

## Chapter 378 Turning Tides

The Veramath was still thrashing around, slower than before but its sheer size did most of the work.

Ilea looked through the gains from the battle so far. Few of the beasts had the capability to even get through her ashen armor, let alone injure her. The Veramath was different but they had yet to engage it.

***‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Awakening reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 14’***

***‘ding’ ‘Sentinel Core reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 2’***

***‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Fighting reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 14’***

***‘ding’ ‘Armor of Ash reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 16’***

***‘ding’ ‘Aspect of Ash reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 10’***

***‘ding’ ‘True Ash Creation reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 10’***

***‘ding’ ‘Heart of Cinder reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 3’***

***‘ding’ ‘Ash and Ember Unity reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 9’***

***‘ding’ ‘Heavy Archery reaches lvl 5’***

Ilea assumed that some of the skills had been close to leveling already thanks to the training with the new group of Cerithil Hutners. Especially her armor of ash.

“It’s getting close.” One of the mages informed.

“Barrier ready?” Catelyn asked.

The barrier mage nodded, the steel mask on their face not revealing anything.

The tension was obvious, amongst all of them. More excitement for Ilea and perhaps a couple of the others but they were aware of the dangers involved.

“Then let’s move down and destroy that creature. Ilea, how is your Mental Resistance?” Catelyn asked as they moved down towards the raging beast.

“High enough for it not to matter.” Ilea said. “Want me to get its attention?” She asked with a wide smirk.

“That. Yes. If you don’t think it’s too dangerous.” The fox asked, looking back at her.

Ilea moved her wings and sped up. “It would be my pleasure.” She said as she passed Catelyn, starting to blink to close the distance.

Her healing would help keep the mages out of danger but the barrier mage should keep them safe for a while.

Ilea after all was very good at being a painful nuisance for a beast of such size and destructive power. *Like a roach, flying, with ash tentacles and instant recovery.*

*Let's see how hard this thing hits.* Ilea thought, blinking once more as she reached her top speed.

The Goliath Veramath was at least three hundred meters long with a twenty meter diameter and thick scales.

She could see the orange lines now, hundreds of cuts showing the orange ooze trickling out, some still holding arms or heads of beasts that had sunken their talons in.

Ilea landed near its maw, right where its head should be.

The worm had slowed down enough to make it an easy maneuver, its rolling and thrashing easily avoided with flight.

Ashen limbs lashed out and dug into the hardened skin, some of the blows glancing off while others yet found purchase.

Ilea could see the scratches now, thousands of tiny indentations from just as many claws and teeth. For every wound the beasts had managed to cut, there had been hundreds if not more failures.

Her ash as well had to dig in several times for all her limbs to puncture. Heart of Cinder was charging and while some of her limbs remained in the wounds to keep her balanced atop the moving worm, most of them dug deeper still.

All the while destructive mana was pushed into the creature.

The Veramath didn't seem to notice her, not until a chunk of its plate like skin was ripped out by ashen limbs, exposing the vulnerable flesh beneath.

Ash now penetrated much deeper than before, ripping out huge chunks of flesh as Ilea quite literally burrowed herself into the burrower.

Explosions and impacts resounded from further back, the mages having started their assault.

*This time I won't go into its mouth.* Ilea thought, releasing her Heart of Cinder into the open wound. Heat and energy smashed inside, scorching the flesh as the worm screeched.

***'ding' 'You hear the raging mental cry of an ancient creature. You resist paralyzation'***

***'ding' 'Veteran reaches lvl 8'***

***'ding' 'Mental Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 14'***

The attack didn't subside, her head pounding with the brute force of its mind magic. *Good thing I've met some friends called Blue Reapers.*

Her ash cut deeper and deeper, Ilea now standing within the wound, blood soaked and holding on with four ashen limbs.

The worm had turned, rolled over the beasts still attacking it from all sides, crushing them with wet sounds. Most of them were paralyzed.

Some made their way into the wound Ilea had created but they instead were ripped apart by ash.

Burrowing herself even deeper, Ilea once again released Heart of Cinder, now in a sphere instead of a cone.

She was already several meters deep, the worm trashing in pain as her healing pulsed through her mind. Its attacks had become more frantic and more powerful.

