

## Chapter 532 Activities

Velamyr returned to Gyffold four days later, furious and not alone.

His anger was soothed when he learned about what had happened on the other side. It was clear that his efforts soon focused on the topic of Gyffold and Baralia.

The man demanded no less than complete military support from Gyffold against their former capital, should they ever wish to reach some form of understanding.

Ilea had thought Felicia somewhat reasonable in the bits and pieces of her talks she shared with Ilea but it turned out that the woman was downright saintly. Velamyr might as well have spit in their collective faces. And he knew he could. Lys was moving closer and each city that did not come to an agreement in a reasonable time was forced to speed up their negotiations with more *violent* methods.

The High King did not come to support anyone. All his closest allies were already in the capital after all and the nobles of both Lys and Baralia were aware of that.

Ilea mostly kept out of the ensuing politics, restructuring, and war. She would bring terms to the General as soon as Baralia was dealt with, mostly in regards to Yinnahall and some of the now empty cities. She trusted the Empire enough not to get involved any further.

It surprised her that the man waited three days after his arrival to even enter Erendar again.

“So that thing can speak Standard?” Velamyr asked as he joined Ilea’s side outside the temple. She had agreed to introduce him to Meadow.

“It learned quickly,” she said.

He squinted at her but didn’t say anything.

Ilea led him to the vaults. “It might be the only being capable of closing the gate,” she said.

“It opened it in the first place. What does it want in return?” Velamyr asked.

“Endless Meadow asks for the survivors remaining here to be brought to Elos,” she said.

He ground his teeth audibly.

“Dark Ones... in our plains?” he hissed, looking at her.

“You’re being racist,” she said.

“Your tolerance will not lead to anything more than death,” he said.

“Haven’t made any such experiences so far,” Ilea said with a smile. “Either way, they can’t go to the human plains anyway. The mana is not dense enough. Even the mana that seeps in from the gate will take weeks to saturate enough of Gyffold for a reasonable transfer.”

“That won’t happen. Measures have already been taken to siphon away the excess energy,” Velamyr said.

“I know,” Ilea replied. She also knew how much the minds put to the task were struggling with finding a solution. Velamyr commanded, likely not accepting failure but there were limits to the magic people could wield.

It was clear that the Erendarians wouldn't be welcome in the city but Ilea didn't plan to take them there anyway. She wanted them north, where they could survive.

"You have another plan?" he asked.

"I'll take them north," she said. "The mana is dense enough there."

Another option would have been to place them in a random dungeon in the plains but she thought that no different than imprisoning them.

He stared at her for a moment.

"I don't like it, Lilith. But... But if it takes that for it to close the gate, then I see no other way. Let them die in the north," he said.

*Such a small minded view*, Ilea thought but didn't say anything. If Velamyr thought the north unbearable for these creatures, she wouldn't try to correct his assumptions.

He started to become focused onto the end of the hall, likely starting his conversation with Meadow.

Ilea had already informed both of the other, with very limited information.

### ***[Mage – lvl 300]***

*So his ability reduced his level? Seems pretty cheap to avoid death*, she thought, wondering if the same was true for his skills or stats. *Did he lose levels in both Classes? Or just the one that holds the skill?*

Ilea left them to their own devices, checking in with Michael to see if they could help each other out.

He had asked about a confirmation of some space runes because while his knowledge was definitely greater than he had let on, he really didn't have a way to grasp the actual result of their use. He instead helped her understand some of the basics better, theory and understanding that Ilea only possessed instinctively based on her skills. Michael had achieved his knowledge through years of study and experimentation, thus having an easier time actually explaining some of it to her.

The tutoring only helped marginally but coupled with Meadow's more practical lessons, it wasn't exactly wasted either.

Ilea definitely had some of the most knowledgeable teachers of magic and space right there, both willing to cooperate and share information.

Velamyr was gone when she returned again after a session of spirit dodging and Meadow gave her a quick rundown of their conversation.

Most of it had been Velamyr checking Ilea's information for consistency. The rest was focused on the relationship between Endless Meadow and humanity, including their empires.

It knew the man didn't trust it.

Ilea had known as much but didn't really care what the General thought, as long as he didn't want to keep the portal open.

She doubted the weaker spirits would be more of an issue than the Demons or even Cursed but she trusted Meadow's information on the stronger variants still remaining on their planet. The gate had to be closed, if only for the sake of Gyffold's population. And Ilea focused her efforts towards that goal.

The three weeks after her first conversation with Meadow were mostly spent on training and lessons. Phaseshift reached its second tier in less than three days, the low level skill benefiting quickly from the powerful hordes of monsters she constantly engaged.

