

GREED 331

Chapter 331 Code Name: TaS8cpNGGFbkk16D0R

The ants also noticed him. They ignored him. Their orders are to simply defend the colony until the queen finishes her evolution. If he doesn't come forward then they won't attack. Someone from the giant army flew up to him and from the looks of her attire, she is one of the precious resources being kept away from the fighting.

The priest is garbed in yellow attire with the insignia of the sun god that signifies her to be a bishop of the church of the sun, two ranks beneath a cardinal that wears white robes. It also means that this priest is a mana entity, but she can fly because of the use of divine spells. The beating wings made up of fire attached to her back constructed with the runes of a Stigmata indicate how she is managing to fly.

"Welcome demigod of the sun. It is an honor to meet you." The priest bowed to him.

"I am glad to be here. Are you the representative of the church in charge of the affairs of the church here?"

She nodded vigorously, "Yes I am. You can call me TaS8cpNGGFbkk16D0R."

Helios looked at her closely for the first time since they met.

He asked her, "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Huh?"

"Your name. What's it supposed to mean?"

"It's the code of priesthood I was given when I became a priest."

Helios sighed. Then he asked, "What is your name then? I want your real name, not some codename."

"I am nameless and exist to serve my god. The codename that I was given the day I was ordained as a priest marks the acceptance of my faith and the start of my eternal servitude which is the rest of my life so it is my name."

Helios chose to salvage what can be called a waste of time so he changed the subject.

"What do I need to know about this quest? I am in a race after all." He said to the female priest.

The priest replied, "Not that I doubt you but this heroic Quest will need prudence. The hoard has to dwindle in size before you can foray into the ant mound."

Helios tore his gaze away from the wings of the priest to answer. "Your advice is noted. Still, I want to know the situation so that I can make my decision."

The priest nodded, "Very well then. Follow me."

Then she led the way to the battle headquarters at the back of the army. Helios observed the wings in action one more time. They were so life-like and realistic like the wings of a bird. They even have distinct feathers.

'This is clearly the work of Stelios.'

He has only seen this kind of realism in Stigmata made by the sun god. The wings are large but their rhythmic beating isn't how the giant is flying. They are imbued with a levitation spell through divine power. The priest simply determines her flight speed and direction by beating the wings.

'The difference between Stigmata and runes is so large.' he thought to himself.

A normal rune can create something lifeless like a weapon or an object but a Stigmata can create more by using the Divine will of a god. A Rune needs knowledge and it needs understanding to create. A Stigmata on the other hand is brought to life through the divine will of a god and is capable of creating the divine.

'More realistic or not. Mine is better.'

The difference becomes obvious in the runes on his body. The runes he created take advantage of his sun core to enhance his body while the stigmata that Stelios created simulate the sun core itself. Even so, he believes that his rune is better. His flying is just a side effect of his wrestling control of the force of gravity on him. Other runes can't do that because of the lack of imagination and the right knowledge to make it work. But his rune can do so much more than allow him to fly.

They soon reached the battle headquarters. They dropped down in a seemingly random place teeming with activity. Helios deactivated his runes and his yellow skin turned orange. His pure white eyes returned to their normal color with yellow-golden pupils and his flaming hair became blond again.

She complimented him after seeing him transform. "Your rune is fantastic."

"Thanks. How do I get in?" He pointed forward and asked.

It is an open location where giants enter and leave hurriedly. The only indication that it is a special location and not another place in the desert is the dome barrier that has been placed on the spot. It is just like the ones used to protect the city, it is transparent and if not for the slight distortion of light that occurs around it, you wouldn't know that there's a barrier here.

The priest offered him a badge. "You need this if you want to enter. You will get access as long as you carry it on you. Please return it after the battle."

Helios made a joke, "That's if I survive the quest."

The priest's previously smiling face became stern. She said to him with seriousness. "Please don't joke about that. You won't die. Your team will make sure you survive and earn the heroic feat."

The children of God are sacred. They represent their god in the mortal realm. To joke about their death is not allowed. It is blasphemy. Killing a demigod without having the backing of another god is a crime punishable by death. Even then, the god that instructed you to kill the demigod can give you up which will lead to your death.

"Yes, my team. Hak told me I'll have one. Where are they and what can they do for me?" He asked her as they passed through the barrier.

She led the way while they talked. "I have notified them of your presence. They will be here soon. They are a group of very talented battle priests from the sun church. They will take care of your healing needs and your protection."

Helios nodded as he listened to her. He doesn't plan to work with a team. But he isn't going to tell her that. He came here to get information about the colony and only that. He needs to know where the ant mound is if he is to target the queen. Acquiring some liabilities is not on his agenda.

They entered the headquarters to find it bustling with numerous activities. The headquarters is filled with soldiers moving about quickly. There isn't any building, only posts for certain activities. The barrier around the headquarters blocks out wind and sand, it is all the protection they need. Helios sighted a large portal created by a soldier. Most of the law fragments on the body of the soldier are used to create the portal. Reinforcements and supplies are coming in from the portal.

He isn't the only demigod here. He saw several demigods. They could sense each other as demigods because of the divine power within each other. Most of them are older than him by several hundred years but they are all mana entities.

There are no transcendent participants in this quest. It is a restriction placed by the gods to make the quest fair and more entertaining. A transcendent will be able to solve the problem too quickly. That will rob the gods of their fun.

The demigods nodded at him in a show of respect. He nodded at them in return. No one spoke to him or tried to ingratiate themselves with him but they know he isn't an ordinary demigod because he already has a heroic feat by killing a much older demigod when he was a child.

There's only one demigod that is hostile to him. She saw him and was about to rush forward to fight him but was being held back by some priests.

He smirked when he saw the demigod. He waved at her and shouted, "Hey Tanya, you're here too. I almost didn't notice you. It's not your fault. I just have problems seeing weak little shits that I can beat up any time I want."

She was ready to duke it out here and now but that changed when she heard him. Now she wants to kill him. Her face morphed from an angry scowl to a savage scowl. Her thirst for his blood could be seen in her eyes. The number of priests holding her down increased from 5 to 8. The priests are from her team and instead of protecting her from external threats, they are protecting her from the consequences of her internal desire for violence.

He smiled and shook his head in wonder when he saw her reaction. "So easy. How can they survive in this world as hot-heads?"

Tyke was also like that. He had said something about Tyke's intelligence and it set him off. It seems anger problems run in the family.

Chapter 332 You're Not The Boss.

He said aloud so that Tanya will hear him clearly. "Demigods of the sky god are easily angered. It made it very easy for me to kill that Tyke dunce. It is a surprise that such people have not been weeded out by Natural selection and competition. I guess there have to be some merits to acting without thinking."

"I'll kill you Helios."

Tanya roared angrily. Her voice is so loud that everyone within the headquarters turned towards the source only to find a giantess being held down by 9 priests. Her bloodshot eyes and the lightning sparks in the straightened hair on her head give her the image of a crazy person.

He shook his head in mirth. The first god of the sky and tempest couldn't be stupid to reach that position or he could be but also has to be incredibly lucky. The past doesn't matter now. The fact is that regardless of how they are before, becoming a god changes you. Becoming the god of tempest makes those changes align with a chaotic mental state and mood. Some of these changes are then inherited by the demigods. It's why no one stared at Tanya for long before resuming their activities.

He gave up taunting Tanya when he reached the post for information and reconnaissance. The priest accompanying him prepared the records and maps they have for him to peruse. He looked through the maps and records quickly. The records showed the position of the troops, their progress, and the composition of the enemy forces. He was able to approximate the position of the mound and the best route of attack. He also acquired information about the number of troops that the churches are dedicating to this mission.

