

Chapter 435 Cosmic Knowledge

“Where to then?” Ilea asked after a while. “Do you still want to travel with me, now that we’re done with that dungeon?”

Unsure

Time

Away

Long

“Away from home?” Ilea asked.

The Fae nodded.

“Well, as much as I have enjoyed exploring the Descent with you, I won’t hold you back. I’m sure we both have plenty of things to worry about back home.”

The Fae looked at her and then up at the moons. It tapped its leg as it sat on her shoulder.

Visit?

“You can visit whenever, just make sure the people around don’t spot you. You Fae seem to be a desirable thing to many.”

No

Visit

Me

It paused.

Us

“You want me to visit your home? What about the rules?” Ilea asked. She was certainly intrigued but if it put the little one in danger, she’d rather not. Similar to Elfie and his Domain. Not that he himself would be welcomed with open arms at this point.

Trust, was all the Fae sent.

“You should never trust a human. Just as a general rule. I wouldn’t want you or your kind to get hurt,” Ilea said.

Home

Safe

“You think so?”

Dangerous

Mana

“More dangerous than the twenty fourth layer?” she asked.

Yes

Ilea looked at the Fae. “I don’t really want to feel that pain again, little one.”

No

Drain

“So it’s a little more dense than the layer itself was but it won’t hurt me because you won’t funnel it all into my body?”

The Fae nodded and twirled.

“If you don’t think it will be an issue, then I would love to see your home. Are you sure the Ascended won’t follow?”

Misplaced

Concern

“I’ll trust you on this, ancient one,” she said.

Mental

Resistance

Third?

“Yeah, it’s in the third tier. Why?”

Us

The Fae sent and stopped to consider.

Human

Mind

Fragile

“I’ll let you know if I can’t handle it. Is it a pressure I can escape?”

Unsure

“Sounds intriguing at least. Do you want me to visit now or some other time?” Ilea felt a little like her six year old self having made a new friend, now discussing visiting each other’s homes. *Is it going to have to ask its parents?*

Now

Tired

“I’m happy to join then. Can you teleport us again?” Ilea asked. “Oh... before we go. I can teleport out from there right? Or is it blocked off? You saw my skill before when I started using it.”

Leaving

Works

Entering

Difficult

It started draining mana, Ilea's resistance turned off.

Her mana had recovered enough to allow for the nearly ten thousand points the Fae required. Instead however, it kept going.

Ilea felt like she was powering a spell of her own, so easily did the mana flow out and into the creature. She was impressed such a small and low level being could even hold all the power she felt from it.

It seemed creatures around them noticed as well, some of the monsters in the forest below running away just as a bunch of birds flew out of the trees to get some distance to the magical phenomenon forming in the skies above.

I hope we won't attract something powerful. Ilea kept a lookout for the Ascended or something else. *Is this a thing now? Constantly checking my back for that fucker?*

She decided that it would be alright for a while. Contrary to most other things that could beat her close to death, the Ascended was a sapient being, one capable of tracking her down to finish the job.

Space shifted once again.

Ilea immediately felt the mana around her, crashing into her like waves of water. As if she was teleported into the depths of the ocean with all the weight and pressure suddenly pushing her down.

Holy fuck, she thought and went on one knee.

Okay, she sent to the Fae from whom she felt slight concern within her sphere. She couldn't quite place where the creature was, her arcane perception muddled by the magic.

This really is an issue... my sphere is the main thing I can trust once my eyes fail.

She looked up and found the moons staring back at her. Much closer than they had been a moment prior. The winds were strong here and the air thin. Neither bothered her nearly as much as the mana density itself.

Ilea saw a sharp decline to her left, clouds visible far below, slightly illuminated by the moonlight. *We are definitely high up.*

The stars above added to the scenery, as did the sharp rocks jutting out of the terrain. This was the peak of a mountain. She glanced around but found nothing else reaching these heights. Some of the summits in the distance peaked out of the clouds but nothing quite as impressive as this.

There was no plateau per se. Just wild outcrops of stone and rock, without a visible path. The highest point was still around thirty meters farther up.

She slowly adjusted to the mana and kept a focus on breathing steadily. The thin air surprisingly didn't bother her body. Her rational mind told her she would need to exert herself more here, would need to be careful and move slowly but nothing else seemed to support that notion.

"I'm fine," she said and found the Fae floating a little to the side.

The creature twirled and nodded.

It floated away and towards the peak. Ilea followed.

She noted that the moon- and starlight reflected from various otherwise invisible sections around her. As if space itself was distorted here.

Her wings moved slowly as she took in the surroundings, finding that the sky more and more meshed with the ground until finally, she could not quite tell up from down anymore. Even gravity didn't help. *Where are the moons?* she found herself thinking.