***Active – Phaseshift - 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 1***

***Expending a large amount of mana, you can temporarily unbind your body from the physical and pass through barriers. You may let spells and physical objects pass through you unhindered. Be aware that certain types of magic will retain some or all of their impact.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Resilience bonuses from skills are doubled when entering Phaseshift.***

***Category: Space Magic***

She already knew that her resilience bonuses were somehow kept when the spell was activated, otherwise she would have had much more trouble using the skill at all against the death and astral magic of the resident spirits.

It was a little disappointing that the second tier didn't allow for movement but with the increased resilience, Ilea could use it to take a breather and heal herself more efficiently. Against unavoidable spells that was. The skill became a choice between evasion and damage reduction.

The latter was significant enough for her to like the ability quite a bit however. Initially the main benefit she saw from the spell was escaping in the case of her being pinned down. Now, it could be used as a temporary defense boost against attacks she simply could not avoid. Her precognition somewhat lowered the negative impact of the spell's activation time.

Ilea was aware that her testing in Erendar wasn't exactly fair either. Astral magic was apparently quite rare and she didn't think most spells would inflict quite as much damage to her phased form than the spirit's attacks.

The more tangible defense her physical ash armor and body provided might work better defensively than Phaseshift in certain circumstances but with the second tier bonus, she assumed the skill came out on top most of the time.

Instead of going forward with Phaseshift however, Ilea switched it out for the next available ability. She was set on her passives for now but didn't see a reason not to check out all her active options now that she could level them so easily.

She found that even the attack spells progressed quickly if she mostly focused on high level death spirits, still not killing any of the creatures. Compared to her passives, most of her remaining active options were quite straightforward when it came to leveling.

The first skill she tried was the spear.

***Active – Spear of Creation - 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 1***

***Wield the fire of creation as an extension of your body. The spear is especially useful against magical defenses.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Sacrifice health to double the range of your spear. Spear of Creation gains bonus damage the lower your health reaches.***

***Category: Fire Magic – Space Magic***

Ilea dismissed it immediately. The range didn't make up for the lack of multipliers and the benefit of more damage at low health didn't sit well with her. If there was a choice between defense and offense, Ilea would choose the former.

**Active – Burst of Creation - 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 1**

***Let the fires spread, creating a sphere of lingering flames around yourself.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Burst of Creation can be used much more frequently and the fires now move with you at their center as they expand.***

**Category: Fire Magic**

Burst proved to be somewhat interesting, allowing her to essentially become a moving fiery explosion that constantly burned her enemies. The damage remained lacking however and it turned out to be more of a distraction than anything else.

**Active – Shrouding Cloak - 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 1**

***Invoke Space magic to hide yourself or objects in your vicinity in plain sight.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Shrouding Cloak now affects sound and smell.***

**Category: Space Magic – Aura**

Ilea found herself still nowhere near as stealthy as someone like Eve, even when she reached the second tier. Shrouding Cloak took the longest of the bunch to reach the second tier, Ilea even finding it more efficient to train it while stalking the various adventuring teams that entered Erendar.

Many of them detected her which added to the skill levels as she displaced herself continuously with the skill active. Death and Astral spirits couldn't be fooled for long by the maneuver, likely grasping either her life or mana without a focus on sight, smell, or hearing.

**Active – Blazing Force Shield - 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 1**

***Form a shield of fire before you that will devour spells and objects alike.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: You gain mana from devoured spells.***

**Category: Fire Magic – Space Magic**

The shield proved interesting. Had she not possessed Sentinel Core already, the skill would have likely taken a spot in her active abilities.

Compared to her azarinth ability it fell flat however. Most of the enemy spells still penetrated the shield, hitting her anyway. The mana she gained wasn't influenced based on her resistances, making the gains marginal at best.

If the third tier somehow centered the ability around herself like a constant shield, the benefits could be meaningful but for now, she deemed Phaseshift the winner.

She continued her training with the skill equipped, its progress slowing down considerably once it hit the second tier again.

*“Your interpretation is somewhat correct. The ability changes the space your body occupies but you are hardly removed,”* Meadow said and shot a wooden projectile at her.

The thing passed through her ethereal form without issue.

It followed the attack up with a grasp spell.

*“I can’t move anyway,”* Ilea said and rolled her eyes.

*“Do not resist but feel its impact. You’re better than this,”* Meadow said.

She focused on the space around her. It was one thing analyzing someone’s teleportation ability or her own space magic. Here however, the situation was a little different. It felt like she was inside of a dubstep club a few hundred meters away from the ocean, trying to hear the waves.

Ilea did get better but her progress with Space Awareness was slow, even more contextualized by the ease with which she leveled all those active skills to the second tier.

It still hadn’t reached the end of the second tier. Not that she was convinced the third would even be available. At this point she mostly hoped the Meadow’s insane demonstrations would help her along.