The priest was giving advice from the side. "We haven't seen any of the royal guards of the Goliath ants yet. It is obvious that the ants are bent on stalling. Their royal soldiers will be the last line of defense and should be close to the mound. We will need heavy firepower if we intend to reach the mound behind enemy lines."

He listened attentively. The members of his team began to arrive as he discussed with the priest.

The priest continued. "Attacking the mound will be incredibly dangerous because we will be surrounded on every side without any way to retreat. There's a motion to attack the mound at once. The different groups of demigods will come together for the strike. All the representatives have agreed with this plan of action."

"Won't attacking the mound turn the entire ant hoard on us? What do we need the army for then if just the group of demigods can handle the horde at once?" He asked.

Each demigod is limited to a team of 10 including the demigod and there are 9 demigods on the scene. Which means just 90 mana entities intend to take on thousands of ants.

"That will spell death. The demigods can't handle the horde at once. That's why we intend to force the ants to focus on the soldiers instead of them. The army will push the offensive while the demigods and their team enter the ant's domain. If the ants chose to focus on them, then they will leave their back wide open." She answered and showed the proposed movements on the map.

"Good plan, except it is full of holes. What if, and I am just putting this out there, what if the ants decide to be foolish and focus on the demigods and sacrifice large numbers to achieve it?"

It will be foolishness to think that ants will decide to be reasonable when they can deal the gods a blow by killing 9 demigods.

She explained the crucial information about their plan. "That's why we are bringing in the annihilators. We will make it visible by setting it up at the front lines. They will have to stop us or risk having their numbers annihilated in catastrophic numbers."

Annihilators are very special priests that have a unique rune weapon of mass destruction marked on their bodies as Stigmata. Stigmata are very efficient and use fewer fragments of order than normal runes. It is why priests can be any of the three major types of troops. But the Stigmata of this weapon needs the entire fragments on the body of really strong priests. You can imagine the amount of damage that such a weapon can deal.

The annihilators have their disadvantages. They take a long time to load and can be interrupted. But the soldiers are using that as bait for the ants. While the damage they cause is devastating, the wielder of the stigmata will be unable to move while loading and will be near death after firing it. Recovery time can take up to a hundred years even with divine healing because the damage done to the wielder is from the divine power contained within the Stigmata as it activates and burns through divine crystals to load its attack.

If the ants chose to disregard the annihilators, most of their numbers will be annihilated. So it is a question of how much risk the ants are willing to take. It is a choice between the annihilators and the demigods.

He said to her, "Your plan is pretty good. Except you haven't fixed the gaping hole in it. What if, the ants disregard the annihilators and focus on the demigods?"

"Then there's nothing we can do."

He offered a very obvious solution. "Why don't you just fire the annihilators before the strike team goes for the mound? That will reduce their numbers and make it easy to reach the mound. Then the demigods and the soldiers can all attack the ant mound together instead of making a risky plan."

She coughed. "We can't. Annihilators are rare and their presence will reduce the danger too much. The gods allowed us to fire only one. We intended to use the others as bait. We will only fire the one we are allowed to prove to the ants that we mean business."

He began to laugh. "Of course. What did I expect?"

The priest stayed silent while he laughed to himself. The gods have the means to put down this threat as soon as possible but they turned it into a game for their entertainment. It won't be entertaining for

them if it is too easy for the demigods. So they placed limits on the amount of help that the demigods can get.

'It's good too. The waste of time is favorable. They won't know what hit them when it hits them.'

He clapped his hands when he was done laughing. "Alright. I am all caught up. You will fire that Annihilator now. It will create a breach in their defense. The teams of demigods will go through the breach and reach the mound. If that doesn't work, then we will simply grind the ant horde down with the soldiers."

The priest frowned. "That's not a good plan. It is too slow. We need to get to the ant queen fast and end her transformation."

"That's true. But it is a better plan. It is better than your plan."

"Regardless of what you think, you can't just make changes to the plan however you wish." Her voice turned frosty and her displeasure for his disregard of their plan became evident in her tone.

Helios nodded. "That's true too. So who's pride needs to be broken to have that Annihilator fired."

"What did you just say?" Her eyes stared daggers at him.

"I mean who do I have to convince of my new plan?" He changed his wording.

He meant the same thing.

She was silent for a while just staring at him before she answered. "The plan was made by the committee of bishops from the 9 churches involved in this heroic quest."

"Now convey a meeting. The plan has to be changed."

She didn't move to fulfill his request. "The plan has been made. It cannot be changed. You cannot just come in here and make changes however you wish. You may be an exalted demigod but you're only a mana entity. If you were so capable then you wouldn't need a team of priests."

Demigods are no different from other giants of order until they become transcendents. That's when they become able to use divine abilities from their parents. The divine spells that priests use are imitations of divine abilities. Divine abilities beat divine spells. That means demigods become stronger than priests when they become demigods. But until demigods breakthrough, priests are much stronger because of their divine spells.

Helios considered his options. She is obviously insinuating that he is the one that has his pride misplaced because he thinks he is a demigod. But being a demigod that is a mana entity isn't enough to come here and have things changed to the way he sees fit. He isn't strong enough, so he can't push people around.

She might as well have said, "You are weak. You're not the boss of this operation."

Chapter 333 Who Is The Strongest?

He looked at the members of his team that have arrived. All 9 of them avoided eye contact with him. They are supposed to be his babysitters. It is the unspoken arrangement but the bishop tore down the veil of civility and called it for what it is. She called him weak.

He finally spoke. "Okay then. You're right. Everyone can do whatever they want. It is not my place to order you around. Strength speaks for itself. You are strong and you think your plan is good. You can go ahead with the plan."

Her face eased up a little. "I am glad you think so. The plan will go as it should. Don't worry. Everything will go right. Your team will protect you."

Helios smiled. "I have nothing to worry about."

Their short argument became a thing of the past. She felt impressed by his maturity and her opinion of him improved.

'He is so much better than other demigods. He is level-headed and not too proud.' She thought to herself.

The truth is that he could have changed the plan by making a fuss and getting the other demigods on his side. But he didn't behave like a child who would throw a tantrum when they don't get their way because he will get his way eventually. It is just a matter of time.

He would have liked to have a more important role in deciding their plans so that his purpose here will work out better but it is what it is. He is above all else amendable and quick to adapt. It is easy to let go when he knows that the outcome is set.

The final briefing was called before the strike team will send out. The representatives of the churches involved in the heroic quest called for it to inform the demigods of their plan as a whole.

The 9 demigods arrived and introduced themselves. Helios took note of them and their power. In his opinion, the strongest of them and the youngest is Tanya, the demigod of the church of the sky. The rest are pretty average except for 3 that stood out somewhat.

The first is the one that calls himself AMS. He is the demigod of the church of mercy. He is dressed like a monk and has his hands together in constant prayer. Pretty quiet and keeps to himself. He looks ordinary for a giant but Helios can sense a hidden strength. The other 9 members of his team are also monks. Together, they form a very quiet bunch.

The second one is KROMBOPULOS the demigod of the church of the hunt. He speaks a lot more than AMS and looks more eager to be here than all of them. He is practically hopping about because of the excitement of the hunt. Helios could feel a buzz coming from him and he noticed that the buzz gets stronger the closer this KROMBOPULOS is to the ant mound. It seems he gets stronger the closer he is to his target.

The third one is BLAZE_DRACONYTE the demigod of the church of fire. He looks to be very dangerous and crazy because of his scattered hair and rapidly moving eyes. Adding the tongs of flames just dancing in his hair will make you realize he is a fire hazard. All in all, he looks like a trigger-happy pyromaniac just waiting to go ballistic. You certainly do not want to be in the same room with him.

