

## Chapter 680 Undying

Pierce giggled and jumped off, falling to one knee. “As you wish, great lord.”

Ilea displaced a nearby Skinner into her open palm, squishing it with her massive steel fingers. She threw the remains to the side, like a wrung out rag. “Is she fine?”

Verena’s vitals seemed to be doing alright according to her dominion enhanced healing, but she was taking a lot of hits, and the acid constantly melted her skin. Most of her clothes were gone too, her body covered in blood and flames.

“She’s just getting started,” Pierce said, appearing on a nearby chunk of rubble.

Ilea kept an eye on the fighting Elder but decided not to interfere. She instead changed her attention back to the priest.

It was slowly reforming its missing head and injured torso, a heavy steel fist interrupting the process.

Ilea knelt down on one knee and just kept punching, each hit sending tremors through the ground. Cracks formed and stone was shattered. The undead was first turned into mush, then powder as its remains mixed in with the debris. Only then did Ilea receive a notification.

***‘ding’ ‘Your group has defeated [Priest of the Blight Chosen – lvl 608]’***

She stood up and checked her arm, the steel neither dented nor scratched from the intense pummeling.

“You’re moving a little less awkward now,” Pierce said from the side, her armor back to normal as well.

“It feels... right,” the titan answered, her first raised.

“Hm...,” Pierce exclaimed, giving her a look.

“Are you aroused again, mortal?” Ilea asked, spreading her arms.

“No... not exactly,” Pierce mused and turned back to the slaughtering Verena.

Ilea squinted her eyes despite the steel in front of her, looking through the messages she had received.

***‘ding’ ‘The Faen Valkyrie has reached lvl 488 – One stat point awarded’***

*One. Need to find more of those fat titans,* she thought, ignoring the fact that she was even heavier at the moment.

Verena sunk her axe into the last of the moving creatures, cutting it apart with eighteen more strikes until only a few pieces remained. She looked up with glowing runes on her burning blood covered body, a broad disconnected grin on her face.

*Doesn’t seem fair to comment on that after my own performance,* Ilea thought and walked towards the woman.

“Give her a moment,” Pierce said.

Verena turned and crouched. She looked at Ilea with hungry eyes, her axes at the ready.

“Friend,” Ilea said and spread her arms wide.

The woman looked confused and hesitated. Steaming black blood dripped from her body, most of it burning away. “Friend?” she asked herself, looking to the floor before she glanced at her axes.

“Yes,” she added with a smile.

The others waited until Verena had cleaned herself with her flames, a fresh hide skirt and steel top appeared when she was done. “Ahh, that was good.”

“Got a level too,” Pierce said. “It’s so easy with this machine here to take out the most dangerous foes.”

Ilea grunted with a deep voice. She gestured to the others and continued towards the exit.

The tomb continued down into the depths, opened and empty graves lining the many corridors and halls, few of them holding and undead. Most seemed to have come up during their earlier battle. As they descended down moist stairwells and dark shafts, the group soon started to hear noises once again.

“Far enough away from the previous fight,” Verena said.

“Nothing in my sphere,” Ilea formed with ash.

They continued towards the noise for another ten minutes, Ilea’s armaments preventing them from moving particularly fast through the often cramped tunnels. She did feel like she was getting better at avoiding the ceiling and graves, only damaging every fourth one or so.

Ilea stopped the others with a gesture, starting to see groups of undead creatures at the edge of her dominion. “More spacious area ahead. Several titans,” she informed with floating ash, unable to make her voice changer particularly quiet. She took a few steps. “Priests too. And... something else. Looks more dangerous than any of the others.”

The Elders followed in silence.

“Cavern leading away,” Ilea formed, creating a rough copy of the tunnel layout with floating ash. Embers lit up where the three of them were located and then where the cavern seemed to lead out of the tomb.

“You’ll want to fight them,” Pierce said.

“Of course,” Ilea said after appearing on top of her armor. “But it might be too dangerous for you two. There are eight titans alone, and I’m pretty sure the Priests can heal the others with their death magic. Oh... one of the large ones just turned our way.”

“We’ll approach slowly once you’ve started. And we will get back and out of here if they’re too dangerous,” Pierce said.

“I’ll send you a warning if there’s mind magic at play that could take you out,” Ilea said, looking at Pierce. “Let’s get working then,” she added with a smirk, vanishing into her armaments.

“Go get them, titan,” Pierce said and stepped aside, a wide grin on her face.

“Don’t mind if I do,” the titan boomed and started towards the open hall full of undead.

Ilea saw magical lamps on the ceiling as she approached, the tunnel opening up into a spacious natural cave. The ground was laid with stone, a temple like structure built into the other side of the cavern. She could see nearly a hundred Skinners, eight Titans, and a few Priests, most of them barely moving around. The new variant of likely undead she could see were tall beings with thin elongated bodies. Their frail arms ended in clawed hands, their height reaching her armaments. They wore tattered cloaks covering their faces, the outline suggesting a barely recognizable mush of flesh below.

