

## Chapter 670 Ice

“In the west lie sets of islands, some as large as entire nations, the ones I visited varying greatly in climate, species, and danger. Few of the islands were hospitable, fewer even with sapient locals, let alone ones willing to communicate with me,” he said. “I have made it a habit not to travel over the open ocean for too long, but I’m sure there are other landmasses in the south as well.”

*I wonder if the Krahen Isles are part of those western islands,* Ilea thought. “Thanks, suppose I’ll have to explore that part of the world myself. Not like I’ve been to most places on this continent anyway.”

She stood up again. “Thanks again for all the information. May I?” Ilea said, holding out her hand towards Nes.

The mark set, she informed Scipio of Hallowfort’s location based on Tremor, various landmarks, and the Penumra dungeon. The Meadow would likely make contact anyway, or he would have to figure something out to do so himself.

“Just mention Lilith,” she said and walked towards the exit. “Now... what do I do with the others.”

“Do you need a few spells to chase you?” Scipio asked.

“No, no. I think I’ll be fine,” Ilea said. “That’s goodbye then, for a while. Hope you succeed with your work.”

“As do we,” Nes answered. “You are welcome here, Lilith.”

“Appreciate it, see you around,” Ilea said and vanished through the enchantments. She continued onward, appearing next to her allies. “We’re leaving,” she said and moved them away, teleporting a few times up the mountain before she stopped and turned around, looking down towards the way they had come from. “Got the key, but I might’ve woken up whatever was guarding it. No, we don’t want to fight it,” she said.

“How boring,” Feyrair and Pierce said at the same time, glancing at each other, both likely annoyed that they would say the same thing.

Ilea used the moment to set her third tier transfer destination before she summoned the locator.

“Nothing seems to be following,” Verena said.

“Good,” Ilea murmured. “The closest key is north,” she added, looking towards the high reaching mountains. She caught a glimpse of a set of wings between two mountain peaks before they vanished behind the snow covered stone. “Up for it?”

The three gave their assent, Ilea taking the lead as they traveled northwards.

“You okay?” she asked, looking at the two elders after a few minutes of flight. They were covered in ice, their breathing more strained.

“I’m fine,” Pierce said.

Verena burned a little brighter. “Trying not to attract attention,” she said.

Ilea stopped. “We’re here anyway,” she said, the locator pointing down towards solid stone. She couldn’t see anything in her dominion either, forming an ash drill before she started digging.

Pierce formed a metal dome above once they had enough space in the hole, shivering as lightning flowed through her. “Much better,” she murmured, Verena and Feyrair on fire close to her.

Ilea decided no to comment. She had noticed the colder temperatures but after her experiences in Erendar, the ice here hardly bothered her. *It’s still quite a ways off*, she thought, checking the locator as her ash shattered and ground stone.

“How many more do we need anyway?” Pierce asked. “We found four already.”

“You don’t seem particularly invested,” Fey commented.

“All we found were either empty ruins or unreasonably powerful enemies. I thought I’d get to join some epic battles, not loot abandoned caves or be chased by literal dragons,” she said.

“If you were a higher level, it could’ve been us to chase the dragon,” Ilea mused.

The woman huffed. “Even you couldn’t fight that thing, how am I supposed to keep up?”

“You have a couple decades of a head start,” Ilea said. “I assume that would provide you with enough time to train.”

“Ah, but you assume all I do is fight, but not everyone lives such a sad and lonely lifestyle,” Pierce answered. “You probably lack any understanding of the arts.”

“Oh d-” Ilea stopped herself, the ground breaking open into a bright underground tunnel, one she hadn’t perceived within her sphere. “This place didn’t show up,” she whispered, looking down into the light blue environment.

The others quieted down, Ilea trying to figure out why her dominion couldn’t pierce through. There were no enchantments she could discern, just a faint glow of magic now that she focused on it more actively. The density in the area was high in general, hiding the space from her previously.

“It’s even colder down there,” Pierce said.

“You can wait here if you like,” Ilea said and jumped down, her wings spreading in the perfectly rectangular tunnel she had found herself in. Blue streaks of light flowed through the partially see through walls made of what looked like ice.

***‘ding’ ‘You have entered the City of Glass dungeon’***

She set down onto the ground and touched the wall, ice spreading onto her ash before her body fought back, preventing further freezing. “It’s a dungeon,” she said. “Good place to level ice resistance if you three don’t have that maxed out yet.”

Ilea didn’t plan to push her resistance to the third tier, only having one point currently available.

Verena jumped down, landing on the ground where her boots instantly started freezing over. Her fires intensified, keeping the frost off her but not managing to melt any of the floor.

Feyrair didn’t seem to be bothered at all, Pierce simply deciding to float with constant lightning flowing over her armor to keep the cold air from damaging her.

“Further down,” Ilea informed, following the corridor until they came up on a set of stairs. Her dominion could only push through the weird magical fog for about two meters before her perception blurred slightly. Her eyes however worked normally.

They came into an expansive hall, mists of magic flowing through the air and walls, statues of ice depicting various monsters and people distributed throughout the area.

