

Ilea felt the power settle within her as she stood up, stumbling slightly as she took a deep breath. The weight change wasn't substantial but she noticed it nonetheless. She could feel magic settling within her bones. *Like some kind of enchantment*, she thought, trying to see what had happened with her evolved Arcane Dominion spell. *No way to pierce through myself. And my healing isn't helping either. Everything is fine apparently.*

She sighed and stretched, grabbing her ale with Displacement before she turned towards the stairs.

"Well? You're going to leave us in the dark?" Feyrair asked.

Ilea glanced back and smiled. "There will be time to show everything off, but I think I'll take a small break first."

Kyrian cracked his neck. "I'll go hunt in the meantime. I will match you in no time," he said and gave her a thumbs up.

Isn't that Fey talk?

The elf hissed, realizing he had let his curiosity get the better of him. "Take all the breaks you need. I won't waste any time either," he said and vanished with laughter.

Kyrian waited a few seconds before he sighed. "There he goes. Come get us when you're ready."

Ilea giggled. "That wasn't necessary, Kyrian. But I do appreciate it."

"I'm glad we made it," he said, looking back at the large cavern. "Sure you don't want to look through the rest?"

"Bunch of rub...", Ilea started, looking at the chunks of stone left behind on an evened out section at the back of the cavern. *I know those runes.*

"Found something?" Kyrian asked.

What does that... it's not the exact same but...

"Maybe. They're all destroyed now anyway but the runes here. I found something similar below Ravenhall. Gates of some sort. Guess now it's clear that they're not Taleen creations," she explained.

"I see. Krahen or Ascended maybe?" Kyrian suggested.

"Maybe. I'll collect it all just in case," Ilea said and used transfer for the first time. She felt the new addition to her spell, a part of her mind tugging. Had she wanted to, an explosion of arcane magic would've flashed out when she arrived near the stones.

She knelt down. *Definitely the same runes. Does that mean there were Ascended down below Ravenhall? Taleen? Krahen? It has to be connected somehow.*

A quick swipe with her ashen limbs summoned everything with runes into her necklace. *Fifty units, ah well, won't hold onto this stuff for too long.*

"Nothing from the Terror?" she asked as she walked back, inspecting the scorched ground.

Kyrian shook his head. "It's mace is still there."

She rolled her eyes. "If anybody's going to use that, it's you."

"I'll have a look, but it doesn't seem to be particularly special," he said, his steel extending before it moved around the mace, pulling it closer.

"Can't just move it with your magic?" Ilea asked.

"Too heavy. Only so much metal I can control effectively, and the flails and armor I have already fill most of that capacity," he explained.

"Hmm, at least you can store it all within your ring," she said.

"I'd rather be a creator like you two," the metal mage said, glancing at Neiphato.

"Grass is always greener," Ilea murmured, walking towards the exit. She grabbed the remains of the Azarinth healer as they returned, storing the corpse within her necklace.

Neiphato motioned to a nearby tunnel they had previously ignored. "That's where the Taleen came from."

"Figured," Ilea said. "Even the great trap makers wanted to avoid the ones laid out here."

The tunnel had been collapsed, thoroughly.

"I'll leave this here for now," Kyrian said. "As I mentioned, come get us when you're done. And take your time. The gap has widened if anything."

[Metal Mage – lvl 417]

And I only got three levels for that fight?

"I will, thanks," Ilea said, watching the man fly out of the half collapsed entrance.

Neiphato glanced at her and smiled, hissing joyously. "Congratulations on your advancement, Ilea."

"I appreciate it," she said and sat down on one of the old benches, resummoning her ale.

[Wood Mage – lvl 342]

Coming along nicely too, young elf, she thought, taking a sip.

"Do you want company or someone to test with? Otherwise I will resume my hunting as well," Neiphato said.

"I don't, but thanks. I'll get you all in an hour or so, have fun," she said with a smile.

"You too," Neiphato said with a brilliant smile before he too vanished.

She looked at the ale in her mug. *Hmm... alone on a set of exotic isles with my three hot companions and a bunch of dangerous monsters. Maybe coming to Elos really was just an elaborate reality tv gig after all. I hope that Leviathan isn't the camera man.*

She ditched the bench and formed an ashen armchair, enjoying the ocean breeze coming into the hall as she relaxed for a moment. *Hmm, maybe a test subject wouldn't have been that stupid. Ah well, can check that out later.*

First things first.

Ilea focused on one of her marks, all of them still very much visible when she thought of the spell. The new part came to her much like her skills usually worked, downright instinctual.

“Violence.” she sent.

A few moments passed, a gust of wind passing into the hall.

“Violence!” the answer came.

She grinned, their daily quota used up. But what more was there to say really?

The spell worked, Ilea even checking the hall to see if the little bugger wasn't hiding somewhere, having followed her throughout her adventures. Alas, he wasn't there. *Just like telepathy. Feels the exact same.*

So what's the limit exactly?

For the next mark, she tried to use up the whole quota.

“I have transcended you old tree. Now bow before me!” she sent, finding the limit to be ten words.

