

## **GREED 361**

Chapter 361 Helios Has A Different Aim.

If the queen doesn't create royal guards and expand her entrance through the special substance that only she secrets, then she will stagnate without any chance of progress. What use then is safety and a mediocre life? A life that stagnates is no life at all.

She became very angry. Now she is looking forward to seeing him beaten and defeated. What the target said not only angered her, but it also angered number 11 who took off running for blood. She was about to tell the royal guard to stop and remember the plan when the target loped off one limb.

The target had fired two beams from his eyes. It is an unknown and dangerous ability. She realized that she couldn't tell Number 11 to be passive or he would die.

Then another limb went off. Number 11 didn't need her to tell it that he should defend itself. But even that didn't help its fate. She felt a slight ache for the death of a precious subordinate but she couldn't complain. She has already gotten a lot from this endeavor which more than covers the death of a single royal guard.

"This demigod might be stronger than we thought." She shared her fear with her partner in crime.

It is not in the plans for the target to be so strong. Her enhanced royal guards are supposed to be able to handle any demigod. It seems that the target is not all bark and can bite. It is one hell of a bite too.

"Plans rarely go without a hitch. You just need to concentrate more of your royal guards on the effort." The tree father told her.

She nodded silently while calling for more of her royal guards to the ambush site. But she didn't call her strongest royal guard. Number 1 has a very important thing to take care of. She also can't risk him. She can't bear to lose her strongest royal guard right now. Things are certain to change when she finishes digesting the divinity and becomes a demigod. Then she will be able to use her divine power to control the recalcitrant royal demigods.

"What is going on? He isn't entering the entrance. What should we do?" She asked hurriedly.

If the demigod doesn't go through the entrance then he won't encounter the trap. The trap can't be moved because they will have to set up the cloaking barrier. The plant spirit can't set up one right in this situation. The activation of divine power will not escape the detection of the gods under their close scrutiny.

She doesn't know what to do. Thankfully she isn't the one in charge of this heist. So she asked the one calling the shots.

The tree father answered. "Don't panic. Switch the aim of the trap to the strike team. If you succeed in kidnapping them, there's no way the gods won't allow you to exchange them for one demigod in return."

"That's true."

She calmed down. What the tree father said is reasonable. It gave her hope of nabbing that slandering demigod.

"But what do we do about him?" She asked.

"Don't worry. His aim is the aim of this heroic quest. He will come here and then you can get him here. So call more royal guards here to the central room."

Very reasonable plan of action. Instead of spreading her forces at every entrance, she can focus them here on their objective. So she pulled back most of the royal guards, except Number 1 and the others that will trap the demigods.

"Where are you going you rat?" She murmured

The queen's attention was mostly on the target. He took a random entrance and was floundering about in the tunnels. First, he was moving closer to the central room then he stopped progressing.

She giggled and said, "What a fool. He doesn't even know what direction the central room is. He got lost after spouting so much nonsense about stupidity."

The target was still moving, only he has digressed from the direction of the central room. The queen realized that the target is closing on Number 1's position.

Her small limbs on her abdomen scratched the ground in happiness.

She guffawed. "I am so lucky. I might get what I want after all."

She has faith in Number 1. Unlike number 11, number 1 should be able to hold the target down for reinforcements to arrive and gang up on him. Still, she instructed number 1 to try his best and give his all as if to kill the target, but he must prioritize his safety.

"It wouldn't matter if the target is maimed. Everything will be alright as long as he is alive. That's my job." She thought in glee.

She was looking forward to the fight. Number 1 wouldn't be easily killed like number 11. He is much older, wiser, and stronger so the target will be captured. Number 1 informed her when he sighted the target. So she sent some reinforcements. She also kept a lot of royal guards by her side. If the target somehow survives the encounter and escapes Number 1, he will still come to the central room or fail the heroic quest.

Then things went wrong. It went wrong fast and she couldn't do anything to stop it. The target appealed to Number 1 to let him pass but Number 1 was dutiful and obedient. He refused and they fought. The fight didn't go as she thought it would.

"This can't be happening." She cried out in anger.

The result of the fight shocked her. Not only did the target defeat Number 1, but he also freed the royal guards she had reserved.

"Fucking little shit. All that effort in vain." She grumbled and cursed.

The release of the royal guards hurt her deeply. She had spent a lot of resources and effort on them. The weakest one of them is as strong as Number 1. Apart from the resources used to create them, there is the effort required to drag their bodies back to the ant mound from wherever the royal guards were when they froze. Now all of them have gone to waste.

Chapter 362 The Gods Are To Be Blamed.

It is not an easy thing to create royal guards and drag them back across the desert but a single demigod undid everything she did with a simple toss of fire.

"Wait, how does he know about it anyway?" She asked absentmindedly.

"The gods probably sent him to do it. They must have sent the demigods with multiple agendas." The tree father answered her.

"Damn those gods. That explains how he was able to find where I kept them." She cursed again.

It is not a secret that royal guards become disobedient and that ant queens recover their bodies. So it sounds reasonable that the gods will plan for various outcomes. They may be preparing for the possibility of her becoming a demigod. Now, even if she succeeds in digesting the divinity, she won't have an increase in power substantially.

'That demigod is really special. I wonder what this entity wants with him. If he can sacrifice divinity, then this demigod must be worth more than the divinity. I wonder what kind of special creature I can create from this demigod's flesh. It has to be something special. That golden armor he wore reminds me of the armors of Behemoths.' The queen thought to herself.

