

Chapter 407 Air Pressure

“Don’t be too hasty. It was likely a powerful thing. Even I am too weak yet to face it, am I not?” she asked.

Unsure. Possibility.

She had a hard time grasping the meaning of the mental images, feelings and thoughts. It felt alien in a way and yet familiar. Like a language one had studied for a year or two, a decade prior to hearing it once more.

The Enavurin had learned English just to communicate with her. It had mentioned it was the first time it spoke it, through the mind even.

Impressive creature. A shame it chooses to rest and think instead of... well anything else really. We could learn a lot from such a large brain.

“Were you taken from your home?” she asked.

The little guy shook his head lightly.

“Why come here then?”

It seemed to think of an answer.

Joy, the thought reached her mind and she understood.

“You like to explore, find new things, feel new magic?” Ilea asked with a smile.

The Fae nodded.

“Me too, but I like to train my resistances. To get stronger, get a higher level and all that,” she explained.

Understand.

“Do you mind if we teleport down? There seem to be a ton of stairs here,” she said, looking down into the darkness. The dim lights from higher in the facility did not reach far.

He nodded.

Ilea blinked several times until she reached the bottom of the long decline. Any sight of the fourteenth layer was gone in her sphere.

Finally, she thought, seeing the small door that exited into open space.

The Fae appeared a moment later, sitting once more on her shoulder.

“Number fifteen, any thoughts or detection?” she asked.

The area right in front of the entrance was mostly barren earth, partially frozen over. No trees or any vegetation was visible, nor any creatures or corpses.

Careful.

“I mean everything down here is hundreds of levels higher than me, let alone you. Of course we should be careful,” Ilea said and chuckled, stepping out.

Crystal light shined from above, hundreds of meters away and yet still reaching the ground. It was quiet, no noise except for the wind as it moved over the dead and frozen ground.

Ilea walked up the incline of a small hill before the whole of the layer spread in front of her.

Kilometers of barren land, only the occasional shrub or stone disturbing the overwhelmingly boring landscape. No trees, masses of water, mountains or creatures.

She felt the hairs on her neck stand up. *Open space... this might spell trouble. Nowhere to hide.*

Ilea continued to observe and found her assumption hadn't been entirely correct. Gashes in the ground strewn around at random would provide spaces to hide from monsters and attacks alike.

Danger.

The thought reached her mind when a loud shriek made her look up. She didn't freeze this time but Ilea could feel the power in the challenge.

A bird flew closer as she waited, stopping a kilometer away.

Ilea had a hard time even seeing it but the power emanating from the creature was noticeable even at the distance. *A single monster, she noted, open space and very little space to hide.*

“I'll charge it. Do what you want but I suggest you try to get to the other side. If things go to shit, I'll be fleeing to the next layer as well,” Ilea said.

The Fae nodded and vanished, unaffected by the screech just as much as she was.

Fascinating creature that one. As well as my distant friend, she smirked and spread her wings, her precognition not necessary for her to see the incoming blade of wind.

The spell cleaved through the air itself, reaching her in mere seconds.

She jumped and moved her wings, the sound of the impact as the crescent blade slashed into the frozen earth arriving at the same time as the passing of the magic itself.

That's insane. At that distance, she thought, a broad grin tugging on her lips as she sped up, her eyes focused on the winged dot.

More spells came her way, much harder to dodge now due to her own speed working against her.

She had to resort to her blink when she was around halfway to the creature, both the intensity and frequency of its attacks increasing by now.

As she got closer, her eyes glimpsed more details as she weaved and blinked through the multitude of attacks. The thing looked like a four legged bird with broad and powerful feathered wings and the head of a golden eagle.

She dodged downwards, only to be caught by one of the blades.

It cleaved through her ashen armor and through her bone, cutting deep into her flesh before it was finally stopped. Her second tier wind resistance didn't seem to have helped much, both her own speed and the incoming spells too fast for a reasonable change in trajectory.

The hit unbalanced her, the deep cut already healing as her ash covered her once more. She spread ash before her and moved her wings ahead when a barrage of tiny needles slashed into her.

Like an unending storm of tiny cuts, the beast overwhelmed her defenses and ash regeneration. It didn't stop for several seconds as Ilea was shredded through, the thin and shallow cuts healing quickly but a hundred more forming in turn.

She refrained from using her near instant recovery quite yet, in case it got worse. The mana she absorbed from the attack easily paid for her healing.

So much resilience, defense, resistances, healing. And what do these fuckers do? Just get right through.

