

Ilea wasn't about to test the magic bypassing bonus of her newfound third tier against a Wyvern. The fuckers melted her skin even with a Heat Resistance at the end of the second tier.

Wait... does that count?

She summoned one of the glass vials holding the poison from the eight layer. "Are you magic damage?"

The vial of course did not reply, as vials should.

'ding' 'You have been poisoned by Concentrated Rupture Liquid -100 Health per second for three minutes'

Alright, now can I deactivate the resistance? Ilea tried to feel for the skill and something instantly clicked in her mind.

The notification changed.

'ding' 'You have been poisoned by Concentrated Rupture Liquid -208 Health per second for two minutes and fifty eight seconds'

"What?" she exclaimed and checked her Poison Resistance.

"That's fucking twice the damage!" she murmured to herself. Something felt off.

I should have asked how damaging the poison was to the others.

"Ah, they wouldn't even want to drink it," she sighed.

Ilea searched through her necklace and found something else that could perhaps serve as a test.

The corrosive arrows the elf near Riverwatch had used right before she went to the Shadow's Hand. She looked at them and found little of the green sheen remaining.

Eh, why the fuck not.

She jammed one of them into her unprotected arm and let the sizzling begin. Ilea counted five seconds and checked her health throughout the whole affair.

A frown on her face, she looked at the useless arrows. No change in her health was noticeable. Her natural recovery outdid the corrosion.

So how about I disable the resistance.

This time, something did happen. Her brows lifted high as she looked at the numbers change.

"Twenty five... no, twenty eight health per second," Ilea had no clue what that meant. With all her defenses, her natural health recovery and nothing else but a bunch of arrows and poison to test it, she simply sighed and put the rest of the arrows into her arm, finding the damage rise to a little over one hundred and ten health per second.

Ilea summoned her notebook and flipped the pages to the last notes on her health recovery. *0.1% base, plus 1% from my class... now with Sentinel Core at 3rd lvl 10, that's... 1.1 times 11.25.*

It took her a while to figure out the math, finding her health recovery at an insane 12% per minute. A little more than that but Ilea really struggled without a calculator.

With 7410 current Health, that meant nearly nine hundred health per minute or around fifteen health per second. Last time it had apparently been at around thirteen.

Every level counts, she noted.

One alone dealt around twenty eight damage per second. *Plus fifteen health per second meaning around forty three?*

Adding two more arrows dealt an additional eighty six damage per second, quickly decreasing.

The exact numbers were hard to grasp. Ilea had the capacity to see and recognize the changes exactly but depending on where she stuck in the arrows and if she moved them, the damage changed of course.

Likely less than with a normal human, where an arrow to the throat would deal much more damage regardless.

Ilea's body wasn't one single sludge either though, some parts more difficult to regenerate, meaning damage dealt would certainly not be static all over her body.

"This is getting ridiculously technical...", she moaned to herself but wanted to reach at least some form of conclusion.

"So, this means that with my resistance, I can reduce forty three corrosion damage to less than fifteen. What about three?" she asked herself and deactivated the newfound ability once more.

She ripped the arrows out, healed her arm completely and jabbed them back in.

Oh? Five seconds passed before she removed them once more.

"You deal... about twenty one damage per second," Ilea exclaimed proudly, holding the arrows up above her head.

"So," she looked at the notebook again. "112 or so damage plus 15 health per second equals around 127 damage. 21 damage with the resistance skill active means it's around 36 damage in total without my recovery."

She scribbled some more. "Second tier level nine corrosion resistance equals... a 71% damage reduction. What the fuck?" Ilea closed the book and stood up. Poison vial in hand, she squinted at the little thing.

The arrows had lost their green glint, discarded in the cave.

I'll have to ask someone about this. Armor of Ash likely fucks this whole thing up anyway, affecting my resistances as well. Or it's different because I applied the corrosion to my flesh and poison works differently?

At least I know that deactivating my resistance actually does something. Might just be that the poison is fucking powerful and thus only allows for a smaller reduction.

The new skill would help immensely with her resistance training, even turning these useless arrows into quite a chunk of damage.

I don't think I want to know what the Wyverns would do to me without Heat Resistance though. If it seventy percent on my corrosion, it could be in the same vein.

She was getting melted as it was. Plus, there was likely no way for her to level her Heat Resistance any further. For now at least.

Ilea cracked her neck and teleported out once more. There were beasts waiting for her still.

Ilea managed to kill two more Wyverns in the span of the next six hours. The newfound bonus to her ash let her tank more hits without major damage and noticeably reduced the time she needed to penetrate its defenses.

In the grand scheme of things however, the creatures still got through her armor just as much as she overwhelmed them in the end. Without her shredder tactic, she still failed to penetrate the hard scales.

'ding' 'The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 322 – Five stat points awarded'

'ding' 'Kin of Ash has reached lvl 321 – Five stat points awarded'

All points were once more invested into Intelligence.

