

Chapter 912 Ruler

Ilea felt the space magic summoned by the Monarch. She could feel him trying to lift her up, trying to rip away her flesh, trying to squash her eyes. Her Fourth tiers weren't active, the seven barriers around her unable to block space magic itself. Not in the form that he used it as, nor did Ilea wish to block his attacks for the time being.

She had met the Sanvaruun before. Briefly. When Heranuur and Seviir had stranded her and the Cerithil Hunters inside of a Taleen dungeon. She had survived his attacks and his taunts then. She planned to survive him now.

"You were injured," she said, still feeling his magic push and tear at her, his right arm raised. She watched the wounds she could see on him heal. "And you don't regenerate fast."

It felt almost strange. All the monsters she had faced in the past. To think she had been afraid of him once.

A beam of light shot out towards her. Bright and burning, scorching the ground before it crashed into one of her seven barriers, the blue and white light expanding as she felt his spell. She absorbed much of the mana he used, not that she needed it.

"You talked more the last time we met," she said. "When you sent your dog after me."

A monster on his own? Or one made by you?

The Monarch glared at her before he hissed.

"Do not speak, vermin," the Sanvaruun commanded.

Ilea raised her brows. "Vermin," she repeated in a whisper, as if to taste the word. The ruler of an Elven domain. Ancient. Feared among his kind. And he just called her vermin.

She felt a wave of magic, the fire and heat around him expanding in an exponential burst of power. She could feel the heat and frowned, looking at him. "What did you do to them? To Heranuur and Seviir?"

Wings of fire burst from the back of the Monarch before he flew up into the air, arms raised as several dozen small spheres of fire came into existence. All of them flew her way a moment later, leaving trails of flame in the air and homing in on her position.

Ilea didn't interfere, staying where she was, even pushing aside her shields as the explosions of heat and fire washed over her. "Is this enjoyable to you? To fight beings you deem below yourself? Weaker than yourself? What did you do to Heranuur and Seviir?"

The elf hissed and summoned another set of spheres.

This time, Ilea teleported them straight back at him, a set of spatial shields protecting him against the explosions. She teleported right in front of him and latched on to his teleport when he made distance. She did so three more times, remaining right in front of him. An explosion of fire turned the few trees below them into cinders.

Ilea let the flames pass, gathering a bit of heat. She sent it back at him with Volcanic Source, the uncharged beam of heat and energy burning past his spatial defenses. "You're boring me."

“You don’t deserve to speak to me, creature,” the Monarch said. Between his hands, a small sphere of glowing light formed.

Ilea felt the pressure of his gathering mana emanate into the surroundings. Still, she waited and watched.

A moment later, she felt her perception spike. She raised her brows, activating her Fourth Tier of True Reconstruction just before a thin beam of light shot out from the glowing sphere between his hands. Aimed at her head and brain.

She stood, the sizzling light burning into the blue and white energies now in front of her left eye. She took the hit, seeing a hundred thousand mana burn up with it. The blinding light vanished a moment later and they remained flying where they were.

“I’m not a creature, same as you. I’m human,” Ilea said and teleported him closer, then held him there with her Fabric Alteration. “What did you do to them? How did you convince them to join you?”

The Monarch hissed, pushing against her magic. “Two cursed elves. Why would you care for them? They came crawling back, and I freed them.” A glint of light as chains of fire rushed out from the Monarch’s chest, slinging around Ilea before they linked and locked her in place.

Ilea wondered if he had really killed them. He wouldn’t care, would he? Would she? They couldn’t shake their past and the rules imposed by the Oracles and Monarchs. They had hurt her with their betrayal, but she found that she still cared. “They must’ve been afraid. To risk a return. To be judged by you.”

She could feel the burning chains heat up, draining her of life, stamina, and mana. Their framework was complex, but nothing too far out of the ordinary.

The Monarch looked confident now, moving closer as he willed his chains to tighten, the flames flaring up and burning into her armor.

She could feel his magic, and found it wanting.

“They were weak, and cursed,” he said. “As are you, so called Val Akuun. An illusion at best. To think I let it trick me.” Again, his power surged, the air itself set alight as his chains flared up. He hissed, an amused sound. “You will die here, human, as will e-”

Ilea teleported next to him. She willed open the barrier that protected him and grabbed onto his hair, her aura preventing him from teleporting away. She ignored the claws, fire, and light spells exploding in her face and pulled his head closer, to look into his eyes. “I have faced dragonfire. Don’t insult me with this, shit,” Ilea said and charged her wings. She turned and aimed the both of them towards the ground, then flew down with all the speed that she could muster.

The impact sent a shock wave outwards, a small crater added to the landscape.

She let go and stood up, brushing away the dirt that stuck to her.

The Sanvaruun stumbled up and turned to face her, his face distorted by anger. Blood ran down his nose, despite the barriers that had protected him from the impact.

