

Ilea could tell now that the Fae had a good way to keep its location a secret. She could easily tell in which direction Claire was located with her mark.

She found something a little more interesting than the bats a while later.

It didn't notice her at first but turned as soon as she clapped.

[Decrepit Golem – lvl 71]

The being was a solid meter taller than her, made entirely of stone or clay, perhaps even metal. It was difficult to tell in the dark cavern, her only light being the staff.

"Hello," she said and sent the greeting with her telepathy as well.

The golem didn't speak to her, instead slamming its fist down with surprising quickness.

Ilea just stood there and let it impact her armor without any effect. A small chip showed on his hand, proving that her armor was the harder material.

"Wondrous, isn't it?" she asked with a smile and watched the creature take a step back. Something glinted from within a crack in its torso. A green gem that reflected the light of her staff.

Perfect, come on, show me your magic.

Arcane power manifested as vines rushed out from the cracks, entwining her where she stood. Sharp thorns scratched against her ash, still not enough to injure her at all.

Ilea at least found the strength of the combined vines considerable, making her strain against it before the vines gave in. The awkward position was the main problem really.

"Let me help you out here," she said, the golem hitting her head while she talked.

Her ash armor disintegrated and her clothes vanished. Created ash covered her chest and waist. *Wouldn't want anyone getting the wrong idea. Even though sex golems are definitely a million dollar idea.*

She let the creature attack her as she explored more of the tunnels, the thing not understanding that she was an enemy it couldn't possibly beat. Even without her armor, the vines had a very hard time piercing her skin.

"Too much Vitality, hmm?" she asked, finding another one of the creatures.

This one had a yellow stone embedded in its skull, shooting concentrated light beams out of it.

A third one had a blue stone, using pressured streams of water to attack. It reminded her a little of the powerwashing tools that existed on Earth.

If all of them provide single resistances then I have to thank Claire for suggesting this place. Not sure why the skull is here however.

She assumed it had to do with the curse the barkeeper had mentioned.

Her movement was somewhat inhibited by the group of golems that slowly followed her, continuing their mindless attacks.

Me and my pet golems, strolling through the Karheim dungeon.

She hummed a tune, spending the next two hours walking through the place.

At that point, a dozen golems were following her. The existing group's arsenal extended by an area attack stemming from a red gem, a spherical arcane attack that did more to inhibit the other golems than her.

The damage they inflicted wasn't enough to provide additional skills for now but she was sure they'd succeed in time.

Finally, she came upon the hall the barkeep had mentioned. Ilea could smell the vile stench for a while already, leading her to the source.

Rotten and half overgrown corpses. Human, bat and a few animals. All littered the rather expansive hall that led deeper into the dungeon.

The main thing of note was the architectural difference. This was built, not natural. *Finally, an actual ruin*, she thought.

Ilea thought it a waste to destroy the golems but neither did she have a good way to get rid of them. Some of the adventurers who had gotten deeper into the hallway looked rather well equipped, not the kind of people she had seen in the inn.

She turned to the Golems and charged Monster Hunter, all the while activating her armor again, as well as summoning her bone set.

The spell was unleashed as she shouted. "Leave!"

To her surprise, the creatures turned around and slowly shuffled away to the various tunnels leading to this central place.

She wasn't sure if they actually understood or if it was a similar phenomenon as with the bats, simply making them realize the efforts were in vain. *Should have realized that after hours of attacking me. Oh well, won't question the rhyme and reason behind a golem's actions.*

The pressure and magic she felt from the hall was obvious but she couldn't quite place it. *Guess there's no way around it*, she thought and took a step forward.

Nothing happened.

Another couple steps brought her into range of the magic.

Alright, this is wholly different than whatever those Golems could dish out. It felt similar to the curse magic she had experienced before but somehow she knew it was different.

"Fuck," she said and stored her armor, puking on the ground as she stabilized herself on her knees. Another retch brought forth the rest of whatever she had remaining in her stomach. The next one came out bloody.

Her natural regeneration wasn't enough anymore and she started healing against it. Ilea watched in fascination as her skin turned a sickly green color, something growing on it as well. Her healing pushed against it, turning it back to normal.

Healing works. Good thing I didn't die to some weird curse down here, she thought and remained standing in the area.

Ten minutes later, she took a couple steps forward, finding the spell growing considerably stronger. The pain was probably the worst, leading her to disable that perception entirely. It just felt disgusting, as if her innards were convulsing, decaying and spurting growths at the same time.

The perception granted thanks to her healing didn't help either. She just let the magic run its course as she waited and healed against it.

Half an hour and nearly halfway through the hall finally granted her with a notification.

'ding' 'You have learned the General skill: Blight Resistance

Blight Resistance – lvl 1

A rare phenomenon often caused by ancient curse magic colliding with naturally poisonous, unclean or corrupting environments. When wielded by a mage it can turn into a dangerous weapon.

Blight hmm? That's why I thought it felt somewhat familiar. Hmm, maybe? she thought and deactivated both her poison and curse resistances.

