

Chapter 423 Friends?

She was glad she had waited with the last two skills, surprised she was actually much more interested and excited about her Huntress ability instead of Eyes of Ash. The latter would surely be useful as soon as she got used to it but right now it was more of a distraction.

Eight general skills maxed out and still nothing about the third tier, she thought. It wouldn't hurt getting more levels either way so she would continue to do so. Resistances against various schools of magic would give her an edge against many opponents, the higher level the better.

Another ten minutes passed until the creature was healed up, most of its heavier injuries already dealt with before the others had left.

'ding' 'Space Magic Resistance reaches lvl 5'

Repaying the Trakorov with a heal was the least she could do. Another level to her space magic resistance was just the cherry on top.

She spread her wings and jumped off the head, turning around to see the monster's eyes opening slowly. "Thanks again and see you around!" she shouted and bowed before waving at the creature.

It simply kept its eyes on her but didn't move, closing them again as soon as she was a little farther away.

By now her bone armor had regenerated as well. It was by no means bad equipment but against creatures beyond level six hundred, it just didn't hold up.

The survivors were waiting near the facility, a couple dead worm creatures and a bunch of blood and corruption telling another small tale.

She landed with all eyes on her, waving at the group. Most of the lower leveled ones were apprehensive at least, some outright terrified.

Ilea moved her ashen armor to her back but found the reaction not changing much.

"You made it. How is the Trakorov?" Catelyn asked as she approached in her normal sized form.

"Grumpy? Not sure. I'll check on it again at some point soon, met some worms?" Ilea said and summoned one of the glass containers, harvesting orange goo into them from the rather massive corpses lying around. Nobody commented on her ashen helmet covering her eyes.

"Venekov and the rest managed to fend them off. Barely," Catelyn said, giving a nod to the masked dark one.

"This dropped from the Elemental by the way. I didn't want to show it so close to the Trakorov," Catelyn added and held out a fist sized sphere swirling with sand.

"Looks cool, what does it do?" Ilea asked, taking the sphere as it was handed to her.

[Elemental Tear – Ancient Quality] – [Allows storage of one ton of sand]

“Uuh, nice one,” Ilea said and handed it back. “Would be useful if it was ash.”

“We thought you should have it, considering the contribution,” Catelyn said.

[Mage – lvl 334]

She benefited quite a bit as well, Ilea thought with a smile.

“Ah, I’m fine. Give it to a sand mage in Hallowfort or sell it to fund something useful. I’ve gotten plenty out of this place,” she said with a smile.

“Thank you. We will put the value to good use,” the fox said and bowed lightly.

“Do you want to leave immediately or catch up on some sleep?” Ilea asked.

“Sleep would be good but most everyone here prefers to rest within one of the staircases further up compared to here. I count myself among them,” Catelyn said with a weak smile.

“Then let’s go up. I’ll take care of the Deep Mirage,” she said and nodded to the waiting group, wary and tired, with damaged and broken gear. “As soon as I filled these containers,” she added, putting another chunk of corrupted flesh into the glass.

Ilea filled three containers with corrupted material before she led the survivors and her team towards the exit of the twentieth layer.

Most of them were rather dejected, considering the failure of the expedition and all the losses they had incurred. They avoided looking at the four people that had come and saved them, out of shame or fear. Wearing masks and helmets helped in that regard.

Ilea didn’t mind either way. She came to destroy the corruption and to help out a friend. It was nice that the healer girl and Hana had survived but she didn’t know the rest of them and cared little for a group that thought this endeavor had made any sense.

She understood that not everyone was about to fight things that could kill them but to sneak past in the hopes of treasure? In the north? *Then again you are a little weird, getting a kick out of being in danger constantly*, she thought, deciding to let it be.

The implications from the sphere and the dubious purpose of this facility still left her a little on edge but in the end it simply confirmed the existence of powerful beings or people moving pieces in the background. Nothing too surprising, really.

Ilea wasn’t about to hunt them down but she would have some questions about the corruption at the very least.

“Ilas,” she called out, the dark one flying over to her before he bowed.

“Your plan worked. Impressive, truly,” he said.

Ilea chuckled and looked him over. “You don’t sound very elated.”

“It is... no, I am glad, that we... you have defeated the corruption. Yet the closer I come to my own goal, the more it is... difficult, to be confronted with my failure.”

“We’ll be done with it quickly then. Tell me again what you need help with and where,” Ilea said, the group now walking into the tunnel leading to the nineteenth layer.

“The seventeenth layer... the spirits are protecting a facility that me and... Cynthia, an old friend, explored with the help of two people I will not name. We had reason to believe there to be

immeasurable treasure but all we found was a monster too powerful for us to beat,” the man explained.

“What was it?” Ilea asked.

