

Chapter 835 Mind

Ilea nodded along as Trian retold one of his adventures. She laughed when he mentioned eating the eyes of the four limbed being he had killed with his bright magic. The tentacles in his face writhed as he too laughed.

It felt nice. To be among friends. To know she was appreciated. How far had she come? To go out into the seas of Kohr, to fight monsters, to finally reach the fourth tier. A time for celebration, for relaxation.

Claire was there too, as was Eve, the friend she had thought dead. But of course she wasn't. She had just hidden herself away, finally giving up on her wish to find and hunt the Golden Lily. Now they were all here, all with the Meadow.

But the Meadow isn't here?

She looked around but it really was missing. Strange. Maybe it had learned how to move out of its domain. Ilea giggled, thinking about the tree walking around with crystalline roots, arcane lightning striking down from above as it looked for creatures to awaken.

Her ashen limbs lashed out at her friends but the attacks left no mark on them. That seemed right. Why would she attack her friends in the first place?

Violence?

A voice reached her mind and she turned to see the small fae, floating with its head cocked to the side.

Ilea wanted to greet it but her voice failed her. She used telepathy instead.

"I'm glad you're here too," she sent, a pleasant smile on her face as her friends tried to hug the Fae with their fleshy limbs.

It teleported around to avoid their touch. Violence did like to play around.

Mind

Trapped

Escape

"Your mind is trapped?" Ilea wondered. She worried for a moment, trying to heal the creature with her Reconstruction. But she found nothing wrong with it.

They all sped up for a moment, the surrounding darkness moving faster for a few seconds before they slowed again, coming to a standstill.

Your

Mind

"My mind?" Ilea asked, slightly confused. But then the Fae was often not too clear with its explanations. It seemed distressed however. *"What's wrong?"* She asked. Her friends were here. They were safe in the Domain of the Meadow, protected from any kind of danger. But Violence was

scared. Had she ever heard it that worried? Something was wrong, but she couldn't put her finger on it.

Again her ash lashed out, walls around her forming and breaking for some reason.

Her perception slowed, she could tell the spike came from Eternal Sight. *Which means I'm about to take a hit for half my health or my mind is about to be incapacitated.* The thought was confusing to say the least, but Ilea knew to trust her skills more than anything. Her friends were in danger. She was in danger. And she didn't know why.

Immediately, she activated the third tier of her Azarinth Barrier, the necklace glowing a bright gold but the shield didn't form. In turn she activated her Fourth tier to take the incoming damage to her mana instead of her health, she healed her friends through the excess mana she channeled into the Azarinth Star and equipped them with layers of her mantle as fast as she could. Right before the spike of her perception ended, Primordial Shift activated.

The space around her distorted, the white flames flaring up when she saw the blue and gold barrier all around. The telepathic connection she had to her friends vanished, as did the healing magic going out from her amulet. Confusingly, her friends vanished entirely, as did the domain of the meadow. She saw a distorted dark being with a few dozen limbs all around, embracing the round golden barrier laced with blue runes. A confusing sight, one she found that hurt her mind. The arcane magic in her body was pushed to the limit by her fourth tier, the golden barrier cracking under the weight of the many limbs.

Ilea looked down on herself. She was hurt. Much of her ash was gone. She felt poison in her body, wreaking havoc. Her mind felt sluggish. Her right arm was missing, ripped off at some point.

Strange.

Her health was low, her fourth tier eating up more as its mana kept up the barrier and Primordial Shift.

Her headache built.

I should.

I should get out of here.

Something is wrong.

That thing is not my friend.

I'm dying.

The barrier shook and splintered into nothing, Ilea teleporting out right before the many limbs crashed down on her. The fourth tier vanished and healing flowed through her entire form, her missing arm regenerating as the headache vanished. She gasped, her lungs already filled with water. Her eyes opened wide when she found only darkness before her.

She was fighting the monster. In Kohr. Was she not?

"Violence!" She sent out, hoping the fae was still around.

She looked out to feel her ashen copies but they were gone. *Did they try to get me out?*

Violence!

Ilea

Safe?

“What happened?” she asked, teleporting to avoid the strikes of the fast approaching monster.

Spell

Ilea

Stopped

Fighting

“I was...” she tried to remember what had happened but she found her mind blank. The thought was strange. *Didn't I just?*

She thought about leaving to catch both her breath and her thoughts but instead she grit her teeth. She wasn't about to flee. The fight was still going on, and the longer she fought this monster, the better she could deal with its attacks. She had already figured out its magic absorption, and she had experienced its poison, several times it seems.

Her eyes went wide.

“Its fourth tier spell. Mind magic? Did it wipe out my mind in an instant? It didn't target you?” she sent to the Fae.

