

Chapter 928 Power

Ilea killed the last giant void being in the mountains of the Courts, the closest one she saw a long distance away. *I hope they don't start teleporting now.*

She thought back to the creatures she had fought in Kohr, but even they had only used teleportation to flee.

Looking eastward, she saw arcane lightning flash up within the territory of the Courts, and beyond, she saw the storm of the Frozen Wasteland, more vast than she remembered. *Maybe just another season? Or did the Extraction change it as well?*

She opened a gate to Riverwatch, stepped through, and sent out a wave of burning smoke and ash, killing the void monsters on the ground. Fewer had gathered here than the last three times she had appeared, and still, there were hundreds.

Ilea found it didn't matter.

They would simply have to kill them all.

To the east, she could see the single and last remaining sun of Elos low on the horizon. Soon it would set.

The sight made her pause for just a moment.

What a fucking day.

She didn't want to slow down and process, knowing she would have to face all of that death, doubt, and guilt. If only they had done more. If only they had found both meshes. If only she had killed the Architect back in Kohr.

Ilea shook her head and kept flying, aimlessly slaughtering monsters for a few seconds until she saw a flashing green light in the sky. One of Aki's Watchers, which meant his machines were moving out into the lands once more. She teleported close to it and breathed in, her eyes looking at the green light set within the sphere.

"I found them. They are here, on this continent. We're meeting at the Meadow's domain, and we could use anyone who can fight an Ascended."

Ilea blinked her eyes.

And breathed out.

"I'll be right there," she said and opened up a gate to the North.

She could feel the vibrant magic all around. The landscape here had changed as well, though the same cracks and crevices ran throughout the rock, the same arcane storms raged above. She could see the corpses of a thousand monsters of the void, scattered throughout the rocky terrain. The Meadow's obelisk floated above the wracked lands covered in black blood.

It was quiet, the winds flowing past before a bolt of arcane lightning struck down a few hundred meters away.

Her resistance deactivated and she was moved into the domain of the Meadow.

She was greeted by strained faces of nobles, scholars, and fighters alike. Seven mobile teleportation platforms had been set up within the domain, people and machines appearing in frequent intervals. The floating fireflies of the Meadow added a strange feel to the hectic scene. There were more present than usual.

She saw the same three dimensional map hovering above the machine that conjured it. *A map of our world.*

She thought about all the cities on it, all the people, all the forests and lakes, all the monsters and animals. How much of it was wiped out by now? How much more of it would be gone by the end of the day? By the end of the week?

People parted to make way as she walked past and joined those already gathered near the map, all her spells deactivated. The main thing she was missing for a fight was time in her Meditation, but she doubted they had long to prepare.

Owl, Vor Elenthir, and three Pursuers were already present, two more appearing on one of the gates, accompanied by Nelras Ithom.

Ilea sat down on the ground, sighing as she hugged her knees.

Owl floated closer and put a hand on her shoulder.

The Ascended looked at her but turned back towards the map a moment later. "I'm sorry," he spoke.

She looked up.

"For what my kind has created."

"You found him!" Nelras shouted as he approached, his magic thrumming. "Where is he?"

"We will gather those suitable for such a battle," the Meadow spoke. *"Calm yourself, and prepare. Ker Velor did not come alone."*

"Ravana," Ilea said. "She's what all of this is about, isn't it? Why he came back here, why he's taken another sun."

"Her and the separation of the Olym Arcena. That is why I think he is here, though I could not have fathomed the extent of his plans," Vor Elenthir spoke as Nes Mor Atul appeared on the gates, accompanied by Scipio.

The man's armor was covered in black blood, his eyes unfocused.

"So it is time," Nes spoke as she approached. She looked at Ilea and bowed her head for a moment. Then she looked up and turned towards the map.

Erik appeared on one of the gates and walked over, straightening his wide robes as he approached. His expression was grim.

"Is this it then?" Nelras asked. "Or are there others in your Accords who could face one of their kind?"

"One more has requested to join," the Meadow spoke.

Ilea glanced to the gates and saw a single figure appear on one of them. The First Vampire, clad in enchanted black armor lined with silver. He did not wear a helmet, his long black hair flowing free. He breathed out, mouth open to reveal the two pronounced canine teeth.

Ilea touched the hand of Owl on her shoulder and stood up. “So, what’s the plan?”

“*Aki is trying to track them, but they are moving fast. They have killed Audur and moved southward after, in the direction of the Still Valley,*” the Meadow spoke.

