

Chapter 405 Ancient Mind

“I should still be able to communicate with you until you reach the place. The layout of this... area is unfamiliar to me yet I can guide you through it nonetheless,” the Gracken said.

Ilea gave a mental thumbs up and moved to the entrance. “Right direction?”

“So far, yes. It was at your current height. You should push further,” the Enavurin said.

She continued, seeing several corridors leading into the structure. A prominent stairwell led down but she ignored it for now. “You mentioned a mark, what did you mean by that?” Ilea asked, soon reaching a dead end.

“Ancient magic. Even to me it was new, finding it on my own essence after several... talks with the excitable creature,” it replied.

Ilea tapped the wall and tried blinking past it, not seeing anything with her sphere. *Doesn't work*, she thought and instead ripped into the steel with her ash. It still resisted, the same material they had encountered in the seventh layer. Her ash however had gotten significantly more durable and she had some new tricks.

The assault of her limbs stopped and instead she formed a massive drill. It would take a while but she immediately got better results from the steady pressure and torque compared to her limbs alone.

I should just use drills on all my limbs, she thought and tried forming one. Ilea found it difficult to keep the moving bit steady and compact, deciding that she would remain with her normal spikes for now.

“So my... essence, is marked?” Ilea asked. “I don't like the sound of that, didn't even notice it.”

“You said... that you can heal. I have found it similar to healing, where it is a non threatening form of mana intrusion. The marking changes nothing and is only visible to creatures able to see. It took me a long while to even discern the change on myself,” the Gracken said.

“What exactly is a long while for you?” Ilea asked, already a couple centimeters deep into the wall. “Is this the right spot by the way? I don't want to lose hours because I started at the wrong place.”

“It should be a good point to start. Yet I do not know how far you will have to go. Is the steel blocking your way?” the creature asked.

“It is,” Ilea said.

“Yes... there is no rush. I have lost contact a while ago. Time holds little meaning to me, young Ilea. How do you calculate it? There are many forms of doing such,” the Enavurin said.

“One, two, three, four... along those lines, those are seconds. Sixty form a minute and sixty minutes form an hour. Twenty four hours form a day. Seven days a week and around thirty a month. Twelve months a year and that's usually the longest unit we use. Decade is ten years and century a hundred. Humans don't really live much longer than that normally. At least where I'm from,” Ilea explained.

The Enavurin was quiet for a moment. “A peculiar method. What is the logic behind it? A deity you worship? Or an old system that was never replaced?”

“Kind of a deity... the sun,” she said, continuing when a questioning emotion came her way, “It’s a star, providing light, warmth and energy. It’s a long fucking way from planets usually but visible in the sky.” Ilea added a memory of an animated science video she once saw.

“Interesting... does this realm have a sun as well?” the Enavurin asked.

“Two actually,” Ilea said, pitying the creature for remaining in the dark for such a long time.

A calming emotion was sent her way, “Do not fret, young human. I have only been here for three of your centuries. Even for you that should be trivial. My needs are different, my way of thinking. It has been... one month since I last communicated with the Fae.”

“Three centuries... are you kidding me? Humans usually live less than one,” Ilea replied, chuckling a moment later when a comforting emotion came her way. “It’s fine, plenty of time to have a fun life.”

“Fun?” the creature asked.

“Oh boy... you don’t have a definition for that?” Ilea asked.

“I am communicating in your language... through the magic of the mind. Words are naturally not even a concept for us,” the Gracken said.

“Fair enough Mr. Superbrain,” Ilea said and sent some memories their way, of fighting, eating and whatever else she could think of being fun. Only memories from Elos. She even checked if they were still there afterwards, in case the being was somehow able to eat her past.

“How very interesting... I will need some time to grasp this concept. Perhaps one... day, I might understand,” the Gracken said.

“What do you do then? In all this time you have? I’d get bored sitting in a tank of water all day,” Ilea said.

“I would share memories, concepts and emotions with you but I believe your mind might not be able to take it,” the Enavurin replied.

“I’d welcome some Mental Resistance training actually, though be warned, there will be an automatic reflection of some of the damage,” Ilea explained.

“The second tier, I am aware. Yet I believe a part of the concepts I may show you will be reflected. No harm will come my way,” the creature said.

“Go for it,” Ilea said, sending a reassuring emotion to the creature.

Pictures and feelings suddenly appeared in her mind, making her reel back as the drill spun to the size, dissipating all the while Ilea counter healed the damage to her mind. *Insanity*, the word the only thing she could think of.

“Yeah... well, I don’t think I could understand any of that even if I had a thousand years to study it,” Ilea said and reformed her drill.

The equivalent of a chuckle reached her, “Different beings have differing strengths and weaknesses. Not all possess the vast understanding our species has evolved, neither do they need to. Perhaps it was a way for us to live... without *Fun*, the warmth of a sun or the thrill of hunting.”

