

Chapter 836 Excursion

Ilea finished drying herself up and found a suitable rock to sit on. The Fae landed on her shoulder with a soft movement, touching her cheek before it nestled down into her ash. She continued eating, taking another deep breath before she started going through the new messages.

'ding' 'You have survived the Gentle Serenity spell – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'Harmony of the Drowned reaches 2nd lvl 2'

'ding' 'Harmony of the Drowned reaches 2nd lvl 3'

'ding' 'You have killed [Бездна – lvl 2100]'

Even higher than the last one. I wonder if I'm hunting eldritch gods or if they're really just large fish that happen to have powerful magic and a want to eat others and their mana.

She looked up at the dark clouds of Kohr.

"Hmm. Maybe those two are really one and the same."

'ding' 'The Arcane Eternal has reached lvl 755 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Arcane Eternal has reached lvl 756 – Five stat points awarded'

...

'ding' 'The Arcane Eternal has reached lvl 774 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Ashen Titan has reached lvl 752 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Ashen Titan has reached lvl 753 – Five stat points awarded'

...

'ding' 'The Ashen Titan has reached lvl 769 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'The Primordial Arbiter has reached lvl 751 – One stat point awarded'

'ding' 'The Primordial Arbiter has reached lvl 752 – One stat point awarded'

...

'ding' 'The Primordial Arbiter has reached lvl 768 – One stat point awarded'

Still pretty effective. Just glad I have this realm available to me. More levels for the Eternal, but then I did mostly rely on the fourth tier in this one. Hope I can actually use my magic in the next

fight, I still want to see the effects of the fourth tier on my other skills in action, against something that can take the hit.

She grinned at the thought. A part of her wanted to dive right back into the depths. Now that she had all her class skills enhanced and at the end of the third tier, all she really had to focus on were Class levels. With the requirement of eight fifty for her next third tier point, she couldn't wait to get there as fast as possible.

Ilea raised her brows. She felt a tiny bit embarrassed that her wish to advance had only little to do with the impending threat of the Architect. *An additional motivator*, she thought, quickly checking the rest of her messages.

'ding' 'Ashen Limbs reaches 2nd lvl 18'

'ding' 'Ashen Limbs reaches 2nd lvl 19'

'ding' 'Azarinth Barrier [Mythic] reaches 3rd lvl 23'

'ding' 'Azarinth Barrier [Mythic] reaches 3rd lvl 24'

'ding' 'Azarinth Barrier [Mythic] reaches 3rd lvl 25'

'ding' 'Bulwark of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 7'

'ding' 'Bulwark of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 8'

'ding' 'Identify reaches 2nd lvl 9'

'ding' 'Monstrous reaches 2nd lvl 18'

'ding' 'Telepathy reaches lvl 18'

'ding' 'Poison Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 5'

'ding' 'Poison Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 6'

Close to another third tier point.

She put her two hundred and fifteen stat points into both Vitality and Wisdom. Lately she had considered her mana somewhat more important than her health, but now that it had a direct influence on the time she could use her fourth tier Reconstruction, the benefits were even greater. Still, her three main stats remained equally important.

Still quite a way's off to eight fifty. And to a hundred core points. I wonder when the next evolution is. Might've expected one at seven fifty. Suppose it will happen when it happens.

Getting up, she stretched, the empty plate vanishing into her domain. "It's a fucking mess in there by now," she murmured to herself, unwilling to sort and clean up what she quite literally couldn't see. *Even after all this time. I guess I'm still me*, she thought, happy about the annoyance her slight mess could bring to some people.

The Fae cocked its head to the side.

"Ready to go back to your realm?" she asked.

No

Violence

"I'll be back to violence in no time, don't you worry little one," she said, patting its head as she opened a gate back to the domain of the Meadow.

Ilea stepped through and took in a deep breath. It was warm, the air not near as dry as in Kohr, the smell of salt gone. She smiled at the nearby groups, the occasional Mava already integrated, though admittedly the few that she saw didn't seem particularly involved or interested. But at least they were there. *Maybe their laid back attitude and focus on magic can provide a helpful perspective. We've already achieved insane shit through the collaboration of all these different beings.*

"*You seem upbeat. Murdered something big, Godslayer?*" the Meadow greeted.

Ilea waved her hands slightly. "*Not that big actually. Pretty large, but I've fought bigger. Not sure why I got the title now.*"

"*It must have been an impressive show of power,*" the Meadow sent and paused. "*There is... something else.*"

Ilea smirked. "*You can tell?*"

The Meadow remained quiet for a few seconds. "*Not magically... but you have this... aura about you.*"

"*An aura of power?*" Ilea asked. "*Of confidence?*"

"*An aura of smugness,*" the Meadow spoke. "*That's what it is. More and more you're turning into an Elemental. I wouldn't be surprised to talk to a cloud of ash next time you return... a somehow smug cloud of ash.*"

"*You have returned, godslayer,*" Ohn Ika spoke, the fox strolling past the busy engineers, administrators, and mages without a care in the world, curious silver eyes taking in the various plans displayed on their workbenches and tables with varied interest. "*I surmise your hunt was successful.*"

"*Maybe I should change my title again. This is getting a little obnoxious.*"

"*Godslayer!*" Myr Iva sent from a little farther back, the Mava bowing her head slightly.

