

Chapter 503 Questions

Hector listened to the ramblings of the nervous man who had showed up to confront them.

Ilea had tuned out as soon as it became clear that no, this wasn't Elos Standard, and no, this man wouldn't lower himself to speak the common tongue.

He looked to be in his sixties, bronze skin and wearing luxurious robes lined with gold, silver, and even gems. It looked pretty ridiculous but he did carry himself with grace and pride.

[Mage – lvl 223]

His power wasn't too impressive. A fire mage mainly, based on the spells he still kept up as he talked frantically with the Pirate.

Hector spoke the language fluently, to her ears at least.

Ilea mostly ignored them, her non-threatening behavior having a slightly calming effect on the man. Either that or the few words Hector got in between the aggressive rambling did that.

It was the perfect time to check her various messages from the past day of fighting.

'ding' 'The Azarinth Sentinel reaches lvl 361 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Azarinth Sentinel reaches lvl 362 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash reaches lvl 361 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash reaches lvl 362 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie reaches lvl 115 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie reaches lvl 116 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie reaches lvl 117 – One stat point awarded'

...

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie reaches lvl 132 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Faen Valkyrie reaches lvl 133 – One stat point awarded'

The leveling speed had slowed down considerably, for all her Classes. Ilea assumed a large chunk of the experience for her main Classes came from the few Rock Beatles she had killed, their level above five hundred.

She still amassed thirty eight stat points through the fighting, forty six together with her remaining eight.

'ding' 'Absolute Destruction reaches 3rd lvl 28'

'ding' 'Sentinel Sphere reaches 3rd lvl 28'

'ding' 'Azarinth Perception reaches 3rd lvl 27'

'ding' 'Heart of Cinder reaches 3rd lvl 25'

'ding' 'Heart of Cinder reaches 3rd lvl 26'

'ding' 'Storm of Cinders reaches 3rd lvl 22'

'ding' 'Eyes of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 19'

Her skills at least were progressing quite well, benefiting more from the constant use against somewhat powerful opponents she actually attacked with everything she had.

'ding' 'Force reaches 2nd lvl 7'

...

'ding' 'Force reaches 2nd lvl 12'

'ding' 'Flare of Creation reaches 2nd lvl 9'

...

'ding' 'Flare of Creation reaches 2nd lvl 13'

'ding' 'Displacement reaches 2nd lvl 11'

...

'ding' 'Displacement reaches 2nd lvl 14'

'ding' 'Space Shift reaches 2nd lvl 4'

'ding' 'Space Shift reaches 2nd lvl 5'

'ding' 'Identify reaches lvl 15'

'ding' 'Meditation reaches 3rd lvl 9'

Ilea put fifteen stat points into Vitality, bringing it to 900. Thirty points went into Intelligence.

Maybe he's right. I should work on Body of the Valkyrie and Space Awareness.

She didn't mind too much about leveling her third Class but Space Awareness wasn't even in the second tier. The skill wasn't exactly easy to level but she decided to take the time to study the ritual site a little more in Nara.

"Do you mind if I go and study the distorted space? I assume he cleared out the tower from here on up," she said.

The man finally looked at her and rambled something before shooing her away.

"What's he saying?" she asked.

"You don't wanna know. I'll talk to him for a while, just make sure to come back here afterwards. Don't forget about the deal we made!" Hector said.

Ilea rolled her eyes and vanished.

Her wings spread when she appeared outside, falling quickly before her flight stabilized. She quickly found the area where she had perceived the distorted space.

She focused on it, trying to find the center. A task that proved more difficult than she had first anticipated.

It was clear that the ritual had taken place in one of three towers ahead of her but she wanted to figure it out with her awareness instead.

Ten minutes passed, Ilea studying the flow and anomalies of the wisps, occasionally flying further out to see how it behaved normally.

A little later, she started to make progress.

Compared to her experiences with the Taleen gate, the space around her felt as if someone had placed a thin sheet of glass between the very fabric of reality. The space on the other side of this equation seeped through, almost like through condensation.

Ilea had no access to the other side however, which made it difficult to even reach this conclusion. Another thing that threw her off was the spacial anomaly she designated as a sheet of glass. It wasn't static, instead twisting into entirely different directions when approached from another direction.

The direction itself wasn't the only thing that had an impact. Ilea noted that her speed, Space Magic Resistance, available mana, active skills, and even the weight connected to her body had an impact on the area around her.

It didn't help that there were monsters appearing out of this anomaly, some of them clinging to the nearby towers and others plummeting to their deaths. Their mass, mana, and spells also impacted the space in their surroundings.

Ilea decided to leave it after nearly an hour of concentrated study, making progress thanks to her awareness but lacking understanding. She came to the conclusion that this might be one of the best places to increase her Space Awareness skill. It most certainly was the best place she knew.

