

Chapter 543 Training Training Training

Ilea didn't get a revelation in the next few hours but she did feel like she got closer to one.

Meadow provided various runic systems and combinations for her to get a feel for them, not letting up with the constant insults to her primitive human brain, as was protocol.

"You have a reliable way of hunting level seven and eight hundred creatures. I believe you should gain every level you can before the closure of the gate," Meadow said.

"You're ignoring the evolution problem," Ilea said.

"You won't evolve," Meadow said.

"Says who? The Meadow God?" Ilea asked.

"I won't try to convince you. If you wish to enhance your skills, I suggest you go out there and use only those you still need to level," Meadow said.

"I'll do that," Ilea said. *"But we'll still spend a few hours every day working on this. If you have time."*

"Between the weekly one minute conversations with the Elemental and my busy life of waiting for creatures to awaken, I think there should be a few slots open for helping you. Please speak to my assistant for specific times," Meadow suggested.

"Your assistant keeps freezing me," Ilea said, looking at the sleeping wolf deer ice monster.

"I'm too nice. She makes sure I don't overtax myself," Meadow said.

"That's good. Wouldn't want you to get a burnout. Plenty of time for that with your new cult in Hallowfort, oh divine tree," Ilea said.

"I've learned some ways of avoiding that fate. The way you described them however, it shouldn't be too difficult," Meadow said.

"Let me guess, using overwhelming force and displays of incredible magic isn't the way to go?" Ilea asked.

"Very funny. I wasn't always all knowing," Meadow said. *"I'll keep a low profile."*

"You're literally a four mark being," Ilea said.

"I meant my magic. I'll just focus my more impressive efforts on people like you. Those who won't sacrifice their children to try and appease me. It's not like many can understand me directly anyway," Meadow said.

"Fuck. I'm sorry that happened to you," she said.

"Oh nobody died. Took me a few months to convince those responsible that their actions would cause my wrath instead of help. Not the smartest creatures those," it mused.

"One of the surviving species?" Ilea asked.

"No. No no. They moved away, their cultural rites more important to them than my knowledge or protection. Perhaps they're still out there," Meadow said.

Should I tell it?

Probably better if I don't.

Ilea heavily doubted anything managed to survive out there. That's if they're not as or more powerful than her. Even then, in the long run, it seemed unlikely.

"They might be fine," she said.

Meadow sent an amused thought. *"Hope remains but I understand the conditions required for life. Better than most."*

She smiled but didn't say anything else.

"You should get going then, if you wish to level your skills," Meadow said.

Ilea nodded. *"Do you think it might be more beneficial if I use them against you?"*

"No. My intent would not be to kill you. Not truly. Your hordes are the best bet. I'll be here whenever you decide to return," Meadow said.

"Thought as much. Still not willing to give me info on four marks?" she asked.

"Those I know of, you would not be able to best, nor do I know their location as I've said before," Meadow said.

"Have you seen spirits of that level?" Ilea asked.

"Only the daughters. Death spirits form through the remains of those deceased. I have yet to see one reaching level one thousand but if there is a way for you to kill something at that level, it would be one of them," Meadow said.

The millennia old creature hasn't met a single one? Well good luck then, Ilea thought. She didn't think it impossible due to its stationary nature but her prospects didn't look particularly good.

"I'll try my best then," Ilea said with a smile before she vanished.

It only took a minute to be back in the fray. Ilea checked her ashen skills quickly to see if she could help them along somehow.

Passive: Eyes of Ash – lvl 3rd lvl 27

Increases your perception by 63.5% [508%] when fighting without a weapon.

2nd stage: Effects apply with weapons as well. Opportunity calls, you notice possible critical weak points on enemies with more ease.

3rd stage: Your eyes are vastly improved. Great distances and a lack of light won't pose a problem to you anymore.

Category: Body Enhancement – Ashen magic

Maybe try to look around at the enemies farthest away? And focus on weak points.

Active: Storm of Cinders – 3rd lvl 27

Burn the inside of whatever your body hits with a surge of heat and embers or release the attack in a burst of fire and cinders.

2nd stage: The flame burns on. Targets hit will have fire burning through or on them. Time and consecutive attacks will increase the effect.

3rd stage: Storm of Cinders burns away all that stands against it, damaging mana intrusion capabilities of defensive enchantments, natural- as well as manufactured armor.

Category: Ashen magic

Alright, just keep attacking. At least I can use this one hundreds of times with my ash.

Ilea added whatever passive abilities she could from her third Class and tried to level Sentinel Huntress despite the likely low results.

A few hours later, she decided to up her game a little. *Maybe the new bonuses might be enough.*

Instead of fleeing the Astrals, she stayed as long as she humanly could.

There were six already present, all the death spirits in the area already destroyed.

Beams of astral magic flashed past as she pushed her wings to the absolute limit of their flexibility.

Her sphere and precognition allowed her to react much faster than a single spirit could fire its spells but the combined efforts lead to more than a few damaging hits.

