

GREED 371

Chapter 371 Bidding War Gone Wrong.

Someone said to the god of knowledge, "It's too late for that now."

The god of knowledge's lip quivered. He sighed and replied. "I can see that."

The gods might not know the value of their demigods but a financial competition about who gets to have their demigod compelled them into action. For most of them, it has become a matter of honor and pride to outbid the others. Unfortunately for the other gods, there is no one more desperate than Harkam.

The screen is showing the priests trying to outbid one another. The priest of the church of the storm started it after Harkam instructed her to. Harkam had instructed the Colossus before the god of knowledge started talking and she had dropped a price halfway through the god of knowledge's speech about showing restraint.

Stelios couldn't help to smile. "Harkam is not one to show restraint."

He hadn't finished talking when Harkam's priest, the Colossus suddenly transformed. The priests and Helios were scattered to the wind by the expansion of her body. Stelios' eyes widened in shock as he saw her grab Helios.

He screamed at Harkam. "What are you doing?"

The commotion that occurred next did not allow his question to be answered. There was a loud crash as a large hand broke through the top of the temple. It reached for Harkam and crushed some avatars in the process. Harkam dropped some items into the hand and the hand withdrew. The gods heard another loud crash outside the temple. Then everything turned silent.

The dust that obscured the god's vision subsided to show the Colossus now reduced to the size of a normal giant standing beside Helios. She is holding items with divinity in one hand while her other hand is on Helios's shoulder. Standing beside her is the cage that they used to hold the captured royal guards.

The god of knowledge shook his head and sighed. "Harkam has done it this time. Now things have been overturned. There's no going back."

Back At The Ant Mound.

The Colossus patted Helios on his back. "How are you doing Mr. Negotiator? Sorry about my earlier handling, I had to protect you. Wouldn't want anything unfortunate to happen to you. Now, why don't you get on with your job? Call the royal guard and let's do this."

Helios asked her, "What about the other gods?"

She smiled sweetly at him. "Do you see anyone of their priests here? They're probably busy with other matters. I can only imagine what could be more important than this negotiation. This just goes to show that I and my god are the only ones taking this seriously. They are not here while we are willing to go to extreme measures to get what we want."

Her eyes glinted with the vague suggestions of a threat that he is quick to pick up on. Her words are clear enough and her smile seems innocent but the way she is staring at him with sharp eyes served to drive the matter home.

Helios nodded. He understood immediately and he doesn't mind. It wasn't what he had in mind and the situation derailed from what was planned but Helios and the others would just have to adapt to the situation and make the best of it. He called for the royal guard. The royal guard came out of the ant mound carefully.

"What was that earlier? What are you trying to do? If you mess up, this negotiation will turn sour." The royal guard screamed at her with false bravado.

It isn't fooling anyone. Its shaking legs are enough indication of the amount of fear that he has for the Colossus.

She said to Helios, "See how wrought he is. Don't make the poor guy suffer too much. Or more innocent people will suffer. You don't want that do you?"

Helios shook his head. He certainly doesn't want that.

She smiled, apparently pleased with his reply. "Now get on with it will you?"

"We have settled on a deal. We have here 100 items each containing divinity enough to create a demigod and we also have all the royal guards that we took on as guests. They have expressed interest in returning to the fold of the ant colony. They have an admirable work ethic. There's no way we can say no to such enthusiasm." Helios did his job as quickly as possible.

"Which demigod is yours?" The royal guard asked.

"That will be Tanya. The one with blue skin and purple hair." The Colossus answered.

The royal guard reported back to the queen and another royal brought up Tanya. They also took the captured royal guards. The captured royal guards are already frozen within the cage. A year is enough for their fungus problems to resurface. They might not be able to move but they are still aware of their surroundings.

"Son of the sun god, is that you?" Doofus asked.

Helios didn't reply but it wasn't going to stop Doofus.

He cried, "Save us, son of the sun."

"Help us."

"Please help us."

More and more of them cried out to him for help with their divine sense. They pleaded to him to help them. But Helios looked on indifferently as they were taken away. He didn't feel guilty or sorry. It is just a cry for help from the weak. He has killed people who begged him not to and has slit the throat of

infants to get his way as Gehaldirah. This much doesn't faze him. It is just best to keep silent so that what he says now will not be used against him in the future.

