

## **GREED 351**

Chapter 351 Free The Captives.

Making fire is easy for him. Making weak but virulent fire is very difficult. This fire needs to be weak so as to not damage the ant too much but be capable of spreading even with its low power. It requires very precise control of his divine power.

He took a handful of the specially made ball of fire and threw it to a slumbering royal guard. The fungi on the body of the ant caught fire. The fire spread quickly to cover the entire ant. It burned the fungi away and freed the nerves beneath the carapace.

A divine sense reached out from the slumbering ant as its mind awakened, "What is going on? Am I free?"

"Yes, you are. I freed you. Get up quickly and escape." He said to the ant while he threw more balls to the other ants.

His main aim in this heroic quest is to free these royal guards. He is not after the ant queen at all.

"Is the colony under attack?" It asked in concern.

"Sort of. But it's none of your concern, right? You're free from the colony from today onwards."

The ant turned silent and considered his words. "Yes, I am free. And that's all that matters."

It might be willful and craving for independence but its first instinct is to protect the colony and fight giants. That what's it was raised for after all. It took a while to reorganize itself and ascertain its identity as an entity separate from the colony.

Then it struggled to rise up. It was feeble and shaking at first but it quickly regained control of its limb. It stood up and towered above Soverick. This royal ant is even taller than number 1. It is almost 80 meters tall.

"Who are you?" It asked after getting a good look at Soverick.

"I am Helios, the son of the sun."

It bent its limbs and bowed to Helios.

"Thank you, son of the sun. You have my eternal gratitude. If you are ever in need of help, I Doofus will not turn you away."

"Your name is doofus?" Helios asked with a straight face while he continued to free the other giant ants. One ball of specially made fire is their get-out-of-jail card.

"Yes, what about it?"

"It's a very fine name."

The ant became happy. "It fills me with joy that you, my benefactor appreciate my name. I picked it myself on the day that I gained independence."

"You have a good taste for names. We'll talk more about it when we have time. We have to escape the ant mound as quickly as possible."

The others began to wake up. He and Doofus explained the situation to them as they woke up. A friendly face helped to ease the tension of seeing a giant as soon as they woke up. They all thanked him profusely after their situation has been explained to them. All of them thanked him except one.

This one is very old and has been under the influence of the rampaging fungus too much. It attacked Helios as soon as it recognized him to be a giant. Its mind has grown fuzzy but one thing is still clear and that is its life's aim to kill giants. Its age makes it the biggest, strongest, and most experienced when it comes to killing giants and now it wants to kill Helios.

Helios narrowed his eyes at the charging giant ant. This close to it means dodging is nearly impossible. But that is for others. He flashed to the side as the giant ant barreled by. The horns and mandibles missed him. Then he grabbed the ant's head with his two real arms, activated his domain, and rolled over the ant to the other side of it.

His flip pulled the head of the royal guard unnaturally to the side exposing its neck. The neck is a soft tissue unprotected by the diamond carapace. Another thing that he figured out from fighting number 11 is that the jointed parts of the ants are vulnerable. His target is this spot of weakness between the head and the thorax.

He has grappled the royal guard to the ground. If it wants to stand up, it needs to escape Helios's chokehold. The giant ant can't focus because of the heat of the domain. It was stunned by it. His domain also blinded the royal guard while his four artificial arms fused into one and morphed into a sharp blade.

The sharp blade fell on the exposed neck and severed it. The royal guard didn't know what hit. One moment, it had a head and the next, it is headless. Helios recalled his domain and stood up from the ground with the giant head in his hands.

"That's how to kill a royal guard." He said as he tossed the head up and down with his hands.

The other royal guards stood frozen with their eyes gawking. They had wanted to rush and help but the fight ended quickly. The royal guard that he fought doesn't know that yet. Its body is still flailing about on the ground while the mandibles on its head are still snapping.

The divine sense from the royal guard continued to transmit its incomprehensible feelings and emotions. Even being headless has not affected its state of madness. That all ended when Helios poured heat into the head. The soft tissues within it turned to ashes.

"Now that all issues have been fixed, it is time to go."

His words cut short anything they wanted to say. They remembered that they are supposed to be escaping so they all started running. They passed Number 1 on the way out.

"Is that you, chubby grubby?" Doofus asked with their language. It clicked its mandibles to make the sounds of its language.

It used to know Number 1 as a very hungry grub that has an unusual hankering for giant flesh. Chubby grubby is all grown now.

Chapter 352 We Will Meet Again.

"I am number 1 now." Number 1 replied with his divine sense.

"What? You have an awakened mind now?" Doofus asked in shock.

It isn't only his size that has changed since he was a grub. Chubby grubby has become the next in line to become Number 1. It is the oldest and the strongest royal guard in the current service of the queen.

"Yes."

Doofus was confused, "Then why are you still in service of the queen."

"I'm not like you. I don't have a choice yet."

"Has the queen become so strong as to control an awakened now?" Another escapee asked.

"She is about to. That's why we have to escape right now." Helios shouted to them to remind them of their situation.

Doofus bid farewell before he turned to leave. "Goodbye, then brother. We wish you well."

"I wish you well too." Number 1 said to him.

Each one of them said their goodbyes to Number 1 as they left. The escapees didn't speak with Helios while they escaped but they were communicating in their language. Meeting Number 1 really affected them. It came to them as a shock to see an awakened royal guard in the service of the queen.