'ding' 'Sentinel Sphere reaches 3rd lvl 2'

'ding' 'Azarinth Reversal reaches 3rd lvl 10'

'ding' 'True Ash Creation reaches 3rd lvl 13'

'ding' 'Avatar of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 2'

Finding them within the mists proved to be quite difficult, their lack of corruption the main reason for that. Both of the creatures had been below level six hundred. Enough still, for a single level in each class.

It didn't exactly help that the layer expanded downward for several kilometers. Ilea had yet to find the actual ground level.

Only the tiniest percentile of rock formations actually expanded up to the top and above the mists, most of them ending within the sea of white.

Ilea could only follow the roars she heard from time to time but all she found were Tusk Bears and Wisp Ravens, the former ranging in the lower three hundreds and the latter even lower, below two hundred.

Neither was worth killing for the experience and neither did they show any corruption among them.

Not amongst the living ones that was.

Ilea did find dozens of once corrupted corpses, most of them burnt to a crisp. Only one of them had been a Wyvern. She even found a couple tentacles from corrupted tangled reapers that must have made their way down after being frenzied.

There was a chance that the corruption had sprung up in a higher up layer and the group had simply missed it. However unlikely that may have been, considering the lack of trail left behind by the expedition.

She returned from the hunt and landed once more on the plateau where the red church priest had resided.

Ilea hadn't met any of her group during her hunt but she assumed they had left quite some time ago.

One of them had remained.

Lucas had collected samples from all the plants in the area and was currently studying a fern like plant he had potted into a wooden container.

He turned her way when she entered the cavern. "Oh... mhm. What a smell! How often did your hair burn up?" he smiled and shook his head, turning away from the plant as he grabbed his pipe from the gnarled wooden table.

"I don't count. Probably lost about a hundred sets of bowels though. If that counts for anything," Ilea said, looking around.

"They left. About two hours after you did," Lucas replied. "And yes, I believe your survival counts for something. As well as your level. You have caught up to me. Congratulations."

Ilea smiled. Her Sentinel class was now one level higher than Lucas and his wood creator one.

She assumed the light magic one was his weaker class.

"They're tough. It's fair to say that mana intrusion and my insane recovery allows for some wonders," Ilea commented and formed an ashen chair, sitting down as she stored her bone armor, cleaning herself with ash before she switched to more comfortable clothes.

Her armor moved back to just under her neck as she yawned.

Lucas had lit his pipe in the meantime, taking a puff as he watched her.

"You still liked fighting back then? When you faced the Wyverns?" she asked a moment later, summoning herself some food.

Lucas looked at the dish with his puppy eyes, not replying until she received one too.

"I... I did," he said, taking a bite and closing his eyes, savoring the taste.

"Ravenhall you said. I should visit to eat this food," he murmured to himself. "It was maybe ninety years ago. We did not enjoy it... at least I didn't. I had my reasons and to attain power, it is a necessary evil." he explained.

"And yet you chose a peaceful life now. Even though you agree that without fighting, killing. There is no way to attain power?" Ilea asked.

"Power is not necessary for a fulfilled life. A meaningful life," the man said as he leaned on his table.

"I suppose it isn't," Ilea said, continuing to eat.

The elder seemed surprised at her response, one of his eyebrows quirking up slightly. “You really like the challenge, don’t you? Facing the most powerful monsters of nature. The blood and pain.”

“You don’t have to point out that I’m nuts,” Ilea said.

“You are not crazy. Your motivations merely differ from most. Perhaps it is for the best, that someone such as yourself should find their way to power... mhm,” Lucas said.

“I’ll use it in the way I see fit,” Ilea commented. “More practical... I got a skill that allows me to nullify my resistances. Wanted to test some stuff with you, if you’re up for it.”

“Oh? Now that... would come it spectacularly for someone like yourself! Hah,” he exclaimed with a smile.

“Exactly. Just hit me with a very weak spell. Light or wood magic, doesn’t matter. I need both,” Ilea said and switched out her shirt for her ashen bra.

Lucas lifted his hand, a beam of light burning into Ilea’s skin an instant later.

“Hmm... it does seem to work. This shouldn’t hurt you much at all,” the man said.

“Well, it isn’t. Crank it up a little. I’ll let you know when it reaches significant damage,” Ilea said. She still had all her other defenses and bonuses after all. Simply removing her resistance to an element simply meant the same potential damage as physical attacks.

“I was wondering... how resistances work exactly. My testing was confusing,” she said after a while, the beam getting stronger with every passing second.

“Hmm... well for one, their level determines a reduction in damage. A percentage. This can vary greatly however, depending on what level the enemy skill used possesses. So, even if you have a high level light magic resistance, my spell being in the third tier will still do significant damage,” the elder explained.

“The bonuses, I believe it was around forty percent at level twenty and I think eighty at the end of the second tier. I personally don’t have a resistance at that level but I’ve tested plenty. If the progression continues to be linear, it will be eighty percent,” he said.

“So if I have a level twenty resistance and you hit me with a third tier spell, it’s not going to count for shit?” Ilea asked.

