilea blinked away many times to heal back up and recover some mana, spending a couple hours with the Griffin until the last message finally popped into her mind.

‘ding’ ‘Ashen Wings reaches 3rd lvl 6’

‘ding’ ‘Ashen Wings reaches 3rd lvl 7’

‘ding’ ‘Avatar of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 16’

‘ding’ ‘Veteran reaches 2nd lvl 11’

‘ding’ ‘Wind Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 15’

...

‘ding’ ‘Wind Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 20’

Ilea waited for a moment, sitting in the stairwell with the Fae on her side before she sighed.

A ding resounded.

‘ding’ ‘You have proven to be more resilient and masochistic than few before you, training without ANY regard for your own body or mind in a wide variety of General skills. Mostly Resistances. To find and acquire these skills is already an achievement worthy of mention. To train them to their maximum potential is far beyond even that.

For reaching level three hundred in at least one class, unlocking thirty General skills and achieving a minimum of 2nd lvl 20 in ten or more General skills, you have unlocked 3rd tier General skill points.’

Ilea rejoiced with a wide grin. “I did it!”

Joy!, the Fae sent, dancing in the air without knowing exactly what had happened.

She read the rest of the notification, calming herself down unsuccessfully.

‘One third tier General skill point is awarded for reaching 100 levels in General skills.

You currently have: 1061 levels in General skills.

One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

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One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

One third tier General skill point awarded

“Holy fuck... that’s way more than I expected. This is a little overwhelming...,” Ilea murmured and summoned one of Keyla’s meals.

She needed something to distract herself, shoveling the food into her mouth as she explained the achievement to her companion.

Joy, it repeated and patted her head.

Consideration

“I’ll think about each point carefully, don’t worry,” she said between bites.

As she calmed down, the overwhelming feeling turned to a more subdued joy. The main benefit of all her resistance skills were of course the skills themselves. Third tier benefits would be a nice addition but even if they were very powerful, it wouldn’t top simply having second tier resistances in the first place.

Let’s see what’s available then...

‘3rd tier General skill points available [1061 Total skill levels]: 10’

'General skills available for third tier advancement:'

- Meditation

You have fought with Meditation active, have trusted in the skill and have consistently used it to its full potential in the midst of battle. It is certainly crafty and yet quite opposite to the actual intention. Through your complete disregard for such matters, you have unlocked the potential third tier of Meditation.

- Blood Manipulation Resistance

You have faced both the carefully crafted Corruption of the Descent as well as the might of a Starved Vampire. Neither has fazed you, proving that your body is ready to advance Blood Manipulation Resistance to the third tier.

- Heat Resistance

Be it Cliff Wyverns or the power of a Trakorov, you have faced and lived through their smoldering fire. Truly, it is remarkable your path has not lead to fire related classes but here we are. You may advance this skill to the third tier.

- Light Magic Resistance

Not many have witnessed the combined effort of Elder Sun Sprites and even fewer have lived to tell the tale. It is beyond anything the second tier would provide protection against, making you ready for the third tier.

- Wind Resistance

The Storm Griffin is an ancient and proud creature. Your survival is a grave insult and proof enough that you deserve to reach the next tier of Wind Resistance.

Ilea read through the information, surprised the actual achievements that were needed to unlock the third tier were listed. The same wasn't true for her class skills after all.

A little annoying that achievements are necessary at all, meaning I have to face something ridiculous in the first place to get the option for a third tier.

Meditation, Heat and Wind were the obvious choices out of the list. Ilea kind of wanted Light Magic Resistance too but she would think about it a little longer.

"Meditation, heat and wind resistance. What do you think?" she asked the Fae.

It sent a mental thumbs up.

I'll still have plenty more points to spend for everything else. Just have to find insane creatures to fight... though I guess the lightning and sand Elementals count, as well as the Trakorov. Need to get those to level twenty.

Ilea focused on the now, culling her excitement a little. She had time to level a bunch more resistances to the end of the second tier. Afterwards she'd have to check on Trian. She cringed a little at how long she was already gone and the time it would take to get the rest of her skills where she wanted them.

