

Chapter 551 A realm of wonder

“Can you open a path?” Ilea asked.

She watched the ground shift, her wings keeping her afloat as a tunnel formed.

Ilea blinked down and reached the Meadow. *Not particularly deep anymore, they were close.*

“Remember, my power will be vastly reduced in this form,” Meadow said, quite literally folding in on itself. The grass rolled up and the tree cracked and shattered. The water from the creek dripped out as the mana density first increased and then lowered.

“Perfect. Then I can get my four mark kill early,” Ilea said and displaced herself towards the basketball sized chunk of stone. It looked simple enough, perhaps a last ditch playing dead kind of spell.

“You’ll find this nut difficult to crack,” Meadow said.

“Damn, you’re heavy,” Ilea said when she grabbed the creature.

“Of course. I’m a prime specimen after all,” Meadow said.

Ilea displaced herself and the being out into the open, finding the task manageable now that it was weakened and small. She assumed it didn’t resist anymore either, maybe even helping the spell work.

The space outside was distorted still. A massive crater had formed where the portal had been previously. Debris, ice, and pieces of flesh floated around in the space magic related aftermath that spanned farther than the destroyed city walls.

Ilea couldn’t help but stare at the massive Daughter of Sephilon floating a few hundred meters above, its body shredded, barely a husk now. Its many eyes looked lifeless but she saw the surrounding mana float upwards.

“Where are the Michaels?” she asked.

Two notebooks appeared in front of her.

“They managed to bury them far away enough before they perished,” Meadow said. *“Oh... one of them has survived. I’ll lead you there.”*

Ilea raised an eyebrow.

She sped up, her wings carrying the two of them out of the ruins, any spirits that arrived now were focused entirely on the corpses and whatever mana had remained from the closing gate.

A howl resounded in the distance, echoing through the lands.

Ilea looked towards the distant creature, antlers of ice visible even from kilometers away.

“Thank you, friend,” she thought and charged her monster hunter.

“Anything you’d like to say to the Elemental?” she asked.

“There is no need. My gratitude has been conveyed,” the Meadow said.

Ilea once more imitated a wolf's howl, ignoring the spirits of death that would surely look for her now. She waved with a bright smile, seeing a blizzard form around the Elemental as it turned away.

What a fucking beast.

She sped up and left the few death spirits her call had summoned behind.

The remaining Michael was limping through the frozen desert, clutching the book with his one remaining arm.

He went all this way?

Ilea landed nearby.

The man didn't react.

"Michael," Ilea called out.

He shuffled to a stop, turning towards her before he collapsed.

His skin had been burnt, several deep wounds adorned his whole body barely held together by his blood magic.

One of his eyes was gone, the other one bloodshot.

Ilea extended her ash and started healing.

"There is... no point," he said in a strained voice. The man coughed a few times, blood and gold splattering onto the ice.

"I am, a construct. My resources... are... spent," he said.

Ilea noticed it too. The wounds did close but the man was dying either way. There was nothing she could do.

His one eye widened. "The... book," he tried to look down but failed to find the notebook he still clutched in his arm.

"I have it," Ilea said and knelt down next to him, placing Meadow on the ground.

She grabbed the notes, gently but firmly releasing his grip on them.

"Is that... Meadow?" he asked, looking at the spherical stone.

The man started cackling, coughing again before he calmed down a little. "You... you'll bring it back... you figured it out?"

He laughed again. "That is... wonderful."

"She will. Your original might find me at one point or another," Meadow said.

"Fuck him...," Michael said. "We were... close... you know?"

"To what?" Ilea asked.

"Long... range... teleportation," he said. "But if you bring... it back. There will be... another chance," he said. "Don't... waste it... humanity... requires, its power."

Yeah I kind of have that covered already, Ilea thought.

"You did well to survive this long," she said.

“And what... a... spectacle, it was,” he said and smiled to himself.

He died in that moment, his body dissolving into blood and gold.

Ilea sighed as she stood up, grabbing Meadow and charging Heart of Cinder.

“Will the spirits follow us at this point?” she asked.

“Your mana output is too small. I may attract mundane spirits but... the Daughters will return to Sephilon,” Meadow said.

“We killed one of them. But they can’t exactly die, can they?” she asked.

“Perhaps. I do not know,” Meadow admitted.