Saying something nice to the ants will make the gods look unfavorably on him. He is the one that suggested they be captured and used as bargaining chips. Feigning innocence now will make them realize that there might be more to him. Saying something bad to the ants will also work against him if he needs to deceive them or lie to them in the future. Saying nothing now leaves a blank space that can be filled in the future.

Chapter 372 The Sacrifice Of The Weak For Their Betters.

The fate of the rebellious royal guards is the fate of the weak, to be used as tools for their betters. This kind of thing happens every time in the void universe. It is nothing in the grand scheme of things. There are entities out there in the void universe that destroy realm trees and all the life within them.

If one cannot sacrifice others, one cannot reach the levels of such entities. It is why the era of conquest is so bloody. It is the era of sacrifice. The weak are sacrificed for the power of their betters just like these royal guards will be sacrificed for the good of their betters.

The ants brought Tanya up.

"Oh my. She has lost some weight." The Colossus remarked with sadness.

Tanya has changed. One of these changes is the drastic reduction in size. There are no scars on her body since she is a mana entity with a very high healing factor but one can tell at a single glance that she has been through a lot.

Her reduction in weight indicates severe trauma that her existence has not been able to fully heal despite the lack of scars. That's just the obvious damage to her. There is surely psychological trauma that may never heal despite the fact that the memory of her experience within the ant mound is foggy at best. Some things just can't be forgotten even when the events have been wiped out from the mind by a powerful entity.

The Colossus took her from the royal guard that brought her up. It was then that Tanya teared up. Her vacant face finally showed some emotion after recognizing a familiar face.

"Aunty Vint. I missed you." Tanya said.

"Silly girl. It has only been a year."

Tanya hugged the Colossus and sobbed. The Colossus patted her gently while singing to her. Helios observed their interaction with some interest.

'It seems like they have a close relationship. It might be like Cardinal Hak is to me but much closer.' He assessed.

Tanya stopped crying later and even fell asleep in the embrace of aunty Vint. Helios kept a straight face through it all.

The Colossus lifted her and carried the sleeping girl in her arms. She said to Helios, "Good job Mr. Negotiator. This exchange went without a hitch."

"It's probably because they are afraid of crossing you. They know you can do extreme things to get your way."

She laughed merrily. "You're funny. I'll remember that. I'll say it about you at your burial ceremony if you die."

"I appreciate it."

"Anyway. I'm leaving now. Good luck with your job. If you ever come by the Storm city ask for Vint the Typhoon."

Then she began to grow. She expanded until she became her full colossal form. Then she walked away. Her gigantic feet created quakes in the sand as she walked. If there's ever a saying that describes how she is walking, it will be "walking like you own the place." All of the earth is open for her to stomp on with her carefree attitude. She didn't stop as she passed the front lines. She had orders from her god to take Tanya and leave.

The royal guard that had been staying away returned. He said to Helios. "The queen has had enough negotiation for a while. She will contact you when she is ready for another round."

Helios nodded and began his trip to the front lines. He had done his job very well. The negotiation went without a hitch and it wasn't due to the fear of Aunty Vint. Legion wanted the negotiation to go well, so it went well. Actually, the turn of events might be better than they planned thanks to Vint the Typhoon. So he is happy as he journeyed to the front lines still reeling from the shock of events.

He was joined by some of the priests that were scattered earlier. Not all of them survived Vint's transformation but None of the ones alive said anything. They didn't complain or admonish him either. It is not their place to say anything. They are simply the mouthpiece of the gods and this situation is a game of the gods. It is not their place to voice an opinion. They might have opinions but they can not say them. Saying anything might offend a god so they kept quiet and walked in silence with him.

Temple Of The Gods.

Unlike the priests, things are not so silent or peaceful amongst the gods. The gods immediately started fighting as soon as they realized what Harkam was doing. His Colossus had broken into the temple to collect the items for divinity and also stole the captured royal guards. Then forced the innocent Helios into making the exchange.

They realized that they were wrong when they said Harkam had gone too far earlier. It turns out that there's more he can do past the boundary of reasonable. So they began to fight. This time a lot more gods took part in it. Some gods joined both sides either because of camaraderie or because it is fun to fight. So things have truly escalated from a fight between 8 gods into a fight amongst some 30 gods.

