

Ilea pretended her wings weren't quite as maneuverable as the Shadow's own hovering power. Time and time again, she rushed the woman before being blown back by the spells she threw around.

Admittedly, the beams formed near instantly and they dealt quite a bit of damage, even to her. The problem was that those factors weren't quite enough to deal with Ilea's insane regeneration and healing.

Her actual armor of ash would mitigate a large chunk of the damage as well but even without, the spells weren't enough to take her down to even two thirds of her health.

Ilea wasn't sure what was more powerful, Feyrair's white fire or the weird magic this woman was using. It was a testament to her classes to even bring up such a comparison. The elf likely still came out on top, even with the presence of a third tier Heat Resistance.

Finally, a message popped up in her mind, making her put up a hand.

**'ding' 'You have learned the General Skill – Astral Magic Resistance – lvl 1**

***Astral Magic Resistance – lvl 1***

***The power of the stars, harnessed and used to wreak unimaginable destruction. Few beings are able to channel this power through their bodies. It would not come as a surprise to find a human, of all beings finding a way to modify their weak vessel for its use. You should not let your encounters fool you, this school of magic is quite extraordinary and just as rare.***

*I can see that myself, message person. Thank you very much.*

The Shadow misinterpreted her request for a pause, her eyes glinting with the light of the fires clinging to some of the nearby trees, paths of destruction left where her magic had scorched the ground.

"Have you finally reached the limits of your regeneration?" she asked, the arrow like shapes still circling around her.

Ilea assumed they were her defense, likely activating if something got too close. If they weren't fifty times as powerful as her other spells, they wouldn't be a concern.

"Not quite. Thank you for the help. Do you want your ten gold now, or later?" Ilea asked as her real armor of ash reformed.

"You can keep the gold, Lilith. I'm not in need of charity," the woman replied.

"I simply wished to pay for your service. I didn't insult your financial state," Ilea said, shaking her head. "Ready to continue?"

"Whenever you want," the woman said, lifting her arms.

*She seems bored... well, let's show her then,* Ilea thought and rushed her, ignoring the power washing over her, barely shaving off a millimeter of her armor. Neither did she fly backwards, instead closing the distance with vastly higher speed.

The woman opened her eyes wide at the display, lifting both arms as more beams washed over her foe.

Ilea reached her, the arrows digging into her ash before their power dug into her. *Mana intrusion? Or another way to bypass my ash*, she wondered, the damage of no concern.

The Shadow vanished before she could reach her, finding a distortion of space within her sphere. A blink brought her to the surprised woman. Her hand rushed out and closed around her neck.

She felt the power build before more arrows moved past her ash and into her body. *Not my body... my mana*, Ilea realized. They damaged both her mana pool and her health, neither in a substantial way. She wondered if it was due to her drain resistances or just her general resilience.

The woman choked and tried to punch her, magic flowing around her fists.

“What? You didn’t seriously expect that that was all I had?” Ilea asked, letting go before her fist punched into those perfect lips.

A broken jaw and half of one’s teeth missing didn’t lead to a very beautiful smile.

The woman hovered back, tears in her eyes but still focused on her foe. “You faked it,” she said, straining against the pain before she spit out blood.

“I told you, I want resistances. Now I’ve gotten yours. Are you disappointed someone bested you? Or do you want to continue?” Ilea asked.

“I’m not done,” the woman said, her magic surging before another beam extended, at least twice as powerful than any she had used before.

Ilea dodged that one, her wings carrying her outside of the range of magic as she once again approached the Shadow. The damage was still low but she wanted her to know she could just avoid her magic entirely.

She reached her and grabbed on to her leg as she tried to escape, twirling in the air before she sent her flying into the ground.

The Shadow managed to slow herself down a little but still crashed hard, her shin broken from Ilea’s hold.

*Quite a bit more fragile than your large friend*, she thought. *But why would you think about defense when you can simply blast away all your foes? Perfect logic.*

She landed next to the crashed woman, watching her turn and aim her magic.

Ilea slammed a few ashen limbs into the ground next to her, the magic dissipating an instant later.

“I give up,” the woman said.

“Good,” Ilea said and healed her back up, not receiving a complaint from the Shadow.

The others joined again, Miller chuckling as he approached.

“Looks like I did a better job fighting her,” he said with a smirk.

“Well you both seem to be defensive fighters,” one of the mages said.

Charles and Petra just looked at each other. They had seen Ilea near Virilya.

“You still want to try?” Ilea asked, looking at Duncan.

He shrugged. “Why not, you can just heal me back up,” he said.

*At least no delusions with that one*, Ilea thought.

“Thank you for the heal,” the woman said. “My name is Rivka. It looks like I’ve found more than my match. Thank you for the demonstration,” she said and bowed.

Ilea was a little taken aback by the polite gesture and just nodded. “No worries. I appreciate the resistance. As I said. I’d be happy for you to join in the arena.”

Rivka waved her off. “I have plenty of areas to work on, thank you. Miller here is enough to help me with my hand to hand combat. It seems I have neglected it.”

