

Chapter 436 Considerations

“There are plenty of creatures that shall satisfy the experience needed to advance. For some it may be beneficial to wait and train both class and general skills.”

“I’m not known to be very patient.” Ilea said with a smile.

“Even from what we have experienced together in the Descent, you might find something that meets the requirements for a third class. Few humans ever achieve such.”

“I hear that all the time. What is it that talks to me anyway? The messages and notifications when I level up? The Status I can see in my mind?”

“It is mana itself. A part of you now. One that has fused with your very essence as soon as you were brought here. We do not know the exact reason you have arrived here in this land unknown to you. A crack perhaps in space itself or a musing of a being even we do not comprehend. The most likely theory is an instability in your realm of origin. The notifications in your mind are simply a way to make graspable what otherwise would not be comprehensive. Changes to your body and soul, its potential unlocked as soon as you were touched by magic.”

“As to your request for us to change you into another being. We do not possess such power, nor do we believe it necessary. You are beautiful and powerful as you are.”

“Thanks for the encouragement. Maybe I’ll think on that date again, you flattering space magic creature, you.”

“Can you elaborate on the instability of my realm?”

“Magic seeps through space and time. It is the source of life itself and where it all returns. That is our current theory at least. Even we do not know all. While we believe your realm must have had little magic, some had to be present. Instability can be manufactured or can occur naturally, when cosmic forces shift and the flow of mana grazes realms and worlds previously less suffused. Cracks appear and phenomena rarely observed take place. Not much unlike what happened in the lands of what you call the North after the disappearance of the third sun of this realm.”

“You’re bombarding me with confirmation and new knowledge. Holy fuck.”

“Is it too much for your monkey brain?” the concern sounded real with a speck of well meant banter.

Ilea rolled her eyes. “Come on. Probably been a while since you were bombarded with such knowledge.”

“We jest.”

“Parts of you, probably. So tell me... if that’s true then my original realm was grazed with mana. What does that mean? Changes like here in the north? Worse?”

“We have too little information to be sure. Potentially the changes could be as vast as in the north or could not have been felt at all. Magic could have reached a suitable level to affect beings in a more direct manner, as is the case in this realm. If truly cracks have formed that allowed you to appear here, it is likely the effects could have been violent and expansive.”

“Classes and stats... can’t imagine the chaos that would cause... holy shit. Billions would die...,” Ilea murmured. “What about those cracks... I would assume they go both ways?”

“It is likely. Creatures with even a moderate understanding and feel for magic would avoid such places where the space between realms is fluctuating.” the Fae explained.

“Can you see to other realms? Or tell me what happened? Maybe there’s a way I could go there... I’m sure my blink could take me back again,” Ilea said.

“Not without an anchor. Or knowing the realm ourselves. Your memories could provide one perhaps but it is an invasive attack on the mind. One we will not use on you. Neither is success guaranteed. You yourself however, could perhaps one day acquire the ability to return. The skill you have shown is sufficient to travel through the realms. Connected to a powerful anchor in space. Yet it will not bring you to your old realm in the first place.”

“Why, might I ask, would you want to go back?”

“I told you before... this is my home. Elos. Might just be curiosity, to see my old realm again. You definitely added to that with your talks of mana and cosmic flows. The Ascended had a way to travel through the realms... you told me as much. Or at least to send signals through realms. Maybe we could establish trade or travel between places.”

“Humanity... you are not the first with such thoughts and goals. Perhaps using the technology brought by those you call Ascended, might bring your species a step further in such endeavors.”

“You talked about the sun. Everything I found points to the Ascended being the perpetrators. It vanished three thousand years ago?”

“Indeed it did. The rupture that followed rolled over the lands like a wave of fire, burning those not powerful enough to withstand, shifting earth and stone, water and ice. And then it faded... against all logic and theory. The human lands as those of elves were spared. Perhaps it took time alone for the celestial bodies to realign, time for this plane to stabilize. We have not found the answer, though few of us seek such knowledge.”

Ilea nodded. “What do you think happened? If the Ascended really did something, they had a reason. I doubt the destruction caused was the goal itself.”

“Do not underestimate the wrath of living creatures. Yet with what we know of them, it does seem unlikely. A source of power perhaps, to harvest what lays atop the curtain of the skies.”

“The Taleen talked of unlimited energy... perhaps it was the sun they meant after all. They also suggested the Ascended were scattered among the realms, few survivors remaining,” Ilea said, recalling the information from the translated diary.