“That would be... a difference of twenty or more levels. I believe the skill levels add or retract one percent respectively, depending if your resistance is higher or lower than the skill attacking you,” the elder said.

“One percent per level? So say my light resistance is level twenty, meaning a forty percent reduction. And your spell is in the third tier, at level one. That means my reduction is reduced by twenty percent? Leaving me with a twenty percent reduction?” she surmised.

“Twenty one. Because I have one level in the third tier. But yes, that is ultimately how it should work. It is difficult to test because there are so many factors playing into how health damage is calculated. Skills, armor, species as well as offensive properties of the attacker. Some might have an armor piercing bonus from a skill or deal more damage to especially flammable parts of your body... like hair for example,” Lucas explained.

Ilea noted the gist of it down.

Resistance level 20 = 40% reduction

Resistance 2nd level 20 = 80% reduction

1% up or down per skill level difference between attacker and defender

“What about level one of a resistance? It should give only two percent if it’s linear, shouldn’t it?” Ilea asked.

“I believe it is five actually. After level four, the progression is two percent per level,” Lucas supplied.

“And third tier skills? If it’s eighty percent already at the end of the second tier, could I reach complete immunity against an element?” Ilea said.

Lucas chuckled and shrugged. “I don’t know. You are already in a place few people have reached. With level alone that is, mhm. Your resistances... are a completely different beast. Perhaps you will be the first I know, to gain a third tier resistance. You tell me, after you manage that.”

Ilea sighed. “Well, for now I’ll just get as many up to the end of the second tier. You can push more with your spell by the way.”

“That is as powerful as I can keep it, to not deplete my mana in a quick manner, mhm,” the man said. “Even without a resistance, it seems you can withstand my light magic.”

“The resistance is only at level nineteen, no worries,” Ilea tried to reassure him. It did burn into her stomach much more quickly than before, about thirty eight percent more quickly.

So that’s the base for resistance skills. How my Armor of Ash comes into play is still a mystery. It has a one thousand percent increase to resilience but I wouldn’t be taking any damage if I had a four hundred percent resistance to light magic.

‘ding’ ‘Light Magic Resistance reaches lvl 20’

“Ah, there we go. Level twenty,” Ilea said with a smile.

“The reduced resistance will allow you to train much faster,” Lucas said. “It appears you have gained another powerful boon to help you.”

“It did... you know a great deal about combat skills for a pacifist,” Ilea said, smirking at the old man.

He didn’t reply.

“You can add wood magic to the mix, if you would be so kind,” she said a couple seconds later.

The man nodded, roots and wooden projectiles slamming into her mere moments later.

This time, the difference wasn’t as noticeable, her wood magic resistance only being at level twelve. Still, the projectiles dug deeper into her skin than the last time they had done this.

“Do you know anything about... this?” Ilea asked, the last word enhanced by her monster hunter skill.

Lucas blinked before he smiled. “Took you long enough. Which one is it?”

“Which one? There’s more than one?” she asked.

“A general skill then... that’s rare. Well, I suppose everything is possible. A reward then, for fighting a Wyvern while alone?” he said.

“For fighting many beasts alone, much higher leveled ones too. It’s called monster hunter,” Ilea informed him.

“Never heard of that one... might be Verena has the same one. She likes to face challenges alone as well,” he mused, taking his pipe from the table. His magic was still slashing into the healer’s stomach.

“The elder. Yea, she seemed keen on fighting that colossal demon alone,” Ilea said. “She is alive, I heard.”

“Good to hear,” Lucas said.

They trained in silence for a while, before Ilea glanced at his plants.

“Found anything interesting?” she asked.

He nodded. “Yes and no. Most of it is... rather mundane. At the same time it is extraordinary.”

“How so?” Ilea said.

“Because... every single plant here. I have not seen any of them in my entire life,” Lucas said. “Not here in the north, not in the south, not in the Navali forest nor near the Isanna desert.”

“Could have developed in this dungeon, born of magic?” Ilea suggested with a shrug.

“Potentially. Even within dungeons however, there are similarities. Not here,” he said.

“Well, the Descent does seem to be quite special,” Ilea said. *Do I ever find dungeons that are not special. Even the Calys mine had a group of hidden necromancers inside.*

“It does. Which is why I will likely stay here. For a time at least,” Lucas said.

“What about your forest in Lisburg?” Ilea said, cocking her head to the side.

He frowned at the mention. “It has been difficult... since that bloody *Protector* sent his lackeys. The Feynor won I suppose. They lost that battle but the city was lost nonetheless,” he sighed.

“Politics,” Ilea said, giving him an empathetic smile.

The elder just nodded. “I will return once they have dealt with that. Or as soon as Lisburg loses its value.”

“Could just stay here, maybe work for Hallowfort? You want to restore the north somewhat, don’t you? I doubt it matters much where you start,” Ilea said.

“Years of work are just sitting in Lisburg. Mhm... I will see what I find here, in this peculiar ruin,” Lucas said.

Ilea tapped her cheek and smiled. “You could work for me. I’ll provide food and rare plants I find,” she suggested.