

Chapter 554 Overleveled

Fire burst outward, leaving behind a crater and twenty odd dead monsters.

Ilea was out before the first living one even approached.

'ding' 'You have defeated [Soul Ripper – lvl 580]'

...

'ding' 'You have defeated [Soul Ripper – lvl 656]'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 376 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 377 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'Flare of Creation reaches 3rd lvl 15'

Hmm. I should probably focus on my skills a little more with these monsters. Or should I even bother? If they're not moving around anyway, who cares?

The monsters remained creepy but that was the only thing they had left. She had killed them now, had bested them easily. It didn't feel like fighting a dangerous creature anymore, more like murdering a helpless pest. And she wasn't exactly in the mood for extermination.

Hmm.

The only thing that will level from this is my third Class. Do I want to push it higher already? My skills are nowhere.

Oh.

She had seen the attack coming, seeing the jumping Soul Ripper that tried to grab her mid flight.

Ilea avoided it easily, flying around the creature with her high level wings.

A hundred more beings followed, Ilea flying higher as she maneuvered herself through the sea of eldritch grasshoppers.

Hundreds of the monsters now looked up to her, their flower like heads bloomed and pulsing with dull purple energy.

You're not going to catch me, she thought.

These were the monsters I was so terrified of?

She smiled. *You're not so different from those Drakes now, are you? Still a higher level but not exactly a threat anymore.*

Ilea floated around, occasionally using displacement to move herself or one of the beings.

"How is the talk going?" she asked.

“Good so far. It is fortunate that Catelyn seems to have dealt with powerful entities before,” the Meadow said.

“Yeah, me,” Ilea said and laughed.

“I had that one coming,” Meadow said.

“That you did,” Ilea said.

She’s met the Fae, the Trakarov and Elemental too. And whatever else she has encountered during her time in the north. To think she looked that scared with the Meadow.

Ilea blinked to reach a somewhat lone standing Soul Ripper away from the largest groups, appearing right in front of it.

Her gaze was focused on the opening flower, fleshy tendrils slithering within.

The creature grabbed her with both hands, the long fingers wrapping around her ash like moving twigs. Energy formed in front of its head, concentrated void magic biting into Ilea’s head.

Her skull remained, as did her ash. The spell had caused internal bleeding and a bunch of vanished flesh but nothing majorly concerning.

A direct hit, she thought with a grin, displacing herself out of the monster’s grip.

That does feel pretty good, she thought and flew past the hordes. Most had lost interest as soon as she reached the cavern entrance to their apparent domain.

“Hey Meady, there isn’t a four mark in here by chance?” she asked.

“No Ily, I can only feel the presence of the same creatures you have fought,” Meadow said.

“Can you have multiple conversations at the same time by the way? Or am I interrupting your talk every time?” Ilea asked.

“One conversation is enough but talking to you is more akin to busying a child,” it said.

“Oh? I see. So you’re as limited as us monkeys,” she said.

“I disengage from this conversation,” the Meadow said.

Ilea laughed as she entered the deeper layer of Tremor, no new notification informing her of a newfound dungeon.

The Soul Rippers down here were the same, quickly forgetting about her after she had vanished. She let them use their void attacks on her before disappearing, just to show them how futile it all was.

‘ding’ ‘Fear Resistance reaches lvl 13’

Look at that. Showing up again after such a long time.

The whole complex was just a bunch of burrowed tunnels with several layers. No sign of any other creature but the Rippers remained, making it a winded deathtrap with little to gain. Rotted wooden beams and rare pieces of decrepit gear suggested this place had not always been quite as abandoned.

Maybe I could’ve visited during my stay in the Descent. I’ve outgrown them a little.

The creatures were still close to the Spirits of Death in Erendar, even way more consistently above level six hundred. Compared to the Astrals however, the difference just wasn't enough anymore, neither to level her skills nor her Classes. Not while being at four hundred.

Not even twice my level! Where would I get fighting monsters like that!

Ilea slowed down when she reached one of the deepest chambers.

Her eyes opened wide as her smile vanished.

The entire end of the tunnel had been clad in steel, runes carved within, not just similar but pretty much looking just like those she had found in the Descent.

So it was the Ascended.

Ilea squinted, finding the space slightly distorted at the center of the runes.

"Hey Meadow, is there a gate to another realm here?" she asked.

"Oh... peculiar. I hadn't even noticed. This form really is quite limiting. But no. There are merely remnants of a fissure that existed long past," it said.

"Can you see the runes?" she asked.

"Not in this form. Though if you bring me there, I can have a look," it answered.

"I would very much like that," Ilea said, staring at the steel for a little while. It looked entirely out of place in this cavern.

She didn't dare touch any of it.

Let's not alert the metal man, she thought, gulping at the memory.

Interesting. Not quite over it yet, am I?

She sighed and returned up, leaving the Rippers behind to join the others.

"Already back?" Doravin asked.

Ilea glanced at him. *"Yeah, not the most interesting hunt."*

Elana glanced over, quirking up an eyebrow but not saying anything.