The effects from the magic around her increased immediately. Not to a significant amount but noticeably so. *Does that mean I can level the others too?*

Ilea decided to stay for a while anyway, to just experience the beauty that was blight. The smell especially was a marvelous mixture of rot, death and decay. *If there was a smell resistance, I would have it by now. I should really be unaffected by all this shit by now.*

She continued to advance through the hall, finding some spots where the blight's influence was less powerful. In other places it was several times as intense.

Fucking weird.

As soon as she was out of the hallway, she found that the magic was still present. As if it was part of the ruin itself. *I guess that's good, I can level it up coupled with whatever creature survives down here.*

The halls and tunnels were made of stone, carved into the ground by mages of the respective elements. It was no wonder that many peoples in Elos preferred to build underground, protected against dangerous creatures and the elements. Humans just really, really liked sunlight.

We could at least build trains or tubes that connect various cities together. Or would monsters come to life down there? she wasn't quite sure. Teleportation seemed like the better option anyway.

At least if I don't just copy myself every time I use blink. Let the Federation think on theories like that. I'll just enjoy my fast traveling methods.

Much of the ruins were overgrown, the design and architecture much simpler compared to the Taleen or Tremor. It made her think it was more just an underground laboratory or shelter than a town.

Would make sense as well. Rhyvor wasn't always underground and the Taleen are dwarves. Potentially more inclined to stay underground.

'ding' 'Blight Resistance reaches lvl 2'

One step closer to ultimate indestructibility! she thought with joy, retching up some more blood and likely malformed and destroyed organs. She certainly understood why this dungeon was listed as a dangerous place.

Ilea found traces of recent activity, massive footprints that suggested golems or something of similar size. Using Sentinel Huntress, she followed the steps as she continued to heal herself against the damage.

A healer in the team isn't just a recommendation in a dungeon like this, it was an absolute necessity. Even someone like Trian or Kyrian couldn't survive this without someone to drain.

I just really hope I'm not torturing all those people for nothing. Morale will drop until the first person gets a class. My fame and power isn't enough on its own.

The food, free lodging, gear and good teachers definitely helped as well but she was already late as it was. Not that she saw it as her fault, she just hadn't expected Trian to focus so much on the organization.

It wasn't a bad thing at all, the goal of Ilea mostly being a self sufficient organization that produces capable independent healers. For some larger conflicts or outbreaks they could be mobilized as well but the general idea was just more healers for everyone.

She herself was just the head. There to finance the whole thing and take care of any problems some idiots might try to put in their way. If a Shadow was feared already, she couldn't imagine what kind of feelings her power would inspire.

Then again, to a level one hundred person it doesn't exactly matter if the enemy is at two, three or four hundred. Respect is demanded either way.

"There you are," she said and waved at the Golem that turned towards her. It moved faster, two yellow gems set into its stone skull focusing on her. The creature was three meters in height. It looked ancient but not quite as sad as the ones she had met so far.

[Gem Golem – lvl 252]

"Do you understand me?"

Greetings

The golem replied by firing two concentrated beams of light magic into her armored chest.

"Guess not," she said and tested her defenses against the creature.

It looked like this version had more than a single gem type set into their body. She could see a red glint near its torso, two clear gems on its hands as well as two green gems set into its legs.

The golem didn't hesitate, vines spreading from its legs and entwining her as the concentrated light beams still cut into her armor. It didn't approach, remaining where it stood. For now.

Ilea found the magic sub par. Laughable compared to the sun sprites or even Lucas' power. *I guess that comes with having such a wide variety of abilities.*

She kept up her defenses and approached the creature, using a couple of her ashen limbs to slash through the vines. *Roots are better my friend,* she thought and closed the distance in walking speed. The blight was mostly in the background now that her ashen armor was active, as well as the resistance.

As soon as she got five meters close to the creature, its lasers stopped and clear blades appeared from its arms.

“Blade arms. How original,” she sighed and put away her staff, just in case it got damaged. The way the light reflected on the golem’s blades reminded her of a diamond. Perhaps actually the gems set into its massive hands.

It slashed into her ash and surprisingly cut quite deep. The attacks were rather slow as a trade off.

She stepped even closer and smiled when the red stone in its chest started glowing, releasing a spherical arcane wave that pushed her back and burnt away a tiny bit of her ash.

Alright, I think I’m safe, she thought and deactivated her Ash Armor. Her resilience was immediately reduced considerably, the blades now cutting deep into her flesh and the thorns ripping into her similar to a Shredder’s attacks.

Of course the level difference was still a major thing. Ilea regularly fought creatures at level six hundred by now. This golem was not a threat. *Might actually be without all my resistances, stacked resilience and most importantly healing.*

She deactivated her Heat, Light, wood and arcane magic resistances, finding that the damage increased significantly. *Guess its skill levels are on par with my resistances. That’s a pretty huge difference.*

The damage coming from the blades didn’t change at all but the magic now ripped through her body with significant efficiency.

