

## Chapter 478 Inquiries

Ilea was quite proud of the progress. Especially the third tier Void Magic Resistance gave her a little confidence that she had lost when fighting the Ascended.

She didn't know what exactly would happen if the whole space around her was removed. If she was transported somewhere, able to use her third tier Blink to get back, or if she would simply cease to exist. Her precognition hadn't been clear in the heat of the moment.

The benefits she had gotten through the various second tier advancements were situational and generally quite minor. Still, they added up.

The main benefits next to her Void Magic Resistance were the bonuses provided by Avatar of Ash.

It had reached a point where her resilience was increased by 485% and her ash density by a staggering 185%.

All that just from gaining and leveling resistances, which on their own already provided ample bonuses.

Ilea assumed a part of why she could fight monsters like the Specters was because general skills didn't really weigh in on level differences. She could very well be level one hundred with the same amount of resistances, entirely decimating her weight class and creatures far above her perceived level.

The Fae had mentioned that monsters at a certain level had abilities and characteristics that offset bonuses like the ones she had but Ilea questioned how far that went. Her healing and mana intrusion combination surely wasn't solely responsible for her easy time against higher leveled beings.

She sipped on her ale and thought about what resistances she should get to the third tier. No new possibilities had cropped up but she had gained three additional points. Either way, she definitely wanted to keep a few points for emergencies.

Another thing she quickly did was collapsing her general skills within her status. Even the non resistance types were getting numerous.

**Name:** *Ilea Spears*

**Unspent statpoints:** 0

**Unspent 3rd tier skill points [The Azarinth Sentinel]:** 0

**Unspent 3rd tier skill points [Kin of Ash]:** 0

**Unspent 3rd tier General skill points [1713 Total skill levels]:** 5

**Class 1: The Azarinth Sentinel – lvl 348**

- **Active: Absolute Destruction – 3rd lvl 23**

- **Active: Sentinel Reconstruction – 3rd lvl 30**

- **Active: Azarinth Awakening – 3rd lvl 30**

- **Active: Blink – 3rd lvl 27**

- **Active: Sentinel Sphere – 3rd lvl 25**

- **Passive: Sentinel Core – 3rd lvl 30**

- **Passive: Azarinth Fighting – 3rd lvl 30**

- **Passive: Sentinel Huntress – 3rd lvl 8**

- *Passive: Azarinth Perception – 3rd lvl 23*
- *Passive: Azarinth Reversal – 3rd lvl 19*

***Class 2: Kin of Ash – lvl 348***

- *Active: Armor of Ash – 3rd lvl 30*
- *Active: Aspect of Ash – 3rd lvl 30*
- *Active: True Ash Creation – 3rd lvl 30*
- *Active: Heart of Cinder – 3rd lvl 19*
- *Active: Storm of Cinders – 3rd lvl 17*
- *Passive: Ash and Ember Unity – 3rd lvl 27*
- *Passive: Ashen Wings – 3rd lvl 24*
- *Passive: Eyes of Ash – 3rd lvl 17*
- *Passive: Avatar of Ash – 3rd lvl 30*
- *Passive: Keeper of Ash – 3rd lvl 27*

***General Skills: Hidden***

***Status:***

***Vitality: 816***  
***Endurance: 405***  
***Strength: 515***  
***Dexterity: 425***  
***Intelligence: 765***  
***Wisdom: 910***

***Health: 8160/8160***  
***Stamina: 4000/4000***  
***Mana: 18189/18200***

*A little better, still too much though, she thought with a smile. It felt liberating not seeing the massive list anymore. She wondered if she would really get a third class upon reaching three fifty. It was possible all the speculation and waiting had been for nothing.*

*She chuckled and took another sip. That would fit the Fae, at least the part of the collective I know.*

*Her options for third tier advancements were Blood Manipulation, Corrosion, Lava Magic, Light Magic, and Sand Magic.*

*The only thing she felt was reasonable was Light. The rest seemed too situational, even if the bonuses were potentially good. Lava might give an increase to Heart of Cinder.*