Her study of the gate to Elos helped too, though she soon reached the conclusion that the design was rather simple. Simple as a concept but downright impossible in reality.

*“Your talks with Michael haven’t lead to any breakthroughs yet, right?”* she asked.

*“He would be capable of conducting the same ritual previously used but the problems of its location and likely attraction of powerful spirits remain. I cannot move from this place. Not without leaving it unprotected,”* the Meadow said.

*“You didn’t mention that before. So you Can move?”* Ilea asked.

*“There is a way, yes. But I would have to take a risk. Both for myself and everyone here,”* it said.

*“How could you move exactly? Ten thousand tiny little legs?”* she asked.

*“I would have someone else move me,”* Meadow said.

*“But you’re massive,”* Ilea said. *“No offense meant.”*

*“Why would I be offended? Is it not preferable to be large?”* it asked.

*“Depends on who you ask,”* she said.

*“Hmm... true. There are benefits and disadvantages to balance. Though I gain more power if my form can expand to its full size. However I understand the logistics of such a task. Which is why I would reduce my form to the minimum. Perhaps the size of your head. However my power will be reduced too much to guarantee the protection of this place,”* it explained.

*“Could I move you through the gate? Or would you go mad immediately at the low amount of mana?”* Ilea asked.

*“Compared to your human body adapting to allow for strong mana exposure, I will have to resist the effects through healing and sheer resilience alone. It would not be possible to remain in a low mana area for longer than a few of your days at most, not without lasting damage,”* it said.

*“Really? But you’re sapient and super powerful? Can you not just get an Arcane Magic Resistance or something? Gradually get used to less mana until you survive?”* Ilea suggested.

*“I haven’t had the opportunity to try. It may be possible but you must understand that my body formed in this place. The base my Classes and skills are built on is not the same as yours. I came to existence with them present, already a part of me,”* it explained.

*I'm pretty sure it should be possible... staying in the human plains for longer might kill it but if it went the same route I did? A few levels of resistance here and there before finally being exposed to the mana at the bottom of the Descent. Just the other way around.*

*"Might open up some more possibilities," she said with a smirk. "I have to inform a friend of the current situation. So I'll be away for a day or so."*

*It's been over a month already, she thought.*

Lys definitely took their time, according to Felicia there were only elite groups stationed close to the enemy capital as of yet. She did assume it was on purpose, to really bring home the overwhelming power at their disposal.

Ilea just hoped it wasn't misplaced confidence. To her it seemed the nobles and Generals treated this whole affair more like a game than war.

If she were the Empress, a swift and decisive strike would sound much more convincing than giving the enemy so much time to prepare. But she wasn't a ruler, nor did she know anything about war strategy or tactics in Elos.

No ritual had taken place and reports from the local Order members suggested that Elder Zion had acted on his own. Other Elders and high ranked members denied being involved, as did most of the nobles they managed to contact in Baralia.

Being connected to someone who had willingly sacrificed entire cities within their lands was at least not officially beneficial to their reputation.

As the information spread through the kingdom and beyond, the Order investigated their own ranks and temple sites. In other areas they were investigated by the local government or outright executed without mercy. According to Felicia, more leniency was shown than expected, likely because of the connections many of the members had and the simple fact of them being healers.

*"Then I wish you farewell for the time being. Greet your friend," Meadow said.*

*"Guess I will," Ilea said. "There's something I wanted to show you. I won't be using the gate to return this time."*

*"Oh? Truly?" Meadow asked. "A realm breaching teleportation ability?"*

*"I should be able to return to my realm with it, yes. Try to decipher as much of it as possible," she said.*

*"I will do my best. Even I lack the ability to travel into another realm without cooperation," Meadow said.*

*"Well I hope it works in your presence. Don't interfere. It'll take me a while to cast," Ilea said and activated her third tier blink. By now space shift reduced the cooldown enough for her to be able to use it nearly once a day.*

It took her six minutes to cast the spell, the wisps around her converging immediately as the spell started to form. They moved into more and more complex patterns before it all stabilized and brimmed with power.

Ilea appeared inside her home the next moment.

*I should really use this more... even just for studying purposes. Now that I can see so much of it...*

She was interested in what the Meadow had seen. *Could the creature prevent me from using it? Help me modify it somehow? I've relied on its functionality without really testing its limits before.*

Ilea enjoyed her days in Erendar but she had a lot of work for Claire, information and gold that shouldn't wait much longer.

She blinked up and out of her house, taking in the view of the ocean for a moment. A breeze flowed through her now uncovered hair, waves breaking against rock far below.

She was glad to be done with the war for now but there was still a lot to do, now in Erendar instead of Baralia.

*Still didn't meet with Elfie. Might just be a dusty skeleton once I get there,* she thought with a smile and headed westwards.