Her healing of course negated it all, skin and muscles reforming faster than the golem could destroy. The blight remained one of the most annoying aspects, occasionally making her cough up tissue. The other damage was on the surface only, the worst part of it all the smell of burnt skin and hair as well as the wet feeling of blood running down her body.

“We should find some of your buddies, big guy,” she said and continued her exploration of the frankly disgusting ruins.

This was what she imagined a rotten old and forgotten dungeon to be, not the splendid beauty of the Taleen. She enjoyed it in a way, the blight making sure nobody sane would come down here to disturb or annoy her. The gem magic provided a wide variety of resistances, if only she could find two or three more of the golems.

Ilea didn’t bother with a map, sure that it would get destroyed the second she tried to draw it, instead trying to follow the always left approach, choosing the left most way until she came into a closed room or the end of a tunnel, circling back and once choosing the next way.

It wouldn’t help of course if the dungeon tunnels circled back on itself but it would make sure that she explored as much as she could.

Ilea spent ten minutes searching before a second golem showed up, adding to her training regime. Her healing still easily outperformed the combined damage of the creatures. She did leave behind a trail of blood, cut off chunks of meat, eye sauce, burnt hair as well as choked up bloody sludge from inside her body.

Not a nice scene but neither one that made the dungeon any more disgusting than it already was.

The third golem she found actually had blue gems set into its skull, adding pressured water attacks which really came as quite the help, cleaning off everything else.

She found three of them to be optimal, choosing a room as she focused on her Meditation to pass the time. There was of the dungeon to explore but she could come back tomorrow. For now, this was exactly what she needed. Some good old fashioned resistance training, made more efficient by the fact that these creatures actually wanted to kill her.

Ilea checked her growth a few hours later.

'ding' 'Meditation reaches 3rd lvl 3'

'ding' 'Monster Hunter reaches 2nd lvl 3'

'ding' 'Arcane Magic Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 11'

'ding' 'Blight Resistance reaches lvl 3'

'ding' 'Blight Resistance reaches lvl 4'

'ding' 'Blight Resistance reaches lvl 5'

'ding' 'Blight Resistance reaches lvl 6'

'ding' 'You have learned the General skill: Diamond Magic Resistance

Diamond Magic Resistance – lvl 1

A considerably hard substance, capable of channeling powerful mana if the user understands its properties. Rarely seen due to the required gems and necessary fundamental understanding and connection to its composition.

'ding' 'Diamond Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2'

...

'ding' 'Diamond Magic Resistance reaches lvl 9'

'ding' 'You have learned the General skill: Emerald Magic Resistance

Emerald Magic Resistance – lvl 1

Vine magic is a magic school closely associated with water and earth, often used to entrap creatures where trees and vegetation is naturally abundant. Emeralds have the ability to create vines from magic. Acute control and high understanding is necessary to achieve a usable result.

'ding' 'Emerald Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2'

...

'ding' 'Emerald Magic Resistance reaches lvl 5'

'ding' 'Heat Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 4'

'ding' 'You have learned the General skill: Ruby Magic Resistance

Ruby Magic Resistance – lvl 1

A sub magic school of gem magic, harnessing the arcane connection of rubies. Rarely seen

among living creatures, unstable and difficult to control. Golems are one of few exceptions to the problems of using such magic.

‘ding’ ‘Ruby Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2’

...

‘ding’ ‘Ruby Magic Resistance reaches lvl 4’

‘ding’ ‘You have learned the General skill: Sapphire Magic Resistance

Sapphire Magic Resistance – lvl 1

A sub magic school of gem magic. Sapphires are attuned to water magic in a way few natural stones and gems are, letting a trained user focus powerful torrents of collected or created water to form devastating and precise attacks.

‘ding’ ‘Sapphire Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2’

...

‘ding’ ‘Sapphire Magic Resistance reaches lvl 6’

‘ding’ ‘You have learned the General skill: Topaz Magic Resistance

Topaz Magic Resistance – lvl 1

Gems especially capable of channeling light magic, focusing beams to an extent otherwise impossible. The necessary understanding and craftsmanship to create usable gems is vast, minute mistakes causing dangerous malfunctions.

‘ding’ ‘Topaz Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2’

...

‘ding’ ‘Topaz Magic Resistance reaches lvl 6’

‘ding’ ‘You have learned the General skill: Vine Magic Resistance

Vine Magic Resistance – lvl 1

The versatility and abundance of vines have caused many hunters to specialize in its use. Often coupled with venom, this at first glance less dangerous magic becomes the last thing many a creature experiences. You have avoided that fate. For now.

‘ding’ ‘Vine Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2’

‘ding’ ‘Water Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 2’

‘ding’ ‘Water Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 3’

‘ding’ ‘One third tier General Skill point awarded’

Ilea was more than happy with the results. She didn't necessarily expect a lot of enemies to wield gem magic but it didn't hurt to be prepared. The fact that the gems mostly altered or helped channel

the effects of other magic schools was helpful too, partially leveling the respective resistances in addition to the gem magic ones.

A successful night. I'll certainly be back again tomorrow.

She waved at the golems, activated her defenses and started blinking through the dungeon, following her own bloodtrail back to the entrance.