

Chapter 379 Fire and Ash

Ilea felt the heat of the exploding fireball to her right, dozens of beasts scattered as their limbs were ripped off, their bodies unable to withstand the pressure.

The Old Blooded in front of her withstood the blast, burns showing on its malformed and corrupted skin. It crouched and snarled at her, the wounds regenerating slowly.

It jumped aside to avoid the ashen limbs, two of them still slamming through its body.

Ilea used the limbs to pull it closer, another five of her ashen tendrils ripping through the beast and killing it.

'ding' 'Your group has defeated [Corrupted Old Blooded – lvl 352] – For defeating an enemy thirty levels or more above your own, bonus experience is granted.'

Downside of having the mages help. Ilea thought, blinking towards another cluster of monsters nearby.

A powerful stream of wind knocked her aside, making her spread her wings to stabilize before she blinked into the group. Ashen limbs slashed through the snarling creatures before she looked up and saw the distant moth unleashing another wind magic spell.

Ilea watched as a set of ice spears impaled it, making the beast tumble in the air before it dived downwards, focused on the mage that had attacked it.

Annoying. Ilea thought, at least a dozen of them flying above, way too far away for her to effectively fight them.

She could go to them but Ilea was much more effective on the ground, killing dozens of monsters in the time it would take her to hunt down one of the moths.

It seemed the Veramath in its approach had formed a more direct tunnel to deeper layers of the Descent. The moths were certainly annoying but Ilea enjoyed fighting the new beasts that had shown up.

[Corrupted Needlebear – lvl 324]

She dodged out of the way as the massive creature rolled past her, coming to a stop with a roar.

A three meter tall bear with bone like needles sticking out from its back, both used in its rolling attack but also at range.

Alright, let's do this. She thought, looking at the beast with a deep gash on its belly, orange puss oozing out. Four ashen limbs slammed into the ground behind her.

The bear jumped and curled up, rolling at her with increasing speed.

It impacted with a heavy thud, the needles digging into Ilea's ash as the movement was stopped completely.

She held onto one of the spikes and slammed her fist into its back, some of the needles splintering as her mana was pushed into the creature. Her limbs slashed into the bear from the side, adding to its injuries.

They were surprisingly durable, especially those without many previous wounds.

Ilea kept it in place and continued her assault until the noise resounded in her mind.

She turned her head as a root slammed into her face, scratching past her ash before she grabbed onto it.

[Corrupted Night Forest Spirit – lvl ??]

Still below five hundred. Ilea noted, glancing at the floating spirit with an owl like wooden head.

She let go when another Needlebear slammed into her, jumping up when a Blood Carrier crashed in from behind, dodging both with the movement. Both creatures were stunned for a moment, allowing her to unleash her Heart of Cinder, disintegrating them entirely.

Ilea spread her wings and rushed at the spirit, dodging the wooden spears and roots rushing at her before she impacted, slamming her fist down onto its head and chipping away at the wooden form of an owl nearly her own height.

With a last crack, the head was ripped off and the creature died.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Corrupted Night Forest Spirit – lvl 438] – For defeating an enemy one hundred and twenty levels or more above your own, bonus experience is granted.’

The numbers were thinning out a little, mostly because the dark one mages had insane area spells taking out dozens of the lower leveled monsters with each attack.

Ilea wasn't slacking either, her ashen limbs and Heart of Cinder incredibly effective against groups.

With the new species showing up, it took a little longer to kill them. Many survived the area spells too, creating spaces where only one or two corrupted monsters remained, stronger than the ones from presumably higher up layers of the Descent.

Ilea let another powerful gust of wind with mixed in air blades flow over her, the magic slightly digging into her ashen armor but mostly just providing a little bit of mana and a sliver to her next level of Wind Resistance.

Two corrupted Old Blooded rushed at her with lanky long limbs, their movements a little uneven due to the corruption running through their veins.

Ilea sighed, her limbs at the ready when a barrier suddenly formed between them, cutting into their flesh before two purple beams slammed into their heads.

Wooden spears crashed into the creatures, ending their lives.

“You made it.” Ilea said and looked up.

Maro grinned down and nodded. “Quite a massacre you’ve created. Can’t believe there’s still more with all the dead.” His helmet appeared before he lifted his arms, a surge of power fanning out over the area.

Dozens of dead corrupted beasts twitched and slowly stood up, readying their fangs and claws.

“My kind of battlefield.” Maro sighed and floated down, the monsters rushing past Ilea and towards the corrupted.

She just looked on with amusement before she nodded at Elfie floating closer.

Neiphato, Seviir and Heranuur joined too, weapons at the ready.

“You have called and we have arrived.” Elfie spoke. “A battle unlike most. A corruption has caused these beasts to rise up to the upper floor?”

[Mage – lvl 295]

“Close to your evolution.” Ilea said with an acknowledging nod. “Thank you for coming. I think we can use every capable mage and warrior we can get.”

