

## Chapter 674 Rebirth

“Ah you made a mistake there, young woman,” the high pitched lich fragment said and giggled. “And here I managed to hide all three of them.”

The other Fragment looked over, its eyes glowering. “You... you were the one to... why...,”

“I believe I did,” the first fragment said, giggling to herself as she raised an ethereal arm to her face. “Sorry Pain, but I didn’t want to die. Nor do I want to die now, but I suppose it’s over.”

“He will combine the phylacteries and undo us,” Pain said. “You should flee human, if you do not plan to fight the creature you have just unleashed upon the world.”

“You two don’t want to stop him?” Ilea asked. “You’re at a higher level even,” she said to the second one.

The Lich waved her off. “I was never one for fighting. I’ve long forgotten who I was before but... not a fighter. Not then, not now. The transition will be painless, mostly. Or so Pain here claims.”

“Could you do it too then?” Ilea asked the first one. “Do the transition? I assume you need to combine the three phylactery fragments which then kills two of you?”

“Indeed. It is the only end for us,” Pain said, his voice sounding almost relieved.

“Really? Even if I defeat that guy he won’t die?” Ilea asked.

The fragment looked at her. “You would have to destroy the phylacteries and defeat his current form.”

“The same is true for the two of you, I assume?” she asked.

“Yes, though I would gladly find an end to this suffering,” Pain said.

“I don’t. So please don’t insist on fighting me. I would rather vanish than be killed,” Owl said.

“I see. And what happens when the three are combined?” Ilea asked.

The first fragment looked at her. “You have them, do you not?” he asked and paused, glancing towards the hole in the ground. “You risk much, human. Why?”

“Because he threatened to kill my allies,” she answered. “So tell me what happens.”

“The one bestowed with the fragments will ascend to the full status of Lich, and will no longer be bound to the limits we have been imprisoned in for millennia,” the first one said.

“How long would that take? And can you hide us from his presence while that is happening?” Ilea asked.

“I’m afraid that is impossible,” the fragment said. “It will take days to finish the ritual, and neither I nor Owl can escape this place. Death will find us.”

“What happens if I defeat his current form?” Ilea asked.

“He will come back to life, but it takes time, for the mana to collect, to reform what has been lost,” he answered.

“Enough to finish the ritual?” she asked with a smile.

“Perhaps... yes. But for you to defeat. No, you have slain the monster below, you are more than capable. And I shall help,” he said, his voice deeper, not wavering as it had before.

Ilea looked between them. “No way to save you both?”

“There is not. Nor is there a need. I have been yearning for this day, where my rest is granted. Those I loved millennia past I have forgotten. They are long gone. The only wish I have is rest, but if there is a way to give to Owl what Death has claimed for himself... yes...,” he said as power exploded from his body. “Then I shall assist you, with all I can do. And so should you, Owl. To survive, is to struggle, to fight. If you wish to claim this, you must now show your resolve.”

The other Lich looked at Pain, her head moving down before she glanced at Ilea. “I never wanted any of this...,” she said. “That much I remember.”

“Just do whatever you can do to support and protect us,” Ilea said. “You’re the highest leveled one here after all,” she added, seeing Feyrair progress through the dungeon. “And we have another ally coming our way.”

Pain looked up and vanished, returning with Feyrair in tow, the elf clad in white flames as he hissed at the two fragments. He turned to Ilea with a questioning look.

“Those two are fine. We need to kill the third one,” she said.

“Finally,” Feyrair said. “A fight.”

They heard a wail echo out from deep below, anger and frustration near palpable.

“He’s coming.” Ilea mused and started sacrificing health into her fire and auras. “We’ll show him who’s the one really trapped inside this dungeon. Let’s curb stomp that motherfucker.”

Death appeared before them, soul and of course death magic emanating from his form as he looked at the gathered people, fields of magic stopping his aura as he spread his arms. “You would betray me. Mere fools, standing in the way of greatness. You have no right to claim what is m-”

Ilea appeared before him, her burning ash rushing forward as she punched his chest with a charged set of spells. She ignored the pained wail and continued her assault, preventing his teleports as she tried to grapple his form with her ashen limbs. Six more punches landed before she jumped off, displacing herself to avoid the incoming flare of soul magic. She landed, Feyrair in his dragon form joining her as Pain formed additional sets of barriers hovering close to his two new allies.

“Y... you... BEAST!!” the Lich screeched, floating backwards as a dozen creatures formed from thin air, summoned at his will. “You have no aut-”

Ilea held up her arm, having sacrificed ten thousand health as a fully charged cone of heat and energy formed in front of her. The blast incinerated everything the Lich had summoned, his screeching form in the middle of it all as he tried to form shattering barriers in front of himself.

The two warriors didn’t hesitate, Feyrair rushing forward with the spell still ongoing, his resilient body taking the heat in stride, white burning claws slashing at the floating form two long strides later.

The ashen healer flew behind the Lich, once more preventing teleportation as their assault continued, shields shattered by arcane explosions and the flame of creation. The two avoided each others spells with practiced ease, simply ignoring the flames when they thought it reasonable.