The moment a royal guard awakens is the moment when they become willful. It is also the moment that they gain their divine sense. Their divine sense resists the mind control of the queen. Helios knows the queen has yet to become a transcendent or demigod, so she can't control awakened royal guards yet. She is using a shortcut to control Number 1 and the others.

What they didn't want finally happened. The queen broke through to become a demigod on their way out. Her divine power began to cover the entire ant mound marking it as her domain. The escapees picked up speed without the need for Helios to hurry them.

Doofus spoke to Helios when they finally passed the exit, "I understand why the colony is under attack now. The queen is getting stronger and the giants don't want that. It is a good thing that you saved us before we are forcefully conscripted for her war. We are even more grateful for your kindness."

"It's not a problem. It was easy to do and as the son of the sun god, I can't pass by when I see injustice. Besides, we helped each other too. I needed your help to escape. Go now, before it is too late."

Doofus didn't understand how they had helped him but it doesn't matter now especially since they could sense the divine power of the ant queen that has covered the ant mound. It meant that the queen is more than capable of controlling them now.

"I hope to see you again," Doofus said one last time before he left with his brothers.

'All it took was a little fire. You might not have escaped this conflict as you had thought.' Helios thought to himself as he waved them off.

Breaking them out helps him in more ways than one. For starters, they will be his alibi when he explains how he escaped the ant mound. There are other more important advantages he is gaining from freeing them and all it took was a little special flame.

His fire is special, no doubt. But it cannot cure the royal guards of their fungi problem, at least not permanently. What they are experiencing is a brief relief as the exposed parts of the fungi were burned away. The implanted sabotage protocol is still there under their diamond carapace and they still need the queen to stunt its growth.

If they don't stunt the fungus, it will grow again and freeze them. The queen will send royal guards under her control to bring them back since she is able to track them with the implants. She will then keep them in a cavern for the time she is able to control them. They won't be able to escape again unless another nosy person set them free which is even more unlikely now that she can control them no matter how willful they are.

Their escape is not futile though. He has reasons for freeing them which will come into play soon. The royal guards don't need to be free of fungus to be useful to Legion.

'We will meet again. Probably very soon. But for now, the show must go on.' Helios thought to himself as he watched them leave.

He removed his armor and the artificial arms. He became his normal figure except his skin is white to match his eyes instead of being yellow. The golden runes on his skin showed clearly. They showed clearly as the golden sun on his back. The change is due to the increase in divine power he got access to through the Stigmata. The power of the sun god is thrumming within him.

"This stigmata always leaves me in wonder." He said appreciatively.

He really liked the stigmata but he is saying it out loud to the benefit of those listening to him. If they think the power of his rune is due to his stigmata, they will think it is Stelios's work. They will bother Stelios for it instead of him. Then he flew into the air towards the front lines. They must be expecting him.

Meanwhile On The Frontlines.

A temple has been built within the headquarters. There was no building before within the headquarters, only posts, but the meeting of the gods requires a temple. It's not like you expect the god's avatars to just stand around under the sun even though they can't feel the heat of the sun or any discomfort since they are gods and also since they are not even here in their real bodies.

The temple may not be performing the useful function of protection, but it is performing the "very important" function of style. You just can't separate gods from style and luxury.

Chapter 353 The Report.

Eternal life is a very long time. It is a blessing and a curse to live forever. The true immortals are suicidal and manic. Their immortality means they can do almost anything. Gods are not true immortals. There's no coming back from death for them so they have to live safely.

Their list of exciting things to do is limited by the rules that bind gods. They can't descend to the mortal realm in their main body and they can't live the plane even if it were not sealed shut. That small list gets reduced further by the rules of the Celestial Supreme. Playing war games is nice and all but it is to gods important that they enjoy their life. This is where Style and luxury come in.

Style is so important that the temple is taking up most of the space in the headquarters. That is after the headquarters has been expanded to accommodate the temple. The temple is large and built grandly to contain the hundred and one gods in total.

That number didn't happen by chance. The celestial supreme had a lot to do with it. The number 101 is pretty symmetrical and good to look at for someone who wants to control everything. Unfortunately, it had to be ruined by a new god. 102 is an eyesore, so the celestial supreme allowed only 101 seats in the temple. He won't suffer that ugliness in a number anymore. If the new god decides to attend their meeting, then he or she can stand.

"What is taking the dwarf sun so much time?" Someone asked in irritation.

The temple was built quickly, almost instantaneously. So the gods were seated before Helios arrived at the front lines. Their meeting ended when he came out of the ant mound. It didn't take him much time to reach them but some of them are already getting impatient with him.

"You're clearly in a bad mood, Harkam. Maybe you should keep quiet while he speaks." Stelios spoke from his front-row seat.

"You can't tell me what to do. I'll speak when I want and there's nothing you can do to stop me." Harkam barked.

"Silence." The Celestial supreme ordered and the hall was silenced.

He is someone that can tell all of them what to do and he ordered them to be silent.

The gods didn't become quiet because of fear or respect. They didn't stop talking because he asked them. They stopped talking because he made them. The celestial supreme's order forcefully shut down all sound and froze every means of communication in the temple. So nothing would be heard even if they continued talking.

'What a douche. Throwing his weight around. I was going to keep quiet anyway.' Harkam thought to himself.

Harkam became sullen on top of being impatient. Thankfully he didn't have to wait for long. Helios entered the temple. He entered in his empowered form with white skin, golden tattoos, and a faint glow around him.

He bowed to the gods and said in greeting, "Helios, the son of the sun god is here at the behest of the high and mighty gods."

