

Chapter 866 Rain

Ilea watched her body slowly dissolve, blood running down her form with entire organs burned away. She protected her brain as well as she could, the Oracle not adjusting the ongoing spell in any way to focus on Ilea's head.

There was no gloating, no increased stress, nor a reaction to her burning spears and Embered Heart shot towards its form. The result remained the same. The Oracle seemed unaffected, and Ilea barely remained standing, with half her skin and muscle gone, even parts of her bone slowly dissolved as she kept up her defenses. Her growing damage reduction against the monster's spells certainly helped, as did the increasing resilience, but either way, she was outmatched.

If this is an actual Oracle, I feel like I'm doing pretty well. She grinned with half her cheek and jaw missing, finally forced to activate Primordial Shift when the damage simply became too much to handle.

She watched from within her own strange fabric as her fires burned away at the moving water, the writhing flesh and space itself barely keeping everything at bay. Still, the spell provided a breath, allowing her to heal the damage dealt.

Before the drops broke through the spell, Ilea deactivated it herself, able to absorb more mana if she actually got hit. She saw the mists retake the space where it had been pushed away, deciding not to sacrifice any more health to that effect, keeping her fires close now that she didn't exactly have to see a large part of the battlefield.

Ilea knew where the Oracle had been as the mists moved in again, obscuring her dominion, her eyes, and all of her senses. She could see the droplets shatter her shields, burn through her walls of ash, her mantle, and her flesh. Waves of Embered Heart rushed out in spheres with her at the center, weakening the drops that would soon burn into her form. She didn't teleport away any of the droplets, the mana it used exceeding what her healing or even her Primordial Shift demanded.

Instead she just walked towards the Oracle, her body slowly dissolved as she pushed against the powerful magic all around. Space Manipulation did little to affect the already slow water, her ash sliced through but the drops simply reformed, her fires constantly burning and merely lowering the impact.

What the fuck am I doing? She smiled at the thought, knowing that her Godslayer title would help a little more, but still refusing to change it. The Sanguerrihn was a sapient being, one that could lurk and hunt, whereas this, Ilea felt like she was facing a force of nature, a force of magic itself. She had time to consider, time to think, time to plan. She remained outmatched, but that was a given. She had been outmatched before, many times. And if she failed right here and now, she could always come back and try again.

Ilea saw the two white eyes above, right when she had to use her Shift again. Fires, flesh, and space moved out in an effort to defend her, only to be subdued by the unchanging, unrelenting, and overwhelming magic summoned by the monster she had found. She healed herself and returned into the fabric, to find the figure still looming before and above her. Charging her Archon Strike, she activated her Fourth Tier, feeling the rush of arcane power before she delivered the first devastating punch.

Magic flared up as the destructive healing burned into the mists but still, there was no reaction. The white eyes watched with neither thought nor emotion, looking down on the struggling human covered in glowing blue runes.

Ilea slammed her fists into the ethereal being, finding little purchase but feeling the destructive waves burn into the fog like monster. She was dealing damage, that she knew, though she didn't know how much, and didn't know if the Oracle could heal itself.

As the drops reached her skin, they started burning away at her magic at an alarming rate, her Fourth Tier protecting her body and health at the cost of her mana. For once it felt like a disadvantage. Still, she kept it up for a few more punches, the slow moving water and highly increased damage more than making up for the hits against her mana.

Back to her frayed body, Ilea healed once more, focusing on her defenses as she spread her fires and heat, still standing right in front of the Oracle. Ilea made sure to apply her mark on the creature, to find it in the mists in case it moved.

Cycling through her spells, she soon reached a point where her mana was simply too low to continue, even with her high absorption and regeneration during her Fourth Tier. She activated her gate to Kohr, marking this location just before she left.

Her enemy made no move to stop or interrupt her.

A few more droplets clung to her right before she stepped through, Ilea once again breathing the salt air of the Navuun realm.

The gate closed behind her with a few water droplets falling down and burning into the salt stone.

It's like I'm a fucking toddler, punching away at an adult.

She cracked her neck, waiting for her mana to recharge with all her buffs. Ilea kept her weight buff up, most of her bonuses now retained despite the pause in battle. Only the second tier of Titan Core would have to be reapplied, but right now Ilea didn't really have any other choice but to retreat. Her Wurm armor slowly rebuilt, the thick layers capable of stopping high level spells burned away by the water magic just like her ashen mantle.

Maybe I'm just not strong enough to fight that thing yet.