*Many other second tier resistances were more enticing but she hadn't met the requirements to reach a third tier. Blast Resistance, the various drain resistances or even Time Magic were sadly unavailable.*

*Ilea decided her five points were enough to spend two. If she needed more, she could always host another resistance training session.*

***'ding' 'Light Magic Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1'***

### ***Light Magic Resistance – 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1***

***The power of the sun harnessed and enhanced by magic. You have experienced the burning heat of light and pushed ahead. This skill will help you be more resistant.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Staring into the light should have really blinded you at this point. Instead, you have gotten used to it. Your eyes are much less sensitive to the negative effects associated with light. You are mostly immune to sudden blinding changes, be they an abrupt abundance or lack of light.***

***3<sup>rd</sup> stage: You have been exposed to incredible sources of light magic. Your body has gained the ability to absorb some of the properties of the light around you, allowing you to see even in the absence of light as long as you have been exposed in the past week. Damaging natural occurrences of certain wavelengths no longer pass through you but are instead absorbed, should you wish for such to happen. Excess energy will be transformed into both heat and mana.***

Ilea smiled as she read through the added text. *Skin cancer resistance? Not that I think cancer even forms in my body with the regeneration I have. Or does it form faster?*

She assumed the former to be the case, thinking she would have noticed if the latter applied.

The interesting part was the excess mana and heat, adding to her pool and potentially Heart of Cinder. *I could literally fight a sun*, she thought and giggled to herself, getting a weird look from the mage a few tables over.

He pointed at her and murmured something that sounded like a curse.

She didn't feel the familiar magic however.

"Yes, yes," she said, waving him off.

### ***'ding' 'Lava Magic Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1'***

#### ***Lava Magic Resistance – 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 1***

***An elemental form of molten rock, reserved for those few living in conditions most consider deadly. You have met and fought such a being, its magic opposed by Heat and Earth magic resistance but ultimately something different, more primordial and ancient.***

***2<sup>nd</sup> stage: Your body can store heat more effectively, your skin and muscles less prone to melting. Lava has become to you like water is to others, its substance less restricting as you move through it.***

***3<sup>rd</sup> stage: You gain the ability to absorb heat from both within your body and your surroundings, effectively cooling yourself and your vicinity, allowing you to survive in high temperature environments.***

Ilea tapped the table as she read through the newfound powers. Nothing major but she felt the points were worth it regardless.

Her night and cave vision would be vastly improved and if the third tier of Lava Magic Resistance delivered, she could now effectively cancel Heart of Cinder.

*Hmm*, she thought and activated the spell.

She could feel the heat building before it flowed seamlessly into her body. Other than a lightly warm skin, nothing came to be.

*Like the sun on a warm spring day*, she thought with a smile.

The mage who had occasionally looked over stared at her with an open mouth, muttering a few more curses before he stumbled backwards and ran.

*What's gotten into him?* Ilea asked herself before she noticed the steam rising from the corners of her mouth.

*Ah, I see.*

She stopped channeling Heart of Cinder, releasing the small amount of energy in a comically weak cone of fire.

*So I can charge it up before a battle now, cool myself down from time to time to make sure I don't die. And absorb the heat in case it isn't needed.*

She thanked the Trakorov and enjoyed the rest of her short stay at the Seaward inn.

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“Now, now. That doesn't sound good at all,” Helena said as she sliced into the freshly baked lemon cake. The fourth try had wielded something quite marvelous. Perfect moisture.

Her guest sighed. A rare show from the near mythical bard. His shoulder length blond hair looked perfect as always, lightly curled today. His skin was lightly toned, the Virilya based man having relocated before the siege had started. He wore utterly ridiculous clothes, unfit for battle or business alike.

Tight black pants ending above his ankles. Above his pants he wore a skirt of all things, ending right above his knees. A fluttery white shirt covered his chest with broadening sleeves reaching nearly to his fingers. It would have been decent enough, if it hadn't been mostly see through.

The silver chains around his neck would have been acceptable if they were his weapons but she knew for a fact that they weren't.

