

Chapter 549 Arrival

Meadow's training had pushed her space awareness forward. More importantly, now that Ilea understood what to focus on, she could crack more and more complicated rune sets. Cracking in a sense that she could teleport out with either of her abilities.

The massive grass creature still had ways to keep her from moving but it admitted her progress was finally acceptable.

Her requests to have the Ice Elemental and Meadow push her resistances to the third tier with their insane capabilities were met with refusal. From the Elemental that was.

Meadow tried with its magic but failed, likely due to its lack of intent to actually kill her. The big tree was just too much of a softy.

Ilea had invested a few hours to incapacitate a lower leveled Spirit of Death, using Blink combined with Displacement to bring it back into her house.

The aftermath would have been a nightmare to clean for anybody that didn't have magic ash. The lower mana somehow exponentially increased the black blood splattered with every wound she had dealt to the creature.

She really should have just used reversed healing coupled with her flame of creation but alas, she did not.

Michael greeted her upon her return from the desolate wastes.

[Mage – lvl 275]

Not a level... with such opportunities. I wonder how much he learned from the Meadow.

His tables and libraries were gone, only the five versions of his remaining.

He looked determined, not quite as tired as the last time they had met.

"Are you still interested in my offer?" he asked.

She smiled under her armor, the group looking like some kind of cosplay group who chose the same character.

"Of course," Ilea said. "I'll take back any notebooks you leave for me. No guarantees though. Your copies will probably die pretty quickly."

"Let's hope you're wrong," he said with a sigh. "The prize for bringing back my records will depend on its contents, of course. It will all be written plainly, without code or hidden spells."

"Good," Ilea said and looked at him.

He glanced at her before looking at the group of his copies. Then he left. Without another word.

Ilea watched his back before he teleported, shaking her head lightly as she turned back to the group.

“Left you to die without so much as a goodbye. What a dick,” she said.

“We are that dick. Though considering the circumstances, I do believe some self reflection would be in order,” one of them said.

Another one smiled.

“I suggest you fan out and try to stay at a distance where you can observe. One maybe close to Meadow but I doubt that one will survive very long,” Ilea suggested.

“We have our locations prepared already,” one of the Michaels said.

Ilea didn't really care. “Just give me a quick signal so that I know where to look for left behind notes afterwards. Oh... and now that I have all of you here. Is anybody interested in helping me with Gold Magic Resistance? You're a little too paranoid. Or your original is, I suppose.”

One of them chuckled, another one glancing at him. “I was sure she wouldn't be this brazen.”

“Really? Maybe we gave her too much credit.”

“I for one am glad I didn't add an order against using gold magic,” one of them said.

“Our actions can't benefit a potential enemy,” another one said.

“I don't see why she would fall into that category. If anything her actions have proven to be that of an ally,” one of them said.

“If you can trick your mind to support such. I find that I cannot,” one of the Michaels said.

“You lads are pretty individual,” Ilea said with a smile. “I thought you're the same guy?”

“The process is quite invasive and surprising. Even to someone as experienced as us. To suddenly realize one isn't the original, unable to go against rules set by our creator,” one of them said. “The reactions aren't always the same. A human mind is complex and reactions differ based on minuscule change.”

“We did discover the spell after experimenting with potential ways to achieve something similar. The results fall well within our potential expectations, even before gaining the ability,” one of them said, obviously proud to have achieved something of this magnitude.

Even knowing he's a slave and will soon die. A magical construct with all the memories of the original. I don't really feel like delving into the moral depravity of all this.

“Gold?” she asked instead.

Three of them formed spells as her armor moved to her back, her bone set still on. She ripped out a part near her stomach.

“We won't be drawing your face for our original to find,” one of them said with a smirk.

“I'm not sure if the original is the one who left or not,” Ilea said. “Only reasonably so.”

“*We should start soon,*” Meadow interrupted them from below.

Ilea let the golden spikes slash into her, weird corrupting waves of mana flowing into her from the impacts. *Continuous mana intrusion? Without actually touching me?*

“*I'm in the process of finally getting my Gold Resistance. We can surely wait for a few minutes?*” Ilea asked.

“Of course. I will start with the preparations nonetheless,” Meadow said.

The ground suddenly shook. Ilea watched as cracks formed on the floor they stood on, the whole thing suddenly ripped out and elevated upwards. The edges crumbled away until they stood on a floating round platform made of stone.

Meadow soon moved them out of the hall. Stone shifted all around, hallways collapsing behind them. Ilea turned around to see the moving structure, much of the temple already gone when they came to a stop a hundred meters above the gateway to Elos.

Stone and roots started growing out of the now vaguely pyramid shaped remains of the temple, buildings nearby taken over or removed entirely as stone merged and grew.

The sphere of influence reaches far beyond the temple grounds, Ilea thought, watching the nearby landscape transform.

She wondered how much of it Meadow built in the first place. Seeing how it changed everything now, she assumed it had little to do with the architecture.

Flowers and trees occasionally bloomed on the living construct of earth, stone, and wood before their leaves froze and died.

The noise was deafening, even at their distance.

At least it's not using any drills, Ilea thought.