“The Taleen have been a fascinating group to observe. Few of us have returned from their iron clutches but those that did told of enchantments unknown, theories and wonders that we had not considered.”

“You aren’t angry that they captured and killed some of you?” Ilea asked.

“It is only expected. To lash out against the unknown, to capture it, to try and gain whatever power and knowledge you can. Most sapient creatures share these traits. An evolutionary need for competition, to come out on top. Few beings care not for such things and most of them sit high atop the chain of power. As you have said that scavengers know the risk of exploring dungeons, each part of us is aware of the risks within the world and its inhabitants. Even more enticing is the

journey. For what more than danger and the unknown can entice a living creature, can give it meaning?"

"I kind of get what you mean," Ilea said. "Especially considering how old you must be. You were there then, during the war. When the Ascended attacked Elos?"

"A long time has passed since last the lower races of this realm have come together to repel a common enemy. Many had suspected the Ascended had taken the third sun but the evidence you provide as well as the Descent's existence and depths as well as the runes found within lead further credibility to this theory. If only they were willing to converse. To share stories and knowledge. Yet they remain untrustworthy, dangerous and arrogant. Elves fighting alongside humans and dwarves is a rare thing. An fickle alliance, shattered as soon as the enemy was repelled."

"I mean the same is true for alliances between different human kingdoms and empires. We do what is necessary, often only cooperating because a greater danger requires it." Ilea said.

"You do not seem particularly invested," the Fae said and giggled.

"It's difficult to care, with so much shit constantly going on. I'll try to have an impact, now that I am as powerful and rich as I have become. I don't feel like constantly being involved however, a purely selfish notion."

"It is not selfish at all, to try and have an impact. Already you have helped in destroying the corruption that would not have threatened the realm but would have cost many life, both sapient and not. You have cared to save not one but three of us without expecting anything in return. You speak of being selfish and not wanting to be involved and yet your actions tell the opposite."

"I appreciate it. I don't need to hear about the impact I've had. I just try to help out where I can."

"A false modesty. You at heart desire to help those less fortunate, those weak and unable to conquer the challenges set on them by life. It is good to be aware and cautious, not to become a slave to a cause unworthy. And yet we all make and find our own meaning, now that the burden of consciousness has been placed upon us."

"That we do. I think I can at least help enable more people to fight for themselves and to survive a little longer than they otherwise might have. I do sound a little like a knight, don't I?"

"Self awareness is the first step in accepting and challenging a mental illness."

Ilea laughed. "Nice one. Well, you have a couple millennia on me so I'm sure I'll figure it out someday."

"That, you shall. If you survive until then. Perhaps forming a cluster of knowledge and stories like we did would help in those endeavors."

"Thanks but I like being me and not having a thousand voices in my head," Ilea said.

"The benefits are incredible. Perhaps you simply need more time to understand."

"Perhaps," Ilea replied.

"You are being sarcastic. To think a being as young as you has the sheer audacity to question our knowledge. Highly intriguing."

"Others would kill me for that," she said.

"Dragons might."

“You really dislike them. Speaking of killing, can you use your space magic against me so that I can reach the third tier? They way you are now it should be a simple matter.”

“Of course. We suggest you disable your resistance as you did before. It will be more safe for the both of us.”

Ilea nodded and disabled her resistance, in no way expecting a sudden betrayal. Not that this creature would need her resistance to be off. It was so far beyond anything she had felt before, she wouldn't be surprised if it could just delete her out of existence.

“The Ascended... it was a four mark creature. I'm pretty sure that means level one thousand or above,” she said and felt her arms and legs compress by an invisible force, crushed and bent in ways that weren't natural. Neither her nor the being were bothered by the training.

“That is correct.”

“Well... I'm just wondering. There was a war, against their people. Elves, humans and dwarves came together to fight them. Just still doesn't seem like quite enough, you know? I think I'm close to the pinnacle of what powerful humans ever reach. Elves are higher surely but above one thousand? Same with the dwarves... Praetorians were level six hundred and while there were surely more powerful beings around, it seems unlikely they would have even considered asking humanity for help if they could deal with it themselves.”

“You assume that because humans were asked to join, the enemy in question should have been insurmountable? We fail to understand. Have you not defeated creatures twice and more your level? The Vampire you have faced should at least have been level seven hundred. And you would pose a small threat even to the Young Lightning Elemental.”

“Would I? But I have two classes, wouldn't they add up to seven hundred as well?”