With Space Shift, she could teleport a little more than twice per second, combining both blink and displacement, each with a roughly two second cooldown between uses.

This time she didn't attack immediately, focusing on dodging in a hope to level her Eyes of Ash a little quicker in the dangerous environment.

They'll add astral area attacks and concentrated slashes into the mix once I get close.

Ilea sped through the air, watching another astral spirit arrive, its spells immediately forming, aimed at her.

She didn't teleport yet, dodging three massive cones of astral energy with the help of her precognition and wings alone. Her wings got damaged in the process, the cones simply too broad for her to dodge efficiently.

Damage is still alright, she noted, keeping an eye on her health. Her armor was shaved away constantly but reformed just as quickly.

She swerved around the group of creatures, moving herself between two of the spirits floating close to each other and the rest of the group.

The maneuver didn't deter any of the monsters, their beams still simply aimed at the annoying human that refused to be incinerated.

A large part of the astral energy slammed into the spirits on the way but they didn't seem particularly bothered. Their mana drain however activated, now that their bodies had experienced minor damage.

Third tier resistance, here you go, Ilea thought with a smile. Any point of mana they drained would damage the creatures, in turn forcing them to drain more.

Just have to keep them in a perpetual loop, she smirked, knowing full well that their own regeneration likely outpaced the effects of her resistance easily.

Let alone the fact that they steal mana from each other. Wait, shouldn't they all have high resistances too? Maybe not a third tier, I guess. If it works the same for unawakened monsters.

Another spirit showed up half a minute later, the encounter now not just reminding of a laser tag game but actively being one.

Pretty uneven teams, Ilea thought with a smile as she noticed the slightly reduced damage from her third tier Body of the Valkyrie. *Five percent is more noticeable than I thought.*

She failed to dodge five incoming cones, her teleports still on cooldown. *Getting a little low there.*

Phaseshift activated after she continued her dodging, displacement taking her behind one of the spirits. The damage reduction allowed her to heal much more efficiently, despite the higher frequency of attacks hitting her.

She even stacked some health into her Flare and Awakening, if only for the increased defense both would provide.

When the combined efforts started to overwhelm her and both her teleports were on cooldown, she used her third tier Displacement in front of her.

The spirits didn't grow any smarter just because there were more of them, Ilea sending eight continuous beams through the gate right back at the creatures.

She laughed in her phased form, stacking her auras with more health before the spell dissipated again.

Her resilience increased immediately, allowing her to take a little more of the magic head on.

Ilea's laughter was the only thing audible besides the low hum of the spells trying to catch the fast moving human.

Mana wasn't an issue, Sentinel Core filling her resources up thanks to her maxed out second tier resistance and the abundance of magic burning into her ash and body.

Minute number two, she thought, noticing the slight defensive boost again.

Phaseshift activated once more, her third tier Displacement however still on cooldown.

She displaced herself a little farther away, the increased distance forcing the spirits to move closer. Either that or their spells would simply not hit her quite as quickly.

Every millisecond counts, she thought, watching with joy as one of the now more distant creatures left the field again.

Why I wonder?

It didn't matter. Another creature soon took its place but every delay in combined attacks would lead to increased resilience and regenerating health. The mana drain cluster already seemed to damage the beings quite a bit, at least one of them now constantly using the ability.

Ilea soon started to test Storm of Cinders.

The area spells activated right when she reached the highest possible range of her limbs. *Ah shit.*

Now that she was closer to the floating group, the beams reached her near instantly. It was close before but with her precognition and constant recovery, the difference was more than just noticeable.

Her ashen limbs vanished in the combined astral energies, only able to deliver a single dose of her spell.

Still enough, she thought, reforming her sixteen limbs after she blinked out again.

Ilea distanced herself, flying around the group of spirits. *Phaseshift, use the deactivation time to get close and blink in, hit once, displace out.*

She did just that, the timing proving to be a little tricky with her increased perception.

Every hit of her mana intrusion ability forced her to retreat for a while again. More spirits showed up as time went on but it seemed to plateau at around ten of the creatures. Most of them only hit with half their normal damage by now, allowing her to fly around the beings without having to retreat more permanently.

A third tier astral magic resistance would make it even easier, she thought, using phaseshift and displacement again to catch her breath.

Slowly, she acclimated herself to their magic, the way they moved, the frequency of their spells, and her resource management. The latter was really the thing it came down to. That and her own positioning.

With each passing minute, Ilea became more efficient at delivering Storm of Cinders. She was still forced back every single time, her health occasionally dipping so low she had to disengage the group with full distance blinks.

The difference between her and the creatures however was their limited ability to adjust based on her abilities. Knights of Rhyvor changed their behavior accordingly, just as much as the Specters of Rot did. Spirits seemed to care less or were simply incapable of learning, the comparison to a natural phenomenon continuously more apt.