The man just grunted. He nodded to Ilea, as if he was glad Rivka finally understood her shortcomings.

“Come at me whenever you want,” Ilea said, looking at Duncan.

The man didn’t need to be told twice, vanishing immediately.

Ilea felt the attack coming. *Interesting, using the void like that.*

He appeared followed by his blades, two curved daggers that flickered in and out of existence.

Azarith Fighting seemed to be a little confused at the changing space. Ilea had to react without the precognition, deflecting his blades with her armored arms before she punched thin air in front of her.

Duncan appeared to her side and then behind, without a noticeable pause between his skills.

Either way, it didn’t matter if his daggers couldn’t penetrate her armor in the first place.

Ilea continued to react, finding it hard to see the distortion in the space around her. He attacked at random, using speed and the void to simply overwhelm her.

*There you are*, Ilea thought and punched into the air, Duncan appearing right as the fist connected.

He was sent tumbling back, holding a half broken mask in place, blood dripping out from below.

She noted that the bleeding stopped surprisingly quickly.

“You can predict my movements?” the man asked.

“There is a slight distortion in the magic around you. Right before you appear,” Ilea explained.

“You react to that? Fuck...,” he said and relaxed his posture, his daggers vanishing. “If that is all it takes, then I’d rather miss out on the beating.”

“Smart lad,” Ilea said with a chuckle.

“Well, I think we’ve stayed here for long enough. Anybody else wants to get their teeth kicked in?” Warren asked.

“I’m fine, boss,” Duncan said.

“We should go too,” Rivka said. “May we meet again.”

“Stay alive, you mad fuckers,” Charles said and winked at Ilea.

“You do the same,” she said.

A few comments were exchanged before they went on their way.

Ilea watched them fly and sprint off into the wild. Her own wings spread before she slowly moved around the area, quenching any remaining flames with a cloud of ash.

The ground had been upturned, dozens of trees destroyed. It looked like creatures of myth had an epic battle in the vicinity.

*Maybe that's exactly what we are*, she wondered. Among humans, they certainly had a reputation.

The Shadows she had fought were well trained, versed in their magic or style of fighting. They had ways to hit her and to avoid her attacks but they hardly compared to something like the Specters, or the Ascended.

The whole experience just reinforced her belief in the Medic Sentinels. The combination of healing and offensive power would underline the main reason humanity became the apex predator back on Earth. Endurance and intelligence. The former would make sure the latter came into play.

Even Miller who got stronger the longer he fought was broken in time, his injuries mounting until he could simply not move efficiently anymore. Being able to regrow lost limbs, cracking bones back into place, fleeing and learning from lost battles, that was what really set her apart from them. Without her healing, she would have died within a day of meeting her first Drake.

Ilea planned to provide the same benefits to her Sentinels. It was up to them to take advantage.

Ilea knocked on the door and waited, glad nobody had recognized her on the way here. Taking the rooftops had helped. Plus the fact that most citizens were below level fifty, meaning most healers would identify with question marks showing.

She was just one of many.

The door was opened, green eyes staring out from behind the chains still in place. "Yes?" the woman asked.

"Hello. I'm Ilea. Dale invited me for dinner... I hope he informed you?" she asked with a smile.

The woman smiled and opened the door wide. "He let me know, nice to finally meet you, Ilea."

It took Ilea a second to process the words, stunned by something entirely beyond Veteran.

Dale's wife had flowing red hair and striking green eyes. She was a little smaller than Ilea with a delicate stature. The woman wore a simple dress but on her it looked anything but.

"Are you alright?" she asked, waking Ilea from her stupor.

"Ah... yes. Apologies. I've had a long few days," Ilea said.

"I'm Abby, come in," she said, welcoming the guest before she walked to the kitchen. "Can I get you a drink?"

"Sure, whatever you have," Ilea said and looked around the ground floor. Her sphere already told her everything to be known about this apartment from a practical standpoint but only her eyes could appreciate the subtle color schemes worked into the various items and decorations.

*Does Elos have interior designers? Probably.*

Abby leaned out into the doorway to the kitchen and smiled again. "We have wine, ale, mead, beer, whiskey, water, and lemonade. Or do you prefer fresh blood?"

She giggled and vanished again.

*What did you fucking tell her about me?* Ilea thought and shook her head. “Ale, mead, or beer. Whatever you suggest. I’ve had enough blood in the past week,” she said with a contemplative tone.

“I didn’t mean to offend!” the woman spoke loudly, pouring something into two mugs before showing herself. She handed one of the containers to Ilea.

“None taken. I didn’t expect you to...,” Ilea started. *Why am I trying so hard?*

Abby waved her off. “It’s quite alright. Dale mostly just groans. You’re a large improvement. I thought you had horns and a tail.”

Ilea nodded and downed the mead. *Delicious.*

**[Cook – lvl 41]**

“That comes with the armor. I decided on a more casual outfit for tonight,” Ilea said with a smile.

“Very disappointing to hear,” Abby said and leaned on a cupboard.

Ilea smirked. “Do you want to see it?”

“Yes. Very,” Abby said and took a sip of mead, a sly smirk on her freckled face.

