

Chapter 398 Benevolent Sentinel

Ilea crash landed on an island, her arms locked around the Wyvern's neck as they slid to a stop, leaving behind a line in the stone.

A last wave of fire expanded, burning into the stone and the nearby plants as well as Ilea's ashen armor.

Ilea heard the noise in her mind resound, signaling the creature had died. She stopped her shredder extension that had bitten through half of its neck by now and stored the corpse. The healer landed on one knee, the space below her suddenly empty.

Ash reformed, as did her skin and the bone armor between. Meditation had been active for a while, her mana regenerating quickly. She blinked away and hid within the nearby bushes.

No light needed for all this to grow? she wondered. Perhaps it was mana alone that supplied the growth, or the crystals above somehow sent energy through the sea of mist.

She waited for a while, prepared to face another one of the creatures.

Nothing showed itself however.

'ding' 'You have defeated [Cliff Wyvern – lvl 608] – For defeating an enemy two hundred and ninety or more levels above your own, bonus experience is granted'

'ding' 'Azarinth Reversal reaches 3rd lvl 11'

'ding' 'True Ash Creation reaches 3rd lvl 14'

'ding' 'Avatar of Ash reaches 3rd lvl 3'

No levels from that one, she sighed. The fight had been simple enough, Ilea now knowing how to handle them pretty easily. Their instincts were good, likely not expecting her to simply ignore the flames and their teeth as she did.

A suicidal approach for anybody without Pain Tolerance and Heat Resistance in the second tier, as well as an insane level of defense and regeneration.

For her however, it worked.

Ilea noticed movement in her sphere, spotting a creature that looked a little like a bear. Thin and with two tusks jutting from its mouth. It hid behind a tree, looking straight at her.

She checked the surroundings and got up slowly.

[Tusk Bear – lvl 303]

Shouldn't be too dangerous for me. Ilea thought, having dealt with similarly high leveled creatures back in the first layer.

The bear looked at her but didn't move at first. It took a step towards her, showing its teeth before it roared.

Not exactly an intimidating sound.

Ilea crouched, her talk with Lucas fresh on her mind. This thing could rip apart most humans in the southern lands, maybe even a member of the Hand. And yet here it was, looking positively malnourished, close to death.

She was about to just leave when she saw a small cut on its leg, orange ooze dripping out.

"Ah fuck," she murmured.

The bear approached, once more showing its teeth. On all fours now, it prepared to charge or leap. Desperate.

Nobody is ever going to come down here. Might as well help out.

It attacked, charging with surprising speed as its maw opened, showing sharp teeth.

Ilea let the bear bite into her ash, its weight coming down on her as she braced against it. Ashen limbs moved to immobilize its arms and legs, its mouth uselessly biting into the powerful armor.

She summoned a chunk of meat she still had from her own kitchen, slamming the thing into its mouth. "Calm down, I'm not food," she patted its fur and checked the cut on its leg.

"That's pretty nasty, not gonna lie," Ilea healed the creature before two of her ashen limbs closed around its left thigh. A quick jab separated the whole leg, enticing a pained roar from the dying bear.

"It's alright," she reassured it again and healed the leg back, this time without corruption.

Ilea summoned another piece of meat and threw it into the nearby bushes. "Now fuck off."

She released it and pushed the creature aside, already looking healthier than before.

A sigh left her as she leaned on a nearby tree, watching the bear run for the meat.

Ilea watched as it reached the meal, a smile on her face as her wings spread once more. She turned and barely saw another Wyvern, swooping down, its talons slamming into the Tusk Bear before it was flung off the island, limp and bloody.

"Fuck," she murmured, following the Wyvern.

It caught the bear mid flight before landing on another island, gulping down a third of the monster before it noticed Ilea.

"I just healed it," she hissed, her voice imbued with power.

The Wyvern turned towards her and roared.

'ding' 'You have heard the challenge of the Cliff Wyvern – You resist its effects'

Fucking right I do.

'ding' 'Veteran reaches lvl 15'

"I'll rip its remains out of your stomach," she said and advanced, stepping into the flames that enveloped her.