“It does seem very fun.” Heranuur said and walked past. “Neiphato, let’s stay close together in case one of us gets injured.”

“Of course.” Neiphato said and followed, giving Ilea a smile as he passed.

Seviir rushed past with claws extended, joining the creatures Maro had raised.

The demonic skeleton they had found in the Taleen city was leading the charge, clawing into the corrupted with a ferocity comparable to their own.

“Efficient.” Ilea commented as she watched the dead fight the corrupted.

“Certainly. Though they are weaker, it will help protect our own and it will let the mages shoot spells without worry.” The necromancer said.

Niivalyr crouched and grabbed some of the orange sludge with a gloved hand. “A threat, to all life.”

“A little dramatic.” Ilea commented, glancing around to see where she could join the fight again. To her surprise, there were no monsters immediately close to her.

The elves had moved a couple dozen meters farther ahead as well as the raised undead. *Corrupted raised undead. How many times can someone raise them?*

Ilea didn’t think further on the specifics.

“Perhaps. Yet you should not underestimate such corruption. Worse perhaps than even demons and mages of death.” Niivalyr commented as he shook off the orange goo.

Ilea was surprised that Maro didn’t have anything to say about that.

The necromancer just moved past and raised more of the dead creatures. “I got Lucas too. He’s fortifying the defensive position you formed. Terok is helping with that as well.”

Ilea nodded. “Thanks, he’ll be quite useful with his wood creation.”

“As is Neiphato.” Niivalyr said, smirking at her.

“Of course. A healer especially.” Ilea said and smiled back. “I’ll have to talk to you about something later, Elfie. Met a bunch of Cerithil Hunters back south.”

“You did? I am intrigued. First however, let us deal with these creatures.” The elf replied.

Ilea nodded and flew up, turning to face the enemy hordes.

The line of mages had moved up, taking out the moths one by one as the warriors on the ground got some time to breathe thanks to the arriving elves and Maro who was adding more and more undead to their numbers.

Ilea counted at least eighty to a hundred, quickly dying but more arriving to join at the same time. Their levels were lower than the corrupted creatures had been before but most still above two hundred.

Don't fight a necromancer amidst piles of corpses. She smiled and flew ahead of the line, coming down with wildly twisting ash, impaling ten beasts at once.

Some were dead on the spot, others she threw at their corrupted brethren. Heart of Cinder was released after a blink into the thickest mass of bodies she could find within her sphere.

The ash remaining from the disintegrated corpses condensed into spears that were released at another group running at her.

Some of the beasts released spells that slammed into her ashen armor, providing some mana for her next attacks while shielding the resurrected creatures behind her as well as the elves.

Their auras gave off a different feel than those of the corrupted, allowing her to differentiate between them.

Ilea was glad her limbs were so effective, reserving Storm of Cinders and Absolute Destruction for the stronger beasts among the groups, effectively allowing her to fight near indefinitely. The constant sources of mana from various spells was just icing on top.

“They are still going strong.” Ilas commented, floating a little ahead of Catelyn.

She was regenerating some of her mana, occasionally shooting a fireball down at the masses or a beam at an approaching moth creature.

Ilas was talking about Ilea and the elves she assumed, those she had called for. *Elves and a necromancer, as well as that old wood creator.*

She was curious about where they had come from, how Ilea had met them. She knew Maro of course, the king to Elana's title of queen. Gone now and forgotten but their strength remains.

Hordes of undead rose and fought until they were ripped apart, only their bones remaining. They rivaled the corrupted in sheer tenacity.

The elves were similar, one of them joining the mages as he floated above, barriers and curses funneling the monsters and greatly helping in containing the beasts.

“We will have to talk to the curse user.” Ilas added, using an item to spy over the landscape. A telescope, he had explained.

“If he is inclined to help us.” Catelyn replied. Curses helped against poisons, able to target specific substances in someone's body. Perhaps he was able to destroy the corruption just as well.

The worm had formed a formidable defensive line, more dark ones gathered from Hollowfort and the village of the first layer, helping extend and fortify the perimeter as well as closing off the various cracks and crevices leading down.

Stone, wood and whatever else they could summon, create or move.

Ilas signaled a waiting group below, pointing them at a distant group of monsters that must have emerged from a smaller opening.

Not a single one was allowed to escape this place, lest their city fell and all those within.

Catelyn looked up and sent a scorching ray of fire at an approaching moth creature, burning one of its wings as it tumbled down. Sixth layer creatures and much smarter than their corrupted versions.

It's worrying that Moth Divers were taken too. Yet here is where they will fall.

Looking down, she saw the elves move a little ahead, their own healer making sure the others wouldn't be overwhelmed, wood appearing from time to time, splitting up groups of monsters as the other two slashed through them.

Neither overextended, aware of the others as the fourth elf moved above, his barriers and curses focusing on their own targets unless the group below needed assistance.

A formidable group. It was obvious that they had worked together for a long time. She was aware that there were elves in the north, some few visiting Hollowfort even. Their kind wasn't liked however, by neither dwarfs nor many dark ones.

