

## Chapter 870 Blue

*How the fuck do I kill that thing?*

Ilea paced around, realizing she had lost her hammer somewhere during the fight.

*Well, not like it would switch sides to the blood monster from the blood lake, right?*

Aside from the sarcasm, she found she actually trusted the hammer, feeling some kind of bond between them that seemed to go beyond even what it had with its maker. Perhaps she influenced it in some ways, she wasn't quite sure.

Ilea looked at her mana and found that she was ready to fight again. She had to leave because the Oracle could close the distance despite her teleports, and her wild attacks were too fast and powerful to avoid fully. A few more punches and she'd have been down to very little health. She did an alright job, she thought, if she considered the fact that she was brawling with possibly a literal goddess.

“And of course she can heal. That's stupid. Only I am allowed to heal,” she muttered, kicking a piece of salt stone nearby. *The heal is fast too, and even though I could pierce her flesh and burn her a little, she didn't care in the slightest. Though I guess the other one didn't care either.*

*Could try to use my new Fourth Tier, but then I'd have to sit here and meditate for hours.*

She cracked her neck and sighed. It was one thing facing a creature of legend and being outmatched, but being outpunched was something entirely different. Punching was her thing.

*And then she heals as well. And she's taller.*

“The audacity,” she murmured.

“*Violence?*” a voice reached her mind, coming through her mark.

Ilea smiled, despite her annoyance.

*“I'm around. Fighting an Oracle or something. It's dangerous but you can join if you want.”*

She felt the fabric shift near her, the small creature appearing with its wings spread out, the white eyes taking her in.

Ilea squinted. “Your eyes look almost like those of that monster. Are you hiding a realm in there?”

*Secret*

The Fae appeared on her shoulder.

*Fight?*

“Yeah, yeah. I'll have to retreat frequently though, that thing is at level two thousand and it packs a ridiculous punch,” she said.

*Better*

*Ilea?*

She didn't comment.

The Fae nodded.

*Stronger*

*Ilea*

“I might reconsider your participation in this event,” she said.

*Disagree*

“That’s not your decision to make,” she said when the creature booped her cheek.

*Violence*

She took in a deep breath and smiled. “Right. You’re right. I should trust in your wisdom, oh dense one.”

Ilea checked her messages before returning to the Cursed Marshes, and her second bout with the second Oracle she’d fought.

***‘ding’ ‘Blast Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 29’***

***‘ding’ ‘Blood Magic Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 23’***

*Blast resistance from those punches. By the fucking Meadow.*

Ilea wondered if she could do the same with her Fourth Tier and all of her intrusion changed into physical damage. Maybe she could try with the tree at some point.

*“Any news from your hive by the way?”*

The creature nodded.

*Fear*

*Unfounded*

*“What do you mean? We have a divination mage and an Ascended that are sure the Architect is returning. Or do they just not care about the suns?”* Ilea asked.

*Search*

*Futile*

*And*

*Boring*

“Well that’s about as helpful as I expected,” she said with a slight smile. “But I suppose when I’m done with these monsters, I’ll reduce any Ascended to scrap metal.”

*Scrap*, the Fae repeated.

Ilea rolled her eyes and opened her gate into the Marshes.

She instantly noted the Fae vanishing, protecting itself in the mana dense area. Ilea still felt it, the blood magic in the air. The presence of a monster. None of the Dread Beasts had returned in the

short time when she was gone, and she saw the Oracle, standing at the center of the lake and looking up towards the skies.

“W-” The creature turned and charged her way in the same moment she established a telepathic connection. With the same fervor from their fight before.

Ilea didn't have time to breathe out, but she was ready with her stance this time around, and her Fourth Tier flared to life. She deflected the first strike, and then the second, dodging away to avoid the third. The Oracle didn't just use punches. She used jabs, claw slashes, her arms rushing straight forward or coming in with wide arcing motions. Ilea wondered if the creature fought with an inefficient technique because of its overwhelming power and possible madness, or if there was more to it.

She dodged backwards to avoid a jab, the Oracle taking a step closer as her other arm rushed forward in a wide arc. Ilea had seen both attacks with her precognition, but she had no way to perfectly avoid the second strike. She teleported again, the split second used to regenerate some of her mana. Again she received her opponent with a defensive stance, seeing the Oracle come in low, a grabbing motion going for Ilea's legs. She jumped and delivered an intrusion enhanced kick against the creature's head.

Ilea's motion was stopped and the Oracle staggered slightly to its right as a shock wave extended, arcane magic and fire flaring up into the creature's head. Ilea used her wings to get distance, finding her enemy keeping up, a clawed hand slashing into her ash covered shin, the blood magic cutting straight through her mantle before it was stopped by the arcane. Still, the claws dug into her form as the runes shined bright. Ilea joined her fists and brought them down onto the monster's head, this time converting all of her power into pure physical force.

