

Chapter 484 Noble Ideas

Force created a spherical field around her that expanded for three meters and slowed or stopped things from moving if she willed it so. She could focus on currently eighteen objects to increase the effect for additional mana, of which she had plenty.

She wasn't sure why it was eighteen exactly. It didn't have to do with her cognitive ability like her ash creation did but felt more like an otherwise imposed limitation. Focusing on the objects hardly distracted her, merely using up mana.

Either it was just random, based on some hidden requirements, limited by the skill level or connected to a stat, the most reasonable stat would be Wisdom at 910 or at 18200 mana after the buff from Meditation.

Another candidate was Intelligence. At 765, if multiplied by her auras, both affecting it being at 3rd lvl 30, it should equal 9486. Divided by five hundred, the result was eighteen and something. It was the only way she had been able to get an eighteen out of the numbers.

No matter which it was, requiring five hundred or one thousand points in a stat respectively was quite a steep requirement. *Might just be eighteen at level one*, Ilea thought with a smile. Somehow she felt that wasn't the case however.

"Sure you don't want to take Space Awareness? Especially during training like this," Trian said.

Ilea considered it. She did want to know what Lull would do in the second tier but he was right. She couldn't exactly level it against him here. Space Awareness would allow her to learn more about the skill itself and potentially her other abilities, hopefully retaining some of the knowledge even after she switched it out again.

"I switched it," she said, activating the sight. The wisps appeared immediately.

"It's a body enhancement spell too, so you should get some benefit out of it."

"Just use it and keep an eye out for anything that changes or might be noteworthy. I believe that while the effects of magic are measurable and explainable by scholars with sufficient understanding and tools at their disposal, using it should be more instinctual. Trust the skills like you trust your ash and your healing."

"I know," she said and smirked, reminded of Dale and the pointers he had given her back in Riverwatch in what felt like so long ago.

She couldn't help but send a few ashen lances at the flying taunt mage, forcing him to put some effort into his evasions for once in a while.

"I have some more ideas you could test by the way, if you're up for it," Trian said between teleports.

Ilea noticed that the wisps close to him moved slightly whenever he used his spell.

Hmm?

"Sure, what did you have in mind?" she asked.

“Just some things I don’t think you’ve tried with your current skills,” he said and floated down, his demeanor calm again, the man turning back to his teacher self.

What followed were a quick series of tests he had suggested.

Ilea was impressed with the ideas he had come up with in the short period of time. She usually just used her skills in battle and tried to figure them out that way.

The first thing they tried was seeing if Space Shift affected any of her newfound powers. The only one showing a change was Displacement. The range without Shift was around seven meters, its cooldown considerably higher than the buffed Blink.

With Space Shift equipped, she could use it at a close to ten meter range with a cooldown similar to Blink, the latter of course affected by the passive skill too.

Ilea interrupted Trian to test something she was surprised she hadn’t tested yet.

Displacing herself.

It felt much weirder than Blink did. Ilea wasn’t sure she could have managed it without her sphere, the perception ability allowing her to see herself and focus on the space around her instead of what she saw before herself.

She focused on the skill and stretched out her hand with closed eyes. *Touching myself with Space Magic*, she smiled and moved herself to a position ten meters away.

The shift was instant.

Trian quirked up his eyebrows and nodded afterwards. “Try deactivating your resistance.”

Ilea smiled and deactivated Space Magic Resistance, finding no change in the way she could use the skill. Other than it still being *very* weird.

She surmised that Displacement was simply the better teleportation skill compared to Blink. Except for the range but she assumed the subdued third class had something to do with that. *I do get a hundred percent to Displacement and nothing to Blink. Might cancel the subdued part out.*

The next thing Trian suggested was teleporting something out of his hand.

It surprisingly worked with a few random objects. As soon as they tested with enchanted or magical items, the spell failed to grasp them.

Having used the skill more often by now, it became clear how much easier it was to move a small object compared to an actual person. Both in how much mana it used up and how fast the object was affected.