“His plan to take both suns in an instant has failed. I would’ve expected him to give up on this realm, but it seems Ravana’s return has changed this,” Vor spoke. “His first goal would be the destruction of the largest threats.”

“The Domains, and the Oracles,” Nelras said. “Why fight that dragon first?”

“Who is in charge between the two of them?” Ilea asked.

“He revered Ravana,” Nes said in a quiet voice. “But she would listen to his council.”

“But she is not the same,” Vor spoke. “The descriptions alone do not match perfectly. He created something different than what she once was.”

“How do they fight?” Owl asked. “What should we prepare for?”

“Ker Velor is not a fighter. His abilities encompass steel, soul, blood, and space, though he will not face us directly, not if he thinks there is a chance of his defeat,” Vor spoke. “He will flee.”

“Then I will hunt him down,” Ilea spoke.

“He will have planned for such an eventuality, and he will have prepared a trap, or more than one, specifically for you,” the Ascended spoke.

“I know,” Ilea said. “And I don’t care. I’m the only one who could even hope to follow and find him.”

Nobody spoke.

She assumed they didn’t disagree.

“Ker Velor cannot live through this conflict. Or he will dismantle and destroy everything that you have built here,” Vor said.

“He’s done enough already,” Ilea said. “I will find him, no matter what.”

“Take me with you,” Owl said.

Ilea glanced over at her, looking at the glowing purple eyes.

“There are ways to track the soul,” she added. “Besides. I don’t think I could die, even if he managed to destroy my form.”

The phylactery.

“I’ll take you with me if I can,” Ilea said and turned towards the Meadow. “*He manipulated the fissure left in Kohr. If he does that again...*”

“*A delicate manipulation. Even I could not do such in mere seconds,*” the Meadow replied.

She nodded.

“If we can even get to him,” Erik said.

“He is calculating, but this is his victory. I doubt even he could resist the allure of seeing the fruits of his labor,” Vor said. “He is still here after all, and I suspect he will only leave once we face them.”

“And he would leave this Ravana behind so easily?” Nelras asked. “Would he not think her in danger?”

Vor chuckled, a dark sound. “No. He is a maker. A scholar. Ravana. She is a warrior. Perhaps the finest one that Kohr had ever seen.”

“What’s her level? What are her abilities?” Verillion asked.

“We cannot say for sure that she is still the same,” Vor spoke. “She had been above a thousand and five hundred in the times of the Olym Arcena. I never saw her fight myself, but it was known that she used the magics of storms and lightning, and that while she was no builder, her mastery of steel was unparalleled in battle.”

“There were rumors too,” Nes spoke. “That she was not dignified in battle. That she found joy in it, and lost herself to it. There were rumors about other magics too.”

“Something to do with sound, yes,” Vor spoke. “However her position in the Olym Arcena, coupled with her reputation, led to most Ascended leaving such matters alone. Many had their share of secrets.”

“You included,” Nes said.

He did not deny her.

“Sounds like a plan then,” Ilea said. “We find them, face them, me and Owl go and kill the Architect, and the rest kills Ravana.”

“One of my Watchers has reached the outskirts of the Still Valley. It seems the cold air is dissipating. Single elves are fleeing. Something is hunting them down,” one of the Pursuers spoke.

“The mists are dissipating?” Nelras asked, doubt in his voice. He hissed.

“We should go and help them,” Nes said.

Aki’s green eyes glowed bright. “The last one just perished. The Ascended are moving east, towards the Fire Wastes of Ash. There is a nearby Taleen gate that remains, but you may encounter elves of the Wastes.”

“We have a Monarch with us. No elf would dare attack us for our mere presence,” Nelras spoke.

“But while the Wastes offer a clear target for them, if we could lure them here, to the Endless Meadow, we would have another being to help.”

“We must make haste.” Erik spoke. “Beings of the void are killing all that lives in this realm. Every minute we waste, they are scouring the lands.”

“Agreed. The longer we wait, the more they will kill. I will fight, if you bring them here, but we should stop them now that we know where they are,” the Meadow sent. *“Ilea should mark you all before you go. And Nes, Nelras Ithom has mentioned that he wishes for a better spear. You did tell me about something, a while back.”*

Nes glanced over at the elf, the two meeting eyes. “And you think yourself worthy to wield an artifact of the Olym Arcena?”

“I have not heard of such an artifact, Ascended,” Nelras spoke. “But I know to wield a spear.”

Nes looked at him for a few seconds as Ilea moved to mark the fighters, none refusing her. Not even Vor.

“A spear...” Vor murmured as Nes summoned the weapon.