Helios introduced himself last. He was the last to arrive and he is the youngest. Only time will tell if he is the strongest.

The briefing continued after the introduction. Helios complimented their plans and agreed with everything they said. He remained on good behavior when the final briefing was going on. The bishops sent from the 9 churches explained the plan to the 9 demigods and their teams. He didn't criticize the plan at all. He stood with his two muscular arms folded on his chest without interfering.

He didn't even taunt Tanya when she came for the briefing. She also didn't attempt to attack him. She was just like him, they have both seen the errors of their ways. There are things they would both like to do but they are not in the right situation to do it.

On another unrelated note, all nine of her team members had her surrounded and were keeping an eye on her every movement while she stared daggers at Helios. Maybe she hasn't fully seen the error of her ways.

"If there are no more questions, then the heroic quest will start now." A bishop announced after the briefing.

The headquarters began to bustle with a little more activity. Giants rushed about to get things started for the plan. Helios followed the strike team out of the headquarters. Then he continued walking with them to the front lines. They passed ranks of soldiers busy holding back the ants.

The sounds of explosions rocked the ground but they couldn't overwhelm the drone of insect wings. The guts of the resilient ants could be seen spilled all over the place. The wind brought with it the smell of dead insects which made the nose tingle. The fight had been going on for hours but the tide of ants hadn't ceased. The ant hoard resembled a tsunami wave threatening to destroy the giants.

Then the strike team began to form. The 9 teams combined and distributed themselves according to the format in the plan. Helios stood aside watching it all happen without joining them.

One of his team members summoned the courage to ask, "Exalted demigod, it is time to deploy."

"I know." He answered calmly.

He asked again. "Are we not joining them?"

"I don't know about you. You can do whatever you want but I'm not joining them."

"But it is according to the plan.

"Now you're just wasting my time by stating the obvious."

His answer made his team members confused. They went to tell the bishop of the church of the sun. The priest marched up to him with a very bad frown and an air of importance. It seemed to those watching that something bad is about to happen.

Chapter 334 Two Strikes And You're Out.

Code Name: TaS8cpNGGFbkk16D0R stopped in front of him. Her frown had deepened with that short walk it took for her to reach him. Her eyes fixed onto him like a predator to prey. She felt like slapping him but she held herself back.

She composed herself and said to him, "I heard you're not joining the strike team."

He nodded nonchalantly and chose to see what the strike team will do. Their formation is lacking a big chunk of it and they are getting confused. They don't know what's going on so they too are asking questions.

"Do you know what this means?" She asked with a voice laden with fury.

He wasn't fazed by her anger.

"I'm not an idiot if that's what you're asking. I know what it means." He answered calmly.

If he isn't joining the strike team, then his team can't join the strike team. That will reduce the number of 90 members to 80 and reduce their chances of success drastically.

She yelled at him. "If you're not an idiot then stop behaving like one.

Then she pointed to the strike team, "Get there and join them now."

He attacked. His arm moved to backhand her. It wasn't a fast attack. She saw the attack coming and she grinned.

"Fine then. I'll put you in your place. I won't humiliate you too much." She said through her smile.

She raised up one of her hands to grip his. She would then squeeze it a little bit. She doesn't plan to do much damage to him. He may be insolent but he is still a demigod. She intends to show him the difference between them. A hundred-year-old teenager should mind what he says to a priest that is almost a thousand years old.

The golden runes on his arm flashed brightly for a brief moment and then his hand blurred so fast that it couldn't be tracked. His arm broke her hand and smashed into her face. There was a loud sound of impact as his arm came into contact with her face. The contact was more of a smack but it has the power of a full punch to the face.

Her head was forced to whip to the side. Her lips broke and some teeth came loose. The smack bruised her cheeks and made her spit out saliva mixed with blood, gum, and the teeth that they used to hold.

Her head reeled with shock and her battle instincts kicked in. All the Stigmata on her body began to activate and her mind was about to activate divine spells through the divine mark of her god on her soul. Gone is her underestimation of Helios and her intention not to hurt him too much. She began to gear up for battle. Now she intends to teach him a lesson he will never forget.

Her barriers were the first to materialize. Films of force came into life around her. They would block physical attacks and grant her enough time to get her bearings for retaliation. Then she would bring down the full might of her fury on the little disrespectful shit that thinks too highly of himself.

Helios had withdrawn his hand after the first attack. He moved to strike her again. The runes flashed again briefly, then they dimmed. Except that this time some were still glowing on his hand. It made his arm golden like that of a gold statue. His arm blurred with another activation of the light resonance runes.

His accelerating arm met with the first barrier and the power nullification runes that made his arms golden nullified the barriers and penetrated through them as if they were films of paper. He tore through her defenses and grabbed her neck. His arm smashed into her neck with enough force to shatter it if he hadn't held back. Even then, her throat collapsed and she was forcefully lifted off her feet by the force.

He squeezed a little bit and her eyes almost popped out of her head as she choked. She panicked and tried to remove his hands.

"Stand down." He said to her.

His cold voice struck her more than the first blow and hurt more than the second. She deflated and gave up her struggle. Her Stigmata dimmed down just like her arms drooped. The first blow bruised her face and broke her lips and the second almost killed her, but this outcome hurt her pride more. She will live, but she will never forget.

He brought her head close to his face and said to her, "You mistook me being reasonable for being weak. I allowed you to make your plans and do whatever you want. And yet, you intend to order me around. What gave you the idea that you can push me around? You're obviously not strong enough for it."

It is one thing for him to be forced to stay in a single place for a hundred years because his divine father demands it. The sun god is strong enough to order him around, but it doesn't mean the sun god's lackey can boss him around him too. He isn't a normal demigod that is a mana entity. Nothing about him is normal.

"I'm sorry exalted demigod. I shouldn't have acted that way." She struggled to say.

He hadn't reduced the force of his grip on her throat, so talking is difficult for her. It is the least of her problems. If he activates the energy discharge runes in his hands, she will burn up as heat is pumped into her body. That will do more than hurt her pride.

He can picture it already. First, the water in her body will begin to heat up, which will cause her blood to boil. Her organs begin to cook within her. She will start to shout and struggle when the pain increases

but it will all be for naught. Then she will catch fire and begin to burn when the fat in her body starts to burn. She will burn until she turns into ashes scattered in the wind.

He nodded and dropped her to the ground. "Good. I'm a reasonable person. I'll let go of this slight."

Chapter 335 A Costly Lesson.

He let her go and she dropped to the ground but she didn't drop in one piece. He had formed a blade construct on his other hand using light and fire. The red glass object looked fragile but it is very sharp. He was able to cut off one of her arms in a smooth and swift motion.

She didn't see it coming at all. It was swift and unexpected. She felt relief that she didn't know she was experiencing before the pain hit her. The contrast in emotions outlined that she had felt relief that she wouldn't die more than she thought she would. It also made her rein in the reflex to scream in pain.

Instead, she stood back up and picked up her bleeding arm from the ground.

"Thank you for your consideration, exalted demigod. I made a mistake and you corrected me. I am happy to say that the lesson has been learned."

She had to appreciate him. The way he cut her arm off is a warning and a message that he could have killed her earlier without her being able to struggle.

He waved his hand like it didn't matter. "It is the least I can do."

In fact, it is not the least he could do. He could have taken two arms for her two mistakes or taken her eyes from her, but he didn't. Instead, he left her mostly intact, and most importantly, alive. It took a lot out of him to not kill her for such disrespect. Twice she did it and if he hadn't reacted the way he did, she would have done it again. He wished to kill her. He didn't kill her because he has to look towards long-term benefits and not the short-term pleasure of killing her. Everything he does is being watched by the gods.

