

Ilea switched to her third class and selected Fires of Creation. *Aw man, all those collected Core points gone in a few minutes.*

***'ding' 'Fires of Creation [Enhanced] reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1***

***Active – Fires of Creation [Enhanced] – 3rd lvl 1***

***Let the fires erupt, burning away your health in the exchange for devastating power. All of your spells and your body are infused with the Flame of Creation, dealing lingering damage to health, mana, and magical constructs. You are immune to stunning, fear, and shout abilities. Your resilience is increased by 60% [780%]***

***2nd stage: The pale flame settles within your core. The Fires of Creation now affect enemy health regeneration. This effect is higher for areas directly touched by the Flame of Creation.***

***3rd stage: Your experience with Fires of Creation allows you to infuse your magical constructs with its effects. For each level in the third tier, the skill's upkeep is reduced by a static 25 [750] points of health per second and you may sacrifice an additional static 250 [7500] points of health per second to enhance the skill's effects. The flames of creation return 2.75% of all health and mana burned away so long as the spell is active.***

***Category: Aura – Body Enhancement – Space Magic***

*As if I needed even more sustain, Ilea thought and laughed.*

*“What did you unlock?” the Meadow asked.*

*“Health and mana steal with the Fires of Creation,” she said with a smug expression.*

*“Oh? You didn't have that already? Well, you did just get your evolution,” the being said.*

*It's joking. Just ignore it. You're a powerful goddess, Ilea, she reminded herself and went to upgrade her last skill with her remaining eight Core points when another message popped up.*

***'ding' 'Following requirements have been met. Has reached level 500 in three Classes as a human. Has enhanced a total of at least fifteen Class skills with a minimum of one skill in each Class.***

***Additional options have been unlocked***

***Core Skill Points available: 8***

***[3rd tier Class Skill Point]***

***[Stat Gain]***

***[Skill Boost]***

***[Add Class Modifier]***

***[Skill Enhancement]***

[Locked]

[Derivative General Skill]

[Locked]

Oh? What's that.

**[Add Class Modifier] – [Add a random additional Class modifier to an existing Class - Cost: 10]**

As in... like a universal body enhancement bonus or something like that? Damn... that's pretty fucking good. Or well... it would be, if it wasn't random. Could be a bonus to Flesh Magic or maybe just a stat bonus? Who knows.

"Just got the ability to add class modifiers with Core points," she said.

"I see. How much does it cost?" the Meadow asked.

"Ten points, and it adds a random bonus," she answered.

"Good. Though I suggest you focus on enhancements first," it informed her.

"I think so too. With it being random it might even be worth a thought to invest in stat points instead. Ten points is quite a lot," she mused and enhanced the last skill on her list. *But I guess an additional class bonus could be insanely good too. Like literally becoming an immortal.*

**'ding' 'Space Manipulation [Enhanced] reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1**

**Passive – Space Manipulation [Enhanced] – 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1**

**You have learned to see and manipulate the ever present spatial fabric. You gain the ability to move anything within the fabric with a mere gesture.**

**2nd stage: Further understanding of the spatial fabric allows you to manipulate its forces with greater ease and higher intensity. You learn to perceive even the tiniest ripples in space. In the case of active fissures, you find yourself able to peer into the other side. You gain the ability to anchor a spatial pocket to your very essence. Storage increases with the skill's level.**

**3rd stage: You have peered through the fabric of space itself and have learned to unravel its intricate structure. You gain the ability to perceive and differentiate magical frameworks and how to manipulate them within your space without failure. Charge simple manipulation attempts with up to 250 [3500] points of mana. Charge is limited to a static 500 mana per second. You learn how to damage existing frameworks. Results may vary.**

**Category: Body Enhancement – Space Magic**

A charge hmm? Only for simple attempts. Gonna have to test that out thoroughly.

"Alright, I think that's it... three core points left and a whole lot of new things to figure out," she mused and stood up. "You don't mind if I throw a bunch of stuff at you, right?"

"You're not quite at the level of power where I would notice," the Meadow informed.

“*Because you’re a healer too,*” she sent with a smile and burst into white flame.

Archon Strike charged before she switched into a stance and punched the air in front of her. A wave of near white turquoise energy burst from her fist, sizzling the black grass before it washed over the crystal trunk of the tree.

She repeated the spell, this time without her flames. The wave of blue arcane energy flowed past the being.

“*Healing with your fists. And here I thought you couldn’t solve all your problems with punches,*” the Meadow said.

Ilea shook her head. “You’re being ridiculous. I can kick too.”