"It feels like everyone is mocking me," Ilea murmured.

"*They're in awe of your power,*" Ohn Ika spoke.

Great

Respect

The Fae sent.

Ilea just glared at the two before she watched the little creature fade into nothing, a giggling sound fading through the air with it. She saw a few people raise their heads at the strange phenomenon, all of them quickly returning to their work when they saw her. Some did a double take, opening their eyes wide.

"*That's the proper reaction. Fear and reverence!*" she sent.

"*Careful, godslayer, with that kind of talk you may very well be on the way to become a divine entity yourself,*" the Meadow sent.

"*I'll show you my power once I'm an ash cloud, tree god,*" she sent and stuck out her tongue.

“You really are in a good mood. Show me,” the Meadow sent.

Ilea grinned from ear to ear. She nodded to Ohn Ika, the fox giving her a nod back before he returned his attention to the surroundings. Ilea vanished.

She appeared on the black grass of the Meadow, teleporting once more before she stood in front of the crystal tree. The Baron floated into existence once more, landing on the grass himself.

“You didn’t evolve, did you? I think I would’ve noticed,” the Meadow said.

“No. I would hope you’d notice something of that magnitude.”

“The fourth tier then. All your skills were enhanced. What else was needed?”

“Level seven fifty in all classes,” Ilea said.

“What did you choose?”

“I think it’s better to just show you,” she answered and activated it.

She gasped ever so slightly. It really was an intoxicating feeling. During the fight, she had needed it, had relied on it. A part of her knew, knew that she had never felt as powerful, that she had fought a being classified as divine, and she had matched it. With just one of her fourth tier abilities unlocked. Now that she was standing here, no need to fight for her life or optimize the time in this state, she once more just felt it. Felt the arcane energies rush through her veins, felt it enhance her every cell, every fiber of her being.

Ilea knew she was quite literally burning up, but she didn’t feel or see it as damage done to her. It was simply the cost of true power. It was necessary. Her fourth tier did nothing less than push her body to the very pinnacle.

She looked up at the tree and smiled, the spell fading when she willed it.

“Ridiculous,” the Meadow sent.

Ilea didn’t miss the slight delay in its reaction. For the unfathomable space being of many brains, yet limited, the delay may very well have meant an eternity.

“To think so much power could be cramped into such a small form,” it sent. *“Perhaps even I have underestimated the resilience of your body.”*

Dense

The Fae nodded sagely.

“I am,” Ilea confirmed. The weight and every little bit of her enhanced body was required for the feat she had just demonstrated.

“You fought with it too?” the Meadow asked.

“I did. But the monster I faced with it had an ability to absorb mana. I could test it against you, if you’re up for it,” she suggested.

“I considered it. But I think it may be more beneficial for you to experience your newfound power in the heat of battle. Without limitations. Or concerns,” the tree said and continued after a short pause. *“I will be honest, Ilea. If you used that in a bout between the two of us, it may be possible that people in the vicinity could be hurt. As frail as they are.”*

“Blaming it on their frailty? Not your questionable barriers?” Ilea asked. She was surprised more than anything. *The damn tree thinks it can't contain me?*

She had expected to feel joy, but Ilea just gulped.

“I don't think you would be a danger to me. But with your space magic and intrusion as well... a single misplaced or broken barrier could mean a dozen dead. Even someone at level three hundred could be endangered,” the Meadow sent. *“I am being serious.”*

“I'm not ignoring you. I guess it just kind of bothers me...”

“Was this not your goal? To become stronger?” the Meadow asked.

“You know power always comes with a bunch of catches,” Ilea sent. *“But I suppose I'm already an important figure for the Accords. At this point it won't really change much.”*

“It won't, godslayer,” the Meadow sent as a chuckle flowed through the fabric.

The Fae looked up and added its own.

Ilea sighed. *“I appreciate you two. Guess it would be kind of lonely at this height.”* She smiled and crossed her arms. *“I'll miss you.”*

“What do you mean?” the tree sent.

The Baron glanced at her, trying to hide its concern.

“When I'm so far beyond you two that I can't possibly associate with you anymore.”

“Of course. The cloud of ash plan,” the tree said.

“Cloud of ash conversing with literal stardust. Just you wait,” Ilea sent. *“Delegation ready?”*

“Delegation?”

“The delegation to visit Eregar's Haven,” Ilea said.

“It's more just... a group, but sure. We can add a fancy title,” the tree said.

Ilea shook her head ever so slightly. *“Says the chief tree of the Meadow Accords. Violence, care to join? You might get to see a bottled up sun.”*

Violence, it sent and nodded.

“Only if you promise you won't somehow steal or fuck with it,” Ilea said.

It crossed its little arms and somehow managed to pout, even without any facial features.

“This is a matter of literal international security,” Ilea said. *“You will behave.”*

The Fae sighed.

Behave, It spoke.

