

Chapter 844 Who we are

Ilea flew as fast as she could, towards the stationary form of the humanoid manifestation of lightning, wind, and storm. Burning spears appeared around her, shooting out and struck by lightning, sent astray by gusts of wind. Teleporting from a dozen blasts of blue, she summoned from the Azarinth Star a slew of golden shields, to protect her for just a moment.

Her hammer appeared in her hand before she threw the weapon, teleporting once again when a wall of air came from above, slamming down and shattering the earth. A beam of chaotic heat flared out as a silver threaded hammer was sent flying with sparks of lightning. The white flames struck an invisible wall, burning ash joining the assault against the insurmountable magic of her opponent.

The longer she fought, the higher her resilience would become. The best strategy would be to stall, to stay defensive, to let the creature think it was just as superior as it surely thought itself. But this was not a battle for survival. It had recognized her, had learned her name, and shared its own. They were two beings in this world, their battle happening within a nondescript valley far into the North. And yet it was everything.

She would not try and garner some strategic advantage, or get help to fight alongside her. This was her fight, and she would not hold back.

Blue runes lit up along her ash, the lightning striking down no longer stripping her of ash and burning through her flesh. Her body was pushed to the limit, all to match this monster before her. Ilea rushed forward, moving faster. She impacted the burning wall, her Archon Strike exploding against the magic before her, setting everything alight. A teleport brought her behind the being, burning ash and punches slamming into its defense. She didn't stop, unable to put herself within the complex framework protecting the Wind of Aveer.

Once more her heat rushed out, air set alight as she withstood the torrents pushing against her flying form. A dozen lightning strikes came down, her runes glowing bright as she kept up her assault. More teleports followed, the being shrouded now, in a sphere of white flames. A pulse came, lightning rushing out from the creature at the center, Ilea sent flying through the air as she deactivated her fourth tier. Residual lightning traveled through her, released from her arm as she healed herself with her third tier Reconstruction.

She watched her fires push into the walls of air, the two eyes of the Elemental watching her from beyond.

Then she saw two broad wings of webbed blue lightning come into existence. They thrummed with magic, heat, and vibrant light. The Elemental flew up and then towards her, pushed by the very air around them, and brimming with lightning.

Ilea flew as fast as she could but the being was faster, catching up to her even when she made distance with her Fabric Tear. A blast of raw lightning came from its outstretched arm, shattering golden shields and ash, Ilea gasping when the energies flowed through her form. She raised her arm towards the being mere meters away from her, the lightning redirected back at it.

She felt her veins burst at the flowing energies, the Elemental slapping away the attempted redirection before it aimed at her again. It sent a gust of wind at the approaching Silent Memory, but the hammer vanished, appearing instead above, moved by Ilea's Fabric Tear as she formed two

gates. One in front of her and one next to the Elemental. Her mark in Iz was gone. She would not summon Aki to this battle.

Its next spell was sent through the fabric and back at itself, giving Ilea precious time to recover. She saw the silver threads struggle against the walls of air, lightning flowing in and through her adversary, with little to no impact. It reached up and sent the hammer flying with a blast of wind.

Ilea was gone, appearing as far away as she could, forming ash and heat, her wounds healed as she absorbed copious amounts of mana from the lightning spells and the potent magic all around.

The Elemental did not follow. Instead it looked her way. And time, slowed once again.

Ilea saw two walls of bright light within her dominion. One to her left, and one to her right. They reached far, both up and to each side. And they were already there, nearly touching her very form. She didn't know if either of her teleports would move her far enough beyond the walls of air, and she certainly was not fast enough to go up, forward, or back in time to avoid them. Instead she summoned a gate right next to her, connected to where she had sent the Elemental's spell just a moment prior. She wasn't fast enough to actually move into the gate, but was pushed by the incoming wall. Her wings were severed and one of her legs was twisted as it hadn't been positioned perfectly.

A boom resounded through the valley, a ringing coming to her ears before the shock wave hit her. Neither her regenerating wings nor her resistances could protect her as she was flung aside by the ridiculous force. Ilea impacted the side of the wall, breaking stone in the process as she strained to see the impact of the Elemental's spell. She coughed a few seconds later, when the pressure lessened, hearing dull cracking sounds as an entire section of a mountain came loose and fell into the valley. Not one valley now, but two, slightly offset with the second one produced by the monstrous piece of magic.

'ding' 'You have survived the Twin Walls spell – One Core skill point awarded'

"Beautiful," she muttered as she flew up yet again, finding the Elemental near a hundred meters away. Its near ten meter height felt more imposing now, the wings near twice as large, more than ten times that of her own.