Helios folded his arms again and returned to his posture of an unconcerned onlooker as if he hadn't just fought a bishop more than a thousand years old while he is just a hundred years old.

Then he said to the strike team that was frozen in shock, "You people should get on with what you're doing. We don't have all day."

The bishop's shout had drawn their attention. What they saw next was mind-blowing. It is why most of them have wide eyes and open mouths. That short fight might as well be accepted as a heroic feat. It was that unreal.

He turned to his team members that were still frozen in shock even after he reprimanded the others. "You guys can join them if you want. This is the only chance you'll get if you want to have fun with them."

Only five of his team members chose to join the strike team. They wanted to join in on the heroic quest. Escorting Helios wasn't a chore for them. Now that they are not part of his team, they can take credit for the heroic feat if they kill the queen. Instead of being his babysitters, they can now become competitors.

Helios watched merrily as changes were made to their formation. Then the strike team separated from the army and ventured into the ant horde. The priests were cycling through their barriers to protect their charges while they used various spells to attack.

He caught a brief look at Tanya. She was wielding two large hammers charged with Lightning. They stunned the ants as soon as they come near the hammers. The hammers will then crush them to pulp and fry their remains. She is also able to discharge chain lightning strikes to control the crowd of ants. The Lightning strike kills the smaller worker ants and stuns the larger soldiers.

"It wouldn't have helped Tyke in our fight." He mused to himself.

Her Stigmata is impressive like most Stigmata are, but he isn't intimidated by it. He would have been able to kill Tyke even if he had the assistance of the rune. His numerous understanding of fighting skills is not for show. Being without a weapon doesn't mean being unarmed. You can use your body as a weapon if you know how to. And being with a weapon doesn't mean you know how to use it.

Helios watched as the strike team disappeared into the ant hoard. It was then that the annihilators started to load up. The entire bodies of 10 giants of order lit up with pure white light as the stigmata on their bodies consumed divine crystals to power them. These ten had attendants that threw divine

crystals at them. The divine crystals get consumed when they reach the halo of light around the giants. The giants couldn't even be seen beneath the white glow around them.

The ants noticed the development. The light that the giants were giving off was glaring and difficult to hide. The giants of Order weren't even trying to hide it, they wouldn't have brought the annihilators to the front lines if they didn't want to draw attention. An annihilator can fire at a target within their sight from any distance. There's no need for them to be here if not to draw attention.

'So much wastage of power. It may be powerful, but it is inefficient.'

Helios noticed some of the intricacies of the stigmata activation. All that light that the annihilators are releasing is energy being wasted. It is what happens when the creator of a stigmata doesn't have enough knowledge. They achieve what they want to create because of their powerful divine will and divine power but the Stigmata will be inefficient at what it is made to do.

The ant horde went crazy with the development. That many annihilators will literally annihilate their numbers and will allow the giants to march freely to the ant mound. They increased the frequency of their attacks. Most of them ignored the strike team and tried to reach the annihilators. Things went into a frenzy as the army also increased their attacks in retaliation.

He nodded calmly. "Everything is going well."

The bishop had returned to his side after the strike team was deployed. The bruises and cuts on her face have healed and her throat has bounced back. There is no sign that she was held by her neck a few minutes ago. Even her arm has been attached and healed.

"It is a good thing." She said.

"Yes, it is."

"Are you really not going to join in on the heroic quest? The sun god will be disappointed." She asked carefully.

She didn't want to say what she said but it is her position as the representative of the church to say it. Her superiors and her god will not take it kindly that she watched on and did nothing as the demigod of the sun failed a heroic quest because he didn't participate. People might say he was scared.

He chuckled. "Who says I'm not joining the heroic quest? I never said that. I only said that I won't join your strike team."

"But they will be ahead of you by too much. It will be too difficult, if not impossible to catch up to them."

"Maybe. It also means I won't be with them if something goes wrong with your plan."

She shook her head. "I don't think something will go wrong. The ants think that we have 10 annihilators at our disposal. They don't know we can only use one. You just said that things are going well."

Helios's eyes were focused on the ants. He said to her, "There's still time for things to go wrong."

She chose to remain silent. When Helios said the same thing when he first heard about the plane, she had become angry at him and dismissed his opinions. Now, she still doesn't think he is right, but she isn't going to openly disagree with him. She doesn't agree with him because they already planned for most of the scenarios, so things should go well unless the ants disregard the threat of the annihilators and focus on the strike team.

She chose to keep her opinion to herself because if there is one lesson that she learned from that physical exchange, it is that Helios is strong and it is a bad idea to get him angry. The two of them are not equal. Even if she were stronger than him, she can not kill him unless she wants to suffer the wrath of the sun god. That is not the case for Helios. He can kill her and he is also strong enough to kill her. So she remained silent while wishing the strike team well.

Too bad that wishes aren't horses. Things went wrong. It is said that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. Is it a matter of certainty or possibility that the worst outcome is inevitable? Does wishing for something bad make it happen or does wishing for something good make bad things happen?

It doesn't matter because if the ant queen got information about the real amount of annihilators that will be fired from a reliable source, then the worst outcome becomes a certainty, regardless of what you wished for or the possibility of it happening.

Chapter 336 Annihilator Deployment.

Everyone watched aghast as the ant horde withdrew from the front lines all of a sudden. They rushed back like a hurricane and pounced on the strike team that was like a bubble of air in the depths of the ocean. Each team of demigods was using a domain Stigmata that kept the little bugs away from them and let them focus on the soldier ants. It is an upgraded version of a standard Stigmata for priests of churches.

The Stigmata is simple in its action. It creates a field of power around the priest that repels objects that come close to the priest. Objects that enter the field will slow down before they are pushed back. The power of the field determines how fast objects decelerate. The upgraded version is more powerful than the standard version and it can fuse with an adjacent force field created from a similar Stigmata to form a domain.

This domain is what is keeping away the worker ants. They are small and weak, so they can be pushed back easily. The soldier ants on the other hand are only slowed down. This is already good enough for the strike team. They found it easier for them to kill the soldier ants because of the force impeding them.

The strike team was making good progress until the number of enemies suddenly increased. Their domain has a limit on its output. The worker ants may be small and weak, but a large enough number of them can overwhelm the domain.

"What is going on? Why have their numbers increased so much?"

"What about the annihilators?"

"What should we do?"

"Are we going to die?"

They were confused and they started raising many questions about their situation. They began to panic when things weren't easing up.

They are not the only ones panicking. The bishops are panicking too. They started asking the same questions but in different forms.

"What is going on? Why have they turned their attention to the strike team?"

"Don't they care about the annihilators?"

"What should we do?"

"Are they going to die?"

As always, Helios had to be the voice of reason.

He said to them, "Calm down everyone. You already planned for this. You just have to remind them of the danger of the annihilators. That should show them what they are missing out on. Hopefully, it will convince them to make the rational choice and leave the strike team alone."

'But what are the odds of that happening?' He said to himself.

One of the bishops spoke up, "That's true. We will fire one and hope for the best."

They were not supposed to fire the annihilators at all according to their plan. The annihilators are meant to be perceived threats and not actual threats to the ants. It is because the perceived threat of 10 annihilators is greater than the actual threat of 1 annihilator.

Resorting to using the annihilator means that they are in trouble with no way out. That doesn't mean the annihilator will help or stop more trouble from coming.

Helios agreed with him. "That's what I am saying. You should only panic when that fails to work."

The bishop belonging to the church of the storm glared at him and spoke sarcastically, "Thank you for your reminder. It was very helpful."

"Don't worry about it. It is my burden to always be reasonable. I'm very good at it too. You should ask the bishop of the church of the sun to tell you how good I am. Do you want me to reason with you too?"

