

## Chapter 624 Lizards

Ilea went in first, her dominion already picking up various magical residue, Eternal Huntress informing her that some of the sources were dangerous creatures, even to her. White flames burned on her armor, illuminating parts of the cavern, all her companions aided by one or the other kind of magical sight.

They remained quiet as they entered the volcanic caverns, the heat already reaching heights where a low level resistance would surely be required. Ilea held up a hand, signaling for the others to stop when she felt a tremor go through the ground. Her dominion didn't pick anything up, nor did anything attack them.

"Common," Kyrian mentioned.

"I see," Ilea said and continued onward. The light resided soon, leaving them with their skills and fires, Feyrair now too clad in flames. She came upon something peculiar a few dozen meters further. An irregularity within the cavern walls, magical in nature. "Any creatures hiding in the walls?" she asked, glancing back to Kyrian.

"Plenty. Burrowing, stone itself, shadow creatures. What do you see?" he asked.

"Unsure. Let me see if I can get it to come out," Ilea said and sent reversed healing into the spot, smiling when she got an instant reaction.

The wall itself shook and trembled, boulders falling down before they reformed into a vaguely humanoid shape made of rock. The pieces themselves weren't directly connected, arcane energy filling the gaps according to Ilea's sight.

It roared and fell down to all fours, stones reorganizing themselves to form two more arms before it ran towards them in a frenzied dash.

### ***[Stone Specter – lvl 528] – [Hostile]***

"Who wants to have the honors?" Ilea asked but the two Elves had already vanished.

Neiphato appeared in front of the running creature, his wooden armor growing roots before the monster crashed into him, the elf pushed back several meters before he managed to stop the creature. More roots grew, some into the ground and walls behind, more into and around the creature he was slowing down.

The Specter used a similar approach, Neiphato's feet slowly sinking into the ground as spikes shot out from the ceiling, some deflected while others pierced into his armor.

Feyrair jumped over the elf and aimed his hands downwards, two thin beams of white energy flaring up in the darkness before he landed in a roll, turning around to see the Specter fall apart.

"Not dead yet," Kyrian said, standing next to Ilea, his arms crossed.

"He burned the connections," she answered. "Pretty big weakness if you ask me."

"I don't think it's a common ability. Being able to damage magical constructs," he said.

She looked over. "Really? I have two Classes now that can do it."

“I wouldn’t exactly categorize you as common. Nor that elf,” he answered.

Ilea watched as a prison of wooden roots grew around the stone chunks trying to reconnect themselves, the pieces trembling against the wood.

Feyrair leaned against the wall and watched, not interfering further with the locked struggle between the wood creator and his prey.

Neiphato won out finally, the chunks of rocks crushed by the continuously thickening roots, thorns brimming with magic now adorning the growth. His own armor closed again, much of it stained with his own blood. Wounds he healed himself, the elf not having shown a reaction to the injuries.

Ilea knew he had some kind of general Cerithil Hunter Class next to his arguably more powerful wood creator one. She could feel the body enhancements he used. While he wasn’t particularly skilled with the blades he used to wield, he was incredibly tough. Perhaps the closest to her main Class in likeness from the present group. It was hard to say if he was anywhere near as resilient as Kyrian or Feyrair, both of them with insane defensive ability. But with the healing from his wood magic class, the elf had a good chance of survival at the very least.

*His offensive just kind of sucks*, Ilea thought. The wood was versatile, yes, but against higher level enemies, even this Stone Specter, it proved difficult to apply. She thought it comparable to her ash if it was slower and couldn’t deliver any mana intrusion spells.

The elf breathed hard when the monster had been dealt with, a triumphant hiss coming from him before he refocused. His gaze was aimed at the dark tunnel ahead, likely avoiding a potentially mocking look from Feyrair.

“Well done,” the dragonling said instead. “Next time I won’t lend a hand.”

Ilea walked past, tapping the wood mage’s shoulder before she took the lead again. *We need a separate level calculation system for this group. He hardly even lost an important organ, and just a few liters of blood*, she thought, glancing back at the wet spot on the ground.

Crevices and cracks in the walls soon started showing, some opening up to new sections of the caverns behind. Ilea focused on the largest tunnel, assuming it would lead somewhere. Half an hour later, they hadn’t come across any larger caverns or anything else to fight.

“This seems to just go in random directions,” Ilea murmured, feeling another tremor somewhere deep below. “Let’s just go in here,” she added, kicking into the wall to her right with a wave of arcane energy.

The small crevice exploded, revealing a large open cavern behind, rocks and debris tumbling down into the dark, hitting more stone a hundred meters farther down.

She spread her wings and entered the darkness, landing on a nearby ledge where she noticed a few creatures within her dominion. They were small, about the size of her head, and they reacted to her presence, jumping off the walls with flapping shade like wings.

“Incoming,” she said as the rest of the group landed close to her.

The few creatures had turned into a few hundred, the walls swarming with them as they started to circle their group. It almost looked like the shadows themselves had turned alive, one of the critters flowing into the next near seamlessly.