More than just her healing was supplied by the magic of the beast, her mind shaking as it was glued and taped back together time and time again.

***‘ding’ ‘Mental Resistance reaches 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 15’***

Ilea had to use her instant recovery now, the damage too vast to simply heal with normal healing. She mindlessly slashed around herself, carving herself deeper into the worm with each passing second.

Soon she found dripping orange ooze coming from within the deeper sections, the corruption already having reached that far. Heart of Cinder extended the cavity more with each explosion.

Ilea felt the mind magic hasten as time went on, her digging going into the direction of the source she could now feel.

The pulses themselves were now crashing against her armor, the sheer amount of mana stripping away chunks of her ash. She could see the damage coming thanks to Azarinth Fighting but there was nothing she could do to mitigate it further.

Finally, an area was ripped open to expose the organ responsible for its magic.

Ashen limbs slashed into it before Ilea’s sight became blurry and then black. She heaved as her sight returned, her ash still slashing through the incredibly tough sphere of what was essentially white stone connected with various tendrils to the body of the Veramath.

Ilea carved it out, another wave of mind magic flowing through her and nearly knocking her out again. Winding the ash around the organ, she cut the tendrils and ripped it out with all her strength.

The thing came loose, Ilea rocking back as the damaged white organ slammed into her, its weight and size rivaling her own. It vanished into her bracelet a moment later.

*It’s not dead yet.*

Ilea jumped into the opening she had created and released another wave of heat, all her offensive spells and ash lashing around in the small space. Her mana was topped thanks to the massive mind magic waves, allowing her to charge Absolute Destruction.

She stabilized herself with all her limbs and waited, feeling the monster breathe slowly, its muscles limp as the corruption flowed through.

Thin orange veins formed in the space she was in, moving slowly along the bleeding exposed flesh.

*Twenty seven...*

Blue runes lit up on her body, hidden below her ashen armor as two thousand points of health were sacrificed.

*Twenty eight...*

The power emanating from her fist was palpable now, even without her sphere.

*Twenty nine...*

The magic power flowing through her arm could barely be contained within. The third tier of Aspect of Ash activated, embers and fire started to dance around her arm.

With that, Ilea watched the orange veins move past, her fist smashing into the wall of flesh as her fully charged Absolute Destruction was released, amplified by her third tier auras.

Her arm was repelled backwards on impact, her shoulder dislocated from the force as she was held by her ashen limbs.

It felt like half of her very being was expelled as a ripple of destructive mana flashed up in her sphere like sunlight. A thunderous wave washed through the creature, its very cells destroyed and burnt by the repurposed healing magic.

Ilea grinned as she lowered herself to the fleshy ground before she grabbed her shoulder and yanked it back into place without so much as a wince. She watched as the orange veins faded, losing their magical energy as the breathing of the Veramath came to an end.

***‘ding’ ‘Your group has defeated [Goliath Veramath – lvl 783] – For defeating an enemy three hundred and seventy or more levels above your own, bonus experience is granted.’***

***‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 312 – Five stat points awarded’***

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***‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 311 – Five stat points awarded’***

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***‘ding’ ‘Absolute Destruction reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 17’***

***‘ding’ ‘Sentinel Reconstruction reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 17’***

***‘ding’ ‘Keeper of Ash reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 8’***

Ilea took a deep breath, smelling blood, the vile stench of corruption and sweet victory. Her healing had already brought back the sacrificed health, her mana quickly regenerating with her activated Meditation. “Fuck, this is fucking disgusting.” She exclaimed and shook her arms and ashen limbs, blood and orange goo splattering all over.

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Catelyn felt the mind magic even at this distance, several hundred meters away. Fire still rained down on the near motionless worm as she watched the beasts topple, what remained of their minds ripped apart by the increasingly frantic and powerful magic.

The group of mages had retreated when the barriers fell, three of them unconscious, hopefully alive.

She had remained of course, her resistance high and her healing stronger on her own body. Rage filled her mind, shielding it against the waves of power.

Even with the cracks she felt were forming, Catelyn held fast, the flames burning ever so brightly as she released spell after spell in the hopes that Ilea was still alive.