"It's settled then. You will be brought to Hallowfort and may stay in the ruins between our town and the Descent. We can adjust if the mana isn't enough for you there," Catelyn said. *"Elana, can you draft an agreement."*

The woman nodded.

"Already managed to convince them?" Ilea asked.

"Catelyn was quite forthcoming after the initial shock. An impressive friend you have here," it said.

"Hey, don't forget who your favorite friend is," Ilea said.

"Ah yes, Gravhsitanuloti. He was truly a good friend. A shame he succumbed to his old age," Meadow said.

"May he rest in peace," Ilea said, shaking her head lightly as she smiled at the creature.

"I can feel that your heart isn't in it. But it makes sense. You two would have hated each other," it said and laughed.

"Did you fight the Soul Rippers?" Elana asked, her face a perfect mask.

"Yeah, I can kill them now. But I won't eradicate them, they're not really a threat. I did find steel and runes in the place they have come from. I think it really was the Ascended that summoned them here," she said.

"I see," Elana said after a moment, lost in thought before she focused on her again. "Thank you."

"I am grateful for your hospitality, Catelyn, one touched by fire," Meadow said and sent a mental bow.

"I'll have it check out the runes before I go. Can you guys wait a few minutes?" Ilea said and picked up the ball of rock.

Doravin turned his head, crossing his arms in front of his chest.

"We shall wait. There is plenty to discuss," Catelyn said.

Ilea smiled and vanished, displacing the two of them a few times until she reached the deep tunnels once more.

"What do you think?" she asked.

"Hmm," the Meadow said, held up towards the runes and the anomaly left behind in the fabric of space.

"Hmm?" Ilea said.

"I have no idea what these runes do," the being admitted.

Ilea turned the ball towards her face. *"Really? I thought you were the rune god."*

"I don't even have a related Class. My knowledge comes from time and experimentation. And this hasn't been accomplished through space magic," it said.

"Blood and void, I'd assume," Ilea said.

"Precisely," Meadow said.

"What's the difference to space?" she asked. *"Can I destroy it by the way?"*

"Do so, yes," Meadow said. *"The void is more... forceful. Where space magic relies on understanding and structure, void magic relies on power."*

"Seems to fit me more then," Ilea said, using her burning ash to destroy the runes.

"Perhaps, yes. But you received a space magic option instead, so here we are," Meadow said.

"Because I met the Fae. I wouldn't have gotten either otherwise," she said with a smile.

Heart of Cinder released, melting most of the metal that was left behind.

The fissure disappeared, Ilea returning upwards. She flew past the mostly still Soul Rippers.

A few of them walked around, likely due to her recent activities.

"It may be beneficial to talk to a high level void mage, if you wish to evolve towards that instead," the Meadow said.

“Hmm. I do like the Class as it is though. We’ll see what kind of evolutions present themselves. I’m sure some of it will be cool anyway,” she said.

The Meadow laughed. *“You’re somewhat unconcerned with these things. It’s quite refreshing.”*

“What? I asked you so many questions about my skills, evolutions, and everything related to that,” Ilea said.

“Sure. Many,” Meadow said in a dry tone.

“I didn’t?” Ilea asked.

“Let’s just say that being seen as all knowing amidst low level sapient beings has taught me that some are simply insatiable. Just as much are they often indecisive or simply afraid to do what is necessary. Simply knowing how to advance doesn’t lead to power. One has to carve their own way. Guidance can be as detrimental as it can be advantageous. It’s a fine line,” Meadow explained.

“I get that. Knowing how many people here remain powerless when the option to alleviate that is right there, outside of their walls. I don’t fault them, and I’m aware of the luck I’ve had in gaining a powerful Class early. But with so many options available... flight, superhuman speed, healing, pain resistance, the thrill of battle, the intoxicating feeling of besting a monster of myth, near immortality... age wise at least. There’s just too much for me to pass up. Though I understand that everyone thinks differently, and the risks and pain involved may be too much to give up a somewhat comfortable life,” Ilea said.

“Very reflective for a battle obsessed maniac,” Meadow said.

“I come from a place where magic and Classes didn’t exist. I think that was a large influence too,” she said. “And to be honest... if I hadn’t stumbled upon the Azarinth Class, I’d have died after a single day of being here.”

“I was born with power,” the Meadow said. “It’s difficult to imagine what I would have done if I had been born at level zero.”

“Well, depends on your instincts I suppose. If you were the same, unwilling to kill sapient beings, you would’ve likely had problems rising to the power you sit at now,” she said.

“Oh, reaching my current level would have been near impossible. I wasn’t born with that anyway, I invade other realms and eat everyone there,” it said.

“Mhm, exactly. Meadow, the world eater. It would be quite a twist to be honest. But you mentioned it too many times,” Ilea said.

“It’s important to add foreboding elements in a story so that it doesn’t seem unrealistic when a twist happens,” the being said.

“You can ask for books from Catelyn if you want. And I can bring you more from Ravenhall if you like,” she said.

“That would be marvelous,” Meadow said.

“And you can write yourself too, you know? I’m sure you’ve seen a lot of things worthy of a book,” Ilea suggested.

“Hmm... that is... a good idea. Maybe. Do you think anybody would care to read it?” it asked.