“What is it? You sound contemplative,” Ilea said, aiming her spell at the remains of Michael. There was quite a bit of gold but it didn’t feel right to take it.

Instead her fire engulfed the remains, flare of creation adding to it until little remained.

May you find rest, clone number four. Or more accurately, Michael.

She closed her eyes for a moment before her wings spread again.

“I was wondering,” Meadow said. *“What he said about power.”*

“If I’m doing this just for that?” Ilea asked.

The creature remained silent.

“You know me better than that,” she said. *“Though if you’re willing, I’d love for you to meet a few enchanters working on some long range teleportation.”*

“You know I wouldn’t refuse you,” the Meadow said.

“You can, you know? You don’t even have to come to Elos if you don’t want to. I just think it’d be more interesting for you. And I’d like to be able to visit you from time to time,” Ilea said with a smile, reaching another mountain range.

She looked for a cave somewhere, checking for spirits briefly before she settled down on a peak outside, summoning a meal.

“You wish to wait?” Meadow asked.

“Just a last meal. And a last look at this marvelous hellscape,” she said.

“Hmm,” the Meadow said. *“Many peoples have come and gone. Cities built and withered away.”*

They remained silent for a while.

“I would like to come with you. To discover what your realm holds for me, if you will have me,” Meadow said.

Ilea finished her meal and grabbed the sphere.

“It would be an honor,” she said and displaced them both into the cave.

“Now don’t flip your shit if you can’t breathe. The mana is VERY thin in my house. I’d like to keep it intact,” Ilea said.

Meadow didn’t reply.

“Ready?”

It sent a confirming thought.

Ilea activated her third tier of blink, feeling the power manifest, runes form, and space distort.

When it activated, she connected the Meadow to her long range teleportation ability, both of them leaving Erendar without a trace.

Ilea appeared within her home an instant later, in her hand a ball of stone.

She shook it lightly.

“Hey, you alright in there?” she said. *“We’re here.”*

“Yes... yes... I can feel it. Finally... I can take over your realm. You fool!” the Meadow exclaimed. It sounded distracted, joyous.

“You’ve been sitting on that one for a while, huh?” Ilea asked, stepping out onto her balcony, closing the door behind.

“There is... so much life... so many... creatures,” Meadow exclaimed.

Ilea felt deep reaching emotions exude from the being, invading her mind with joy and relief.

“It’s alright. You’re safe now,” she said and silently stroked the stone.

The ball shivered but Meadow didn’t say anything else for some time.

“To see this place,” it said, its voice quivering lightly. *“You have no comprehension of what it means to me, Ilea.”*

“It’s a pretty nice realm. Maybe we can keep it from collapsing a little longer, with your help,” she said.

“You face an eclipse then? Or an enemy?” Meadow asked.

“Not to my knowledge, no. But you never know what’s out there,” Ilea said. *“And time moves differently for an ancient creature like yourself.”*

“I’m... sorry. I am a little... distracted,” Meadow said.

“Take your time. The flight is long. How’s your body looking?” she asked, unable to see any issues with her healing.

“Any adverse effects shouldn’t come for another few days. Two suns... magnificent. Something is... missing? Peculiar,” the creature said.

Ilea flew up and charged her wings, aiming northwards.

“There were three suns a few thousand years ago. Or we think so at least,” she said.

“A sun taken from the skies... it seems I have much to learn,” the Meadow said.

“Yeah, if you can find a few Ascended. I’m sure they’d be interested in meeting you,” Ilea said.

“You do not sound fond of them,” the being said.

“I’ve only met one. Nearly killed me. I’m sure I’d fare better now,” she said.

“You survived a battle involving Daughters of Sephilon,” Meadow said.

“Yeah but I didn’t exactly kill them, did I?” Ilea asked.

“No. That is true,” Meadow said.

They continued for a while in silence.

“Trees,” Meadow said when they passed the southern mountains.

Ilea nodded.

“Can... can I see them?” Meadow asked.

“Of course,” Ilea said and descended.

“Should I make you touch one? Or can you expand here?” Ilea said.

“It would be... appreciated. And yes but I can only use it every so often. It would be foolish to do so in a place I do not plan to stay at,” Meadow said.

A little weird but okay, Ilea thought, touching the tree with Meadow’s rock ball.

She checked her few messages from the last battle while the Meadow hopefully didn’t commit an act of sexual harassment.