Harkam felt like badgering the dwarf sun questions immediately but he held himself back. He has learned his lesson to be patient.

The celestial supreme smiled at Helios. "Welcome, son of the sun god. I was there the day you were born. It seems almost like yesterday. You have grown well."

The smile didn't seem sincere. Maybe it's the unsettling white pupils on the background of the black sclera of the celestial supreme's eyes. Helios continued to bow while the celestial supreme scanned him thoroughly.

"You may rise."

"I thank the Celestial Supreme for his Providence." He said graciously and stood straight.

The other gods began to scan him too now that the Celestial Supreme is done with him. He maintained his composure through it all. It is a violation of privacy to scan someone with your divine sense but the gods obviously don't care about Helios' opinion or privacy. After all, there is nothing he can do to them if he gets angry about it.



The God of order and justice asked him, "How do you find your experience in the divine dungeon?"

Helios answered. "It was terrifying."

"What was terrifying about it?"

"The royal guards."

"What about the royal guards?"

"They were strong and terrifying."

His answer didn't seem to satisfy the god of knowledge. "And yet you killed one on your own."

Helios nodded. "Yes, I did."

He didn't explain further than that. A statement stating the obvious shouldn't need more explanation unless a specific question is asked. Even then, his answer might not be what they want.

The Celestial Supreme and the gods became silent for a while before speaking again.

"It must have been tough on you to survive alone. I heard you didn't go with the strike team."

Helios answered, "I didn't have confidence in their plan so I didn't follow them. Now, I have come to realize that it is simply hubris that blinded me or I might not have failed."

The Celestial Supreme nodded and asked the question that they all wanted. "Tell us what you experienced in the ant tunnel."

Helios smiled shyly. He scratched his head awkwardly.

He said, "I'm sure the gods saw my whole trip. I would rather not retell the story of how I failed the heroic quest. I'm sure I am the only demigod that returned in failure. I am such a disappointment to my divine father. He had such high hopes for me but I blew them. I blame my inadequate skills and my pride. Maybe I should have trained more."

The gods looked around and shared a look with each other. They don't want to earn the Celestial Supreme's ire so they communicated a silent message amongst themselves. It is more of a question.

They asked each other, "If Helios is a failure, then what are the others?"

Chapter 354 Truth Or Lies. Action Vs Motive.

Then there's the reason why they called him here. It is because they did not see his trip through the ant mound at all. Can they claim they did not? It will surely damage their image in front of this little demigod that thinks so highly of them if they admit to their inability to watch him in the ant mound.

"I noticed the divine domain over the ant mound. It must mean that the ant queen has been killed and a god is claiming the ant mound as a trophy. I wonder who the demigod that earned this heroic feat is."

Helios continued to rant and talk about things except for the one thing that the gods wanted to hear. They want to hear about his experience but they don't want to admit to having failed to track him. They believe that the hidden god obscured him but he doesn't know what they think. His reluctance to share information may shed more light on their thoughts if they admit their failure. So he is reminding them of their failure.

"Enough." The Celestials Supreme said after having had enough of the nonsense that Helios is spewing.

Helios became silent like a meek little demigod.

"Stelios, talk to your son and get this along." The Celestial Supreme delegated to the sun god.

'He is unraveling, what a fun sight.' Harkam thought to himself.

Harkam quirked his lips. He enjoyed the celestial supreme being embarrassed more than he thought he would. The celestial supreme was calm during the divine council but he has already snapped twice during this meeting.

Stelios coughed, "The thing is that you are the only one that returned from the ant mound."

Helios nodded shamefully and interrupted, "As expected. I returned in defeat. I have shamed you, divine father."

Stelios raised his hand and Helios became silent again.

The sun god continued, "As I was saying. You're the only one that returned but not for the reason you think. How should I put this?"

Harkam cut in immediately. "The others failed. They were kidnapped."

He has had enough of the hemming and hawing

Helios smiled a little. "That is not funny, your divine excellency the sky god. I don't dare to say it with certainty, but a situation where demigods are kidnapped right underneath the noses of gods might be insulting of my intelligence and insulting of the might of gods."

Harkam almost blew his top. Lightening flashed through his eyes and he was getting ready to smite this little shit that dared call him negligent and powerless. He even called all the gods negligent and powerless to their faces. The Celestial Supreme stopped things before they spiral with a well-placed order.

"Silence.

The divine power that Harkam was accumulating deflated like a punctured balloon as his divine energy froze. Helios runes also winked out and became dull. His divine energy froze and so did all of his runes. The golden tattoos on his body disappeared.

The Celestial Supreme glared at both Harkam and Stelios and grumbled. "If you want to do something and you want it done right you have to do it yourself."

He turned to Helios. "Now listen to me. A new unknown god is helping the ant colony for a purpose that is beyond us. What we do know is that the demigods have been kidnapped due to their joint effort. Tell us what you experienced in the ant mound. Start from why you didn't take that entrance."

'So they think a god is helping the ant queen. That's good to know.' Helios thought to himself.

By withholding information from them, he was able to get their thoughts about the situation. The gods might think they are the ones interrogating him, and they will be wrong. Even if they meet halfway, they are both interrogating each other. Helios knows that even that might be an overestimation.

He asked shakily, "Does that mean that the ant queen is still alive and my fellow demigods are in danger?"

"Yes, they are in danger. Whatever you tell us will help us to rescue them. Now speak."