I also kind of want to explore the last five layers before going back, she thought and tapped her chin.

Ah, he can wait a little longer. Patience is a virtue any medic should have, she thought and ignored the matter for now. Her own progress was more important right now. Ilea planned to have the Medic Sentinels be mostly independent of her anyway. After some initial guidance of course.

‘ding’ ‘Meditation reaches 3rd lvl 1’

Meditation – 3rd lvl 1

While in the state of meditation you cannot move. Your natural mana and stamina regeneration is increased by a factor of 423%. The factor is improved upon leveling up the skill.

2nd stage: Your familiarity with Meditation lets you move slowly while the skill is active

3rd stage: Few ever reach this stage, normally through centuries of study and meditation. You have stood amidst death, trusting the flow of mana to be at your side. Vast experience and understanding has changed your very core. The effects of Wisdom are doubled. Meditation is no longer limited by movement.

“Oh my shit! The Enavurin was right!” she exclaimed and laughed, feeling as if invisible flood gates within herself had opened up.

Ilea checked her status with a grin.

Status:

Vitality: 816

Endurance: 405

Strength: 515

Dexterity: 420

Intelligence: 740

Wisdom: 905

Health: 8110/8110

Stamina: 3738/4000

Mana: 6821/18100

Double the power, she thought and looked at the Fae.

“Meditation third tier doubles the effects of Wisdom... can you fucking believe that?” she asked.

The creature nodded knowingly, sending her another thumbs up.

Wait, effects of Wisdom are doubled and I can keep Meditation active at all times now... regeneration being a percentage... holy shit!

She summoned her notebook with the previous calculations and added the changes.

The bonus to Wisdom alone increased her mana per minute from 4.5% to 9%, doubling again thanks to her maximum mana doubling from 9050 to 18'000. Instead of doing the math, Ilea just slammed her fist into the wall behind her a couple times and checked how fast her mana regenerated.

Around 33 per second without Meditation and nearly 46 per second with the skill. I don't really have to consider the first number though, she thought. This was huge, bigger than most of her third tier class bonuses recently.

Well, practically maybe not that significant but I don't really have to worry about mana in the near future.

Then again, the next creature I fight could just as well be ten times as durable... still... now I have a chance to kill whatever it may be without having to recharge several times.

Stamina was affected by the Meditation change as well, meaning the resource was barely a concern now that she didn't have to slow down to use the skill anymore.

Ilea tested it quickly, flying around and watching the numbers as she used her most costly mana intrusion abilities.

"Fuck yeah, Fae Fae!" she exclaimed.

No

"What? The nickname?"

It nodded.

"Alright then, Mr. Violence," she said, elated from the skill change.

The Fae sent an approving thought.

Ilea slowed down and continued her meal, selecting Heat Resistance for the next level up.

'ding' 'Heat Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 1'

Heat Resistance – 3rd lvl 1

Ignoring the warnings of your parents and friends, you refuse to not stand in fire. This skill will help lessen the damage and pain a little.

2nd stage: You've been burnt and melted again and again. Through extreme exposure, your skin, muscles and bones become much harder to burn and melt.

3rd stage: It is a mystery how the soul of a literal Volcano has found its way into your body, forcing you to seek out fire and heat as much as you do. Do you not see how melting your body is not a good idea? The third tier lets you retain and use some of the flames and heat around you, should you choose to do so. They are still damaging of course but it seems you are beyond caring.

Ilea smiled at the jabs, knowing that there was either a god like being governing all this or the magic allowing her to learn and improve skills tapped into her own subconscious to form these paragraphs before they were beamed into her mind.

The benefits were rather unclear, making her hesitate with the third skill she wanted to improve. *Kind of want to test this one before I advance my Wind Resistance.*

"I'll wait with the third skill," she said to the Fae.

Disappointed

"Yes yes... you know it's reasonable though. I first want to see how good the Heat Resistance bonus is." she said and stood up, excited to test some things out and to get more resistances.

Give me your magic, creatures of the Descent!