His voice was cheery but the bishop of the church of the storm gulped involuntarily. He shut his mouth up. The other bishops chose to remain silent and execute the next part of their plan. This created another problem.

"Where do we fire at?" Another bishop asked.

They have only one shot, they have to use it to the greatest effect. Helios was quick to give another helpful suggestion.

He pointed to a spot on the map. "This is a good spot. Fire here."

"But that won't help the demigods." The same bishop said.

Helios had selected an area closest to the ant mound. It is very far from the location of the demigods.

"This is where their royal guards are. Those are the most important troops they have. The colony didn't send them forward and is using the soldiers and workers to stall you. If you want to hit the ants where it will hurt them the most, then it must be here." He explained his reasons.

The archbishop was about to raise more objections but Helios continued. "You know you can't drop an annihilator close to the demigods. You run the risk of killing them. You also can't waste your single chance on a useless place. If you want to convince the ants that you mean business then you must hit their royal guards."

The bishops shut up after that. Unlike Helios, they care about the demigods and would like to use their single opportunity to save them instead of relying on the change of mind of the ants. But Helios is right, the annihilator can also kill the demigods and no one wants to be the one that called that shot.

A heroic quest is full of danger and can cause the deaths of demigods, but accidental death by friendly fire is something else. It is still killing a demigod and it is punishable by death.

So they gave the go-ahead to the one single annihilator that could fire at all. All the light around the giant began to recede until it formed a ball of white light more than 10 meters in diameter behind the giant. The giant aimed for the spot on the map and launched the ball. The ball rose into the sky in an arch before falling down.

It exploded before it reached the ground. The white glowing ball expanded near instantly into a white dome more than 100 meters in diameter. Then there was a bright flash of light that could be seen for miles. It disoriented the ants on the battlefield, even the ones not close to the point of denotation.

The heat blast occurred next as the heat moved faster than the air could expand. It originated with the white dome as its source and spread far beyond it. The heat turned every ant it touched within an area of a kilometer diameter into ashes. The ants beyond that range incurred injuries varying with their proximity to the blast site.

Then came the explosion of heated air. Air expanded and created a loud bang that traveled far. This blast extended farther than the blast radius of the heat wave. It created shockwaves that reached the front lines. The heated air rose up into the sky forming a column of air, dust, and water vapor in the shape of a mushroom.

"Magnificent." The bishop of the church of the sun said.

Helios replied. "It is magnificent. It is also my cue."

The golden runes on his body lit up and he became the incarnation of light and fire. His skin turned yellow and white tattoos appeared on it, his eyes turned white and his hair turned into a golden flame with red streaks. He rose into the air and shot forward towards the ant mound which has become visible after the ant horde became destabilized.

His acceleration created shockwaves in the air as he broke the speed of sound multiple times. He passed above the strike team and continued onward. The ant mound began to enlarge in his vision to reveal itself as a mountain. It is an artificial mountain built by the ant colony. That's why it is hollow with numerous entrances that lead to spaces within it.

One such entrance with a space more than 60 meters tall is close to the area where the annihilator detonated. A wide and deep crater has been formed close to it. The surface of the crater has turned to lava but the entrance is fine. In fact, the entire mountain was not harmed by the explosion at all. The ant mound might be ant-made but it is one of the toughest things in this plane or the ants won't have been able to survive being neighbors with giants.

He began to decelerate until he smashed into a point within the crater close to the entrance. His collision with the ground created enough force to throw lava into the air. He rose up from the pool of lava still in his child-of-the-sun mode. Lava fell off of him like oil on water. His yellow skin was not marred by the hot lava.

He breathed in and siphoned the heat around him. The golden flame that is his hair grew larger while the lava began to solidify due to losing its heat. He looked around and at the entrance. His white eyes could see the heat being given off by a giant figure hidden within the darkness of the entrance.

He grinned as he thought in anticipation, 'It seemsseems it's time to do battle.'

Chapter 337 Goliath Royal Guard.

"Come out, come out, wherever you are."

His voice was quiet but the royal guard hiding within the mountain heard him.

It came marching out. Its figure appeared to reveal a colossal ant more than 40 meters tall. It stood taller than Helios. The ground shook as it appeared.

Everything about it is big. It has giant horns for efficient impaling on an equally giant head and sharp giant mandibles capable of beheading Helios. Its diamond exoskeleton which it uses to defend itself shown brightly under the light of the sun. It has a majesty about it that strikes fear in the heart. It could be that or the fear that rises when something much taller than you is approaching to kill you. It certainly doesn't help that the threat is a giant bug. It's like a scene out of a nightmare.

A divine sense reached out from the goliath royal guard to Helios. "I am number 11, a royal guard of the honorable queen Anselhamtep. You are not welcome here intruder.

A royal guard is the prime warrior of Goliath ants. They are the main protectors of the colony. They are intelligent, have a size that can compare to adult giants of order, and have enough strength to tussle with adult giants of order. Soldier ants can defend against giants but royal guards are predators made to hunt giants. They are rare in a colony because of the difficulty of creating one. Helios is sure that this colony has less than 20 of them.

Apart from the prohibitive cost of feeding one, most of the reason why they are rare is that they are mutants gotten from feeding the flesh of giants to ant grubs. The flesh of giants is rare to find. It doesn't grow on trees and even if it does, trees don't grow in the Zargoth plane.

The flesh of giants can only be acquired from giants but they are not generous enough to donate body parts. The chance of successful mutation is also very low. So royal guards are rare and very valuable. Helios also knows that none of the royal guards died in that strike with the annihilator.

It is not that they are strong enough to shrug off the explosion, they just weren't at the site of the detonation. In fact, they weren't even outside of the ant mound. Royal guards are so valuable that if information that the annihilator is targeting them is made available to the colony, the ant queen will surely make them hide within the ant mound to be protected by the incredibly defensive structure.

Helios ignored the hostile ant. He looked up at the ant mound and nodded appreciatively.

"Your ant mound looks ancient and large. This is a large colony. Your queen must be very strong."

"Yes, she is. She will be stronger soon when she completes her transformation. That's why we aren't taking any visitors. Leave now. This is your last warning." Number 11 warned again.

The ant queen is within the mound but it wasn't targeted by the annihilator because it will be useless to attack it. The ant mound is durable enough to withstand the attack of a transcendent. It is also the Queen's body and it gets stronger the older and stronger the queen is.

The ant mound is attached to the queen like an exoskeleton. It can't grow by itself, so it needs to be reinforced by the ants of the colony. This makes the size of the ant mountain to be directly proportional to the size of the colony.

Helios smirked unconcerned about the threat. "You're so intelligent. You're not like your mindless siblings. Do you feel emotions? Tell me, how does it feel to know that your existence is the reason why we can kill your queen?"

Number 11 bristled at his statement. The ant mound is like a tortoise shell. The ant Queen's real body is vulnerable and soft while the exoskeleton is tough. It offers protection to the queen but it has a lot of disadvantages. The queen can't run away in times of danger. A young queen might be able to move, but an old one won't be able to move because of the weight of the ant mound.

The most important weakness is the entrances. A queen without royal guards will have small entrances fit for the small soldiers and ants. The entrances will be too small for giants of order to enter. Giants won't be able to do anything to the queen then. But the creation of larger entrances for royal guards makes the queen vulnerable to giants. It is an irony that the creation of royal guards to kill giants also exposes the queen to the danger of being killed.

Helios continued talking while the royal guard began to tremble in anger. "You know, Goliath ants survived against the giants of order because of their strong, protective shell. But you guys got full of yourself and began to prey on your oppressors. Now you're being besieged with a real threat of having your colony wiped out."