She knew the man well, had worked with him for more than five decades. He was capable, ruthless, and still clung to his ridiculous attire and demeanor.

He smiled his perfect smile as he received the plate. “Thank you, my dear. I do so love your baking.”

She could not detect a lie, nor did she care. “Shush, keep those compliments for your concubines.”

“I would never insult you with a lie, Helena,” the man said and this time she almost believed him.

“The situation is dire,” he said, going back to the topic at hand.

“That it is. Half of the forces occupying Odiah have fallen,” she said with a thoughtful look.

“Alyris won’t relent. Circumstances have changed however. Numbers won’t make a difference anymore. Infiltration and powerful individuals are necessary to overcome the rituals they have prepared. The loss of life is unprecedented...,” Elijah said, one of his hands balling into a fist.

A pacifist at heart, with a somewhat warped view of the concept. Few with his power and influence had a grounded idea of human life. Especially not people so young. He was barely eighty.

Helena wondered if a true pacifist would ever even talk to her.

“The fall of Baralia is certain either way. Though it seems the fanatic believed their magic to be more than just belief. The effectiveness would speak for his words. And yet I doubt the man.” Helena said as she ate a piece of cake, savoring the taste.

Elijah glanced at her, folding his hands as he relaxed in his chair. “Why?”

“Because he is a fanatic. I have dealt with such orders before and very few of them were founded on more than hubris. The Empress isn’t idle either. Baralia has been a sore spot for her, not only because of her dearest brother. She won’t abandon this war, not with the impact it already had on Lys,” Helena said.

“Ravenhall,” Elijah said.

A stupid suggestion really. She had expected more. Or was he testing her? Just as ridiculous.

*Ravenhall has been independent for a long time, now it’s just official. Alyris kept the relations and doesn’t have to worry about them anymore. Her power is absolute. The nobles who thought of Ravenhall as something to aspire to now have the choice of obedience or independence. The choice is simple.*

“Why are you suggesting that? You know Alyris intended their defection. Especially after the surprising change in leadership,” Helena said.

The man smiled and ate a little piece of cake. He swallowed before continuing. “I don’t think the Empress knew anything about that. You overestimate her. It was convenient, I’ll give you that. None of the Elders would have followed through with what the new leaders did.”

“You’re right about the Elders but I’m confident she had her hands in it. Otherwise it seems too convenient. The Shadow’s Hand is no longer an internal threat,” she said.

“Doubt she ever considered it one. Not like you have,” Elijah said.

*Well, you don’t know Verena or Adam.*

She sipped on her tea.

“Oh, you know something I don’t?” the man asked, leaning a little bit closer.

Helena waved him off. She wasn’t in the mood for theatrics.

“I still think we cannot dismiss it entirely,” she said.

“Will you go?” he asked, a grin on his face.

“Of course not. Baralia is a dreadful place and I’d like to avoid participating in wars if possible,” she said.

“The other members then? Should I contact them? Or do you think your guild can handle it?” Elijah asked. He himself wouldn’t participate even if the war was at his doorstep.

*I would rather not risk them.*

“I think suggesting an intervention is not out of place. Michael can send some of his people and I’m sure Acantha has been involved from the start anyway,” Helena said.

“Velamyr fought in Odiah,” Elijah said.

“You don’t seem happy about that,” Helena commented.

He waved her off and summoned a filled glass of wine, taking a sip. “Always the hero. He’s going to rise even higher than before.”

She nearly had to smile because of the unintended pun. General Velamyr Ryse cared about his soldiers. He would skewer the High King himself if he could somehow maneuver himself into the right position.

“Just inform him that some of us are coming,” Helena said.

“The Pirate?” Elijah asked.

“Seems up his alley,” she said. *Pillaging, war. He’ll feel right at home.*

“Skorn has been in touch. He is already involved, though not personally,” the bard said.

Not that anybody expected anything different from the man.

“Good. I’m sure Elizabeth is too,” she commented.