Ilea forgot the question when her eyes landed on something she could not grasp. It moved. She knew instinctively that the being turned towards her but she failed to comprehend its form, could not understand where it began and ended, the shape impossible and instantly forgotten. As if her eyes looked but refused to see.

She felt the slight pressure in her mind. Something was damaging it but it was of no concern. For she was looking at something incredible. While her eyes refused to see, her mind and body could feel the presence, the power.

The Fae close to her was gone, she hadn't noticed it leaving.

"Do not fear us, human," a voice resounded in her mind, incomprehensible and yet as clear as the very stars around her.

Ilea had to close her eyes, focusing on the flows of mana around her instead. Her mind hurt but she let meditation and healing flow through it, getting used to the presence, the sensation it brought. A part of her felt like crying, another like laughing. She was in the presence of a god. Nothing else seemed appropriate in description.

It took her a while to calm down. Sometimes a giggle slipped out or a tear rolling down her cheek. She had goosebumps all over. It was beautiful and terrifying. Slowly, she learned to accept the being as something real.

It gave her time. Did not speak again as she adjusted.

Ilea did not know how much time had passed when she spoke, now calm and mostly collected. She really was in need of a clock, unbothered by the presence of ancient beings or the insane flows of mana.

"Way to make an entrance," she spoke. *"Nice to meet you."* her eyes were still closed.

A giggle resounded all around her. *"You adjust quickly. Ilea, Kin of Ash. It was not our intention to make an impression as you suggest. Your human mind is simply not equipped to perceive our presence."*

"I've seen some pretty powerful beings but none of them could match the feeling I get from you. Is my ally and friend still somewhere in there? Or is all individuality lost when the Fae join your being?"

"It is the Fae as we are Fae. It is part of us as we are part of it," it spoke.

Ilea rolled her eyes and laughed. *"How very hive mind of you,"* she said and identified the presence with her sphere.

[Fae – lvl ?????]

The presence chuckled into her mind. One and many.

"Your mind is ill equipped to perceive and understand us. The notion to use humor in the face of the incomprehensible is similar to our own. A tool most powerful, do you not think so, Kin of Ash?"

"I do," she answered. "You got some level ups too... why send out the little Fae? And why at such a low level compared to this? You wouldn't get captured and hurt or even killed otherwise."

"The mark on your soul has not been placed without reason. To think we shall meet a human that holds concern for that which their mind rejects. How cute."

"Hold up a minute. You're the cute one, alright. Not me. I'm the fearsome monster and you're the little Fae sitting on my shoulder. Just because I can't comprehend your form or being as you are now doesn't change that," Ilea exclaimed and summoned a meal.

"Is that... sustenance?" the being asked.

"I need something to ground my mind. I know you don't eat," she said.

"A peculiar notion. Very common in mammals. Our consumption of mana might be the most comparable thing. We have decided that we do not dislike your notion of calling us cute. Your shoulder however does not have the room to hold us as we are now."

"I'm pretty strong, you know. And you can float, can you not?"

"True... we believe it rude however. As most of what we are does not know you. The trust we feel is not encompassing and yet we understand why a part of us has found a liking to you. Though it was a part entranced by violence and death."

"As we are now, much of the world would be painful to walk, uncomfortable and dangerous. Our power leads to animosity and fear, thus much of what we are decides to take a form more vulnerable, requiring less energy and mana to travel the lands lived in by creatures such as you."

"Do you not get lonely up here?" Ilea asked.

"We are one but we are many. The hive mind thing you have mentioned, it fits. Is it not the way you describe the home of bees? Perhaps a way to describe such a concept in your realm, not yet reached humanity in the place you call Elos."

"I see. Talking to oneself is usually considered a bit of a psychological issue though. Maybe you should go out sometime."

The being giggled. *"A long time has it been, for us to meet one as unconcerned with our power. We were right all along, to bring you here. Your survival is most joyous."*

"I trust the part of you I met and traveled with but I'm a little concerned about the mark you talked about before. What does it do? The Enavurin said it wasn't an issue but he's just as much an ancient incomprehensible mind as you are."

"It is very young compared to us. We have decided to ignore such a grave insult to our being in light of our relationship. The mark is placed on the soul of a being. Now that you have reached the second tier of Soul Magic Resistance, it will fade with time. Faster if you learn to manipulate it, not at all if you will it so. Already you should perceive a part of what is your essence. If you try and learn, you will understand yourself, what the mark means."

"It is a warning or endorsement we, as others, place on beings we interact with. Yours means tolerance as well as power. Both warning and endorsement, depending on who might see. Though most Fae would see you as a potential ally or perhaps even more."

