

Icy soon slowed down, the large Elemental having reduced her magic to a reasonable degree.

Nearby spirits still followed them, but Ilea assumed that Icy was no longer a massive beacon that shined even through the storms. She saw through her dominion that they had reached a mountain range, Icy climbing up and then past the peaks, down into a valley, and then into a cavern.

Instantly, the loud sound of the all present storm was reduced to background noise. They came up on a collapsed tunnel, ice forming before the Elemental before she bore through the collapsed rock.

Guess that makes more sense than magical ice walls the spirits would sense, Ilea thought, holding on through the violent process. The tunnel collapsed again behind them, the two coming out in a large cavern. Hundreds of ice crystals came into existence and floated in the air, generating pale light that illuminated the stone walls.

It felt cramped with the ice wolf present, the large elemental lying down, the size of her antlers reduced to not hit the ceiling.

Ilea kept up her healing.

Icy looked tired and closed her eyes a moment later.

Ilea sat down a few meters away, pushing as much healing as she could into the creature. She didn't want to attempt using her third tier, both because she didn't understand the Elemental's body at all, and because she felt like it would deplete her mana immediately. She did try to focus on the cracks, slowly evening them out in the next few minutes.

[Ice Elemental – lvl ?????]

And she's higher level than the Meadow. No wonder you're still alive.

"Heal up and rest until you feel better," she said and continued using her magic.

The levels from the battle were fewer than some of her earlier fights on Erendar. She assumed mainly because of them fighting the spirit together.

I wonder if that one would've been a stalemate without Icy's help. Certainly came to an end much faster.

She formed heat within her and summoned a meal, but found that Icy's presence didn't really allow for heat beyond Ilea's own body. She was glad there were quite a few meals in her domain that were meant to be eaten cool. She just had to be really quick, or everything would freeze over.

Licking on frozen ale wasn't particularly tasty either, but Ilea found the novelty amusing nonetheless. How many people could claim to have eaten pseudo ale ice cream next to an Elemental, in a cavern, on a distant moon covered in storms and four mark spirit monsters.

She once again distributed her stat points. The battle had awarded her two additional Core points for surviving the spirit's Fourth Tier spells. ***[Astral Star]*** and ***[Domain of Weight]***. She hadn't gained a point for being close to Icy's Fourth Tier and decided she would have to ask the wolf to use it on her at some point.

Maybe not the best option if we don't want to attract more spirits.

Ilea leaned against the wall and watched the dancing pale blue crystal lights. She smiled, watching the Elemental sleep as she ate a bowl of potato salad. The food started to crunch as it froze over.

You must've had a rough few years.

Icy stirred a few minutes later, her body rumbling with a strange sound before she opened her eyes. The large blue and white orbs seemed to move, as if they focused on Ilea.

"Hungry?" Ilea asked and raised her bowl. She didn't exactly want to share her food, but Icy was injured. And they hadn't seen each other in a long while.

The elemental didn't reply.

Ilea formed an ashen wolf, then a bowl of food.

Icy seemed slightly confused.

"I suppose you wouldn't eat, would you," Ilea murmured. "Being an elemental and all."

She smiled and continued eating. "*Found some of the battlegrounds,*" she sent. "*You must've fought a lot of spirits.*"

The wolf lit up slightly, the ice shifting to show her form engaged in battle.

"Looked like a massacre. I did kill the one we fought together, back then. It was lurking around, probably looking for you," Ilea sent.

Icy growled. She seemed excited.

"I fought a lot of things too while I was back home."

She added ash, creating various creatures from the flying horrors of Kohr to the Wind of Aveer.

Icy watched with a focused look, glancing to the near evened out cracks in her body before she closed her eyes.

A feeling of gratitude reached Ilea's mind.

"I just happen to be a healer. Kind of. If I need ice, I know where to ask," she sent and winked.

The wolf seemed amused.

Ilea thought that was good.

She assumed Icy would go back to sleep, but the wolf stayed awake, and watched her with inquisitive eyes.

And so Ilea started telling her what had happened. With both words and ash. She started with her arrival back on Elos, bringing the Meadow to the new realm. Her introduction of the creature to Hallowfort and the North, and the formation of the Accords. She told of the Fae, of Audur, of the Ascended, and the realm of Kohr. She talked about her friend and dagger Aki, taking over an entire army of machines, told of the Taleen hidden away in Io, of the Cerithil Hunters that now fought in the Navali forest, among the chaos of the Domains.

And the Elemental listened, with an attentive gaze.

When Ilea was done, the cracks had nearly healed, and the Elemental formed another field of ice. It seemed to be her turn, and it was Ilea's turn to listen.

She leaned back and summoned another meal, watching as the Elemental created an ice based reenactment of her journey. Short battles of her obliterating swaths of spirits, extensive battles against Daughters, all of which she defeated. Some of the battlegrounds, she left with injuries, but she traveled on. Icy rested and slept in every set of mountains that she found, but it was only a matter of time until more spirits showed up, her form too powerful, too bright a source of mana for them to ignore.