Fireballs exploded atop the massive creature, ripping out chunks of skin and flesh, the corruption now clearly visible, slowly taking over what remained of the worm.

A sudden ripple of blue energy washed through the creature, Catelyn's eyes widening as she watched from afar.

The orange veins exploded outwards, the light of their corruption fading quickly. Red mixed with orange as the creature bled out where it lay.

***'ding' 'Your group has defeated [Goliath Veramath – lvl 783] – For defeating an enemy four hundred and fifty or more levels above your own, bonus experience is granted.'***

*She did it.* Catelyn felt herself relax as she chuckled, floating in the air for a moment before she sped up, hoping that the mad human was still alive.

*Still not enough for a level. I wasn't the one clawing my way into the beast either. Perhaps I should join her next time.*

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Ilea stepped out of the dead worm, wings spreading as she looked over the sea of corpses spreading for what seemed like hundreds of meters. *Seems like mind magic still works against the corrupted.*

She grinned and looked up at the bright fiery spot coming towards her with incredible speed. *Now, what to spend my stat points on. Mana is probably fine for a while with my absorption. Intelligence it is.*

**Name: Ilea Spears**

**Unspent statpoints: 0**

**Unspent 3rd tier skill points [The Azarinth Sentinel]: 0**

**Unspent 3rd tier skill points [Kin of Ash]: 0**

**Class 1: The Azarinth Sentinel – lvl 313**

**- Active: Absolute Destruction – 3rd lvl 17**

**- Active: Sentinel Reconstruction – 3rd lvl 17**

**- Active: Azarinth Awakening – 3rd lvl 14**

**- Active: Blink – 3rd lvl 12**

**- Active: Sentinel Sphere – 2nd lvl 20**

- **Passive: Sentinel Core – 3rd lvl 2**
- **Passive: Azarinth Fighting – 3rd lvl 14**
- **Passive: Sentinel Huntress – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Azarinth Perception – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Azarinth Reversal – 3rd lvl 6**

#### **Class 2: Kin of Ash – lvl 312**

- **Active: Armor of Ash – 3rd lvl 16**
- **Active: Aspect of Ash – 3rd lvl 10**
- **Active: True Ash Creation – 3rd lvl 10**
- **Active: Heart of Cinder – 3rd lvl 3**
- **Active: Storm of Cinders – 3rd lvl 3**
- **Passive: Ash and Ember Unity – 3rd lvl 9**
- **Passive: Ashen Wings – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Eyes of Ash – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Avatar of Ash – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Keeper of Ash – 3rd lvl 8**

#### **General Skills:**

- **Elos Standard language - lvl 6**
- **Harmony of the Drowned – lvl 1**
- **Heavy Archery – lvl 5**
- **Identify - lvl 9**
- **Meditation – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Veteran – lvl 8**
- **Arcane Magic Resistance – 2nd lvl 16**
- **Ash Magic Resistance – lvl 1**
- **Blast Resistance – 2nd lvl 8**
- **Blood Magic Resistance – lvl 15**
- **Blood Manipulation Resistance – lvl 4**
- **Corrosion Resistance – 2nd lvl 7**
- **Crystal Resistance – lvl 18**
- **Curse Resistance - 2nd lvl 3**
- **Dark Magic Resistance – lvl 13**
- **Death Magic Resistance – 2nd lvl 3**
- **Dust Magic Resistance – lvl 1**
- **Earth Magic Resistance – 2nd lvl 1**
- **Fear Resistance – lvl 9**
- **Health Drain Resistance – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Heat Resistance – 2nd lvl 18**
- **Gravity Magic Resistance – lvl 2**
- **Ice Resistance – 2nd lvl 6**
- **Light Magic Resistance – lvl 17**
- **Lightning Resistance – 2nd lvl 7**
- **Mana Drain Resistance – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Mental Resistance – 2nd lvl 15**
- **Mist Magic Resistance – 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl 10**
- **Obsidian Magic Resistance – lvl 3**

