

## Chapter 485 The Three Shadows

Ilea used Force to slow down the pompous being, trying to teleport it behind herself.

The Reaver stepped to the side but was slightly pulled forward anyway, yet not teleported. His backhand was slowed by the magic field as he tried to hit Ilea. The heavy hammer smashed into his side, bringing him down to one knee.

Lightning spread into it from its back, making the creature roar before an explosion rocked through the two of them.

Neither the Reaver nor Ilea showed a visible reaction, the creature continuing to attack as she focused on her space magic.

It blocked her hammer swings with slow movements, the sheer size of its arms and hands countering her attacks. She got a few hits in before a fist smashed her square in the chest. An attack she could have easily avoided.

The movements were so clumsy, Ilea wondered how a creature like that could be considered level three forty. *I do hope it's born at this level.*

She was flung backwards and tried to use force against the nearby wall. It slowed her movement before she slid to a stop on the ground.

*Didn't even crack the armor*, she thought with a smile. It was nice, fighting some low level enemies for once in a while. Now with an actual purpose.

Outside of Force's influence, the creature focused instead on the other two adversaries, its movements now quicker and more decisive.

Trian floated around, sending bolts of lightning at the being from a safe distance, teleporting whenever the being got close.

A barrier appeared around it after the mage had led it into the hastily prepared circle of Claire's making. A fist slammed into the bright energy, cracks immediately forming.

Bright light appeared within the dome as a dull sounding explosion spread inside. The energy vanished, smoke and fire released.

The Reaver roared as it stumbled out of the smoke, burns showing on its sickly skin.

Ilea executed her three step run up perfectly, the hammer lifted from behind her back before she let go.

It twirled once before slamming into the creature's head, stunning it for a second as the others continued their assault.

She tried to use Displacement instead of Iana's enchantment to move the weapon to her hands but found the thing only sliding slowly towards her, Ilea's mana declining by hundreds of points for each use.

The attempt was stopped and she instead used the enchantment. This time the hammer moved, its weight apparent as she struggled to control the flight angle. She caught it, wincing a little at the thought of it hitting the creature head on. *Maybe the level IS justified.*

Another use of Displacement moved the giant creature a meter back, its fist now unable to reach Claire's barriers before lightning and fire enveloped it again.

*Doesn't even regenerate*, Ilea thought. And still it took so much time for her companions to kill the being. It was understandable considering their levels and the apparent focus on defense and Vitality the creature had.

A last powerful blast of lightning slammed into the Reaver's head, frying its brain before two powerful explosions ripped through its legs.

The creature finally died to another explosion covered by a dome like barrier.

"Easier than last time," Trian said, floating down to join the others.

"Well of course, I'm participating now!" Ilea said in a joyous tone.

"You could kill this thing with a single strike," Claire said. "It's because we had more space in this cavern than the last. Don't grow overconfident Trian. They hit hard. For us at least."

"I know," the man said.

Ilea checked her messages briefly.

***'ding' 'Your group has defeated [Torn Brute Reaver – lvl 342]'***

***'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 4 – 1 stat point awarded'***

***'ding' 'Force reaches lvl 2'***

"Just a single level for that one," she said and quickly tested her spells. *Half a meter more for Force and about seventy centimeters for Displacement.*

She liked the bonuses, knowing that at a higher level, she would be able to use the spells at an impressive distance.

"Nothing for us," Trian said. "Your participation is showing."

"I know you want to use the hammer but can you try and only use your third Class? I somehow doubt it would make much of a difference but it's worth a try," Claire said.

Ilea rolled her eyes and stored Quiet. "Alright, only magic form now on."

She formed a fist and watched the pale flames flicker over her hands.

Trian chuckled. "Not that it will make a difference. She's too powerful, even with just that."

"Many of my passives I can't even deactivate. My main Classes will be involved either way," she said as they moved on.

***[Torn Blood Reaver – lvl 383]***

The next enemy they faced was more lean, and as it seemed a little more intelligent too.

It circled them with apprehension, taking in the unknowns invading its cavern with twisted eyes. Clawed hands opened and closed as it gargled, any resemblance to a human taken over by whatever had taken this creature.

It reached nearly three meters in height with a thin body. Visible muscles showed the danger it posed, as did the high level.

Ilea had her ash armor disabled, her auras too. Just walking felt sluggish and weird, as if she was sick.

“Hold me Trian, I’m weakened,” she said, trying to sound croaky.

“Don’t touch me, frail being!” he said and moved away, dodging her hand.

Neither of her main auras cost mana to use anymore, making them constant companions. She knew that they were active even in her sleep.

Plenty of passive skills boosted her power in various ways but nothing really came close to Azarinth Awakening and Aspect of Ash when it came to straight up enhancements.

*The Intelligence boost is gone too... meaning my magic will be quite pathetic.*

She wondered if that fact helped with leveling her third class skills or if the opposite was true.

The beast lunged, its steps fast and sure. Claws rushed out at the group.

The mages vanished immediately, Ilea the one remaining in front of the beast.