‘ding’ ‘Your group has defeated [Larinis – Daughter of Sephilon – lvl 1740]’

Highest level kill I’ve ever gotten, she thought with a grin.

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 439 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 440 – Five stat points awarded – One Core skill point awarded’

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 441 – Five stat points awarded’

...

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 447 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 436 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 437 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 438 – Five stat points awarded’

...

‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 443 – Five stat points awarded’

That’s nuts. Glad the Elemental killed that little shit, Ilea thought. *Or I guess just temporarily killed it? Who knows.*

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 356 – One stat point awarded’

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 357 – One stat point awarded’

...

‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 375 – One stat point awarded’

Fuck, maxing my third Class skills before four hundred is going to be impossible if I continue at this rate, she thought.

Might just go for five hundred too. Wasn't that a Class requirement anyway? Getting a third Class before five hundred?

She dismissed the thoughts and checked the rest.

‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Reversal reaches 3rd lvl 29’

‘ding’ ‘Storm of Cinders reaches 3rd lvl 29’

‘ding’ ‘Eyes of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 29’

‘ding’ ‘Phaseshift reaches 3rd lvl 3’

...

‘ding’ ‘Phaseshift reaches 3rd lvl 8’

‘ding’ ‘Flare of Creation reaches 3rd lvl 10’

...

‘ding’ ‘Flare of Creation reaches 3rd lvl 14’

‘ding’ ‘Displacement reaches 3rd lvl 10’

‘ding’ ‘Displacement reaches 3rd lvl 11’

‘ding’ ‘Space Shift reaches 3rd lvl 6’

‘ding’ ‘Space Shift reaches 3rd lvl 7’

‘ding’ ‘Body of the Valkyrie reaches 3rd lvl 7’

...

‘ding’ ‘Body of the Valkyrie reaches 3rd lvl 10’

“You can remove me from the tree,” Meadow said.

Ilea did just that, flying up again as she checked the rest of her messages.

‘ding’ ‘Deviant of Humanity reaches 2nd lvl 7’

...

‘ding’ ‘Deviant of Humanity reaches 2nd lvl 12’

‘ding’ ‘Meditation reaches 3rd lvl 11’

‘ding’ ‘Monster Hunter reaches 3rd lvl 8’

'ding' 'Veteran reaches 3rd lvl 13'

'ding' 'Mana Drain Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 5'

'ding' 'Mana Drain Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 6'

'ding' 'Mana Drain Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 7'

'ding' 'You have ridden an Ice Elemental into battle – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'You have successfully distracted a Daughter of Sephilon – One Core skill point awarded'

'ding' 'You have saved an incomprehensible being from its dying realm – One Core skill point awarded'

Ilea was quite happy with the results.

"Maybe we should go back and have another battle like that. Got a shit ton of levels out of it," she said.

"You might not be quite as lucky next time," Meadow said. *"Is that... a lake?"*

Ilea groaned. *"You want to look at everything?"*

"Y E S," the being said.

Ilea laughed and descended. *"Alright. Let's travel on foot then. There's no rush."*

"I appreciate it... now chuck me into that lake," Meadow said.

"I'm not going to throw you around willy nilly," Ilea said. *"Can you imagine? Taking you here from Erendar and then losing you in a bloody lake."*

"With your abilities, it's highly unpro- ah a joke. I'm distracted, apologies," the being said.

"No need to," Ilea said and lowered the sphere into the lake using her ash.

She joined for a quick swim but kept her armor active. Somehow it felt indecent to bare herself in front of the space being. Even though it had literally seen her to the bone.

"Those are... the fish, you have mentioned?" Meadow asked.

"Mhm, there are many kinds. Also great to eat," she said.

"You would... eat? Such a magnificent being? Truly, a travesty," the Meadow said, mentally shaking its non-existent head.

"Have you tried? Well wait... better not teach the four mark space mage the beauty of eating flesh," she said.

"I lack the necessary organs anyway. Can you move me out of the water? I can see something VERY interesting," Meadow said.

"Is it dirt?" Ilea asked, displacing the ball into her hand before she swam to the shore. *"Oh... yeah I get it."*

She displaced them out and looked at the Meadow. *"Do you want some alone time?"* she asked with a wink.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Ilea,” the creature said, rolling a few thousand mental eyes.