He told them of his experience. He said he felt danger from the first entrance he came upon so he used another entrance that felt safer. He didn't face many obstacles till he was ambushed. He fought with everything he had until he stumbled onto a cavern containing sleeping royal guards. Some of his flames fell on them as he was clashing with the royal guards and it woke them up. The awakened royal guards then helped him to escape.

The Celestial Supreme was listening attentively while gauging if Helios is telling the truth or not. It is one of his abilities under his domain of justice and it vetted that Helios isn't lying. The words that Helios spoke matched the prints of events that occurred in the past. It is this method that the Celestial Supreme used to verify the truth. It is the most reliable method to determine the truth of events because nothing can change the past but self-deception and delusion can change one's opinion or memory of truth and lies.

Only actions matter and through it the Celestial Supreme can verify that it is the truth that Helios entered the tunnel, was ambushed by a very strong opponent, tried his best, found the cavern, freed the captives, and escaped with them.

All of that happened just as Helios said. Why it happened is another thing that he can't confirm. It is irrelevant to the Celestial Supreme to know why anyways. Justice doesn't care about motive. Only action matters.

Stelios added after Helios is done, "We can confirm that he escaped with other royal guards. We saw him come out with them and they are currently leaving the area around the ant mound."

The Celestial Supreme nodded in agreement. He doesn't suspect Helios and the other gods don't suspect Helios either. They have seen his prowess when he killed a royal guard on his own. If there's someone among the demigods strong enough to survive an ambush, then it has to be Helios.

Chapter 355 Cute And Inconsequential.

Helios's narration seemed believable. He is strong and luck was on his side. He happened to come across help in the form of retired royal guards. Then they escaped together.

No one suspects that he knows that the cavern would be there. How would he know that? Helios didn't lie about stumbling into the cavern. He knew the area it should be in, not the area it is. So he had to try several times to find it. He stumbled upon it, he just didn't stumble aimlessly into the cavern.

Helios asked carefully, "So what will be done about the demigods? I'm sure they are suffering."

The Celestial Supreme answered. "We wait for their demands."

Harkam wanted to speak up but he kept quiet. He doesn't like to wait but he thought it better not to voice his disagreement especially since he doesn't have a better idea. Instead, he turned his ire to Helios.

"You're done here. Your presence is no longer needed. Leave unless you have something important to say. We don't need the help of a useless mortal..."

He wanted to say more but he wisely chose to keep silent when he saw the frosty eyes of the Celestial Supreme.

"I understand that you're impatient so I will let this go for now. This will be the last of this. The next time you dismiss an audience that I haven't dismissed, you will face the consequences in full."

Harkam stood up and bowed slightly, "I'm grateful for your understanding. I promise that I will not interrupt the proceedings of this meeting again."

The Celestial Supreme nodded and Harkam sat down. The atmosphere in the temple turned chilly. No one wanted to talk after that particular nasty reprimand with the threat of death.

Helios spoke up again and everyone's attention turned to him. "I have something that we can do while we wait. We can capture those escaped royal guards."

"And what use will that be?" The Celestial Supreme asked.

"They are clearly important to the ant queen even more now that she has the power to control them. We can use them as bargaining chips with her during negotiations. I'm sure some giant bugs are nothing to the pantheon in the grand scheme of things that's why you ignored them. Even the god that is helping them is of little importance. If the god was so strong, they wouldn't be hiding. They will fail at the end of the day."

He made a suggestion and also gave the gods an excuse for why they didn't come up with it themselves. It is essential to keep your superiors happy as you serve them. They won't notice when you poison them.

The gods began to murmur quietly. Even Harkam nodded his head appreciatively.

'This boy has a good head on his neck. It's just like that time he suggested that we bomb the area close to the ant mound. He makes really good suggestions.'

"That's a good suggestion. I am impressed with your resourcefulness." The Celestial Supreme praised him.

"It's nothing, your divine greatness. I was just thinking about everything that could help my fellow demigods." Helios bowed graciously.

"You've made a helpful suggestion and must be rewarded for it. Ask me what you want. I will grant it to you as long as it is not that I should allow you to become a divine lord." The Celestial Supreme spoke magnanimously.

Helios became shy again. He glanced at the sun god before turning back to the Celestial Supreme. "I don't dare ask for anything. It is already my grace to be of significance."

The Celestial Supreme frowned. He said to Stelios, "Surely you must know what he wants. He is your son after all."

Stelios smiled. He asked Helios. "You want the sun core don't you?"

Helios nodded. "I want the sun core but I wouldn't dare ask for it. You might have other plans for it."

Stelios shook his head with mirth. He waved his hand and threw three sun cores to him. "That should do."

Helios bowed after receiving them. "I thank my divine father and the Celestial Supreme for this graciousness shown to this lowly and cowardly demigod that chose to escape instead of braving death like a hero should."

His words stroked the gods' ego and they felt good.

The Celestial Supreme felt satisfied too. "You may go now. We will call you if we need you for anything."

"I'll always be at the service of the great gods." Helios bowed again and left the temple.

"What a cute kid." The goddess of power and might said Stelios.

That's what most gods thought about him. He is cute. He may have given a piece of useful information, but he is still their plaything. And just like Helios said, they only missed his idea because they thought

the royal guards were inconsequential. So it is a case of an inconsequential demigod noticing some inconsequential bugs.

They didn't suspect that they might have missed something about him just like they missed the bugs because they know all that is there to know about Helios. Some of them were there when he was born and are aware of his short unexposed life in the sun city. He is just a cute naive demigod. Who would suspect him of more?

