

Chapter 410 Taking Flight

Ilea nearly choked on a prawn when she read through the new description. *Holy shit that's cool.*

She hurriedly formed her wings and started experimenting, finding her ability to change and form them just as proficient as her normal control of ash.

There were limits of course. Her wings couldn't be two dicks for example, something she thought rather funny. Neither could they be massive hands or enlarged copies of her head. They had to stay wings.

Otherwise, she could apparently go nuts. A feathery form and then one of a more leathery design. Angel and demon in respect, both formed by ash and thus lacking some of the iconic touch they would normally possess.

Ilea found she could even change the size, though not by very much. *Hmm, funny.*

She admired the new addition to her back. A tail of ash growing out where her spine ended. This one too she could form and change a little.

I'll have to think of a theme. Draconic maybe? Hmm... a little too conventional, isn't it? Yet I've killed Wyverns and Drakes already. I do like feathers too and the ashen ones do look pretty cool, she mused, looking at the changing form.

They seemed to flow and grow seamlessly into her armor. By now she looked more like a being of ash than a human. *Ash fiend, or well, Kin of Ash I suppose.* She chuckled and tried out some other forms, one more akin to a fighter jet from Earth. It felt very much out of place in the setting as well as unwieldy.

Bone wings were another option, missing a lot of area, rotten and dead. They still worked actually but while the magic was still active, Ilea was sure the missing chunks would still affect her movement. Just as her healing needed longer to regenerate a whole arm compared to a simple arrow wound despite the theoretically same health point recovery.

She jumped up and did a somersault, using her new tail to guide her movement. *What?*

This time she jumped higher, moved her wings twice before rushing down to the small ledge. The difference wasn't just noticeable, it felt like day and night.

The flavor text didn't lie, hmm? She thought to herself. *Did I really think I could fly? Well why would I have doubted myself? I could keep up with flying creatures, could hunt and kill them. But this...*

The movement had changed. Speed and precision as if she was fighting something hand to hand, now applied to her flight. Her wings had already been superior in some ways but now she doubted there ever was a reason to remain on the ground if there was enough space. She had to get in close either way of course.

Well. She landed and changed the shape of her wings again to a more aggressive design, spikes and straight lines gave it a pseudo futuristic feel while still somewhat fitting the magic creatures all around. *Hmm, not perfect but I like it.*

A decision would be difficult but Ilea didn't exactly have to make one. The change was near instant, just as she would form and move an ashen limb. Force of habit and some level of comfort would keep her moving on the ground, that much she knew. She knew just as much that flying didn't feel like a novelty anymore, something she should not be able to do, only achieved through the magic of this world.

No. Now, she felt in control. As if she always had wings to traverse the skies, to move through and feel the air around her. Like a bird of prey that was born inside a cage, finally freed and allowed to spread its wings, to let instinct take over.

It's not just the tail, is it? She wondered, finding it rather easy to move the new appendage. Easier even than her ashen limbs that felt mostly natural to her by now. Her control remained even after she twirled up her tail near her lower back. At least mostly. It did add a noticeable increase to her dexterity but her wings themselves too felt different.

Oh wait, I also have a speed up thing, she thought and instinctively activated the part of her skill.

It took a couple seconds for the aspect to activate. She felt how energy permeated the powerful wings on her back, heavier now than a moment before, brimming with light in the sight of her sphere.

She shot off when they were ready, her enhanced body coupled with a second tier wind resistance easily ignoring the forces pushing against her as she sped through the layer, flying several hundred meters above the creatures prowling below.

Ilea reached the other end in less than a minute, unsure of how fast exactly she had flown. Trying to stop the skill caused a bit of a problem when she realized it had a wind down too. She spread her wings to slow down but the momentum was simply too much, crashing her into the rock on the other side of the layer. Her form cracked the stone and dug deep but she found little damage to either her armor or the body within.

I could use this to attack, just fucking slam into things, she thought and chuckled as she ripped herself free of the stone prison around her.

Just have to make sure I'm harder than anything I hit. If she were being honest, even that wouldn't matter much with her regeneration. She laughed at the thought of a powerful being, hit suddenly by a fast moving human that splattered all over them. *Also a way to go, I suppose.*

I could become an ashen drill or just form a spike before I fling myself at targets, Ilea pondered. Her limbs moving around her like Shredders with the initial torque and power from a massive drill could seriously damage any oversize beasts. The Veramath wouldn't have stood a chance like that, Ilea immediately punching into its brain like a human sized bullet.