The attack stopped and she spread her wings once more, farther back and halfway to the ground by now. Her eyes were ice. *I'll slap your arrogance off your face.*

Ilea sped up again, using her blink sporadically now. She let the attacks hit when necessary, moving her body in the slightest ways to let them cut into non vital parts as she turned and circled the creature.

She wasn't about to accept that some flying fuck could reduce her to nothing from such a distance.

It didn't even move, simply keeping its head locked on her as she moved.

Another set of spells cut through her, three blades, each slamming through her skin. One of them cut into her bone even, severing it halfway through.

As long as you can't mince me, I'll keep coming, she thought and healed her body with her third tier. Ilea's Wind Resistance was rather high leveled and even her third tier reconstruction was paid with the mana she absorbed, coupled with her natural regeneration.

The beast would have to keep its heavy assault going for minutes, shredding her very body to nothing faster than it could regenerate to get close to a kill. No matter its level or the critical damage inflicted.

Sentinel Core, my darling dear. If only you could absorb physical power, Ilea mused as she closed the distance, only to be cut apart once more.

The closer she got, the harder the magic hit, the more did she want to slap the creature's beaked face.

Five times already did she try to approach, getting a little closer with each try.

[Storm Griffin – lvl ?????]

Ah shit, Ilea thought, a barrage of blades ripping through her body, now close enough to identify the creature.

Its eyes glinted with intelligence, looking at her with interest and apprehension.

She felt her bones crack, her left arm ripped off and flying away. *Hope that doesn't matter to my bone armor,* the thought was the only thing going through her mind as she was pushed away by the powerful magic that slashed and punched through her skin, muscles and bones.

Her head was struck and she noted her brain was cut into before it immediately regenerated. She hadn't even blacked out, it had been so quick. *Seems like my third tier regen kicks in as soon as a critical organ is hit. Good to know,* she smiled and kept moving.

I can do this all day, little bird, she thought and blinked.

Hana ripped out another piece from the wall. It had taken dozens of strikes from her sword just to bend the metal a tiny bit.

“Sure it was them?” she asked the dark one next to her.

He was panting, collecting his blood and corruption covered chains before he collapsed near the wall. “Don’t look at me like that... I’m ok,” he said and breathed hard.

“Yes. I am sure. The corruption stems from those canisters. I have found two already, both empty. If only none of the beasts would have been infected, we could still search this place,” he murmured.

“Something is coming,” the thin mage said in a gravely deep voice.

Hana didn’t have much confidence in the dark one, his thin form covered in a ripped magical robe, his head covered in a black metal mask. Even his level was below hers.

He had contacted them several hours prior, having hidden in a small storage room veiled in illusions and shadows. Like many in the expedition he was very much unlike Hana, not one to confront a beast and fight it.

She had to admit that he had already saved their lives three times but without his kind in the expedition, they might not find themselves in the midst of beasts they cannot fight.

Relly can fight them, she noted, watching Jonna heal the man’s wounds.

He hadn’t killed the beast that sensed them but it had left, injured and wary. *Free of corruption. There is hope still,* she thought.

“Come to me,” Carul said, the mage appearing next to the wounded warrior and bidding Hana to join.

A shadow formed over them. “Cease your healing, lest we be discovered,” he hissed in a quiet but deep voice, commanding and on edge.

Hana hissed at him but did not retaliate, nodding to Jonna who had already stopped her spell.

Relly gave a nod and smiled at the human.

Hana watched as Carul finished another spell, his own form appearing in the damaged hall several times, moving slightly as to attract attention.

“Why do we not only hide?” Hana asked.

“It knows we are here, it can sense something. Let us hope the illusions frustrate it enough to leave,” the mage said.

A clinking sound came from above before a massive worm like creature punched through the ceiling, its mandibles ripping through the corporeal illusion and the wall beyond.

[Fang Shaper – lvl ???]

The creature screeched before it burrowed itself into the steel floor, its ten meter length vanishing seconds later.

‘ding’ ‘You have heard the Fang Shaper’s challenge – You are paralyzed for five seconds.’

How did Krentin really think this was a good idea in the first place, Hana thought.

She was happy to get a challenge, otherwise she would have tried her luck in the human lands or further south a long time ago. There were limits however and the Descent proved to be one of them.

I should have spoken out against it, should have stopped them. Fools. Hiding and sneaking is the scavenger’s way. We are no scavengers.

Hana was aware that the same wasn’t true for most of the others in the expedition. Even Krentin tried to avoid conflicts and battles whenever possible but he didn’t stop her either. Here, she didn’t have a choice but to hide.

And now they were stuck down here. The only reason they were alive still dumb luck and a single mage weaving his illusions and shadows. It made her furious.

“Keep calm, we will find a way,” Relly said, the warrior looking up at her with warm eyes. “Are we safe to continue?” he addressed the mage.