The ant said for the last time. "Leave."

Helios eyes became cold. He spoke to the angry ant. "Make me."

Number 11 moved its giant blade-like limbs and rushed toward Helios. Helios's white eyes turned red and two red energized beams of light came out of them. They struck the diamond carapace and dug two deep furrows into its carapace.

The ant didn't feel any pain because its thick carapace protected it from having its internal organs damaged. So Helios turned his eyes and directed the lasers to the appendages.

The two lasers found a joint and cut through it. One of Number 11's six limbs fell off. It adjusted its weight pretty quickly and continued to rush toward Helios. It used everything it could use including its large head, horns, and mandibles to try and block the lasers. It is intelligent enough to know that it can't allow the beam to do more damage to its legs.

Helios flashed brightly for a brief moment. By the time the flash of light ended, his body had appeared 10 meters to his right. Number 11 couldn't block the beam because of the quick shift in position so another one of its limbs on the same side was cut off. It couldn't adjust its weight and retain its balance as easily as last time so it stopped running. It chose to defend itself from further damage by tucking in its legs and staying low while approaching Helios slowly.

"What happened to your previous fervor?" Helios asked as he rose into the air.

He put his hands together and when he pulled them apart, a physical structure of light began to form in between them.

"You better come and stop me." He taunted the cowardly ant.

Number 11 chose to stay still. It lowered itself even more and used its carapace to protect its limbs. It recognized the threat but decided to have faith in its strong carapace. The other option to rush and try to stop Helios is not feasible. But that faith in its carapace began to dwindle as it watched the construct of light getting bigger and the pings from its energy sensors increased.

It asked with a shaky voice. "What are you?"

That's the one thing that has been bordering it since it saw Helios. It is also why it chose to warn Helios off. Number 11 wasn't sure what Helios was. Helios looks like a transcendent demigod but has the energy readings of a mana entity. For all of Number 11's intelligence, it couldn't figure out what Helios is.

So it asked Helios to leave. It was a test. It never intended to let Helios go. If Helios chose to leave, it will mean he is weak, then Number 11 will be confident of killing him. If Helios decided to stay, number 11 will still fight but it will be hoping for the best. Still, it will be enough information for him to call for reinforcement since he isn't confident. It just didn't think that Helios will kill it so soon into the fight.

The structure of light grew into a large hammer more than 50 meters long. Helios answered when his attack became ready.

"I am the child of the sun."

He swung his arm down. The hammer of light fell toward the royal guard. It was slow so it could dodge but it didn't. Standing will make its legs vulnerable to Helios. So it chose to withstand the attack while reinforcements come.

The hammer struck Number 11 with a loud clang like a hammer striking metal. Then the hammer exploded into light and heat.

Helios saw the outcome after the explosion cleared up.

He grumbled, "You're one tough nut."

He doesn't like what he is seeing. Number 11 survived the attack. It was pushed into the ground but it wasn't crushed like the bug that Helios thought it is. In fact, it came out of the clash and its subsequent explosion without any injury. Number 11 will not be easy to put down.

Chapter 338 Internal Combustion Engine.

The royal ant said smugly, "This is why the queen risked the danger to her life to create us. It is because we are reliable and can protect the colony. We have been able to do that successfully for so long because of our diamond carapace. There's nothing you can do against it."

It has regained confidence in itself and its existence has been justified.

Helios's eyes glinted sharply. "We'll see about that."

"Why don't you go ahead and do that? I have nowhere else I want to be at this moment. Take your best shot. There's no rush. We have all day."

He ignored the taunts and jeers to focus on creating another light construct. This time it is a spear of light instead of the hammer. The white runes on his body shone brighter as he concentrated. He grafted some of his runes onto the spear so some runes appeared on the spear as it grew larger. They are the same light resonance runes on his body.

His audience continued to throw barbs at him as he worked.

"Nice idea to try something pointy next. It is genius really. If the hammer doesn't work, then try the long pointy thing. You must be some kind of rare demigod."

He exhaled after finishing its construction partly due to exhaustion and partly due to his annoyance with Number 11. Then he admired his work before he looked at his complacent foe.

"Say your last prayers because death is coming."

The confident royal guard laughed in derision. "I am not so desperate to pray to your gods. My queen will become one soon and she will be all that I need."

Helios let his hand drop and the spear dropped with it. Then spear flashed and appeared above the royal guard. Number 11 couldn't dodge fast enough even if it tried. Not with its compromised limbs. The spear phased through the carapace and sank into its body. It discharged all of its energy into the royal guard.

"AHHHHHHHHHHH!"

Number 11 began to burn from the inside out. It roared in pain because of the enormous heat building up within it. It lit up and began to glow brightly as the spear transformed into energy within its body. The energy couldn't leave its body because of the insulation of the carapace. Its internal organs heated up and turned to ashes leaving behind the sturdy and reliable carapace. The death was very quick but very painful. It was also very noisy due to Number 11 screaming throughout the process.

He nodded in contentment. "That is a job well done. Now I know how to kill them."

The translucent carapace sat on the ground like some sort of tortoiseshell except it is glittering and shiny. The shell, the head, and the limbs are the only things that Number 11 left behind.

He admired his work for a while before he turned into a streak of light. He didn't go through this entrance, he went the long way to another entrance. He did so because he is sure this entrance will be teeming with royal guards pretty soon while the entrance farther away is suspected to be free from royal guards.

Not long after he left, three royal guards arrived at the spot where number 11 died. They didn't have much time to mourn since the strike team also arrived. It is a good thing for the royal guards, they get to take out their anger on the invaders. The three royal guards clashed with the strike team with a thirst for vengeance. They swung their horns about and tried to shear off body parts with the mandibles. It made for a great show for those watching above.

The POV of Harkam The God of The Sky and Tempest. Before the strike team was deployed.

Harkam sat in his divine kingdom alone while he watched the heroic quest. His divine kingdom is filled with brown clouds and lightning dust storms. His believers come to his divine kingdom after their deaths to become wind and lightning spirits. His divine kingdom is not welcoming or hospitable. Dust storms are prevalent and the wind is too violent. The wind can shred a giant down to the bones. It isn't why no one is watching with him though. He just isn't a pleasant god to be around.

He is sitting on a cloud in his real form watching the battle on the front lines. Harkam looks like a hybrid of lightning and dust wind spirit. He doesn't have legs and his body is made from brown dust winds that are always releasing golden lightning bolts into his environment. His eyes and hair are made from similar golden lightning bolts. He doesn't have a mouth. He can form a mouth but he doesn't need it because he can't taste anything.

Bloodlines affect the lineage in a myriad of ways. It gives them an edge over others in terms of divine abilities or ancestral memories. They also come with weaknesses. Demigods and gods are also limited by their divine power. Those of the sky god lineage are fast and can wield lightning. They also get angry easily and become elemental beings when they become gods. Their elemental form has lost the ability to taste.

While the sun god and his faction are eating nice things as they watch the heroic quest, he can't eat anything. Even his humanoid form can't taste food. And people wonder why he is always so irritable. Imagine having eternal life but you can't distract yourself from the stress of living with some food.

His inability to taste things does not bear the full blame for his bad personality. His erratic mood is due to his volatile nature as a wind spirit. Still, he gets by. There are few things that he can distract himself with and they are the only two things he feels pleasure doing. One is sex and the other is destruction.

Giants of Order have low fertility. They find it difficult to bear offspring naturally. Their low fertility has become exacerbated because of the low concentration of ambient mana. Demigods are very rare because the union of divine and mortal is even more difficult to result in a child. People think the god of the sky is very fertile but that's only because he has sex a lot. When it is one of the only two things you can do for fun, you tend to do it a lot. When you do it a lot, the chances of you having a child become very high.