"I'm not sure if I'm sexually attracted to a star being," Ilea joked, not just enjoying but actively reveling in the sheer absurdity of this conversation.

The Fae laughed. *“Amusing. Suggested as a joke, it would strike fear into weak minds should our persons engage in a relationship of romantic nature. Your tendencies however would make it difficult to hold and nurture one such bond, let alone the thousands of individual minds and wills that form what we are.”*

“Yeah, that sounds exhausting. No offense. All the roses I’d have to get.”

“Individual wishes would be offered. Many require no gifts, others only the most precious stones. Others still the hearts of creatures you are not yet ready to face, nor would be morally acceptable to slay. As to the mark, you shall learn of it as you progress. Should you wish for us to remove it now, we shall oblige. And yet it would pain us deeply.”

“Leave it. You haven’t consumed me yet so I’m inclined to trust you. Even as a being made up of many. Are all Fae part of you by the way? Or are there many collections such as you? What about individuals? Are there some that travel the world alone?”

“We are aware of others such as us. Not all Fae you meet are us and yet they are.”

“More like a network of Fae clusters then. A hive network,” Ilea said.

“Not entirely. Our liking of you will not transfer to others yet it is unlikely you will meet any such being in your lifetime. Not impossible, with your fast progress in power. Simply unlikely. Your incline to seek death and danger will likely undo your existence before such an event occurs.”

“They are in other realms?” she assumed.

“Yes.”

Ilea nodded and continued eating. “Sure you don’t want to try? I’m confident you could form a mouth somehow and the senses required to perceive the taste and smell.”

“You overestimate our abilities. We are not of flesh and blood.”

“And yet a part of you was corrupted by the Blood Manipulation.”

“It affects the essence of what flows through the bodies of its victims. All life is fueled by something. Even the purely arcane is subject to the effects of Blood Manipulation, even if it may be subdued.”

Ilea nodded. “Do you think the Ascended will hunt me down?”

“Do you fear it?”

“It nearly killed me. Came closer than even the Elementals.”

“It is its sapience you fear. With what we know, it is unlikely the being will hunt you down. Outside of its domain it will find it difficult to trap and kill you. Nor does it benefit of your death. We determine it is too wise to be tempted by the notion of vengeance. Especially considering the grievance. It was wise of you not to share the knowledge we have revealed to you. We shall inform the individual named Catelyn of the importance of those secrets.”

“Thanks. I could do that myself, you don’t have to get involved.”

“You have cared and protected us, have spent time with us and even risked your life to save us from suffering and death. It is the least for us to prevent your allies from meeting an unnecessary end due to misinformation. We shall however not interfere in direct battle unless the realm itself is endangered.”

“If it’s not much effort for you, then I appreciate it,” Ilea said.

“I have so many questions I could ask you... are you bothered by that or is your goodwill limited? I don’t understand what you are and what drives you and I don’t want to bother or anger you.” she said.

“You may ask as you wish. Not all of us are focused on you and as time goes on some will lose interest yet we consider you a friend to the Fae. It is the least you have earned. Knight.”

“Ah fuck off, Baron.” Ilea murmured with a smile.

The Fae snickered, in an entirely different way. Still somewhat cute but based on terrifying power that tugged on the fabric of her mind.

Ilea tried to glimpse at the creature but found it still weird and confusing. She came close to placing a thought in her mind before it vanished. “I feel like a child looking at you.”

“A vast understanding of Space Magic and more synapses in your monkey brain would be required to see us with your eyes. The main problem really, is that there isn’t exactly a form to perceive.”

“I see. So now I made a friend as powerful as perhaps a god... do you know what brought me here? Can you give me a power up that would make me level one thousand or at least capable of fighting against the Ascended? Maybe you can change me into a Dragon or something.”

“Your obsession with Dragons is dangerous and yet we know you do not care about such warnings. We hope your first encounter will be as favorable as it was for you to meet us. They usually do not care to seem harmless and approachable. Knowledge, understanding and entertainment are desires we share with them but our ways of acquiring them differ greatly. However they are more individualistic and most care not to converse with us.”

“Are you pouting?” Ilea asked with a smile before she laughed.

“We cannot give you power. Not in the sense you seek. Only your own strength and achievements can bring the leap you wish to accomplish. Meeting us in such a way and surviving the encounters in the Descent have surely unlocked many possibilities however. Your obsession with Resistances will only benefit and form an increasing advantage. We believe it might even be possible a third class will unlock as soon as you reach level three hundred and fifty in both of your current classes.”

Ilea opened her eyes wide. “Oh really? Any idea where I can find some creatures to hunt?”