But it didn't end there. The Celestial Supreme remained silent throughout it all. He was watching the chaos but his mind is somewhere else. It is the worst possible reaction in this very volatile situation. The bitter gods took his silence as an opportunity to do more.

A bitter god proclaimed grandly. "You have blasphemed me Harkam and you helped a mortal to do it too. I shall wage war on your church and uproot your legacy in the mortal realm."

Many other gods joined in this proclamation. Divine wars were declared. The gods are not joking. At this very moment, their various churches are already mobilizing their forces. This will be a world war like no

other. It will be the largest war in recent history and all of it was caused by the kidnapping of some demigods in an ant mound.

Chapter 373 Support Harkam So That He Won't Learn His Lesson.

The funny thing about this war is that the gods ought to be embarrassed if asked about why they are taking up arms. So someone cheated at a bidding war for things that they usually use as playthings. It is the sought of the funny reason that mortal kings should fight about not high and mighty gods. Then again, religious wars have never been fought for wise reasons.

Ironic enough, this war isn't an overreaction. It is a justified response albeit not a mature one. It is not like the inciting event of Harkam's and Stelios's war. Last time, Harkam declared war because his demigod was slain. It was his and his demigod's fault. This time he overrode the other gods and acted selfishly. It is his fault again, but he is not the one declaring war this time.

The world war isn't about the demigods anymore. It stopped being about the demigods when the bidding war started. Harkam disrespected them to their face and he did it with a mortal too. The Colossus crushed some god's avatars with her hand like they were bugs. Most of the casualty to the avatars is due to the falling debris but all of it can be attributed to Harkam and the Colossus. Then Harkam took ownership of all the royal guards without their consent before using it for his own selfish agenda. He practically bullied them and stole from them.

What if word of this event got out? And it would since there are so many ways it can be leaked. There were soldiers watching, the talkative Colossus, the other gods, and Harkam himself. He will certainly brag about it and so will that Colossus because of their big mouth. If there is one thing that the Colossus and her god have in common, it is that they don't think before they talk or act.

So the news will get out. Mortals will know that some gods were cheated and then crushed by a mortal, all with the support of her god. The story will make rounds among mortals and gods for thousands of years. It will become a legend and it might incite similar events. They won't have it.

Their pride has been soiled. It is another thing that the god of fate will use to mock them. That always hurts more. Harkam caused the blasphemy of their prestige and so they must have war. Blood must flow to cleanse away the sin he has committed.

Harkam laughed boisterously. "It was worth it."

The blood that will be shed will belong to mortals but Harkam thinks it will be all worth it. He isn't concerned about the upcoming war. Whatever will happen will happen. The gods might destroy his churches and mortal forces but they won't dare to face him in the divine realm. He is not some weak god. If he were allowed to attack other gods then he will go on a rampage, but he doesn't want to push the Celestial Supreme too far.

This war will impact him heavily. He sacrificed a lot of divinity that the lineage of sky gods has been saving and he will lose a lot of his priests but he considers it worth it and that's enough for him. In fact, it is more than enough for him. Tanya is safe and sound now, while the other demigods are still suffering in captivity. He also got to screw up the other gods so it is undoubtedly good enough for him. The problems he created will be left for the future generations of sky gods to fix.

"Wonderful moves exalted sky god. I am overwhelmed and impressed by your actions." The god of conflict complimented Harkam.

"It's nothing. It just came to me in a moment of inspiration." Harkam replied modestly but he is visibly proud.

Harkam would have loved to claim that he planned it from the start but it isn't so and no one will believe it to be so. One thing led to another. He just went with his gut instincts and things worked out the way they are. He didn't want to be in a bidding war with the gods and reduce his chance of getting Tanya. Better to take things by force.

He is currently surrounded by numerous gods who are taking his side in this conflict. His reply made them laugh and shake their heads in wonder. Harkam is just too amusing and entertaining. It is true that he does foolish things but foolish things are the most interesting things. Where would their entertainment be if there are no gods like Harkam? That's why they can't allow him to be punished too much or he might actually learn his lesson and stop doing foolish things.