She has always thought that there must be something special about the target, or else an entity like the tree father won't start a heist to get his hands on the demigod. Her evaluation of this specialness is increasing the more she is getting to know the target. The specialness of the target is beginning to tempt her.

Number 1 is very strong and can take on an adult giant of order when it comes to brute strength but the demigod, clearly a young one considering his height of 30 meters, was able to best her champion. What's even more special are the various runes that the target was using. That transformation with armor and extra arms reminds her of behemoths. Except Behemoths only have four arms and those arms don't warp around or be disintegrated only to form again.

If not for the way the target fought she would have thought he is a transcendent giant of order. So the target has to be very special. That's why she is tempted, but only that. She doesn't have any intention to cheat her employer. It is normal for her to be tempted, but to act on it is another thing that might bring calamity to her.

'I'm sure he won't mind if I take a little flesh here and there.' She glanced furtively at the quiet tree as she schemed.

She just can't let go of the opportunity to gain something from the target. Her fear for her employer might stop her from betraying the tree father, but it won't stop her from taking her pound of flesh from the target.

"These damn gods. They are really out to get me." She cursed again.

She was pulled from her fantasy when she noticed the royal guards being rounded up. They were captured one by one and taken to the frontlines of the giants. The gods didn't violate her warning not to come close to the ant mound. They waited for the royal guards to distance themselves from the ant mound before nabbing them. It proved to the queen that the tree father was right and that the gods had planned for it or at least are on it now.

She believes that they had to have planned it. There's no other believable explanation for why the target just happened to stumble into the cavern where she stored the royal guards and then retreat immediately instead of storming the Central room to kill the queen.

She is certain now that the demigod didn't stumble into the cavern where she kept the rebellious royal guards. The target had appealed to Number 1 before he freed her prisoners. The target must have known about the prisoners and where they are kept. The only way to acquire that information is from the gods since the target didn't get it from her.

She was thinking of all the evil things she will do to the target once she gets her hands on him when the captured demigods were brought before her. They were accompanied by 3 royal guards. Their arms have been bonded and are kept far away from the queen.

"I can do anything I want to them right?" She asked the tree father.

The tree replied. "Yes. Just keep them alive. They are worth more alive than dead."

The queen grinned. "Yes."

The demigods noticed the tree before the ant queen. Their eyes went wide when they noticed it. A tree burning with green flames is not something you see every day. It is not something you see within an ant mound. It is also the thing with the highest divine power in the central room. So their attention was glued to the tree.

"Oh no. A god." One of the demigods managed to say through the panic making it difficult to breathe.

"What is a god doing here?"

"Why is a god helping the ants?"

"We are doomed."

Three of them fell to their knees and bowed. Then they started to cry and beg.

"Please let us go your divine greatness. Forgive us for any sin that we have committed."

"Please forgive us. We didn't know you were supporting the ants. It was the Celestial Supreme that sent us here."

Some of the others were too stunned to speak. Their mouth hung open and their eyes focused on the entity that has doomed them. Thoughts of their soon to arrive end filled their minds.

They suspected that a god is helping the ants, but to have an avatar here like this out in the open means that this issue is bigger than they thought. It doesn't matter if the gods are playing with their lives or there's conflict among the gods, neither means anything good for them. All that matters is that this heroic quest might be the end of them.

Chapter 363 Strength Brings Respect.

Demigods know that the gods play with the lives of mortals in games for sport but this made them realize how pitiful their existence really is. Only one demigod thought otherwise.

"You're scum. You're a betrayer of the gods. You must not be on the gods' side. My father will never allow this to happen if he knew. You must be a traitor." Tanya shouted at the tree.

The tree father didn't answer. He ignored their existence and said nothing no matter how much they cursed or begged. They aren't worthy of a reaction from the tree father. If they are the playthings of gods, what are they to the tree father when the gods are the tree father's playthings? He will not lower himself to deal with the playthings of his playthings.

The queen's divine force slammed into the demigods.

"Silence." She boomed into their minds.

They became quiet immediately and finally turned their attention to the giant white caterpillar in the room. The demigods are much taller than her but her presence feels more powerful.

She is an ancient mana entity and a demigod too so they don't have any advantage over her. It is quite the opposite. The queen has a powerful mind which has become more powerful now that she is a demigod so her mental pressure is overwhelming them.

They all fell to their knees and clutched their heads. She might not be able to control them but she can make them feel pain.

"You have insulted my guest and you have insulted me. Is this how you were brought up by the gods? I expected better."

None of them answered her. They are in pain and they have nothing to say to their captor.

"You will be my prisoners of war until the gods ransom you. I assure you that it will not be a pleasant experience. But you will have to earn your keep."

The ant queen felt empowered like never before. These giants that she is berating and is going to take advantage of are demigods. The simple mention of them used to fill her with crippling fear. Now, she only has slight fear and that's only because of their divine parents.

Strength is good, even though the process of acquiring it is dangerous, it can increase your odds of survival so it is worth it. But the increase in your station that strength grants you make the risk more than worth it. The world literally changes when you gain more power. People will treat you differently and you will begin to see the world in a different manner.

She took a moment of silence to relish her emotions very well. Then she decided their fate, "I have decided what to do with you. You're going to join the effort to create more royal guards for the colony till you are ransomed."

She enjoyed their immediate reaction. Their placid eyes opened wide. They paled when they heard what she said. She has just condemned them to a fate worse than torture. Their flesh will be liberated in small quantities and fed to grubs so that the grubs can mutate into royal guards. The demigods will feel pain likened to the worst torture but the torture is just a by-product of the process.