The mountain side was barely halfway to the ground when the creature moved again, closing the distance in mere moments.

Ilea didn't miss a beat. She teleported and sent out ash, pushed to the defensive not to gain an advantage, but out of necessity. Her spells were flung aside or outright ignored, burning away at the Elemental's form. Three quick close range blasts of lightning cracked her shields and shred away her mantle, her healing pushed to the limits before a gust of wind followed, sending her tumbling through the air as she tried to heal her burnt insides and her twisted joints.

She saw the Elemental catch up with her spinning form, Ilea teleporting and healing before the creature once more closed the distance. Air coalesced and punched downwards, sending her into the ground where she impacted with stone shattering momentum. Another gust followed when her wings twitched, shaking what remained of her organs. The third gust kept her down. She could see through one regenerating eye, the gathering dark clouds far above the valley, heard from one ear the low rumbling thunder.

The Elemental raised its arms and the world turned white again. Lightning roared in an unending maelstrom of true power, impacting Ilea's downed form.

For the third time, Ilea's perception slowed down. She knew the spell would not outright vaporize her, and compared to the first time she had seen it, the impact was considerably lessened. Still, it was enough to kill her, if she lay there and took it.

Primordial Shift activated, sheltering her within a framework of her own. Fleshy tendrils and white flame pushed against the unending energies unleashed to destroy her. Ilea screamed, she pushed her magic, her fires, ash, and her barriers.

I will survive, and then I will punch the ever living shit out you. She said the words in her mind as she focused on her spells, her framework wavering against the stream of lightning. She absorbed all the mana that she could, with all the spells that allowed her so. The shift was burned aside, her eyes burst as she looked up, her teeth gritted as she felt her very form disintegrated by lightning.

And yet she stood, summoning another gate above herself to alleviate the damage. She aimed to take in a deep breath but there was no air to be had.

When the spell ended, and the ground was glowing and flame covered, Ilea spread her wings and flew up, locking eyes with the Elemental as her flame burst back to life. The switch in her mind returned. Her spell was ready.

This is getting fun, she thought and cracked her neck, her smile wide and her renewed eyes focused.

This time she did not avoid the being. The arcane surged within her, pushing her, elevating her. Fires and waves of arcane energy clashed with air and lightning. Mana came and went as she punched and teleported, the two beings flying through the burning and destroyed valleys, impacts resounding from the falling rocks.

Reconstruction burned away at the Elemental as its defenses were eaten by intrusion and the Flame of Creation. For the first time in the battle, Ilea felt like she was on the offensive. Trading blows instead of merely surviving. Each impact sent shock waves outwards, fires and lightning burst to life and searing into each of their forms. Ilea, in this brief moment, felt as if she could flatten mountains, as if she could burn the seas. She felt her heart beat within her chest, the arcane flowing through her veins. Her punch connected, a wave of destructive healing searing into the remnants of a wall, shredding away at the defense as she summoned a gate to deflect another blast of lightning.

She looked aside and saw her hammer, twirling in the air as it came flying down. She raised her arm and gripped it with her Space Manipulation, flinging it towards the Elemental as a beam of heated fires met a blast of wind, sending an explosion over both herself and her enemy, neither of them pushed back, instead moving forward to exchange yet another blow.

Ilea watched her hammer grapple against the mist like form, barely protected by the winds. She wanted to push further when she felt something within her precognition. Once again her shift activated, the two walls of wind slamming together from each side. Too fast for her to react, her teleportation irrelevant at the sheer scope of the Fourth tier spell.

The shift bent and cracked, the very fabric pressed together as her mana was quickly depleted. Ilea ended the Fourth tier before she ran out, keeping the Shift active and activating her golden shield around her. Her defenses cracked and neither her teleportation nor her gate activated as she was wedged between the walls, unable to decipher the framework and remove herself from it. She felt the pressure as her eyes burst from her skull, her bones ground and broken one by one as the pressure kept up, unimpeded.

Something burst to life right when she knew her mind would fade. Flesh grew where there was no space, the fabric itself moving to protect her from the incomparable pressure of the two walls. She

remained broken within a trembling cocoon of flesh and space, gritting her teeth as the Elemental's Fourth tier spell continued.

She could not let it happen. There were more monsters out there. More challenges. What of her next fourth tier spell, what of her next evolution. What of the Architect and his plans?

Ilea found the questions to ring hollow. Reasons she thought were relevant. Reasons she had given to herself. She grinned, as well as she could with all the flesh growing from her face and neck.

