

Chapter 617 Slice and Dice

Ilea burst out of the ocean before she landed on the shore, rolling onto her back as the mists swirled around her. She coughed up water, her ashen limbs lashing out to slice open her chest, a splatter of blood and water landing on the ground before the wound closed again.

She controlled her breathing as she finally tasted air again, taking deep breaths before she coughed once more. The fight had been messy, her lungs filling with water because she couldn't keep her armor sealed at all times.

A few miststalkers started to dance closer, their tendrils of magic draining health and mana from the prone figure who had flopped onto the shore.

Aw man, she thought, welcoming the familiar feeling of the creatures' drain magic. She sat up when the first mist blades dug into her armor, unable to pierce or pass through her. Her ash lashed out, cutting through the creatures until they vanished, likely to reform at some other point on the isles.

Ilea hugged her knees, shivering as she let the heat within her chest dry her body, white flames erupting on her to help deal with the water. She wasn't cold of course, it would take an Ice Elemental to let her feel that.

Two levels, she thought, focusing on the numbers in her status. More than effective for what? An hour's work, two? She didn't know exactly how long she had been down there.

Before she could think of the darkness again, she slapped her own cheeks, a few of her teeth flying through her mouth before they reformed. She spit them out and stood up, cracking her neck as she stretched. "FUCK YOU!" she shouted and threw a few burning ashen spears into the ocean.

Ilea started walking along the coastline, flying onto some of the large boulders as she kept her gaze on the waters. Stars shined above, storms raging in the distance, normal ones at least. Her theory had proven true. She was pretty sure she wouldn't have gained as many levels if she had fought the same Bluetail out in the open. And she had gained several levels in Fear Resistance, one of the few resistances she couldn't level easily.

A few minutes passed, two of Keyla's meals stress eaten, Ilea prepared to jump in once more.

Unending depths.

I've faced the Daughters of Sephilon, Taleen Praetorians, the Demons of the Great Salt. I won't show you my fear.

Kyrian had filled his plate again, sitting down at one of the empty tables before digging in once more. He absolutely loved it. In fact, he didn't remember if he had ever eaten something this good. *And I thought I was good at cooking? Laughable.*

He had attended two of the Classes, surprised the Sentinels had Classes in the middle of the night, but then again so did the Shadow's Hand. Most of the students weren't above level two hundred, but with what he saw of them, he knew they wouldn't take long. Many of them at least.

Kyrian hadn't asked Trian many questions, though he certainly was interested. He just didn't want to bother the man too much. Already he had offered so much.

"Do you mind if I sit here?" one of the Sentinels asked. The man had dark skin and short brown hair.

Most of the Sentinels Kyrian had seen were walking around in Leather armor, likely made for training. Some just wore simple clothes in various styles and colors. This man however wore armor similar to the set he had seen on the first squad that walked past him and Trian back when they arrived.

A well fitting design, mixing steel and bone to create a fierce looking armor. It had small horns similar to Ilea's ashen defense.

Kyrian had stopped eating, his gaze on the helmet next to the healer.

[Battle Healer – lvl 128]

The man sat down, tapping the helmet he had set on the table with a smile. "Sentinel Armor, first generation. Does a wonderful job at keeping you alive."

Kyrian looked at the thing before he felt at the steel in the man's armor. "Lots of repairs."

He laughed. "Of course. It's not quite as good as ash. I've not met you here before, I'm Luke."

"Kyrian," he answered, continuing to eat as he looked at the helmet again.

"Looks fierce, doesn't it? I love the design," Luke said as he leaned forward a little. "Almost makes me feel like I'm Lilith." He smiled and started eating as well.

"It does look like her," Kyrian said right before two more healers joined them.

Both were wearing armor too. The man showed scarred tissue on his neck, likely caused by fire. He gave Kyrian a vary look before he spoke. "Do you mind if we join you?"

Kyrian gestured them to join, continuing to eat as he looked at the group.

The third one was a woman with short blond hair and a smirk that instantly reminded him of Ilea. "You're the new mystery guy. Are you even a Sentinel?" she asked, sitting down and starting to eat. The amount of food on her plate reminded of Ilea as well.

"I'm not a Sentinel," Kyrian answered, continuing to eat as he locked eyes with the woman. Neither of them looked away as they ate, like wild beasts protecting their catch while eyeing the competition.

"I'm Nathan, nice to meet you. What brings you here if I may ask? I saw you took part in the beginner alchemy class," the other man said.

Kyrian glanced at him. "I'm Kyrian. I... know Trian."

“What kind of shit answer is that? I know him too,” the woman said. “I’m Celeste.”

Nathan glared at her. “Don’t start a fight again.”

“I won’t fight her,” Kyrian said.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Celeste asked. “Think you’re so much stronger?”

Nathan tried to intervene again but Kyrian didn’t mind. He knew the way she looked at him very well. She wasn’t offended, nor did she question his ability. She hoped he was stronger, hoped to get a challenge.