“I assume it’s the same problem that applies with teleporting out of someone’s grasp. Another mana signature interfering... at least that’s the going theory I’m aware of,” Trian murmured.

“But I can move normal objects. So I could steal someone’s weapon,” Ilea said with a smile.

“Or their clothes,” Trian suggested in a dry tone.

“Or that,” she said with a wicked grin.

Reorienting items or people didn’t work, neither with herself. Blink was quite a bit better there but she assumed a second or third tier could potentially remedy that. Nor was it a major issue with her quick movement, sphere perception, and supply of attacks.

She couldn't rip out an arm or just Trian's legs either, just the whole thing. He suggested that it had to do with the mana flow once more.

Ilea assumed the skill just wasn't meant for that. Yet. She knew Void Mages could rip out parts of a living being and the same had been true for the Ascended, not that she remembered exactly if it had used Space or Void magic to do that. They did feel quite similar.

Trian insisted she try to use Destruction through the new Spear skill she had gotten. She wasn't surprised when it didn't work.

"Can we try something with Phaseshift? We theorized about it but I can actually try to prove it," Trian said.

"What did you have in mind?" she asked.

The idea was that Ilea should use gathered momentum to pass through a few of Trian's spells. Instead of bolts, he used more paralyzing stationary lightning. Traps he had rarely used in their Shadow days, both Claire and Kyrian having had better options available.

They did find that he could stop her movement in her phased form.

"Have you thought about using it offensively? Phase through attacks and get a strike in after creating an opening?" he asked.

Ilea looked at him, stunned for a second. "I... seems like I was preoccupied with the defensive part. Let's test it out," she said.

Trian summoned a blade, looking at it for a moment before her prepared to strike at her.

"You have blades?" Ilea asked, smiling at the man.

"It's... ceremonial. I don't use it in battle," he said and attacked.

With precognition, Ilea could activate Phaseshift as soon as the attack started. It still was barely enough to make herself translucent.

"That was close," Trian said.

"Takes a moment to activate," Ilea said and watched him raise a hand.

Lightning hit her before she could use her spell.

"There's a cooldown between uses too... wait. Try again," she said.

This time she did activate it as soon as he used the spell. His lightning was faster than the sword, striking her before Phaseshift took effect.

In theory the ability would work well in the way he had suggested. In practice, the limitations were simply too much to overcome. Even against an opponent a hundred levels below her.

If I see the spells coming or use it against a slow enemy, it could still work.

Trian bit his lip. "I still want to see the second tier."

"Me too. Don't get me wrong, I still like it. It's just that instead of the complete immunity, now it seems more like trading one defense for another. The cooldown and activation time make it harder to use than I initially thought too," Ilea said.

“No, I get it. And your arguments for battle use are valid too. While there are creatures like the Ascended out there, you could escape from most others in that level of power already,” he said. “Any revelations from your new Awareness?”

“Not really. There are slight shifts whenever I use Displacement or Blink. Force changes the flow a tiny bit in its sphere of influence. But I don’t really understand the relevance of it all,” she said.

“You’ve had the Class and its skills for a few hours. I’m sure the skill isn’t just useless. I would even suggest you work on that for now instead of Lull of Battle. When was the last time you had mana problems?” Trian asked.

“Before getting my third tier meditation, I think? Though I haven’t really fought anything that would have required constant full output damage,” Ilea said. “Maybe the Ascended but it would have killed me before I could have used it all up.”

“I thought your body just keeps regenerating automatically,” he said.

“Yes. But if it keeps damaging me, at some point I’ll be dead. At least that’s the theory,” she said.

Trian shook his head. “What a terrifying defense. If you can’t be finished off before the enemy’s mana runs out, they simply can’t kill you.”

“I don’t think it’s that easy in practice. I could think of a few ways to take myself out but I won’t tell you,” she said.

All about that brain. Keep it from regenerating with a spike or something. Could just trap me like that and put me underground. Pretty much dead until my brain gets steel resistance or something.