She interrupted them before they start any complaints or begging. "I don't want to hear what you have to say.

She made sure to use more mental force in her mental transmission to enforce that request of hers. They can't talk when their mind is in pain.

"You can make as much noise as you want later on when your flesh is cut away to feed the grubs. But for now, I don't want to hear anything from you. Nothing you say will matter anyway."

"Take them away." She said to the royal guards.

"Wait, I have something important to say." One of the demigods suddenly shouted.

The queen frowned. "What do you have to say? I warn you not to waste my time."

Her tone was disapproving but the demigod didn't back down. He spoke. "It is an important divine secret."

The queen's eyes lit up. "Go on then. What is it?"

The demigod glanced at the burning tree before saying, "I can only tell the god."

"What is it?" The tree father asked in the demigod's mind with a private mental transmission.

"It is about a divine weapon. I know its location and I want my freedom in exchange."

"What's special about a divine weapon that it is worth your freedom?"

The tree father wasn't convinced about the importance of the divine weapon or even if it exists. This demigod might just be making stuff up in an attempt to get his freedom or he might just be wasting time.

The demigod said earnestly, "It is a weapon made by the gods to kill a god. I don't know much about it but I know it is called the GodSlayer."

"Is that so? You tell me where this so-called god-killing weapon is and I'll check it out. If it is real then I will grant you your freedom."

The demigod became hesitant. He wasn't talking anymore. Something made him hesitant.

"Do you doubt me? Do you doubt the dignity of a god?" The tree father's voice slammed into the demigod's mind with more power than the ant queen could muster.

The demigod shivered and fell down. He spoke quickly to appease the tree father, "Never. I wasn't doubting you. I was just trying to recall all I know about the divine weapon."

"Then speak. I'm listening."

"Yes."

The demigod began talking about everything he knows about the divine weapon. He wanted to get a divine contract that will ensure his safety and release but the way the tree father phrased that question made it so that asking for assurance means he is doubting the god. To doubt the prestige of a god is blasphemy and can lead to his death. So he sang like a canary.

#### Chapter 364 The Destiny Of The Weak Is To Serve.

The demigod is trying to escape his fate not offend a god and die. So he spilled the information in hopes that the tree father will uphold his side of the bargain. He is weak so he can only hope that the one who is stronger than him will decide to be honorable. Such is the only option for the weak.

The queen's rising ego took a big hit when the demigod said that he would only speak with the god. Her ego stalled with the realization of her station. Demigod or not, she is still a mortal and cannot compare to a god.

'I am not even a free mortal. Wasn't I a mortal before I met this entity? Now I am a demigod and also a pawn. I have to become a transcendent and break my limits. Only then will I have my destiny in my hands.'

The stalled ego began to deflate when she realized that she is a pawn. She has grown stronger but she has also become a pawn. Pawns are expendable. No matter how good it feels to grow stronger, her fate still hangs in a balance. And most importantly, it is within the hands of another.

All of this is because she got the attention of a stronger entity. She would be free and normal had the tree father not come to her but now she is embroiled in a heist to rip off the gods. She may not survive the repercussions of this heist unless she becomes a transcendent. Only then will she transform from a caterpillar into a butterfly. This ant mound is her protective cocoon, she will be able to leave it and explore the world beyond if she becomes a transcendent.

She held on to that dream of a greater future for herself. It is a dream that all the ant queens of the race of Goliath ants have but none have ever achieved.

It is for this dream that she will continue to be a pawn. It's not like she has a choice anyway. She is just like the demigod. They have to please and be useful or they will die.

The demigod finished telling the tree father about the divine weapon.

The tree father said to the demigod. "I will check the authenticity of your information. In the meantime, you will be exempted from donating your flesh."

Then he said to the ant queen, "Treat this demigod well. He doesn't need to be pampered or waited on but he must not be tortured or used as flesh supply for your grubs."

"I'll see to it." She replied.

"What about the issue of the negotiator?" She asked the tree father.

"I have a plan but we don't need to be anxious. Rushing will make us look weak. Let the gods become frustrated. They are more likely to make mistakes that way. They will come to us when they can't take the wait anymore. Don't you need time to finalize your plans for transcendence? You can use the time we have for that."

The queen accepted the decision meekly. Then she got to work giving out orders while the tree father began thinking of important stuff.

'It is a good thing that Helios was able to subdue that Number 1 without killing it. The ant queen was keeping its position a secret from me. I wonder what else she is keeping a secret from me. It wouldn't matter anyway. Things are going well and will remain so. The ant colony's strength has been kept constant and the gods have been given bargaining chips.' The Tree Father thought to himself.

The reserved forces of the queen have been taken from her and given to the queen. Even if she succeeds in making more royal guards, they will take years to mature and many more years to reach significant strength. So the strength of the queen has been kept effectively constant even though she just became a demigod.

There are a lot of reasons to keep the ant queen's strength constant. An increase in strength will put ideas into her head when she gets full of herself. An increase in strength will increase her ego and make her dissatisfied with the position of a pawn. So as long as her power is constant, she will remain manageable and controllable.

The second reason is to make the gods have something that they can exchange with the ant colony. A negotiation needs two willing parties. The queen has something that the gods want and now they have something she wants. This will ensure that this game continues. It is for this reason that Helios didn't kill Number 1. Reducing the strength of the queen will lower her position and might lead to the game ending quickly.