“You don’t hunt? What do you eat then?” Ilea asked. “No offense but I’m picturing you as some sort of massive ancient octopus. The ones in the last layer tried to drown and eat me.”

“Sustenance is not necessary as long as there is... what do you call it? The energy that permeates us all, flows through all life and gives us the power to think, to create,” it said.

A form appeared in Ilea’s mind, pretty much confirming her suspicion. *Kraken*, she thought and chuckled. Similar beings were hyper intelligent even on Earth. It was no surprise to her that she found one able to talk here. *Much more than that, really.*

“I think you’re talking about Mana,” Ilea said. “And I was serious about the Mental Resistance training. Can you just crudely attack me? Or with finesse. I’m trying to get more resistances to a higher level,” Ilea said.

“Mana... yes. It is all I truly need. As well as concepts, thoughts. Should I have found all answers to all questions, I will cease to be.” it paused for a moment, “To what end may I ask, do you wish to raise your levels? It is pain, suffering and hardship, is it not?”

“It is... maybe it’s a weird drive we humans have. To strive for more. A deep hunger or desire. Maybe it’s because we normally don’t live very long. We need sustenance, desire things, food and well, fun. I can see that there would be little purpose to strive for change if you are perfectly satisfied with your own thoughts and mana,” Ilea tried to reason.

“It is certainly... interesting. To communicate with one such as you,” the creature said and started pushing against her mind.

Ilea healed against it, feeling the power even with her high resistance. “That’s... good... holy... shit,” she stammered out. The creature had the finesse of Eve and the punch of a mind weaver, and then both tripled.

The attack ceases a moment later. “Is it too powerful?” the creature asked.

“It’s fine actually. The damage is pretty high though. Your skill level must be negating my resistance skill,” Ilea said.

“Such is impossible. There is always a minimum reduction provided by resistance skills gained through violent exposure,” the Gracken said.

“What do you mean? I thought the benefits were reduced by one percent for each difference in levels of each skills,” Ilea replied.

“It should universally be a minimum of five of one hundred for level one, ten of one hundred for level ten, twice that for level twenty. Should you reach the second tier, you have a minimum of twenty six of one hundred reduction. At level twenty of the second tier it is forty five of one hundred,” the Enavurin explained.

“Interesting... so it’s not as diminishing as I thought,” Ilea said and smiled. Lucas had mentioned there was a minimum at some point but he hadn’t known exactly what it was.

“Keep attacking, I can take it,” Ilea said. “If you can handle the reflected damage.”

“Attacking the Enavurin with mind magic is a foolish endeavor. Anything that does not reflect at all is not considered a threat,” the creature said.

“And I am?” Ilea asked with a smirk, feeling the magic weight on her again. *It can even attack me through rooms. Well, maybe it’s just the connection.*

“I would have not considered you as such... yet you seem to have faced many that have reveled in their own superiority. I shall not end as one of them, merely to satiate your unending hunger,” the Gracken said.

“Is there... an... upper... limit... as well?” she asked the creature, changing the subject back to resistances.

“Yes, ninety five of one hundred. Yet often one’s skin alone or a loss in power to a spell due to external influence will render what remains useless either way. Complete immunity to a form of elemental magic is... rare. Not found in a species such as yours or even mine,” it said.

“Ele... mental?” Ilea asked, suggesting one being that could theoretically be fully immune.

“It is possible, yes. I have met only a few in my drifting, none of them having reached higher thinking,” the creature said.

‘ding’ ‘Mental Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 17’

Already, without reduction. The Gracken is nuts.

“Can... you... read... minds? Thoughts... memories?” Ilea asked.

“It would be difficult to explain this... knowing you have little knowledge of this magic yourself. Some, surface thoughts can be grasped... ideas mostly... influenced by your desire to share them. Something you deem... secret or private, is instinctively protected, even without a resistance to it. Complete domination would be required... with a potential rupture of the mind,” it explained.

Yea, let’s not try that. I shouldn’t even take all this at face value, not that there even is a face.

“Stop,” she said after a while, having broken through whatever enchantment had prevented her sphere from seeing past the wall.

The mental pressure vanished immediately. “Have you found it?” the creature asked.

“I found... something,” Ilea said, her sphere revealing another hallway that extended beyond this part of the facility. She blinked inside, succeeding this time. “I’m in,” she whispered and crouched.

“You are closer now, yes,” the Enavurin spoke in her mind.

“How are you seeing me by the way? Did you know I was there from the very beginning?” Ilea asked.

“You dropped something into the waters, disturbing my slumber. A pulse of mana alerted me of your presence and when you responded to me I could locate you. I can see your mind now,” the creature explained.

“How very comforting,” Ilea said with a grin.