How come I search for six hours and now I find two? Fucking with me and my bear.

Ashen spears slammed into its wings, unable to penetrate the powerful scales.

The Wyvern roared once more, biting down on her head.

Ilea dodged, going to one knee as its mouth closed around her shoulder.

“Like the taste?” she asked, wedging an ashen limb into its slightly open mouth and releasing a beam of heat and cinders.

Ashen limbs cut into the creature’s eyes as she held on to its head, her shoulder mangled but released.

“You will die here,” her voice thundered through the creature.

‘ding’ ‘Monster Hunter reaches lvl 2’

Ilea ripped off the Wyvern’s head after it had been killed, falling like the rest of them. She looked at the thing, its tongue hanging out in a grotesque manner.

She thought about keeping it but decided against it, instead throwing the head near the dead bear. *May you both feed something else.*

Ilea did store the rest of the corpse in her necklace.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Cliff Wyvern – lvl 581] – For defeating an enemy two hundred and fifty or more levels above your own, bonus experience is granted’

‘ding’ ‘The Azarinth Sentinel has reached lvl 323 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 322 – Five stat points awarded’

‘ding’ ‘Sentinel Reconstruction reaches 3rd lvl 19’

‘ding’ ‘Sentinel Core reaches 3rd lvl 11’

‘ding’ ‘Azarinth Fighting reaches 3rd lvl 17’

‘ding’ ‘Heart of Cinder reaches 3rd lvl 10’

She sighed once more and jumped off the island, continuing her flight through the layer. *At least he didn’t die to corruption.*

Ilea encountered two more bears in the next hour, both in a healthier state than the previous one.

They avoided her, one even running into a cave to get away.

No more monsters showed up, Ilea soon landing on what she assumed to be the bottom of the ninth layer. Rock formations jutted out, devoid of the same greens that grew on top of the plateaus.

Pillars of stone grew from the bottom and vanished into the mists above.

Ilea noticed the smell first, familiar now but still just as heavy. Corpses littered the ground. Bears, Wyverns as well as a bunch of dead Wisp Ravens, the birds sometimes showing up on the edge of her sphere, their level ranging in the two hundreds.

They all had one thing in common. *Corruption*, she lifted some of the corpses and saw the orange ooze dripping out. Many were charred, taken out by the Wyverns that remained untainted.

They dealt with it themselves, Ilea mused. *So much for world ending threat*, she smiled.

She sliced open her arm and slathered some of the corruption into it. In case a Wyvern attacked, she could simply rip it out again.

No wonder so few of them remained.

There were dozens of creatures, just in the range of her sphere alone. Ilea was sure this layer had looked quite a bit different before the corruption came. More beasts to fight and levels to be gained but Ilea wasn't sure she could reliably take out two Wyverns at a time, let alone three or four.

Depending on how fast they regenerate, we might have an issue going back up.

Then again, we somehow got down. We'll find a way back out, even if we have to dig a tunnel ourselves.

Ilea smiled and formed a drill bit with her ash, combining her limbs in the process. *Might want to try that at some point, now that it's so much harder.*

She flew a couple meters above ground, avoiding the corpses. Most of the Wyverns were quite literally ripped apart, most of their scales charred and unusable. She still found five corpses that looked to be in passable shape.

Burning hot ash removed the remaining corruption before she stored them in her necklace. The other creatures, she ignored, their corpses easily coming apart with a couple strikes of her ashen limbs.

Twenty minutes later, she found a cave entrance leading down. Pieces of charred clothes remained near the entrance, as well as a small message carved into the stone.

Expedition came through – Be vary of lightning

Ilea wasn't sure if it was carved by her group or by the expedition.

'ding' 'Blood Manipulation Resistance reaches 2nd lvl 1'

Blood Manipulation Resistance – 2nd lvl 1

A rare gift similar to poisons having an effect with dangerous results. Your blood was tampered with through magic but you have survived, making it harder for the next attempt by your enemy. 2nd stage: Stop putting weird substances you find into open wounds. Perhaps your parents told you that playing in dirt was good for your immune system but there are limits. Your body can now fight blood manipulation actively.