Spell

Yes

Mind

Hidden

She calmed herself for a few seconds, teleporting continuously as her wings pushed her speed to the limit, the monster following in perfect silence, water parting for both of them as they moved in the depths. Two monsters. *Close. This could have been the end.* A wicked grin came to her face. *And yet I'm still here.*

“Neat trick. Both that spell and yours as well. Any clue on how I can avoid being knocked out myself?” Ilea asked.

You

Alive

“Don't fuck with me now,” Ilea sent before vanishing again. She teleported twice to get more distance between herself and the creature. Its constant barrage of terrifying visions were a little more bearable now, almost like a background noise, albeit one she constantly had to counter with her healing and meditation. It remained painful, but at least that sensation seemed to trigger the third tier of Pain Tolerance. She was focused on the fight. *“I might have survived but I don't know if I can do it again. If you have any tricks, tell me.”*

Only

Fae

Ilea dodged again. Her third tier would soon become available again, but she didn't know if she should engage. *How long until it can use the spell again.*

"If I can't use it, then I need to understand its spell. Tell me what happened," she said.

Ash

Attack

Defend

Mind

Didn't

Conscious

Tricked!

Ilea tried to make sense of the words. She knew her ash could act on its own when her mind was taken out. She trusted it, but she didn't know what had pulled her out in the end. She remembered being in the Primordial shift, remembered the gold and blue barrier, the fourth tier. *"Did you feel it, when it used its spell?"*

Yes

"I see. Warn me next time, just in case. I don't remember it," Ilea said, forming several spheres of ash, imbuing them yet again. *Circle around my head if my mind is taken out.* There was a chance it wouldn't help, but if the Fae thought she was conscious, maybe she would at least remember the command she had given her ash.

Ilea felt the monster charge. And this time she met it. Blue runes lit up to join her fires, a heavy impact sending water out and away despite the heavy pressure of the deep. She didn't move, instead pushing forward where she slammed enhanced punches into the creature. Not being able to use her spells was a massive detriment, but she still had all her defenses. Knowing that the monster had used its poison cloud and even its fourth tier, she surmised it either really wanted to kill her, really enjoyed fighting, or that she actually pushed it. For now, she was fine with any of that. Least of all, she'd get some resistance levels out of it, experience against a powerful four mark, and experience with her fourth tier.

I've got a few more hours to go, Ilea thought with a wide grin, her next appointment scheduled for the afternoon.

Plenty of time to nearly die a few more times.

Her next three uses of her fourth tier came and went, her resilience against the creature rising with every minute. She marked it too, in case it would try and escape. At least that, the creature didn't somehow absorb.

Dodging and teleporting, Ilea felt a powerful surge of magic from the being.

Is that it?

Spell!

The warning of the Baron confirmed it, Ilea immediately activating the Primordial Shift and her third tier barrier, flooding her mind with healing arcane healing. She felt something come and go, as if a pleasant breeze flowed through and past her.

She could see the white flames around her, could see the barrier, and she saw the approaching creature, its single main body smooth, dozens of limbs flowing below, behind, and above.

Ilea felt calm. Her head hurt for some reason. As if the Meadow itself was trying to crush her head with space magic. Something was wrong, but she couldn't quite place it.

Did it have to do with the strange creature swimming towards her? She felt a creeping sense of unease. Its limbs now encircled the golden sphere. She had activated it, her mana still fueling it all. There probably was a point to that. Not that she really knew why. The creature was of no danger to her, or was it?

She watched it carefully, watched as it broke through the barrier, right before it slammed its limbs into the fires of her Primordial Shift. Her defenses writhed, her ash moving to intercept the fast moving limbs, each wider than her own body.

A voice tried to reach her mind. Several voices. She couldn't quite listen, it hurt so much. And so she kept on healing her headache. Ilea couldn't quite make up her mind about the being before her. It had somehow gotten through her barrier, and her ash was interacting with its limbs. Though it all seemed very confusing.

Maybe if I identify it?

She tried.

[Безомя - lvl ?????] - [Friend]

Oh, that's interesting. It's telling me that it's a friend, but I don't know. It's powerful though! Maybe it can help me train?

"Hello. Can you hear me? I'm Ilea. I'm sorry, my head hurts a lot right now," she sent, trying to talk to the being.

A strange noise resounded in return, followed by a mist that sprayed towards her. It all burnt inside the fires around her. Fires and ash that protected her.

Ilea squinted her eyes. She opened and closed her mouth, considering. Her eyes darted to the side when a few small spheres of her ash started spinning around her head. Imbued ash. Ash she imbued with a command. Her command. *What was it again?*

Why are they spinning?

Around my head?