Helios left the temple and found a corner to absorb the sun cores. The gods decided to wait patiently but didn't stay idle. The escaped royal guards were captured swiftly. The gods also called for more troops from various churches. One of them called for the rare Colossus.

Tree Father's POV.

A few years ago. A seed was tossed into the plane from beyond the void of the plane. This seed landed in the desert. It didn't dry up and die. It began to grow despite the harsh environment. It was tossed into a desert without water and yet it grew. It didn't grow into a herb or shrub or some ordinary plant. It grew into a tree.

Chapter 356 What Is The Father Of Trees?

This tree from the unusual seed had so much vitality that it affected its barren environment. Other plants began to grow around it until a small grassy plain formed around the tree. The tree wasn't affected by the barren environment. Its growth seemed limitless. It continued to grow even surpassing 100 meters all the while no one knew that it was growing. It became a green and lively spot in the brown and dead desert.

Plants are very rare in the Zargoth plane. Trees are more so. The lack of ambient mana and the cause for this lack of ambient mana means that plants can't grow as they are stripped of their vitality. The sand storms that are very common in the Zargoth plane make it near impossible for even hardy plants that need only a small amount of water to survive in the plane. It doesn't help that there's no rain all year round. Just all year scorching heat from the sun. The inhabitants of this plane have made the environment caustic to plants.

You would expect very tall trees in a barren desert to be noticed pretty quickly. Tall trees that grow to the height of 100 meters in less than three days should have drawn a lot of attention. Yet, no one noticed this tree. Not even the nosy gods and their controlling leader.



The only entity that noticed this tree is very confused about it. This entity doesn't care for the height of the tree or the time it took to reach such a height. It is more concerned about the divinity of the tree, but it can't understand what it is sensing from the tree.

So this entity decided to do the barest necessary minimum. It made an extra seat for it among the gods. This entity thought that whatever the tree is, it is some sort of god and a seat amongst the gods can't be a wrong idea.

That's the only thing this entity did. Has the will of the divine plane, it is its job to announce this being to the pantheon of the Zargoth plane. But announcing to the pantheon must mean that this tree is a god. If there is one thing that the will of the divine plane knows, it is that this tree isn't a god.

The tree might have powerful divine power with a signature that is previously unseen but that doesn't mean it is a new god or a god at all. No god can live within the mortal realm anyway. So this tree is not a god. It is why the divine plane did not do more.

The tree grew in peace with nothing changing until it reached a height of 1 km. You would think someone would have spotted such a tall tree in the desert. The grass plain around the tree has become a forest and has also expanded into the size of a city of giants of order. It even has a barrier that separates the forest from the world just like normal giant cities. Still, no one noticed. The tree stopped growing at that point and concentrated its effort on making fruits.

These fruits grew to be very large. They are round and more than 10 meters in diameter. When they were finally ripe, they were plucked by a vine of the tree and brought close to the ground. The fruits were then crushed by the vine and their contents were made to fall on some of the small trees in the forest.

The juice of the fruits sunk into the trees and was absorbed quickly. These selected trees began to transform. They uprooted themselves and formed limbs made of leaves, branches, and tree bark. A head was formed on top of their neck. These trees became humanoid plants.

They are all different, with different forms and sizes. There are a hundred of them and they are all unique. Some grew to be over 100 meters while some were as small as 30 centimeters. Some have round heads on small defined necks while some have a tree crown for their head, a tree trunk formed their neck and torso.

Some have vines shaped into limbs while others used tree branches as arms and roots as legs. Some have four legs or four arms instead of two. There are some that have wings made of leaves and can fly.

These Ents, plant elementals, plant spirits, or leaflings bowed to the magnificent tree that birthed them. The leaves of the tree rustled in response. It instructed them of their purpose. So they rose up and went to perform their duties. They all left the forest but in different directions. They should have been noticed but the power of their creator shielded them.

One of them approached a city and chose to stay outside of it. It transformed back into a tree and buried its roots in the desert sand. Giants went by every day but no one noticed this tree. A particular young giant passed by the tree on a particularly favorable day.

SYNCLAIR was her name. She was walking absentmindedly as she is returning to the city. She is sad and has a lot on her mind. She has just gotten word of the death of her parents. Her two parents didn't die in an unfortunate accident or of old age. They died on the battlefield. It should be a glorious thing but SYNCLAIR doesn't think so because the war that they were fighting is a divine war. So her parents died because of the conflict between some gods. She doesn't understand why they can't fight and kill each other instead of causing the deaths of mortals with their squabbles.

She is just 26 years old, a child and yet she has lost her parents. But she has to take care of herself now. It may be because of her childishness that she believes that the gods took her parents. Childish or not, it is an opinion that can get her killed by the gods that her parents used to worship.

Chapter 357 Priestess Of The Cult Of Life.

It may be a sacrilegious, blasphemous, and generally unpopular opinion but it is not unfounded. It is also one that permeates the society of giants. It is like cracks in a rock that is the rigid society of giants. It just so happens that plants are very good at using such cracks to break rocks apart with their roots.

Her blasphemous opinion is why she doesn't appreciate the sum of money that they gave her for killing her parents. She has gone to the temple to ask for her parent back instead of the money but the gods refused to talk to her. That's why she left the city, to shout and curse the gods where they won't be watching.

She noticed something out of the corner of her eye as she is returning from her cursing session.

"Are my eyes playing tricks on me?"

She thought she had seen a tree in a desert. Trees and plants are rare. She has only seen them on farms belonging to the goddess of agriculture. Even then, it's the rich that can afford fruits. She was intrigued. So she turned to look but she didn't see anything.

