

Chapter 594 Beaming

Ilea took a deep breath, feeling the magic flow through her. The new sensation from her Deviant upgrade didn't last long, her perception quickly adapting to what the Meadow had called an increased harmony.

She blinked around in the staircase, activating various spells before she punched into the walls a few times. Heat gathered in her core before the energy was released in a small beam that burned into the stone.

Everything felt... smoother. Practically speaking, her spells activated faster, the mana flowed through both her body and out of her limbs with what she felt like was less resistance. She couldn't perceive a direct change in her physical body but the results were the same.

Her cooldowns remained the same and most of her abilities were quickly usable anyway, but it felt good nonetheless. Ilea tried her ash next, moving around her limbs and forming a few floating spears. *Okay that's a change for sure.*

With the increased control, Ilea felt confident to create eighteen limbs instead of the sixteen she had been using for a long time. Her ability to move her conjured projectiles around had improved noticeably too and something about her armor made her investigate further.

She raised her arm and looked at the thick defensive layer. Instead of making it recede, she cut into it with a limb, revealing the flesh below. *Oh boy*, she thought, checking her thigh instead. It was the same there. The ash had partially fused with her body. Just a tiny bit but enough to make her a little uneasy.

Am I turning into an ash monster?

Ilea giggled to herself. *Ah who am I kidding. I've long been one.*

"Hey Meadow, how do I prevent myself turning into some purely magical creature?" she asked nonetheless.

"You've had choices before, right? Don't choose the ones that may evolve you in such a manner. Though I do have to ask. What is wrong with turning into a purely magical creature?" it said.

"Probably can't enjoy food anymore," Ilea said, a worried expression on her face.

"Ah I see. Food. Of course. Well do carry on, I'm sure your intuition will guide you," Meadow said, cutting the connection once more.

I suppose it's right. I've not been fucked over by my evolutions and choices so far.

She cracked her neck, finding the maneuver still working despite the change. "Time for some payback."

Ilea teleported down and into the large open space of the eighteenth layer of the Descent. A desert. She didn't care about concealing herself, instead fanning out her wings and flying over the sands as she felt the magic in the air, the power coursing through her veins. It all felt vibrant. Available.

A group of three sprites welcomed her half a minute later, the creatures retaining their strangeness. Long root like bodies with thin dried out wings on their backs. Their bodies moved quickly in the

air, not corresponding to the movement of their wings. Their faded bone like color remained the same, dice like heads propped up on the thin bodies.

This time they didn't communicate at all, instead charging up their light magic spells.

"Suits me," Ilea thought as she felt the heat within her gather. *Now let's see how far I've come since last time. Do make sure to show me what you have. I'll need all the resistance I can get against the Sanvaruun.*

A broad smile spread on her lips as she spread her arms in anticipation. She watched as three bright beams of light fused into one, the energy reaching her near immediately. *Hmm*, she mused, looking at her hands as the magic burned past her, leaving little damage on her armor.

Did it get stronger too? Or would this have happened anyway?

[Elder Sun Sprite – lvl ???]

Close to seven hundred. At least I'll get some experience out of this, if not much, if this is what they'll manage, Ilea thought and deactivated her resistance to Light Magic. The third tier really made a difference, the beams working their way through her defense as soon as the resistance was gone.

Ilea didn't mind spending some time here. It was a good opportunity for some training, and for testing the new harmony she had gained from her Deviant advancement. She formed a few dozen small spheres of ash, condensing them as far as she could in a short amount of time before she sent them flying at the three sprites ahead of her.

The group moved, avoiding some of the projectiles while using their beams to deflect the rest. The few hits that landed made the creatures wobble in the air, the blunt force enough to disorient a level six hundred and fifty Sprite.

Really not something to write home about, Ilea thought, a little disappointed in the monsters' performance. For now that was, she already saw a few dozen more of the beings descend from the higher reaches of this layer. Together they might even be able to match the Monarch's output. Compared to the elf however, she would have little issues with escaping, should that become necessary.

The other sprites arrived in the next few minutes, joining in with their brethren to destroy the pesky ashen creature that had invaded their home. Beams joined together and concentrated in brilliant heat and energy where the being hung in the air, black wings lazily moving on her back. Ash was burned away and reformed, bone armor and human skin exposed from time to time, reforming again with each moment when the barrage couldn't be sustained.

Ilea just laughed, twirling in the air as she exposed herself to the somewhat extreme sun bathing experience. As the creatures gathered, their beams came to overwhelm her healing from time to time but her growing resilience against their attacks through Body of the Valkyrie prevented her from actually having to retreat.

'ding' 'Light Magic Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 2'

Ilea closed her eyes and enjoyed the heat. Feeling the growing power within her chest, she reached out to one of the Sprites and used Displacement to move it in front of her. Her hand closed around it's thin root like neck. The right side of her face lay exposed, her cheek missing as a bright beam of light burned away at her tough skin. Her eye glazed over and popped, blood trailing down before it evaporated. And yet she held on to the struggling creature without a care in the world.