***[Winged Shade – lvl 504] – [Shadow/Disturbed]***

*Both kind of obvious, identify, Ilea remarked. And yet more creatures that seem kind of useless for me to fight.*

She glanced at Kyrian with a bored look on her face, hidden behind her armor.

“Patient, little huntress,” he said, his confidence mixing somewhat with slight guilt it seemed.

The winged critters didn’t wait any longer, advancing towards them with an eerie unity.

“These are mine,” Feyrair said as his form expanded, his body slightly curled to protect the group before his breath lit up the cavern. His fires hit an expanding darkness that formed in front of the flying swarm, breaking through a moment later, the magical flames engulfing hundreds in the first split second, the rest of the swarm trying to move away in a desperate attempt to dodge his attack.

Some few hundred managed to survive, flying into and somewhat through the dragonling.

Ilea brushed one of the bat like shades with her arm, feeling some of her health drained with a vicious pull. Feyrair’s health was alright, his resistance or regeneration handling the damage well. Another torrent of fire reduced the remaining creatures to nothing.

“Good thing they attacked from the same direction,” Ilea remarked. *Wouldn’t have been an issue for my dominion or Kyrian’s curses anyway.*

She pointed down to the distant floor and jumped, landing after having accelerated further with her wings. The ground shook slightly, small indentations visible where her ashen boots had cracked the floor. *Gods I love doing this*, she thought. It felt even more effective with the added weight from her evolution. *I hope my Ash one gives me another few hundred kilograms.*

The others landed, looking around in the dark ravine.

“This way... something strong moved past... recently,” Ilea murmured, leading the group through the broad valley. A large fissure in the wall led them further down once more, the trail she had picked up feeling more recent with each step. *Thing didn’t move quickly*, she thought, not picking up any actual tracks. A flying monster perhaps, or simply one that wasn’t particularly heavy.

They came into an expanding cavern, the other end only barely visible to Ilea.

She noticed too late when a projectile came flying at her burning form. The chunk hit her head, bending it back a little too far, ashen limbs hitting the ground to prevent her from falling. One of her eyes had burst, regenerating as she looked forward just in time to see another chunk flying past.

This one hit Feyrair, his form sent flying as the piece of rock hit his stomach, leaving a trail of spittle and blood. She knew he would be fine.

Neiphato had started growing a protective shield of roots, Kyrian adding edges to his armor in an effort to deflect incoming projectiles.

*Hmm, why did I never do that?* Ilea thought, another chunk coming at her. Now that she knew what to expect, she simply held her ground and used her ash to support her. The chunk hit, digging into her armor and pushing her limbs further into the ground, the attack largely ineffective. She caught the chunk and looked at it, her armor reforming. *Just normal rock?* she wondered, glancing at Kyrian who took a stabilizing step to the side after a rock had glanced off his armor, slamming into the wall a few dozen meters away.

Ilea hit the next chunk with a punch, rubble exploding outwards with a wave of arcane energy.

“It’s hiding close to the wall, about two hundred meters away,” Kyrian said, pointing at a specific location.

Feyrair hissed as his form expanded, the dragonling rushing forward with flapping wings, only to flutter to the side when one of his wings was pierced by a flying stone.

Ilea tried to follow Kyrian’s gaze and finally found the monster. *Well, no wonder. It looks the fucking same as the wall.*

She followed the dragonling, the continuous impacts slowing him down, however unable to penetrate his scales. That changed a moment later when a stone lance pierced the elf’s chest, his form crashing to the ground as the lance was pushed further out of his back.

Kyrian appeared in front of the downed warrior, his metal expanding to form a wedge in front of him. “Go have a look,” he said. “I’ll protect him.”

A whined hiss came from the small red dragon as he stumbled up, ripping at the lance within his chest.

Ilea was already gone, crossing the distance in mere moments with her teleportation abilities and wings. When she appeared a second time, her body was pierced by three fast flying spears of stone. They just barely managed to get through her ash, leaving wounds in her chest and stomach.

***[Rubble Guardian – lvl ???] - [Startled]***

*Startled? After it attacked us from several hundred meters away? she wondered, her ashen limbs ripping out the spears. Hmm, close to nine hundred though. Maybe even worth fighting.*

She could feel her limbs move, twenty now thanks to her harmony bonus from dominion. They moved in unison as she approached, a few quick steps bringing her to the large lizard like monster. Ilea saw the attack come, teleporting to avoid the spears shooting out of the ground, her limbs scratching against the side of the being, leaving nothing but shallow scratches. Scratches that smoothed out a moment later.

The lizard swiped its tail her way, a thousand pebbles appearing with it, flying as fast as pellets from a shotgun.

Ilea crossed her arms in front of her, the impacts sending her back a few meters, pieces of stone falling out of her armor as it recovered. She took a deep breath and rushed forward, Archon Strike charging in her right fist as she watched the creature turn its massive stone head her way.