The God of Conflict laughed and said, "Don't worry about the upcoming divine war, Grand god Harkam. I believe you are right on this issue. Your reaction is natural for any god that cares for his demigod. So I promise to assist you with troops and resources to the best of my abilities."

Harkam's grin became wider. "That's good to hear. I will enjoy expecting your help."

The god of conflict isn't the only god to promise support. They won't do their best but they will certainly do enough to give Harkam a fighting chance against the other 7 gods and their allies. This will ensure that the fight will be drawn out, gruesome, bloody, and very entertaining.

Zargoth plane went into an upheaval. A world war is about to start and it isn't baseless rumors. The gods brought out their blades and began sharpening them. All around the plane, churches everywhere enlisted troops and trained soldiers.

Some mortals prayed for peace but most were easily riled up. Their gods have been blasphemed and they are angry about it. It doesn't matter that a war will lead to far dire consequences but that's the thing about Faith. Faith makes people blind to some things including when it is clearly not good for them. So a lot of mortals are participating in this war voluntarily without coercion or forceful recruitment. They are doing it just to please their gods.

Chapter 374 120 Years Ago.

Things moved quickly too. Troops from various corners of the plane converged at the center of the plane where the divine battlefield is. It is normal divine war protocol that the Celestial Supreme put in place so that the rest of the plane won't be damaged by war. But there's no way the plane will get out of this with a minor injury with a war this big. They might have chosen to fight in one spot but the number of soldiers coming into that spot will cause damage to the entire plane more than physical injury.

There's is more to war than the loss of life. Wars are expensive. They cause inflation in the price of goods and services. The reduction in the labor force will make labor more expensive and will reduce the productivity of the economy. The war will cause financial, emotional, and all sorts of economic losses.

All that doesn't concern Helios for now. The church of the sun isn't one of the churches going to war and even if they are, he is too weak to be crucial to the war and he also has a very important job here as the negotiator. Harkam's actions did cause a lot of changes here too. Many Colossus from the churches that Harkam screwed over came to the camp.

Fortunately, it was agreed that only the gods involved can send Colossi and they can't send more than one. Thanks to that, the camp isn't overflowing with powerhouses that can threaten Helios. Still, nothing changed about the ant. They didn't move to open the floor for negotiation no matter how the Colossi stomped around or made a ruckus.

Somehow the ants knew that they were only posturing. The ants didn't think the gods will actually do anything that might risk their demigods. The ants chose to believe that the remaining gods are not as unreasonable as Harkam. So they didn't move for negotiation.

The wait continued like this without any progress for 50 years. It was then that the divine war became really serious. Harkam's side is actually winning the war. It came as a surprise to both sides. The other side didn't take him seriously and messed up. He also got a lot more support than anticipated. His enemies decided to curb his streak of victories as soon as possible so the war became more frenzied.

All the gods' attention moved to the war since watching the captured demigods is boring. Nothing had changed for years and they are tired of waiting around for nothing to happen. Even the Colossi were recalled to the divine battlefield to shore up the forces of the gods. The stalemate extended for another 70 years.

The Celestial Supreme.

The god of order and justice sat in his divine kingdom unmoving for the past 120 years. He watched the chaos escalate without doing anything about it. It is against his nature to allow things to happen like that but he allowed it all because of a meeting he had with the god of fate 120 years ago.

He had called the god of fate immediately after questioning Helios about his experience in the ant mound. A screen appeared in front of the celestial supreme. It showed a giant floating and dozing on a multicolored river. The giant is covered with wavy tattoos that depict moving rivers.

The sleeping giant spoke. "What do you want? And make it quick. I have sleep to return to."

The Celestial Supreme was agitated back then due to the appearance of the new god but he reigned in his rising anger at such disrespect to his person.

"I have a problem and I need your help." He said calmly.

That's one of the reasons why he didn't flare up. He shouldn't get angry and lash out at someone he needs help from or that person won't help him.

The god of fate yawned. "I know. It's obvious. You only talk to me these days when you need help."

"Then why did you ask if you already know what I want?" The Celestial Supreme said through gritted teeth.

"That's obvious too, isn't it? I meant what do you need help with?"

"There's a new god that I don't know anything about. Do you know anything about it?"

"I know about it." The god of fate answered curtly.

