

Ilea finally did it.

Her mana didn't just cause heat anymore, the flow neither dissipating nor entirely eaten up.

She could see it with her magic perception, could feel it with her body as the armor shifted. The groaning sounds of steel bent to her will, animated by magic beyond her understanding.

It took long, minute changes happening as she kept the flow intact, her mana cycling through the metal as if it was just an extension to her body.

The massive thing shrunk by about ten centimeters in the next five hours, the arms and legs thinning out a tiny bit as more visible joints etched themselves into the hunk of steel.

Steel mufflers grew out of the back, just behind her shoulders. Openings through the steel allowed for sixteen ashen limbs to reach through and extend out of the armor, two additional slits appearing for her wings.

No eyes formed in the two and a half meter machine but she saw well enough with her sphere. Features sharpened as the steel slowly settled, the boring hunk taking on the crude form of heavy full plate armor.

Ilea no longer felt like she was sitting in a steel trap but a tank instead.

One she could control.

Her hand grasped the handle that had formed in front of it, the arm's length extending by a meter beyond the ash covering her fingers.

Magic surged and steel moved.

Ilea laughed within her finally activated toy as she took her first step.

She aimed for the closest wall of the training hall and took another step. Already the movement had been easier, more steady.

[Armaments of Lilith – Ancient Living Quality]

Living? she thought while laughing. "Hello!"

The armor didn't reply, her whole strength necessary to take each step, her mana regeneration down to a trickle at the constant expense to power the thing.

Ilea spread her wings, pushing with all she had to lift herself.

She sped up suddenly, her legs slowly dangling until she landed, her head slamming into the stone wall with a loud crash.

Her arms moved slowly, pushing against the stone she was stuck in. Black wings, small in relation to her form flapped to get her out.

Steam rose from the exhausts when she finally broke free, chunks of stone falling to the ground as she stumbled backwards, as if in slow motion.

Ilea blinked, appearing outside the armor she now watched crashing to the ground.

“Fuck!” she exclaimed and blinked back inside.

She tried Displacement instead, using it both on herself and the armor.

She appeared where she wanted to but the armor itself didn’t even budge.

“Work in progress,” she murmured. *But fuck, I love you Goliath.*

Ilea appeared inside the armor again and tried to roll over, using both her ashen limbs, her body and the armor itself to try and get there.

Stuck like a turtle, she gave up and instead charged her wings.

The sudden activation pushed her up and away from the ground, coming to a stop a few meters up. *Oh no.*

She tried turning in the air, finding the maneuver possible but slow.

Ilea came crashing down, rolling over to find herself on her stomach. Or the armor’s stomach.

After five minutes, she finally managed to stand up, slowly brushing herself off from the rocks and debris clinging to the steel.

Living..., she thought, finding her perception of the steel much more detailed than anything she had worn before. The dent she recognized wasn’t only visible thanks to her sphere.

Sentinel Reconstruction activated and she watched in amazement as the damage was repaired.

Holy shit!

She jumped up, rejoicing at the revelation and jumping up, only to find herself lifting up by five centimeters, landing with a loud noise as the weight came crashing down onto the solid ground.

Okay I need to work on this more.

Ilea slowly stepped towards the wall, pulling her arm back before she punched with all she had.

None of her skills could sadly be channeled through the thing but the fist and weight alone dug into the stone as if it was sand. Chunks and pulverized debris fell when she ripped the arm out once more.

I need a bigger hammer, she thought, summoning the thing into her armor’s hands. That worked at least.

The mana expenditure rose whenever she moved, the heavy hammer demanding additional resources in itself.

“What in the name of...,” Trian exclaimed as he joined her for their scheduled training. “You can move it!?”

Ilea turned and waved, her hammer in her armored hand.

The man laughed as he walked closer. “Tell me you can use your skills.”

“Not everything,” Ilea replied, realizing a moment later that her voice didn’t reach him at all.

She blinked on top of the thing instead, watching it power down without a supply of mana.

‘ding’ ‘You have activated the Armaments of Trials bestowed to you – One Core skill point awarded’

Hah!

“Not all skills... I can heal it Trian!” she said, tapping the steel with her knuckles. The noise was dull.

“How heavy is that thing anyway?” he asked, trying to move one of the arms, failing comically.

“I don’t think you can move it without mana. I don’t think I could bend it while being inside. Not with strength alone,” she said and jumped off.

“My ash can get through the back but my armor only covers my body,” she said.

“You could just layer it with ash and keep that up, wouldn’t that work?” he asked.

“Kind of. Not as powerful as my actual skill though and the concentration would require me to give up a few arms. Not really a good trade off I think, with how limited my attacks are,” she said and appeared back inside.

“What about your fire spell?” Trian asked.

His voice sounded subdued now too. She just hadn’t noticed beforehand.

She motioned him to get back and activated Heart of Cinder, the spell somehow absorbed by the armor. *Hmm.*

Ilea found the mana cost reduced for a little while after but with her reserves, it didn’t really matter.