Ilea checked them with her healing and dominion but found nothing indicating that they were still alive, or in anyway constructs that would suddenly attack as she very much expected. They scanned the hall, looking for whatever creature had frozen these beings or at least sculpted them.

“New prey... invades our halls,” a whisper flowed through the area, a block of ice falling down to block the entrance.

Ilea appeared near the block and punched through with Archon Strike, tempered seal exploding a moment later as her fists cracked the entire block, the others preparing to fight.

“Nonono, please don’t leave already!” another voice said, still with a whisper like quality but less distorted.

“We will kill you all, or you can choose to stay,” the first whisper said.

“A gauntlet. You stay and entertain, and you reap the rewards!” a third voice said, this one a much higher pitch.

Ilea turned around, finding the three figures floating above the field of statues, humanoid wisps of blue light and freezing air. They glowed with magical energy that reminded Ilea of Maro, just quite a bit more intense.

***[Frozen Lich Fragment – lvl ?????]***

***[Frozen Lich Fragment – lvl ???]***

***[Frozen Lich Fragment – lvl ?????]***

The first two were close to one thousand, the third a few hundred levels higher. She could barely tell them apart other than by their levels, the first one floating with crossed arms and shining blue eyes, the second one a little slumped, its eyes dim, the third one smaller than the others and occasionally hopping up and down.

Ilea noted that the damage she had dealt to the entrance had already reformed, the wall perfectly even like the rest of the hall, her memory alone informing her about where the entrance was.

“Who are you people?” she asked, stepping past her comrades who were prepared for battle, the Elders a little more apprehensive than Feyrair who seemed excited to start.

“Hmm yes, I like that one, the elf. Flames of creation and dragon touched, fortunate, strong, a good elf,” the smallest of the three said in its high pitched tone. “You will walk the path of the owl!”

“We’re not going to walk any-” Ilea said, Feyrair already gone including the smallest of the three Lich fragments.

“You two look scared. I too was scared. You will walk the path of pain, and I shall tell you of our cursed fate, follow me,” the slumped being whispered and activated its spell, the two elders vanishing. “Please, don’t interfere with the paths not destined for you, ashen healer.”

Ilea held on, not allowing the creature to teleport when it vanished nonetheless. She attached herself to it, appearing in another hall with dozens of paintings on the walls, writing set in frozen plates in front of the museum like exhibits.

“Please. You were not invited here, but perhaps after you finish your own path, I may tell you of our fate,” the slumped being said when the other one appeared next to it.

“You are suitable,” the last one whispered in a quiet tone. “For the Path of Death,” one more teleporting Ilea back into the first hall where they were before.

*A museum?* she wondered. *Maybe they won't need my help after all.*

“Again, who are you?” she asked the floating lich fragment.

Ilea could hear ice cracking as she glanced over to one of the frozen statues, blue eyes opening within the solid confines, their focus on her.

“Your death, lost wanderer,” the lich fragment whispered before it started laughing, the sound echoing through the room, all the statues cracking and opening their shining blue eyes, bodies starting to move.

She displaced herself next to the floating creature, embered heart flashing out in a sphere, burning through the flying form of the whispering lich fragment as it wailed in pain. Ilea watched a shadow fly into the frozen walls, the two shining blue eyes staring at her from within.

“Good, you do not hesitate, and strike at the heart. Now show me, wanderer, what you can do,” it said.

Ilea sighed, unable to pierce the ground with displacement or her dominion, the distance to the next open area likely too far, or the magic kept her in the room. However her space awareness suggested the distance was simply too far, no aura or spell that she could see working against her abilities.

*Guess I'll play along,* she thought, looking at the beings.

***[Undead Wyrm – lvl ???]***

***[Undead Warrior – lvl ??]***

***[Undead Python – lvl ??]***

***[Undead Blight Summoner – lvl ???]***

Her body set alight with the flame of creation, she rushed through the beings, her burning ash ripping through the weak monsters like steel through paper. She used her valkyrie skills as much as possible, though not letting the creatures hit her more than they managed on their own. Ilea simply doubted the close to level five hundred beings would be able to deal any significant damage.

The snakes were sliced apart into chunks, the blight summoner, a large ooze like flesh monster with several eyes moaned as it was eaten alive by white flames, the warrior was punched a few times, all of its bones broken and splintered, its form still moving but unable to attack or even walk, and the undead wyrm simply couldn't keep up with Ilea's flying form. Her ashen spears broke through its scale armor, heat exploding within the death magic creature far smaller than the Scorching variant she had fought on the Krahen isles.

Barely a minute had passed and the nearly a hundred creatures in the entrance hall were sliced apart, white flame clinging to their remains as the ashen warrior landed amongst them. “Did I win the

game?” she asked with a smile, her marks informing her that Feyrair was progressing slowly, several kilometers deeper in the mountain, the elders still at the same place they had been before, the museum hall. Either would surely call for her if they were in enormous danger.

Ilea expected another set of creatures coming out of the walls, ground, or ceiling, or that the Lich fragment would attack her directly.