The Celestial Supreme sighed and asked, "Do you mind telling me about what you know?"

"Actually, I do mind."

It was becoming very difficult for the Celestial Supreme to reign his anger in. Something new is threatening the order that he has established and yet, this god of fate is toying with him.

"What do you want for the answer?" He asked after managing to calm down.

"If you want what I know, then you must come and get it from me. It has been a while since I last had visitors." The god of fate told him.

The Celestial Supreme cut the connection quickly before he screamed. "You don't have visitors because everyone thinks you're an asshole."

He said other unsavory things and vented his frustration with more choice words before he finally calmed down. Then he left his divine kingdom to visit the god of fate. He appeared beside a floating sea with multicolored water within a bubble. The bubble opened and he entered. He found the floating giant soon after and appeared beside him.

"Your strings of fate seemed to have proliferated nicely." He said to the god of fate.

The multicolored river is made of many ropes with different colors meshed and flowing together like a river. They look like strings to a giant but they are very large ropes to other lesser physically privileged races.

"You're just saying that to ease the awkward atmosphere after all the bad things you just said about me." The god of fate spoke without rising from his position.

He had heard all what the Celestial Supreme said about him after their call. He doesn't care about it just like he doesn't care enough about the Celestial Supreme to stand up and greet him.

Chapter 375 What's The Aim Of The Hidden God?

The Celestial Supreme didn't seem surprised that the god of fate heard what he said about him back in the privacy of his divine kingdom. It is common knowledge among the gods that the god of fate can hear about events he isn't present to witness. No event that concerns him or involves just stating his name can be hidden from him. He shouldn't be able to do so to the celestial supreme but what others don't know about the god of fate is that he is a celestial god too.

That's the second reason why the god of order didn't flare up when the god of fate disrespected him. There's a third reason why he didn't flare up but that's for another time. The god of fate being a celestial is why he can go scot-free from attending divine council meetings.

Everyone in the plane believes that there is only one Celestial God in the plane because the Celestial Supreme kills newly ascended celestials. They are partly right. The god of fate ascended without an announcement so no other god knew about his ascension except the god of order and justice. It is his privilege as the Celestial Supreme to be made aware of all ascensions.

The stealth ascension might have given others pause but that didn't change the Celestial Supreme's mind about killing newly ascended celestials. He wasn't intimidated at all and he went after the god of fate to kill him. Obviously, he couldn't kill him or the guy wouldn't be alive right now disrespecting him to his face. The god of fate's domain countered his own so he had to leave the new celestial god alone.

Thankfully it was only a stalemate or the current Celestial Supreme will not be the god of order and justice.

The situation about the hidden new god made the Celestial Supreme think of the god of fate. He hid his ascension from others by utilizing the powers of his domain. Those who are not required by fate to

know of his ascension will never know no matter how much they try. The god of fate's ability to snoop on others might also be very helpful in this situation. Those are the reason he called the god of fate.

"So here I am. What do you know about the new god?"

The god of fate answered. "Nothing. I don't know anything about the new god apart from the fact that there's a strange divine entity at work in the mortal realm."

The Celestial Supreme became angry. He asked with barely held anger, "Then why did you ask me to come? You could have just said that when I contacted you earlier."

The god of fate ignored the outburst. He has nothing to fear from the Celestial Supreme. It showed in his actions and his speech.

He replied calmly. "The answer to that is also obvious. It is to make you come here. I already told you that I haven't had visitors in a while and you know why I can't go out myself."

The Celestial Supreme continued to simmer as his anger rose. "So my trip here was a waste?"

"It is a waste for you if you decide to make it so. It isn't a waste for me since I am enjoying the pleasure of your presence even though you're being such a stick in the mud."

The god of order and justice finally snapped. His voice was low as he said, "I won't have that. You either tell me something useful or I will damage your collection of strings of fate. I might not be able to do anything to you but this sea will become a small pond by the time I am done with it."

The god of fate considered the threat for a while before speaking. "Fine. I was wrong, you are not a stick in the mud. You just have a stick up your asshole."

The god of order and justice roared, "Just get to it already."

The god of fate sat up. His legs sank into the river of ropes while his buttocks sat on it.

He began to speak. "Let me ask you this. What do you think the aim of this god is?"