Instead of just using the spell, she instead sent it through her ashen limbs, the beam of energy slamming into the nearby ground without trouble.

“Nice!” Trian said and clapped.

Ilea had to try.

She charged her wings while her ashen limbs moved in front of her, joined by more ash that quickly formed a drill. The thing started rotating when she sped forward.

“Are you alright!?” Trian shouted from outside the hole.

Ilea hit her head again, unable to rip out her arms or legs. “I’m fine,” she said. “Just stuck.”

Instead of trying any longer, she simply stored the armor.

Or she tried.

The mana and heat still cycling through the machine flowed out through the exhausts, a part of it back to Ilea herself. When the last of it was gone, the steel cooled down slowly and suddenly vanished.

“Hmm,” she exclaimed and blinked out of the rather sizable tunnel she had managed to dig.

“I don’t want to stand against that,” Trian murmured as he turned to look at her.

Ilea summoned it again and blinked inside. Her mana flowed into it without trouble, as did the heat of Heart of Cinder. Still, it took quite some time for the armor to be charged up, ready to be controlled.

I bet it can get even better... I'll have to use this whenever possible, she thought and powered it down again.

“Don’t worry about it, that thing is slow as fuck,” Ilea said.

“More durable than you?” he asked.

She huffed. “It took a dent from falling down. More from that stunt before,” she said and pointed to the tunnel. “But it’s heavy... and I can repair it with healing. Not sure against what it would be more useful than my normal style of fighting but it’s fucking cool nonetheless,” she said and giggled. *Intimidation purposes perhaps? Probably just for fun right now.*

Was he inspired by Terok? she wondered with a grin. *I did learn a lot about my perception abilities from that training... is that the reward? Or is there more still to come. Damn smith.*

The gates to the training hall opened, Aki joining them with his new body.

“I felt a disturbance... what? Was that a spell of yours?” his voice traveled easily, the spear in his hand held casually.

“A new toy. How is yours by the way?” Ilea asked.

Trian just smiled and shook his head.

“I am learning. It is much more difficult to control than the Guardian’s vessel,” he said.

The uncertainty in his steps was just one part of it. Compared to how easily he had moved with the Guardian’s body, it seemed surprising that the similar looking Centurion would give him so much trouble.

[Centurion of Akelion – lvl 300]

Iana had tried to explain it but Ilea didn’t care much for the intricacies.

“He has a higher level than you, Trian,” she whispered with a smirk on her face.

“Good for him,” the man said and smiled. “I’m glad we have a guardian of such power.”

Back to his responsible self, Ilea thought and rolled her eyes. “You’ll get used to it in no time. Just keep training.”

“Of course, Ilea,” Aki said and lightly bowed to her. “My gratitude for this wonderful gift.”

Next time I’ll get you a Praetorian, Ilea thought.

The dagger had lost a bit of its edge, only in a figurative sense but the absence of someone he pulled mana from was evident.

Ilea hadn’t interacted with him often lately but she trusted Trian’s judgment.

Aki counted himself to the core members of the Medic Sentinel Corps. He found pride in teaching the students and protecting their headquarters. He had remained with Iana and Christopher for a few days after getting his new body, thinking it shameful to show himself like this.

The two enchanters hadn’t yet managed to figure out the issues with the teleportation gate, their testing going in circles. Instead they had decided to focus on the keys again, to see if they had missed something or if the second one shone some light on the problem.

Ilea offered them to help with her Space Awareness again but as the skill was right now, she could only point out flaws. After hundreds of tries, Iana was certain that they wouldn't be successful taking this route.

"You succeeded then?" Trian asked.

"You're asking if I'm going to visit the Lily? Probably," Ilea said.

Her training had resulted in no further level ups, the lack of danger or newfound knowledge for her perception abilities proving to be a rather thick wall.

"I'll inform Claire then," he said and nodded.

Ilea didn't stop him. *I'll miss this*, she thought and looked back at the training hall. *Just having time for myself and my skills.*

Eh, I can use them as training dummies too, she concluded.

"Are you going to battle?" Aki asked.

"Hopefully," Ilea said and winked towards him.

"Enjoy it," he said and winked by dimming one of his shining green eyes.

He's not completely lost, Ilea thought and changed into some comfortable clothes and leather armor.

Ilea landed in the outskirts of the small town. Most of the area was covered in fields, hence the name. A lot of it looked like wheat but she saw other crops too, unsure as to some of their names.

The suns hung low on the horizon as Ilea patted off her leather armor. She had decided not to hide her face. If the Golden Lily really was as influential and wide spanning as they assumed, such theatrics simply weren't necessary.

If it came to a conflict, Ilea would gather her allies and entirely destroy everything involved with this secret organization. She had Ravenhall behind her, allies in the North and within the human plains.