"I knew you'd survive," Ilea said and smiled, finishing her now frozen potatoes. *"And now that I'm here, we can figure things out. I can kill them with my fires. Don't think they can come back from that."*

The Elemental listened.

"And I could get you to Elos as well. Might have to squeeze you through a gate, but now that I have a way to Erendar, there are options," she sent.

Icy didn't seem particularly keen on the idea of leaving these lands. But she formed a few of the spirits with her ice, then covered them in ice shaped like fires.

"The Meadow wants to rid these lands of the Daughters too. And I plan to hunt them for the time being. Not sure we can do anything about the storms though."

Icy seemed amused. She formed a mountain range made of ice, then herself walking to one of the peaks. Her small form lied down while looking at the stars, undisturbed by any spirits.

"And you can keep the storms away?"

A gust of cold wind flowed around the miniature copy, pushing the nearby floating crystals aside.

"Suppose you already kept that dome cleared out during our fight. We can discuss with the Meadow. If I can really kill them, we can start clearing them out, I suppose, but I don't know anything about the Daughters. I don't know how they form, nor why the storms are here now. It will take time."

Again, Icy seemed amused.

She looked at Ilea with a reassuring gaze.

"Hey, not everyone is as ancient as you are," she murmured. *"I think I'll go talk to the Meadow, now that I found you. Speaking of which, I have a mark I can set on you, if you are willing. It will allow me to teleport to you, and we can exchange twenty words ever hour. Maybe you can howl or something if you need help. I will also set one of my anchors here, which means I can teleport here even without you."*

Icy moved her head a little closer, indicating for Ilea to touch her.

She smiled and set the mark, additionally changing her Transfer destination of Paarah to this cavern instead.

"Sure you don't want to get out of here. I don't know if I can manage it, but we could try," Ilea said.

Icy closed her eyes and lied down once more.

Not interested in leaving her realm of strife? Ilea smiled. She kind of understood. Maybe Icy would be willing to visit the Meadow at least, at a latter time.

“Do call for me if anything shows up. I can probably kill it permanently,” Ilea sent. *“Fighting together was fun.”*

Icy opened one eye and closed it again.

Ilea still poured healing into the being, but at this point she felt the injuries were mostly gone.

She activated her third tier Transfer, aimed at her house near Ravenhall. Reminded of her recent bout with the Meadow, she decided not to use her gates.

“I’ll be back.”

Ilea appeared and instantly noted the absence of freezing sand and astral magic. She felt as if she had taken the first breath in a long while. Maybe she was. Nothing had followed her, and her destination in Erendar remained, as did her mark on Icy, though it felt obscured in the same way the one on Violence often felt.

She teleported outside and took in a deep breath, spreading her arms as she yawned. She opened a gate to the outskirts of the Meadow’s domain and stepped through.

“You’re back,” the Meadow sent, voice laced with anticipation. *“Tell me.”*

Ilea smiled wide. *“I can kill them. Or so the notifications claim. Defeat and then kill.”*

The being was silent for a few seconds. A wave of space magic moved through the fabric. *“You can.”*

“The storms are pretty intense. I really don’t want to get your hopes up, Meadow. And there are a lot of spirits. Even if me and Icy can clear the Daughters, there are still-”

“Icy?” the being interrupted.

“Yes. I found her a few hours ago,” Ilea said. *“She’s fine. Didn’t want to come here.”*

“I’m glad, that she survived. Maybe you can give her a message at a latter point in time. For now, my greetings are sufficient,” the Meadow spoke.

“Happy to deliver whatever you need. Got a mark on her too. But as I said, even with the Daughters cleared, there are... just unending amounts of death and astral spirits. They’re not much of a danger to me or Icy, but some of the Astrals are close to a thousand, with shields and regeneration.”

“There is no rush, Ilea.”

She smiled. *“I could die, you know?”*

“And my anchors remain, the fires of creation, remain. It is true that you could help a lot with this, but it’s not a priority. There is enough to do here, in Elos, where awakened beings are aplenty, and we don’t have to figure out how to fight an endless storm and spirits.”

“I’m happy to help, Meadow. Might be a nice hobby for me. Clearing out a moon, fighting storms and spirits. I could plant some carrots, see if they grow.”

“Amusing.”

“I’m serious. For now, it’s a great hunting ground, but if I can really kill the spirits, I’m happy to help. Not just for you. Icy wants to stargaze, I think.”

“You would waste your time, fighting most of those monsters.”

Ilea sighed. *“You pretty much gave us long range teleportation. You taught me space magic, and helped with my resistances. And you’re a good friend. I think it may even be good for me, not to seek the next thrill constantly.”*

“There is always another Drake. Isn’t that what you say?”

Ilea smiled. *“Of course I’ll get an itch sooner or later, but it sounds nice.”*

“I won’t say no to your help. As a member of the Accords, and as your friend.”