Ilea felt the power emanating from the artifact. Similar to the divine items she had seen before.

A silver spear tipped with a blade in the form of a leaf. The same weapon she had found in the hidden vault of the Architect.

“Wasn’t it broken?” she asked.

“And it has been restored. Having anchors in Kohr is useful,” Scipio said.

Nelras bowed his head. He looked at the Ascended, then held out his right hand and closed his eyes, his mana extending towards the weapon. A moment later, it snapped into his hand, a clear sound echoing out. “I see,” he spoke in a quiet voice. “It is an honor.”

Ilea finished marking everyone, not in the mood to question what had just happened. If one of them would have a better weapon in the coming battle, then she welcomed it. And that was that.

She could use a few days to meditate and regain some of her Fourth Tier time, but they knew where the two Ascended were right now. And they didn’t know when or where the next chance would be to catch the Architect.

“Vials,” she said to Verillion, using her black glass to pierce her own skin.

The Vampire obliged, summoning five of them that she quickly filled, uncaring for the blood loss she healed in mere instants.

“Then let us move,” Erik said.

Aki’s five Pursuers started towards one of the mobile gates, eight Watchers arriving to join them.

Ilea filled the last two vials while she made her way to the platform, ignoring the many eyes on her as blood dripped to the ground. She stepped onto the platform and locked eyes with the First Vampire as the others joined them.

Today they would fight together.

To kill their enemy.

She handed the vials to Verillion and deactivated her resistance as the gate came to life, bringing them far away and to the south.

They appeared in a dark hall, magical lights above broken, the ground covered in water, with more dripping in from the ceiling. Ilea looked up and saw the surface through her domain. Focusing on all the frameworks around her, she teleported them up and outside.

She knew through her marks that they were in the former Navali forest. And yet all she could see was a wasteland. Mere bits and pieces of wood remaining among the cracked grounds. Scorched earth and not a single tree as far as she could see. Purple light flashed in the distance, lightning

cracking down into the surface, one of the last dark clouds she could see in the late evening sunlight.

She heard the screeching void beings around her, arcane, death, and light magic flaring up to silence the monsters. To the east, she saw a single mountain towering over the lands. Ilea squinted her eyes slightly, unsure if it was Karth. It had to be, based on the marks, but its peak looked fractured, entire sections gone, rock slides brought on by the Extraction.

“Follow me,” one of the Pursuers spoke, all the machines taking to the air and followed by the group of fighters.

Ilea spread her wings and rose. She had her magic, her draconic scale armor, and her Fourth Tiers. She was ready.

Within her domain, she saw the marks set on her allies.

Six beings near or past the Four Mark stage, five Pursuers, and her.

In silence they flew, over the now quiet landscape destroyed by the Extraction. The last sunlight was soon gone as the remaining star of Elos set below the horizon.

Ilea took in a deep breath when she saw the pooling mists flow down from the mountains to the north, appearing within craters and flowing down into the crevices of the land. She clenched her fists and breathed out, relaxing them once more as she focused.

She saw the distant scuffles between void monsters and Miststalkers. It reminded her of Erendar. Spirits fighting an endless war.

The Fire Wastes of Ash were barren as they had been. Though there were cracks in the ground near the border, little seemed to have changed within. Corpses of void monsters interspersed by dead elves littered the ashen grounds. Ilea felt heat from deeper inside the Domain. Its Oracles were still alive.

Aki led them into the Domain, over burned tree stumps and a sea of ash.

Ilea felt it all. She felt the heat within, felt the ash, all of it quiet, burning, embers left in a dying world. Refusing to go out.

“We are almost there. Prepare yourselves. For battle,” one of the Pursuers spoke.

Ilea narrowed her eyes when she saw the light of an explosion. They sped up, more spells now coming to life all around her.

She felt her own magic, ready to activate her Fourth Tiers at a moment’s notice. A lot had changed since her last encounter with the Architect, but she didn’t plan to give him any time to adjust.

They came into view of an ongoing fight. A single burning figure sent tumbling over the ground, two beings of steel opposite.

“*We’re going in,*” Ilea sent and confirmed her target. Her spells came to life, her perception spiked, and she vanished, focusing on the floating form of the Architect. Of Ker Velor. She appeared not in front of him, but ten meters short, her arm gripped by a hand made of steel. She could feel the strange energy all around, altering the fabric, a mesh of heat and mana, as if the wisps themselves were on fire.

She had felt it once before.

Ilea perceived Owl and the others appearing within her domain. And she could see the Architect glaring at her with his vertical line of four white eyes.