“That is a wrong assumption. The species of a being determines how many classes it may hold. Pushing through thresholds via various means can increase such but in general you should assume a being at level one hundred is as strong as another, no matter how many classes it possesses. Humans commonly have two. Creatures lacking sapience commonly have one. Do you believe it normal that a level one hundred human can fight and kill level two hundred monsters?”

“I mean I mostly did that. It took quite some time to get them down usually but by now I can kill a level four or five hundred creature with a single hit. Not all of them of course but some.”

“Does that not explain it already? You realize that creatures of similar levels differ greatly in resilience, power, cunning. You yourself are the best example. Sapience and the ability to learn, improve, use intelligence and tactics in battle adds a layer of power that is not quantifiable. Not by levels and the numbers associated. Those merely determine how many points of Health and Mana a being has at its disposal. And yet what do even these numbers mean when your self healing can recover even lost limbs and heads? When skills can multiply certain numbers ten fold? When you can summon ash itself from mana and use it to defend and attack?”

“You are telling me levels don't matter. I always thought they were more of a suggestion. Means I'm pretty special then, doesn't it?” she asked.

“They do matter but as you say, it is a suggestion. It is unwise for you to challenge beings above the level one thousand mark but you have experienced such yourself. Many times. Before you ask, a third class for you will benefit you but it will not be the same as your current ones. It will be weaker, subdued and it will take time for it to be nurtured and grown into another weapon you may wield.

Many humans, elves and dwarves have found their end because they expected the same result based merely on levels. You too could be slain by an old and cunning creature closer to level three hundred than five hundred.”

“I see the doubt in your mind. You have the luxury to recover injuries in mere instants and to escape where others may be trapped and killed. Your classes, skills and resistances as well as the experience in combat you have garnered make you a formidable foe. One that benefits from their low level and would surprise most at higher power. The Ascended too showed considerable caution when battling you. To even talk to a being so far below its own power is a testament to your abilities.”

“I see. I mean it wanted to know what happened to the mana.”

“And you believe it would be possible for a level three hundred and forty human to influence the gathered power in any meaningful way?”

“I wouldn’t know,” she said.

“You wouldn’t. We would, as would the being you have faced. And still it decided that there might be a possibility, as slim as it seemed, that you truly were the reason for the power to be gone. It did not learn that in a way that possibility was true after all, accepting in our intervention that it was us in the first place. A human as resilient and self repairing as you are is something we have not encountered before. Perhaps some that have wielded the Azarinth magic in the past have come close but your attitude, enjoyment of battle as well as resistances put you apart from them. With your recent acquisition of third tier general skills, it may even be possible that you can challenge some few level one thousand beings. We do not suggest you do, merely think it a possibility.”

So it wouldn’t have asked me in the first place, if I hadn’t survived for as long as I did?, she thought.

“Neither should you disregard your connection to Ash itself. Requirements are often dangerous and reserved for those few willing to take risks that others disregard. Yet it is not our place to explain your abilities to you. You yourself know best how vast and powerful your classes are. The trail of death and destruction you have left behind is proof of that.”

“I suppose it is. So even a few humans could have managed to take down one of the Ascended?”

‘ding’ ‘Space Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 17’

“It is possible. Yet if the being we have faced is representative of their people, it seems unlikely. Wars are complicated affairs however and in such chaos, much is possible that would not seem likely at first glance.”

“Yeah. Maybe their numbers weren’t high. Or they were weakened.”

“Theories. Should you meet again, perhaps you can ask. If you have progressed far enough in power to force a conversation.”

“I might. Pretty far off in the future, if I survive until then,” she said.

“It already is difficult to kill you. We believe there is at least a three percent chance that you will survive.”

Ilea nodded. “Thanks for the optimism.”

The Fae sent a thought indicating a thumbs up.

“Where are we by the way?” Ilea asked, looking around.

“It is a secret kept to Fae alone.”

“I see,” Ilea said, thinking of what else to ask. The being really seemed to know almost everything.

“Is there a way to stop the Taleen machines attacking the Elves? And would that be desirable at all? For humanity I mean.”

“Machines are made and controlled. Surely there is a way to stop it. As to whether this would be desirable... many opinions should exist. Without the constant danger, many elves would find other targets. It could also be possible that their settlements would grow, their population less hardened from the constant strife. Only centuries and millennia would tell. All this is without considering individuals swaying whole Domains one way or the other.”

“I see. What about the Oracles? Do you believe they would desire the lands human hold?”

“Their desires are separate of your concerns. If anything humanity should fear from the elves, it would be the complete removal of the Oracles’ control. They have little interest in your kind.”