"I don't know. If I knew I wouldn't be here." The Celestial Supreme answered with irritation.

"I said what do you think the aim is? Surely you must have some theories."

The celestial supreme sighed. "I honestly don't know. The actions of this new god don't make sense to me. Nothing about this makes sense to me."

"Come on. Don't be so boring. Give me your best guess. I'm sure you have a lot of them running around in that thick head of yours. They might be boring and uninspired but they might be useful."

The Celestial Supreme glared at the god of fate before he replied.

"If I have to guess, I think the aim of this god is to help the ant queen become a transcendent and then become a god."

The god of fate clapped in applause. "That's a pretty good guess. So why don't you confirm it."

"I can't confirm it."

"Because?"

"Because the demigods are at risk. If I try to investigate the ant colony, the demigods might be killed. Their death will create a lot of Chaos and I don't want a lot of Chaos. I don't want Chaos at all."

The celestial supreme answered.

The god of fate shook his head. "You and your dislike for Chaos. You have to be flexible or you will break. This case can be burst wide open if only you overcome your fear of chaos."

His fear of chaos in the mortal realm and amongst the gods is holding him back from confirming the hidden god's agenda. If he can overcome it or find a way around it, then this conundrum of a situation will become clear and simple. He will be able to cut short the hidden god's agenda and put everything right.

Chapter 376 Patiently Waiting For 120 Years.

The Celestial Supreme frowned as he considered the proposition.

"So you're saying I should go ahead and investigate the ant mound without any care for the consequences? That's actually a good idea."

The god of fate waved his arm to disagree. "No, that's a bad idea. What if the aim of this god is to make the gods hate you? Right now we have one god on the side of the ant. Your actions might lead to more gods switching to help non-giant races. You are already disliked among the gods. This might be the tipping point. They might just decide to band together and usurp you."

The Celestial Supreme became confused. He understands that more dissent among the gods might be bad for him especially since he is aware of some of it already among the gods. He knows that the gods have a doomsday plan against him if he pushes them too far. The doomsday plan is unlikely to work against him but he doesn't want the chaos that conflict among the gods will create. What he doesn't understand is why his idea is bad when the god of fate said that he should consider disregarding chaos.

He said to the god of fate. "But you just said I could confirm my theory if I let my fear of chaos go."

"Yes, I said that. But your theory might be wrong. Is the consequence of your actions worth confirming a wrong theory?"

The Celestial Supreme sighed. His irritation has left him leaving only confusion. "So what do you suggest for me to do?"

"I suggest you wait for a time when it will be worth it to confirm your theory."

"What do you mean?"

The god of fate answered with a question. "What do you think will happen if you do nothing? What will happen to the plane if you stop being the controlling freak you are? Why do you think you must school everything?"

"You know why I must control everything. Without me, the plane will be plunged into Chaos. Gods will start to fight wantonly amongst themselves. Mortals will start attacking churches and creating their own churches in hopes of becoming new gods. It will be utter and complete Chaos. It will be a nightmare. There will be deaths upon deaths. So much death, it will be..." The Celestial Supreme grew livid the more he described the consequences of letting the world run without his control. He truly felt bad just imagining it.

The god of fate interrupted him. "That's enough. I've heard enough."

He knows enough about the Celestial Supreme to know that he really means well for the Zargoth plane. He is not as old as Stelios but he is old and he used to be close to the Celestial Supreme in the past. That was before the Celestial Supreme tried to kill though.

The Celestial Supreme stopped talking and looked expectantly at the god of fate who is running his hand across his face and muttering about all the demons lurking in the god of order's head.

"If you were to try and confirm your theory during a time of chaos, what do you think the repercussions will be?" The god of fate asked.

The Celestial Supreme's eyes lit up in realization. He said slowly, "It wouldn't matter as much. There will be so much chaos around that a little more Chaos won't matter. Wow, that's a good plan. You're a genius."

The god of fate shook his head. "You're just too tightly wound and your thinking is rigid. That's why you don't see the obvious. Don't be so excited about confirming your theory. You can be wrong about it, but the good thing is that you will become closer to finding out the aim of this new god."

"Thanks for your help. I have to go." The Celestial Supreme said.