The grip on her arm tightened and she glanced right to lock eyes with the other Ascended. Tall, with the form of an armor clad warrior, thick pieces of linked steel plates. Two eyes of white light looked into hers as she saw the Architect prepare his spell.

***[The First Ascended – lvl ????*]**

She focused on the strange mesh, all of her training with the Meadow coming back with her Fourth Tier of Meditation. She saw Ker Velor vanish with a powerful teleportation spell, and she used his magic as a way out of the confusing field of mana. Latching onto his spell, and taking Owl with her, Ilea sent a last message to the others.

“Level three thousand. She has a Source.”

And then she vanished.

Aki received the message, his Pursuers positioned between the other fighters. His Watchers had spread out far and wide to provide a better view of the battlefield. Mists had started to pool, the lack of arcane storms increasing his visibility. The skies were mostly clear, only a few clouds in the surrounding lands.

He saw the elf clad in flame stand up and stare at them, a hiss resounding as he flew closer.

The Ascended waited and watched, blood on the steel plates of her form as she glanced at each of the fighters in turn.

He couldn't identify her. And even with his Pursuers, he could not grasp her power, nor the mana around her.

The elf was clad in battered dark red scale armor, blood running down his face, cuts visible on his armor. He grabbed his right arm and snapped it back into a healthier angle, hissing as flames moved around him. He spoke in Elvish and then in Standard. “Who are you?” His question was directed not at the entire group, Aki realized, but at the only other elf present.

“I am Nelras Ithom. Former Monarch of the Sunlight Wastes,” Nelras spoke, only glancing back to the other elf for a short moment, then moving his attention to the Ascended before them. “And I am here to fight her.”

The fire elf hissed, his flames flaring as he walked to join them. “I am the Faransire, Monarch of the Fire Wastes of Ash. Who is this being come to kill our kind?”

[Fire Mage – lvl 1120]

“She is Ravana Vor Itar. First of the Ascended, and Warrior,” Vor Elenthir spoke, focused on the being of steel before them.

“United they stand,” a voice rang out, coming from Ravana. A neutral sounding tone. “Are we waiting for someone else to join? Or should we start?”

Nelras hissed as magic exploded all around, his leaf spear glowing with light as he rushed forward, followed by Verillion, blood magic surging as he shot off from the ground.

Healing magic from Nes flowed into the Fire Monarch, as Vor and Erik flew up and back, magic sent out towards their enemy. Aki moved three of his Pursuers around to flank and pressure, but not planning to attack until he saw how the Ascended fought.

He could feel new magic thrumming out from Ravana. She crouched and dodged the leaf bladed spear, taking three quick steps back as she deflected and ducked. Shields of metal appeared from thin air to block the blue streaks of arcane magic coming at her, each shield only just large enough to deflect the spells. She moved between Verillion and Nelras, stepping into the vampire’s range while using his body to prevent the elf from reaching her. Her elbow slammed into Verillion’s head, a shock wave rushing out as she grabbed his arm and twirled her body, sending his form flying at the charging Fire Monarch, the Faransire healed enough to fight.

Ravana jumped back, just barely avoiding a spear thrust from Nelras, when his weapon glowed, a blinding light lashing out to cut into her neck of steel.

She landed, three metal spears sent out towards Vor Elenthir, his hands raised as he used his magic to slow and damage her with void and space alike. Shards of glass and beams of arcane magic were deflected with small summoned steel plates before Ravana jumped back, an explosion of fire wracking through the ashen ground as she raised her arms.

She landed and touched her neck, a scratch visible.

“Finally,” she spoke and crouched low as her eyes glowed bright, flames reflecting on her blood covered steel form as lightning flashed in the distant mountains.

Aki felt the pressure in the air changing as rain started to fall, sizzling in the heat of the ash covered ground.

A storm was coming.

Ilea appeared and instantly felt a powerful spell with her precognition. The Architect had vanished yet again, light flashing bright all around, her Sunbound Creation forming around both her and the appearing Owl. She didn’t lose her focus, the thrumming magic burning away the very air but unable to break through and into her reality. She made sure to let Owl’s magic flow out of the defensive spell.

With how her marks felt within her mind, she could tell they were no longer in Elos. All around them, the spell of the architect still burned, her Fourth Tier Meditation the only thing that allowed her to focus on the barely perceptible lines of his second teleportation spell.

There were two dozen recent spells.

She grit her teeth and focused, checking each of them in turn. *Did he split himself up somehow? Or is it an illusion? No. The fissures are real. But...*

If he escapes...