“It’s only fitting, to have my eyes explode again in this place,” she mused and raised her other hand in front of the creature’s head. The heat within her released in an instant, a beam of fiery energy flashing out from her palm, quite literally removing the monster’s head from existence.

Flakes of ash flowed from its neck as a ding resounded in her mind. Ilea grinned when she saw that her attack had partially disintegrated four more of them who happened to be in the path, only one clinging on to life.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Elder Sun Sprite – lvl 700]’

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Elder Sun Sprite – lvl 684]’

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Elder Sun Sprite – lvl 658]’

“I told you I’d be back,” she said, her face regenerating as the creatures moved into clusters, focusing their spells together for a more powerful result. Ilea knew it wouldn’t be enough to stop her. These creatures were simple minded monsters wielding overwhelming magic to defeat their foes. Beings who never had the need nor will to advance past their limiting instincts. And it so happens that they had once tried to kill a dear friend of hers.

If they had been Sapient, perhaps it would have led to a different end, but their spells weren’t the only limited thing about them. *I can be patient too, despite evidence to the contrary*, she thought and continued forming heat within her. A display of such destructive magic would’ve forced most enemies to flee, sapient or not. But it seemed the Elder Sun Sprites had an ingrained arrogance not much unlike that of the Elves. Or perhaps they simply couldn’t comprehend that a living thing existed that could fight them.

We will never learn, Ilea thought and displaced another creature to herself. Her ashen limbs spread and entrapped the being, resisting the continuous light magic. She floated a little closer and punched the monster in its dice like head, the impact vibrating through her arm, leaving a dent in the hard material. She punched from the left next, speeding up as her magically enhanced body brimmed with power. Ilea started mixing in her mana intrusion, quickly overwhelming whatever lousy defense and health the being had.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Elder Sun Sprite – lvl 685]’

She turned around, letting the body fall towards the partially glassed desert below.

‘ding’ ‘Light Magic Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 3’

You Are pretty effective with that combined effort, Ilea mused. The impact however was lessening, the enemy spells dealing more than ten percent reduced damage with each passing minute of their continued battle.

Ilea started being a little more active, using her quick teleportation to close the distance between the various flying creatures, her intrusion overwhelming each and everyone of them in a matter of seconds.

She appeared within the largest cluster, using Heart of Cinder in a sphere around her to disintegrate the group of Elder Sprites. *Violence*, she thought, using the remaining ash to form spears she sent at the few creatures that were left.

Ilea was almost disappointed when the last of them fell to her attacks, the area quieting down as she floated in midair. *That was what a hundred? Two?*

The fight hadn’t taken long either but after the hordes she had faced in Erendar, she supposed the experience couldn’t be anything but underwhelming.

“You don’t suppose you could let me know about large clusters of high level monsters nearby?” she mused, looking upwards as she checked her messages.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Elder Sun Sprite – lvl 658]’

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‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Elder Sun Sprite – lvl 700]’

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 472 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 466 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 418 – One stat point awarded’

And no more skill levels. Oh well, not like there was a lot of skill involved in this battle.

“Even if I would agree with your way of life, there is nothing here that could satiate your endless lust for blood and death,” Meadow replied.

“Are you sure? A good punch to the head might help some beings awaken, who knows,” Ilea said. “Alright then, beam me up Scotty.”

“I understand the humor, however you would be surprised with how effective that method really is. Especially with hard skulled creatures like yourself. Are you referencing a fictional work I’m not familiar with?” Meadow asked.

Ilea deactivated her space magic resistance when she noticed the pull, appearing in Meadow’s domain a moment later.

“Why does that not surprise me. And yes. It’s an older reference, but it still checks out,” Ilea said with a smile.

“Maybe some day, I will understand your otherworldly references. I hope the planned alliance between Raenhall and Hallowfort will lead to a lot of literature trade at least,” Meadow said.

“Well I’m sure you can teleport or mine valuable things from the vicinity to buy things yourself,” Ilea said. “But I don’t know if a TV or computer would actually work the same way in this realm. Who knows. There was some good stuff out there though.”

“I feel envy, to have such a short life and yet be entertained so thoroughly. Meadows like me had to entertain ourselves with the study of magical theory,” it said.

Ilea rolled her eyes. “Yes yes old one. But now you’re powerful as fuck, and humanity would rather fuck around behind their walls. Even I am just a fringe case because of my battle obsession,” she said.

“Are you suggesting I did well?” Meadow teased.

“Of course. You’re the best, strongest, and funniest Meadow I know,” Ilea said and winked.

“And how many Meadows do you know exactly?” it asked, sending a vision of a thousand squinting eyes.

“You’d be surprised,” Ilea said, smirking at the continued attempts by Feyrair. She glanced over to Neiphato who sat meditating with wooden shapes floating around him. Definitely a contrast.