“You can start by writing for yourself, but honestly? Yes. And if they don’t, you have millennia to hone your craft,” she said and laughed.

“An acceptable alternative to devouring your world. You have just saved this realm, Ilea,” Meadow said.

“Not even an achievement for that. Something is telling me your plans weren’t quite as sinister to begin with,” she said.

“Oh shush, I stand above the magic governing these things,” Meadow said.

“Can you set me to level one thousand then? Administrator,” Ilea asked as they landed in the cathedral.

“That would defeat the purpose of your struggle,” Meadow said.

“You’re back,” Catelyn said.

“Ye,” Ilea said, throwing the Meadow up before catching it again.

The council members looked at her with varied expressions.

“What?” Ilea asked.

Snickering resounded within her mind.

Catelyn stood with the rest of the council as Ilea walked around the ruins with the Meadow in hand.

To think she is casually holding that creature, going as far as throwing it around.

She truly is a monster beyond compare. And here I thought I was extraordinary.

She smiled, enjoying the vacant looks on the other council members’ faces. They hadn’t seen Ilea charge in sitting on the Trakorov’s head.

It was one thing to know she had befriended a Fae and another entirely to see her do these things.

I do hope my intuition hasn’t failed me.

At least everyone is in agreement. The benefits offered by this creature could change the fate of everyone here.

And if I’ve done something right in my time, then it was trusting Ilea.

“It says here is good,” the woman said, looking at them with sparkling eyes.

Catelyn knew she was smiling under all that ash. *Does she even know how intimidating she looks? Or is she really just the same young woman looking for adventure that offered me cake?*

Coming here and surpassing my carefully accumulated power in so little time. An insult really, she thought with a grin.

She joined the two and looked around. *“We’re nearly in the middle between the Descent and Hallowfort. Can your power reach that far?”*

“Yes. We believed it best to make it possible for me to reach both the surface and deep into the Descent. I’ll be able to warn you of creatures moving within your territory,” the Meadow said.

Deep into the Descent? How far can this being see? Even in this obviously subdued form, it could contact Ilea back in Tremor.

Catelyn couldn’t help but feel both giddy with excitement and terrified of a potential turn of events.

Why would it wait with its betrayal? There is little reason. Except the horror it would cause amidst our own.

She shook her head. *If I meet every being more powerful than myself with such suspicion, I’ll just turn into Elana.*

Maybe the stress is catching up with me.

“Meadow said it will make some changes to the architecture. I suggested a place close to the cavern, it’s right beyond this wall actually,” Ilea said and motioned behind herself. “A good view is nice.”

“I have told you, I don’t look with eyes,” Meadow said.

“Ah come on, at least it’ll add to your aesthetic, with a crystal lit cave behind you? I’m sure you’ll like it,” she said.

They’re bickering. Like friends.

Catelyn remembered the little Fae on Ilea’s shoulder. *Just an illusion. You know the Fae is just as, if not more powerful than this being here. This is nothing new.*

“You seem tense, Catelyn,” Ilea said and stroked her head lightly.

I let my guard down.

She growled lightly.

Frustrating. I have no authority here.

Ilea removed her hand. “Hey, I’m sorry. Don’t look at me like that. You’re just so soft. And no, I still refuse that offer,” she said and shuddered.

“What offer, I’m intrigued,” Meadow said.

“I suggested I could shed, to provide her with my fur,” Catelyn said, grinning slightly as she watched Ilea squirm.

“Oh? Why would that make you uncomfortable? I have reduced you to a squirming head,” Meadow said.

A WHAT?

“It’s not the same with me,” Ilea murmured.

“Humans,” the Meadow said, shaking a metaphorical head.

“They do have their peculiarities,” Catelyn said, her tails swaying slightly.

“Oh, I see where this is going. Fantastic,” Ilea said. “You better take my side Cat, or there will be no more cake!”

“You wouldn’t dare,” Catelyn said, growing in side as her fires licked on the surrounding stone and debris.

“Oh I would,” Ilea said, white flames starting to burn on her body.

“That is new,” Catelyn said.

“Oh yes, it’s apparently the Flame of Creation. Sounds super tacky, right?” Ilea said and laughed.

She was joking. The crisis is averted.

“I believe it should represent the power of your magic,” Catelyn said.

“You’ll just encourage it,” Ilea said.

“Encourage the... flames? Do I have to inform you that they are no sapient creature?” Meadow said.

“How would you know, tree? You’re a bloody Meadow, why couldn’t fire be intelligent?” Ilea asked.

“You’re no Elemental,” Meadow said.

Catelyn glanced between the two of them and started laughing. She turned her head to see the terrified looks of the council and laughed even harder.

“This spot is fine then?” Ilea asked.

You’re asking me?

“It’s acceptable for us, yes,” she said.

“As it is for me,” Meadow said.

“Then you can settle here,” Catelyn said.

“Eh... you probably have to get some distance before that happens. Meadow’s current form isn’t... exactly representative of its power,” Ilea said.

“I’m afraid she is correct. The mana alone would kill most of you in a short period of time,” it said.

“Oh,” Catelyn stuttered out. *I really shouldn’t be surprised.*