I don't want this fight to end, she thought to herself when the pressure finally lessened, her mana regenerating with meditation as she healed her wracked form, ashen limbs cutting her out of the protective growth of flesh. *This is way too enjoyable.*

Light returned when she fought her way out of the growths, her mantle reforming on her body as her bones cracked back into shape. Wings formed on her back before she ascended, seeing the Elemental finally send the hammer flying, the silver form impacting the nearby mountain side before it rushed back at the Wind of Aveer.

This dance is far from over.

Ilea smiled and rushed forward. No being had infinite mana, not even an Elemental. She knew that retreating here was the safe option. Waiting for her defensive cooldowns to recover, and facing the creature once again when she was ready. It was the sensible option.

But she couldn't do it.

She was here. She was alive.

What was the point if she did not push further right here? If she did not fight?

"If I don't return. Tell everyone I went out with a boom," Ilea sent to the Meadow, and with it the joy she felt.

White flame burned on her form when she saw the Elemental turn her way, its eyes wide before she impacted the remnants of its defenses. Punches and ashen limbs slammed against the air, lightning spells refueling her mana as her body refused to give in, more resilient against the monster's spells. She teleported when lightning rained down from above, arcane energies mingling with sparks of lightning. She now saw pulsing blue light between the fog of the Elemental's form. Not that of lightning, but that of arcane.

It blasted her with more spells but the impacts were less focused, less frequent. She teleported after the being when it tried to make distance with its wings, her space manipulation slowing it. More punches came down as her mana continued to recover. Her enemy kept its spells coming, but it seemed its ability to regenerate its form was far less potent than hers.

Ilea landed in front of the creature when it fell to one knee, looking at her with white flames eating away at its fog like form, blue eyes of lightning meeting hers, the kneeling creature still far taller than her.

She hesitated, seconds passing as they locked eyes.

"Do not falter now... in the face of the end. I have waited for millennia, and today once more, I have found meaning. Do not deny me death, for I will not hesitate," the Elemental spoke.

Ilea watched as the being rose once more, sparks of lightning spreading out, pushing against the arcane and searing the very air around it. The winds were gone but its wings spread wide and

thrummed with power. Lightning surged in the clouds above, slamming down into the being with a bright flash near instantaneous. It stood, one arm limp to its side.

“I am the Wind of Aveer, that which rests atop the northern peaks,” it spoke as its power surged once more, a pulse of mana rushing out. *“Come now, and meet thine end.”*

Ilea watched the surging storm of lightning come towards her. She raised her arm as bright blue runes came to life. Taking in a deep breath, she released a charged push of her space manipulation. The impact slowed the creature, gold and blue shields deflecting parts of the surging lightning. She flew up and charged her fists with as much mana as she could, rushing down into the remaining wall of air. An explosion of arcane healing broke through the shield, shredding into the creature right before she impacted the ground in front of it. Ilea raised her palm towards the Wind of Aveer. A beam of heated fire shot out, punching a hole through the Elemental’s chest as a wave of burning ash rolled down from above, engulfing it in blazing fire.

She raised her chin and watched the mists fade away, eyes of lightning dimming with every passing moment. Ilea opened her eyes wide when she felt another push, a roar coming with it as the Elemental rose one last time, its working arm shrouded in lightning as its burning form crashed down on her.

Ilea met it, Archon Strike and Tempered Seal exploding outwards and against the searing sparks. Her Fourth tier took the hit as she prepared for another strike.

But instead she saw the dissipating mists, the Elemental lying before her, much of its massive form already gone, the rest engulfed in flame. Its eyes had vanished, the remainder of its magic returning to the air and stone itself.

A ding resounded in her mind as she took a step back, unwilling to turn off her spell, in case the creature was somehow still alive.

Was it the end?

She had won, had she not?

And yet she felt, hollow, in a way.

Ilea smiled to herself, still feeling the arcane magic burning away at her health. *Because the fight is over. That is why.*

She shook her head as her Fourth tier faded, a little confused at everything. Why didn’t she flee? What about her friends, her allies, all the people that relied on her? She could’ve avoided some of the danger. Should have avoided it.

But you stayed. And you won. She looked at her fist and opened it. Sunlight broke through above the vales, the dark clouds dissipating with the death of the Storm Elemental.

Things are a little more complex now, but I suppose I can’t change who I am.

Ilea looked up at the northern skies and took in a deep breath.

She turned and raised her brows at the glowing aftermath of their battle. The entire valley looked different. As if a meteorite had crashed down onto the land.

She cracked her neck and rolled her shoulders, flying up before she landed on a large chunk of jagged heated rock. “Fucking hell,” she muttered to herself.

“I’m hungry.”