“Owl, if you can locate his soul, tell me its direction,” she sent, her eyes going wide when she found the strange nature of the first few fissures. They were real enough, but something about them felt arbitrary, almost like a chaotic side product of another spell. For a moment, she wondered where they led, discarded the thought, and found the one recent line in the fabric that was substantial enough to be made by Ker Velor. She summoned a piece of glass to indicate the direction. *“This one.”*

“I can’t locate him yet. I trust you, Ilea,” Owl sent.

If I choose wrong.

No.

Thousands of puzzles, thousands of fissures. Two dozen tears set in space, but only one felt real.

Trust in what the Meadow has taught you.

Ilea narrowed her eyes, focused on the tear and followed, bringing the Greater Lich with her.

They appeared inside of a massive and well lit hall of steel, filled with creatures of the void. Not the same three marks brought upon their lands by the Extraction, but different creatures. Large heads with a dozen eyes, ten limbs, some of them flying. She could feel their magic as they all turned and focused her way, the Architect floating at the the very back of the hall, right above a rune covered sphere of metal set into the ground.

They locked eyes, and Ilea teleported close, only to find herself appearing a few meters short. Before her, she felt a thrumming field of space magic, originating from the sphere. The mesh changed a thousand times in the fraction of a second in which she perceived it. And she could feel the first spells behind her activate as the creatures moved to attack, each one of them that she could see in her domain carried magic as powerful as a high level spirit from Erendar.

She reached up her hand and found Owl teleporting closer too, the Greater Lich staring at the Ascended as Sunbound Creation took form, and the hall filled with void magic, a dozen fourth tier level spells slamming down on her self-made reality just as her ash and flames exploded outwards with everything that she could summon, her mana costs reduced to almost nothing as she brought her spells into the hall of steel. Her ash, her heat, and the Primordial Flame, Reversed Reconstruction slamming into each and every one of the creatures set alight by her fires, their frames trembling when the Pyroclastic Flow engulfed them, Scorching Intrusion burning through their every cells, creatures bulging and exploding in bursts of vaporizing blood, others vanishing into nothing as her cosmic energies pulsed through their forms.

Their void spells burned as Ilea absorbed much of their power back into her own mana, her cosmic magic and the Primordial Flame slowly working their way through the field of space protecting Ker Velor. Too complex was the changing framework for her to rip him out, but her magic did not care, burning and dissolving the energies that he summoned.

She could see more of the complex framework when the fires burned deeper. Ilea charged her Fabric Alteration and formed a wedge, her anti teleportation aura activated just before she pushed

forward and into the space. The violent clash caused an explosion of heat and burning sparks, spreading through the sphere as she watched the glowing eyes of the Architect. Another push she used, and broke through, her heat and fires let inside just as she perceived another teleportation spell of his fail, his metal frame engulfed in the Primordial Flame, melting away into nothing as her reversed True Reconstruction dissolved all that he was.

Ilea burned away even the melted metal falling to the ground, a message reverberating in her mind.

‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Avatar of the Architect – lvl 1039]

“His soul was damaged, but it slipped away and past your fires and my spells,” Owl sent. “I don’t know how, it shouldn’t have been able to escape!”

Ilea didn’t look at her. *“Can you track him?”*

“A mark is left on his soul!” Owl sent. “I will guide you, but it is far away.”

“Then let’s see if any of my anchors are closer.” Ilea said and opened a gate to the surface of Kohr, hoping he would’ve chosen his former home as a place to return to.

Owl looked up when they arrived. *“It is much closer now, Ilea. Up, and towards the sky!”*

She charged her wings and nodded to the Greater Lich. *“Hop on. We’ll find out where he’s hiding.”*

Aki moved with his Pursuer, intercepting the Ascended charging Nes. His blades lit up with void magic, cutting at Ravana who twirled in the air, grappling his silver arm before they both landed in a tumble, rolling for a dozen meters before they came to a stop. A fist came down, a shock wave expanded and his barrier burst. The second punch was blocked by an appearing blue barrier that thrummed in the air, Nelras, Verillion, and the Faransire catching up as Ravana jumped away, dodging the first few wide reaching strikes of blood and light before the vampire’s claws cut into her right arm. She blocked and ducked, the white glowing spear tip punching through her right shoulder before a small and dense sphere of fire hit her head, whipping it back with a flare of burning heat.