She barely felt the gold magic from Michael, unsure if the clones held back to keep enough mana for their mission or because of some other order or limitation.

“Did he say his goodbyes to you?” Ilea asked Meadow, watching as a square base started to manifest both around the temple grounds, the gate, and a hundred meters beyond.

“He did. And heavily regrets my decision to stay here. There were many offers, though obviously fully intended to be to his benefit alone. He believes I simply refuse to come to your realm,” Meadow said.

“That's good. Wouldn't want to have him nagging both of us constantly,” Ilea said.

“Yes. You are quite enough,” Meadow said.

Ilea felt the winds, bracing herself on the floating stone platform as her wings spread.

Michael used his magic to stabilize himself on the stone.

Snow?

She turned to see a blizzard moving to the edge of the frozen city of stone, settling as the Ice Elemental revealed itself. It emerged from the frozen mist, its antlers growing towards the sky in complex patters. Perhaps a challenge to the network of wood and rock the Meadow was constructing.

The Ice Elemental looked up towards Sephilon, dim light at the edges of the large celestial body casting light down onto their moon of Erendar.

It howled. A single long sound that shook the ground, tremors continuing when its voice had already settled.

The Michaels stood frozen around her, Ilea instead moving her wings to get off the platform. Meadow moved them further out and up, its creation already reaching about fifty meters high.

A wave of mana and power exuded from the Elemental, pushing with it ice and debris.

She braced against it, feeling the cold air. Every hair on her body stood up, the primal power displayed making her instincts go haywire.

Ilea couldn't help but grin. *To be the witness of such power twice in a lifetime.*

"Can't believe you got an Ice Elemental to help you," she said, shaking her head as she healed against Michael's mana intrusion.

"A magnificent creature," one of the Michaels exclaimed, noting something into his book. "To see this spectacle... what greater purpose could there be?"

Ilea understood.

"Staying alive would come close to such purpose," another Michael said, one of the three attacking Ilea.

She agreed with him too.

Why not both?

They didn't argue any further.

The Meadow had carved out a path in the land, a rectangular structure slowly growing below them. Walls and roots had already covered the gate and Meadow itself. "What can I say?" the creature said. "I'm very charming."

"That, you are," Ilea said when a message resounded in her mind.

'ding' 'You have learned the General skill: Gold Magic Resistance – lvl 1'

Gold Magic Resistance – lvl 1

The power of this magic is not only measured by its direct combat application. Gold is a fascinating metal to many creatures and species. Its manipulation is not often achieved. A precise form of magic, one that benefits from mana intrusion and the inherent flexibility of gold. You have gained a resistance, perhaps even more rare than manipulation itself.

She didn't stop them, happy to gain another one or two levels as they waited for Meadow to prepare.

The first spirits started to appear in the distance, moving towards the spectacle the Meadow didn't bother with hiding anymore.

Swaths of spirits were caught in a moving haze of freezing air, their bodies solidifying in an instant.

It didn't even fucking move, Ilea thought, looking at the Elemental.

The wolf like creature didn't look her way, its attention focused upwards.

Stone and wood flowed together freely, geometrical shapes of either floating through the air to join each other. Patterns and runes appeared, fields of space magic manifesting and changing in instants.

Thousands of large chunks floated through the air, the sheer size pushing against the air. All was added to the growing stone monolith, Meadow and the gate at its center.

She had no idea how many tons of stone and wood had formed that creation, its smooth form reaching several hundred meters in height, shimmering with magic runes that covered every square inch of its design. Arcane barriers formed all around, the thick mana pouring into them visible to the naked eye.

No wonder they called it a god.

She breathed out and stared at the monolith now towering above their position in the air.

The Michaels stopped their spells and focused on themselves, enhancements forming that would protect them against the temperatures and hopefully some of the rest.

“We will take our positions now,” one of them said, the group splitting up and teleporting through the city, each using a bright spell to show their final location.

“*Pretty impressive, right?*” Meadow asked in a *very* smug tone.

“*Yeah,*” Ilea said, her sarcasm for once entirely silenced.

“*Remember, do not come close if the situation does not demand it,*” Meadow said.

“*I’ll act as I see fit,*” Ilea said. The two hadn’t exactly found a perfect agreement in the end, the Meadow going as far as requesting she wait several kilometers away until the closure of the gate had concluded.

“*I shall begin,*” the Meadow said.

Ilea’s precognition told her of an attack but what she felt was instead pure mana.

The fabric of reality seemed to shift as her eyes started to water, the power flowing out of the monolith like an ocean of power.

She felt herself fly away, if only a few dozen meters. *Like a fly close to a flame.*

The low thrumming sound coming from the monolith increased until it suddenly turned into a steady hum that shook the surroundings.

Ilea watched with Space Awareness, seeing the wisps turn and spin, the manifestation of space flowing towards the monolith of Meadow.

A growl resounded from the Elemental, its form standing up before it stepped into the air. Steady movements brought it close to the top of the monolith, the blizzard around it now growing in intensity.

Ilea had to displace herself a few times to get out of its range, her health dropping steadily in the swirl of ice.

She moved her wings, her healing active as heat formed within her core.