The impact sent a shock wave through the vicinity, chunks of earth ripped out of the ground as a small crater formed below them. Her arms shook, moving up as if she had struck an anvil with a hammer. Her enemy, she saw moved down, her head slightly bent to the side as her legs dug into the earth. A fast punch landed on Ilea's chest in the next split second, sending her flying backwards. She deflected two more strikes during her short flight, landing in the wet earth where she summoned ashen spears and sent them into the oncoming creature.

Heat, ash, fire, space, everything damaged the Oracle, but nothing stopped it. Ilea still used her reverse reconstruction, but she didn't notice a reaction. Ilea had little experience using the strength of a fighter against them, but she still tried what little she knew in this fight, seeing the sometimes simple attacks. Instead of deflecting the next strike, she tried to spin her body after grabbing the creature's arm.

The Oracle didn't move in the slightest, staring at her with entirely dark red eyes for a split second before her next strike flashed up against Ilea's Fourth Tier, a chunk of mana gone as the earth behind her was ripped from the ground and sent flying.

She teleported away and tried to see more when she saw her mana had been reduced to less than a third, her health closing in on two thirds. She found her hammer in the dirt, no silver threads animating the divine object. Summoning the thing to her side, she stored it and created a gate behind her.

Ilea went through and closed the fissure, the red arm reaching out to her pushed back by the closing portal.

Her Fourth Tier deactivated as she fell to the ground, taking in a deep breath of fresh Kohr salt air.

She wondered for a moment if she could trap the Oracle here. If it would come through the gate, it would likely fight the creatures in Kohr, but at the same time, she wondered if such a thing was beneficial at all.

*Maybe the swamp enhances her abilities?*

The Fae reappeared on her shoulder.

*Violence!*

The little baron jumped up and down before making excited punching gestures, dodging left and right.

“Liked the show, I see,” she said.

*Her attacks too... they're not coordinated, but neither is she just a stupid monster. It's almost like they're too random, completely different every time. If there is a pattern somewhere, I'm not good enough to see it.*

*No favored arm or leg, no repeated footwork, not even consistent speed. Sometimes she just throws out super quick jabs and then she goes for six heavy hitters in a row.*

She grinned to herself and laid onto her back. *Fun. But frustrating. I'll have to get better.*

The Fae landed on her chest.

*Impressive!*

*Survival*

“I know. She really should be dead by now,” Ilea spoke. “Any tips?”

It punched the air twice and then did a little crouch.

“Oh, right. That makes so much sense. Thank you,” she answered in an enlightened tone, sitting up as her mana slowly recovered.

The short bout hadn't resulted in any level ups, but she didn't expect to crack this nut anytime soon. Despite the Baron's best efforts, his tips didn't leave her with considerably heightened confidence.

She decided to only engage the creature using her Fourth Tier for now. She had to understand it better to fight it continuously. That was the first step. Once she got to that point, she could ask herself how and if she could kill it at all.

*At least I can get away.*

“*Space magic rules,*” she sent to the small creature.

It gave her a thumbs up, once again, without thumbs.

*And I guess healing rules as well. Can't imagine anything fighting her without it.*

She ate lunch and soon resumed her battle.

Time and time again, Ilea arrived back in Kohr. As frustrating as it was to be pushed back repeatedly, she was making progress. Marginally, but she was making progress. Her growing

damage reduction from Primordial Flesh helped, but more so did simply fighting the creature. Her idea of the being shifted from a goddess of blood with overwhelming strength and power, to a dangerous foe. One that could kill her in a few seconds if she let it happen, but that was really nothing new at all. She had so many tools at her disposal by now, so much experience, and contingencies that protected her even against fourth tier abilities.

Something she was sure of by now, was that there were no patterns to exploit. She had to find openings on the fly, had to deflect or dodge every strike herself. But the more she fought the being, the more used she got to the different types of attacks it used. None was really ever the exact same, but the range of her arms, the strength of her jabs, the speed of her punches, all of it could only vary so much. And the more familiar she got with the being, the better she got at countering it.

Checking through her messages, she was making some progress on that front as well.

***‘ding’ ‘Ashen Limbs reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 11’***

***‘ding’ ‘Bulwark of Ash reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 22’***

***‘ding’ ‘Blood Magic Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 24’***

...

***‘ding’ ‘Blood Magic Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 26’***

***‘ding’ ‘Wind Resistance reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 24’***

*Without using any Wind magic whatsoever.*

Ilea activated her Fourth Tier and went through the gate, heat within her core. By now she had five seconds of her Meditation Fourth Tier stored, which meant she had fought the being for four hours already, or the focused meditation she tried between each bout accelerated the process, with each session not having to be an entire hour long.

She crouched immediately, sending burning spears into the approaching Oracle. *A kick.* She dodged to the right and punched upwards into the monster’s side. Her intrusion flashed up, her limbs cutting into the creature as Ilea took two measured steps back, moving her head to the left to avoid the wild slash, claws flashing past millimeters before her face, blood magic ripping into her mana.