“But yeah, the eclipse is supposed to last for decades? Millennia? Don’t think there’s a particular rush right?” Ilea asked and closed her eyes. Her body didn’t really need sleep, but she wanted to do it anyway. She added a bed and blanket of ash and formed heat within both.

“Indeed. But it would be a shame if you died. Training up the Sentinels will take years.”

“Decades at least. I’m special,” she sent, right before she dozed off.

Ilea woke up to a bolt of arcane lightning smashing into her face. The ground below her bed cracked as the energies spread out. She stretched her arms and yawned.

“One entire hour of sleep. Impressive,” the Meadow sent.

“Just one? It feels like I slept like twelve,” Ilea answered. She felt a little groggy, but assumed that was more just her mind assuming she should feel groggy. Her body was fine. *“Could’ve blocked that bolt as well.”*

“I did the first few, then thought it’d be interesting to see what would happen. This was number nineteen. You slept through the rest.”

She scratched her cheek and looked up at the storm. *“I did? You’re not fucking with me?”*

“Who knows,” the Meadow sent.

Ilea smiled. She sat up in her bed slightly. *“You have books, right?”*

“Tens of thousands. I copy them for the scholars. Dagon and a few librarians throughout the Accords wish to create a library of sorts, including Aki and Taleen technologies. Everyone should have access to the collected knowledge of the Accords. I believe before the threat of the Architect came up, they were arguing about possible topics to limit access to.”

“Was just a matter of time,” Ilea murmured. *“I wonder when the first chatroom will be born.”*

“A room to communicate throughout large distances?” the Meadow asked. “They were testing that as well. Aki has since reclaimed his higher level machines, but I’m sure there will be research in the future.”

Speeding through development. Give a society some trees and a dagger, bam, modernity.

“You wanted a book?” the Meadow sent.

“Right. Yeah. Something romantic? I do want some intrigue and action though. The ending shouldn’t be too sad.”

“There are three hundred and forty two options available. Do you want them sorted by era, origin, or my personal ratings?”

“All in Elos standard?” Ilea asked.

“I translate them of course.”

Fuck me. We’re beyond modernity already. “Give me one of your choice.”

A book appeared, followed by a dome of golden light that blocked the next bolt of arcane lightning.

Ilea smiled. *Suppose it needs more protection than I do.* She touched the black cover, a title written in silver engraved letters into the hardcover made of what felt like wood.

The Rains of Virilya – Book 1 – Gregory Langston

“Is that?”

“A distant relative. I don’t think your friend is aware of this book, Gregory’s writings never came to fame. He was not of noble blood after all. Well written enough, and they have heart.”

“I’ll give it a shot,” Ilea said and started reading.

She paused a few hours later, the suns having moved on the horizon. It was fun to read about Virilya, though it seemed either the author lived in a time where the city was far more dangerous, or he added quite a bit of strife for tension. Just enough to balance out the quiet scenes between the young smith and the daughter of a noble house. Not a particularly complex setup, and she could see a few twists coming already, but she couldn’t help but smile, storing the book in her dominion.

“I can borrow it, I assume?” she sent to the tree.

“You can have it, if you like. I made a copy before I gave it to you.”

“You can make paper?”

“Not in the same manner as the known processes. It’s wood, but the function is essentially the same,” the Meadow spoke.

Ilea summoned it again and turned a few pages. *“That’s pretty cool.”*

“You’ve seen my Fourth Tier spells, and this is what impresses you?”

She smiled and stood up, stretching for a few seconds. *“All I’ve seen recently were massive fucking magic spells. Want me to fawn over your prowess, oh great Endless Meadow?”*

“That is quite enough of that.”

She grinned. *“As I thought. No news from Eregar yet?”*

“I would’ve called for you. And no, Aki and Fey have yet to find your target. Not that I think it to be a good idea for you to poke ancient draconic creatures in the far north.”

“I might get another evolution,” Ilea sent. *“A young healer needs every achievement she can get. Can’t be left behind by some upstart Sentinels.”*

“They are very, and I can’t stress this enough, very, far away from reaching your power,” the Meadow sent.

“You know how fast I grew. I’m sure I wasn’t the first. And I sure as fuck won’t be the last,” Ilea answered.

“Let’s hope they turn out as well as you did,” the Meadow sent.

“You flatter me. Suppose it’s hard to fuck up as much as sun absorbing Ascended, willing to kill an entire planet’s worth of sapient creatures for power.”

“There are many who justify any and all means, if they deem whatever ends they seek, a worthy cause,” the Meadow spoke.

“Good to add a few more capable healers then. Accords certified,” she said. *“I’ll be out hunting a few more spirits then. Let me know if anything comes up.”*

“Do you have a specific goal in mind?” the Meadow asked.

“For now? Nine fifty, and my last Fourth Tier,” Ilea said with a smile.

“Oh? Made your choice already?”

“Not quite, but I have a few contenders,” Ilea sent back and focused on the anchor she had set within the current hiding den of Icy.