She didn’t actually know how much of her cognitive ability was tied to parts of her brain anymore. Maybe her sphere would still work somewhat. Cutting off her head and regenerating from her torso would become an option but only if some of her brain worked.

“I think you met a good match, the thing being a four mark and thinking. I doubt there are a lot of those out there. I would be surprised and sad to hear about your death. More surprised. Terrified of whatever managed such a feat,” he said. “But we digress. With all your teleportation and space abilities, I’d say keep Space Awareness for now. Lull of Battle you can try out if the second tier of awareness is useless or if you simply don’t find it to be an asset.”

Ilea agreed. Getting a skill to the second tier couldn’t be too hard.

She formed another ball of ash and continued displacing it as Trian seemed lost in thought.

He looked at the ball and smiled.

“I know you have pretty much given up on the spear and shield skills but can you try them and see if you can merge them with your ash somehow?” Trian asked.

Both ideas worked technically. Ilea just wasn’t sure if there was an actual benefit to either. The blazing shield was strengthened by her ash but still remained the stationary slightly growing shield, her dense ash a much better defense already, even without a specific skill related to it.

The Spear seemed stronger but she needed to hit with the fiery part to get the bonuses. If it had been a brittle thing in the first place, maybe she could’ve strengthened it with her ash but in the end she just added a coating.

Trian summoned an enchanted sword again, surprising her.

“I wondered... you can't take the weapon with Displacement. Can you take me while I hold the weapon?” he asked.

“Of course,” Ilea said and used Displacement on him successfully.

“Why were you so sure?” he asked.

“Your armor is enchanted too,” Ilea said.

“No it's not. This is a training set,” Trian said. “Maybe it has to do with the relative power or complexity of the mana connected to another object.”

Ilea thought about giving him the Taleen Key. *Could I teleport him still? That thing was quite complex.*

“The cast time isn't influenced by distance, right?” he asked.

“No. Just takes longer for you compared to a piece of bread,” she said.

“Complexity again,” he said and wrote something down in a notebook that had appeared in his hands.

They trained for a few more minutes before Claire appeared in the hall.

Ilea checked her bone armor through her sphere, slightly moving her arms to feel the weight of the warhammer resting in her hands.

Her ashen defense had retreated to her back, forming the one winged symbol of the Sentinels. Invisible to everyone but herself.

The new Class was ready and she felt comfortable with most of the skills. Space Awareness still felt weird, more distracting than anything else really. She forced herself not to think about it, not to focus on it too much but to just let it be, as if it had always been there.

Dim white flames lazily clung to her armor as she lifted up the hammer.

‘ding’ ‘You have entered the Vile Grotto’

“Ready?” Trian asked. He wore his usual black armor, light and mobile while providing ample protection.

Not enough against creatures Ilea usually faced but he didn't exactly plan to get hit as often as she did.

Claire too was clad in armor. Her usual set, black in color with a few parts in blue. Compared to her early Shadow days, this set was sturdier, made with better materials. And the hood had been replaced by a helmet without ornaments, connecting snugly with her chest piece, her eyes barely visible behind the two tiny slits.

Ilea nodded towards Trian, a smile on her face as she twirled around the incredibly heavy warhammer.

Claire checked some of her armor's compartments, taking out runed plates and pushing them back in, seemingly satisfied with the inspection. She nodded ever so slightly.

No enjoyment from her, Ilea thought as she started towards the darkness. Her eyes needed no light thanks to her third tier resistance. The others didn't complain, her white flame apparently enough for them.

"No fire?" she asked, glancing to Claire.

"Yours is sufficient," the woman replied, focused on the tunnel before them.

"The Fires of Creation," Trian said and winked.

Ilea just rolled her eyes. She had gotten used to the skill and class names. Considering all the blood and death she had to go through to get them, the names didn't come off as comical anymore.

Not that they ever really did, with her rather abrupt appearance in Elos.

They continued in silence, taking the dungeon seriously, despite the fact that so far they hadn't encountered anything that Claire and Trian couldn't deal with themselves or at the very least escape from.