Aki stood up, his other Pursuers circling around with one of them now reaching Ravana’s back, his blade flashing upwards when she twisted with a wild motion, ripping free the spear in her shoulder, her foot connecting with the head of the Fire Monarch, his form slamming down into the ground. She weaved past the claws and spear while flying through the air, a metal shield appearing to block a beam of blue arcane energies. Ravana raised her arms to block the claws and spear, bits and pieces of her steel plating ripped away with every block. The fourth spear thrust, she caught, pulling Nelras closer before her fist went for his chest, the strike breaking through the appearing blue barrier with an explosion of glittering shards, denting in the elf’s armor with a dull sound and a shock wave of air, blood spraying on her steel face as Nelras thrust his spear deep into her chest.

Blood claws cut into her raised arm as she slammed down another punch into the elf. A feint for his stomach, going past the appearing shields of glass and arcane light before she struck his face,

sending him whirling back as bones shattered from the impact. Three more strikes of claws trailed by blood cut through her left arm, slight movements preventing the Vampire from hitting her side or head. She moved right, ripping out the spear in her chest as her left arm was separated and fell.

Ravana turned and dodged the void blades slashing at her, now standing alone with a Pursuer and the vampire. She went for the latter, parrying away the first few of his blood claw strikes with one arm as her second one reformed with flowing steel. She was struck twice, three of her fingers gone and a glowing furrow in her left forearm when she went in with a series of wild punches, shattering shields and pushing him to take a more defensive stance, her third hit denting in his armor. Her open palm slammed against his throat, her left arm crashing straight into his face, sending him careening backwards with bits of blood and armor scattering into the air before she turned, a bladed arm clad in void magic slicing through her back.

The next strike of the Pursuer, she caught, the void magic slowly slicing into her hand as her other arm was raised, a single steel rod the size of a house forming above them in mere instants, and slamming down onto the machine with a reverberating crash, flattening the being faster than the core explosion could take place, debris and bits of silver metal flashing out as the steel slid along and dug into the ash.

Runes on the ground flared to life, a magic circle near a hundred meters wide brimming with dense mana right before blue arcane light thrummed up towards the skies in a broad and perfect pillar, illuminating the battlefield of ash, the pools of mists in the distance, and parting the dark clouds above. Waves of mana flared out from the thrumming pillar of arcane might, Erik's flying form now glowing with pure arcane energies, his Fourth Tier magics vibrant with power as he fueled the spell, barriers appearing around him as the others made distance, injuries recovering fast with the help of Nes and her healing.

Five long seconds passed as everyone prepared their spells.

Darkness returned when the pillar dissipated.

Ravana fell to one knee, the steel plates of her body melted, steel dripping to a pool of liquid metal below her, the rod of steel she had summoned entirely gone. She formed a shield of metal against the charging Nelras, Erik and the others flanking her as their spells cut and crashed into the steel she summoned and the steel that remained of her body. Blood magic surged as Verillion cut into her back, his claws digging deep as a burst of void magic dissolved the shield before her, Nelras slamming his spear into and through her head, just past Verillion on the back.

Homing arcane flares and dense spears of thrumming wind crashed into the kneeling Ascended, her eyes glowing white as bits and pieces of her body were cut away.

"Very good," she spoke right before Nelras ripped the spear out of her head. Another strike cut through the right side of her neck.

Ravana spread her arms despite her damaged form and missing steel, void blades slicing through her limbs, what remained of her right arm cut and flung away when lightning rippled through the clouds above, and cracked down and into the first of the Ascended. A shock wave of sparks flared out, sending the close fighters back with force, where they flew up or landed on the ash.

Rain fell and the sound of thunder rolled through the vicinity.

Six sets of spells and four Pursuer void cannons fired onto the Ascended, everything exploding against a dome of steel swirling into existence. The steel split into moving tendrils, each as thick as the trunk of a tree and flashing outwards in a twirl, each aimed at one of the combatants, forcing

them to dodge or make more distance. Ravana now stood at the center of the slowing steel tendrils, lightning flowing over her steel form, the cuts and missing arm reforming in an instant.

She looked at them with glowing white eyes as the winds picked up, more rain falling as the pressure increased, strands of lightning moving through the clouds above as she glanced at the glowing form of Erik, and shot towards him with a shock wave of air extending outwards.

An arcane beam cut into her, barriers shattered when she impacted Erik's flying form, the two slamming down into the wracked earth, cutting a glowing line through the landscape before she raised her right hand, a war mace made of steel forming from her mana. An explosion of blue light washed over her from the downed mage before her mace crashed down, lightning and air shot outwards before a set of beams lashed out and at her back.