We both know I won't stop with it, Ilea said to herself and whatever god, system, supervisor, virus or delirious fever dream was talking to her.

Her resistance was off to level the skill faster but she checked quickly what it would look like with it being active.

She saw the corruption slowly recede, as if it was taken over by her own body. *Hmm, seems like a good thing to have. Maybe some of the creatures developed this as well? Let's hope so.*

If they did, no matter how often they got injured, they wouldn't get corrupted. Were they to survive in the first place of course.

Ilea checked her stats quickly and decided on Vitality and Wisdom for her ten remaining points. While Intelligence provided more, it was mostly offensive. Prioritizing offense over defense was a horrible mistake, in her experience that was.

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 323

- **Active: Absolute Destruction – 3rd lvl 18**
- **Active: Sentinel Reconstruction – 3rd lvl 19**
- **Active: Azarinth Awakening – 3rd lvl 17**
- **Active: Blink – 3rd lvl 13**
- **Active: Sentinel Sphere – 3rd lvl 2**
- **Passive: Sentinel Core – 3rd lvl 11**
- **Passive: Azarinth Fighting – 3rd lvl 17**
- **Passive: Sentinel Huntress – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Azarinth Perception – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Azarinth Reversal – 3rd lvl 11**

Class 2: Kin of Ash – lvl 322

- **Active: Armor of Ash – 3rd lvl 19**
- **Active: Aspect of Ash – 3rd lvl 14**
- **Active: True Ash Creation – 3rd lvl 14**
- **Active: Heart of Cinder – 3rd lvl 10**
- **Active: Storm of Cinders – 3rd lvl 9**
- **Passive: Ash and Ember Unity – 3rd lvl 11**
- **Passive: Ashen Wings – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Eyes of Ash – 2nd lvl 20**
- **Passive: Avatar of Ash – 3rd lvl 3**
- **Passive: Keeper of Ash – 3rd lvl 12**

General Skills:

- **Elos Standard language - lvl 6**
- **Harmony of the Drowned – lvl 2**
- **Heavy Archery – lvl 5**
- **Identify - lvl 9**
- **Meditation – 2nd lvl 20**

- *Monster Hunter* – lvl 2
- *Veteran* – lvl 15
- *Arcane Magic Resistance* – 2nd lvl 16
- *Ash Magic Resistance* – lvl 1
- *Blast Resistance* – 2nd lvl 11
- *Blood Magic Resistance* – lvl 15
- *Blood Manipulation Resistance* – 2nd lvl 1
- *Corrosion Resistance* – 2nd lvl 9
- *Crystal Resistance* – 2nd lvl 1
- *Curse Resistance* - 2nd lvl 9
- *Dark Magic Resistance* – lvl 15
- *Death Magic Resistance* – 2nd lvl 8
- *Dust Magic Resistance* – lvl 1
- *Earth Magic Resistance* – 2nd lvl 2
- *Fear Resistance* – lvl 9
- *Health Drain Resistance* – 2nd lvl 20
- *Heat Resistance* – 2nd lvl 20
- *Gravity Magic Resistance* – lvl 2
- *Ice Resistance* – 2nd lvl 7
- *Light Magic Resistance* – 2nd lvl 4
- *Lightning Resistance* – 2nd lvl 8
- *Mana Drain Resistance* – 2nd lvl 20
- *Mental Resistance* – 2nd lvl 16
- *Mist Magic Resistance* – 2nd lvl 10
- *Obsidian Magic Resistance* – lvl 3
- *Pain Tolerance* – 2nd lvl 9
- *Poison Resistance* – 2nd lvl 12
- *Silver Magic Resistance* – lvl 1
- *Soul Magic Resistance* – lvl 8
- *Stamina Drain Resistance* – lvl 5
- *Time Magic Resistance* – lvl 4
- *Void Magic Resistance* – lvl 7
- *Water Resistance* – 2nd lvl 1
- *Wind Resistance* – 2nd lvl 12
- *Wood Magic Resistance* – 2nd lvl 1

Status:

Vitality: 746
Endurance: 400
Strength: 510
Dexterity: 415
Intelligence: 735
Wisdom: 775

Health: 7428/7460
Stamina: 4000/4000
Mana: 7723/7750

Oof, my stamina, Ilea ignored it for now, knowing it regenerated rather quickly anyway. As soon as she would notice it being the deciding factor in a battle, she would level it again of course.