'ding' 'Space Awareness reaches lvl 18'

'ding' 'Space Awareness reaches lvl 19'

She would make sure to reach the second tier before disrupting the ritual

Ilea found Hector and the old man back in the tower. *They're both old men. Hector is probably older*, she noted. Appearances said even less about people here than they did on Earth.

They were smoking together, occasionally saying a few words in a conversation that seemed to have mostly died down.

"Welcome back," Hector said and motioned towards one of the silk covered maroon couches. She noted he didn't have his water field active but was of course still dripping. The couch however hadn't gotten wet so far.

He must be changing it back to ambient mana, she thought and sat down, summoning a meal as she sighed and relaxed on the comfortable couch.

The old man started chuckling before a cough took him.

Hector just smiled.

"What did I miss?" Ilea asked, enjoying her good friend's cooking.

"Kain over here just explained to me how he fucked three courtesans on that couch while his sons were attending a formal ball," he said.

“Amusing,” Ilea deadpanned, closing her eyes in bliss at the taste of the food.

“Are you imagining what it must have been like for them?” the man said, speaking in the common tongue.

Ilea ignored him, eating a few more bites before she opened her eyes. “Kain, was it?” she asked.

He still had the same self assured smile on his face.

“If you insult me one more time, I’ll literally crush your dick,” she said.

“Do you want to touch me this badly, ash woman?” he asked, chuckling to himself as he looked at her and then Hector. He stopped smiling when he saw Hector’s expression.

“Bad idea,” the pirate said. “Try not to kill him yet, he fucking despises the king and the Order.”

“Mr. Destroyer... we had a deal!” the man said as he glanced nervously between him and Ilea.

“With me, yeah. I don’t control her,” he said.

Ilea used her second tier of Space Shift to prevent teleportation, closing the distance nearly instantly as her ash entirely surrounded the man.

She was slightly irritated by his casual behavior after seeing what had happened to the city, the way he talked about the courtesans that were surely prowling the streets by now as cursed beings.

His arrogant and disrespectful demeanor coupled with his likely status as a slave owner and noble of Baralia made her go through with her threat. She had given him a chance, even ignoring his distasteful and downright pathetic comments.

“Sssh,” she said, infusing her voice with monster hunter and entirely freezing the man before her knee slammed into his crotch with immaculate accuracy.

Ilea healed his broken hip but left the mess below as it was.

She returned to the same couch and continued her meal, the man moaning in pain as he slumped to the floor.

Ilea sighed after a few minutes and extended an ashen limb towards the man, helping him regrow his genitals with a push of mana.

She didn’t feel bad in the slightest, continuing her meal in peace as the man slowly got up and found his couch again.

He chuckled when he sat back down, checking his crotch quickly just to make sure before he continued smoking.

“Apologies,” he said after a while. “I had considered you his subordinate.”

“Misunderstandings happen, no hard feelings,” she said with a smile.

Hector snickered while Kain mirrored her expression.

“You want to start with that training then?” Ilea asked.

“Do you not wish to hear what I have to say?” Kain asked.

Ilea looked at him as she got up. “Not really,” she said.

Hector shrugged and followed her, leaving the old noble behind as he muttered something in his native tongue.

“He just called you slightly unreasonable,” Hector said with a smile as they walked into a spacious dining hall.

“His actual words?” Ilea asked.

“Seems like you left an impression,” the pirate said and formed water in his hand.

Ilea used her space magic on him and started sending ashen projectiles at him.

They occasionally adjusted the power of their attacks, Hector in the meantime explaining to Ilea that Kain was one of the oldest members of a mid power noble House from Nara. He had apparently not agreed with the war efforts in the place. When he heard about the plan to use a powerful ritual that would sacrifice many of their own citizens to strike a blow against the Empire, he nearly lost it.

The man had attacked his own family to try and stop the thing but was ultimately placed high in the tower while the rest cleared out their vaults and fled to the west.

“Why didn’t he leave yet? He obviously failed to prevent the ritual,” Ilea said.

Hector shrugged. “He’s pretty much an outcast now. The man has nowhere left to go. He stayed to save the city, his city. I think it’s admirable.”

“He’s a slaver, and by his attitude, the man didn’t exactly treat his subordinates with respect or dignity,” Ilea said.

“I frankly don’t care. As long as he tells us what we need to know,” Hector said.

“And did he? What do we even need to know?” Ilea asked.

“He did. He informed me that many of the nobles knew of a ritual happening. The scale wasn’t exactly what was advertised but their information was comprehensive enough for them to pack their shit and flee. The request to come to the capital came from the High King, including information on the ritual, not the Order of Truth,” he said.

“So they’re working together, it’s not just the lunatics finally revealing their secret rituals, it’s the king ordering them himself,” Ilea said. “A charming man.”

“That he is. It’s also good news,” Hector said.

“How so?” Ilea asked.

“It means that they’re getting orders. If complications arise, there’s a slight possibility that they would abandon their posts and forget about their ritual. Previously it was thought they would die trying to set this up, whatever the final plan is,” he said.