She obliged, armor of ash activating.

“Hmm, yes. The wings?” Abby asked.

Ilea spread them, making sure not to hit any of the furniture or vases. She noticed the boy entering the house behind her.

“Why is there a bird here?” he asked.

Abby giggled. “I didn’t tell him,” she whispered.

Ilea turned, the casual expression on the boy turning to terror as he took a step back, one hand going to his side as if to draw a weapon. There was nothing there.

“Nice to meet you,” Ilea said and deactivated her skills. “I’m Ilea. Dale invited me to dinner.”

“D... what?” the boy said. His hair looked similar to Dale’s, as did his build. He would do his father proud. She assumed he was around eighteen.

**[Warrior – lvl 22]**

*How cute.*

“He is off limits,” Abby said in an icy tone.

Ilea smiled and looked at her. “Oh if I’m interested in anybody, then it’d be you,” she added a light touch of monster hunter to the mix.

*You’re not the only one who can play this game.*

It took them a while to recover from the paralysis, Ilea casually sipping on her mead. “No need to be scared.”

“Why would I be scared?!” the boy asked.

Ilea could feel his terror.

“You’re barely older than me!” he added.

*Ah, that stings.*

“He’s right, you know. If I weren’t married... I would give it a thought,” Abby said and went back into the kitchen. “Be so kind and introduce yourself, Rhett!”

“Lilith is in our house and you are still acting like this! Why are you embarrassing me!” Rhett shouted but he was expertly ignored by his mother.

He shook his head and calmed down, taking a deep breath before he bowed deeply. “I’m Rhett Langston. Thank you for saving our city and my father!”

Ilea was glad he had closed the door behind himself.

“No worries. I just helped out a friend,” Ilea said and motioned him to stand up straight again.

“Sorry about that. Dale told me you dislike the attention but after what you did today, I doubt you’ll have an easy time avoiding it,” Abby said and refilled Ilea’s mug.

“It’s not that much of a problem when you can literally fly into the wild to avoid your problems,” Ilea said.

The woman laughed.

“You wanted someone else to train with, Rhett, why don’t you show her your skills?” Abby said before going back to the kitchen, grabbing a few vegetables and washing them.

*How very vicious,* Ilea thought, almost pitying the boy whose cheeks had taken a dark red shade.

“I wouldn’t mind,” she said. “Could also help in the kitchen.”

“You keep to fighting armies, I don’t need healers and warriors in my kitchen,” Abby replied.

“I see you have a training room in the house?” Ilea said, nodding towards the closed door.

“How did you know?” the boy asked.

“I can see through walls,” Ilea said in a whisper.

“Really?” Rhett asked, now with a smile on his face.

“Yes, come on. I’m sure you can benefit from attacking me for a while,” Ilea said.

“No resistance training, young lady!” Abby shouted from the kitchen.

“Yes, yes,” Ilea said, waving her off as she entered the training room.

It wasn’t large. Enough for two people to swing around swords but not quite enough for an actual bout. The walls were made of stone, chips and scratches covering them.

The straw scarecrow looked back at Ilea, sad and abused eyes.

“Why does it look so sad?” she asked, touching the thing as if she could heal it.

“Father says I need to understand the weight of taking someone’s life,” Rhett said as he walked over to a small wooden chest, taking out a wooden sword that he twirled somewhat expertly.

*The things a teenager has to learn in these parts,* Ilea thought. Maybe a few lessons from Dale before this all started would have been more than beneficial.

“I heard the whole army shot spells at you... and you didn’t even flinch. Is it true?” he asked.

Ilea turned towards him. "I wouldn't say the whole army. That would have been difficult logistically. I'm a rather small target. There were quite a few."

He laughed and changed into a battle stance.

Ilea noticed a pair of eyes watching from the doorway a few minutes later but didn't push.

Dale showed up half an hour later.

"I'm back!" he said and looked into the kitchen. "Did-"

"Yes," Abby said and pointed.

"Ah," Dale said and joined Ilea and her two trainees, Rhett and Alaina.

The girl had accepted Ilea's invitation to the makeshift lesson on swordplay. Dale knew more about it but Ilea had fought plenty of experts to know a few things herself.

Rhett brushed away the sweat from his forehead before grasping his sword. His face was focused, his stance prepared. Two steps and his blade rushed past the dodging woman.

This time, he didn't leave himself open, instead side stepping before he went into a more defensive stance.

"Well done," Ilea said with a smile. "Hey Dale."

She did a double take, unsure if she had seen right.

The man looked at her with a serious expression. "Did you hurt my kids?" the words came out in a growl, magic emanating from him.

"Did your classes evolve?" Ilea asked, appearing in front of him with a smirk. "Well done!"

The man relaxed, realizing who he was dealing with.

"I checked in, darling. She was a sweetheart," Abby said, looking out from the kitchen.

"Thanks," he said and turned to Ilea. "Sorry. It's just... when it comes to them."

"I get it, no worries," Ilea said.

"Daddy, come play too! She can make wings! Like a bird!" Alaina exclaimed in a high pitched voice, running circles around Ilea.