'I have even come across a so-called GodSlayer. I'll see what it is about and wait. All we have to do now is wait for everything to be put in place.'

The job of confirming the weapon falls to him since Helios is under the spotlight right now. He has a lot of plant spirits so confirming the authenticity of the divine weapon will be easy to do. The divine weapon is not needed for Legion's plan but it will be an advantage if it is useful.

The tree father doesn't intend to let the demigod that told him about the god-killing weapon go. He will be put to use in raising new royal guards if the tree father confirms the divine weapon. His reprieve will be short-lived.

If there's no divine weapon and it was all a hoax, the demigod will simply be put to use for flesh donation. His outcome won't change regardless of the situation of the GodSlayer. The authenticity of the divine weapon may not change his fate, but bringing it has bought him the time for his fate to change. He might live but his destiny to serve his betters won't change.

Chapter 365 A Colossus.

Weakness is not a sin. Not knowing your position in the hierarchy is a sin. It is a sin that everyone is capable of making unless they become the absolute strongest. It is this goal that Legion and all of life want to achieve. The ant queen wants freedom and so does the demigod. Only strength brings freedom. Absolute strength brings absolute freedom.

The tree father will not fault the demigod for trying to change his fate. Anyone can do anything including lying to try and save themselves. The demigod might be weak but every living thing will struggle to achieve its freedom. It is the constant of life for life to always try to find a way.

If the divine weapon is fake, then it is the fault of the tree father for believing him in the first place. If the divine weapon is real, the tree father will still make him do what he is avoiding. If anyone can do whatever they want, then the tree father can go back on his word. After all, there's no contract that says the demigod has to be released if the divine weapon is real.

The short reprieve that the demigod is receiving right now is so that the tree father will have a level of integrity for when he might need the demigod in the future. No one knows the future so it is always best to plan for it. The demigod will certainly not be open to talking in the future if he has been treated badly. He might be weak, but he has the choice of death. That is something that only world gods can take away from anyone.

But the demigod will be abandoned to the plans of the ant queen once he has outlived his usefulness to the tree father. That's the destiny of the weak once they come under the attention of the strong, they have to be useful or they will be discarded.

A Year Later.

The ant colony shut themselves in and the gods waited. Helios and the Tree Father wanted this wait to take a long time. This conflict between the gods and the ant colony is but a distraction that Legion orchestrated. The longer a distraction works the better. Sadly things don't always go as planned. Someone among the gods began calling for action just after a year of waiting.

Helios was in his tent when something changed the dull atmosphere of the frontlines. They had been waiting here for a year and yet the ant colony didn't make any requests so there was nothing that could be done. He was meditating on his runes when he felt the ground shake. His eyes opened immediately. He could sense a threat coming toward his position and it is approaching fast.

He rushed out of his tent and looked toward the direction of the threat. He didn't need to strain his eyes for him to see it. It is practically looming within his vision.

"A colossus." He muttered in realization.

A colossus is one of the two outcomes for a giant of order that becomes a transcendent. He has been surrounded by mana entities and the avatars of gods for a year. They are not a threat to him so the presence of a transcendent spooked him.

He relaxed after identifying the threat. A Colossus coming here means it must be on the side of the gods and if it is not, it is not his problem to worry about. He relaxed but that doesn't mean this change is not troublesome.

"Someone called for a colossus. This is troublesome. Who called for a colossus and why?" He asked himself.

The ground continued to shake and the shaking got stronger as the colossus got closer. All of this shaking is caused by the feet of the Colossus hitting the ground as it is running.

A colossus is very large. For giants of order to call something colossal, it must be extraordinarily huge. It must be ginormous and it really is. A colossus makes a giant of order look normal. The shaking is caused by the almost thousand meters tall entity marching towards the camp.

"This is too early. It seems the plan has to be updated." Helios thought as he looked at the colossus whose very steps are shaking the earth for miles around.

A colossus means that the situation has changed. For them to make the proper response, they must find out what caused the change.

"What a shame though. The giants of order have so much potential. Maybe something would have changed if they were allowed on the ancient battlefield. Someone will probably have found the solution to their problem." He thought in pity.

For a race that can't become lords of law, the giants of Order have a lot of potential. There are few races that can grow bigger than 100 meters tall and a much smaller number of races in the more than 100,000 planes of the high heaven realm that can reach a kilometer tall. If they are around the multitudes of geniuses from different and various planes that come to gather at the ancient battlefield, maybe a solution would have been found for their problem.

It is a pity that this same Colossal form of giants of order sealed their fate. The great general of the giants of order that led them to the ancient battlefield was also a colossus. He used to grow to be 10 kilometers tall back then. That's 10 times taller than the Colossus coming to the frontlines but maintaining such a height consumes Origin energy like a blackhole consumes matter and energy.

Giants of order that are mana entities drain their environment of mana. The powerhouses of the ancient battlefield won't care about that. But the colossus drains the environment of origin energy. It is probably the only thing that giants of order can use Origin energy for and it is also the most important thing that people go to the ancient battlefield for. Their penchant for hogging origin energy to themselves did not sit well with the powerhouses of the ancient battlefield.

#### Chapter 366 The First To Break.

Transcendents can change their shape and size but they can't do so drastically or their existence will fracture. Origins gods can take the transformation further to inanimate objects but it has to conform to their concepts. It is very rare to transform into a 10km being. Such a being also consumes a tonne of Origin energy and deprives others of it.