The other thing he enjoys apart from causing rampant destruction in the mortal realm is watching interesting things going on in the mortal realm. Things like heroic quests are always interesting.

"What a show-off." He muttered angrily when he saw Helios appear on his screen.

Unlike others that will marvel and inquire about the runes, he doesn't appreciate the power of Helios's runes. He considers it showy because he doesn't like Helios. He has nothing against Helios really. The one he hates the most is Stelios, the sun god. That hatred automatically extends to Helios because of who his father is. It is simply the natural cross-generational transfer of hatred.

The feud between the sky god and the sun god goes back to times before Harkam. Harkam's father also hated Stelios. But Harkam and Stelios's conflict is greater than most of the previous conflicts by any standard.

"It's all Stelios's fault. He is too full of himself." He said as he threw a bolt of lightning at the screen.

The bolt was reflected back and it shot off to somewhere in the divine kingdom. The thought of the chaos it could cause made Harkam feel better.

He doesn't like Helios and believes that the death of his son, Tyke, at Helios' hand is Stelios' fault. It is not the only thing he blames Stelios for. Whenever Harkam thinks back to how their conflict started, he would always blame the sun god.

He was a new grand god then, recently ascended. He had risen from the position of a divine lord to that of a grand god so he was proud and excited. He was especially excited when he attended his first divine meeting with other gods and the celestial supreme. He used to be outside the circle of gods, just on the edge but now he is within their midst, making decisions with them. It felt good to not be a tool for entertainment anymore.

He might have said something disrespectful to the sun god about his age in his excitement. Harkam didn't think it mattered how old Stelios is. They are both grand gods and of equal strength. That's what matters. So he should be allowed to make fun of the sun god. That train of thought sounds reasonable to Harkam.

The sun god didn't believe so and didn't take being called an "ancient almost obsolete tool" very well because of his pride. He even pushed being unreasonable to the next level by asking Harkam to apologize.

Chapter 339 The Most Important Use Of A Demigod.

Harkam had scoffed at the request to apologize. He felt it was harmless. He also didn't want to apologize because it will weaken his image as the new grand god. That's how their conflict started. First, it was the little things but it escalated when Stelios killed Pitran when the demigod failed his challenge.

Harkam doesn't care about Pitran just like he doesn't care about Tyke. He cares more about what the existence of Pitran meant to him. For a god to shift to the path of perfection, they need to attend the trial of heaven. But a god can't leave the plane as mortals can. The only way for them to leave is when a channel leading to the tower of heaven opens in the divine realm before the trial.

The thing is, gods can't take the channel however they wish. If they are stopped by the celestial supreme, then they can't participate in the trial. The celestial god of Order made a rule, that only those that have a divine lord that can substitute for them, will be allowed to attend the trial of heaven. That rule keeps the plane from being chaotic due to the constant divine war that would ensue in the absence of a god and the resulting vacancy in their domain.

It is a known fact among the gods that the celestial god of order and justice doesn't like change. To prevent gods from changing too much, he invented heroic feats as a requirement for a demigod to become a divine lord. The heroic quest will distract gods from fighting amongst themselves while also limiting change.

Pitran, the demigod of the sky god was on his 11th heroic feat. He needed just one more and he chose to challenge the sun god. He could have chosen any god but he chose the sun god in honor of the ancient conflict between the sky gods and Stelios. That decision didn't turn out well for Pitran and Harkam. 12 heroic feats will guarantee him the position of a divine lord, which means Harkam will be able to participate in the trial of heaven and progress forward.

There are other ways to become a divine lord. If a demigod is special or very entertaining but there isn't any opportunity for more feats, the council of gods can vote to make the demigod a divine lord. The majority vote of the gods or a decision of the celestial supreme can also bestow that position to any demigod.

It really is an entertaining thing to see a demigod challenge one of the oldest gods in the pantheon. So the gods were rooting for Pitran. Stelios chose to kill Pitran because he is favored by the gods and will likely get the position. It cost Harkam his opportunity and delayed him. So Harkam got angry and started a divine war. According to him though, it is all Stelios's fault and even until his dying breath, he will never admit that he was losing that war.

If they had been allowed to fight, Harkam would have been able to beat Stelios because of the sun god's weakness, but the celestial supreme didn't allow it. That left divine wars in the mortal plane. Sadly, the church of the sun had more resources and better stigmata than the church of the storm.

Even the divine war in the mortal realm didn't escalate because the celestial supreme didn't let it. There was no pillaging and burning of innocent believers. Just a battle between troops on a battlefield. If not for the help Harkam got from other gods who didn't want him to lose easily and cut off their source of entertainment, his loss would have been worse than losing more than 70 percent of his total troops and manpower in the mortal realm.

Things eventually calmed down over time and then Harkam had twins. It seemed that things were looking good for him. He now has two chances of acquiring a divine lord. It was proof that fucking around is a productive pastime. You get to have fun and produce the next generation at the same time. It is a very efficient hobby.

That was until Stelios had his own demigod a few years after. Harkam behaved like a stubborn and petty god would behave. He tried to sabotage Helios's second-star celebration. He was hoping to have Helios killed even though it will have little impact on Stelios since the sun god can't shift to the path of perfection with that glaring weakness of his. Things didn't turn out well for Harkam. He was tricked and had one of his opportunities taken from him.

The thing about being stubborn is that it is difficult to learn from your mistakes and even more so to change your ways. Harkam didn't learn anything when he insulted the sun god apart from the fact that Stelios is very old and proud. He didn't learn anything when he "didn't lose" that divine war apart from the fact that Stelios may be good at making Stigmata.

But something very important finally got through the thick wind that formed his head. He learned something as he watched Tyke die. It was that he must not lose Tanya. It is because of this lesson that he didn't whoop in excitement when Tanya tried to attack Helios.

Any other time, he would have encouraged her to disregard the rules of fair play during this heroic quest and maul Helios to death. Heck, he was the biggest supporter of Pitran's decision to challenge the oldest god in the pantheon.

So instead of cheering her on, he sighed and said, "Just leave him alone. It will do you no good."

It hurt him to tell someone not to make a stupid and rash decision. But the circumstances have turned him into the reasonable one who follows rules instead of the free-spirited and unfettered rascal he should be. It is a shame.

Of course, Tanya couldn't hear him because the gods have been banned from communicating with the demigods or offering any type of aid. So he can only watch, rant, and feel immensely grateful to the priests that held her down.

"I'll reward them if they survive the heroic quest." He promised.

He might forget about rewarding them later on or he might remember because of his volatile mood. What will come will come. That's how he rolls, always in the moment, doing whatever makes him happy and looking for more fun. Right now, watching the heroic quest is fun and very important, so he is content with watching.

"Not bad for a demigod of the sun. It's mostly the work of that pompous Stelios. But it isn't too bad." He said as he watched Helios put that bishop in her place.

He felt really impressed by Helios but it will be against his nature to say so even when he is alone with no one to hear him say it. He would rather attribute the strength that Helios showed to Stelios's rune-making skills so he won't complement Helios for it.

He also won't complement Stelios out loud because a god has ways of finding that out. For example, there are no secrets to that asshole god of fate and he is always using it to blackmail or embarrass people.

He began chanting, "Kill her. Kill her."

Helios had the priest by the neck like some helpless chicken and he wants more than anything else to watch Helios snap that helpless chicken's neck.

"What a wuss." He said when Helios didn't.

Cutting off an arm is not savage enough or nearly entertaining. So he cursed at Helios.

He watched the strike team deploy. He wouldn't admit it but he felt anxious. The anxiety reached a peak when the ant horde turned on the strike team.