She watched him teleport up before he spread his arms, a hundred spheres of bright flame appearing in the air before they grew and shot down towards her, each as large as a car.

Did he not see the Primordial Flame? Ilea wondered as explosions of heat and fire shook the ground around her, his bombardment continuing for several seconds as she waited, bits and pieces of her armor ripped away in the continuing blasts.

“When is the last time you faced anything stronger than yourself?” Ilea asked.

Another hiss. Anger, more so than anything else. But she hadn’t expected reason from the elf who brought his people to this fight.

He raised his hands to form another sphere of light.

Ilea charged her Fabric Alteration.

She formed two gates to displace another of his thin beams of light before she focused on his framework, grabbed on, and smashed him down into the ground.

He rose up immediately, light and fire burning around him, protected still, by his invisible set of space barriers.

Ilea let her aura spread, preventing his teleportation as she sent down another wave.

The Monarch raised his arms, his knees slightly buckling. He hissed and strained against her might, sending out another bright beam of light, this one more broad and accompanied by a set of fire spheres.

Ilea started walking towards him, the beam burning against one of her barriers before she waved her hand, Deconstruction dissolving his approaching spells into nothing but mana. Another wave of space magic, she sent down, a shock wave spreading out from his standing form, deepening the crater as his feet dug into the ground. The next wave made him drop down to one knee.

She charged her heat and weight, still walking towards him.

His spells, she blocked, absorbed, or displaced.

“I expected more out of this fight,” she said.

Ilea could feel him strain below her Fabric Alteration, could feel the surge of magic whenever he tried to teleport away and failed against her aura.

Fire and light magic repeatedly crashed against her defenses, some of the latter too fast for her to counter, and still, the cosmic energies protecting her were sufficient.

Ilea stopped a few meters in front of the kneeling Sanvaruun and slowly raised her arm, the heat within her now palpable, the air blurring as wisps of flame danced on the debris, licking at the barriers of space before her.

“But then I feel it’s only fitting,” she said.

For the first time in their fight, the look in his eyes changed.

Disbelief.

Really? Now? How many died because of you? I’ve fought warriors before. I’ve fought a Queen in Erendar. But you. You’re just another beast.

He hissed and screamed, all his might pushing against her, pushing against her control before he slipped past and flew to the side, sending out another set of thin beams, three at a time, burning away large chunks of her mana.

Ilea didn't look his way. She kept her arm aimed in front of her and sent out all of the heat within her. The world lit up with heat and fire, as she pulled the framework of the Monarch in front of her with Framework Disruption. She saw his barriers crack and splinter. Stone turned to lava. A glowing furrow a hundred meters long and half as broad spread before Ilea's standing form.

She perceived an explosion of fire and heat from the Monarch himself, more powerful than what he had summoned before. Not worth defending against, a bit of her outermost armor layer burned away.

Right before her stood the Sanvaruun, his eyes gone and his skin burned away and blackened.

He fell to his knees and caught himself on his arms, bone showing with bits and pieces of muscle slowly regenerating back. His mouth opened and closed, his hands twitched.

Ilea formed a single spear of solid black glass. She aimed it at an angle down and towards the Monarch's head, charging the floating projectile with her wings. A moment later, she sent it down and through his skull.

His torso whipped back with his head skewered to the ground, the Monarch still kneeling as his movements stopped.

A noise resounded in her mind.

'ding' 'You have defeated [Sungod of the Sky Domain – lvl 1028 / Chosen Flame of Verleyna – lvl 1021 / Will of Sanvaruun – lvl 921]'

Ilea watched the corpse and all the magic surrounding it. In case he had a way to fake his death or escape somehow. And yet, she found nothing.

Just his corpse.

She didn't feel like this was needed. She didn't feel the same rush that she felt from growing past a monster she had lost to in the past.

It just felt like finishing a shift. Another job done.

Looking up, she saw the distant elves remaining in their half destroyed and grounded city, nobody approaching from either side as she stood next to the corpse, silence returning to the battlefield.

She took in a deep breath and looked at Verleyna. *Now what the fuck do we do with this?* She saw Isalthar and the Hunters land within her domain, followed by two Executioners.

"It is done," Isalthar spoke as he approached. He knelt down next to the dead Monarch and moved to grab the spear.

Ilea dissolved it.

"You fought Verleyna itself, and killed the Sanvaruun," Feyrair said as he approached. He shook his head and hissed.

"He chose to attack. Didn't mean to interfere with your plans," Ilea said, smiling slightly. She did feel a little bad, but mainly about torching their beautiful city. "What happens with the survivors? There are hundreds left," Ilea said, seeing the first of the elves flying down towards them, slow and careful. She hissed a warning when the first came closer.