The ancient battlefield is filled with conflicts. Transcendents from various planes converge there. They are the top dogs in their plane but they become one among many. It led to a lot of conflicts. The numerous cultures and racial differences make cooperating a problem on the ancient battlefield. But that changed when the giants of order arrived at the ancient battlefield. They all gained something that they can agree on unanimously.

The powerhouses of the ancient battlefield didn't care too much about environmental mana deprivation because they have had enough of it from their home plane. They came to the ancient battlefield for Origin energy. So that general crossed their bottom line. The concentration of origin energy drops precipitously for miles around a Colossus anytime one transforms.

The irony is that the giants of Order would have been ignored if their general didn't lead them to the ancient battlefield. If the giants of order had gone to the ancient battlefield on their own without any Origin energy-siphoning giants then they might have been left alone. But it is a must for a transcendent to open the portal plane that connects the plane to the ancient battlefield.

It is the mark of potential greatness for a plane to create a transcendent. The portal was created to be unlocked by a transcendent and thus validate the plane has useful.

If a plane cannot produce a transcendent after a while, that plane will be scrapped by the will of the realm and recreated. Those are the rules. A race has to have potential or it will be eliminated. If all the races in a plane cannot break their limits, then their entire plane will be destroyed and re-created. It is not a problem for divine races to become transcendents though. That's why a plane with a divine race survives.

The giants of Order are a divine race. They have a divine ability. Even though their divine ability made it difficult for them to become transcendent, they achieved it at the end of the day. And like most cases, they wiped out most of the other races in the plane and subjugated the rest.

Then they turned their focus to the ancient battlefield and were beaten back like unwanted guests. It is not like a transcendent will open the portal and then return to the plane refusing to see what else lies beyond their plane.

The colossus looks like any other giant of order except it doesn't have tattoos on its body. It is also naked because making clothes for such an entity is a hassle. It can grow taller than what it currently is but there isn't Origin energy in the plane.

The absence of origin energy is also why there are lesser and lesser colossi. Most giants of order don't become colossi anymore when they become transcendents. Instead, they become behemoths. Behemoths are strong and have their own advantage but they can't grow as tall as a colossus.

The colossus reached the camp. It began to reduce in size until it became a giant of order about 20 meters tall.

Helios shook his head and turned away. The Colossus reminded him of Cardinal Hak which means whoever this Colossus is, it is probably a high-ranking figure of a church. A free unbelieving colossus won't come here where the gods have important business. He will find out soon anyway. That's why he is returning to his tent to wait.

Meanwhile In The Temple.

The gods are arguing and are about to come to blows. The silent and calm air in the temple is nowhere to be found. The only one calm and silent is the Celestial Supreme who has chosen to keep quiet and watch. His implicit permission has allowed the brewing stress to explode.

The stress lit a fire within one god which then spread to others and finally is exploding to cause this situation.

"You selfish, pompous, and arrogant god. You will doom the demigods with your impatience. It has only been a year and you called a colossus. This is going too far." One god screamed at the god that is the root of this problem.

Harkam shouted back, "I've had it up to here. I can't take any more of this. Something has to change."

The gods that are arguing are the parents of the kidnapped demigods. On one side is Harkam, the source of the sudden change. On the other side are the other gods with demigods at stake. It is predictable that the Sky god will be the first to break. He is not a fan of doing nothing. Doing nothing for a year is already commendable for him. So he called for a colossus when he couldn't sit still anymore.

These other gods don't agree though. A year is a short amount of time to wait. Plus they can all sense that their demigods are alive. So what's the rush? They planned to give the ants 10 years at least. If nothing changes in a hundred years, only then will they use force and take drastic actions. They live longer lives than most and can be patient. 100 years is the time it takes a baby giant to become of acceptable age. So there's no need to rush.

It is not only Harkam that cares about those demigods. These gods also care, that's why they don't want to do anything to jeopardize the lives of their demigods. The presence of a colossus is sure to threaten the ants and might lead to unfavorable events. The tension within the temple began to increase because of Harkam's brash move.

Chapter 367 Stupid Sky Gods.

"It is too early for something to change. Even if something is to change, you have gone too far with the change." Someone shouted back at Harkam.

Harkam didn't even tell them about his decision or give them any kind of heads-up. He just sprang the Colossus on them. They too were as shocked as the mortals when the Colossus came.

Harkam remained stubborn. "It's alright. Nothing will go wrong."

"It's not alright you stupid fool. You sky gods are always like this. You don't think well that's why you think everything is going to be alright."

Harkam's eyes lit up like a brewing desert storm. His brown hair began to move around wildly.

He asked calmly. "Are you calling me stupid?"

His opponent didn't back down. He laughed and replied, "You stupid fool. I wasn't calling you stupid. I am calling the entire generations of sky gods fools. What are you going to do about it?"

Things escalated pretty quickly after that. It doesn't take much for an explosion to turn into a fire disaster. That requirement becomes easily met when someone is actively pouring flammable objects into the fire. You can't call the generations of sky gods stupid and not expect a disaster.

The gods started fighting with the limited strength of their avatars. Harkam was getting beaten up. He is one fighter against the group of gods. Unless the vessel is unique, gods are limited to the strength of mana entities within the mortal realm. So it doesn't matter that he is a grand god. In the mortal realm, it is 7 mana entities against Harkam.

Stelios and the other gods chose to watch as Harkam is being bullied from every side. The 7 gods chased him all around the interior of the temple. They flew into the air and threw divine spells at him.

No one interfered with the fight because their pillar of order allowed it. The Celestial Supreme just watched on without interfering. He is usually bossy and fussy about chaos but he chose to remain silent.