The answer of course came immediately. *“Lousy spell. Fit for imbecils. Go and evolve again. Monkey.”*

Rude, she thought with a smile, giggling to herself before she drank from her ale. *I can annoy it every day now! How glorious.*

Hmm. Mark communication ten words per day now possible. Sent, Ilea. That should work.

She quickly sent it to everyone who had a mark and wasn't on the isles.

“Noted, good luck on your journey!” Claire sent.

“Get out of my head, you monster,” spoke Walter.

“Understood. Sent, Dale,” the guard captain sent.

“Congratulations in order? Proud of you. Take care of Kyrian,” Trian answered.

“May the winds carry you. I hope you are alright,” Felicia sent.

“Useful tool. Hallowfort growth steady. Meadow helpful. Visit sometime. Catelyn,” sent the fox.

Elfie just sent an appreciative or congratulatory hiss. It remained unclear how many words exactly had been used for that.

“Will want to analyze that spell for enchantment. Iana,” the enchantress sent.

Of course, why don't we just add telephones to the shit I fund in Elos.

The rest of her marks were her three companions whom she would inform later. *So next thing... Core points. Meadow mentioned skill enhancements so I guess this is what I've been waiting for. But I should wait until I have all my evolutions, just in case there are requirements. Hmm... on the other hand, I might actually unlock new requirements having enhanced skills.*

She thought about it for a moment before deciding not to spend any points yet. She would lose a lot of power even resetting one of her skills to the start of the third tier, power she could use against the monsters on these isles, in order to even get the other evolutions.

No reason to weaken myself now. I can train them up again after I get Kin and Faen to the next stage.

Standing up, she walked over to a stone wall. Mug in hand, she flicked the wall with her finger.

A wave of arcane energy flashed out, leaving a small crack.

Hmm.

Now let's try with Archon Strike. Wave form.

Her finger hit the wall, an explosion of arcane energy wrecking through the stone, sending chunks to the side as a shock wave of air and mana expanded with thunderous cracks.

She looked at the crater with joy. *Quite different to that initial spell down in the Azarinth temple.*

Ilea stepped away and sat back down, debris and rubble still falling from both the ceiling and wall itself. *So technically...*

She tried to use Archon Strike with all her fingers but failed. Using them one after another worked somewhat however. *Same frequency as if I would use both my fists. Makes sense I suppose.*

Charging the spell worked as advertised, her finger flicking into the air, all the mana used returning to her as she hadn't hit anything with the attack. *That is actually pretty nice. I wonder how effective this will be against an actual creature.*

Ilea used her health to charge the attack instead, finding it limited to five thousand points much like her mana, reduced again by Sentinel Core of course. Stacking both allowed her to double the effective resource use to ten thousand. She looked at her finger, feeling the energy brimming within. *Now if that isn't the nuclear fucking option. How many absolute destructions is this? One hundred? All just sitting in my finger.*

She giggled like an absolute madwoman before she canceled the spell, downing her mug of ale before she refilled it. *Marvelous.*

Can't test Dominion without subjects. I hope I can heal and damage selective targets at the same time, she thought and stood up, transferring into the same wall, an explosion of blueish arcane energy extending outward in a sphere around her, the energy reaching a radius of about two meters. More of the stone got destroyed but the effects weren't as impressive as her Archon Strike.

Guess I should try it against an enemy spell. Could maybe even go into an area effect like Kyrian's curse, deliver one or two blows and going back out, she thought and charged up an archon strike, using transfer again before she delivered the blow. It worked without issues, except for the degrading integrity of the Krahen keep.

One last thing, she thought and linked transfer's usage to displacement, moving herself and a bunch of chairs through the room. The arcane explosion extended, but only from her. *Worth a shot I guess.*

Ilea teleported out of the hall and into the open, twirling in the air as she smiled. It felt good. She felt good, mana brimming within her. *Ready for some applied testing.*

Her wings charged before she flashed away, towards the valley of death.

Ilea looked at the Bluetail with her arms crossed.

The creature screeched, rushing her before it retreated again immediately, having stepped into her Arcane Dominion.

“It’s working,” Kyrian said.

Ilea briefly used the destructive spell on the man before she healed him again immediately.

Selection works. Awesome.

The spell packed even more of a punch when she supplied it with health as well, canceling out all but her third tier healing for more power. Enough to startle away the level six fifty Bluetail now circling her with angry screeches. *It’s like I can touch everything within my dominion... with reconstruction that is.*

“That it is,” she said whilst checking her nails, her middle finger charging up Archon Strike.

Kyrian watched Ilea vanish, her form appearing next to the bird’s head. She extended her arm and flicked the creature.

He remained calm when its head flashed up with blue ripples before it burst like an overripe fruit, splatters of bone and blood flying away from the arcane impact to join the decoration of the valley.

The rest of the bird flapped its wings one more time before it flopped to the ground.

Ilea glanced back with joy in her eyes before her expression changed.

“What?” Kyrian asked.

“What? You don’t look sufficiently impressed, that’s what,” she said in a smug tone.

He smiled. “I didn’t expect anything less. I do believe I should wait with a bout until I too have reached the next set of evolutions.”