Ravana turned and dodged, flying over the ground and picking up speed before she crashed through one of the Pursuers, its shield shattered and its body mangled by the heavy impact. Verillion downed a vial of blood as the two elves charged, fire and light burning as their enemy met them. No longer did she dodge, instead parrying away the first strike of the Monarch, an explosion of fire washing over her as a glowing spear of light cut into her side. Her mace came down, and whipped the Monarch's face to the side, his lower jaw ripped away as blood splattered to the ground.

She kept up with Nelras as he took three steps back, her mace deflected once, the second strike slamming away his spear before the third crashed against a set of barriers, crashing through the first four and stopping at the fifth, Nelras jumping back.

"Yes," she spoke, her voice deeper now. "Show me more, warriors."

A pulse of blood magic exploded from Verillion, his eyes a bright red in the dark as he staggered, one hand to his head. He grinned, canines showing before he moved into a crouch.

Ravana whipped her head towards him and moved away from the elves. She flew at the vampire and he flew at her, scythe like extensions of flowing blood appeared out of his arms as they met, moving past each other with Ravana's mace just barely missing his head.

He stopped as Ravana staggered forward, red lines visible in her side. She turned and charged again, beams and projectiles of light, arcane, wind, void, and fire flew towards her, the Ascended dodging to the side before she charged and closed in on Nes.

Her mace struck down, shields splintered, her second hit blocked by Nes' arms, denting them in and her third one ripping her head to the side. She turned and caught Verillion with a backhanded strike, sending him tumbling through the air, a Pursuer flashing past to catch and take Nes with it.

Ravana didn't pursue, instead rushing towards the two approaching elves.

Aki saw the Monarch fly to the side, Nelras glowing with bright and flickering light. His spear flashed out and cut into Ravana, splinters of glass forming before him, her mace passing through the elf without impact, the glass splinters flashing out and away, one of them shimmered and his form rushed out, his leaf spear cutting into her back, a copy of his appearing near a third shard, and then another one from a fourth, all rushing forward, their white glowing spears leaving deep cuts in her steel, a few of them deflected by the Ascended before a last strike cut through her arm, the mace falling as his light flickered again, repeatedly now, each wave burning into the steel of her form.

Ravana screamed and grabbed him, then flew down into the ground, cracks webbing out and through the stone, her arm reforming with a new mace. She raised it when Erik's glowing form crashed into her, sending her tumbling through the air before she landed, skidding on the ground

until she stopped, her chest rising. She looked up to find a bright sphere of flame illuminating all, held aloft by the two raised arms of the Faransire as the air itself was set alight.

The sphere vanished and appeared on top of her, incinerating the very stone she stood on, a deep crater burned away into the ground as waves of heat and fire flowed out against the warriors bracing for impact.

Aki watched through his machines, seeing the glowing heat as the spell came to an end.

Ravana stood, melting steel dripping from her arms, reforming as she looked at the mace in her right hand. "Is this the extent of your power?"

Verillion closed the distance, as did Nelras and the Monarch of the Wastes, dense and thrumming magic moving with them.

Ravana let go of her mace and closed her eyes. She raised her hands and pressed her palms together.

And the air shook.

The vampire and elves halted instantly, hovering in the air as their forms shook. Verillion slowly moved his arm forward when the Monarch's eyes burst, his arms and chest exploding out with blood and bits of flesh, all of it caught in the air before him, hovering and spreading out. Nelras followed a moment later, his eyes unable to take the assault, bursting out as he stood with gritted teeth. All the spells sent towards Ravana stopped as soon as they entered the strange field of magic, ripped apart in her domain.

Erik sent out three more flares before he summoned a bell into his hand, closed his eyes, and rang it.

Aki set down Nes after running with her through the air for a few hundred meters. He could hear the high pitched noise coming from the powerful domain of the First Ascended, watching as the mangled steel of Nes' arms and head slowly reformed.

His Watchers looked down onto the battlefield, the two elves and Verillion still within the magic field, Erik and Vor hovering at a distance, a pulse of magic flowing out from the latter as he pulled with his arm. Nelras Ithom jolted back, one meter, then two more. With the next pull, he was ripped out of the field before Vor moved on to the other elf.

Ravana lowered her hands, opening her eyes as she took in the beings before her. "You didn't burst into flesh and blood," she said towards the vampire. "Well, he did," she said and raised her hand towards the Monarch. A pulse lashed out from her palm, shattering the ground and shaking the air before his chest and head exploded into chunks of bone and meat.

Ravana vanished in a charge, flying through another Pursuer before she looked towards the charging Verillion. She raised her hands. A thousand metal wires formed, encircling him before the steel caught his form, slinging around him as he pushed back.