"Aren't you going to stop them?" The god of power and might asked Stelios.

She asked him because Stelios is the oldest god and the one with the highest authority among them. He is like their big brother. The level-headed one that they can count on.

Stelios answered. "What's there to stop? Harkam is making a fool of himself and my demigod is safe within his tent. I've got no reason to worry."

He understood the problem with Harkam and why he did what he did. It didn't come as a surprise that Harkam finally snapped. He is probably the only one that will agree with Harkam that it is commendable of him to have waited for a year. The sudden arrival of the Colossus is unexpected but inevitable since Harkam is among the gods with kidnapped demigods.

The god of war nodded his head and said, "Yes, don't stop it. This is enjoyable. They need to fight more and break stuff."

Stelios grinned. "Yes, it is enjoyable. It is understandable that he is anxious about his daughter. I would have been anxious too if Helios isn't safe. But like most things that Harkam does, he didn't think this one through."

The god of war asked excitedly. "Do you think this will lead to a divine war? I want a divine war. This heroic quest is boring."

Stelios shook his head. "Unfortunately this kind of conflict cannot lead to a divine war. It's just some demigods."

"But you and Harkam fought about a demigod." The god of power and might said.

Stelios became silent. "You may be right. Anything is possible with Harkam."

The different factions of gods chose to talk amongst themselves and watch the fight. Only one person finally interfered.

The grand god of knowledge flicked 8 sheets of paper from his body at the Fighting gods. Different spells came out of the sheets and canceled the attacks of the gods. Golden bolts of lightning shot out of one sheet and canceled Harkam's attack of golden bolts of lightning. The other sheets did the same for the different gods.

Generations of gods of knowledge have studied and recorded the powers of most gods so the god of knowledge can use almost all divine abilities. Knowledge is power after all.

The 8 gods turned to the god of knowledge. He spoke up after getting their attention. "This won't solve anything. You are making fools of yourselves. What has happened has happened. Now, do we use the colossus or send it back?"

The fighting gods glared at each other before dispersing.

The god of knowledge nodded. He asked Harkam. "So you have brought a colossus. What's your plan? What do you want to do with the colossus?"

Harkam didn't answer. He looked around shiftily.

The god of knowledge rubbed his eyes. "So you brought a colossus here without a plan?"

Harkam looked away without admitting it.

The gods began to laugh. Even the gods that just beat him up couldn't help themselves from shaking their heads. One thing went through all their minds and it is "That is so Harkam." It is not strange for the sky god to act without thinking. He chose to fight 7 other gods with equal strength as him and he was the aggressor too.

"What do we do now?" The god of knowledge asked everyone. Then his head shot up all of a sudden.

"The ants have moved. They have sent a royal guard to the frontlines." He told everyone.

"What for?" Stelios asked.

The god of knowledge shook his head. "I don't know yet. But we'll know soon enough."

He wasn't spying on the ant mound. No god is. They haven't used their divine vision to watch the ant mound for a while now because they don't expect anything to happen soon. There's no way they are going to fix their attention on the ants for years of time. But the god of knowledge found out about the changes immediately after one of his believers became aware of it. It is the role of the god of knowledge to hoard knowledge. He knows everything that his believers know.

Chapter 368 Helios The Negotiator.

The gods turned their attention to the ant mound immediately after they found out something is going on. They saw a royal guard approach the front line and speak to the soldiers. They heard what the royal guard asked for. Then they all turned their attention towards Stelios.

Stelios was in thought for a while before he spoke. "I agree. There doesn't seem to be anything out of place. They want a demigod to be the intermediary between the gods and them. They chose him because he is the only demigod around. But the colossus must escort him for his safety."

Harkam and the other 7 gods sighed in relief. Stelios had the right to refuse but he didn't. They appreciate it and have to admit that he truly is reliable.

Harkam chose that point to speak up. He grinned smugly and said, "You have me to thank for this. Now there's progress because of me. If I hadn't done something, we would have been here for many years to come."

His 7 opponents were about to start another argument but Stelios stopped them before it could start.

He said to them, "Ignore him. It is more productive to find someone to inform Helios and bring him here."

So someone went to inform Helios.

He was in his tent waiting when he was told.

A priest from the church of the sun informed him. "The ant queen has finally decided to start the negotiation. She has chosen you to be the negotiator for the gods and the gods have decided that you will take this position."

"I will do as the gods of Zargoth have commanded."

He nodded and accepted the responsibility like a true naive hero who is willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good. He was taken to the temple where he was informed of everything that happened, their plans, and their bottom lines in the negotiation. Then he was escorted to the ant mound by the

colossus and 9 other priests. The Colossus is a priest representing Harkam's Will while the other 9 represent the other 7 gods, Stelios and the Celestial Supreme.

The priest of the church of order and justice is here to make sure that order is maintained but he is just here for the Celestial Supreme to snoop and monitor the negotiation. Even in a situation that doesn't concern the Celestial Supreme, he still has to oversee the proceedings.

The Colossus was carefree as she walked beside him. She was checking everything they passed by. Since they are in a desert and there's not much to see, she might just be seeing things that are not there. The two of them are of the same height now, 40 meters tall. Helios has grown stronger and taller after absorbing the three sun cores.

She suddenly whirled on him and said, "I have a feeling that you will be sacrificed."

"Sacrificed for what?" Helios asked calmly as they walked towards the ant mound.