She punched back, hitting right below the monster’s chest. Another punch before she teleported, avoiding the grab that came for her. Ilea appeared as far away as she could, the split second of mana regeneration worth it more than the arcane damage to her health. She sent out burning ash and a fully charged blast of Embered Heart, taking a step back when the Oracle emerged from the fires with a heavy upper cut. She moved her head back to avoid the strike and flew up with her wings to avoid the kick at her shin, twirling forward to avoid a grabbing motion. Her finger just barely touched the creature’s head, her intrusion flaring up as Archon Strike and Tempered Seal released into its skull.

Ilea pushed towards the ground as the monster turned, twirling to face it once again. She deflected three quick jabs that stripped away her ash, the air pressure and blood magic reducing her remaining mana. She saw the opening and punched back, her fist impacting the Oracle’s head with a full physical strike. A shock wave spread out from the impact, Ilea feeling the energy moving through her body, flesh stripped away from the creature’s head to reveal bone, one of its red eyes bursting.

Ilea stepped back and deflected the heavy strike coming at her, summoning shields and ash to slow the knee coming from below. She had to teleport, seeing the flesh on the creature's head already knitting back together, her eye reformed.

This time Ilea charged to meet the monster, both of them flying before they impacted each other, neither giving way. Ilea slid around the creature's neck as it tried to grab her, holding on with her ashen limbs and spreading fire as she punched into the back of its neck with repeated punches. She was grabbed and flung into the ground after three strikes, teleporting up and above the Oracle when she saw its other fist coming for her head. Instead Ilea came down with a kick and immediately flew back after the impact, avoiding the wild horizontal slashes of claws.

She felt the blood magic impact her, a wave sent out by the hissing creature, partially converted into mana, though she still lost considerably more than she gained back. Ashen spears formed above her and slashed down into the creature, a few punching through its large flesh wings.

Ilea moved to the ground and deflected a strike, flicking the creature's arm twice as it went past, her intrusion abilities flaring into it before she opened her right fist to backhand slap its face with another set of spells. Three strikes followed, the third she couldn't dodge or deflect, activating her shift with her teleports on cooldown.

She took in a deep breath, lowered and raised her arms as she watched the Oracle claw into her distorted piece of fabric, the fires, flesh, and space burning and cutting into the creature. She waited for another second before coming out, a burst of burning ash extending forward. Ilea punched three times with quick jabs before she teleported back, summoning a fully charged spear and sending it at the creature.

Ash and fire exploded with the impact, a part of the massive spear stuck inside the creature's chest.

Ilea raised her brows, seeing the monster unmoving.

It looked at her and hissed, pulling out the splintered spear as the wound healed.

*Something new.*

A pulse of blood magic rushed out, nothing more powerful than what she had felt from the creature with every single punch and kick, but even without understanding of the spell, Ilea could feel the complexity.

She felt the fabric quiver slightly. *Another realm? No. She's affecting this one.*

Ilea could see the distant moons of Elos in the sky turn red. The entire horizon slowly colored in the same dark hue. The lake no longer seemed out of place, but a reflection of the skies above.

The Oracle stood, her chest rising before she hissed in a strange frequency.

Ripples moved over the lake once more, and six figures rose from the liquid. The same long ears, the same teeth, the same eyes. Ilea could not distinguish them from the original.

*Shit.*

A moment later, they all charged.

She deflected a strike and had to teleport, appearing to the charge of three more. She dodged a strike, blocked another, her shin was struck, then her face. Ilea flew back but was caught and slammed into the ground. She teleported to avoid the eight attacks coming at her at once, appearing before she opened a gate behind her.

Through again in Kohr, she gulped, seeing the vast skies of the Navuun realm colored in red.

Bleeding figures rose from the salt stone, six instead of seven, all of them charging her.

Ilea flew as fast as she could, but the creatures were faster, keeping up with her as she failed to slow and charge her wings.

She activated her Shift right before the creatures reached her, seeing her mana already dramatically low.

*I need time.*

Ilea breathed and activated her new Fourth Tier. *Five seconds.*

Instantly, she felt calm. At peace. She could feel her mana flow through her form, could feel the power of her Reconstruction. The arcane moved through her but it no longer wracked her body. Instead it flowed with perfect motion. The Primordial Shift calmed around her, the fires and space no longer chaotic but serene. She could see the six creatures but ignored them, the strain her shift put on her mana no longer relevant.

Four seconds. Her shift would grow in cost exponentially, but she knew the beings would break through her fabric long before her resources were gone.

Instead she looked inward. To her very essence. And her soul. There too, she could see the blood. Ilea deactivated her reconstruction Fourth Tier and sacrificed the maximum amount of health she could put into her fires, and then she burned, focused out from her soul, first to her stomach, then her chest, then her arms and legs, and finally, her head. Everything she healed with her third tier recovery.

Two seconds.

She looked inward once more, and found the color gone. Ilea deactivated her Meditation Fourth Tier and stepped out of her shift, teleporting instantly and as far away as she could.

The sky was no longer bleeding, but the creatures remained.

She sent out burning ash and spears to intercept the beings, the wounds no longer healing. They were slower now, but still fast enough to catch her.

Ilea grinned and twirled in the air to meet the group of adversaries. Her arms rose as she focused.