Force barely inconvenienced the creature and Displacement failed to move it.

She ducked, barely managing to dodge the claw she had seen coming from a mile away.

Ilea displaced herself, finding that at least that ability still worked, albeit less quickly.

The creature was hit by lightning, dodging the explosion before it was upon her again.

Ilea made it a game of fighting the creature with her main class passive abilities only. Precognition was huge, as were her fighting skills. She weaved through the quick attacks, her armor grazed but holding, some blows deflected by expert movements.

Each touch made the flames spread, Flare of Creation no longer benefiting from her high Intelligence but retaining the Body Enhancement bonuses themselves. Enough it seemed to cause considerable damage and keeping the monster’s attention on her.

Lightning continued to flare up, both health and mana stripped from the being as Trian supplied himself through his vampyr abilities.

The Reaver roared and gurgled, not finding purchase with its claws as the white flames slowly spread on its body.

Ilea failed to dodge a few wild attacks, the claws digging into her armor, cutting into her flesh.

The damage was manageable with just her natural health regeneration. Her flames continued to spread as the Reaver tried to get out its claws, unable to even shake her around due to her heavy weight.

They stumbled together as it continued to strike her with its left arm, a few of its attacks getting through the bone armor.

*Thirty levels higher than me,* Ilea thought as they fell to the ground, explosions and lightning spreading around them.

The main bonuses she retained from her passives were defensive in nature, her Flare just adding to the lack of impact the various attacks had on her.

As the reaver was overwhelmed by the attacks of her teammates, it clawed into her chest with the stuck claw, two of them piercing her heart.

“That’s not going to do it, I’m afraid,” she said, almost pitying the creature. “Be free,” she said and grabbed its arm.

Its head exploded in a shower of bone and blood.

Chunks and pieces slapped into her eyes before she brushed them away.

“Are you alright!?” Trian called out as he appeared next to the two, crouching down to check on her.

“What do you think?” Ilea asked and sat up, ripping out the claw from her chest.

“Is that... your heart?” the man asked, fascinated at the sight.

“Possibly,” she said, the wound closing as her armor slowly regenerated.

“Timeless armor. I do believe you mentioned it in passing... quite something to see in the flesh,” Claire said as she too appeared next to her.

***‘ding’ ‘Your group has defeated [Torn Blood Reaver – lvl 383]’***

***‘ding’ ‘Flare of Creation reaches lvl 2’***

She chuckled and lied down, spreading her arms to the side as her ashen armor spread again, her auras activating with it.

“Not a single level,” she said.

“Hmm,” Claire said.

“Flare of Creation leveled to two at least,” Ilea said.

“So instead of receiving a bonus for not using your main skills, it gave you less for having weaker Space Magic,” Trian said and chuckled.

“The group setting is part of it too,” Claire said. “So far the most efficient kill was your first, even though the Reaver was at a much lower level.”

“Aw, I hoped for some dungeon exploration with the two of you,” Ilea said and blinked up, spreading her wings.

“Quite a different look. And also why this probably won’t be very beneficial. I did get one level from that but if we had killed it ourselves, which should be possible, we both would have likely gotten two or three levels,” Trian said.

“I have to agree,” Claire said and sighed.

Trian nodded and looked at Ilea. “What do you think of the idea of us taking a group of Sentinels down here? They could stay at a distance while me and Claire prepare our encounters carefully. They could heal us if we’re injured.”

“They would die to a single mistake,” Claire said.

“Then we switch between the low level Reavers where they participate and otherwise just have them close by to heal us both,” he suggested.

"I suggest lower level dungeons first," Ilea said. "For the two of you alone though, sure. I don't think you even need the safety measure of someone around."

"I don't want to take the same risks you do. Even if it means a much slower progression in power," Claire said.

"I can heal myself though," Ilea said.

Trian smiled. "Which just means that you take even more ridiculous risks."

"Fair enough," she said.

"We could take two teams out a night. If you plan to continue that part of your routine of course," Trian said.

"I do. Until they're strong enough to face some of these dungeons alone. I can take some time to fight lower level enemies too," Ilea said.

"You would depopulate most everything around here," Trian said.

Ilea rolled her eyes. "Alright. I'll find something farther away."

"Good... that's good," he said, lost in thought. "I'll get to setting up plans... Claire, do you want to be involved with their training too? Or just join me for our training?"

The woman thought about it for a moment and nodded. "A few days a week. No more than two nights. I simply can't spare more sadly. I can invest a few hours every day for our training. It would be good to get to know them. With how powerful I believe they will become in the future," she said and nodded to Ilea.

"I wonder if someone reaches three hundred faster than me," she said and grinned.

"I hope not. The risks are too high. Plus I encourage them to understand their abilities well and to prepare extensively before every mission," Trian said.

"Are you implying that I didn't do those things?" Ilea asked.

"Yes," he said, in a matter of fact tone, winking at her. "Neither did I. Not until recently."

*You win this round, noble!*

"They will have the advantage of an extensive education too," Claire said.

"So is this it then? You two just stand there and insult me?" Ilea asked, crossing her arms.