“Why must y-” the Lich cried, arcane energy flowing through him as his words ceased. He tried summoning more creatures, both him and his creations burned by Feyrair’s continues fire breath.

Ilea avoided the soul magic spells while Feyrair seemed to just ignore them. She assumed his extended time with Seithir had something to do with that. *Should’ve leveled more as well*, she thought, giving a slight nod to the watching two Liches whose shields had allowed her to keep her aggression up for most of the fight so far.

She aimed her beam cannon at the Lich’s chest and sent her charged beam forward, snapping the barrel upwards to cut through his head as well.

The being couldn’t utter another word with the bombardment of continuous spells, her teleport prevention coupled with Feyrair’s claws keeping him there.

When the dragonling finally managed to grapple and push down the ethereal form with his flame covered claws, the fight was over. His breath came down in a continuous stream with Ilea increasing her weight to send beam after beam of concentrated heat and energy into the downed form, the frozen ground below shattered and melting.

They didn’t let up until a noise resounded in their minds.

***‘ding’ ‘Your group has defeated [Lich Fragment – lvl 1038]’***

***‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 487 – One stat point awarded’***

***‘ding’ ‘Deviant of Humanity reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 21’***

***‘ding’ ‘Monstrous reaches lvl 4’***

***‘ding’ ‘Veteran reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl 28’***

“That was a curb stomp alright,” she mused.

Feyrair turned back into his elven form, the ground around him cracked and still on fire. He went into a crouch and hissed before he fell on his ass. “That was beyond anything Seithir could conjure up,” he said in a tired voice.

“We could’ve taken our time,” Ilea said, joining him as she checked his vitals. Everything seemed fine, but she couldn’t exactly heal soul damage.

“The shields protected me. There was no need,” he said, giving a nod to the two waiting Liches.

Both of them twitched, floating a little farther back as he looked at them.

“Hardly even a fight,” she said. “Maybe I should’ve taken him on alone.”

*Satisfying in its own way thought*, she thought with a broad grin.

“You... massacred him,” Pain said in a shaking voice, raising a hand to his face before he burst out laughing. “SERVES YOU RIGHT, YOU PIECE OF SHIT NECROMANCER SON OF A WHORE, LIAR, MURDERER!!” he screamed and appeared near where Death had ironically died, stomping the ground with his ethereal boots.

“And here I thought he’d be afraid of us,” Ilea murmured, sitting down next to Feyrair.

Owl still held her distance, her eyes moving between the combatants and the other lich.

“A lot of suppressed anger,” Feyrair mused, happily taking the meal Ilea offered.

“Wouldn’t happen to an elf, I’ll give you that,” she mused, eating a portion herself. It wasn’t necessarily a good fight but a cathartic one after the day’s events.

The Lich cursed a little more before he broke down crying.

Owl joined and awkwardly touched his shoulder, giving a wary glance to the two fighters.

*You’re literally twice our level*, Ilea thought with a grin.

“He didn’t teleport away, why? I know he has hundreds of creatures prepared for this very event,” Owl said.

“It’s a secret,” Ilea answered, summoning the phylacteries. “So you want to live, I take it?”

The Lich looked at her, eyes shining just a little brighter. “I do... yes.”

“Aren’t they undead?” Fey asked.

“Moves, talks, seems pretty alive to me,” Ilea said.

“I suppose you’re right,” the elf replied.

“I’ll leave you to it then,” Ilea said and handed over the items.

“J... just like that?” the Lich asked.

Ilea shrugged. “I got what I came here to get. And I don’t want that guy to come back to life. Seems like the best outcome of the situation is you becoming a full Lich.”

“I s... suppose,” Owl said and turned to the other fragment. “Are you sure, Pain? You’re the one who can do the ritual.”

Pain had calmed down a little by now, wiping away at non-existent tears before he started summoning ice, with runes already scratched into it all. “There is nothing I am more certain of, now come. We have to use the time, he won’t be beaten so easily the next time.”

“I doubt that,” Ilea said, sipping from a bottle of ale.

“You shouldn’t be overconfident, human, despite the incredible power you displayed in your battle. Death has fought many powerful beings, for a long time,” he said, gesturing his fellow Lich to sit down on a specific spot on the growing ice formation.

“He didn’t seem like a fighter to be honest,” Ilea replied, not about to start an argument about it all. The Lich may have fought powerful creatures but he had high-level soul magic and necromancy at his disposal. She doubted he had battled many creatures that could withstand his spells for extended periods, let alone ones that could break his shields so easily.

The Lich focused on preparing the ritual, a circle of floating pieces of ice expanding as he added piece after piece. “Death tirelessly studied the tombs and notes left behind by the order of necromancers we have long forgotten. The mending of our broken fragments is only possible if none but one remain.”

“Were you the same person before?” Ilea asked. “You look and sound a bit like humans.”

“I do not remember the species we had once been. But I do know we are three. It was how this came to be, a failed ritual, taking the essence of not one but three. And so we were trapped, our bodies strengthened but limited. The process is delicate as it is and while failure had surely been an option we considered, the results were likely worse than what we had imagined. I do not remember much of that time. Notes, and feelings, reminding me of what I was, who I once have been,” the being explained. “And yet it matters not. My life ended with that ritual, and finally I will find rest,” he said with a calm voice, continuing to work without pause as he set up the rest of the spell.

