

Preparation

She was still not quite used to her new body. Before, Anrosh barely noticed how her body impacted the world around her, now... It was a lot more apparent, especially with all of her items equipped. She could take a step and crack the ground, just moving through a room at full speed would send air rushing away from her. When she was weaker, it was easier to control, keeping herself to a few hundred stats of power was easy. Now, not so much, she couldn't even imagine what people like Ryun and Tali had to do. It had to be annoying. Though, she had noticed that some of the sects territories were much more... durable than others. She finally understood while some high tiered people rarely left their homes, and her problems were so much less than theirs. They had to be looking for and settling in territories where they didn't need to hold themselves back all the time.

"Are you sure about this?" Anrosh asked, looking Ryun straight in the eye. Tali sat on a small rock nearby, her eyes glaring daggers at both of them.

"Of course," Ryun answered. "You need more power, and Class is a cheap way of getting it. You are still lacking in stats. Besides, the more power you have, the more likely our plan is to work."

Anrosh knew that. Her stats were a fraction of his, though she could somewhat match him with all of her items, when he didn't use any boosting powers or items himself. And by matching him she meant annoying him. If she designated her armor to counter his Void there wasn't much that he could do to damage her, though he hadn't tried going fully all out of course. If even a small percent of his fully charged techniques got through, that might be enough to kill her. But his physical attacks couldn't do much to her, and he was still adapting to his stillness.

If she was being honest, she didn't see anyone really being able to get through her armor. It was just that strong. It put her several tiers above her weight class and it narrowed the gap between her and someone who had advanced properly like Ryun did. Still, she understood what he meant, she needed all the advantages that she could get.

She took a deep breath and then leveled. They had the Essence, she had already started selling some of the items that Ryun had given her, they didn't have a good enough vault to keep any of it in there, so most of the stuff was with him, kept inside his Void storage. That was to prevent people from thievery related powers to sense the items, the wealth. Most of what they earned from sales she was stockpiling in the Sect Interface for now, which was protected, planning for the future expansion on projects. The amount that she needed to level was inconsequential compared to the amounts that the Sect had now.

She reached level 240 and gained new evolution options.

CLASS	DESCRIPTION	POWERS
<p>Frost-Guard Knight</p>	<p><i>You are the shield of frost, guardian and protector.</i></p> <p>Frost-Guard Knights are guardians, knights of frost that use frost to protect and control the battlefield. A Frost-Guard Knight fights in a group, empowering themselves and their allies.</p>	<p>Durability of Frost: Gain +20% to stamina and +20% to the effectiveness of all cold-related and defensive powers. Your defensive abilities modifiers are increased by a factor of x1.2, gain +20% to endurance.</p> <p>!Gain one of the following:</p> <p>-Frost Guard defensive ability: Apply a defensive ward on any defensive object on your person, highly increasing your defenses for five seconds, and applying Frost Essence damage to attackers.</p>

		<p>-Frost Blade offensive ability: Apply an offensive ward on any bladed weapon on your person, increasing its damage for 15 seconds, and making it do increased Frost Essence damage.</p> <p>-Fortitude: gain plus 30% to base endurance.</p>
<p>Grand Frost-Lady Knight</p>	<p><i>A warrior of frost, excelling at using the cold to control and defend.</i></p> <p>Grand Frost-Lady Knight is both a warrior and a leader. Master of frost and defense, deft in protection and command of the battlefield. Like the lesser evolutions of this class, a Grand Frost-Lady Knight is fully capable of dealing great damage if allowed the time to set up properly.</p>	<p>Grand Frost Defender: Gain +20% to stamina and +20% to endurance and strength when in cold environments. Any defensive powers are 15% more effective. Your defensive abilities modifiers are increased by a factor of x1.5, gain +20% to endurance.</p> <p>!Gain one of the following:</p> <p>-Grand Guard defensive ability: Apply a defensive ward on any defensive object on your person, moderately increasing your defenses for fifty seconds.</p>

		<p>-Grand Rally support ability: Increase your and the stats of nearby allies by 10%, clear any low-tier terror-related influences, and bolster their mind defenses by 15% for three minutes.</p> <p>-Fortitude: gain plus 30% to base endurance.</p>
<p>Undead-Bane Knight</p>	<p><i>You are a warrior standing against the curse of the undeath.</i></p> <p>An Undead-Bane Knight is a warrior specializing in dealing with the undead. They gain increased damage against the undead and special powers to help them defeat them or prevent them from rising.</p>	<p>Bane of Undeath: All damage against the undead is increased by 25%, your stats are increased by 15% when in the presence of undead. Undeath Mark—most undead killed by you cannot be raised again. Gain +10% to endurance.</p> <p>!Gain one of the following:</p> <p>-Death Ward defensive ability: Apply a defensive ward on any defensive object on your person, increasing your Death-related Essence resistances for five seconds.</p>

		<p>-Holy Ward offensive ability: Apply an offensive ward on any weapon on your person, increasing its damage for 15 seconds, and making it do increased damage to undead.</p> <p>-Insight and Might: Gain plus 10% to base wisdom and 10% to base strength.</p>
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She dismissed two of the choices immediately. They weren't particularly good evolutions, which she wasn't surprised by. One was a bit of a sidestep instead of an evolution, and the other was a completely different branch, which she had no interest in. She could see how she got them, but only her direct evolution mattered.

She showed them to Tali and Ryun, both of whom agreed about the choice.

"You should take an ability," Ryun said.

