

## Chapter 374 Loot and Levels

The sensation didn't get any easier to handle. Harder actually until the elf stopped attacking. Ilea took that as a sign to rest. Rest. The unreasonable thing she felt was hurt.

She allowed herself to resume the normal resistance training. "Thank you." She said and bowed to the elf.

Ilea really meant it. She felt like he had shown her something indescribable and opened a door to a new understanding of herself. Not in a way that would benefit or change her notably, it was just a feeling.

He bowed back, facing her and smiling, ever so slightly.

Ilea had yet to gain a new skill but she would try again in an hour or two, maybe longer if the feeling didn't subside until then.

"Do you have that resistance, does it exist even?" Ilea asked, looking at Isalthar.

The elf had watched on with curiosity, slightly twitching whenever an arrow moved through her. "You shall find out, soon." Not a threat, a statement of fact.

"Interested to try yourself against my defenses then?" She asked, facing him with her full body now, ashen armor completely covering her bone armor below. It had regenerated in the meantime and was ready to be ripped apart once more.

"In fact, I am." He said.

A powerful surge of mana washed over them, followed by a gentle gust of wind.

Ilea stayed where she stood, crouching down into a fighting stance.

"Do you have a way to tell?" Isalthar asked.

"Tell what?" Ilea asked back.

"I do not wish your death." He spoke, again not a speck of arrogance or superiority audible. He asked if she was sure about this, about what she was getting herself into.

"I'll teleport away if you're about to kill me." Ilea said then. Even if he could half her, it would hardly be dangerous but that card, she wanted to keep close to herself.

The elf nodded and lifted his hand slightly.

A thin line of air condensed and moved. That was all that happened.

As obvious and simple as it sounded, it looked the same in Ilea's sphere. She could have blinked away if she wanted, had known the damage to her ash thanks to the third tier of her Azarinth Fighting skill but the reaction time was close. Terribly close.

Her ashen armor connected again, a barely audible crack resounding as her bone armor was separated vertically. It too repaired itself quickly.

Ilea felt a thin line of wet and warm blood flowing down her body, starting at her brow and ending on her right thigh. Her bone was intact but he had cut deeper than Feyrair's claws.

“That was insane.” She whispered. *Was it not diverted? Did the second tier not do anything?*

Isalthar breathed out, having held his breath for a second longer than he normally did.

*He was worried. No wonder, with an attack like that. Is that the weakest he can tune it? No... he tuned it according to me?*

“More. To the bone.” Ilea said.

The onlookers had various expressions. All of them knew what had happened, had perceived it in their own ways. For some it might have been too quickly but they had felt it.

Another line formed and moved through her. It was so thin, her ash barely moved as it was seamlessly separated. It moved faster still, denser in its fleeting connection.

“Nothing?” Isalthar asked.

Ilea shook her head. “Not a crack.” Her bones were all that protected most of her organs and especially her brain. She would be out for a split second or even longer once he got through. He would notice.

“Peculiar. Your body is resilient beyond compare.” A compliment from the elven mage that could effortlessly bypass most of her defenses.

She wasn’t sure how to take it. Mostly, she wanted to increase her resistance. It felt exciting yet wrong that someone like him could carve her up so easily. Someone as smart as him.

*Not quite there yet.* Ilea smiled. *Another Drake presents itself.* She grinned, glaring at the elf.

“I do not wish to face you, guardian. Merely to provide my assistance.” He spoke, feeling her intent.

“I merely seek to help my people. Fighting you in earnest will not benefit either of us.” He added.

Ilea sighed. “Your choice. Not even me moving around you, trying to approach?”

“Your teleportation is instant, arcane in nature. I have no way to stop it. I suppose it would be a battle of attrition, of who to land a killing blow first. If you wish to test your speed, I suggest testing it against him.” Isalthar spoke and pointed at Feyrair.

*He is pretty speedy.* “It’s more about dodging. You could just do this and I’ll try to evade sometimes. What do you say?” She wanted to test herself against him but something told her that she wasn’t quite ready yet.