"Sacrificed for the negotiations. Negotiations like this can't end well for you. It is a dangerous position for you to be in. When you add in the fact that you're a pawn of the gods, then it becomes almost certain that it won't end well for you." She replied with her face very close to his.

His position as a negotiator is dangerous. It is a position that can make him offend a god especially the ones with stakes in this negotiation. Offending a god means a difficult time if not death.

"I see," Helios said without much inflection.

Her eyes twinkled, "Are you not concerned at all?"

"I am a hero, a demigod and as such I must fulfill the purpose of my divine father. He has permitted me to do this and I have faith in him that he won't send me to my death."

Most of what Helios said is crap but there is some truth to it. He is certain that Stelios will not send him to his death. The Stigmata on his back is proof of it. He is more important to the sun god than Tanya is to the sky god even though the sun god has a lot of divine lords.

"You're impressive. I admire your courage. I will say nice things about you when you die."

"Thanks. I appreciate it."

His reply made her laugh.

"Why aren't you worried about your safety? I heard a god is helping the ants." He asked her.

"That's no reason to worry. A god can only manifest an avatar that is a mana entity at most." She replied.

"That is unless the god is using a vessel." He said to her.

"I am a vessel."

Helios nodded in realization. Now he knows why she is so confident. She has almost nothing to fear.

"What if the god is a true God?"

She laughed again. "There's only one Celestial God in the entire plane. You sound like the sky god. He still suspects the Celestial Supreme of having something to do with this. He says that he knows what he sensed and it is a superior divine power, not a similar divine power with obscuring properties. He doesn't like the Celestial Supreme lying to them about his game, that's why he brought me in. To muddle things up and make him fumble."

She spoke freely without caring about the gods eavesdropping on her.

Helio nodded. "What if the hidden god is a Celestial?"

His words cracked her up even more. Helios got the feeling that it doesn't take much to amuse her. Either that or she is hearing funny things that he did not say.

"That's hilarious. Where could you have gotten that idea?"

Helios replied. "Since his excellency, the sky god believes it is a Celestial that did it, does it have to be the Celestial Supreme?"

She nodded. "That's what your father the sun god said. He believes that if a Celestial did it, it is not the Celestial Supreme. You two are very much alike."

Helios' face twitched when he heard her last statement.

Chapter 369 They Are Not Commodities.

He knows more than anyone else how similar he and Helios are and also why the two of them are different. The stigmata on his back allude to a very odd similarity between the two of them.

The Colossus continued, "Anyways, it can't be the Celestial Supreme because he said with uttermost certainty that the god that helped the ant is new and is definitely not a Celestial."

His mind reeled with the information but he didn't show any outward signs that will betray the importance of the information to him.

"That makes sense."

He doesn't think it makes sense actually. You can't trust the words of someone you suspect. The fact that the Celestial Supreme is under suspicion should mean whatever he says is suspicious too. But he said it makes sense so that this conversation will end and she will leave him alone.

His reply did the opposite. She sidled to him and spoke in a low voice.

"It makes sense right? But there are a lot of things that don't make sense. The Celestial Supreme wants us to believe there's a new god and we don't know about it? What if he is lying? He could also be lying

about not being involved. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what the truth is because there's no need for me to worry. It's you that should be worried."

She may have been whispering but her voice isn't low enough to prevent the others from hearing what she said. But she doesn't particularly care. She could have used her divine sense to transmit the message to him instead of talking at all. She is a transcendent, so she has a divine sense, unlike normal giants.

Helios nodded in realization. "I see. You have nothing to worry about if the god isn't the Celestial Supreme but you have everything to worry about if it is the Celestial Supreme. So why bother with worry since there's nothing you can do if you have to worry?"

As a vessel of the god of the sky, she can borrow some of his power. That means nothing can threaten her in the mortal realm apart from a vessel of the Celestial Supreme. If the vessel of the Celestial Supreme is here, then there's nothing she can do.

She gave him thumbs up. "Now you get it."

They continued their walk while the transcendent continued to talk to him. The other priests didn't say anything. She is carefree because she has nothing to worry about. It is more like because she thinks she has nothing to worry about. Helios knows that there is something unknown that she should be worried about. But as they say, ignorance is bliss.

Her confidence lay in the fact that she can lift the entire ant mound as tall and heavy as it is. And that is without help from her god. This entire situation is just a passing fancy of hers. It is another one of the god's games. To her, it is at most a tumultuous pond of water. What waves can such a small body of water cause?

She would have been right not to worry if she knew that there is a shark inside this pond. Her opinion is understandable too. A shark is not supposed to be inside a pond. Not unless it is not a pond in the first place. It just looks like a pond on the surface. This situation has depths to it that she cannot fathom.

They reached the ant mound and met with the royal guard that is waiting for them there.

"What are your demands?" Helios asked the royal guard.

The royal guard glanced uneasily at the seemingly ordinary giantess beside Helios. The royal guard knows better than to think that she is ordinary. He had felt the shaking deep within the ant mound when she arrived. But he can't tell her to leave since they have no leverage to.

He replied to Helios. "The queen has asked for a show of goodwill. She wants the return of her royal guards that were abducted from her."

"They weren't abducted. They were freed and then offered protection by the gods. They are our guests of their own free will. We can't just offer them to you because you asked for them. They have rights. They are not commodities for exchange." Helios answered.

"Is that your final decision?"

"Yes."

"Then this negotiation will lead to nowhere." The royal guard said and turned to go.

Helios stopped the royal guard. "Wait. I'll report to the gods and see if they change their minds. But you must offer something in exchange."