She could see it then. *Ilea, the regenerating human cannonball. Feared attraction. In a circus now because every monsters had already been taken out.*

Perhaps she was a little too ambitious but the idea at least had merit. With her steadily increasing ash control and density, she could do with it whatever she wanted. The drill spears already proved more than just usable, taking out level six hundred monsters in single strikes, albeit hitting their weak spots. The shredder imitation, now more akin to a bladed armor took out creatures capable of using time magic to freeze her perception.

Aiming it is going to be hard though, she thought and frowned. There really was a sharp decline in control as soon as the speed boost activated, barely any correction possible. It would have a tiny impact, let alone at that insane velocity.

I guess I'll have enough opportunities to test it. The charge time alone would make it unsuitable against most enemies already engaged.

She invested her ten stat points into Wisdom yet again. The fact that her third tier wings barely made a dent in her stamina just drove home again how insane her offensive mana spending really was. Ilea could really use every single bit she could get.

At some point she would have to think about her Dexterity and Strength again, both falling behind heavily. There were reasons for that of course and the upgrade to her wings would surely compensate a little for the lack of dexterity. As would her powerful mana intrusion and ash unity compensate for a lack of strength.

Mana intrusion remained her main weapon coupled with her ashen limbs and projectiles. She doubted her Strength stat had more impact on the physical power of her spears and blades than Intelligence. Destruction additionally had a physical aspect that compensated rather well for her comparatively low strength.

More resistances as well as skill levels in her manipulation and creation abilities would also mean that she would more and more rely on her ash to deliver the physical aspect of her damage. Mana intrusion was versatile and many had little to defend against it but she had to have an alternative ready in case something showed up with a high defense.

She marveled at her wings once more, moving the tail as she twirled in the air. *If only I had a more thorough ranged arsenal and a focus on such skills. Being able to fly like this would bring me to a similar ability as the Griffin, able to play with their enemies without ever touching them.*

Of course that wasn't her style and she didn't truly want that to change that. A mix was welcome though and with the increasing power in her ash, she could certainly already stand her ground against flying and ranged contenders of a similar level. Monsters that was. Perhaps even sapient creatures with less powerful classes, considering her high regeneration and the low cost of her ash creation and control.

"We'll see, I suppose," she murmured to herself and once more focused on the task at hand. The complete eradication of the corrupted monsters.

Beautiful!

The thought reached her mind and reminded her of the Fae that had been watching everything from a safe distance, both the fighting and now her flight evolution.

"You think so?" Ilea asked with a smile. "I think so too," she added and spread her dark wings with a futuristic pseudo feather design before she rushed down, eyes peeled to find another unsuspecting group of monsters.

Hana held her breath as they came up on the destroyed camp. She could smell the corruption and venom, as if it was permeating the very air.

Relly had bent a somewhat intact armor piece to his liking. One they had found on a dead sorcerer an hour prior. It now covered a large part of his chest, protecting some vitals.

A useless effort, she thought. If one of the creatures struck him there, it would make little difference. And still he had donned it, had smirked with a glint of pride. *Ridiculous. Such confidence in the face of certain death. I can only follow suit*, Hana thought with a broad grin on her own reptilian face.

Carul was less enthusiastic about their endeavors. He hid them well, so far no creature had found them past his magic cloak. His opinion on the misguided suicidal idiotic and prideful wish to deal with the corruption was less of a mystery. The dark one reminded them often of his thoughts and still he had remained.

Of course he does, Hana thought and glanced back at the creature. *He is dead just like we are and if there is a glimpse of survival, it is with the help of others.*

She had been surprised at the lack of complaining coming from Jonna. The woman wasn't exactly known to be so quiet during any of their missions. And yet here she barely spoke a word. Hana could smell the fear emanating from her, could see it in her human eyes. An understandable emotion, especially from someone of such a weak species.

She had to remind herself that it was a human who bested her last, not one of a noble and respected line of Dark Ones or Feynor. Yet she knew well that one outlier didn't change the ways of the world. The only reason humans hadn't been overrun by anything else was their high numbers, their powerful defenses and enchantments as well as an ability to work in formations that few others could match.

Hana knew this to be the truth, many respectable warrior confirming it. Some lesser educated creatures simply laughed at the poor essence in the human plains, their territory undesirable and unwanted but like so often, the truth was more complicated. It was the respectable warriors after all that had driven her out after she had defended herself. *Savages, truly.*

They were silent as they reached the last gate before the camp. Hana remembered when they had entered, an enchanter amongst them having disabled the magic placed on it. Activated once more after they had entered and built their camp within the expansive halls.

