

Chapter 590 Magic Turtle

Ilea prepared herself to hold back the masses when the distant walls lit up in a sea of blue light. “Are those?” she murmured, her eyes opening wide when the lights vanished.

A wave of air rushed out from Isalthar, thousands of invisible arcane arrows exploding upon impact with the force.

Yeah I think this isn't exactly a fair fight, she thought, the first arrows flying past, displaced as they reached her.

Isalthar conjured a hundred blades of wind when the first row of enemies reached them, two dozen Executioners running through the air with increasing speed. Shields cracked and shattered as they were hit by the blades, a wave of air pushing them back a little.

“Perhaps, it may be best,” Isalthar said and dodged the silver blade of one Executioner before blowing it away with a concentrated blast of wind. “If you went and prepared your spell now.”

“Short lived battle,” Ilea said with a smile, flying through a barrage of arcane arrows, most of them displaced, others exploding on her with little effect. Their sheer number however shaved away both her armor and health, her teleportation bringing both her and Feyrair down into the houses below.

The elf hissed in frustration but didn't offer any words of complaint, knowing how terribly outmatched they were here. Explosions resounded above and behind, the two teleporting as quickly as they could, reaching their little hideout about ten seconds later.

Ilea appeared in the room and immediately started casting her third tier blink. “Stay somewhat close to me and prepare any barrier and defensive spell you can form.”

Her gaze was focused on the broad windows ahead and what lay beyond. The cavern had lit up, blue and green lights flaring up as spells exploded and clashed with the wind mage flying at the center of it all.

His form was visible through occasional glimpses into the storm swirling around him. Machines flew in the air, ripped apart and sent out into the city as spells exploded in the strong winds. Stone was ripped from buildings, Centurions and even Praetorians lifted up into the growing whirlwind conjured and controlled by Isalthar.

And yet the enemy did not relent, thousands of bright beams and magical arrows entering the elf's domain, exploding nearby or hitting him directly where he failed to disrupt or deflect a projectile. One mage stood against an army, his control of the air unmatched as he sliced through even Executioners, leaving them to fall and reform lost limbs before they could advance once more.

Not all machines were focused only on the elf, many flowing past like waves split apart by a rocky isle. A carpet of dull green steel that moved over houses and through the streets, all in pursuit of the rest. Easier pray for the weaker machines.

“Little point in hiding with your spell charging,” Elfie said, setting up meticulous sets of barriers, layering the white runed shields above each other with deliberate care and hurry.

Purple runes appeared farther out, Asay adding to their defenses as ice and roots joined in on the mix.

Two minutes was a very long time in this situation, Ilea adding walls of ash in a hope to support her allies, her third tier spell slowly taking form as the explosive battle between Isalthar and the endless hordes was covered up by the growing magical bunker.

“How long did you say?” Feyrair asked.

“Barely started. Two minutes total. Keep adding to the defenses,” Ilea said.

The elf nodded, his form expanding as he curled up in the small space, using his dragon self to create another barrier in case everything else came crashing down.

“I’ll let you know when a few seconds are left. Transform back so I can move you,” Ilea said.

Every second felt like an eternity as the explosions outside moved closer, Ilea soon seeing the first machines crawling up the walls and through the staircase in the carpenter’s facility.

Impacts resounded on their defenses as the Taleen started to sink their blades and magic into them. Ashen lances, freezing cold, and white flame burned through the attackers’ health but for every one destroyed, ten more took its place.

“Don’t destroy the Praetorians!” Elfie shouted, the core explosions likely to do more damage than the normal attacks could ever manage.

Layer by layer, their barriers were stripped away, reforming as quickly as they could conjure them up. The distant Hunters had taken aim as well, arcane explosions cracking onto their magical cocoon from above, quickly breaking through each layer. Their sheer power coupled with their high number was simply too much to handle for the comparatively low leveled group.

Ilea spread her ash and already started healing. “Steady,” she said, watching Elfie float above her to block three incoming arcane arrows with a set of bright barriers. They shattered on the second, Neiphato blocking some of the third with a set of roots.

The elf spat blood but was healed again quickly, the hole patched up by several arcane barriers, a field of void magic appearing above.

Feyrair slowly turned in the cramped space, welcoming an Executioner who squeezed itself through the defenses with his fiery breath, continuing the assault until the creature was pushed back again, ice forming immediately where the hole had been.

The flying Destroyers had reached them by then, beams of pure arcane power and death magic continuously burning into the shields as arrows kept on raining in from above.

Ilea caught a glimpse of the ongoing storm outside, Isalthar no longer floating at the center, instead forced to avoid the many projectiles and pursuing Praetorians. Core explosions echoed through the massive city before wood filled the open space she could see through once more, impaling an advancing Centurion with it.

“Can’t hold any longer,” Asay said, both arms outstretched as the arcane field above wavered, cracks forming.

Ilea checked her mana. “Fey, burn me,” she said and activated her third tier Displacement in a large field above their position, the roof long turned to rubble. She manifested the other end towards the largest groups of Destroyers. Both arrows and beams went through the distorted space, arcane magic impacting on the flying Taleen with heavy explosions while the beams harmlessly shot towards the distant cavern ceiling.