“Your reckoning has come,” her voice vibrated through the tunnel, the first rows of undead now turning her way, some already moving into a sprint.

Ilea came out into the open, moving past a few decrepit pillars and onto a balcony that overlooked the cave. Her legs smashed through the ancient stone railings without resistance. She spread her arms in the short flight, one foot landing on an unfortunate Skinner.

Its body exploded outwards with a wet sound. The titan above its remains stood up with a slow moving body. A rifle appeared in its hands as it aimed at the approaching horde.

The bright beam of flames cut into and through the mass of flesh, dozens of creatures falling apart, their limbs lost or bodies halved. The beam ended in one of the shuffling titans, a deep gash now spewing boiling fluids onto a group of undead and the shield of a Priest.

Ilea made her weapon disappear when she saw one of the large beings run to her, faster than anything its size had any right to be. *Time magic*, she saw, coupled with a spell that restricted her teleports. It would take some time to break through it, but she didn’t deem it the most difficult puzzle she had dealt with before.

The massive claws cut into her slow moving armor, digging several centimeters into her steel.

Ilea could see a few familiar schools of magic coming from the creature’s attack. *Soul and... devour*, she thought with a grin. *This might actually get interesting.*

**[Devourer – lvl ????] - [Undead]**

She tried to punch the creature but it simply moved aside with a fluid motion, the horde already closing in. *Near level one thousand.*

Ash formed all around her. Ilea set it alight with the flame of creation, sacrificing nearly twenty thousand health to empower the storm before she made it move out towards the undead horde. She held up her arm to block the clawed hands of the Devourer, its soul and devour magic not doing a whole lot with her outer defense intact.

The creatures screeched as the flames reached them, a chunk of them incinerated with a cone of flames that followed the burning ash.

Ilea watched a second Devourer run around the whole carnage before it dug its claws into her back. The third one joined half a second later.

“You will feel my wrath,” she said. *Three spells at once. A reasonable puzzle. At least only one is a four mark.*

Burning ash spread out, the large undead running back to avoid the floating element. Ilea crossed her arms when two Flesh Titans reached her, their bodies already showing burns when their skin started to bulge.

*Why don't you three come closer*, she thought and displaced the waiting Devourers in front of her. Ashen limbs lashed out to keep them in place as the titans exploded with steaming flesh. Ilea sacrificed another chunk of her recovered health and cast Embered Heart.

The titans were reduced to scorched bones, new flesh already forming around their skeletons.

Ilea watched the Devourers reel back, their bodies burnt and melted but quickly recovering, much like the titans. She could see death magic in the air. *The priests*, she thought when a sphere of flame flashed into the cave and exploded among the largest cluster of the undead clerics.

Their shields flared up and the death magic ceased. Lightning bolts hissed towards them as their attention shifted to the unknown beings. Their staffs raised, the priests summoned more Skinners, a few of the creatures already running towards the tomb.

Ilea switched gears, her reconstruction reversed and pushed to the limit. She topped off her health and stopped healing herself. The armaments would hold out for a little while, even without her support. She focused her destructive mana on the high level creatures around her, staying close to the regenerating Flesh Titans with more of them on the way. The flesh bombs were beneficial if anything.

She watched the creatures approach when her body froze up. Her lips quivered as she felt suggestive mind magic come from the three beings close to her. *Move*, she willed her body, pushing against the combined effort to overwhelm her. The mind magic wasn't guided or delicate, just a straight bombardment that suggested the enemy was terrifying.

It worked for a few seconds. The approaching titans puked their steaming flesh onto her armor as three Devourers dug into her arms and back. Parts of her steel limbs fell to the ground, the first claw on her back biting into her mantle of ash. She could feel the deeply unsettling touch of soul magic, a bit of her health devoured at the same time.

Ilea closed her eyes. *I should flee. I should figure out their spells and get out... get the others and...*, she watched the massive undead, their towering forms looking entirely too large. Their claws were cutting through her mantle now, more pieces of her armor missing, her steel chest and head melting away under the piles of burning flesh.

She could feel her heart beat. "No," she forced herself to say, the deep sound vibrating through the damaged unit in her side. A sphere of heat flared out, all the flesh on her burned away. Flame covered ashen limbs came out of her back, steel regenerating as the undead were cut apart, each of their strikes answered with five of her own. Ilea's weight was at the maximum, the next three uses of Embered Heart killing the five titans still close to her.

Her armor was near completely shredded through by now, her soul taking more damage. When her right arm had recovered to a usable degree, she summoned her rifle into it and aimed at the Devourer in front of her. She sent her spell into the Wyrms eye. The creature dodged out of the way, a field of space magic swallowing the glowing energy before it appeared next to the undead, its body sliced in half from its waist up.