“No, I wouldn’t,” Meadow said. “You asked earlier in regards to your skill change.”

“Yeah anything you’re noticing now?” Ilea asked.

“I’m sure you noticed already. How your ash and arcane mana have integrated more with your body. I believe it will be a great boon,” Meadow spoke. “However it isn’t the dramatic change you feared. Not yet at least. However any further evolution options should be quite interesting. Be sure to consider them carefully when the time comes.”

Ilea nodded. “Will do. Thanks.”

“Hey Fey, want to go back to the Praetorian facility for some time? Until our friends here make some progress with the gates and locating device?” she said.

The elf just roared, trying to dodge a bunch of barriers forming around him, his wings clipped a moment later before his limbs were removed, his body slapping to the ground as he uselessly spewed his fires.

“Maybe some levels would help you fight the Meadow too. I’m sure you’ll win!” Ilea said.

The dragonling rolled his eyes and returned to his Elven form.

“You’re not suggesting this creature could ever overwhelm me?” Meadow asked in a dry tone.

“Yeah no, I just want him with me. Can’t kill Executioners alone yet,” Ilea sent back, giving a thumbs up to Feyrair whose mood didn’t seem particularly stable.

“Yes. I don’t think staying here is a good idea,” he said with a hiss and sigh, somehow at the same time.

“Neiphato?” Ilea asked.

He glanced towards them. “I will continue my training here for now.”

“Alright. Then enjoy yourselves. Let’s say we’re back in a week?” Ilea suggested.

“I suggest you give those two a little more time. Three or four weeks at least,” Meadow said.

Ilea rolled her shoulders. “Ah, well. I had hoped to start the search a little earlier. But I suppose getting into the ancient network takes some time. Just dissolve your mark in case I’m needed or if you’ve had a breakthrough.”

Iana smiled. “Will do. With Meadow here, I’m sure it’ll be manageable. Worst case you’ll have your locator at least.”

“Sure, good luck then. And remember to eat and sleep,” she said.

“I will make sure they do,” Meadow informed her.

“Thanks. And for your help in general. Don’t know what we’d do without you,” Ilea said.

“I help those I consider friends. Without me, well you’d be stumbling in the dark for another few millennia. But lucky for you, I already did that part and have come to show you fire,” Meadow remarked.

“Just don’t show us how to build nukes,” Ilea said.

“What are nukes?” Meadow asked.

Ilea waved towards the tree, stepping onto the teleportation platform. *“Weapons of mass destruction. Spells destructive enough to flatten whole cities with a single blast. That kind of stuff.”*

“I’d like to see such a nuke used against my shields,” the tree suggested.

“Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that,” Ilea said when Feyrair joined her. *“See you.”*

Ilea and Feyrair had an easy time finding their way into the Praetorian facility. Elfie’s mark led them through the desert and into the manufacturing plant without issues or Monarch interruptions.

“Let’s continue to fuck this place up then,” Ilea said as her ash fanned out.

Feyrair glanced at her and smirked. *“More limbs. Did something change?”*

“Deviant of Humanity to the third tier,” she said.

He hissed. *“I see. Perhaps you’re closer to an elf now than to a human.”*

She twirled and looked at him. *“Would that make me an Oracle?”*

“Well, if that were the case, you’d be the Oracle whose Domain I’d join,” Fey said and winked.

“Alright, eyes on the prize, dragon. We’ve got a lot of work to do,” Ilea said.

The two continued in Izta where they had left off, mapping out the massive facility while they fought the various Praetorian variants. Time passed quickly and for every hall they destroyed, they discovered another three.

Ilea informed Elfie about their progress on the first day and that he should call for her whenever they encountered an Executioner. The machines were rare but still forced Elfie’s group back whenever they did encounter one. For Ilea and Feyrair, they were the best source for skill experience. Class level wise, the Hunters were a far better choice because either of them could fight that variant alone.

Three weeks passed before Ilea was called by one of her marks. However contrary to her expectations, it wasn’t Iana or Meadow. It was Trian.

Meet? was the intent sent with the disappearing mark.

“Might have an emergency with a friend. Want to join or stay here? Probably doesn’t have anything to do with your war,” Ilea said as soon as she received the message, destroying the last Praetorian in the vicinity.

Feyrair turned towards her in his dragon form before he turned back to his Elven self. *“I’ll join you of course. More interesting than these endless halls anyway,”* he remarked.

Ilea smiled and activated her third tier blink. A few minutes passed before they both appeared within her home near Ravenhall. Trian had been in the city, his mark slowly fading as Ilea focused on his location.

“Cover your elfishness,” Ilea said and displaced them out and towards the city.

“As you wish, ash princess,” Feyrair said, his new nickname sticking. Only because it sometimes visibly irked her when he said it.

If anything, she was a Queen.