Her lava, earth, and ice magic formed above her palm, the elements glowing in her magic perception with a noticeable increase in power. *The dominion bonus is good for these too,* she thought and moved the formed spheres with her space manipulation instead. Her control felt smooth, but her space skill had been reset to the first level in the third tier. *I think it’s affected, but the skill definitely took a hit from the reset.*

She charged up her space manipulation with a rather sizable amount of mana before she tried to do something with it. Moving the elemental spheres with the charged power didn’t seem to work, the limits of the added bonus instinctive as she considered the possibilities. *I think I could use it to crush the tree... not that it would even notice. A push or pull seems possible too.*

Ilea decided on the push and simply held up her palm towards the Meadow. A gust of wind flowed past the creature, or so it seemed, until the stone wall around sixty meters behind it shook. Ilea had her eyes opened wide, having seen the wave within her dominion.

“*How very forceful. Little nuance in that use,*” the Meadow said.

“*Did you fucking see that?*” Ilea asked, a smile blooming on her face.

“*Yes. I suppose someone who enjoys punching a lot would like such a barbaric approach to space magic,*” it spoke.

“*Exactly,*” Ilea confirmed. *The charge does take a while I suppose.* She formed a set of lava, ice, and earth spheres before she tested her charged manipulation a little more. The simple part in the description limited her use quite a bit but considering the power involved, she couldn’t really see it working any other way.

The wave of space magic she had summoned worked in various variations. From above to crush anything below, from the side to sweep enemies of their feet, or even from the ground up. She tried forming invisible spears or spheres with the magic but failed to keep them contained, the effect simply a smaller wave in the end. A strong pull or push focused on frameworks in a certain space worked too but with the charged power she couldn’t exactly select what to hit. So she simply pulled or pushed everything in the affected area. Compared to the wave, the damaging aspect was much lower but she assumed it could be used to throw even a large monster off balance.

The last use she tested was what she named the fruit press. It was the only way she could use her charged space manipulation in a focused manner against a single framework or even a smaller part of one. The word focused being used very liberally in this case. Anything around it would likely not be affected, but the chaotic overcharged nature of the spell simply squeezed something from all around. At some point something gave. So far she only tested it against her own elements but she

could imagine what it would do to a living creature. It was really quite horrific, even for her. Ilea couldn't wait to use it in battle.

"*At what point do I talk to you about morals and the corrupting ways of power?*" the Meadow asked.

"*When I name myself Empress of Mankind and start to eradicate entire species of awakened beings,*" Ilea answered. She formed her mantle with the full five additional layers. *Hmm. My ash capacity rose with the dominion buff too. Helpful,* she thought. With the full mantle on her, she hardly qualified for light or even medium armor. Her speed wasn't reduced in a major way however, especially with her wings.

The third tier of Titan Core activated as she floated down to the ground, her weight increasing quickly. *Heat charge is good, weight increases faster. The spell is indeed, gooder than before,* she thought with a smile. A test perhaps to see if the Meadow could read her mind, but the obvious groan didn't come. *Your main class is actor after all, ancient eldritch abomination,* she thought and squinted her eyes.

"*What,*" the being said.

Her eyes squinted harder.

"I'm ready to level some skills," Ilea said and changed into her ash mantle only, ashen wisps moving through her hair to make a single braid. White flames formed on her body as she jumped back, wings on her back. "Show me thine power, Guardian of Erendar."

"*A title I have not heard in a long time, Lilith, immortal of ash. Let us see then, if you are ready to become my equal,*" the tree mused, a dome like barrier thrumming to life in a fifty meter radius. Hundreds of wooden projectiles formed around the central tree, the ground shaking as the very foundation below them shifted.

She smiled, her body tense as she watched the pulses of magic, the fabric itself torn and bent. Ilea gulped as she sensed a part of her ally's true power. She stood in the domain of the Endless Meadow.

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Verena turned her head when she felt the barrier magic come to life. A surge of magic unlike anything she had felt before. Parts of her told her to run, others to go and fight. Her rational mind kept her standing where she was, eyes wide open and senses pushed to the limit. Her magic had activated, a feeble attempt to stand against the overwhelming power she felt from the barrier.

Few situations in the past years had made her remember her youth, when she had little to no power. When a simple level twenty Wisp had caused panic and fear to bloom in her heart. Audur came to mind but the Dragon had simply played with them, it had not been out for blood. Not until the very end. This was different. Every hair on her body stood up, the very air charged like lightning.

The Meadow had been an incredible creature to her, incomprehensible really, but peaceful, ally and friend to Ilea. Perhaps its joking demeanor, and the attitude of an all knowing teacher it liked to assume had blinded her to the true nature a part of her knew it to be. Verena had known, she had seen some of what it knew. She had failed to identify the being before, and yet until this very moment she had not truly understood.

The others had a similar reaction, all work and conversation dropped as they looked towards the shimmering dome of energy. Within floated a winged being of fire and ash, defiant against the very form of a god.

It felt like the world held its breath for but a moment, Ilea's form floating ten meters above ground. Her wings moved.

