

## Chapter 702 Brawl

Ilea finished her bottle before she teleported into her armor. She raised her fists in preparation, feeling the power of her auras flow through her. Whatever the Champion of the Pit would throw at her, she was ready.

“Let us get this started then,” Helwart said through a booming sound enhancer much like hers. He raised his saw bladed mace and crouched slightly.

The crowd stopped their bartering and turned towards the combatants, the announcer giving them a short countdown in turn.

*Let's see what you can do, Champion,* she thought and walked forward.

Her foe did the same, neither of their armors made to be exceptionally quick. The layer of stone around him broadened with each step, the mace coming at her in a horizontal strike when she stepped into his range.

Ilea felt the impact on her arm, the power not enough to throw her off balance but the weapon won out against her living armor, ripping into her steel with heavily enchanted saw blades. Sparks and bits of steel were sent flying as she closed the distance, destruction charging up before her punch rushed forward, crashing through several emerging walls of stone until finally crashing against his armor. The impact made the ground tremble, the crowd erupting into cheers.

Helwart used the momentum from the punch to make some distance, his mace coming at her leg this time. Too quick to dodge with her increased weight, the strike nearly took out the massive limb.

She stumbled to the side to stay on her feet. “That thing isn’t just a mace,” she murmured when another strike ripped out a chunk of her armored knee, Ilea going down to one leg as she healed the damage done to her armor. She could feel the magic around him, the power flowing through both his war machine and his mace, all connected and intertwined. He wasn’t using a tool, this was all him, as much in control of his armor as the metal mage had been of his.

He kept the distance between them but stepped to her side, the mace aimed at her chest with a heavy strike. A pulse of mana rushed out as the weapon accelerated, a boom resounding before it even struck, the impact itself a loud crash of steel against steel. It dug halfway into her armor and got stuck.

Ilea felt her entire body vibrate with the strike, cracks sent through the ground below her. *Shock absorption coming in handy,* she mused. The hit was comparable to anything she had seen before. It seemed Helwart had focused on two things only. His stone armor and how to hit really, really hard. *Too bad I'm indestructible,* Ilea thought with a smile. Her form remained unmoving, the heavy chunk of bladed steel stuck in her chest as she moved her hands up to keep it there.

She raised her brows when her opponent immediately let go of the weapon. He walked closer instead and punched her.

Another shock wave went through her, his next attack a hook to her back, then three punches into her neck. Booms resounded with each strike. Bits of debris were sent flying as her armor was pushed deeper into the stone below.

His fists started to leave dents in her living steel, the mana flow around him increasing.

She tried to stand up when a kick sent her stumbling. The mace was ripped out of her chest before she watched him twirl with the weapon, the momentum and magic in his body sending the thing straight into the same spot again, deeper this time.

Ilea felt herself lift up from the ground at the heavy impact, another shock wave pushed away before she landed a few meters away. Her knee had healed but her chest looked more than a little dented, deep cuts left from the blades added to his mace.

Helwart didn't give her a moment, his movements more fluid than before, every step perfectly chosen and executed, the range of his chosen weapon taken into account before another strike caved in her right knee.

She could see what he was doing, his movements still rather slow compared to her non titan form but with her basic capability of controlling her living armor, she simply had no way to respond. His technique thoroughly outclassed her war machine expertise and with his higher speed and ability to take out her legs, she had no clue how to beat him in her armor. Three more strikes took out her leg entirely, leaving her stranded yet again. Ilea watched him spin with mace in hand, the dwarf finishing four turns before an insanely high momentum strike crashed through the arms she held up and into her half repaired chest.

Another few hits like that and he would be through to her real form.

She heard the crowd roar with each hit. Her eyes followed the massive machine through the slit in her helmet. Looking down, she saw her missing hands, regenerating with her healing but not faster than his increasingly dangerous attacks. Her form was pulled forward as the mace was ripped out. The next strike came from above. Her precognition informed her of the incoming attack pretty much as it happened, her metal helmet caved in with a sickening crunch, whirling steel blades ripping through the remnants of metal before they ground to a halt against her head.

Ilea didn't cover herself in ash but her mantle remained active near her neck. She didn't exactly count her defenses as the kind of magic she agreed to not use in this fight.

"You may surrender, before you die," Helwart said as he ripped out the mace, his massive steel and stone arms raised for another strike against her chest.

Ilea grinned. "*I did agree not to use my magic. But you know,*" she sent through her telepathy and made her damaged armor vanish. "I didn't agree to keep this a war machine only fight."

Some of the crowd went silent but this time they didn't dare boo or insult her like they had done with Pierce.