"The only thing we have that the gods have to offer are the demigods and there's no way a demigod is worth so little. It's just some royal guards. What do your gods call us? Ants. The gods will have to offer more in exchange."

"Then what does the ant queen want?"

The royal guard answered, "Go back and ask what they think the lives of their children are worth. The ant queen will only accept items with divinity in them."

The negotiation ended there and the royal guard returned to the ant mound. Helios and his entourage stayed outside while waiting for the gods' decision.

In The Temple.

The gods had been watching and listening to the entire negotiation by using their priests as antennas to utilize their divine vision. A screen had also appeared in the center of the temple that showed the proceedings to all the gods.

So they all heard what the Colossus said about Harkam suspecting the Celestial Supreme. Several of them glanced at him. Harkam had the decency to be ashamed or look ashamed.

He coughed awkwardly and muttered for everyone to hear. "Silly girl. She is still an airhead after all these years. Still likes to make stuff up."

He tried to create an excuse for what she said. It is bad excuse that no one is buying it.

Chapter 370 What Are Demigods Worth?

Harkam raised the Colossus right from when she was a young child so he knows a lot about her. He is like a father to her and his word should suffice. Unfortunately, no one is buying that a transcendent is imagining things and making stuff up. Not when Harkam himself had expressed the same thing just a year ago.

He continued to talk when he noticed that no one is buying his excuse. "How about that Helios boy? He has a good head and a smart mouth. Look at how he refused to give up the ants we captured so easily. That's a divine lord in the making."

Harkam is willing to resort to something he would never admit in any other condition to divert attention from him. He complimented Helios openly.

Stelios shook his head at Harkam's attempt to cover up a lie while his eyes remained trained on Helios. He would have mocked Harkam and escalated the situation if Helios were not at risk. He can't allow anything bad to happen to Helios so he kept quiet and hoped the negotiation remains calm.

The god of knowledge spoke up. "So how much are your demigods worth to you?"

His question was directed to Harkam and the other 7 gods but none of them answered him. The thing is that even they don't know how much exactly their demigods are worth. If they have a divine lord then a demigod is a plaything. A demigod is only of the uttermost importance if there is no divine lord and the god wants to attend the trial of heaven. To someone like Stelios, a demigod might as well be worth nothing with the hundreds of divine lords he has. So the value of a demigod varies wildly. The gods looked around waiting for suggestions.

Even Harkam the ever-straight shooter doesn't know what to say. Undervaluing their demigods might cause the gods to not get them back and overvaluing the demigods will make the ants try to fleece the gods and make ridiculous demands of them.

The god of knowledge understood what was going on. So he advised them. "How about you ask the ants what they want?"

Harkam agreed eagerly. "That's a good idea. We should do that."

The god of knowledge rolled his eyes. His idea is not that good but Harkam is just saying so to reduce the attention on him. The ants already asked them to offer a price but they are returning the responsibility of evaluation to the ants. It might backfire grandly or work out well. So the plan is only so-so.

The gods informed their priests and their priests informed Helios. So Helios called to the royal guard that was hiding within the ant mound. The royal guard came back out and stopped in front of Helios.

It asked Helios, "What have your gods decided the demigods are worth?"

Helios replied with a question of his own. "What exactly does the ant queen hope to get from this negotiation? Does she want freedom and safety?"

"I already answered this question. We'll only take items with divinity. It is more reliable than the promise of the gods."

Helios rephrased his question. "How much of items of divinity do you want then?"

"A thousand for each demigod. Each item must be enough to create a demigod." The royal guard answered.

Items with divinity can be anything as long as they contain divinity within them. The most popular ones are divine weapons. A transcendent can digest these items and absorb the divinity within them to become a demigod. The speed of digestion is based on the strength of the god that the divinity belonged to. The divinity of a low god is easiest to absorb and the opposite is true for that of a celestial god.

Divinity grants power but it has various disadvantages. If divinity isn't properly digested, in the least severe cases, the person will become a fervent believer of the god. In the most severe cases, the person becomes the avatar of the god. The more divinity is absorbed, the lesser the sensitivity to Origin energy and laws. Only those that don't plan to use the path of perfection or are desperate are willing to absorb divinity.

Giants of Order can't digest items with divinity. Their law fragments will prevent the absorption of divinity. Only demigods that were born with a divine core like the sun core within Helios can absorb divinity. But the importance of divinity cannot be understated. A thousand items each with enough divinity to make a demigod is more than the amount of divinity within an average Celestial god.

"That's impossible. I'm afraid that you have asked for too much. There's no way the gods will pay for that. Asking for a thousand demigods for a single demigod is out of the question. Asking for a thousand items with divinity for all of the demigods is impossible to fulfill too. So you better ask for something reasonable." Helios did his job as a good negotiator who has the interest of the gods at heart. He shut down the exorbitant price.

"I allowed you to offer something. You couldn't and yet you're refusing what we asked for. We'll do this then. The queen is ready to release a demigod but only to the god that offers the most. Call me when you're ready."

The royal guard turned back without waiting for Helios's reply. Helios turned back to the priests and said to them.

"You heard what he said. What has your god decided?"

Back in the temple.

The god of knowledge spoke up. "The queen is a demigod now, so it is understandable why she will want divinity. She shouldn't need much unless she wants to become a god but that doesn't explain why she is asking for so much. A thousand items are too much. I recommend that you keep your bids low and don't turn against each other."

He hasn't even finished talking before a bidding war started among the gods.