Burning ash spread inside the barrier, a beam of near white light cut into floating stone walls, one broken through before the next blocked the power entirely. Hundreds of projectiles both wood and stone surrounded the woman before they all rushed her way. Verena wondered for a moment why she didn't teleport away, but there simply was no space to go to. Something would hit her everywhere within the barrier. She walked closer to get a better look, her curiosity winning out against any instinct suggesting danger.

They had seen the dragonling elf try its luck against the tree, always close to getting in a good claw strike or fire breath, always deflected or blocked in the last moment. *That thing was just playing around. Maybe even now...*, she thought and watched. A blink of her eyes before she saw shimmering space form around the floating figure made of flame. Spears, splinters, drill like stone projectiles all lashed into her but the flow wasn't right. There were no impacts, not on her. Instead the things hit each other, hundreds of stone pieces exploding into fine dust as they collided with wooden spears. For just one moment.

Verena didn't blink. And then the world froze. The sea of chaos stood still in the very air within the barrier and then it all vanished. She gulped.

Ilea raised her arm, the shimmers gone when a chaotic beam of energy formed on her palm. This time it didn't impact any walls but vanished. Wisps of white flame clung to an otherwise invisible gate in front of the single crystal tree. The spell came out ten meters above, flying towards Ilea. Again, it vanished.

"What the fuck is happening?" Pierce said as she joined with a smiling Bralin.

"For once in your life, shut up," Verena whispered. Her eyes and head moved around as she followed the beam, gates opening and closing for the next few seconds, closer and closer to the respective beings themselves. In the end the light only showed up for a fraction of a second until it finally burned into the barrier itself. Light cracks showed for but a moment. *And it's whole again. The fires...*, she thought when they died out.

"Their control is marvelous..." Owl mused in a whispering tone.

*Aren't you supposed to be the four mark here?* Verena thought but she didn't take her eyes off the battle. A familiar aura entered her perception. *There you are.*

"Hmm... I felt something above. Did someone challenge the Endless Meadow?" Lucas asked, his voice carrying the same calm it always did. "Wait... that's Ilea?"

Stone walls now flew through the arena. Dozens of them, all at least two by two meters large and flying at ridiculous speeds. Verena strained to keep up with everything. She pushed her auras to the

limit, her health now burning but it was worth it. She raised her brows and glanced towards the tree. The Meadow was healing her.

Ilea spun and moved through the air with increasing speed. Each wall slid past with only centimeters to spare, some of them vanishing and appearing nearby, others shattering against the barrier or the black grass. She teleported, just once, forming gates around herself and occasionally sending waves of her arcane power or heat at the moving walls to change their course slightly.

Each impact resounded like thunder but the ground didn't shake, the barrier didn't waver. Even so it felt like the sound was dulled, not representing the forces unleashed within the set domain of their battle.

*Not a battle, Verena thought. A lesson.*

And yet it didn't quite feel like the two were teacher and pupil. Perhaps friends, both interested in a certain game or style of fighting. Verena smiled, remembering her early adventuring teams. She had met some of them again after years and even decades. Some had wanted to test themselves against her. The results were never in question, cut in stone from the very start, but she respected the sentiment. The joy. The thrill.

"Don't go in there," Pierce said next to her.

*The Meadow has set a barrier. None of us could ever get inside. Foolish Elder,* she thought with a broadening grin. Much like with her old teammates, the result here was clear from the beginning. She watched the unending walls of stone, watched as Ilea tried to get closer to the Meadow.

She managed another teleport but not as far as Verena knew she could move. Another meter. Then she slipped up. The edge of a wall struck her shoulder and chaos followed.

Bralin groaned and raised both steel hands above his helmet. "Fuck..."

Pierce grinned and so did Verena.

The barrage of stone didn't stop when the burning woman was struck. In the moment she was off balance about three dozen walls hit her floating form. Most creatures Verena had seen and fought would've been squashed by the second or third plate. But Ilea didn't really fit into what she had come to expect. While her offensive power was something Verena envied, her armor was something entirely different.

Stone broke against her burning form, her limbs rocked to one side or the other, flames and ash ripped away as a cloud of debris formed around her. As fast as the chaos had come, it passed again. The dance resumed, Ilea's form flying between the plates as she continued her approach towards the tree. Verena could've sworn she saw one of her arms snapping back from a wrong angle. The recovery wasn't what surprised her. It was the fact that she was not only alive, but well enough to continue without pause.

"She did just get hit, or did I dream that?" Pierce asked.

"She did," Bralin said. "Thought she liked the armor because of the plating... doesn't look like that anymore."

Lucas chuckled and sat down on a set of growing roots.

"Anybody up for bets?" Pierce asked.

"Ten gold that she doesn't reach the tree," Bralin said.

“That’s stupid. She doesn’t stand a chance. I say she gets to ten meters,” Pierce said.

“Twelve,” the dwarf answered.