"Before you go, I have something to say to you. Consider it a favor from me. I can't see anything about this new god but I saw something about you. You are going to die and it will be because of betrayal."

The Celestial Supreme left with that damning prophecy over his head. A prophecy that states that you will die tends to leave you brooding but he didn't allow that to stop him from exacting his plans. He instructed the church of order and justice to lie low and stop policing the mortal realm. The only thing he did is to place a large spherical divine barricade around the ant mound. He will be able to know whenever anyone passes through the barricade either to make contact with the ant mound or leave it.

Then he laid back and watched. He didn't say anything when Harkam brought a Colossus to the camp. He didn't interfere in their fight. He allowed it to escalate into a divine war. He allowed the divine war to escalate into a world war as more gods piled on. His inaction enabled the war to become more important than the demigods.

It was then that he decided to confirm his theory. It was painful for him to watch all these Chaos ravage the carefully laid out order that he had put in place but no one will care too much when he puts the demigods at risk. All the Chaos will be worth it if he can unravel the mystery that is the new god.

The evil he knows is better than the unknown evil that the hidden god is perpetrating under the cover of the captured demigods. He can always put things back in order. Things have been getting boring for him anyway, he will have a lot of fun putting things back into their rightful place.

He called for a divine council in the temple at the camp. The gods sent their avatars. It was the first time in 120 years that their Celestial Supreme is giving any order. He has been very quiet all this while. It seems all of that is about to change.

Chapter 377 Time To End This.

The gods attended the divine council enthusiastically. Apart from the meeting being compulsory, they are eager to attend the meeting because they want to know what he has to say after being silent for so long.

"I call this divine council to order." He said after everyone that will come had arrived.

He informed them of his intention straightaway. "I have decided to end this stalemate with the ants. I have called a Colossus from my church. The Colossus will enter the ant mound and get to the bottom of this issue."

He informed them for several reasons all of which revolves around a single word, "betrayal." A betrayal needs a betrayer. The first reason he is informing them is to let them know of his plan and hopefully reduce the chances of the new god using that as an opportunity to turn gods against him.

Some gods like Harkam still believe he is the one responsible for this entire situation. They believe he is doing it to remove their demigods and stop the creation of more divine lords in a bid to reduce changes like he always does.

He chose to inform them of his intentions to resolve it so that if it leads to another unfavorable situation like the death of demigods, it wouldn't lead to more misunderstandings. There will be more misunderstandings if he moves without informing the gods and something unfortunate happens.

The second important reason is to watch the reaction of the ants to his declaration. He wants to determine if there is already a betrayer among the gods. His plan is aimed at uncovering more about the situation so he doesn't mind the leakage of his plans. Whatever happens, is sure to clue him into the aim of the ants and the god helping them.

"I am only calling this meeting to inform you of my decision and not to open it to a discussion. It will happen and we will see the effects of my decision soon when the Colossus arrives. In the meantime, you can leave." His tone indicated the finality of the matter.

"I hereby declare this divine council dismissed."

The gods dispersed. No one said anything since he didn't call them here for their opinion. The seven gods who had demigods here felt sour about the decision but they don't care much anymore. They have a war to fight which requires their full attention. Plus they have already sacrificed more than the value of those demigods in the world war. As it is right now, the situation isn't about the demigods anymore but about disrespect of Harkam to them.

Stelios went to see Helios before he left. He found Helios meditating.

"When are you going to be ready to break through? I'll feel better if you're a transcendent and can protect yourself." He asked his son with concern due of a father.

"I can't become a transcendent or I won't be able to remain as the negotiator. The ants won't trust a transcendent, especially after what happened last time. It is unsafe to remain a negotiator but I can't leave it yet until my job has been fulfilled. " Helios replied with righteous determination.

Stelios smiled and nodded. He is impressed with Helios's show of comradery. It is a good quality that a parent will like to see in their child. It is also a quality that will make his plan for Helios go smoothly.

"Well, you won't have to worry about that any longer. The Celestial Supreme has sent for a Colossus. He intends to get to the bottom of the matter with the ant. Then you can return to the sun city and break through there. It will be safe for you to break through there and I won't have to worry about you anymore."

The relief that Stelios feels is evident in his voice. One will be able to tell how much concern he has for Helios.