"I must have been daydreaming."

She was about to turn away when she saw the tree appear and then disappear from her vision. Now she has to find out if the tree is really there. She moved forward and began to search. This continued for a while. She searched for hours. Whenever she is about to give up, a tree will flash in her vision and it will be much closer to her than before.

She didn't give up and continued to search. She was rewarded with success when she finally found the tree.

"This is magnificent." She said in awe.

The tree is beautiful. Something about it pulled her to it. She arrived before the tree and simply stood mesmerized by the tree. Maybe it is the way the leaves of the tree wave in the wind or the graceful contours of its bark or its emerald crystal leaves. The tree might as well be a treasure. Something about the tree compelled her to admire it and she felt at peace for the first time in a while. The tree is 15 meters tall and she is 8 meters tall so the tree towered over her.

Suddenly the leaves caught fire. A green flame spread out through the branches but didn't burn the tree. The emerald leaves of the tree had turned into flames. A presence descended from the tree onto SYNCLAIR. This time she knelt down and bowed in worship.

"Are you a god?" She asked with trepidation.

"I am your Salvation." A voice boomed in her head.

The voice sounded like the voice of her dead father. It was full of authority. The voice also felt like the voice of her dead mother. It was full of love and care.

She asked fearfully. "What do you want from me?"

A god is a big deal in the Zargoth plane. The attention of one is life-changing.

"You need Salvation and so I have come. I will be your father and mother. You will be my child. The child of the Tree father." The voice answered.

SYNCLAIR began to sob. She felt at home beneath the tree. A soothing feeling filled her body and mind. She felt happiness and joy.

"I am so unworthy. I don't deserve this grace. What can I ever do to repay you?"

"Spread the word of my love to others. Tell them that a time will come when I will call for them and open my kingdom of paradise to them. In my paradise will be peace and plenty. There shall be no war or strife. It will be heaven on earth."

SYNCLAIR wept more and agreed. Her life changed from that moment. She transformed from being SYNCLAIR the rebellious orphan to SYNCLAIR the priestess of the god of Life. She became one of the many first members of the Cult of the Tree Father. They spread the word of peace and love secretly among the giants. Many chose to believe this tree father and as time passed the number of believers increased.

Most didn't care about the promise of paradise at first, but their belief changed after staying around the tree and basking in its presence. Something about the tree is calming. It makes them happy to be around the tree. Their faith in the tree father increased the longer they spent being around the tree until they have become completely devoted.

The thing that turned unbelievers into zealots might be the pollen of the tree that makes them feel good when it enters their bodies. Those that breathe in the pollen get attached to the tree and become protective of it. This particular plant spirit is one of the few that can produce this special type of pollen. That's why it was sent here to start the cult of the tree father.

The plant spirits are not only unique physically, but they also have unique abilities. They were sent to different parts of the plane to do different things based on their talents and abilities. Some met with failure while others met with great success. One of them came upon an ant mound at the far side of the plane opposite to the position of the tree father. The plant had to walk the entire length of the plane to get there.

The plant spirit passed through the sentry and defenses of the ant colony and entered deep into the ant mound. It passed underneath a royal guard standing guard outside of the central room where the queen stays.

The plant spirit entered the room and examined the queen. The queen looked very different from adult ants. She looks like a giant white worm, like an undeveloped grub but way bigger. She is segmented and has tiny legs attached to each segment. She also has very sharp mouth parts that are iconic of her race. She is the queen of a colony of Goliath ants

Chapter 358 Where It All Started.

It is believed that queens are formed when certain grubs don't develop as they should and grow into adults. Instead, they develop ovaries and the hive mind. No one knows what triggers such changes except the queens. But what is known is that new queens will not form from grubs until the old queen has reached the end of her lifespan as a mana entity. The new queens will compete with the power of their minds and wrestle control of the workers and soldiers from their dying mother.

This competition will continue until the queen dies. The grub with the strongest mind will have the most workers and soldiers. It will chase away the other queens while it inherits the central room and the infrastructure of the colony. It will gain a strong start in life by feasting on the body of its dead mother while the others will have to start everything from scratch.

This queen is one of the many that didn't inherit her mother's resources. She started this colony as a small weak queen without an exoskeleton. She grew her exoskeleton herself and it grew to become what it is today. But just like her mother, she too will die in time. Nothing can change that fact apart from the evolution of her lifeform.

It is inherent in life to grow and multiply, to struggle, and to become stronger through competition until eventually immortality is achieved. This queen also wants to be immortal but she is already finding it impossible to become transcendent. How is she to overcome that hurdle within this plane that is under the thumb of the giants of order?

The queen has a pair of tiny limbs on each segment of her body but she can't move. There are two structures that connect to her back like two wings. These structures start out soft and fleshy but become hard as the toughest carapace where they join with the walls of the central room.

This central room is her exoskeleton. It expands little by little over the years as workers add their waste to it to become the mountain of an ant mound it is today. When your main food is sand, your waste product can be very hard. She is currently being tended to by a multitude of workers and no one noticed the plant spirit.

"What do you think, Creator?" The plant spirit asked its creator through their bond.

The plant spirit had visited other ant mounds and other species in the Zargoth plane. It will always ask for its creator's opinion. Then it would move on depending on what its creator says.

The tree father answered. "The location is perfect. She will do."

Plant spirit considered the location but couldn't find anything good about it. This ant mound is on the other side of the plane directly opposite to the forest of the tree father. It had to cross the entire plane to get here. There were other ant mounds closer to the forest but the tree father chose this and called it perfect.