Luckily I did get that cost reduction with Keeper of Ash.

“Well,” she said to herself, looking at the remaining corruption in her arm before it was taken care of by her resistance.

She quickly walked over to one of the corpses and filled some of the empty flasks she had used in her poison training with the corrupted blood, just in case she didn’t come across more of it. As unlikely as that may be.

One last time, she looked up to see if any more of the Wyverns wanted to get her. Nothing came.

She sighed and walked back to the tunnel leading down. “There are like a hundred corpses down here and you had to get that fucking bear.”

Layer ten, let’s see, she thought and walked down, cautious of any beasts or traps that might still lay hidden.

The tunnel narrowed, the initial steep decline not present anymore as she felt a cold breeze come from the end.

She saw a vertical crack, an exit it seemed. Another powerful gust of wind washed past her, the air partially ignoring her due to her second stage resistance.

Her sphere offered little but the fact that there was open space. She stepped out, ashen limbs crashing into the flat stone extending into the distance.

Ilea was hanging from the wall and had a look at the tenth layer.

Below her, the abyss called, light shining from various crystal formations clinging to the ceiling as well as some of the stone formations.

Instead of islands of stone within a mist, the cliffs here were dominant. Huge cracks and missing sections reminded of the northern landscape. Compared to the surface, the ground level was much farther down.

Ilea spread her wings and floated to the nearest surface, a small ledge to the side of a rocky cliff. The winds howled, pushing against her a little but not enough to destabilize her flight.

She landed and noticed ice crystals had formed on her armor.

Ilea couldn’t hear anything other than the wind, no smells or tracks that she noticed either.

Kind of expected to get blasted as soon as I step into this layer.

She explored a little more, jumping down as her wings moved through the sometimes narrow paths.

A little while later, she found a corpse, teeming with corruption. A Wyvern, dead and burnt.

There was little remaining on it. The scales were too damaged to be of any use.

Ilea looked up, noticing the sudden new light source inside the small open space she had found. Something blueish, quickly moving.

She lay prone and covered herself in ash, a small opening for her right eye remaining as her sphere barely reached the cliff side leading to the abyss.

A ball of lightning shot up and landed inside the space, a small bird that looked a little like a sparrow. Its eyes were a bright and nearly white blue.

Ilea assumed she could see it mostly due to her newfound second tier light magic resistance. *A cute lightning bird.*

It tapped along the ground, looking at the corpse as well as the rest of the cave before its eyes came resting on the pile of ash.

[Elemental Fragment – lvl ???]

A bolt of lightning washed over her, Ilea's precognition informing her about the damage. Nothing major but undoubtedly as powerful as Trian, if not more so.

Thanks to her resistance, a chunk of the spell was transformed into mana and stamina, her Sentinel Core adding even more.

"You're not exactly what I had expected," she murmured and watched the bird take flight, zapping her with powerful arcing lightning in quick succession. The bright blue light moved through the cave, licking the walls and ripping out chunks of stone in the process before it slammed into her ashen armor.

Ilea staggered back a little with each hit but her defenses held. *Let's help you a little, birdie.*

The next hit burned through her ash and into her bone armor, stopping only at her skin as her muscles tensed up.

"That's more like it," she said and smiled, seeing the bird charge up more attacks yet. "I think I'll stay here with you, for a while."

She carefully looked at her healing, her health and the area before she blinked to the corrupted Wyvern, taking a handful of corruption and slathering it into one of the newly formed wounds on her arm.

If that's just a fragment, there might be something else down here. Something where I'll be happy to have a little more levels in my resistance.