Ilas looked around them and intensified his spell that seemed to block off their conversation. “A Vampire. A man, human once perhaps but turned and corrupted into a being with unending thirst for blood.”

“Oho... that does sound interesting! Don’t you think, little guy?” she said, glancing at the Fae.

It nodded, listening as if it understood every word.

Ilea didn’t doubt that it did.

“Cynthia... she remained within the facility, one of her summoned animals dragging me out, injured and bleeding. I care not for the Vampire but if anything of her remains, I want it.”

“We’ll see. I can fight the Vampire and see if I can win. Otherwise I’ll distract it for as long as I can while you search for any remains, though with all the legends about them, I doubt there is much to be found,” Ilea said.

“I agree... it is wistful thinking and still, it has remained with me for all this time. I have never come this close. I would give you everything, Ilea, for your help,” Ilas said and bowed deeply.

“You’re weirding me out mate, stand up. I already told you I’d help. I’d also like to see a Vampire. It’s not a four mark, is it?”

He looked up and shook his head. “Three but it was powerful, more so than the scorpions and worms on the twentieth layer.”

“Good, then I’ll be worth the challenge. Just follow the expedition up to the seventeenth level and wait for me,” she said.

“Are you not traveling with us?” the Dark One asked.

“The Sprites on the eighteenth layer have a problem with my little friend here. It would be dangerous for us to come through there with you.”

Ilas shook his head. “No, we have a lot of illusion and hiding spells. They did not even notice us with only my spells, I doubt it would be a problem.”

Ilea wasn’t sure. “What do you think?” she asked her companion.

Dangerous

“I think so too,” Ilea nodded. “Know what? If you want to come back for us, then maybe we can try but I don’t want to be responsible for the death of everyone here. Especially after they were finally rescued.”

Responsibility

Me

“No,” Ilea said to the Fae, “They made me their enemy to get to you. I doubt they’d ignore me if I showed up alone. It’s not the point either way, fuck those sunbeam shitheads.”

“I will come back and hide you two,” Ilas said, sounding positively elated.

“If they attack, you flee, alright?” Ilea suggested and watched him nod.

“Great, then let me meet my sand monster friend and you guys move past a couple minutes later,” Ilea said. *Sleep does sound nice at this point.*

“Cat! I’m going in, I’ll send the Fae as soon as the creature is distracted... fly high and fast,” she shouted to the fox who was talking to two of the dark ones.

Catelyn nodded. “Stay safe!”

“I hope not,” Ilea replied and vanished, appearing twenty meters into the sand covered layer as she spread her wings and started flying through the area.

“Can you tell if there is more than one?” she asked the Fae.

It shook its head.

“Well, then we’ll just have to f-” she said and felt the drain magic activate, coming closer in a rapid pace.

“There you are!” she said and waved at the general vicinity from where the magic came.

Sand tendrils formed on the ground before they fell down again, the head of the Deep Mirage popping out and looking at them.

Ilea formed an ashen clone and added spears as she lazily flapped her wings.

The creature vanished in the sand as a giggle resounded, sand spears flying up a moment later.

“Can you go inform the others?” Ilea asked her companion.

The Fae nodded and vanished, leaving her to play with the creature. *Should I really just leave you down here? I mean you would kill everyone I know but it seems kind of lonely.* It felt like playing with a happy yet malicious dog that bled you dry of life at the same time.

A dilemma really. Because it was still kind of like a dog.

“Do you think she abandoned us?” one of the dark ones asked in a whisper.

Jonna looked over but didn’t comment on it. She could see Catelyn and the two others that had come for them standing near the exit. The necromancer that looked human and the elf. Both terrified her. At least with the fox, she knew it was on Hallowfort’s side.

A wonder she didn’t kill us back then. I can’t believe it’s even the same person.

“She is merely a puppet of the Spirit of Old... trust me, there’s a reason she is always covered in ash,” one of them said.

“I think the Spirit is her prisoner. She uses it to become more powerful. How else do you think she got down here? I bet she’s negotiating with the creature ahead, to let herself pass safely,” the first one said again.

“Stop talking nonsense. The human came to save us and she fought the Elemental. Without her we would be dead,” a mage spoke up.

“You really believe she’s human?” one of them spoke. “What do you think?” the being suddenly looked at Jonna.

She looked for a reply but couldn’t think of anything, stuttering a little before Hana stepped in front of her.

“I fought her, some time ago. She is human and she came to save us. And she won’t abandon us, believe me,” just when she said that, the Fae appeared within the tunnel.

It looked otherworldly, beautiful and ancient. Jonna couldn’t believe it was only level one hundred and yet she saw it. The white eyes focused on her for a moment before they moved past.

Safe

Careful

It sent thoughts into her mind as if it was the most normal thing.

Jonna had experienced telepathy before but this was different. She couldn’t quite place in what way.