The sound of burning fire brought Ilea’s attention back up, a glowing form approaching with increasing velocity.

There you go, she thought with a bright smile.

The being didn’t slow down, its entire form glowing as it entered the atmosphere of Erendar.

It looked vaguely feline, were it not for the six legs and smooth oval head. It was entirely pale blue.

She watched as the creature crashed into the nearby mountain range, the sound and shock wave echoing out into the desert and towards the Mantis city.

It stepped out of the smoldering crater it left behind, the smooth head focused on them, two blue horn like extensions the only discernible features next to its three white glowing eyes.

The creature moved with grace, its size about half that of the Elemental but towering over everything else anyway.

It looked thin, malnourished even, the six legs adorned with claws of astral energy that cut into stone and ice alike as it made its way down into the city.

Its spine ended in a thin blue tail that trailed up into the skies, reaching such lengths that its end wasn't yet visible to Ilea's eyes.

She identified it from hundreds of meters away, the creature's attention fully on the Elemental and the monolith it stood to protect.

***[Daughter of Sephilon – lvl ????*]**

There's your four mark, Ilea mused, judging it to be around a thousand and seven hundred based on her Veteran instinct.

The creature charged.

Spheres of ice formed around the monolith and crashed into the approaching creature like meteorites, crystals of ice forming as the projectiles shattered and exploded in a shower of shards.

Ilea moved closer, staying out of the blizzard around the Elemental.

She dodged the ten meter large shards that howled through the air, more spheres forming as the Daughter soundlessly advanced.

Ilea felt the sudden drain of mana, ten times as powerful as the same ability from a whole cluster of lower Astral Spirits combined.

She kept her distance for now, sending ashen lances at the being as Heart of Cinders continued to charge.

Her projectiles went up in white flame, leaving streaks of fire on the creature.

The ash itself hit the creature without an effect but the flame of creation remained.

Every little bit counts, she thought and continued her efforts, flying parallel to the monstrous creature.

It swatted away a few large ice projectiles and turned towards Ilea with a quick twist of its body, the massive claws slashing her way.

Oh shit. It worked!

She blinked backwards, letting the swipe pass.

Oh no, her precognition picked up the beam as the creature formed it, insane swaths of mana pulled from the surrounding space, leaving it dry as the astral energy solidified in front of its three eyes.

Three large spears of ice slammed into its side, throwing off its aim.

Ilea was pushed backwards by the release of its spell, three beams of astral energy shooting out in different directions.

Her eyes opened wide as she watched the beams arc through the air, homing in on her flying form.

She used her third tier Displacement and activated Phaseshift, the large portal appearing in front of her.

The second portal appeared as far away as she could form it.

The monster's spells vanished in her gate, flying out into nothing where the exit floated in mid air.

She watched the creature stand up on four legs, another set of beams forming.

Ilea turned her head and saw the initial spells arcing through the air, one aimed at the Ice Elemental, the other two coming for her.

Shit.

Phaseshift activated in time, her efforts at displacing the beams failing.

She blinked towards and to the side of the beams but found them arcing in a way to catch her nonetheless.

Ilea braced for impact, feeling the energy flow through her a moment later.

Her health was eaten up by the thousands, her third tier healing keeping her slightly above half before the energy passed.

She deactivated phaseshift and healed the rest, watching the Elemental form a set of thick ice shields formed out of nowhere. Their near instant creation sent a shock wave of air outwards before the astral energy slammed into the defenses.

The next beam hit her, Ilea teleporting away when her health hit sixty percent. Phaseshift ended and she sped up again, watching the second set of beams leave the Daughter's eyes.

It jumped up right after the spell was released, floating up towards the Elemental before four sets of claws slammed into the ice walls.

Spikes exploded outwards, the blizzard now entirely enveloping the monster. Its assault kept on, the claws shaving away dozens of tons of ice with each swipe, its speed incredible for the massive size.

Two beams homed in on the Elemental, the creature jumping back and landing in thin air. Mana exuded from its form. The spells hit it directly, astral energy flowing over the crystal form of the wolf like creature.

The Daughter stood on the Monolith now, cutting apart the remains of the ice before it charged another set of beams.

Ilea watched the remaining beam home around, its target little old her.

She created as much ash as she could, forming several walls in front of her, all connected to her through thin tendrils. Flare of Creation activated as she pushed several thousand health into Azarinth Awakening.

Her health was topped again when the beam hit. It ate through the ash near instantaneously, Ilea bracing for the energy as she flew backwards, forming more burning ash to counter the magic.

Flare of Creation did damage magical constructs too after all.

She was finally enveloped by the astral energies, letting them burn through her defenses and body with an eye on her health.

When it reached a critical status, she blinked as far away as she could, healing and building more defenses immediately as the homing energy continued to follow.

The spell reached her again, exploding in a bright light when it reached her ash.

Ilea was flung backwards, her wings and body burned and mangled.

She didn't lose consciousness, focusing on healing before she slammed into the city below. Through three houses she crashed before she blinked up, her wings reformed and her body healed.

The tail of the Daughter had formed a circle around the city by now.

Ilea could feel the magic emanating from it. *That might be a problem.*