Ilea laughed and sat down, placing the Meadow onto the meadow.

“So what’s the plan again?” the creature asked after a while of subdued rolling around.

“I don’t operate with plans,” Ilea said. *“I guess we can quickly check out Gyffold to see if the portal closed fine on our side.”*

“It should have. But I understand if you want to get reassurance. Though I am slightly insulted in your opinion of my capabilities,” Meadow said.

“Oh really? You didn’t seem so sure back in Erendar. Why did you not teleport me out by the way?” Ilea asked.

“I would have, should the second to last barrier have collapsed. Though to be honest... I didn’t want to try. Even if your resistance was disabled, your third Class provides reasonable defenses against space magic. I might not have been able to move you far enough away,” Meadow said.

“You’re kidding right? The Elemental was massive and you made her vanish in the blink of an eye!” Ilea said.

“Yes. The Elemental that has faced a single space magic being, me. And we didn’t exactly train. There are reasons why you survived the Daughters’ and the Elemental’s attacks where one of them fell,” Meadow said.

“I wasn’t hit directly by the Elemental, nor the massive floating spirit,” Ilea said.

“You’re like one of the fishes in that lake to them. Barely a concern. Taking a direct hit may have killed you. But the simple fact of having to question that outcome is testament enough. I do remember you getting hit directly by the time manipulator,” Meadow said.

“A few beams, yes. I even considered getting a third tier astral resistance but my health held up,” Ilea said.

“Really?” the Meadow asked. *“You could’ve heightened your defenses in that situation? Why didn’t you? You were so close to death!”*

“I’ve been through worse. Many times,” Ilea said.

“Hmm. Yes it does make sense. I didn’t have to climb to the power I have now. You’re more a veteran of battle than I am,” Meadow admitted.

“Of course,” Ilea said and picked it up. *“You’re a Meadow after all.”*

“Are you implying Meadows are not the optimal combat form of a living creature?” it asked.

“Shocking opinion, isn’t it?” Ilea asked and looked at the ball with a grin.

“At least I’m not a sack of meat,” Meadow said.

“Yeah, well I suppose we can both have our own preferred body. No hard feelings,” Ilea said.

“I can accept that,” the Meadow said and sent a mental wink.

Ilea started in a jog before she changed into a sprint, rushing through the empire lands and northwards.

The Meadow occasionally asked to stop and inspect some random growths, plants, flowers, dirt, and creeks.

“Fascinating... it lacks the instinct to see you as a predator,” Meadow commented.

The suns had gone down in the meantime, the two not having gotten very far in their journey.

[Werewolf – lvl 242]

“Might just be angry,” Ilea suggested.

She displaced the large hairy creature fifty meters away to avoid its frenzied attack. Not that its blood magic enhanced claws would leave a mark on her defenses.

“Hmm... it does seem in a frenzy. I can't reach it at all but that may simply be due to my limited form,” Meadow said.

“Are Werewolves common in the plains?” Ilea asked.

“I wouldn't know,” Meadow said.

“Hmm... maybe it's just the only thing that didn't run after feeling my presence. Or it specifically followed our trail because of my power?” she wondered.

The thing towered over her by a meter, its arms and legs pure muscle, covered in thick brown fur that was near invisible in the soft moonlight.

Ilea didn't have the same limitations as most humans however, her eyes locking with the monster's that once more chose to charge her.

“Are you not going to kill it?” Meadow asked.

“I will. Just because it might attack humans. It's pretty high level for this area... I think,” she said.

“An opportunity lost then,” Meadow said in a sad voice.

“You won't be in this area anyway. And I don't think Werewolves are going to be your priority. Something that attacks me at that level might not be the pinnacle of intelligence,” she said.

“It would be a sound argument, were it not for you,” Meadow said.

“You're implying I'm intelligent? Well thank you,” she said and displaced the creature close to her.

It lashed out immediately, its claws stopped entirely when they reached her ash.

Ilea grabbed it with her limbs and pierced through its spine and skull at the same time. The creature was dead in an instant.

She carefully lowered it to the ground and released her ash.

“Intelligent enough to awaken, yes. Perhaps comparable to a fish. Or a very simple bird,” Meadow suggested.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Werewolf – lvl 242]’

So easy. How many creatures and humans did this one kill before I stumbled upon it? It might have even given a group of Shadows trouble.