“Good,” Ilea said and squinted at it. She didn't believe a word but if she was honest, she was more worried about some of the others that were coming along. Aki and the Meadow were the only two beings she would reasonably entrust with a Source, if only because she knew they could keep it safe. The fact that one was likely located in the Haven itself freaked her out. It wasn't just that Ravenhall would instantly become a massive target, the source itself could easily wipe out the entire

city in an instant. After having experienced the hallway to the core of the One without Form, she was sure of it.

“Aki set up a temporary gate within the Haven. He’s waiting until you’re ready to leave,” the Meadow sent. *“I’ll inform everyone.”*

Ilea felt the space magic pull from the being and deactivated her resistance, appearing within a barrier dome. With her were four Sentinel Executioners, their green eyes taking her in.

“You’re progressing fast. As usual. I think I have some potential targets for you as well, once you’re done with yours,” sent one of them.

“Thanks. Don’t think I’m quite done with the ocean of Kohr,” Ilea answered while patting the fae now resting in her hand.

“The Baron is coming as well?” Aki asked.

“Yeah. I can leave him here if it’s a problem. He seemed interested,” Ilea said.

The machine considered for a moment. *“No. You trust it. If anything it will be helpful.”*

She smiled, giving the Executioner a slight nod.

Nes appeared in the dome and took in the group. Her gaze lingered on Ilea. *“Soon you’ll be past even me.”* The metal bits in her face moved slightly to indicate a smile. *“I’m pleased.”*

“Thank you. Still a long way to go,” Ilea said.

“You’re human. Already, I’m sure you could best me in a direct battle,” Nes said. *“And regardless, I know you will not stop here.”*

“Not if she gets herself killed while trying,” Scipio said, right after he appeared. He wore his black armor with golden seams, his stag helmet left in whatever storage item or spell he used. He looked focused and tired at the same time, though Ilea didn’t remember him ever looking any different.

Ilea smirked. *“You’re just envious of my success. You have plenty of time to get there yourself.”*

He looked at her, his eyes softening a little. *“I am just aware of the risks. What I said was neither jest nor insult. Do be careful when you face... gods, apparently. And kill them.”*

She gave him a nod. *So serious. I guess I did nearly die quite a few times. But if he thinks that way, it’s no wonder he’s only in the four hundreds. At the same time I suppose he’s still alive. Compared to who knows how many people like me, who vanished after facing some abomination underground or in the deep North.*

That’s why you need to be a healer, she thought and nodded lightly to herself. *An arcane healer so that mind magic shit can’t hurt you either. Or at least less.*

Ormont was the next to appear, the dwarf looking at the group, his gaze stopping on Nes. He huffed, arms crossed in front of him, face near fully hidden behind gray hair. *“To think I’d be standing here, with both humans and an Ascended.”* He sighed. *“Can’t be helped.”* The dwarf then looked to Ilea. *“Godslayer. No surprise there. Did you really have to bring those damned foxes here? Their runic work is downright insulting.”*

“Is it? They seemed pretty capable to me,” Ilea said, smiling at him.

He sighed yet again. “There are rules. Schematics. Clear documentation. I will not deny that they have original ideas and powerful base sets, but any integration creates more work than could ever be worth it.”

“That’s precisely why their integration will be valuable,” Aki said.

“How is more work valuable?” Ormont asked.

“It’s not the work that is valuable. It’s the fact that even the Taleen are pushed to adapt their work,” Aki added.

“He may just be too set in his ways to see that,” Scipio said.

Nes made a strange noise that sounded like a huff. She purposely looked away when the old mage glanced her way with his brows raised.

Ilea chuckled, joined by a giggle of the Fae.

“Wonderful party we have here. Should I get Isalthar and Ohn Ika involved as well?” Ilea asked.

Iana and Christ appeared in the next moment.

“Alright. Everyone’s here. Let’s not waste any time, I’m having a hard time even keeping track of all the things I need to work on,” the enchantress said, rubbing her temple. “Aki.”

“As you command,” one of the Executioners spoke, gesturing towards the gate at the center of their group.

“*Good luck,*” the Meadow sent.

The spell took hold, Ilea once more deactivating her resistance. She felt herself moved through the fabric, placed into it again less than a second later.

Interesting. It does seem like the gates take longer to send us through the fabric than Transfer coupled with Fabric Tear. Suppose that’s another reason why the Meadow is wary of using this stuff between realms.

Ilea wondered how she would experience a transporter from the Ascended at this point. *There was no counterpoint in Elos. Just a one way ticket. That really does sound like insane technology. If even the Meadow couldn’t pierce to another realm for all the beings it tried to save.*

She glanced at a passing butterfly, noticing the details on its wings. She could tell where it would fly next. Closing her eyes, she took in a deep breath. It felt fresh, as if she were out on a field somewhere in the Plains. It was warm too, more so than in the domain of the Meadow. Looking up, Ilea could see the artificial sun that both lit up the massive underground caverns, but warmed them too. *I never even questioned it. Just some insane ancient technology set up by some powerful wizard. Well... that’s still kind of what it is I guess.*