“I like that spell,” Asay said while giggling, the group rebuilding their barriers as their magic pushed back against the machines in melee range.

Feyrair’s fire managed to keep the Executioners at bay, for now only two of them nearby but more were coming.

Ilea watched her resources dwindle, the flame clinging to her returning some in the form of absorbed mana but it wouldn’t last long. She had to let go of her portal, the impacts immediately hitting onto the barriers once more.

A few of the Destroyers had gone down from the dozens of arcane arrows impacting them, plumes of smoke trailing them before they crashed into the city below. Apparently the arrows weren’t quite as good at avoiding allies as they were at seeking enemies.

“Fey, now!” Ilea called out, the seconds ticking by as her spell started to manifest. *Where are you?*

The dragonling returned to his Elven form, the Executioners immediately pushing forward, digging their void blades into the many layered cocoon.

Ilea would go through with the spell either way. If anybody could flee this place, it was Isalthar. Her worry didn’t come to pass however.

The elf appeared within their space a moment later, missing an arm that was already regrowing, his robe splattered with blood. He closed his eyes before the storm he had conjured earlier manifested around their position, flinging away Centurions and Executioners alike.

Ilea saw the army of machines flowing towards them, rushing over the devastated part of the city the elf had fought them in. She couldn’t tell if there were any fewer than before.

Each of the Elves was present and she focused on them with Displacement, attaching them to her own blink as she watched a thousand spells crash against a nearly impenetrable barrier of air itself. Executioners pushed through the winds, slammed away by the combined efforts of their group before Ilea’s blink finally activated.

Magic flared up as the fabrics of space were shifted and they appeared in a living room somewhere near the human plains.

The oppressing magic had vanished, and with it the explosions and constant sounds of machines, gears, and steam. The air felt cool, sounds of water coming from the window front looking out onto the ocean. The suns had just started to rise.

“Where are we?” Feyrair asked, looking around.

“Don’t touch anything,” Ilea said. “This is my house.”

“Oh, wonderful,” Feyrair said and started walking towards the stairs leading up.

Ilea displaced him down the cliffs and towards the ocean, glancing at the group with a questioning look. “I think we could all use a bath to be honest.”

It is what I usually do when I arrive.

“May we sit down?” Elfie asked, gesturing to the sofas.

“Sure, make yourself at home. On this floor that is,” she said.

Asay looked around with sparkling eyes, literally. “Interesting. So very... unhuman. Well, I shall take a bath. Rare to be near the eastern coast,” he said and stepped out onto the balcony before he jumped down.

Ilea rolled her eyes at the roaring dragon flying by, the great beast diving after Asay.

“Well done,” Isalthar said as he stepped up to her, his bloodied robe already replaced with a clean one, his arm back to normal. He bowed lightly and smiled. “I thank you, for saving us.”

“Not like we could’ve done it without your help,” Ilea said and winked. “Oh by the way, I’d like for this place to remain somewhat private. So don’t tell everyone about it.”

Ben had found the stairs down. “Ilea, is that a kitchen? May I?”

She smiled. “Sure. Just clean up after yourself.”

Farthorn sat down on the sofa opposite Elfie, sighing before he started to take off his armor pieces. “That was humiliating,” he murmured with a hiss.

Neiphato smiled as he walked by. “So this is the ocean of the east,” he said and stepped out onto the balcony, Ilea following behind him.

Seithir joined them, silently looking at the sunrise.

“What do you see?” Ilea asked him, curious to know what his view looked like. He wasn’t truly blind after all.

He remained silent for a moment, hissing a long and quiet hiss before he smiled. “Serenity.”

“A poet. I like it,” Ilea said and jumped down, the two Elves following shortly after.

She entered the water with a deep dive, reducing her armor to a point where she retained decency. Ilea smiled at the underwater dragon pursuing a glowing purple fish that looked remarkably Elven in nature.

Not like Fey ever needs to bath with his fires, she thought, enjoying the cold water, the taste of salt and the might of the waves. Her wings propelled her through the ocean before she broke out, forming a small boat of ash in which she could lie comfortably. The view was gorgeous. *I should really stay here more often.*

She enjoyed the waves breaking on the nearby cliffs, closing her eyes as she relaxed. Ilea only opened one eye when a dragon like creature rose from below, pushing her boat up onto its back.

Feyrair twirled his massive body, taking her with him.

She simply displaced herself past his wing and reformed her boat.

“You’re no fun,” Feyrair said as his massive red dragon head poked out of the water.

She glanced over and smiled. “Enough fun for a day. That was a close one.”

He rolled his large reptilian eyes. “I thought this is what we thrive on,” he said before going under again, focusing on a new prey.

We do, yes. But it would be a bummer to see you all die. Especially in such a shit place underground, she thought and checked the few messages she had received.

‘ding’ ‘Sentinel Huntress reaches 3rd lvl 30’

From what exactly? Ah maybe that was earlier. Guess I’m maxed out now. Two Classes pushed as far as they can go. For now.

She felt rather proud, reminiscing about the work and training she had put in to get them to where they were now.