'Your wish is my command, creator.'

It didn't question the tree father though. A god sees things farther ahead than a mortal. There must be something the tree father sees that makes this location perfect. Besides, it is just a tool of the tree father. It was not created to think or for its opinion.

The tree father used the plant spirit as its avatar. It descended into it and made his presence known to the queen. A plant spirit suddenly appeared in the central room. Its eyes are glowing with a green light from the green flame burning within it. The phantom of a giant tree appeared behind it. The phantom exuded majesty and awe.

The plant spirit is certainly smaller than the queen. It is about the size of soldier ants who are between 5-10 meters but the ant queen felt intimidated. She felt it in her being that the entity the plant spirit

represents can kill her easily if it wants to. So she quivered in fear. All her workers stopped whatever they were doing and froze while staring at the phantom tree.

A voice said to her. "Fear not. I have not come to threaten you. I have brought to you a great opportunity."

The queen calmed down. She was panicking earlier because of the unannounced appearance of a strange entity in her most secure location. It is natural for her to be afraid. She is still afraid, but she has accepted that there's nothing that she can do if this entity is a threat to her. She might as well listen to what it has to say since it didn't try to kill her immediately.

"I bring you the promise of power. I can help you achieve your wishes. Do you not wish to become more than what you are? I can make that happen." The Tree Father said to her.

The tree exuded majesty in waves. A kind of majesty that makes its speaker very compelling. The queen has a powerful mind and so she is resistant to external mental influence. She didn't fall prey to the peace and warmth wafting from the plant spirit but she was still compelled. It is the promise of power that allured her.

"What do you want from me in exchange, my lord?" She asked carefully.

She knows that nothing is ever given for free. A deal with a god can be as insidious as a deal with a demon. But she also knows that she is not in a position to bargain. If things don't turn out well then she might die. That is the fate of the weak. She has no choice in the matter and might die even though she didn't participate willingly.

"There is a demigod that I need. I want to get my hands on him and hope to lure him here. I can't do so myself for some reasons that I can't share. So you will be my tool to lure that demigod here."

Chapter 359 It Was Supposed To Be A Game.

The mind of the queen swooned. She is just a normal queen. She might be a little hardworking and unsatisfied with her station in life and wants more power but the talk of demigods fills her with fear. Demigods mean gods and gods mean danger. If she goes along with this entity then she won't die of old age while her descendants fight over her things. It is more likely that she will be killed by the gods or the unlikely chance that she might actually become stronger. Either way, her destiny will change.

"What am I to do to lure this demigod here?" She asked.

The Tree father answered. "First, you become a demigod.

The queen perked up after hearing that. Becoming a demigod is not the same as becoming a transcendent but it is something good too. It means access to divine power. It means she can increase her control mechanism and become able to use those disobedient royal guards that she has been keeping for future use.

'I never thought I'll ever be able to use them again. Maybe dying while your queenly descendants fight over your things is overrated after all. If this is what I get for just joining this entity, then maybe I will get to become a transcendent after all.' The queen thought in anticipation.

Her dead hopes and dreams began to burn again. Becoming a demigod will extend her lifespan and make it easier to gather resources. Becoming a transcendent is not a hopeless dream anymore.

"I agree." She said wholeheartedly.

"Good. You should know that this is going to be dangerous but if you play your cards right and the situation favors you, then you will have the strength you seek."

The two of them began hashing out a plan. The plant spirit explained the situation to her and informed her of the danger. The queen agreed so they planned and began to prepare for an invasion. The queen increased the production of worker and soldier ants.

The plant spirit also helped to increase the strength of her troops. It gave some of its blood to the royal guards in service of the queen. The green glowing divine blood contains divine power and immense vitality. The royal guards grew stronger than they should be and even awakened their minds, but they still remained under the queen's control because their mind isn't strong enough to escape her control. The vitality in the blood helped their bodies to grow stronger but it had little effect on the strength of their minds.



Time passed as the colony got to work in preparation. The plant spirit was also preparing. It busied itself with producing a shiny crystal fruit. It took days and physical toil on the plant spirit but it finally finished with the fruit.

"Take this." The plant spirit plucked the fruit from its arm and offered it to the ant queen.

"With it, you will have your opportunity to fight for greatness. This is your final chance to refuse."

The plant spirit spoke while dangling the fruit at the queen. How could she say no to such a good thing? Every trepidation and fear that she had melted at the sight of the fruit. The ant queen directed one of the workers to retrieve the crystal fruit. The worker then brought it to her and fed her.

The plant spirit looked up and said, "It has begun."

It has already begun the moment the plant spirit plucked the crystal fruit. The Celestial Supreme noticed the fluctuation of pure divinity in the mortal realm immediately. He investigated and found the location of the fluctuations. Even if the ant queen refused to receive the fruit, a heroic quest would have been created for her head and the tree father would have still gotten his way.

'How admirable of a Celestial. He certainly will be a problem. I have sacrificed a lot. I hope this works.'  
The Tree Father thought to himself.

It is not normal for a Celestial Supreme to know so much about the happenings of the mortal realm like the god of order and justice. This sensitivity to change is because of the celestial supreme's domain of order. Order means control so order needs control. Control requires information and power.

So the god of Order has an edge over other celestial supremes in the aspect of surveillance due to the specialty of his domain. He has placed certain mechanisms all around the mortal plane to sense changes and acquire information about significant changes. He uses the information he acquires to have a tight hold over the happenings of the mortal realm. It is why the creation of a new god without his knowledge is hitting him so hard.