Now the gate was open, pried through by powerful claws and fangs. A testament to the monsters' strength, knowing her own sword couldn't even scratch the steel.

"What do you see?" Relly asked, turning to the mage among them.

His magic pulsed out before he lowered his head a little. "Four beings, yet I feel they are not the same as the scorpions or worms. Each feel different in their own way, yet the same."

"Corrupted," Relly hissed as he prepared his chains. "We move in together and attract them. Carul, if you can, make sure nothing hears the commotion. We deal with them as quickly as possible."

Hana nodded and so did Jonna.

"You and me at the front, Jonna, you focus on healing," the huge saurian said. "Do not back down, we will be victorious. Let us free the ones taken, for the honor of those awakened!"

Hana followed him, activating her buffs as she prepared her blade. The camp lay in shambles, most tents and crates destroyed, corrupted corpses littering the even floor. She saw four figures moving towards the new commotion, humanoid shapes and one of them quite familiar.

“Fuck,” she murmured, seeing Krentin’s form float towards them. Dark magic pooled around him as he prepared his spells. “That one’s mine,” she said, preparing to teleport.

“Do not split up. Trust in our healer and deal with the close ranged creatures first. We move back to cover should they overwhelm us!” Relly stopped her, his chains lashing out with unnatural speed before they spun around the legs of two running corrupted. One once a dwarf, wielding two large axes and the other one a heavily armored dark one wielding a large scythe of shadow.

[Warrior – lvl ???]

[Mage – lvl ???]

Their levels are higher, their classes merged perhaps, Hana thought, slamming her sword into the thick plate armor as soon as Relly had pulled them close.

Magic pulsed from him as lightning flowed through the chains, burning up the dark ones connected to them.

Hana’s blade did not bring lightning onto herself, the two had tested such hours prior.

She found her weapon wedged in the armor, using her full weight to punch through. A familiar dark bolt flashed past her head as she dodged. Krentin was in range. What remained of him at least.

Hana roared and slammed the tangled up dark one to the ground, using both of her fists to slam down on her own weapon, trusting that her own steel would prevail.

And so it did. The massive curved blade cut through the already damaged armor and bit into the corrupted flesh.

She grinned before the mage moved his scythe. Hana dodged twice before the magic weapon cut into her side, leaving a deep gash with a foul smell. At least no corruption seemed to spread, otherwise she might have been in trouble.

A teleport brought her back to Jonna, the healer quickly getting to work.

“Keep an eye out, there is another mage hiding somewhere,” Relly said with a strained voice, using all his magical ability to keep the two monsters at bay, his chains still crapped around their legs. Another pulse of lightning moved through them, flickers of blue light zapping at the destroyed tents and the steel floor before the spell reached the corrupted bodies.

Jonna suddenly turned away from Hana, her fist slamming into something previously unseen. A dagger scratched on the stone armor that covered most of her body. Another punch lashed out, the impact unveiling the remaining mage who had been mostly invisible before.

His eyes pulsed with corruption, a large whole in his chest barely held together by the orange pus.

Hana watched as her friend punched an earthen spike into the open wound, using her full weight and large form to overwhelm the corrupted mage, pinning him down on the floor as the corruption splattered over her.

The stone sizzled but she continued punching, her fist slamming the mage’s head into the steel again and again.

Relly wrapped one of his chains around the large two handed blade still stuck in one of their enemies, ripping it out with a violent noise before he sent it flying towards Hana.

“I will hold them back, finish the mage!” the saurian said as his chain lashed around to strike at the slow moving scythe wielder.

Hana caught the blade and appeared next to Hana, her body bulging as power flowed through her. The blade came down with a heavy crash, embedding itself in the mage’s neck before a powerful two handed strike from Jonna made it cleave through the rest.

A ding resounded in her mind but there was no time for that right now. She retrieved the blade and ripped out small sections of her own scales, infected with corruption. Hana could feel it burn into her flesh but by now her Blood Manipulation Resistance was already at level thirteen.

She signaled to Jonna that she was fine, watching the woman shed her stone armor covered in corruption. New armor formed on her slowly as she went to support Relly.

The saurian was now dodging through the attacks of the two corrupted, as well as avoiding the dark magic coming from Krentin’s remains. He weaved through them as if they were newborn, not yet used to their claws and weapons.

Hana smirked at that and appeared on his side, blocking the axes with a strike of her own. She roared, her body bulging a little more. “We will not die here!” she shouted her defiance, her voice somewhat silenced by the magic of Carul. She cared not for such matters right now, her sole focus the corrupted warrior standing in her way.