‘ding’ ‘Displacement reaches 3rd lvl 19’

‘ding’ ‘Space Shift reaches 3rd lvl 16’

‘ding’ ‘Space Awareness reaches 3rd lvl 4’

Oh, that ordeal pushed it one higher. Well I’ll take it gladly, she thought with a smile.

‘ding’ ‘Meditation reaches 3rd lvl 13’

‘ding’ ‘Veteran reaches 3rd lvl 17’

I’ll be the ultimate veteran, she smirked.

‘ding’ ‘You have escaped Iz, saving both yourself and your team – One Core skill point awarded’

“And a nice cherry on top,” she mused. It would’ve been possible to escape through more traditional means but the journey would’ve been long and dangerous. The chance of them hitting a dead end and getting swarmed by machines would’ve been high too.

When she returned to her home, Ilea sighed as she noticed the burnt smell. She blinked down into the kitchen to find Ben and Elfie fiddling with the stove, the metal plates covered in ice.

She crossed her arms and looked at the two, their bodies slowly turning to face her.

“It... eh, I burned something and... panicked,” Ben said, looking down.

“And you mock me for my cartography skills,” she murmured, turning the stove on again to melt the ice. “Come on, upstairs with you.”

Ben tried to say something when Elfie hissed and dragged him up with him.

Shouldn’t have brought them here, she thought, seeing Feyrair looking at the books in her room. As soon as she saw him jump onto her bed, she displaced him in front of the entrance.

What did they even try to cook, she thought, looking at the pan filled to the brim with ice. Below rested a sad burnt piece of meat. And here I thought Ben was the one knowledgeable about human society. I guess he never joined a cooking course.

She cleaned out the pan with her ash and went upstairs, finding all the Elves sitting at the table or on the sofas, cleaned and very much armored.

Ilea looked at them and started laughing. “Holy shit you guys are awkward,” she said and joined them, summoning meals for everyone and adding a few barrels of ale to the mix. “Can someone play an instrument? Some music would be nice. I think it’d be good to relax a little after that endeavor.”

“We should plan our next move,” Farthorn said, looking at the plate he received with suspicion. He was about to dig his hand into it when Ilea handed him a fork.

“Sure, I mean it’s not like a few hours will make a difference,” Ilea said and formed an ashen chair, the creation much more comfortable than anything not specifically made for her ass and back. She had switched into casual clothes, enjoying a mug of ale.

She raised her brows to look at Asay, the elf having summoned a weird string instrument that glittered with arcane energy, his hands weaving a spell as an aura of magic washed out from him.

He winked at her with a sly smile and started playing, a serene sound spreading through the large room, the very air vibrating with each note.

Ilea closed her eyes and relaxed in her chair, enjoying the ethereal experience as the Elves ate their human meals. Human meals, not human meals.

Seithir formed a spell as well, literally touching everyone’s souls with a gentle breeze of pure emotion. A sensation quite unlike anything Ilea had experienced so far.

Elfie summoned runed barriers that glittered with light, pulses of curse magic disturbing the other spells in a profound and changing way.

She watched them and sipped on her ale, happy to have the group here. It felt right, to see them show off their magic in such a spectacle compared to the monstrous ways of their harsh societies. Nobody spoke a word for quite some time.

When the performance came to an end, Ilea clapped with a smile on her face.

Ben glanced over and copied the gesture with a knowing smirk, Elfie and Neiphato following suit.

“What are you doing?” Feyrair whispered from the side.

“Clapping. A crowd can show appreciation for a performance with this gesture,” Ilea explained to him. “You’re amazing with that thing,” she said to Asay. “Let alone the magic the others weaved. Is that a common thing in the Domains?”

Asay giggled to himself before he waved back his hair, the instrument vanishing as he bowed. “Not exactly.”

“A skill like that has little use in battle,” Elfie said. “Though I can see its value,” he added with a hiss.

Asay hissed back, in an appreciative way.

“You should perform at some point. Maybe I could hire you,” Ilea said.

“We have more pressing matters than artistry,” Farthorn said with a hiss.

Ilea glanced at him. “Your millennia old war, yes. I’m sure it can’t wait for a month or a year.”

“You would not be alive, were it not for her,” Isalthar said, shutting the elf up, his gaze growing softer as he looked to the ground. “And we have learned much in our venture. Our goal will be the Praetorian facility, to gain enough strength to face Iz. I shall find the Hunters that remain in the lands, our purpose laid out.”

“What about the keys? We already have one. Well, Ilea has one,” Feyrair said, glancing at her.

“Artifacts long lost. Finding them will prove impossible. Finding Iz, however, is not. Not anymore,” Isalthar said with a light smile.

Ilea looked at him, thoughtfully sipping on her ale.

“Or am I mistaken, Guardian?” he spoke and looked at her with interest.

“It’s going to take a long time for this group to be able to face that army. Might not ever be possible. Now that they know we can get there, I’m sure the forces will only grow,” Ilea said. “The key allowed me to communicate with that creature. And getting additional ones will allow me to gain even more.”

“Do you have a way to find them?” Elfie asked.

“Now that’s the question, isn’t it?” Ilea said with a smirk.