He used to know about things that no other god knows. He did discover the attempt to create a demigod while the other gods were clueless about it. The Celestial Supreme sent a scout to the ant

mound and used the scout as an extension of his Influence to scan the ant mound. All it found was an ant queen trying to digest some divinity. He didn't see the plant spirit at all. He concluded that she was lucky to find divinity and is attempting to become a demigod.

It didn't matter where the ant queen got the divinity since the Celestial Supreme had the mortal realm scoured for divine items and confiscated unaccounted ones many years ago. There hasn't been any such attempt for many origin cycles but he accepts that he is not perfect and he can make mistakes. The queen getting one means he clearly missed one. Killing her will end the problem there and there.

But she isn't a threat. At least, she isn't a threat worthy of much attention. She is just a mana entity that will become a demigod at most. So he issued a heroic quest and specified the amount of help that the demigods can have. He made eliminating the ant queen into a game to entertain the gods.

Chapter 360 Behind The Scenes.

He made it into a game and like any good game, he made rules for it to make it fun. Like the fact that they can only use one annihilator and no transcendents can be involved. He also stopped the demigods from trying to kill each other since this is a joint mission. He didn't specify if they can kill each other after the mission because it wouldn't be fun to watch otherwise. He was particularly looking forward to Helios and Tanya hashing out their rivalry.

It was supposed to be a fun game. The arrival of an army did not change that. Giants of order from 9 churches arrived soon after. They came with an army and waged war on the ant colony. The death of some giants and ants only made the game more fun to watch. Demigods arrived later. The target of the tree father arrived even later. The queen saw him through the eyes of multiple ants.

"The one you asked for has arrived." The ant queen informed the ant plant spirit.

The plant spirit had turned into a small burning tree. Its green light illuminated the central room in a ghostly light. But the aura from the tree is soothing instead of chilling.

"That is good." The plant spirit said curtly.

"He is shiny and confusing. What is he anyway? A mana entity or a transcendent?" The ant queen asked.

What she wants to know is exactly why this entity is after this demigod but she can't ask that. So she tried to get some other information about the target.

The plant spirit answered. "As long as he doesn't transform into a Colossus or a Behemoth then he is not a transcendent."

The arrival of the demigods didn't change much. The ants continued to fight the soldiers. Then the strike team was deployed.

"Let them pass through. Then you should focus on them when they are in deep." The plant spirit told the queen.

The queen asked unsure of such a decision. "Are you sure? What about the annihilators? I'll lose all my workforce if they are allowed to fire them."

"Yes, I'm sure. Don't question me again."

The voice of the tree father took on a cold reprimanding tone.

"I'm sorry. I was just scared."

The queen apologized quickly and made the ants increase their attacks on the frontlines while ignoring the strike team.

"I told you it will be dangerous. I assure you that I didn't sacrifice some of my divinity so that you can be killed so easily."

Then the ants turned their focus to the strike team and were about to crush them. All ten of her hearts were in her throat because of her anxiety. She knew that those annihilators cannot all be for show.

"I did as you said. The target is not even among them." She informed the tree.

"Don't worry. He will come. Meanwhile, you should bring your royal guards into the ant mounds for protection."

"If I might ask why should I do that? Surely they will be better used to kill the demigods if they come too close to the ant mound."

"Bring them in if you don't want the annihilator that is aimed at them to kill them." The tree warned then fell silent.

The ant queen did as the tree father told her. She had stationed royal guards at easily accessible entrances to prevent any intruder from gaining entry. It is not beneath the gods to prepare a stealth force to sneak past her army into her mound. But now she instructed them to withdraw into the ant mound. She found out it was the right decision soon after. The annihilator missed her royal guards entirely.

She sighed in relief. "That was close."

Her relief turned into joy when the target began to approach the ant mound in a flashy streak of light.

"You were right. They were aiming for my royal guards and the target is on his way." She told the tree.

The tree didn't speak. It remained silent.

"You should let up on the strike team now." The tree informed her soon after a short while.

"Why? I almost have them?"

A little more pressure and she will break their force domain. Then she will be able to swarm them.

"The gods will use the other annihilators if you don't let up. Let them come to the ant mound."

The queen found the situation very odd. First, it was to focus on the strike team then it is to leave them. But she didn't refuse. She understood her position to be a hired henchman. She has to follow orders because she has been paid to. It also helped that the tree hasn't been wrong yet.

Meanwhile, the target finally arrived at the entrance. The ant queen went according to the plan. To make a royal guard fight him and lose. The royal guard will pretend to be pushed back and withdraw into the tunnel. It is there that they will spring their trap on him. Then she will hand him over to the tree father and fulfill her end of the bargain.

She sent number 11 to do the job. He is one of the youngest and weakest royal guards. The odds of accidentally killing the demigod will be lower.

"What a proud privileged demigod. He was born lucky and yet he dares to call my hard work for strength foolish. What does he know about the struggles of survival?" The ant queen cursed because of what the target said.

She doesn't hate the target nor does she care about him. It is just a job for her to kidnap him. Then the privileged demigod began criticizing the creation of royal guards and how it has endangered the colony.

"He is a giant of order and yet he mocks me. What right does he have to mock me?"

The criticism really hit home. Being a giant of order is being privileged enough. Giants have subjugated the entire plane. Being born as a demigod is even more privileged. Yet, such a privileged giant is mocking her.