

## Chapter 415 Nemesis of the never Master

The attacks continued for several minutes, many of them soon forming smaller groups or attacking her alone.

A light show rarely seen, reminding her of the few times she had been to a club. The smell of cigarettes, sweat and the weird fragrance of aesthetic smoke replaced by burnt skin, bone and hair. For the first time in a long while, she decided that the club experience was superior.

In the end, she'd probably still choose laser tag. Only if it could enhance her resistance and defensive skills of course.

Ilea decided to turn off her Light resistance as well, both to insult the creatures and simply because they had given up on their clustered attack, the only thing that posed a reasonable danger to her by now. With the high mana return, even her near instant healing could be fueled for a long while.

She thought about using her Monster Hunter skill but right now it felt right to just stand there and take it, to show them how futile their attempt was. While their communication and thoughts differed greatly from a humans, they certainly knew pride.

"Skeleton ass fuckers and their shit sunlight," she murmured to herself as the blasts burned deep into her body. Avatar of Ash deactivated from time to time when several more powerful beams brought her health down below fifty percent.

The Fae watched on in silence, eyes focused on her.

**'ding' 'Sentinel Sphere reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 7'**

**'ding' 'Avatar of Ash reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 14'**

**'ding' 'Light Magic Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 12'**

...

**'ding' 'Light Magic Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 16'**

The skill leveled even faster with her resistance deactivated. She decided to stay until it reached twenty, the fifteen to thirty minutes it would take definitely worth the investment.

In the end, it took around fifty, her body destroyed and reformed many a time by the focused beams. Ilea wondered why the monsters kept attacking, not seeing the futility in their attempts.

Her anger had calmed down by now, meditation continuously flowing through her as she remained standing at the edge of the doorway, now merely a tunnel digging into the steel wall.

"Why are they so persistent?" she asked, glancing back at the Fae. Many of the beams were aiming at it too, redirected towards her as they entered her sphere. The speed of the attacks didn't seem to matter, her sphere getting more effective with each level of Light Magic Resistance.

**'ding' 'Light Magic Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 17'**

...

**'ding' 'Light Magic Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 20'**

The last ding resounded right after she asked the question, her eyes closing as her resistance activated once more. The beams were now stopped by her ash, still digging into it but with much less punch than before.

*Hatred*, the answer was laced with a sad tone.

Ilea nodded and once more activated her Monster Hunter skill. "I'll be back," she said, her serious side winning out over the part of her that was responsible for imitating an Austrian accent.

Her voice rushed out, not spoken loudly but traveling far nonetheless, enhanced by her skill. The intent was clear. Cold. She would be back, one day.

The creatures seemed to feel it too, their attacks ceasing, if only for a moment.

Ilea felt the slight touch of something on her cheek and looked down, seeing the Fae on her shoulder, its stubby hand pushing into her ash.

Beams of energy lit up again, hammering into her ash with little effect.

*Serenity*

The thought reached her with the corresponding feeling and she agreed, turning around and walking towards the stairwell leading down.

***'ding' 'Monster Hunter reaches lvl 11'***

"I'll still go back thought, just that we understand each other," she said to the Fae, summoning a meal for herself as she walked down into the dark.

*Understand*

*Violence*

She nodded and summoned the Staff of the Chosen, handing it to the little creature.

As expected, it hugged the wooden staff ten times its size before it started glowing, illuminating the way down.

Her sphere provided all the visibility she would ever need but Ilea still liked to see with her eyes, as much as she liked walking, even with her newly empowered wings.

Sentinel Huntress informed her that she was getting closer. The magic left behind by Catelyn was nearly graspable now. She didn't worry about the Fae, knowing how Goliath had talked about their kind. The Sun Sprites didn't seem to think the same way.

She offered food to the Fae but it didn't react.

*Another thing to add to the list of shit on my list*, she thought. "Gotta say though," she started and smiled, watching the Fae struggle to carry the massive staff. "Some order of elite humans just doesn't seem quite as intimidating anymore after you've been blasted by the sun. Neither do a bunch of Praetorians," she finished and took another bite.

The Fae looked at her but didn't send anything.

"You don't know things about human politics, do you? Hidden orders and the like?" she asked with a smile.

The Fae shook its head.

“One of my friends was murdered. I think I might be powerful enough now to look for those responsible,” Ilea said.

*Violence?*

She chuckled and shook her head. “I don’t know. Probably? We were friends but I knew her for less than a year. And yet it impacted me pretty hard. She was a teammate. The least I can do is find and confront the ones who did it. I know she wasn’t exactly a saint either. That’s another thing I’ll want to find out more about,” she said.

The Fae nodded and bumped her head with the staff, the light flickering for a moment.

*Ready*

“I am. Right,” she said and made a fist, a grin on her face. She liked the idea of letting the Lily come to her, now that she was an important figure in Ravenhall and Riverwatch, in the latter certainly less so. But now, if they did initiate contact, she would answer.

“Think I’m ready to face a Basilisk too?” she asked.