Trian had offered some concerns as to her identity but it was no secret that Dale was a good friend of hers. Half of the Riverwatch guards knew it. Not a single threat had come up so far and Ilea assumed him to be the most obvious weak spot someone could exploit.

Her mark was there and she would get her revenge if someone made a move, but it didn't exactly take an international organization to assassinate a level one fifty guard captain.

No. She had to make it clear that Lilith did not need to hide. That whatever they did to her, she would repay tenfold.

God I fucking hate humans, she thought and sighed, already in a mood as she started walking towards the distant buildings.

The one meter high wall suggested either low monster populations or some other defense. If this really was some kind of base for the Lily, Ilea didn't have to think twice about the perceived shit defense.

An adventurer in mediocre gear greeted her as she approached.

“Evening traveler,” he said, lazily eyeing her.

[Warrior – lvl 58]

“What brings you to Myrefield?”

Ilea looked at the man and smiled. “An invitation,” she said simply.

He nodded. “I see. Go on then, it’s getting late. Dangerous for lone travelers out there.”

She didn’t protest, entering the town proper.

Few people were out at this time of day but the dirt roads were well lit, dull light shimmering through most of the windows she could see.

The houses weren’t particularly high, most of them only reaching one story. Some few had two. What stood out to her was the variety and most of all the workmanship. It reminded her of Salia, or perhaps a few wealthier districts of Virilya.

This town wasn’t a frontier city, nor was it undesirable for residents and businesses. The wealth was obvious to anyone who had traveled to various cities throughout Elos, especially someone with enhanced senses.

No house stood empty. Each store she strolled past sold high quality goods. Other than the low level warrior occupying the main road leading into the settlement, there were no guards. Every person she saw looked well dressed, some of them glaring at her and others just shaking their heads in disdain.

She didn’t know if it was just because of her clothes or because they knew something she didn’t.

Ilea turned her head to a nearby alley. More than a hunch but it was already gone. *Interesting.*

She didn’t mind the eyes on her, unwilling to hunt them without further provocation. *I was promised cake. And I will get some cake.*

The most likely place appeared a little further in.

Ilea found herself entering a rather large square, blooming trees providing shade against the evening suns. She looked around and strolled towards the large two story house, a dozen people occupying various tables both outside and within.

A short flight of stairs led onto the low terrace upon which the diners resided.

Ilea could tell with her sight alone that many of them were trained fighters. This just became more obvious when her sphere came into range.

She identified a few of them as she passed, finding most to be below two hundred. Four above.

An unnatural number of powerful people for a small town like this.

If these were the people tasked to take her down, then her enemy was underestimating her severely.

The two story building reminded her of a french estate, the terrace leading towards a large open door, more tables set inside. Waiters sped through with grace as they took orders and delivered food and drinks.

The facade had once been white, having lost a little of its color over the years. The shutters had a lavender color, a little faded just like the house itself. The low angled tiled roof suggested the

absence of an attic. Ilea's sphere confirmed this when she entered, only about a third of the guests even glancing at her.

What looked like the head waiter looked at her with an unreadable expression, flipping through a book of reservations.

Before either could speak, a waitress appeared out of thin air. A young woman with short hair and brown eyes, a friendly smile on her face.

She bowed before she spoke. "Welcome to Myrefield, Lady Lilith. The mistress will see you at your leisure. If you wish to dine first, we have reserved an unobtrusive table, everything free of charge of course."

[Mage – lvl 245]

Now that's a waitress.

"Happy to make your acquaintance," Ilea said. She meant it too, liking the way this woman looked and moved. Her confidence was obvious and she was ready to fight and die right here, if their guest was trouble.

"I'm ready to meet her now," she said with a smile. "What's your name?"

She could feel no distress building, nothing showing on her face or through body language either.

"You may call me Maya. Would you be so kind to follow me?" she asked, still smiling.

Ilea nodded and followed the woman.

She was led through a few corridors, noticing a few more hidden forms within her sphere. Ilea didn't react, simply counting her potential enemies.

If they had such advanced illusion or shrouding spells, she didn't think of them as massive threats. If anybody managed to get close, her precognition and in the worst case her Azarinth Perception would prevent any major damage.

A set of meticulously polished wooden stairs led up to the second floor, Ilea's sphere cut off at a set of double doors where she was being led towards. Not the first enchanted space in the house so far but by far the largest she had perceived.

The affected area suggested a rather spacious room. If there was an obvious trap, it would be there.

"The mistress will see you now," Maya said and opened one of the doors, holding it for Ilea.

She could perceive only one person within. Anybody else that was close by was either hiding too well for her to see or kept at a distance.

Ilea nodded to the woman and stepped inside. "Thank you."

Maya bowed and closed the door behind her, the enchantments falling back into place.

"It's just about right," the woman spoke in a warm voice, her eyes fixated onto one of the many ovens set into the wall. "Tell me, Lilith, how high is your Heat Resistance?"