“I do,” Kyrian answered and continued eating. “But I’m sure you have enough people to train with. And you’re wearing your armor, so I’d think you’re about to leave?”

“Can’t share Sentinel secrets with an outsider,” Celeste said before biting into a steak.

“Training mission,” Nathan supplied. “How do you know Trian? I’m curious.”

Kyrian wasn’t sure what he should share with these people. As if he was some senior considering what to tell the group of teenagers who played near his home. Funnily enough, he was pretty sure they were about his age. Maybe a little younger.

“We were in the same team once,” he said. Technically they still were but none of them actually did work for the Shadows anymore. Not directly at least.

Celeste glared at him now. “Wait... Holy shit... you know Lilith? Like... *know*?”

Kyrian ate another piece of steak, looking at her again as he nodded once.

“Who... what?” Luke asked.

Celeste hushed him before she spoke in a whisper. “They were Shadows. Lilith, Trian, and a few others apparently. I just heard rumors about them but if...,” she said and turned back to Kyrian. “I... I’m sorry.”

Kyrian chuckled. “Now you’re sorry? I don’t mind. Ask away if you’re interested. But I won’t share anything personal.”

“Is she still alive?” Celeste asked immediately.

“I would hope so. I saw her earlier today,” Kyrian said.

“She was here?” Celeste asked.

“In the city, yes. She can travel... fast,” Kyrian said and continued eating.

Celeste beamed. “Can you take her in a fight?”

Kyrian laughed. “No. But we haven’t trained in... some time.”

“She forgot about her food,” Nathan whispered to Luke, glancing over at Celeste’s plate.

“I might too,” Luke said, his eyes on Kyrian.

“She trained us, you know? At first... it was horrible. The pain... I don’t even want to think about it. But somehow it didn’t matter, her healing was... special, unlike anything we can do. She’s amazing. I wish I could meet her again,” Celeste said, starting her usual ramble about Lilith.

Kyrian ate in silence, listening to the healers Ilea and Trian had trained. *She definitely left an impression, he thought. Of course she did.*

Ilea finished the last Bluetail, the group of five hardly a challenge compared to the first one she had killed underwater. Their levels really differed greatly, most of this group below seven hundred. It still took time to take them down but even an Astral Spirit put up a better fight than this bunch.

Finding the Bluetails in the vast ocean proved to be more difficult than she had expected. Monster Hunter didn't travel quite as well in the water, and she couldn't see as far, let alone with the scales of the creatures that made them more difficult to spot.

Ilea swam up to the surface and poked her head out of the water. The closest isle was a few kilometers away by now but the marks on her elven friends helped her cope with that fact. She knew the more danger she was in, the higher the rewards.

Looking around, she found a distant group of three Bluetails, even further out on the ocean. The most numerous groups were closer to the isles but she already knew that those were mostly the weaker ones. Her wings moved out of the water, propelling her forward close to the surface. Her high speed passing left a trail, her eyes focused on the three flying birds.

She found they were quite large, the scales slightly reflecting the moonlight. *No need for stealth with them... not in the skies.*

Ilea herself was barely visible, her armor black above the dark ocean, the stream she left on the calm waters the only identifiable thing she left behind. This time she didn't have to call for the creatures, one of them turning to face her when she was a few hundred meters away. She locked eyes with the Wyvern like creature, seeing the others turn too when it screeched.

Here we go, she thought and charged her spells.

She flew at the beings, swerving above the water to dodge the torrents of wind coming her way. Her sphere let her perceive the incoming waves of magic before she used either displacement or blink to avoid them, the former spell not able to grasp the large attacks. Ilea didn't mind dodging either however, twirling as she flew around another attack, watching the descending monsters.

Two of them dived into the water while one approached from above.

Ilea watched as the creature screeched, the air vibrating with power before thousands of small wind blades rushed at her. *Finally,* she thought with a grin forming. Ilea quickly put her remaining thirty three stat points into Vitality as she rushed into the incoming torrent, many of the spells homing in on her.

Phaseshift activated before the spells flew through her with no impact. She sacrificed all the health she could as the remaining momentum brought her closer to the Bluetail.

[Mature Bluetail – lvl ?????]

So you just need to grow up to become a four mark? Some things are just unfair, aren't they?

Ilea returned to her normal form, bursting into bright white flame as she aimed her hand at the flying creature. She saw the other two birds burst out of the water in that moment, jumping at her with their talons ahead. Heart of Cinder activated, not aimed but in a sphere instead, enveloping the two creatures and vaporizing a sizable chunk of water.

She turned her body in mid air, sinking her ash into the Bluetail that got the closest, hanging on as it breached the water yet again, its scales slightly scorched by her spell. She knew the two she had hit were lower in level, closer to eight hundred. The mature one was at around one thousand and one hundred. Manageable, if it wasn't much smarter than the others.