"Weak," she spoke, glancing over at the falling form of the brutalized Monarch, steel digging into his body before she ripped him into a hundred chunks of bloodied flesh. Then she turned towards the caught vampire and advanced.

He looked at her with glowing eyes, opening his mouth where another vial appeared.

He bit down and screamed, pulling on the wires, claws extending with blood like smoke before he slashed through the steel. He spun and charged at Ravana, his eyes going wide when he saw the colossal beams of steel flying down towards him. Verillion flew to the right to dodge the first but

Ravana met him, faster than the metal above moved. Her mace struck his raised arm, her own blocking the blood claws of his other hand.

And down came the flying steel, crashing into both of them, the ground raised with ash and debris spreading far and wide as the impacts echoed out into the wasteland.

When the dust settled, all the steel rose into the air and Ravana stood, looking down at the unmoving vampire. She raised her hand towards him before his body burst into a shower of blood and flesh that splattered onto her steel form.

The last of Aki's Pursuers arrived too late, facing the Ascended alone.

Another part of him resided in the domain of the Meadow, when he saw a group arrive on the closest teleportation gate.

No.

You can't.

Nes was on the ground at the gate, even though he was still holding her near the Fire Wastes of Ash. Nelras was there, on one knee and missing an eye, blood covering his body. Next to him was the Monarch of the Fire Wastes, heavily injured but his body still intact. Verillion too was there, rolling to the side and coughing blood. Vor floated down and crouched near Nes, steel forming in front of his hand as he touched her, Scipio appearing next to them with Sentinels flying or pushing past the gathered crowd.

"You told me they're still fighting," the Meadow sent. *"Where is Erik?"*

Ilea flew past the dark clouds of Kohr. Higher and higher she went as the air became thinner and the pull of gravity lessened. Until there was nothing left to breathe, a sea of stars before her. She followed Owl's pointing arm out into space when the being spoke into her mind.

"Stop. It's there, somewhere!" Owl sent and pointed closer to the planet.

Ilea stopped using her charged wings and turned, flying in the indicated direction. *"There's nothing there."*

"No, I can feel his soul. Muddled, but it's there. Not far now!"

Ilea squinted her eyes, looking with all of her perception until she stopped abruptly. Before her, she could see a field of dense space magic. Neither her domain, nor her Fabric Alteration could see through the phenomenon, and with her eyes, she saw the same sea of stars that was all around.

She focused on deciphering the mesh to find a way in. *"Are you sure you want to go in there with me?"*

"He might try to flee again, Ilea," Owl sent. *"I'm with you to the very end."*

Ilea smiled for a split second, then activated Teleportation, vanishing past the field and appearing before a distant floating structure made of steel. It had the shape of a double pyramid, smooth all around, each side near a hundred meters long.

“That’s where his soul is!” Owl sent. “Are we going inside?”

Ilea slowed and stopped, raising her arms as she focused on the structure. Lights glinted on its surface, flickering towards them and burning into a set of golden, blue, and white barriers that she summoned in an instant.

“No,” Ilea sent back and felt a telepathic connection established from the shape.

“The knowledge here could make your kind into gods! I will wor-”

Sunbound creation formed around them and Ilea cut the connection, the barriers she summoned before her now burning with the Primordial Flame.

“We’re not going inside.”

Bright burning smoke flowed into existence all around them, ash and volcanic glass within. She charged her heat with Owl protected in her extension of Sunbound Creation as she willed her growing mass of burning smoke forward, far and wide until the Primordial Flame entirely engulfed the floating structure.

Steel melted and evaporated as she pushed her fires, ash, and smoke. And when she felt the heat within her reach a noticeable level, she activated Volcanic Source and sent everything she had into and through her burning Pyroclastic Flow.

For my fucking home.

The wave of heat rippled through the fires, all of it coalescing around the steel structure and crashing through its damaged walls.

Ilea watched as the last defense of Ker Velor exploded in a flare of bright and yellow fire.

She didn’t stop until nothing was left and a notification rang up within her mind.

‘ding’ ‘You have killed [The Architect of Creation – lvl 1039 / The Scholar of Life – lvl 1038 / The Star Walker – lvl 1035 / The Maker of Divinity – lvl 1037]

“His soul is gone. He has perished!” Owl sent to her.

One down, Ilea thought as she watched the last bits of metal burn away in the orbit of Kohr and the birthplace of the Ascended, her flames incinerating every single and last piece of debris.

She opened up a gate to the North.

One to go.