The first enemy showed up a few minutes of brisk walking later.

[Corrupted Reaver – lvl 132]

Once human, the reaver had turned into a mere beast. Turned by magic, corruption or perhaps taken over by the dungeon after he had died.

Ilea doubted the actual name in her identify description offered more than a hint. A warning that the creature wasn't human anymore but something else entirely.

The Vile Grotto reached quite deep into the mountains. Large caverns and crevices, sometimes opening into valleys where snow and ice covered the stone. Dangerous for the Sentinels but quite manageable for a Shadow.

The deeper one went, the stronger the adversaries. Torn Blood Reavers, Torn Brute Reavers, and at the highest level the Elder Torn Reavers. The last variant used weapons, retaining either some of their intellect or perhaps learning anew.

Ilea had wondered in general how common a Dark One transformation was. Creatures gaining sapience after enough Intelligence had accrued or perhaps through another process entirely. Green had been the only one she ever met where she knew the monster version.

Communicating with the Reavers was fruitless either way. Both in English, Standard, and her new and improved Monster Hunter. Even imitating their sounds lead only to angry groans. Which she repeated, laced with sarcasm.

Ilea lifted a hand towards the approaching beast. It moved fast but nowhere near close to anything the three Shadows could manage.

Lifting her hand wasn't necessary but it helped her focus.

Space distorted in a field around her, slowing the creature as she channeled mana into Displacement.

The confused monster gurgled before it appeared ten meters above, flailing its arms as it fell.

A wet crunch resounded when the creature landed, decidedly ungraceful in its execution.

Ilea lifted her hammer and brought it down onto its head, crushing both the skin, skull, brain, and the stone below. She ripped the hammer out with a wet sound, cleaning it off with ash she created.

'ding' 'You have defeated [Corrupted Reaver – lvl 132]

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 2 – 1 stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 3 – 1 stat point awarded'

'ding' 'Displacement reaches lvl 2'

Ilea laughed. “Two levels,” she said. “One stat point per level.”

“I expected nothing. At least one point... Two levels is good. Another fifty of these creatures and you're already at one fifty,” Trian said and chuckled.

“That isn't a lot. At all. A second class would have gotten eight to ten levels, I would think,” Claire commented.

Ilea shrugged. “I can level it. That's all that matters.”

She had forgotten to spend the other stat points in the onslaught of new information and skills.

One thousand Wisdom can't be a bad idea, she thought and put the thirty two remaining points into the stat.

“You have your main class skills active thought?” Trian asked.

Ilea nodded. “Of course. I can barely lift this thing without, let alone use it as a weapon.”

“Now that you mention it, I never tried,” he said. “None of my skills boost Strength. What's yours at?”

“Isn't it impolite to ask such things?” Ilea asked. “Five one five.”

“Ah fuck. Mine is half that,” he said and smiled, grabbing the hammer Ilea had placed on the ground.

He pulled with everything he had but the thing didn't budge.

Claire winked at Ilea and walked over, grabbing the thing and lifting it as easily as she would a broom. “Can we continue please,” she said and handed the weapon to Ilea.

“What's yours at?” Ilea asked.

“It's a secret,” Claire whispered and walked on. “Maybe you should focus on your new skills instead of using the hammer. Deactivate all your main Class skills?”

“Maybe later... I really wanted to use it finally,” Ilea said, her warhammer skill as untested as her space magic abilities.

“Claire has a boost, I'm sure,” Trian whispered, his arms crossed.

“Injured masculinity?” Ilea asked.

He nodded as he followed. “Very. Can your arcane healing deal with that too?”

“I never tried,” she said and extended an ashen limb.

“Stroke me carefully. It’s very fragile,” the man said.

“We’ve got company,” Claire said, the two of them stopping their antics.

Ilea twirled her hammer and watched the Brute rush at Claire.

The woman teleported away, leaving behind an explosion the creature simply pushed through.

Trian vanished too, lighting flickering to life to Ilea’s left.

[Torn Brute Reaver – lvl 342]