Ilea was glad now, that she had elven friends and that these hunters weren’t the enemy of her kind. Perhaps she would have died today were neither of those things the case.

Perhaps it would have been them to die.

“That is agreeable.” Isalthar spoke.

Ilea smiled brightly. “Then let’s continue. I think I can take it all simultaneously.”

Feyrair glanced at Maro who in turn glanced at Ben. All of them looked at Isalthar.

“Very well. You may use your spells against my flesh. Thou too, necromancer.” The wind mage said.

*That sounds wrong.* Ilea thought, forming dozens of small ashen projectiles.

They agreed on a setup, distance and who would attack whom. Two healers were present and all of them likely had Pain tolerance and defenses on par or higher than monsters above level five hundred. A terrifying group, capable of destroying whole cities.

Hours passed, the group falling into a rhythm. Those with the most powerful attacks had to rest most often, waiting to regenerate their mana. Feyrair and Ben, then Maro and the yet unnamed elf, who joined in once more after two hours had passed.

Both Ilea and Isalthar did not rest, using only a small part of their resources to provide resistances to the others.

It wasn't easy this time, compared to the training, the fighting and killing Ilea had done in the past year. Not until a noise resounded in her mind, the arrows passing a little easier, a little less sorrowful.

***'ding' 'You have gained the General skill: Soul Magic Resistance'***

***Soul Magic Resistance – lvl 1***

***The fleeting conscience of man and beast. Flesh, energy, motion and thought. The Soul stands separate entirely, yet intertwined all the same. Through hardship you have learned understanding, not through meditation and study. A brutal yet comforting truth, strengthening that which cannot be grasped.***

Ilea smiled at the contradictory description, feeling that it fit with the feeling she had. Something changed in her and yet she was the same. *This is fucking stupid.*

She focused on the ice, exploding steadily around her ash, the lances boring into her defenses before they were melted away by white hot flame, decayed by the forces of death before a gentle breeze carried all away.

The sunlight was shifting, their spot now cast in shadows.

“Let me check your list before we continue.” Ilea said and stepped aside, the constant bombardment of various spells stopping instantaneously. “Just in case I need to get something in Riverwatch.”

Nobody had come yet, from the guards investigating the tunnels.

Isalthar had informed her that either way, they would know.

“Shall we continue?” Feyrair asked, glancing at Maro.

The necromancer shrugged. “Sure.”

***'ding' 'Would you like to claim [Ring of the First Born – Rare Quality]***

Ilea accepted, glancing at the group who continued their training.

The unnamed elf moved a little closer to her, floating around the group. He did not speak.

“Want to watch?” She asked, putting on the ring.

***[Ring of the First Born – Rare Quality] – [Storage Capacity at 58/60]***

“Tons of shit in here... mostly crates. Do you want to help me look for the things you need?” Ilea summoned the first crate. Mauro hadn’t labeled them. Why would he, he knew what was in each.

A couple items hadn’t been stored in boxes. Those he had shown her earlier were examples.

“Metals.” She commented, lifting a bunch of ingots out of the crate before she stored it once again. Goliath and Terok would be interested in that.

The elf didn’t move much closer but he did keep his focus on her and the crates that came and went, sometimes turning his head a little or smiling.

There was armor, not enchanted or magical, of common or rare quality. Made from various metals, hides and leathers. There were wines, spirits and liquors. One crate held herbs, roots, various monster parts and even finished potions. Health mostly but other more peculiar effects too, some of which Ilea could not discern with Identify alone.

Beautifully made clothing as well as enough weapons to arm whole villages, just as varied as the rest. Whips, pikes, spears and swords. Hammers, halberds and barbed clubs. All of it well made, by capable craftsmen and women.