“See,” Hana said with a grin. “Ilea isn’t our enemy.”

Jonna wasn’t so sure about that. At least the woman hadn’t killed them, not when they confronted her and Austin and not now. Even with the mistrust Jonna had for other humans in the north, she trusted Ilea, if only to a certain length. It helped that she was a healer too and fought offensively.

“She wasn’t kidding,” Catelyn said with a chuckle as they slowly flew past, several spells in effect to keep them somewhat hidden.

They could see the ferocious battle in the distance, ash and sand intertwining to create a chaotic and deadly battlefield.

“Should we not help her?” Venekov asked.

Catelyn shook her head and kept flying forward. “You would only get in the way. If this creature did not manage to kill us, it won’t even leave a scratch on her.”

“No it will, just not for long,” Maro commented as he too watched the raging battle.

The Fae had left them again to join Ilea.

It really got close to her, it seems. I hope it will not pose an issue. Many would kill to get their hands on a Fae.

Catelyn felt anger rise within her chest. It would be a grave crime to attack either one of the two. One a revered being of old, ancient and powerful, the other the bringer of cake.

She hadn't gotten her fill yet but it wasn't time yet to relax and to celebrate. If she knew Elana, there was plenty of trouble waiting for her even without the information they had found within the Descent.

Let us at least hope she hasn't started a war, she thought with a grin. It had been such a joy to work with the human but her goals and methods needed some adjustment. It had been too early to leave her alone with the town but Catelyn trusted her capabilities more than anybody else in the council. With the Dark Protector, the Feynor, the corruption and now potentially even the Ascended, capable rulers were preferable to anyone else.

Ilea took her time, training with the Mirage for over an hour as she got used to her new eyes, learning that she could change the sharpness a little. She finally waved her goodbyes, leaving as she twirled through the air, guiding the last projectiles towards her unprotected body.

"Do you think it will be lonely?" Ilea asked, glancing back at the head looking after her.

Negative

"No? What makes you think that?" she asked.

Aggressive

Predator

Malicious

"Doesn't mean it can't be lonely," she retorted.

The Fae giggled in her mind.

Simple

"The creature itself is simple?" she asked and saw it nod. "I will believe you on this but only because it makes myself feel better."

Truth

"Well you could be lying about that too," Ilea said.

The creature tilted its head to the side, apparently confused with the suggestion.

Truth.

“Alright, no need to get violent. Humans constantly say they’re truthful and then it turns out they were lying,” she said.

Fae, it pointed at itself.

“Are you saying Fae don’t lie?” Ilea asked.

The creature nodded.

She tapped it slightly and smiled. “That’s exactly what a liar would say!”

The Fae groaned in her mind before it shook its head.

‘ding’ ‘Sand Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 17’

‘ding’ ‘Sand Magic Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 18’

‘ding’ ‘Stamina Drain Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 9’

‘ding’ ‘Stamina Drain Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 10’

Slowly getting there.

“I was thinking, third tier general skills... how many second tier skills do I need to level to the highest point before I can advance them?” she asked her companion as she flew towards the exit.

The Fae giggled in her mind, tapping its chin before it tilted its head.

Fae

Liar

It shrugged and looked away.

“Really? You’re insulted?” she asked and laughed.

The Fae giggled again.

Ten

“Ten?” she asked, slowing down a little.

Ten.

“Ten general skills at the max to get third tier skills?” Ilea asked.

The Fae shrugged.

Maybe

“You’re just as uncertain as everybody else. How is this not common knowledge,” Ilea sighed.

Rare

Human

Variable

“I know I’m a rare human with different abilities. Just thought there would be some rules in place,” she said.

Rules

Yes

Human

Rare

“I see. So you know about other creatures?” Ilea asked.

The Fae nodded.

“I’m also feeling like you’re talking more. Maybe you might actually grace me with a full sentence at some point,” she suggested with a smile.

No

“No? Why not?”

Rules

“I see. Rules by magic or rules by your king? Queen? Collective? Magic brain?”

The Fae nodded but didn’t specify.

Ilea could tell the creature wasn’t too keen on talking about the topic, likely because there were other rules or there was more of a reason for it to have found its way into the Descent than a weird curiosity. Could be that the higher up Fae were fascist.

“What about writing? Any loopholes like that?” she asked.

It shook its head.

“Alright, I’ll stop,” Ilea said with a smile. “Do you want to go up to the surface with the others? Or join me as I fight the Vampire and explore more of this place?”

The Fae thought about it for a moment before it pointed at her.

Join?

“I don’t mind you hanging out. As long as you don’t get yourself in unnecessary danger. Like using your magic to stop an Elemental’s attacks. Something like that would be ridiculous,” she said.

The Fae giggled again before it hugged her armored face.