"You plan to teleport round and round, lass?" Helwart asked in a booming voice.

Ilea started walking towards him. "No. No, I agreed to keep this... physical."

His mace came at her and impacted her raised arms, the blades grinding to a halt instantly as a wave of force pushed out behind her, her boots digging into the stone below. Her weight remained at the full increase but she could easily keep up with the massive machine now that she didn't have to haul around over a ton of enchanted steel.

She raised one of her brows and looked up at the large being. "Aw, I appreciate it, Champion. But you shouldn't pull your punches," she mused. *This isn't even my final form.*

The crowd had gone entirely silent, as if they didn't quite comprehend what had just happened.

Ilea knew the unwritten rules against fighting without a war machine were really more there to prevent constant dodging. So she didn't. Instead she charged up Archon Strike and let her enemy attack once more. The mace came from her left, Ilea twisting her body before her fist moved out, the charged attack coupled with Tempered Seal converted into pure physical damage. Was it cheating? Maybe a little. But she didn't much care. This was more fun than the alternatives.

Her fist collided with the mace, the two forces striking together with an ear shattering boom, a crack forming in the stone below the impact. Ilea held on to her hood with her left hand as the air was pushed aside, the wave even impacting the barrier above. One of the blades in the mace had shattered, bits and pieces sent flying. She healed the internal damage done to her arm, the combined efforts of his attack and her own over extension bursting a few blood vessels. Ilea raised her hand as the mace moved away, the dwarf stunned from the impact, his arms shaking as a part of the force went through him. Blood dripped from the back of her hand, her bones intact with some of her skin torn up from the fast moving blade.

Helwart growled and went into a crouch, he raised his mace and struck down from above.

Ilea spread her arms as the heavy bit of steel came down on her head. Her body didn't give, nor did the mace itself. Instead it was the ground itself that cracked, a wide berth of fissures going through the vicinity as she was punched down into the fighting pit. She felt the impact go through her, clothes ruined when the stone exploded all around her, flying debris hitting her unarmored form. She summoned her bone armor set, the slowly regenerating piece at least allowing for some decency. *Until it too is destroyed*, she mused, keeping her head uncovered.

She looked up at the armored titan and smiled, a trickle of blood flowing down from her head, the wound it had come from already healed seconds ago. *I think you skipped some of my turns there*, she thought and ran up the small slope his strike had created. The mace came at her but she simply let it strike, her heavy form moved a few meters with the impact, cracks on her bone armor forming but most of the force going through her heavily enhanced body. She reached the large stone covered form and started with a kick to his knee.

Her intrusion abilities were converted into physical damage. The thick stone was shattered with the heavy impact, pushed into the arena grounds before she kicked down three more times, the metal below bent and shattered.

Helwart let go of his weapon and punched downwards. His massive fist met hers, stone and metal devouring her arm as his defenses were cracked and splintered. She ripped out her fist and elbowed his other hand aside. Eight quick punches slammed into his armored stomach, bits of stone exploding away from his back as the force traveled through him. She looked down at her ruined bone bracers before she focused back on her foe, the massive being stumbling back with a ruined knee and one arm reduced to a stump.

He stopped himself as new stone formed around the damaged bits.

Ilea smirked when he roared, the sound muffled through the steel and stone, his sound enhancing tool destroyed from the impacts that had gone through him. She went into a defensive azarinth stance as the massive being descended unto her. A slew of punches slammed into her, Ilea's body pushed back with each impact, the being finally grabbing around her entire torso before he threw her down into the ground.

She impacted the stone arena four times before she turned in the air and slid to a stop, not a bit of blood on her. Granted, the strikes had done some damage, but most of her enemies managed to

injure her in one form or the other. What they couldn't do was put her down permanently, and by now she doubted the dwarven Champion would come close.

*I'll let him try for a little longer, she thought. For the fans.* She watched the crowd behind the barrier and smiled, Helwart rushing her with heavy steps, his speed increasing with each impact of his stone boots. A glance behind her revealed the close stands, people already clearing the area with the trajectory of the coming attack. *Smart folks. Probably not the first time this has happened.*

Ilea stood and waited, her weight increased and her health topped off once more. Her armor was the only thing that lagged behind in recovery, but she hadn't used it in a while anyway. *Wyrms one is next if he manages to fully destroy this one. Shame I can't just use my ash to shield my decency.*

Her eyes opened wide when the dwarven juggernaut came at her with a charged up kick. His reinforced steel and stone covered shin impacted her chest in a direct strike, much of his defense shattering in the process, his leg rebounded from the impact as if he had kicked a pole of steel planted in the ground.