Ilea was surprised to find a variety of class and spell books, describing different rare magic schools and how to acquire them. Valuable resources and possibly usable for her Sentinels. She didn’t go through it all to find out. If she ever got a third class, maybe it would be worth it to find something suitable. *Could I change it even? Feyrair said he switched his main classes so why not?*

*The Sunlight Blade*

*Arcanum*

*The Senescent Spirit*

*Way of the White Wolf*

*Dream Hunter and Trickery*

*Mercer’s Guide on Survival and Luck*

*Fear of the Reaper*

She turned the last book in her hand, dusty and old. It looked like a chunk of it was missing in the end. *Won’t be finishing this one.*

Ilea put it back into the crate. A smaller one than most of the previous ones. Made of wood, sealed and heavy.

Some of them were history books, guides, others class books or fighting styles. There were many, perhaps too many for a lifetime’s read. *Pretty much immortal at this point, no excuses.* Ilea sighed and closed it once more, the crate vanishing back whence it came.

Four more crates of similar contents followed before she reached the things not stored within boxes. The more immediately valuable things, magic items, gold and trinkets.

***[Silver Insight – Rare Quality] – [You gain understanding of Silver]***

***[Wyvern's Claw – Ancient Quality] Enchantments [Strong Edge 5 / Fire Affinity 2]***

Those she already knew, now in her possession.

***[Midnight Cloak – Rare Quality] – [Improved vision in the dark]***

*Interesting, might try that one.* Her sight was already pretty good in the dark. If something got close enough and into her sphere, eyes of course weren't at all needed anymore.

***[The Skull of Defiance – High Quality] – [Releases a vulgar smell upon destruction]***

***[Scroll of Fire – Rare Quality] – [Stored Flame]***

***[Bottle of unending soup – Rare Quality] – [One hundred liters of lukewarm soup – Remaining 99/100]***

Ilea rolled her eyes. Most of this stuff was of questionable use. Perhaps in niche situations or simply valuable for their unique effects.

*I only got that canine amulet and a bunch of rings so far. Still missing that double damage wig and explosion effect sunglasses.* There was more of course, each stored individually.

***[Chekhov's Heavy Bow – Rare Quality] Enchantments [Sure-fire 2]***

Ilea summoned the bow, finding it a little too large for her. Still usable perhaps but the one Balduur had crafted for her was better suited to her height and the length of her arms. It did look beautiful however, a long wooden curved piece of carved wood and a string that shined with silver brilliance. *Maybe a wall ornament for my house.*

***[None Shield with Left Axe – Medium Quality] Enchantments [Sharpness 1]***

Half shield and half axe. An interesting weapon for sure but Ilea couldn't decide if it was better than simply using an axe and shield individually. *Maybe there would be custom classes for someone using a weapon like this?* She wondered if any of the books and items were applicable for her Medics.

She summoned a hundred and twenty gold coins into her hand and straight into her own necklace. *Expected them to have more.* Then again, a smuggling organization likely wanted their gold to be invested once more instead of piling up.

***[Staff of the Chosen – Rare Quality] – [Channels the divine light]***

Ilea summoned the thing, a gnarled wooden staff with a yellow crystal entrapped in a cage of roots at its tip.

*Divine light?* Ilea wondered and let some of her mana flow into it.

Immediately, a warm but bright light emanated from the crystal, bathing the shadows in light.

She slammed an ashen limb into the ground, creating a thin crack before jamming the staff in there. The glow didn't subside, enough mana remaining to keep it active.

*Can even throw it like this.* Ilea was happy about the find. This one, she'd definitely use herself.

"Maro, why the hell didn't you have stuff like this in your treasury?" She asked, making the man interrupt his spells and look over.

“That staff does what a tiny magical light can do, using twenty times the space and probably lasting half as long.” He commented, focusing back on the elves around him.

Ilea shook her head. “It’s pretty cool though.” She felt like she was browsing through a bunch of barely useful items to maybe find some Christmas gifts.

She already knew who to gift the actual ring to. *Storage items aren’t rare if you raid ancient city vaults and kill smugglers.*

A stack of contracts and letters appeared on top of the ashen table she had formed. *More shit for Dale to sort through.*

Everything she deemed useful but wasn’t on the list of things Isalthar’s group needed, she simply stored in her bracelet. The magical items could at least be sold or put into her house for decorative purposes. Other than the cloak and staff, there was nothing immediately useful to her.