“There is no need to fear me, not unless you wish me harm,” the being said.

“I don’t. Just know that human minds sometimes jump to things we don’t actually want to do or think, in case something comes up,” Ilea said.

“A lacking control of your mind can mean death. I suggest you remedy that,” the Gracken said.

“I’ll try to find one of the three human mind mages to teach me a general skill, cheers,” she said.

“I am aware of the concept of sarcasm, human. It is deeply offending to communicate one thing and mean another,” the creature said, a warning tone in her mind.

“No offense meant but if you can’t ignore my sarcasm, you might as well try to kill me now. For us it’s just a form of humor, if that is a concept to you,” Ilea smirked.

The being sent an apologetic wave her way, followed by understanding as well as the words *Monkey brain*.

How is that not sarcastic? Well maybe it tried to be offensive, knowing I wouldn’t take it as hard. Fucking giga brain.

Several open doors lined the walls of the hallway, light pouring out from the magical lamps set into the ceiling above.

Ilea could already hear the snarls of a variety of beasts, subdued and dulled. Her sphere supplied her with the reason a moment later.

Tubes? she noted and walked into the closest hallway.

“You are close, what do you see?” the Gracken asked, his English already modernized.

“Test tubes... a bunch of partially corrupted beasts, corpses and some frothing and angry creatures,” she replied and checked all the tubes. She killed those that were corrupted, all below level two hundred.

The majority of creatures however were already dead, restrained by the same type of metal that made up most of the facility.

A sudden emotion reached her mind when she took out the last of the thrashing creatures, a bug like monster from the second layer. *Fear?* she thought and blinked towards the origin of the telepathic message, somehow feeling the location.

“You are there,” the being said.

Ilea looked at the tank, seeing a partially corrupted Fae writhing against the small enchanted metal restraints, the whole right side of its body covered in corruption.

[Fae – lvl 103]

It’s not yet taken, she thought, cutting through the glass of the tank. She made sure the liquid stayed inside, in case it had some sort of restraining effect on the corruption.

“Calm down,” she said, her ash reaching the creature and pushing healing mana into it. The corruption was kept at bay at least but she couldn’t exactly rip it in half to get rid of the growing ooze.

She ripped away the glass, letting the water flow out now that her healing was keeping the corruption at bay. Ilea had no idea what she was looking at within the black horned fae, one white eye staring at her and the other one overgrown by pulsing orange and red veins.

Ilea noted that the creature wasn’t in distress anymore, the sentiment she picked up within her sphere changing.

“You trust easily,” she commented, starting to work on the metal that bound the creature, small lines of ash with hundreds of small blades rapidly turning around the tiny bars.

The Fae didn't respond in any way, just looking at her with the one large white abyss like eye.

She tried grasping its anatomy with her healing magic but only found herself growing more confused as time went on.

With a loud clink, the restrains were ripped through and Ilea caught the Fae in her hands. "Hmm... so, how do we go about this," she murmured.

"It's still alive but half taken over by corruption. I'd cut small parts of it away and just let the healing do the trick. Any other ideas?" she asked through the mental connection.

"Incredible... I am... reassured, now that I know it has not died," the being said.

"You're not exactly helping," Ilea commented, holding the Fae in her hands, the creature about the size of her head, much thinner however.

"I do not know how to treat the corruption. Cutting away the infected tissue should be the best option," it said.

"Fuck," Ilea said and looked down. "Any way you can knock it unconscious with your mind magic? I don't want to hurt the little guy," she said.

"Perhaps...," the Gracken said.

I don't see a reason why it would kill the thing, if it's already corrupted. I wouldn't have found it either way, Ilea tried to think of reasons not to trust the ancient being but so far it had given her nothing to doubt its sincerity. Other than the fact that it was some weird ass mind magic monster but Ilea knew appearances could be deceiving.

"Do I have to get closer to you?" she asked, hoping the answer wouldn't be a yes.

"The enchantments were broken... I can barely sense its mind next to yours. It is weak. Move away from it, five or six of your human steps. Can you still keep the corruption at bay from there?" the Enavurin asked.

"Sure," Ilea said and stepped away, using her ash to keep the Fae afloat next to the destroyed tank.

"It is done," the Enavurin said once more.

Ilea noted the differences in the being through her healing skill. It didn't breathe air but the magic flow around it calmed. "Can you keep it unconscious?"

"Yes, do what must be done," the being said.

She nodded and stayed at the same distance, using her sphere and ash to cut away the corruption, her healing continuously flowing into the creature.

The Fae showed no reaction, its white eye looking as if it had closed halfway.

He's fucking out. Mind magic being mind magic. Glad I have resistances to that, she thought, cutting small pieces out and healing them instantly, finding her spell faster than the corruption could spread once more.

"We'll get there little guy, just be patient," she murmured, focusing on the task.