The headache somehow got worse, despite the healing going into her mind. She saw the limbs slowly get closer, pushing into the space of her shift, through the strange flesh, fire, and ash.

Spin around my head...

Spin around my head, if... if my mind is taken out?

Is that it?

But my mind is fine. I just have a bit of a head-

Ilea felt a searing pain, a pulse within her mind. Something snapped.

'ding' 'Mental Resistance reaches 3rd lvl 27'

She looked up at the monster before her, ignoring its attempts to get through her most powerful defense. Her mana was slowly eaten up by the exponentially more expensive shift.

You piece of shit.

Blue runes flared to life, healing turning into mana as her abilities were imbued with arcane power. She ended the shift, teleporting behind the monster before she closed the distance. She could see it now, could see how it slowly vanished. There were no features on its main body. No eyes. No mouth. Nothing. Instead, she latched on to one of the many limbs, focusing all of her ash onto the spot where it connected. She gripped it with both hands, pushing her heels down into the creature before she pulled. It felt like she was about to burst from the arcane energies circling through her. Heavy impacts crashed into her wings and mantle. Two more seconds passed when she heard a tearing sound. Her ash cut through, strengthened by her fourth tier, the beast's skin stretched by the stress she put it under.

Ilea tried to scream, but there was no air in her lungs. And so they remained silent, the violent waters swirling around them as she pushed away, a dark smooth limb with neither joints, hands, nor fingers coming into view. A silver liquid leaked from the limb, and from the wound. She could see it now. The trail.

And she could hear an extended wail, the sound producing visible waves in the waters. Ilea didn't brace herself. She let go of the limb and rushed towards the creature. Towards its mind and towards the silver blood floating out from nowhere.

She had wounded it.

Two more spheres of ash zipped away, the command the same as it had been before. She would be ready. Her hands and ash slammed into the wound, provoking a flurry of aggravated blows. Blows she took with her fourth tier redirecting everything to her magic alone. She gripped the dark flesh within the wound and pulled, her ash cutting as deep as it could, dealing more damage than it had before.

Ilea felt annoyed when she had to pull away. Her health was reaching thirty percent. She couldn't risk it. Not now that she was so close to actually killing this thing. If it caught her with its strange mind magic right after she had depleted her health, it could turn out ugly. Uglier than it had already been.

She circled it now, the silver blood visible to her. Its mind and the mark she had left were clear. She watched it, watched as it sprayed its poison. Potent enough to near instantly kill most every human she knew. *A four mark indeed. But I don't really see it as a god. Just another monster, that happens to have potent magic.*

But I suppose in this world, that's all that's needed to be seen as divine.

She decided to go with her own interpretations.

Ilea watched the silver blood, hoping that the wound wouldn't heal in the time it took for her fourth tier to return.

It didn't. Not without her supplying any magic to the creature.

Blue runes lit up once again.

This time she found another limb and ripped it out. Then another. The damage she took was less and less, the monster more erratic with every blow she struck. It had already lacked the thought and tactics of a sapient being but now it was reduced to mere survival instincts.

It didn't take long until she had removed its every limb.

Ilea felt its magic coalesce, right before near thirty ashen limbs dug deep into the floating monster. Her runes brightened, the fourth tier enhancing her ash as she pushed, adding with it a charged use of her space magic to skewer the deep sea monster.

Primordial shift and her shield activated anyway, Ilea staring at the dead lump of dark flesh, silver blood seeping into the ocean all around. The waters were still now. Her head was clear. She knew what it was. Knew that she had killed a monster.

A ding resounded in her mind, Ilea giving her ash a last push, all limbs pulling away, the lump of flesh ripped into dozens of pieces. She had won.

Violence!

Fabric tear teleported every chunk of the creature that still remained, Ilea storing it in her domain.

"Just another fat fish," Ilea sent, a smile on her face as she opened a gate behind her, dropping out onto the salt stone of Kohr with a few hundred liters of water. The portal closed as she coughed up all the water in her lungs, taking her first breath in quite some time. She coughed again, finally just ripping through her chest with a few ashen limbs. White flame lit up and evaporated the water still trapped inside of her, right before her flesh knit itself back together.

"Underwater fights are annoying," she complained, slowly sitting up and cracking her neck. More messages followed after she had won, but she first took in a few slow breaths, then summoned herself some food.

"How long do we have left?" she asked, glancing at the giggling fae.

Not

Long

Ilea nodded, steam rising from the puddle around her, the heat she formed within taking care of her wet hair and ash. *Another one down, and more will follow.*

She didn't know exactly how close she had gotten to death in the last fight. It felt closer than against the first creature, despite her fourth tier. Without it she would have perhaps had to flee. That or she may not have had the physical power to damage it.

Ilea knew the next drake was waiting. And she would be there. To hunt it down.