"Stop panicking, you idiots." He shouted at the screen when the bishops began to panic.

He shouted at the archbishops. "Listen to the dwarf sun god."

He chuckled when he heard what Helios said about panicking after they have used the annihilator.

"Sounds reasonable for a sun lover. They are usually unreasonable and boneheaded."

Helios's argument to aim for the royal guards was reasonable but he won't admit to that either. He wants Tanya to be safe and a strike close to her might risk her life so it is a good decision to target the royal guards. Except Helios is wrong and Harkam disagrees with the plan to target the royal guards.

"Don't listen to the dwarf sun god. He is wrong. There's no one there. Why would you listen to anyone from the lineage of that old coot? They are all nuts in the head."

He got animated with his complaining. His wing body ballooned in size and the lightning strikes around him increased in number.

Helios made a lot of sense but Harkam can see on his screen that the royal guards returned to the ant mound immediately after the decision was made to aim for them.

Chapter 340 Strike Team Meets Royal Guards.

Harkam didn't find that suspicious at all. The only thing on his mind right now is that they will be wasting their one chance to use the annihilator. It wouldn't help the strike team which means Tanya might die. That's why he is complaining moments after complimenting the "dwarf sun god."

Complain as he might, no one listened to him. The annihilator was fired and it went to waste. The ant horde was disoriented but the damage done to them was minimal. The royal guards weren't where they should and most of the ant horde was at the front lines or concentrating on the strike team.

He was about to call for another divine intervention to save the strike team when he stopped. The divine intervention would have passed since he isn't the only anxious god with a demigod in the strike team. The other 7 gods will surely agree to use another annihilator and the celestial supreme might allow it since the first one was a waste. But he didn't need to because the ants stopped bothering the strike team and focused on the front line again.

"What's going on?" He asked quietly.

That's when Harkam began to get suspicious of the ants. The other gods sighed in relief and thought that the strike wasn't useless after all, it caused the ants to take the front lines seriously. But Harkam only felt suspicion. He doesn't know what is wrong with the ants but their behavior is odd.

First, the ant horde attacked the strike team. Then the royal guards retreated into the safety of the ant mound moments after the decision was made to target them. The ant horde left the strike team alone. Just a little more pressure and the ants will be able to get the strike team. But they backed off. If they hadn't backed off, more annihilators would have been used. He was trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together when he became distracted by Helios's fight with the royal guard.

"Stupid boy. All brawn and no brain. He made us waste that annihilator." He grumbled with displeasure.

He wasn't impressed. Helios is only displaying Stelios' runes in his opinion. No matter how fancy or cool the fight is, he won't complement it. Instead, he would find some way to discredit the boy. It doesn't matter that the wastage of the annihilator couldn't be Helios's fault. The boy's decision was impeccable. He doesn't have the divine vision of the gods. How was he to know that the royal guards would retreat into the protection of the ant mound?

It also didn't matter that Helios is doing stuff that other demigods of the sun god couldn't do as mana entities. Demigods of the sun god can't shoot light from their eyes and cannot create weapons of light and heat. They can't even flash around so quickly like that until they become transcendents. But since Helios is a demigod of the sun god and Harkam can sense a Stigmata on his body made with the divine energy of the sun god, it is enough for Harkam to believe that it is all the work of Stelios and anything related to Stelios must be hated.

"What's he doing? Why didn't he take that entrance?" He asked in confusion.

There's a perfectly good entrance there but Helios didn't use it. He didn't dwell on that useless detail for long because the strike team arrived at that entrance. They encountered three royal guards and began fighting. It wasn't suspicious, and neither did it matter that the strike team had an easy passage to the ant mound after the use of the annihilator. What's there to be suspicious about? It's probably because the ants chose to focus on the front lines after being scared by the use of the annihilator.

"Hurry up. Hurry up." He said anxiously.

It is obvious to him that the royal guards are reinforcements. If the strike team doesn't take them out quickly enough and enter the ant mound then they run the risk of getting ganged up on by more royal guard reinforcements or the ant horde behind them. They could be pincerred on both ends.

The strike team knew that too and exerted all their efforts. They don't need his encouragement to do their utmost to preserve their lives. All of them tried their best but Harkam has eyes only for Tanya.

"That's my girl." He roared in excitement as he watched Tanya.

The winds of the divine kingdom picked up speed because of his excitement. Tanya is the best warrior in Harkam's opinion. She is headstrong and actually strong. She pushed forward towards a royal guard with fearlessness. Her teammates warned her to wait for them to go forward together but she didn't listen. She seemed determined to fight even if she has to do it alone.

Her blood is boiling, her emotions rising, and her energy is spiking. She is angry and she decided to take it out on the royal guard. Her twin hammers got bigger as she used more divine power from her core. She struck the royal guard on the head but its carapace protected it. So she did it again and again.

Her hammer clashed with mandibles and the horns as the royal guard protected itself. The Goliath ant may be huge but it isn't clumsy. It wielded its body deftly and fended off Her attempts at bludgeoning it. But she is relentless. She doesn't intend to accept the resistance. It only riled her up.

"She is a natural at this."

Harkam felt like shedding a tear as he watched her performance.

Demigods can't use their core until they become transcendents. But they can utilize the divine energy within it to enhance stigmata with an affinity with their divine power. They have to harmonize with their core to achieve it. It is a very difficult thing to do because of the impediment caused by their law fragments. But Tanya has achieved it at a young age too. It meant she could break through to transcendence if she wants to.

The air around Tanya is charged. Her two hammers are charged and so is she as the energy of her core flowed through her. Her hair straightened and is flowing wildly. You can see it in her eyes that are sparking with electricity that she is out for murder.

"I won't lose to him." She screamed as she struck the Goliath ant again and again.

They all saw Helios fly above them. The carapace of the dead royal guard they found here means he killed one on his own. The fact that he isn't there right now means he killed the royal guard quickly and he could be inside the ant mound already. His fast speed means he might get to the queen first at this rate. She couldn't allow that. She must get the queen first and then kill Helios.

She doesn't care about the fair play policy that has been set up for this heroic quest. Things will be okay if she kills Helios as long as it doesn't cost the gods their fun. Her father will have to pay some fines but it will be worth it to crush that shiny poster boy.

Her relentless attack was working, somewhat. But only that. It is the combined effort of Tanya, her team, and two other demigod teams that are responsible for pushing back the single royal guard that they are fighting. Alone, a single team will be hard-pressed to survive a single royal guard. She can't take credit for the royal guard giving ground for the advancement of the strike team.

The carapace of the royal guards is too thick. Piercing, cutting, or slashing weapons are useless against it. Only blunt or bludgeoning weapons could deal any sort of damage to the internal organs beneath the diamond carapace. Divine spells wash over the reflective carapace dealing negligible damage. The priests cycled through their repertoire of spells and were rewarded with minimal success.

It is not that the ants are not susceptible to magic, it is just that the output of the priests is not enough to overwhelm the defense of the royal guards. Their fire spells aren't hot enough. Their water and wind spells are too weak to move the giant ants or cut their carapace. Their earth spells are not heavy enough. Their ice spells are too thin and weak to freeze them.

Royal guards got a lot more than size and strength from giants. They also got high resistance to spells. It is not based on law fragments and anti-magic domains like that of giants. Their defense is entirely based on their multipurpose diamond carapace.

The relatively thin limbs of the ants are not as vulnerable as Helios made them look. In fact, one must not get near the appendages because the royal guards can use them effectively as spears. The thin and sharp form of their legs makes them very effective blades that can easily cut through giant skin. The demigods have to be wary around the limbs so that they won't get injured.