She found the sequence and transferred out of her armaments, her weight decreasing once more. Ilea displaced herself behind the four mark Devourer and sent a fully charged Archon Strike into its spine. It wailed as the arcane magic wrecked through its body. Her burning ashen limbs cut into all three of them, more ash constantly forming and covering them in the flame of creation. Ilea's heat generation slowed down as her movements sped up.

"I'm not afraid," she said, still feeling the heavy pressure of their magic. "You are no more than the next horrors I will rip apart." Ilea dodged backwards. Each evasion allowing her to avoid the devastating soul magic. She sent a cone of heat forward. Her wings spread as she flew up.

The Devourers started floating, following her with quick time magic enhanced movements. The one she had split apart knitting itself back together.

Ilea created a few dozen spears, filling them with the remaining heat within her. She sent them down towards the Priests and Skinners. The impacts resounded as she dodged the claws that came for her. A few strikes hit, biting into her mantle and damaging her soul.

*You're just giving me more resistances*, she thought with a grin, her mind now pushing back against the pressure. The four beings flew through the cavern with increasing speed. Ilea got in more hits with each passing second. Her flames and reverse healing coupled with high level mana intrusion started overwhelming the regeneration of the three creatures.

Ilea kept an inner perceptive eye on her soul as she flew through the time enhanced strikes, her precognition and dominion allowing her to avoid most of the attacks. The ones that hit barely cut into her mantle. Their powerful magic was the only card they still had against her but she was past backing down. Body of the Valkyrie reduced not only their physical damage but all of their magic as well. Despite the Devourers' magical affinity, time happened to be in her favor.

She appeared behind the lowest leveled one, six strikes hitting its spine before it could turn. Magic surged up and through its battered body. Ilea transferred past their teleportation blocking spells and behind the next of them. She saw the first Devourer fall, slapping to the ground fifteen meters down. *No notification*, she thought but focused on the others. Their mind magic turned out to be a welcome source of mana, Ilea not willing to risk more soul magic damage to use her Sentinel Core absorption.

The second one fell to her white flames, leaving only the four mark in front of her. She sped up and teleported past its claws, her fists striking its chest with expanding magic explosions. Tempered seal followed as her limbs cut into its arms, pushing them aside as it tried to attack. She moved her wings, swinging around its head as she held on to its hood. Stable and in the air, she struck down, her hand digging into its neck before Embered Heart released. The blast incinerated a part of its head, spreading out its torso. Smoldering flesh remained within, slowly knitting itself back together.

Ilea's ash moved in, the whole creature now covered in white flames. She grabbed on to the two strips of remaining flesh and pushed down her ashen boot, ripping the whole thing into three pieces. No message resounded once more but this time she noticed a dull magical connection that flickered out, its source within the stone temple.

She landed amongst the corpses, pushing them together before she sent another blast of Embered Heart onto them. This time they were entirely incinerated.

The remaining priests and Skinners had moved closer to the tomb, their undead bodies shredded through by the ashen healer in mere seconds. She ignored the two slow moving Titans for now, their legs gone as they crawled towards her. Instead, she went to the temple. Her mark on Verena showed her higher up in the tomb, likely fighting their way back while chased by Skinners.

Ilea found an expansive hall with rotted wooden benches and chairs inside the stone structure. A single ceremonially placed grave on a central altar. It was empty. She ignored that one for now and checked the three closed sarcophagi. Bones rested within, powerful death magic forming close to their rib cages.

Ilea displaced the remains out into the open. She raised her hand above the pile and released Embered Heart.

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Devourer – lvl 928]’***

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Devourer – lvl 893]’***

***‘ding’ ‘You have defeated [Devourer – lvl 1020]’***

More messages dinged in her mind, a grin spreading on her face when she realized they didn't stop. She checked the room again, a little apprehensive at the empty grave but neither her Huntress spell nor her dominion picked anything up at this point. The two titans were the only sources of magic in the vicinity.

She cracked her neck and appeared outside. Her armaments looked battered. The left arm was gone entirely, most of the chest melted away, the head cut apart by hundreds of sharp incisions. It was remarkable that the thing was still standing. She transferred herself inside and started repairing it, heat and mana flowing through the living armor as her eyes locked on to the Titans.

Her weight increased, her sight cut off when the steel of her helmet regenerated. *A shame you can't seem to repair your legs*, she thought and walked towards the creatures. *Let's finish this.*

Ilea thundered through the tomb, each step sending tremors through the walls until she broke out into a broader room.

Verena stood covered in black blood on a mountain of undead corpses, Pierce lying nearby with ragged breath and the occasional spark of lightning flowing over her body. Her armor was ripped to shreds.

“Well done,” she said, realizing that the Elders didn't hear anything. She transferred out and sighed. “Already broken,” Ilea murmured. She raised the heavy steel arm and looked at the entirely smooth metal below. *At least the weakness is gone.*

“Do we flee?” Pierce asked, her head slightly turned towards the massive chunk of steel.

“No. But I do need to take a break,” Ilea said, teleporting onto the armament's shoulder before she summoned herself a bottle of celebratory ale.