“He didn’t know?” Ilea asked.

Hector shook his head. “The King focused on the war only in his messages. Whatever space distortion and summoned monsters appeared was either just a side effect or not told to the nobles of Nara. Not Kain’s family at least.”

“It’s too complex to be unintentional,” Ilea said.

“Your little excursion wielded results?” he asked.

“I’m getting somewhere, yes. Nothing that would help us however,” she said. “I’ll study it more before I destroy the ritual site.”

She checked if her Water Resistance had become available and found that Hector’s confidence in his abilities wasn’t entirely misplaced.

- Water Resistance

You have survived attack spells specialized and perfected over centuries by none other than the great Destroyer. The outrageous power of magical creatures imitated by sheer ingenuity and perfect control.

Ilea didn’t roll her eyes too hard at the message, honestly impressed with what the man could do.

‘ding’ ‘Water Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 1’

Water Resistance – 3rd lvl 1

In your days you have learned many things. One of them is that water pressure is not a joke. This Resistance helps a little with reducing the damage.

2nd stage: You’ve taken so much damage from water based attacks it might be good to check if you’re not actually on fire. Getting more used to it your body and armor magically redirects the pressure to lessen the burden on you.

3rd stage: You have seen the true power of the sea. The structure of your body has adapted, forming microscopic webs that will make you more resilient to cuts and pressure, most notably against water.

“It should make you a little faster too. I don’t know how it works exactly but some of my crew have the bonus,” Hector said.

Quite an impressive crew then, Ilea mused.

“I won’t be able to get you to the third tier,” she said.

“Just continue, it might just work. I can accompany you to the ritual site, just use your magic against me there,” he said.

Ilea nodded, the two quickly leaving towards the anomaly.

Hector had a hard time moving at this height, forming a pool of floating water in which he placed himself with utmost care.

“I wasn’t meant to fly,” he said when he saw her look.

“I can see that,” Ilea said, using her spells occasionally as she continued studying the space around her. She quickly found it a useful addition to have him there, or simply someone to use her spells on.

“What did he ask of you anyway? For the information he shared with you,” Ilea said.

“Kain? He wants us to clear his family’s tower of monsters,” he replied.

“But we already did that,” Ilea said.

Hector pointed at her. “Exactly. He doesn’t know that though.”

She shook her head. "What do you plan on doing with him?"

"Consulting him on treasury locations in the city, hidden information on the rival Houses, maybe something that could help us deal with the infestation more quickly," he said.

"You don't intend to kill him?" Ilea asked.

He shrugged. "Do what you need to do."

She thought about it for a moment but then let it go. The man was a dick and he had surely done horrible things in his life but this city was lost, his family gone, and whatever slaves he had once owned were now cursed husks or corpses. The Empire would come for him, one way or the other.

"You're pretty old, right? Do you know what Identify does in the second and third tier?" Ilea asked suddenly, changing the subject.

"You don't have it in the second tier yet? You really reached three hundred fifty and a third Class before turning thirty?" Hector asked. "That's honestly impressive, even to me."

"I'm flattered," Ilea said in a dry tone.

"Why the assumption now? You know I've not been famous a few years ago," she said.

"There could be many reasons for that. I even considered you being a spy from a faraway land. I've met more than a few tribe living in the middle of monster infested country. They were averaging much more impressive levels than most adventurers in the plains. I wouldn't be surprised if there are whole cities out there with humans all above two or even three hundred," he said.

"Most adventurers above two hundred should be able to get Identify to the second tier by their early thirties. You, with such a high level, should be able to get it earlier even. Which means you're either lying or you reached this level in perhaps under five years."

"Interesting assumptions. Would it be so surprising?" Ilea asked.

"Yes and no. There are more than a few who shoot up quickly. The problem is that such a quick ascension means an automatic lack of experience and respect. They get killed by stupid shit is what I'm saying. Maybe your healer Class prevented an early death. I'm sure you've sustained more than a few otherwise lethal injuries," he said.

"I basically thrive on lethal injuries," Ilea admitted.

He chuckled. "I can see that. If only the healer orders weren't so fucking annoying about keeping their secrets and education within their grasps. You should think about teaching some people your Class. It'd be a welcome change to get some battle healers out there. And with your name to back them, I doubt the Orders could do too much."

"That's an interesting idea," Ilea said honestly.

"If you find the time of course," he said. "I teach my crew everything I know. Only that way can we hunt high level creatures together."

"I'm kept busy by wars," Ilea said and gestured around herself.

"The bane of my existence," Hector mused. "As to your question, the second tier lets you grasp a general idea of the main Class of a sapient opponent. You're classified as a battle healer for example. For monsters it lets you grasp some random information. Like if they're hungry, or aggressive. It's quite variable honestly. The level you can identify above yourself is higher too."

“What about the third tier?” she asked.

“I have no clue. Never met the requirement to advance it,” Hector said.

It could be a lie of course but at this point, Ilea doubted he was pretending much.