The creature on the other hand worked its way out of the ice wall, pushing with some difficulty until it plopped out with a cracking sound. “Wonderful! That was a demonstration like few I’ve witnessed before!” it whispered. “My name is death, it’s a pleasure to meet you, wanderer. Ah it will take many years for me to fill this hall again with other wanderers... come, come, to the next challenge!”

Ilea smiled lightly, seeing the creature’s enthusiasm. “Do the others have to fight monsters too?”

“I do not care about the other paths,” Death said.

“I see. What about survival rates?” Ilea asked. “You do this to everything that finds your dungeon I assume?”

“Of course. It’s rare enough! Everyone on the Path of Death dies,” Death said. “Much better than what the others manage, I should say.”

“You must be proud,” Ilea said. “But really, everyone? I’d expect this place to have some really tough residents.”

The being seemed to scratch its cheek as a block of ice melted away near one of the walls. “There were three, who survived. Three champions!”

“And they could leave?” Ilea asked.

Death did not reply.

*Figured. Guess you’re the last monster I’ll have to fight,* she thought. “What will I win if I survive until the end?”

The being shrugged. “A prize? There are some treasures lying around, but I care not for them.”

“I think fighting you would be prize enough,” Ilea said.

“Ah, a wanderer who can enjoy the true pleasures of the unlife, you will surely be a threatening foe to future wanderers! But first, you must die, so come, and face your next foe!”

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Undead Wurm – lvl 628]’***

...

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Undead Python – lvl 218]’***

***‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 466 – One stat point awarded’***

“Gladly,” Ilea said after checking her messages. “I hope they’re a bit more of a challenge than the last ones,” she added. “I plan to cleanse this whole dungeon of undead after all. Don’t hold back Mr. Death.”

The creature laughed, its eyes flashing bright as it lead her into the next hall, a massive chunk of ice standing in the center of the hall, the frozen remains of an enormous Wyvern within.

“I only use this room for the especially annoying or smelly wanderers. But today you get the honor of facing this champion,” it said and cackled. “You have asked for a challenge, and you shall receive!”

Ilea smiled. “It’s at least large, but it doesn’t look particularly strong,” she said.

“Oh? Then you have fought one of its kind before? I will observe your struggle, do not die quickly, or I shall massacre the wanderers who came with you! Yes, that’s what I would do,” it said, as if remembering something.

“That’s no good at all. You’ll have to fight and kill me first before you fight them. It’s only fair,” Ilea said.

It nodded. “Yes. You speak the truth, wanderer,” it said, its eyes glowing once more as the ice cracked.

Ilea watched the Wyvern’s eyes open, blue like the undead she had fought before. Its body was covered in black scales, bloody remains hanging from its large mouth.

Purple flames spread within the ice, the confines cracking and bursting out as the being roared.

***[Winged Death of the North – lvl ?????]***

*They caught a four mark?* she wondered, finding it close to one thousand, and seemingly just as stupid as a Bluetail as she watched it charge at her without a second thought.

She charged Archon strike and welcomed the open beak about her body’s size with a heavy punch.

The creature didn’t stop, arcane energy sizzling through its head as Ilea dodged above and onto its back. An explosion of heat vibrated through its head as she punched into its neck, charging heat all the while. A bed of ash fell onto the monster, set alight by the flames of creation a moment later.

Ilea was sent flying by a burst of death magic, a few layers of her ash decayed away by the magical blast. She moved her wings and landed about thirty meters away, sliding to a halt on the clear ice floor.

The flames were gone from its back as the creature turned and looked at her with dead eyes, its movements more apprehensive now before it formed a dozen small spheres of purple flames.

Ilea could see them come, stepping aside when the first sphere vanished and appeared behind her. The explosion cracked the ice, heat and death magic flashing out as she twirled and stopped, a bit of ash moving away from her shoulder and taking the brunt of the flames with her, the rest consumed by her own fires.

*If only my death magic resistance wasn’t maxed out yet,* she thought and glanced towards the two blue eyes within the walls. “I hope that’s not all this thing can do?” she taunted.

A giggling sound came from the wall as the rest of the spheres vanished.

Ilea simply crouched, her wings covering her front as the explosions flashed out around her. Blood dripped down and mixed with the melting ice as she stood up, her wings reforming, the wounds on her back and face healing. She grinned, the insides of her mouth visible. *Slowed healing from the*

*death magic?* she wondered, appreciating the slight challenge before she dodged to the side, having felt the beam of purple energy come at her.

It expanded, turning into a downright torrent the creature could hardly control.

Ilea avoided it, teleporting past and closer to the creature while holding out her arm. She watched it bring the beam back towards her when Embered Heart released in a bright cone towards the Wyvern's open maw. Heat and flames burned into its dead skin, as their spells collided, a bright explosion sending the creature back into the wall, Ilea reeling back as some of her mantle was brushed away, ashen limbs digging into the ground to stop her.

She pushed herself forward and smiled, her eyes focusing on the creature slowly standing up, its jaw hanging down where her beam had melted its skin. Arcane energy gathered in her fist as she walked towards it.