A few hours later, the being floated over to the three waiting humans and elf.

Ilea had gotten the Elders after her meal.

“It is done,” the Lich said. “Owl, all you must do is claim what is yours.”

The other lich looked over from its central position within the maze of ice structures and floating cubes. “What do you mean?”

“Connect yourself to the phylacteries, and fuel the runes you touch. It was nice, knowing you,” Pain said and turned to the group. “Thank you.”

“I won’t forget you,” Owl said, her eyes flickering before magic surged upwards from the loose circle, runes and ice alight with both soul magic and necromancy.

The waiting Lich moved his gaze upwards with his arms lightly spread, a serene atmosphere to his form despite his near featureless body. “Victoria,” he whispered as his body dissolved back into pure mana.

The Elders wiped away tears, Feyrair giving them a confused look.

*Don’t get resurrected again, old man,* Ilea thought with a slight smile, turning her attention to the focusing magic that swirled around the remaining fragment, her body glowing with power, all congregating around her until it flowed into her form.

Bright purple eyes shined at the center of the formation, chunks of ice sent flying to all sides as the walls of the cavern started to crumble.

Ilea slapped away a few hundred kilograms of ice, forming a protective zone around the others, Feyrair expanding into his dragon form a moment later, the chunks simply collecting on top of his wings.

A burst of death magic flashed out, sending cracks through the ground and walls as a humanoid being was revealed at the center of it all, its form of ethereal shadow like quality with glowing purple eyes and a purple line indicating a mouth.

**[Greater Lich – lvl ????] - [Undead]**

Ilea waved at the creature from under Feyrair’s draconic head, the Elders standing behind her.

She watched as the Lich raised its arm, the ice around them stabilizing, the walls no longer breaking apart. It glanced to the floor and made a small pedestal form from the ground up, a runed sphere at its center. “We should leave this place,” the same high pitched voice said, looking up. “I cannot stop the collapse.”

It raised a hand, grabbing the sphere before it used a simple space magic spell to move them up in the dungeon.

Ilea didn't try to resist, appearing with the group in the entrance hall where they had first come across the Liches.

"You're still in there, right?" Ilea asked, approaching the creature now at near level one thousand three hundred.

"I believe so... yes... Owl was my name, was it not? The one given to me by passing time," she said before giggling.

"That sounds kind of ominous," Ilea said.

The Lich coughed. "Apologies, I need to get used to this far different form."

"Purple yes, instead of blue," Ilea said, aware of some of the magical differences thanks to her various forms of perception.

"Exactly," the lich said and pointed at her, the sealed entrance shifting aside as it lead the group through.

Ilea teleported them up and out the same way they had entered, quickly reaching the valley up top.

"We should probably not stay here," she mused, checking the locator that now pointed south.

"I... this is... the sun," the Lich said, looking up to the glowing orb of flames.

"Indeed," Ilea said and lightly touched her shoulder. "And we're in the far north, which means there are creatures here even you can't just escape from."

"I... see," the being said, glancing at the members of the group.

"Coming?" Ilea asked. "Or do you want to find your own way?"

"I... you did so much already... I don't... I'm a Lich... a cursed undead being," she whispered.

"I can introduce you to a friend. There's a collection of... special... individuals there already. You'll fit right in, trust me," Ilea suggested, smiling at the creature before her mantle closed up.

The Lich appeared next to her. "If it's really not a bother."

"Not at all," Ilea said and activated her third tier transfer.

The group appeared within the domain of the Meadow, Ilea stretching as she cleansed herself inside a cloud of ash, switching into casual clothes before she joined the slow moving machine currently floating a few meters above ground.

***[Pursuer of Akelion – lvl ???] - [Self conscious]***

"Hey there murder machine," Ilea said, waving at the creature.

"A visitor or an ally?" the Meadow asked.

"She's a little lost. Maybe you can reintroduce her to the world and help her figure out her abilities, body, and well... maybe help her show restraint with her power," Ilea answered.

The being made a rumbling sound that echoed through its entire domain. "I'm not some daycare, where you can drop off your new friends and children!"

*“Come on, Meadow. We both know you love it. And it’s not like I’m dropping any beings that aren’t at least somewhat interesting,”* she said, squinting her eyes at the tree. *“How do you even know what a daycare is?”*

*“You mentioned it a few days ago. You talk a lot,”* it answered.

*“Oh do I now,”* Ilea said, waving to the Lich, everyone else already occupied with their own activities, half of them likely communicating with the Meadow. *“You’re already talking to the tree I assume? It runs things around here,”* Ilea said. *“But of course you can leave whenever you like. I’d appreciate it if you don’t become some murderhappy monster running around killing everything however.”*

*“You already fill that role,”* the Meadow sent.

*“One is enough. Do you really want four mark lich Ileas running around in your carefully cultivated wilderness?”* she asked.

*“That sounds like you’re insulting my hobbies,”* the Meadow replied.