Then again, I used to fight monsters for days, and now I have a fourth tier that even the Meadow said it can't guarantee to block entirely.

She felt the Oracle was perhaps not an unbeatable foe, if mostly because it felt more like a natural force than a thinking creature. Ilea just had to overwhelm the insane magical power.

So it's not really a matter of fighting prowess, but just a numbers game. Until I actually push the being and it reacts. That or it just dissolves and dies at some point. Worth a try either way.

She used one of her remaining two Third tier general skill points to get her Mist Magic Resistance into the third tier. Every little bit of resilience would mean more mana that she could use for offense. And more mana absorbed through Sentinel Core.

'ding' 'Mist Magic Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 1'

Mist Magic Resistance – 3rd lvl 1

Mist magic is a rare talent, found in students of the arcane adept in both wind and water magic. It is an elusive power, difficult to wield yet ultimately destructive and impossible to avoid. You have faced it and lived. This skill will help you do so again.

2nd stage: Through increasing exposure you have learned to stop the elusive mist from passing through you.

3rd stage: You learn to adapt to various effects of mist magic, making it easier for you to pierce the veil. Your magical attacks travel through mist magic defenses more easily, and your perception may see what would otherwise be obscured.

Not exactly defensive, but it helps either way. Now I just have to level it up slowly.

She checked the few other messages she had gotten, to see if she had missed anything.

‘ding’ ‘Bulwark of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 17’

‘ding’ ‘Water Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 6’

...

‘ding’ ‘Water Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 8’

Suppose I won’t get a better place to level those two resistances for a while. Might as well use it to the fullest.

‘ding’ ‘You have found the Oracle of the Lost – One Core skill point awarded’

Ninety two. Just eight left for a Fourth Tier General skill.

Ilea summoned her hammer, twirling it in her hand as she thought. Adding Silent Memory might make a small difference. Mist Magic Resistance will help, as will any Water Resistance.

She didn’t know how much she needed, and she hadn’t seen any other spells from the Oracle so far. As ridiculously destructive as the water was, she assumed a being that powerful could do more than just this. She was just glad the being was a monster, as far as she could tell incapable of thought or strategy, beyond adjusting the water drop patterns. Not that it needed much thought to kill most beings that would dare approach it.

If I do manage to kill an Oracle, that will surely provide a few core points, plus a bunch of levels. Maybe not enough to get me to a hundred, but close.

There are only a few options for a Fourth tier really. Azarinth Barrier, though that’s coupled to the Azarinth Star, which makes it a questionable choice. Deviant of Humanity is interesting, but I can’t really think of it being overly useful as a fourth tier spell. It would likely still be good, but not as obvious as others.

Meditation. This one is probably going to be it. An absolute staple since my first weeks in Elos, and a lifesaver many times over. It's just not flashy, and I'm not sure how a fourth tier would manifest. But even if it's just providing more mana regeneration, that would already be worth it.

Monster Hunter is close to hitting level thirty as well, but I don't really see the point of getting that to the fourth tier. I wonder if I might regret that decision in a few years or decades, when I can't find any other monsters to fight. Suppose I'll have to survive until then first.

Veteran felt the same to her, surely beneficial but just not something with the same impact as Meditation.

And then there are my resistances. Arcane would actually be pretty good coupled with my Fourth tier of Reconstruction. But who knows if it would work as expected. Plus it might only help with Reconstruction, and not with my future fourth tier skills of Ashen Titan and Primordial Arbiter.

Getting various resistances to the fourth tier was tempting, and surely useful against wielders of the respective magic types, but considering she could only choose the option once, the choice seemed obvious, at least for now.

Come on mana, recover faster.

She sat down on a nearby rock and summoned a bottle of ale, waiting for her resources to recharge.

Ilea checked the mark she had left on the Oracle and found it gone. *Of course.* She raised her brows and smiled. *I'm fighting an Oracle.*

She swerved her bottle from side to side. *Well, not a real Oracle. The one in the Still Valley would beat my ass, I'm pretty sure of that, and this one is at a higher level. But I suppose it could be intelligent as well, maybe it just doesn't see me as a threat.*

Yet.

When her resources were capped, she stood up and summoned a gate to where she had left off. *Resistance levels and experience. Let's see if it's still there.*

Ilea stepped into the mist. She could no longer see any water drops nearby, nor was the visibility quite as bad within her dominion.