The little guy barked her, harder. It shook its head.

“I see. A little more violence then until I get there.”

*Lots*

“Lots? Well that’s the thing little guy. I can’t seem to get enough.”

When layer eighteen resembled a desert, the nineteenth one was a full blown sandpit. Ilea was thankful for her ash, easily able to get the stuff off her body. Otherwise it really was coarse and got everywhere.

The light once more came from faintly glowing blue crystals above, bathing the dunes in an illusion of night.

“Sense anything?” she asked the Fae, the two floating a couple dozen meters above ground.

The Fae shook its head, handing back the staff.

She stored it and smiled. “Well, let’s find out if there are corrupted beings around.”

Ilea floated down to the surface and landed, feeling herself sink into the ground.

*Quicksand? Are you serious? What is this a nineties comic?* She wondered and moved her wings to easily get out of the stuff.

*Danger*, the Fae sent and disappeared.

She looked up and remained where she was. Ilea had nearly been overwhelmed by the last layer’s combined team effort of shittery but all it really did was make her annoyed. Right now, she was very much excited for some good old *Violence*.

The wait wasn’t long.

Her precognition informed her about the incoming tendrils of sand. She flew back as quickly as she could, twirling in the air as the sand rushed out of the ground.

It whirled around, sharp points at the end that very much resembled her own ashen limbs. Spears shot out of the ground and by now she was pretty sure this level had somehow copied her and put Sand Monster Ilea down into the floor.

She dodged easily, even through the dozens of limbs that tried to pierce her. The new upgrade to her wings really shined, not adding to her speed but simply providing a wider and more intuitive range of motion.

Ilea picked up the sound of giggling but it didn't come from the Fae. This one sounded more malicious than anything else. It did retain some playfulness but she felt a wickedness coming from whatever creature was causing the sand to move.

A grin spread on her face when she felt the familiar feeling of Mana and Health drain. More importantly however, a Stamina drain as well. *Now, what do I do?* She thought.

Ilea had never really tested her abilities in sand, the only creature she had fought was that fish monster back with her Shadow team, in the huge southern desert.

*Eh, I should be fine*, she thought and stopped moving. The sand tendrils slammed into her ash, penetrating deep but not quite through to her slowly reforming bone armor. The latter piece of gear was mostly in a state of constant repair lately.

The spears actually reached her skin but she quickly opened up most of her stomach and chest area to be injured by the sand. The Health and Mana drain were mostly negligible, only accomplishing a reduction in her regeneration.

*Meaning I should be a little more conservative with resource here*, she thought, the first sand spears and tendrils slashing into her skin and drawing blood.

The stamina drain would have actually been dangerous if she hadn't decided to not move at all anymore, her meditation helping out in addition.

The giggling remained but sounded curious now, still wicked. This dungeon certainly had taught her a lot about communication and various tones of voice. Other than Joaquin, she hadn't ever considered how much a laugh or giggle could convey.

The creature was closer, she could tell through the power of the drains, increasing in power constantly until it remained steady. The sound got louder too. Ilea had a hard time gauging if it was a form of telepathy or an actual audible thing. It had an echo too.

"You certainly win the creepy award, my man," she said and sent an ashen spear down into the ground.

The Sand attacks continued for a while, crude and repetitive.

She was just about to call it a day and wait another couple hours until her resistances had at least reached the second tier when the tendrils instead wrapped around her and pulled down.

*I don't exactly feel like drowning, mate*, she thought and fought against it with her wings, her own ash slashing into the sand but simply passing through the tendrils. "Great," she thought, finding herself unable to blink as well.

*If I die because of such retarded arrogance, I just really fucking deserved it.* Ilea formed a massive drill in front of her chest and started charging her wings as she was pulled down.

Her sphere still didn't pick up something but there were a couple meters still to come.

*There you are,* she thought with a grin and sped up, slightly tucking in her arms and legs as the drill started spinning.

The being looked similar to the spirits from two layers before, just with an additional hood. The sudden increase in velocity sent her digging into the sand with an enormous punch, the sand tendrils ripped off and left flailing.

Sand wasn't exactly the easiest material to drill through however, slowing her down considerably before the being vanished. *Of course, a teleport,* she thought and copied the move, blinking up and out of the sand.

*Drains all resources I have, can bury me under the sand and uses limbs and spears to attack at range. Also a teleport,* Ilea smiled. "You're almost as fucking annoying to fight as I am."

It went without saying that the being regenerated as well, health, mana and stamina.

*I'm missing that stuff still in my skill set. To become the ultimate annoyance.*

**'ding' 'Stamina Drain Resistance reaches lvl 6'**

**'ding' 'Stamina Drain Resistance reaches lvl 7'**

**'ding' 'You have learned the General skill: Sand Magic Resistance – lvl 1'**

***Sand Magic Resistance – lvl 1***

***A powerful and versatile school of magic, able to slash, crush and suffocate. Usually found and common in certain desert regions, its masters unchallenged within their domain. Exposure has made you more resilient to this type of magic.***

**'ding' 'Sand Magic Resistance reaches lvl 2'**

*Unchallenged? We'll see about that,* she thought with a grin, once more slowing down and letting the attacks smash into her. It seemed the creature had given up on trying to get her down into the sand. For a moment at least.