Ilea was sent flying, her reinforced body crashing into the side wall of the arena, stone shattering around her as the barrier flickered above. She started clawing her way out when the dwarf reached her and slammed her back inside with a punch. He didn't stop his attacks until the whole side of the arena had been turned to rubble, some of the stands falling down and joining the same fate.

Her head and body shook and twitched as the stone slabs hammered her into the now magically enhanced ground. It didn't give as easily anymore, the force evenly distributed between his arms, her form, and the stone. A ringing started in her ears when he managed to blow out her hearing, some of her internal organs injured by the continued abuse. Her left eye burst after a set of strikes against her head.

Helwart's started breathing heavily before he grabbed onto her comparatively small form and threw her back inside the arena.

She hit the ground and slammed her hand into the stone, sliding to a stop with a furrow left behind. Her bone armor was replaced by a set of simple leather armor. *This really IS annoying without my Mantle.*

*"Done then, Mr. Champion?"* she asked, blood flowing from her burst eye and her ears. The bruises on her arms remained as well, all quickly healing with her natural regeneration alone. She started decreasing her weight again, neither the regeneration nor her heat generation required for the fight. Her sight returned to normal when the dwarf had walked a few steps. He seemed to waver slightly, finally going down to one knee.

*"Fought four marks less tough than ye,"* he sent back.

She walked towards him as the crowd was silenced, hushed murmurs going through the Forged Dome as their eyes focused on the human.

Ilea stopped a few meters in front of him. *"I've killed four marks less tough than you."*

He puffed. *"A bittersweet compliment, Lilith,"* the dwarf said and stood up, both arms raised. *"Now let us finish this."*

"Gladly," Ilea mused, her weight already reduced considerably. She met his attacks with her own punches, stone debris sent flying. A dodge let her avoid the arm grabbing for her, a kick to his right leg leaving the metal below exposed. Four more kicks left the thing unusable. She stepped around

his back and sent a dozen strikes into the stone, each punch aimed to the side in an effort to destroy the stone more so than his spine deep below.

The large machine collapsed in front of her right when she started to wonder how to get him out without using her magic. A quick check with her healing revealed that he was unconscious, half of his organs destroyed and slowly regenerating. *That works I suppose*, she thought and stabilized him, walking on top of the downed giant in the process.

The crowd remained silent until she raised her fist, the barrier going down and a roar of cheers exploding from the stands.

She jumped off a moment later when the machine below started moving again. “Oof... avenge't been pummeled like that for years...” Helwart murmured as the stone around his steel feet away. Much of his war machine below looked battered, both his legs bent the other way.

“Enjoy yourself?” Ilea asked, her arms crossed as she watched him sit up.

He bent forward and tried to put his legs back into place but failed to move the metal. Instead he replaced his battered machine with a new one. It was smaller and looked considerably more expensive, the same orange visible in a few places. “That I did,” he said and laughed. “Normally can only let loose as much with monsters.”

She smiled. “So I’m the Champion of the Pit now? I wonder what kind of changes I’ll bring to the place.”

“Aye, I ye want the responsibility. Gonna be a tough one convincin the blockheads of a human leader. If yer human at all,” he said.

“Nah, I’m good. You’re doing an alright job, I suppose. And yes, I’m human, despite considerable rumors and evidence to the contrary.”

He laughed again. “Artifact is yours. I’ll have it brought back here while you celebrate,” he said.

“I think I’m good on that. Not particularly interested in the attention of a thousand sweaty dwarves,” she said.

“Hmm. Well then come with me,” he said and started towards the stands.

“I’ll wait outside,” Ilea said. “*I’ll get the key and find you again later*,” she sent to Verena and Bralin before she teleported into then past the celebrating crowd.

She waited up on the ledge of the pit, watching the massive cannons all around. *Are they gonna make small action figures of me now? The one human to beat their Champion in a full on brawl. Impressive how much damage he managed to deal for his level. A chunk more sustain and regeneration and he’s going to be beating down four marks with ease. Healing Class for his third or something would do the trick.*

*Then again most of the creatures I’ve killed seemed pretty resistant against physical damage but maybe he could compensate with that mace of his. Blades on that managed to cut even me.*

Helwart flew up with his entourage behind.

She got up and joined them, ignoring the remarks and questions of the others. *Each with their own agenda it seems. “I won’t get involved with any of this,”* she sent to the main dwarf.

“She’s not interested,” Helwart said and chuckled. “Leave us be, fuck off. Kerron you stay, believe you’ve got something in your vault that she wants.”