Anrosh had been picking the base stat boost for all of her evolutions, and those choices had borne fruit. She had gained a lot of stats from that. But... she could see what he meant, she had only two more evolutions left at best, if Ryun ever raised her to Eternal, and the stats that she would get from that would not even reach what she got from a single item Ryun gave her. It wasn't worth it, but more abilities... that could give her more tools which she did need.

"Which one though?" Anrosh asked.

"Grand Guard," Tali said at the same time as Ryun did.

"Grand Rally."

Anrosh tilted her head at them.

Ryun looked at Tali and said a single word.

"Why?" He asked.

“Defensive abilities usually scale of Endurance and, or Strength, which are her highest and third highest stats. Besides, even with all that armor you gave her, she still needs more defense. You wrapped her up in a cocoon of Eternal armor that I doubt anyone she ever comes into conflict with would be able to crack open. Still, the more she can leverage those defenses the more annoying she will be to crack open by any threats that are beyond her.”

Anrosh could see what Tali was

“She has perks that boost her endurance and the durability of her items, but she doesn’t have anything that really scales well for her real tier. Her build was poorly thought out,” Tali glared at Anrosh, forcing her to look away in shame. It wasn’t like she had any real education in Class, what she knew came from Ryun and some from Nayra, but that came later on.

“It is about the numbers,” Tali said. “Let’s say that that shield of hers can take a punishment of someone with very high offensive scaling. Imagine someone with ten thousand strength, striking her with perks that increased that damage a dozen times. That shield could take that punishment without cracking, but how much of that force would transfer through to hit her body? It depends on the material, on her stats, on her stance and perks. A defense buff increases her items resistances too, which means less force will pass through.”

Anrosh had never really thought about how that really worked, she raised her shield, and if she blocked an attack she blocked it, if not then...

Tali seemed to recognize something in her eyes and motioned for her to stand. “Take out your shield, no armor.”

Anrosh looked askance at Ryun, but did as Tali asked. The woman motioned for Anrosh to brace and she raised her shield. Then Tali blurred forward and hit her shield with her fist. Anrosh didn’t even buckle.

“That,” Tali spoke. “Was a hit with all of my power, I would estimate somewhere around eight thousand effective striking power all of my strength, some of my dexterity. You didn’t feel it anything, right? That is because not only does your shield absorb a lot of that force, the way that you are standing, your brace, the stance itself, increases your effective defending power. All items are multipliers, shields are no different. What force you can take is equal to some of your endurance added up with your strength, multiplied by

the stats of your shield. The way that you stand dictates how much of which stat goes into your shield. That shield is Eternal, its durability is probably equal to hundreds of thousands of stats, more probably, and the amount that it can handle will vary depending on the angle it is struck. And that crystal obviously absorbs a lot of physical force, you don't need a lot of stats to defend with it even against attacks that your stats wouldn't be able to handle.”

Anrosh nodded slowly, trying to wrap her mind around all of that. She knew some of it instinctively.

“I fought a man once, long ago, who had a strange power. He was a Classer, I never found out what his Class was but it was something related to mathematics. It isn't a rare Class, not even now, many have similar ones though most who walk those paths are merchants or advisers, or pursers and treasurers. He wasn't, he used it to fight. He would calculate how much power an attack coming at him had in an instant, then he would adjust his body and response in a way to reduce the attack's power as much as possible while increasing his own defensive ability the same. It was a unique approach,” she shook her head, her lips curling in a smile as if she was remembering something fondly. “I tell you this to let you know that there is power in knowing these things, in preparing for it. Raw numbers can mean a lot, but you can always reduce them. You should always have powers that can add buffs to your strengths, and for better or worse your greatest strength are the items that you hold now. A moderate defensive buff would be around 20% I would say, but a 20% buff on an Eternal shield? That is nothing to scoff at.”

“I understand,” Anrosh said.

“What happened to the mathematician?” Ryun asked.

Tali blinked. “Hm? Oh, I killed him. What?” She asked after seeing their expressions. “Math matters, but not when numbers are too much to overcome.”

Ryun shook his head.

“My suggestion still stands. Her items are enough to protect her from nearly anyone on her tier or even above. Few will be able to get through the armor or the shield.”

“They don’t need to,” Tali said. “If they are powerful enough just a couple percent of their offensive power getting through will mean her death. What does it matter if her armor can stop a million effective power when the attack is a million and ten thousand? The ten thousand will still squish her insides.”

“Situational,” Ryun said. “The armor allows her to negate Essence types. Though I agree in principle, still I suggest the Grand Rally.”

“Why?” Tali asked in the same tone as Ryun had asked her.

Ryun’s expression grew somber. “Hastur,” he said simply. Anrosh saw Tali’s eye twitch.

“That was one monster,” she said.

“It taught me the dangers of mental manipulations; it is not something that should be ignored. I am fairly confident that Anrosh will be protected with the ring I gave her, but if we are ever in a war? A real war not a sect war, we need ways of protecting our people. I’ve been thinking about making a list of required items for our warriors. Perhaps invest in getting them all mind protection items or making mind protection skills mandatory.”

“You are being paranoid,” Tali said.

“Am I?” Ryun asked. “The entire world went to war the moment Hastur was released, does that not seem strange to you? A monster that had extremely powerful mind capabilities.”

“You don’t think that..?” Tali hesitated.

“I don’t know, but I think that it is... suspicious. The wars lessened, some all together stopped after we killed Hastur.”

“They ran its course,” Tali argued.

“Maybe,” Ryun shrugged. “Or maybe not.”

Tali grimaced, then glanced at Anrosh. “Fine,” she said. “She’ll get two more abilities anyway.”

Anrosh looked between the two of them, and then made her choice.

“Good,” Ryun said. “Now onto the perks.”

She glanced at her screens and started leveling again.