Their eyes went wide, hisses resounding as they looked between the corpse, Ilea, and Isalthar. She heard and saw emotions varying from rage to relief, to despair and fear.

A few hundred of them gathered, more flying still at a distance.

One of the elves looked at her, and went down to one knee. More followed. More hissing.

“No,” Ilea said. “Don’t tell me...”

“You defeated the Monarch,” Feyrair said.

“But she is not of our kind,” one of the standing elves spoke.

“She is female!” another shouted.

“Human,” another one said.

“Isalthar. You better get me out of this. I fought your fight.”

“You did,” he sent. “But this is new. I expected them to fight or flee. I didn’t think they would bow to a human, let alone a Val Akuun.”

“Can I not just name you Monarch?” Ilea asked.

“No. My power would be put into question. Duels can end without someone dead, but the difference in ability must be apparent,” he said and summoned an ancient tome. He flipped through the pages.

“Caran Mephali,” he spoke, a few elves nearby glancing at him at the mention of the words. *“The chosen ruler. If a Monarch is expected to leave his domain for an extended period of time, he may choose someone to rule in his stead. There is not in theory, a time limit, imposed by the rules of the Oracles. Not that any Monarch would’ve done this. But they may accept your choice.”*

“So I just choose you as the ruler?”

“I am a Val Akuun. And I did not defeat the Monarch in battle. No. You cannot choose me,” he said.

Ilea looked around and her eyes fell on the Dragonling.

He opened them wide and hissed, fear in them before he steeled himself. “Are you sure about this?” he asked.

“Are you?” Ilea said. “Isn’t this what you wanted? A chance for change?”

“It’s going to take a whole lot of fucking work though,” she sent as well.

He grinned, hissing with an amused tone. Then he took in a deep breath and looked at the assembled elves. He then looked at Ilea and went down to one knee.

“What do I do? Hiss and tap his shoulders with a sword?” Ilea asked.

“Speak these words,” Isalthar sent. *“Caran Mephali.”*

“Caran Mephali,” Ilea repeated after him.

“Levo in Feyrair Kaa.”

“Levo in Feyrair Kaa.”

“Ser varoth.”

“Ser varoth.”

A sound of hissing came from all the elves around, including the Cerithil Hunters. Again, there were differing emotions present, but it felt less hostile to her than before.

“I do not accept a cursed ruler,” one of the elves spoke.

Ilea felt a surge of magic. Not from the elf, but from Verleyrna itself. A pulse dense and threatening. Her Fourth tiers came to life as she looked towards the city. She perceived the offending elf falling to his knees.

“And so it is spoken,” Isalthar said.

“They... intervened,” Feyrair said. “Why?”

“*She defeated not only the Sanvaruun in battle,*” Isalthar spoke and looked at Ilea.

She looked at the city, her spells deactivated once more. “*I asked him what he did to Heranuur and Seviir. He said he had set them free. I assume he meant he killed them.*”

“*I hope for them that such is true,*” Isalthar spoke. “*There are cells within the city, though rarely were they used.*”

“*Can you lead me there?*” Ilea asked.

“*Certainly,*” Isalthar spoke. “*Before that. It is customary that an elf slain in a duel is consumed by those who witnessed the battle. Normally, the winner consumes the heart.*” He paused. “*My apologies. I realize now that I should’ve prepared you better.*”

“*You do. Don’t you,*” Ilea answered, finding that even someone with entirely white pupils could look like they were avoiding eye contact. “*You should have the honor of consuming what is left of his heart, Isalthar,*” Ilea said. “*He has hunted you for so long. Your history and all that. I only fought a battle.*”

“*I understand what you are doing, but to our kind, you are actually bestowing a great honor. However I will choose not to thank you for this one,*” the elf sent and bowed with a hiss.

“*Do you really have to still follow such practices? Wasn’t the whole point of the Hunters to get out?*” Ilea sent.

“*Change cannot happen immediately. Not without great violence. But now there may be new paths we hadn’t considered,*” Isalthar sent to her. “*These are not young elves. Their beliefs won’t be changed with a simple exposure to a dungeon. We will require time, and for them to listen. Your battles today have given us exactly that.*”

“*Just make sure to call for me if they change their minds,*” Ilea sent as she watched Feyrair lift the corpse of the Monarch.

He walked over to the other elves, looking to Isalthar and Ilea.

“*What exactly did I get myself into,*” Ilea sent to the closest Executioner.

The machine’s eyes shone with bright green light. “*I must pass on a set of congratulatory messages. From both the Meadow and Erik,*” he sent and walked over, resting a silver metal hand onto her shoulder. “*I suppose you couldn’t avoid becoming a Queen of sorts forever.*”

I would like to go back to Earth now, Ilea thought, looking at the high reaching remnants of the flying fortress of Verleyrna. She glanced at Aki. “*Think we can get that thing flying again?*”