Finally, there were several huge wooden crates containing most of the items the elves were looking for. Well made ropes and backpacks, lanterns as well as a bunch of enchanted spheres to provide whatever the runes would collect.

Ilea tried them and found water, fire, air, light, heat and a rune that collected moisture. *A drier. There’s everything here to make a modern washing machine and a drier. We have the technology.* She however had her ash already, the tiny particles already enough to get rid of any semblance of dirt on herself.

If her clothes got dirty, they were probably ripped apart anyway. *Wait, fire and heat.* She wondered why there wasn’t a resistance to the former but there was one to the latter. *Why isn’t Ice Resistance just Cold Resistance?*

Ilea shrugged and moved on, piling up everything the elves needed before storing everything else in her bracelet. The ring was empty. “Only thing remaining is food. Ben?” She called out.

The elf looked up and disappeared, coming back into existence a couple meters away from her. “That seems like most of what we need.” He smiled brightly. “Thank you. It’s going to make our lives a little easier.” He touched the pile and quickly moved everything into his own storage item.

Ilea started summoning the remaining twenty meals she had from various Ravenhall restaurants. They were over a year old but in the storage item, it stayed hot and ready.

Ben rushed over, putting away the meals immediately. “This.. will be rationed.” He said in a serious tone.

“That concludes our immediate requirements.” Isalthar said, floating over.

“I had hoped for some more resistance training.” Ilea said, looking over the group.

“As I have said previously. We may stay until nightfall.” The elf replied.

“Great, then come and join again. It’s not every day that I can train my Ash Magic Resistance.” Feyrair exclaimed and beckoned her over.

“Of course. Same goes for your high level magic. I’ve already gotten more Heat Resistance than bathing in molten steel for days.” She sighed, actually a little annoyed that it hadn’t been categorized as dangerous enough to level up her skill faster.

“It needs to actually damage you.” Feyrair said. “I suppose it’s not a terrible problem to have. It helped to change one of my classes back in the day. The sudden reduction in health and resilience certainly helped with my general skills.” He winked.

“Okay.” Maro said and started using his death magic on Ilea once more.

“You’re just annoyed that I beat you.” Ilea said, winking at the elf as she exposed her stomach to allow Maro’s magic through.

“Don’t tempt me. I will reach my next evolution in time. And I will make sure to show you, the extent of my power.” Feyrair said, trying to sound intimidating.

Perhaps if she hadn’t already known a bunch of elves, it would have worked. As it stood however, Ilea just chuckled.

Night came in a flash, Ilea focused entirely on the training.

The combined magic tested her skills and control all the way through, forcing her to decide on which injuries to heal, which parts of her armor to recover first and how to use the split seconds her Azarinth Fighting skill allowed her before Isalthar’s attacks hit.

She did feel like she got better in the end, slight variations in her stance, minute adjustments allowing her to mitigate a lot of the damage.

His beyond razor thin attacks allowed for such.

Ilea had no delusions. She was pretty sure the elf was more than capable of summoning more than single attacks. In the last two hours he even did, using horizontal and vertical aligned blades to throw her off.

Perhaps he was holding back to not give all his cards away or he simply decided on the most profitable exchange for Ilea and himself. Maybe he didn’t have the mana to sustain more attacks for unlimited time or he was worried to accidentally kill her.

***‘ding’ ‘Ice Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 4’***

***‘ding’ ‘Ice Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 5’***

***‘ding’ ‘Ice Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 6’***

***‘ding’ ‘Heat Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 17’***

***‘ding’ ‘Heat Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 18’***

***‘ding’ ‘Soul Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2’***

...

***‘ding’ ‘Soul Magic Resistance reaches lvl 8’***

***‘ding’ ‘Wind Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 2’***

...

***‘ding’ ‘Wind Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 6’***

***‘ding’ ‘Death Magic Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 3’***