A pulse of mind magic went through her, Ilea’s body locking up for a split second as spears shot out of the ground, most of them breaking against her form, a few penetrating. The sudden stop pushed them further in, the stone breaking against the armor on her back as she remained hanging in the air.

She looked at the lizard, its body resembling a cliff or mountain side, edges and irregularities jutting out of its massive four legged form, the location of its mouth and eyes difficult to discern on the many angled face. A thin spear gleaming with magic shot from its mouth, straight at her head.

Ilea used displacement on the projectile, grinning when the spear slammed into its back. The guardian didn’t react, Ilea blinking forward despite the magical stone still piercing her. Her fist crashed against the monster’s head, several thousand points of mana flowing into it with the heavy attack. A vein like pulse of blueish magic spread through its head, hissing with power.

The lizard stumbled to the side lightly, more spears coming from the ground and even ceiling.

Ilea let them come, activating Phaseshift as she charged her fist again, this time with both health and mana, her third tier healing quickly recovering the lost five thousand health before her body returned to normal space, the stone in her occupied space shattering as her body won out against it. Another blink got her close, her fist slamming into the monster's side with a heavy impact, arcane energy flaring up in vein like patters as her attack crashed into stone.

The lizard slapped her with one of its hands, Ilea tumbling away as she healed the slight damage, having absorbed most of the shock.

*A quick one, are we?* she noted, watching the monster jump back several dozen meters with a single smooth movement, neither skidding nor heavily impacting the ground. She knew it wasn't that light.

It jumped again, avoiding the steel lances that shot its way.

*Can't control them from that far,* Ilea noted, seeing the distant form of Kyrian floating in the middle of the cavern. Feyrair had advanced too, still in his dragon form and healed. It seemed the bright flames around his form were more enticing than Ilea's smaller ones as the lizard turned his way again.

*Fine with me,* she thought and displaced herself, appearing at the monster's side. More lances shot out of both the ground and its body, deflecting her strike and pushing her aside. Her wings turned her in mid air, ashen limbs merging into four larger extensions as they broke through the stone holding her back, her feet landing several kicks on its back with devastating impacts, blue energy lighting up as the fires of Storm of Cinders started to spread, slowly ripping away its defenses.

Kyrian's lances flew back to him, the Rubble Guardian focusing back on Ilea as it felt the mana spread through its back.

She blinked, the explosion of arcane energy shattering the forming lances, Ilea unleashing a series of punches with a thousand mana each flashing up within the monster's form. She didn't let up as it stumbled to the side, displacing behind it when it jumped to get away. She charged her punch with both health and mana, sacrificing more health to boost her auras as her healing pushed her numbers back up. Another volley of pebbles coupled with spears came her way as she charged, everything vanishing into a large fissure in space, hitting the monster from the other side.

Her charge complete, she released her third tier displacement and went forward, her fist crashing into the monster's head with an explosion of bright arcane energy, the wave spreading over its body as the impact ripped a chunk off its head.

She saw the damage regenerating as a series of spears dug into her armor. *Intrusion is probably better,* she thought, ignoring the few spears that managed to pierce her defenses, the creature using another wave of mind magic to slow her down. *That won't last for long,* she thought, her eyes focused on the monster as her next attack was already charging. She still had plenty of mana.

White flame engulfed the monster in the next moment, the dragonling finally reaching its form without being stopped by one projectile or the other.

The lizard jumped away again, only to find several metal flails twirling around its neck and legs, pushing it down as a curse spread through its form.

Ilea vanished, her legs and ashen limbs grappling around the monster's neck before she unleashed a series of slow punches, magic flaring up with each impact as the creature was brought lower, finally

hitting the ground, with all efforts to stop her ceased. She doubled her reverse healing to slow its regeneration, one last punch flaring up before she got the kill notification.

***‘ding’ ‘Your group has defeated [Rubble Guardian – lvl 908]’***

***‘ding’ ‘Kin of Ash has reached lvl 494 – Five stat points awarded’***

***‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 457 – One stat point awarded’***

Feyrair landed nearby, his breath attack enveloping both Ilea and the remains.

“It’s dead already,” she said, standing in the fires as she absorbed mana from her ally, her ash slowly stripped away.

He roared once more before he stopped. “Killed like a common beast,” he hissed, returning to his Elven form. It seemed like he couldn’t decide between being proud of her or being angry at the monster for injuring him.

“I suppose we won’t help you with the next one,” Kyrian said when he arrived, collecting his steel again.

“No, I suppose you shouldn’t,” she said, wiping away the nonexistent dust from her armor as she landed next to the monster’s head. She inspected the four flowing limbs on her back, the ends petrified into heavy spiked weapons. *Seems appropriate.*

The battle hadn’t attracted another beast, quiet returning to the cavern as they looked for a way out. A quick search confirmed that it was a dead end, the group returning to the broad valley that lead further down into the mountain. Ilea smiled to herself, her mana already topped off again, ready to face the next monster hiding within the trembling mountain.