It already showed far greater control of wind magic but so far Ilea wasn't particularly impressed. *First, this one*, she thought, pumping her destructive healing into the Bluetail she had clung onto. Her ash scratched against the hard scales as they descended deeper into the ocean, water flowing past as the creature twirled to try and get her away. Its attacks weren't particularly well targeted but broad enough to hit her anyway.

Ilea could take it, healing the damage from the highly concentrated water pressure. Her various resistances really pulled their weight, allowing her to absorb some of the shock, coupled with all her main abilities increasing her resilience. Her ash moved around the creature's neck, pulling her with it when the second Bluetail started with far better aimed attacks, trying to push her away from the slightly injured creature.

She didn't mind much, her sphere enough to inform her of an incoming attack, especially coupled with her slight precognition. Ilea just focused on her target, knowing that she had to take down the weaker ones one by one to get to the four mark. White flame clung to the being as she punched and ripped, focusing on slowly prying off single scales to actually wound the creature. Her mana intrusion would overwhelm it in time, that much she knew already. The creatures didn't possess a major regeneration ability after all. She could outlast them.

Ilea looked up when she felt a powerful magical pressure, seeing the same torrent of wind blades form in the water, a turquoise hue shimmering around each of the blades, none of which impeded by the water, somehow even enhanced. The benefit of seeing them didn't exactly fill her with confidence, their sheer number a spectacle challenged only by a starry night sky.

The silhouette of the four mark was barely visible behind the shining projectiles, the torrent coming over them a moment later.

She had hoped to use the Bluetail as cover but the blades just moved past, circling around to get back at her. Ilea once more activated Phaseshift, letting the spells go through her. A few of them dug into the side of the Bluetail, the creature crying out as it descended away from the now slightly translucent healer.

The magic dissipated after going through her body, taking with it a chunk of health.

Ilea healed against the damage, keeping an eye on her declining health as she focused on the mark left on the Bluetail below. She still thought it unwise to approach the four mark with two other creatures nearby. A trail of blood was left behind where the blades had cut into the Bluetail's side, maybe not enough to seriously injure it but the way was now free for her ash to do its job.

She returned to her normal form when the spells finally stopped, not able to put any health into her auras. Her mark guided her to the descending Bluetail, a few uses of teleportation closing the

distance before she dodged a torrent of water, her ashen limbs spreading out before she once more grappled onto the being.

It struggled and continued to use its powerful magic in retaliation, a laughable effort compared to the four mark likely following the now spiraling duo. Ilea was glad for the constant magic attacks, her healing and attacks steady as she continued to rip open the gash left behind by the turquoise wind blades.

Ilea saw something light up in her sphere before her left eye suddenly went dark. She couldn't move anymore either, seeing her ash float past. The Bluetail in front of her fell apart in the next second, its wings and legs floating away as its head split in two. Blood started seeping into the water a moment later, the remains of the creature slowly spreading out.

She could feel her arms and legs again, her eye returning as her third tier healing regenerated her body. Ilea swam back and saw the rest of her, arms and legs separated from her quartered torso, her skull split, one lifeless eye staring back at her as her corpse floated downwards.

Concerning, she thought, quickly spreading out her ash and storing her body, not about to leave a corpse on the ocean floor. Her brain had stayed intact, Ilea regenerating from there. The Bluetail hadn't been as lucky in its magic abilities.

What the fuck was that. My precognition and sphere barely noticed the spell.

Time hadn't slowed down, which meant at least that she could take the attack didn't deal exceptional damage. Her abilities luckily helped a lot with the issue of getting cut up like that. Broader spells were simply more effective against her.

She finally spotted the large Bluetail, right before it tried to sink its talons into her. Ilea dodged to the side, her ash failing to gain purchase on the tight sitting scales, leaving her spiraling in the wake of the fast creature's passing. She wondered where the other level eight hundred Bluetail was.

Did it decide I was worthy prey after all? she thought, trying to spot the fast moving Wyvern in the black depths. She sent out burning ash to illuminate the surroundings, only spotting the descending remains of the cut up creature, a mist of blood now clouding most of its parts.

Gotta mark it with my next attack, she thought and prepared her abilities.

She saw the spell coming this time, her sphere picking up the bright lines that came upon her near instantly. The burning ash was parted, the flame of creation itself separated as if it was a log of wood being split. Ilea activated displacement and appeared a few dozen meters away, finding the spell had been too late. Her lower half was gone, cut so cleanly she didn't know if her body ever had a lower half.

The wounds closed and her legs regenerated before everything could spill out into the water. She assumed the spell had some kind of way to cut through her ash instead of impacting it directly, the line too thin to be stopped, a similar effect as the void magic blades the Executioners used.

Now fucking show yourself, Ilea thought, using monster hunter to lure the creature closer.

She was rewarded with several talons ramming into her chest, the claws sinking deeper into her ash as she marked the being with Sentinel Huntress. A grin came to her lips as she started to pour reversed healing into the powerful being.