- *Pain Tolerance – 2nd lvl 9*
- *Poison Resistance – 2nd lvl 9*
- *Silver Magic Resistance – lvl 1*
- *Soul Magic Resistance – lvl 8*
- *Stamina Drain Resistance – lvl 1*
- *Time Magic Resistance – lvl 4*
- *Void Magic Resistance – lvl 7*
- *Water Resistance – 2nd lvl 1*
- *Wind Resistance – 2nd lvl 6*
- *Wood Magic Resistance – lvl 1*

**Status:**

**Vitality:** 723  
**Endurance:** 400  
**Strength:** 510  
**Dexterity:** 415  
**Intelligence:** 666  
**Wisdom:** 767

**Health:** 7230/7230  
**Stamina:** 2982/4000  
**Mana:** 3281/7670

She was happy, looking over her levels and stats. *Another behemoth slain. Next time maybe alone.*

“You survived.” Catelyn said as she landed, looking around at the thousands of dead once corrupted beasts.

Ilea raised an eyebrow. “Why does that sound like you’re disappointed?” She spread her wings and flew up, landing on top of the worm.

Catelyn joined her, their gazes focused on the emerging monsters in the distance.

Killing the Veramath had an impact but in the end it was just a small reprieve.

“Because I would have died.” Catelyn answered the question, not looking her way. “I’m in your debt, I really am. Thank you for coming to help.”

Ilea nodded. “I consider you and Elana friends and it would be a shame to lose Hallowfort here in the north. The area would become terribly lonesome.”

“I had taken you for someone that prefers solitude.” Catelyn said.

Some of the dark one mages and warriors joined them nearby, hovering in the air and preparing their weapons.

The four armed shadow dark one appeared close by.

"I do but I also like variety, from time to time." Ilea replied.

"A monumental feat, healer of ash." The dark one said. "You have improved exponentially since I last met thee."

"You were the guardian of the village here, right?" Ilea asked.

They watched the beasts approach in the distance. Their numbers still seemed high, most of them now coming from the path the Veramath had created. A gaping tunnel leading down.

"Thy may call me Ilas, guardian of the first layer. A presumptuous title, holding little truth in the face of these events." He spoke, holding his short swords casually. His steel mask hid any facial features but he was facing the beasts like everyone else.

"There is no shame in getting help. You're fighting like everyone else. If anything, they're all guardians." Ilea said and chuckled. "Are you ready, or does anyone need some rest or healing?"

Catelyn chuckled. "They will not rest until all of them are dead and burnt. Neither will we."

"The barricades now have an additional layer of protection, those in need of rest and meditation will retreat. I will organize rotations depending on enemy numbers." Ilas said. "It seems the sudden calamity has proven useful after death."

He was probably talking about the Veramath, providing a biological barrier between the approaching horde and their defensive position as well as the change it brought to the enemy approach, coming from a single place instead of various cracks and crevices in the ground.

"Any idea how many of them were there per layer?" Ilea asked, glancing at Ilas.

"We do not know." Ilas replied.

*Well, only one way to find out then.* Ilea thought and moved her wings. "Don't worry about me with your magic. I'll try to attract as many as I can. Just send your spells into the bulk of them."

Some of the mages gave her an apprehensive look but most nodded.

"She was the one to enter and kill the Veramath." Catelyn supplied. "I doubt any of us could kill her."

"I haven't fought you." Ilea said to her as she twirled in the air.

"And I hope not to change that." The fox replied and ascended.

Most of the mages now looked at Ilea in a different light, in the very least respect in their eyes.

*Now, my dear corrupted beasts. Come to me.* She thought with a grin, flying over the field of dead.

The screeches and howls grew more audible, frenzied beasts on their way to sink their teeth into something. All they would find was death as dozens of warriors teleported down from the dead Veramath, even more flying rangers, mages and rogues ready to unleash their spells and arrows from above.

They had their perimeter now, people to organize the troops and they were ready for whatever came out of the depths of the Descent. The Veramath was likely just the first of many.

Ilea blinked down and came to a stop, her ashen limbs fanning out and her buffs at the ready.

Meditation was still active, just now topping off her mana once more. If she was honest, she hoped



for stronger beasts. Some of the forms as well as the flying monsters emerging from the hole in the ground at least suggested change to before.

Her fists slammed together, her from crouching lightly as the first projectiles impacted her defenses.