"Oh no, it's just the envy talking," Trian said in a dry tone.

Claire snickered. "He's right, you know."

Trian just smiled and shook his head.

"I do expect you to catch up, in time," Ilea said.

"You expect the impossible," he murmured. "But we'll try."

"We will," Claire added. "Amidst managing a city."

"And a healer organization," Trian said.

Ilea rolled her eyes. "Don't act like you don't love it."

“No I do,” Trian said. “But you shouldn’t focus on us too much. You have to catch up to Kyrian after all.”

“He is too far ahead I’m afraid,” Claire said and shook her head. “A futile task, really.”

Ilea nodded. “The metal man is quite capable. At least I got the dancing skill.”

“And your gourmet ability. Those two will make the difference in your upcoming battle,” Trian said. “Surely.”

Claire chuckled. “You had dancing lessons too?”

He nodded. “Being a noble has its disadvantages.”

“It does,” Claire said.

Ilea grabbed them with a few of her ashen limbs, moving them closer into an ash covered hug. “You two poor things! What a terrible childhood that must have been!”

“Why are you heating up?” Trian asked.

He turned his head when a Reaper growled and charged them.

Heart of Cinder released, leaving behind a half molten corpse, slowly collapsing onto itself.

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Torn Blood Reaper – lvl 310]’***

***‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 5 – 1 stat point awarded’***

*That tipped it over to five? I guess.*

“What terrifying power,” Trian murmured.

“You want it too?” Ilea asked, releasing them.

“Oh yes. Of course I do. If only to protect the Sentinels,” he said.

Ilea smiled. “Shall we?”

The three Shadows returned to Ravenhall shortly after, carried by the healer and left to their work.

Ilea herself continued getting used to the new skills, walking through the streets of Ravenhall with a sphere of ash disappearing in the space around her, occasionally frozen in mid air as she inspected everything with her new awareness.

She suddenly stopped and grinned to herself.

*That’s an idea,* she thought and spread her wings.

A few seconds later she was hovering above Ravenhall, her wings charging with power before she shot off into the night.

Dawn came as she sped over the lands, the suns slowly enveloping the forests, rivers, and hills with light. Monsters would retreat into their dens, creatures of the day taking their place instead.

Ilea slowed down and teleported into the thicket below, switching between Blink and Displacement. Space Shift had halved the cooldown but with Displacement present too, she could teleport nearly

four times as fast. The new skill sadly lacked in range still but Ilea assumed time and training would remedy that weakness.

Her wings carried her through the forest, trees avoided by quick maneuvers or teleportation. She wondered if most creatures even noticed her at all, her movements mostly soundless.

She landed finally and let her wings vanish, cracking her neck to announce herself.

Her prey looked up, opening its wide maw as it turned. Blood still rolled off its massive jaw, the Drake interrupted in its feeding.

It remained where it stood, roaring Ilea's way.

She roared back.

The creature was frozen in place. Enough time to rip off its head. But Ilea wasn't here to bully such a low level creature. She wondered if their population had recovered since her presence in the forest.

*Maybe I'm too arrogant, thinking my murder spree actually impacted the species,* she thought and approached the being slowly.

The Drake wasn't highly intelligent but the apprehension was clear.

Maybe if it had a few more brain cells, it would know that right now, running was the only thing it should be focusing on.

Ilea reached it and stopped in front of the creature. She looked down and saw the half eaten deer. "An impressive catch," she murmured.

The creature opened its jaws and closed them around her head, biting down hard against her ashen armor.

Ilea could hear the teeth grinding against her ash. She used Force to freeze the creature, ripping herself free and staggering back, shocked at the power of the attack.

Displacement moved the Drake back a few meters as she summoned one of Keyla's meals.

It took a minute for her nose to recover, the monster's breath stinking of blood and rot.

"Disgusting," she said and looked up to find the creature running away.

*Finally got it,* she thought.

The thing was at level twenty, barely a danger to most guards and adventurers even. Their size could still be troublesome but now that she had arrived, she felt bad.

It wasn't revenge, nor would it be particularly beneficial to her new Class. Maybe she just wanted to show the creature how far she had come.

They had nearly killed her but they had failed. And now she was this far beyond their power.

Ilea spread her wings once more and blinked up and above the treeline. *I still have to get Elfie to meet Isalhar. Do I want to go north though?*

She decided the elf could wait for a few more weeks or even months. He was hundreds of years old after all. *I did say I'd get him before going south... well things came up. I'm sure he understands.*

*Where else could I find a bunch of unfeeling monsters? Oh I know. Maybe I can sneak past without getting involved in the rebellion.*

Her new target in sight, Ilea flew off towards Karth.

She wondered if the Praetorians were still there. She really hoped they were. Cleaning up the Iztacalum dungeon was the least she could do for her Elven friends and the city of Dawntree. *It would be quite disastrous if they came out and attacked innocent people, now wouldn't it?*

Animals hid in the thicket and their dens, frozen in fear by the magical snickering they heard, the dangerous predator long gone when the sound reached them.