She was forced to disengage entirely when the numbers rose to fifteen, the delicate balance shifting in the Astrals' favor.

Ilea didn't wait long to join them again, waiting at a distance until the monsters started leaving.

She reached them when three remained, annoyed she had to build up her damage reduction again but glad some at least had stayed.

They're not coming back, she thought after half a minute, seeing a single Astral spirit join the three initial creatures. *Guess I'll just do this then*, she thought and focused her entire being on the deathly training.

Ilea stopped when she thought that another full day had passed. Instead of disengaging, she marked a few of the spirits and fled.

She had moved through the wastes in her search for higher leveled spirits, the mark on Meadow allowing her to travel much farther without any danger of getting lost.

It was hard to know how much time had passed in her battle trance and traveling, the eclipse looking the exact same throughout her whole time in Erendar.

Is it just a long day? Maybe we're close to one of the poles?

Might have been more than two days even. I'm a little hungry, she noted. Meditation was both useful and dangerous when it came to situations like this. *Could've just gone on. As long as my*

resources remain and neither sleep or food is necessary. Might be a part of Mental Resistance too, or even some of my Class skills?

The training was efficient. She was in danger and she could focus on her few skills. But it wasn't enough. Not even close.

I'd need at least another few weeks to get them to thirty. Fuck.

The marks were there, floating away as she remained in the air, indecisive. *I'm stalling. For uncertain benefits.*

What if Meadow was right and there isn't an evolution at all?

So much time wasted instead of killing these fucks for experience.

I didn't even find a four mark yet. Just frozen caves, bones, and spirits.

She floated for a little longer, twirling a few times as she summoned herself a meal.

"You know what? Fuck it."

Eight maxed out skills in each Class is enough.

I'll use the marks. Make an impression at least before I leave this godforsaken place.

Ilea followed the closest marked spirit, this one residing much lower in the atmosphere than the first one she had hunted down.

Finally, payback time for all that boring, fucking, training!

Phaseshift deactivated after a blink, tens of thousands of health flaring up in the form of white flames, her body empowered by Azarinth Awakening.

She easily grappled the unwieldy creature, her fists and ashen limbs striking into the creature. Destructive mana slowly overwhelmed the spirit as it tried to kill her.

Her ash didn't yield, each spell the creature used further fueling her offensive capabilities.

Ilea didn't reach the first minute of her third tier Valkyrie skill, the Astral Spirit killed and stored within her necklace.

And so it begins.

She checked the few messages from her training, on her way to the next marked monster. It would take more than these to push her past four hundred.

'ding' 'Phaseshift reaches 3rd lvl 2'

'ding' 'Space Shift reaches 3rd lvl 4'

'ding' 'Body of the Valkyrie reaches 3rd lvl 6'

'ding' 'Deviant of Humanity reaches 2nd lvl 4'

'ding' 'Veteran reaches 3rd lvl 11'

'ding' 'Mana Drain Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 3'

'ding' 'You have defeated [Astral Spirit – lvl 742]

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 249 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 250 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 251 – One stat point awarded'

At least my third Class is coming along nicely.

Ilea continued to hunt down spirits, killing twelve of them until she finally reached her short term goal.

'ding' 'The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 398 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 399 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 400 – Five stat points awarded – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash has reached lvl 397 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash has reached lvl 398 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash has reached lvl 399 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash has reached lvl 400 – Five stat points awarded – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 252 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 253 – One stat point awarded'

...

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 260 – One stat point awarded – One Core skill point awarded'

...

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 268 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'Sentinel Huntress reaches 3rd lvl 17'

'ding' 'Flare of Creation reaches 3rd lvl 7'

'ding' 'Deviant of Humanity reaches 2nd lvl 5'

Come on.

Nothing else appeared within her mind.

Damn tree!

“Alright, five hundred it is. Should be easy enough,” she murmured to herself, searching for the next group of spirits.

Judging by the time it takes me to level my fucking Classes compared to my skills, I’m definitely catching up with the former.

Maxed out skills would have been nice for the various evolution requirements but I doubt an option would have appeared just because of that. Not with all my other achievements since getting the last ones at three hundred.

Ilea spent the rest of the day hunting Astrals.

Not even a fucking core skill point for reaching four hundred, she thought, beating her fists into the smooth blue chest of a spirit.

Did I expect too much?

I could already fight Zaiked at three sixty. I guess now it would be a much more even battle with phaseshift and awareness in the third tier. Let alone Valkyrie.

She frowned, crossing her arms as she watched the dead spirit float down.

I need a break from this.

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 401 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 269 – One stat point awarded’

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 270 – One stat point awarded’

...

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 276 – One stat point awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Reversal reaches 3rd lvl 28’

‘ding’ ‘Displacement reaches 3rd lvl 9’

No training for half a day. At least not here.

She summoned another meal and made her way back towards the temple, her wings lazily moving on her back. *At least you’re never disappointing, she thought, glancing at the bowl of food.*