Didn't even wait for me, she thought, unsure in which direction she should go. She oriented herself according to her marks and went where the Oracle had gone before, moving with short flying hops and teleports due to her increased weight. She noticed quickly that the mist was thinning out again, distant howls of Dread beasts resounding through the fog.

Turning back, Ilea went the other way, and soon found the first dead creatures. Dozens of them, strewn through the mists and half taken by the swamp. *Guess I'm on the right track.*

Once more, the mana density spiked and the mists grew more dense. Ilea could tell her new third tier resistance already did its job, her dominion piercing the environment far more consistently than before. It took less than a minute for her to find the Oracle.

She activated her Fourth Tier and teleported close to the being, the falling rain once more halting before it started swirling around. Ilea punched destructive mana into the surface of the Oracle, adding her reverse healing into the mix as her burning ash spread out. The mana seemed to flow more easily into the fog like creature, the arcane energies flaring up compared to the dulled effects she had seen before.

Ilea raised her brows when she looked at the surrounding drops of water. The pattern seemed simple, similar to the one the Oracle had employed upon their first encounter.

Already forgot about me?

She didn't question the creature, burning her mana as she unleashed punch after punch, Embered Heart spreading out periodically to weaken the water pearls. She found the effects were increased as well, the mist magic in the floating drops weakened far more than before.

Silent Memory tried to close the distance, silver threads reaching out towards the being but single drops of rain smashed the hammer down with their dense magic. A few landed until the divine object was pushed into the ground, sizzling sounds coming from the object.

Ilea summoned it and stored it once more, just in case it was actually getting damaged. *Not the best opponent for you.*

She deactivated her fourth tier and refocused on defense. Ilea could tell her mana was reduced by the second, but compared to the overwhelming presence from their first encounter, she felt like she understood the creature more. The rain drops dissolved her mantle and her flesh, but this time she didn't push her burning ash against the mists, instead focusing on healing. She used her Shift periodically and kept her Fourth Tier to short bursts of damage when she felt her mana allowed it.

After the third use of the skill, Ilea felt something change. The drops fell, all at once, and magic coalesced around the wisp like form of the Oracle.

She jumped back as far as she could with the increased weight, watching what would happen. Ilea felt the spell come to life, her precognition not activating as a thrum resounded, followed by a wave of water magic flashing through the vicinity.

She felt it flow through her, an intrusion she could not defend against.

Ilea teleported as far away as she could, and heard the second wave thrumming past. This one pulled instead of emanating from the white eyed Oracle. Every drop of water was ripped out of the mud, out of the trees, and out of the ponds. She was not far enough away. Not even close. This time, her precognition activated, though she wished it hadn't.

Time slowed as Ilea staggered forward. Her eyes burst, her skin ripped open by the force, her mantle punched through as she exploded from the inside, every bit of water forcefully removed from her body by the power of the Oracle. Her perception waned as she fell forward.

Ilea found herself lying on the dry ground. She coughed, having breathed in what looked like dust. She felt thirsty, her vision slightly blurred. *Was I... I was fighting something. The Oracle*, her mantle reformed as she stood up with some difficulty. She staggered, her weight still increased. Ilea raised her fists, her ash lighting up as she looked around.

The Oracle was there, floating in the distance. She could see it clearly, the long and broad veil of mist moving as if alive, spreading out from the white fog like hair of the ethereal figure. White eyes the only facial feature, white eyes that looked her way.

A massive dome like shape had cleared up within the endless mists, the ground dust, and the trees mere husks. Entire ponds had vanished, skeletons of Dread beasts crumbling away as if they had

been there for millennia. Slowly, the mists reformed, reclaiming the abandoned space from all around.

Ilea took in a deep breath, finding her lungs wanting. She coughed and looked towards the Oracle. "Nice spell," she said with a hoarse voice, cracking her neck as she checked her health and mana. *Could use a minute.*

She summoned a bottle of ale and cracked open the top, downing the thing as water drops fell from above, stopping in mid air before they started moving in circular patterns, with the Oracle at the center.

She finished the bottle with the first drops dissolving her mantle, taking in a deep breath before she looked at the creature. *Not quite a primordial curse, but it's not bad.*

Knew there was more to this thing than a bit of mist and rain.

She watched the mist gather and opened a gate before her, the other end right next to the Oracle. Her Fourth Tier came to life right when she stepped through, the next punch spreading destructive healing and cinders into the mist form of the creature.

Ilea grinned as she sent her burning ashes through the vicinity.

One spell down. Let's find out what else you can do.