At most tolerated, most knowing of the atrocities committed by their kind, now or a thousand years past.

They tended to keep to themselves, not getting involved in any of the northern conflicts. Some had asked Catelyn about Taleen dungeons and the machines within but that was hundreds of years ago.

She smirked, finding Ilea amidst the hordes of monsters. Blasts of magic impacted close to her, ripping through the beasts, many of them already dead thanks to those ashen things around her.

From time to time she released a blast of fire and heat that rivaled Catelyn's own, burning through whole chunks of corrupted.

The magic around her didn't seem to have an effect on her, neither the spells coming from the Dark Ones flying above nor those released by the enemy beasts. She appeared like a wraith of ash, within the largest clusters before her ashen tendrils spun and slashed.

There had been some monsters with somewhat similar abilities that Catelyn had encountered over the years. None of them however could shrug off magic quite as easily, none of them could recover quite as quickly. Most of all, they couldn't fight for hours on end or kill a Goliath Veramath with such ease.

Ilea had changed since first meeting her in Hollowfort. Not just her level and evolved classes. They simply enabled her, pushed her further.

The healer now commanded an authority on the battlefield that Catelyn had seen in few.

Mages followed her form, sent their most powerful spells down into the frenzied monsters that pooled around the healer, knowing that she would not be injured.

Those on the ground followed suit, taking care of the remaining beasts as the line of undead and dark ones moved forward, closer still to the yet distant gaping black hole the Veramath had left behind.

Unbeknownst to her perhaps, Ilea had become a general to lead her troops in battle. Driven perhaps by a frenzy of her own, she carved her way through the enemy.

Neither her task nor perhaps her intention, it was still apparent that as a tactical leader, she was yet inexperienced. Catelyn could see it however, a force of nature that rivaled her own, shaped and empowered by time and battle. A powerful ally to Hallowfort and all those living.

“She is moving too quickly.” Ilas said as he appeared again at her side.

The moths above had yet again doubled in number, monsters in the air as well as on the ground spreading east and west of the main entrance to the first layer that lay northward, created by the worm.

“It is not her task to reel the monsters in. She is merely here to kill.” Catelyn stated. “Two thirds of the mages should retreat, form a broader line and take care of the flying monsters. Those on the ground unable to face the higher level threats should keep farther back.”

Ilas nodded in agreement. “I will add those who can attract beasts to the ground troops. Some should have arrived by now.”

“Good.” Catelyn said, another ray of fire burning into a far away moth. It seemed things were in control once more and it was time for her to join the battle.

To fight the wretched creatures that would threaten her people.

Flames rose from the corners of her mouth, her eyes blazing with a dark orange.

Ilea felt the heat of an inferno crash down into the running beasts, their forms set ablaze instantly, many of the weaker forms melting or outright disintegrating.

The smell was terrible, perhaps the worst she had ever experienced. Her auras and healing kept her from gagging or puking, ashen limbs still slashing at the monsters in her sphere's range.

Some of the mages had retreated, others simply flying a little farther back.

The burning form of Catelyn appeared a couple meters to her right, the heat comparable to Goliath's furnace, open and blazing.

The corpses where she stood were set aflame, bones cracking under her massive form and weight. A rage in her eyes focused on the beasts.

Ilea smirked and kept moving, occasionally burnt by Catelyn's spells as the two moved up and through the beasts that were still spilling out of the created tunnel.

She healed the fox whenever necessary but found her regenerating herself too, albeit much slower than a healer could manage.

The two cut through the oncoming hordes like a smoldering harvester through a field of crops, their yield however were bones as well as melted fur, scales and skin.

Still, the sheer number of powerful beasts was near overwhelming, leaving the two in a field of beasts without support from further back after an hour or two of fighting. Ilea had lost her perception of time at this point, waving through the beasts as if she was one with her ash.

A loud noise resounded, many of the monsters turning away from her and Catelyn, running towards the sound.

“Follow them.” Catelyn said as she appeared next to Ilea.

“Sure thing, boss.” Ilea said and spread her wings, jumping up and out of the monster’s range.

Catelyn followed, flying next to her.

Wish I couldn’t fly so I could ride her. Ilea thought, glancing over.

Fuck it.

She spun in the air and made her wings vanish, landing on top of Catelyn with her ashen armor covering her.

“What are you doing?” Catelyn exclaimed.

“We’re making an entrance!” Ilea shouted with a grin on her face.

The noise came from various Dark Ones sporting their voices as well as two who were using alp horns or didgeridoos.

It was hard to tell at a distance.

The toots sent sound waves through the monsters before a horde of undead rushed past the bards.

Ilea and Catelyn impacted the corrupted beasts with a crash, continuing their slaughter a kilometer further back, once again with air and now even musical support.

Nice way to supply me with magic. Ilea thought as the sound waves washed past, sending some of the monsters tumbling while she braced herself against it.