“What about-” he said but was interrupted by a cold aura spreading through the room.

“No,” Helena said and finished her piece of cake.

“I see,” Elijah said.

“How is Virilya?” she asked, making him focus on something else.

“The same. People are returning. Alyris is doing an adequate job. Surprisingly,” he said.

*I should slap you.*

She didn’t let anything show and instead smiled.

“It’s a shame Arthur died. How is his daughter doing? Any promise?” she asked.

The man nodded. “Last I’ve heard, she may be a good replacement. However her inclination to join the order might be impaired. Perhaps in a few decades, if her ambitions are as grand as her father’s had been.”

Helena smiled, cutting herself another piece. “That is promising.” She would be surprised if the girl would ever even consider it. After the treatment they received from their father. Arthur was capable but he lacked empathy and common sense. Squandering his greatest assets for a misplaced sense of pride.

Helena had greatly enjoyed the news of his death. The evidence wasn’t there but she would bet on the children being responsible.

“No news on Edwin and his... friend?” she asked.

“He remains within the family mansion. The void mage has joined Felicia Redleaf but her allegiances remain uncertain. They should all be in their mid two hundreds,” Elijah informed her.

Helena had some ideas as to her allegiances but she wouldn't share them with the bard. He did like to talk after all.

"We may consider her in the future. What about that girl you mentioned last time?" she asked, interested in what he thought of her. She had made up her mind a few weeks ago.

"Lilith. She is... well, certainly interesting," Elijah said.

"You like her," Helena said.

The bard smiled. "Her methods are crude. And with all the stories and reports, it's hard to really pin down who she is but yes. I do like her, if only for her sense of style. Ashen wings do paint a beautiful painting."

*One of death.*

"Do you think she could be interested?" Helena asked. The woman was an asset to their order either way. She owned a large part of the newly independent Ravenhall with connections to their leadership. The same was true for Riverwatch, if not for other places.

He waved his hand. "That is the question, isn't it? She definitely likes to fight. She is young. Younger than most at even level two hundred. I expect her to be close to three hundred already. Ashen Classes are rare but her second Class is more interesting. She's a healer supposedly."

Helena nodded, letting him talk.

"And still she owns property, got involved when Riverwatch was under siege, fought the demons and even supposedly first encouraged the Hand to retake Ravenhall. Her values will be the deciding factors. Can she accept that the world is not her own playground? I believe it's possible."

She agreed.

"I will meet her," Helena said.

"I wanted to have the pleasure," Elijah said in a disappointed tone.

"The others won't approve if you are the one endorsing her," she said, but the man knew that already. "I'm sure you'll get to meet her."

"You'll have to tell me all about her," Elijah said and started humming a familiar tune. "Do you think the songs exaggerated," he asked, interrupting the sound for a moment.

"You shouldn't get involved with women like her. You remember how it ended the last time," Helena said.

She didn't care if the songs were true or not. The reports were and they were dealing with someone that was potentially more powerful than herself. Few people ever reach that level, fewer even in such a short span of time. Most of them get a few titles and then vanish in the north or some other place, entirely absorbed by whatever goal or power they sought.

She couldn't blame them. And she was glad most stayed away from the intricate and fragile tapestry of politics and trade. Sadly the High King Baron of Baralia had not followed the same pattern. And now they were dealing with hundreds of thousands of deaths and a potentially highly dangerous cult close to the leadership of one of the largest human kingdoms.

The woman sighed, thinking of the Elven lands, the recent return of an expedition vessel from the eastern seas, the potential of an extended trade alliance with the dwarven kings.

And here they were. Again. Dealing with human war. She was tired of it. But she wouldn't ignore the promises she had made. Too many leaders had left. If she did too, few would remain to uphold their fragile civilization.

"Ah, but it was so exciting," Elijah said, a reminiscing smile on his face.

"You nearly died," Helena said.

"No... it was her that was death. A small price, to see such beauty," he sung.

Helena was impressed that he still sounded degrading, despite the obvious praise. Only a true master bard could mask his insults to such a degree.