“It will be glorious,” Ilea said, whistling with the sound spell she liked to use.

I’m sure it will be. I’m sure it will be, Kyrian thought, looking around himself to see a storm cloud moving closer.

“Ah perfect,” Ilea said before she flew towards the lightning.

His gaze followed her form, showing her vanish upwards, a blue sphere of arcane energy expanding before a bolt of lightning slammed into her, sending her tumbling in the air.

“Okay, maybe I should try with something a little less powerful,” Ilea said when she appeared nearby again. “It should be able to disrupt spells.”

“Ah,” Kyrian said as he looked back to the storm. *Yes, maybe you should try with something a little less insane.*

He laughed, shaking his head

Flick test successful, Ilea thought with a grin as she flew up and over the clouds. Neiphato couldn't deal with the lightning quite yet after all. The two Elves joined them a few seconds later, having heard her Monster Hunter. The Bluetails who had responded were just now landing in the valley, distracted again by the feast laid out for them.

Are there more already? Or am I imagining things? Ilea thought as she saw more birds descend.

She turned back to the group and looked at Feyrair.

[Beast Warrior – lvl 408]

“We can move on, and look for new monsters,” she said, trying to use Eternal Huntress to spot anything with her new supposed ability to pick up the trail of dangerous prey. She did actually spot a few bits of old magic residue, likely from high level Bluetails that had flown through here or used their spells.

Awesome, she thought. “Where to, tourist guide?” she asked, glancing at Kyrian.

“Eh,” he said, scratching the back of his helmet when everyone looked at him. He just pointed to the largest isle, the one with smoke rising from its top.

Feyrair hissed. “Finally. I’m not fond of water.”

“Me neither,” Ilea said, looking at the trail of lava flowing down from the top of the mountain, splashes occasionally sent into the ocean by arcane lightning cracking down.

“I’m not sure what we’ll do about cave ins though,” Kyrian said.

“I can teleport you out, and as long as you’re in my dominion, I can heal you,” Ilea said.

The metal mage nodded lightly. “Good. I’m less concerned about getting crushed and more about getting stuck. Can’t teleport into solid rock.”

“I’ll use my long ranged one in that case. Don’t worry,” Ilea said. “Oh, before we go,” she added, removing her ash armor from her head and shoulders. “Would you kindly smash me?”

“Excuse me?” Kyrian asked.

“Like you did that Azarinth healer,” she said and smiled.

Kyrian summoned one of his flails, twirling it a few times in the span of a second before he brought it down on her head.

Ilea watched the spiked steel slow down, her movements lighter as she flew backwards, avoiding the strike entirely. Everything returned to normal. “Thanks. It works.”

“You sped up,” he said, his weapon vanishing once more.

“I can do that a few times per hour now, if I’m about to get incapacitated,” she said.

Feyrair hissed. “Is there even a way to kill you now?”

“Not for you, dragon boy,” Ilea teased.

She doubted the possibility that Kyrian’s flail would’ve taken more than fifty percent of her health with that strike. Her ash would’ve slowed it down past her neck. *Ten to twenty percent at most.*

“Alright, let’s fly,” she said.

“To new dangers,” Feyrair said with a hiss.

Neiphato joined in.

Kyrian remained silent, flying alongside Ilea. He spoke up a few seconds later. “Don’t get overconfident in there.”

“Just a little,” Ilea said, showing her index finger and thumb close to each other.

The man shook his head and laughed. “A little is fine.”

Ilea looked made sure to be aware of the water as they crossed between the various isles, just in case some massive Leviathan shot up to grab them. None of the Bluetails bothered them on the flight. She noted that not a single one of them flew close to the volcanic mountain. “Any clue why they don’t go close?” she asked, looking at Kyrian.

“I just think it’s the heat,” he said. “They probably don’t like it.”

“And what are those goat like creatures?” she asked, pointing to the side of the mountain. “They look pretty normal to me.”

“Can’t be normal if they survive on these isles,” Kyrian said. “They’re above level three hundred, and they spew lava. Though that’s the only thing I’ve ever seen them do.”

“You fought them?” Ilea asked.

“I fought most everything to be found here,” Kyrian said. “And lava magic resistance is required if you want to go in there.”

“I assume you both have it?” Ilea asked.

“I don’t yet,” Neiphato admitted. “But if you deem it unsafe, I will train with the goats.”

Kyrian glanced at Ilea with a questioning look.

“Trial by literal lava? I can heal everything within my sphere. Just be careful,” Ilea said. “You should be fine otherwise.”

“Optimistic,” Feyrair murmured, looking at the rising smoke.

“Can’t gain anything with being perfectly safe,” Neiphato said and hissed. “I will stay by your side. Know that I do not blame any of you should I perish.”

“We’re all here by choice,” Ilea said. “I’ll do my best to keep you alive.”

Kyrian led them to a small plateau where a large entrance led into a cavern, natural by the looks of it, or at the very least not built by mages who cared overly much for safety or symmetry.

“So let’s find out what the Bluetails like to avoid,” she murmured, looking into the darkness with her enhanced eyes.