"Come out and fight me, you fuck." Ilea said, the last word laced with power.

A giggle resounded from below and the attacks ceased.

*What?*

She watched as a cloaked fuzzy head emerged from the sand, looking up at her. It was hard to see in the dim blue light already and the thing's color scheme didn't exactly help.

It remained in the sand with the rest of its ethereal body, giggling once more.

Ilea waved. "Nice to meet you, Mr. Sandman."

The being moved around a little, keeping its eyes on her as she lazily moved her wings and tail.

***[Deep Mirage – lvl ???]***

Ilea formed an ashen copy of herself and pierced it with ashen spears, apparently unable to communicate with thoughts, feelings or words.

The being giggled before around thirty ashen spears rushed out at her.

She smiled brightly and removed the ashen armor from her stomach and chest, pulling the rather sloppily aimed spears towards her with her Sentinel Sphere.

The drains hadn't stopped at all, she noted. She thought it might be a similar thing to Goliath's constant health drain in his vicinity.

The being didn't seem to be annoyed at her second tier of mana drain resistance, probably still stacked out anyway.

Ilea moved in the air, sending ashen spears down at the creature, seeing it flicker around in the sand to dodge them.

She was glad the Mirage had understood her request and was quite literally playing along. Ilea had a hard time thinking of a way to even get to the creature.

It was cautious, teleporting quickly and long before the ashen spears even came close.

The being certainly had some level of intelligence but it was hard to tell how far that went. In the end, Ilea was pretty sure it wouldn't hesitate to bury her under a thousand fuck tons of sand as she was sucked dry.

*I do enjoy this*, she thought, dancing around with a likely ancient and powerful creature in a dimly lit desert kilometers underground.

The anger from her previous encounter was already gone, pure joy filling her as she twirled and flew around. Her sphere was still active but she could dodge the spears' trajectory nonetheless.

### *Annoyed*

The thought reached her a couple minutes later, making her turn towards the distant Fae, its white eyes glowing slightly in the dark. It was far away enough to escape the influence of the Mirage's drains but it could apparently still see what was going on.

"What is it?!" Ilea shouted as she twirled and laughed, hearing the wicked giggle from below.

The Fae turned away and crossed its arms.

"Are you pouting!?" Ilea blinked and reached the Fae as she laughed. "You're pouting, really?" she flew close, her face right in front of the Fae's.

### *Negative*

"Oh no, no this is positive. Very much so," she said and touched her chin. "Do you want to join us?"

The Fae looked at her with one eye and then down at the sand.

### *Danger*

"It's draining health, stamina and mana. I can give you health and you can drain my mana. Just don't use it, I have a second tier resistance. If your stamina gets low, if you even have that, just teleport away," she suggested.

The Fae was looking at her now and seemed to consider.

“Drain my mana if you understand,” she said and watched it lift a hand. The pulse was much weaker now with her resistance active but it didn’t seem to hurt the creature.

She formed a small seat on her shoulder and pointed at it, grinning when the creature appeared on it. Two ashen safety belts closed around its shoulders. “Ah, also teleport away if I get dragged down or the Deep Mirage does anything different, It still wants to eat us... I think.”

The Fae gave her a nod and giggled in her mind when she sped back to the waiting Mirage.

*Aww, you look like a lost puppy,* she thought and approached, unsure if it felt similarly about the Fae as the Sun Sprites did.

The Mirage looked up and stopped its giggles, rising out of the sand before its cloaked form was completely out. Tendrils of Sand moved around it before it spread its ethereal arms and bowed slightly.

“Friend?” Ilea asked the Fae.

The Fae didn’t reply and turned its head away from her.

“What is it?” she asked but didn’t get an answer.

She formed a series of ashen spears and once more formed a copy of herself, repeating the gesture.

The Mirage returned into the sand and started giggling once more.

*That gesture was obviously respectful but it’s not a friend?* She wasn’t sure what it meant but the Fae intrigued her even more now. Goliath had thought them ancient beings, even for him. He had nearly spoken in reverence.

*Maybe this is the same. Might be I’m underestimating this little guy here just because of his level,* she wondered but instead focused on the battle of spears with her new spear buddy. *Should have gone for a Spear Master class. Ilea Spears, spearing the competition with piercing accuracy.*

She preferred her body as a weapon of course but with her bow and hammer escapades, she didn’t feel particularly adverse to learning about the spear.

*Might just take a couple months off and join some classes. Too much to do, too much to fight,* she thought.

*Like taking care of the corruption and finding the expedition,* she thought, wincing a little at her enjoyment of this situation. It was a little easier to accept with the giggles coming from both her current companions, one a little more murderous than the other.

*Just the second stage, then I continue on,* she thought.