“It has moved away. Yet we will not be safe for long. We should move up and out of this layer,” he said, repeating his earlier suggestion.

“Not until we destroy the corruption and find all the survivors,” Relly said with conviction. It was clear that he wouldn’t change his mind, even if the mage decided to leave them behind.

Carul knew as well that his chances of survival were small, were he to move alone. Otherwise he would have left his little storage room long before.

Hana smirked at his situation, feeling quite happy about cleaning up the mess they had unleashed. Someone amongst them at least, intentional or not.

“I see you are unwilling to be rational,” Carul said, hesitating for a moment before he continued. “I have sensed that a group left, right before this whole thing went to absolute shit. I may be able to find where they went.”

“Where were you?” Relly asked, his wounds now healed once more as he stood up and tightened his chains.

“The main camp we had established,” Carul replied.

Hana hissed and Jonna frowned.

“It is overrun with Patrons of Torment. We cannot hope to defeat them alone,” Relly said.

“Many will have moved on by now. I will be able to sense them as we get closer. Come, if we must do this then let us not delay any further,” the mage said, his spell waning before he appeared close to a steel door that was halfway ripped open.

Hana rested her blade on her shoulder and smirked. “Our honor is to be restored, lest we be cursed with far worse than corruption.”

Ilea formed three ashen spears, two immediately slashed apart before she launched the last one. She watched with anticipation as the spear rushed at its head, perfectly aimed and timed between its attacks.

The Griffin looked on with annoyance before it moved its head to the side, the lance scratching its right wing without leaving a wound.

Her own body was hit by a barrage of wind that sent her spiraling through the air, a hundred meters away from her target.

She smiled, finally getting a hit in after nearly half an hour of trying, maybe longer.

We could just keep going forever, she mused, watching the creature move for the second time today. It rushed at her far faster than anything Ilea could muster herself, the air visibly pressured by the sudden explosive movement.

Ah shit, she thought, feeling the magical power that had manifested suddenly.

A spiraling wall of air moved towards her, Ilea blinking out of the way before she was sucked into the turmoil. Her body tumbled downwards as her wings tried to stabilize her fall.

The Griffin was close, entering her sphere with its wings resting on its back. A wall of air slammed down on her, a single spike piercing her chest.

She was pushed down to the ground with immense speed before the impact slammed the invisible spike through her chest, ripping through flesh and bone alike.

The wall of wind pushed her further down into the earth, the very floor around her compressed under the weight and power of the magic.

Her heart lay splattered and useless below her, joined by whatever other organs had been squashed.

She watched as another front of air moved towards her, the light from above distorted and blurry. The Griffin hovered a hundred meters above.

Her chest reformed, the hole nearly encompassing her whole torso. Even with the third tier it didn't heal fast enough for the next attack.

The ground shook once more and her body was compressed down into the frozen earth and stone. Blood flowed from every opening in her body before her instant regeneration restored her.

She blinked and reformed her armor, now moving away from the air blades coming in from above. The magic rushed past her with much higher frequency by now, the attacks that hit cutting deep into her body.

Pissed it off, she thought and felt another front coming from above. She blinked again and braced for the impact, several of her bones snapping before they were healed again.

Mana at least wasn't a problem but she definitely started to worry a little. *Don't let it trap you*, she thought and continued towards the other end of the vast open layer.

Ilea kept moving on foot, her wings only providing a bigger target to the wind magic that rained down either way.

Maybe I should have taken those four marks a little more seriously, she thought and blinked again. She appeared, her back slashed apart by a dozen spikes, some penetrating as far as her organs.

Blood and air was pushed out of her mouth, splattering against the inside of her ash before she healed again.

Should have dragged that lightning elemental down here for them to duke it out, I get it mate, I pissed you off, she saw the wall of the layer now. Hundred of meter of straight stone, carved into the deep, now housing creatures she definitely wasn't ready to mess with.

Not yet, she thought.

Ilea noted that the Griffin didn't move after her anymore, still hovering where it had been before. The attacks still came in the same frequency.

She ground her teeth, her legs carrying her over the terrain as the magic slashed into the ground around her, ashen limbs moving her to the side whenever possible. She jumped and leaped, ducked and rolled just to reduce the impacts.

If she lost her legs and the creature really tried to put her down, she had no doubt it could. This wasn't a monster anymore, it was a natural disaster.

A lazy one at least, she thought and finally reached the other side.

A damaged steel gate rested in the middle of the massive expansive wall, Ilea blinking inside and rolling to a stop.

She held up her hands as the steel was turned to shrapnel, blasted open and punched her way before she blinked once more, down this time.