Helios beamed. "That's great news."

"Yes, it is. So prepare yourself to leave this place."

Helios nodded like a dutiful son. "Thank you for your concern father. I'll return as soon as I am no longer needed."

Stelios left after having a short chat and Helios resumed his meditation. Except he isn't meditating anymore. His mind is thinking about a lot of things one of which is Stelios' sincerity to him.

Helios knows that Stelios wants him to be safe and sound. He is not basing his belief on the display of concern that Stelios is showing to him. He is basing in on what he found out after cracking the Stigmata and figuring out its complete purpose. If he were in Stelios' shoes, he will be concerned about his safety too considering the investment he has put in and what he hopes to get for it.

The other thing that he is worried about is the Celestial Supreme's declaration of action.

'It seems the tree father is out of time. Something has to be done about this.' He thought to himself.

The front lines had been in a state of reduced activity for more than a hundred years but it became active again because of the Celestial Supreme's declaration. Then something happened that put the front lines in a state of overdrive. It is something unexpected. The ants called for negotiation after years of silence. The gods gathered again for the event. They turned their gaze to the front lines and gave it their undivided attention.

'Now I am certain that there is a betrayer in our midst or could it be a coincidence that the ants asked for negotiation as soon as I am about to break this stalemate? One of these gods has betrayed me. Who is it?' The Celestial Supreme thought to himself as he scanned the crowd of sitting gods.

They seem innocent and jovial but one of them has betrayed him. He has been watching the frontlines like a hawk and he is aware of everything that took place including Stelios's conversation with Helios. Helios didn't do anything suspicious and neither did any soldier on the front lines.

Chapter 378 The First Demand.

Helios sat within his tent meditating. He did not leave his tent or receive any other visitors. Even if he did receive visitors, no one else on the front line did anything suspicious. They all went about their day as if nothing is different which to most of them, it might as well be. Most of them didn't know about the Celestial Supreme's declaration.

The Celestial Supreme can say with uttermost certainty that the leak did not occur because of anyone on the front lines. This means that the gods are the ones that leaked the information to the ant. One of them is in contact with the ants. He can't monitor what the gods do in their divine kingdoms so he doesn't know which god betrayed him.

There is some good that came out of the leakage though. He has confirmed that the god of fate was right and that there really is a betrayer among the gods. Now, he will be extra cautious and careful around the gods.

"Should we go ahead with the negotiation?" One of the seven gods asked him.

He already made a declaration of war against the ants. So they are asking him for permission to negotiate with those that can be considered terrorists right now.

He replied quickly. "Sure go ahead. There's no reason not to do everything to try and get your demigods. But this negotiation must not be dragged on because I will still do what I want when the Colossus comes. This opportunity for negotiation won't delay me."

He gave them the go-ahead. Refusing will be counterproductive to his aim of informing the gods beforehand. He wants to show them he doesn't have any ulterior motives and he also wants to see how the ants react. Either way, he will get to the bottom of this conundrum one way or another.

This opportunity for negotiation hasn't changed his mind at all. His Colossus is still on the way and it will burst this entire thing wide open. He doesn't want to endanger the demigods but he will do it if he has to. If this is a ploy to delay him, then it won't work. Nothing can delay the retribution of justice.

Helios was called to do his duty as the negotiator. He was accompanied by nine priests. 7 from the other gods, 1 from the church of order, and another 1 from the church of the sun. There is no representative of the church of the storm among their procession.

One of the priests belonging to the 7 gods spoke to him as they were on their way.

"Thank you for doing this for us. We have taken so much of your time. My God says that he will owe you a divine favor if he is able to get his demigod back and a normal favor if not. You deserve something for your efforts regardless of the outcome."

Helios bowed. "I thank the god of mercy for his generosity. It is my duty to help my fellows when I can but your generosity has made it my privilege."

The priest nodded contently and withdrew. The other priests approached him one by one to express their thanks for his duty and promised him different types of favors. A normal favor from a god can be used to get the god to do something for you but the god can choose not to, offer you a worse alternative or delay doing it.

A divine favor on the other hand is a very important favor in which the god will be compelled by his Godhood as a god to fulfill the favor to the best of their abilities. It is not a must for the god to do what you asked for but it is a must for them to try their best. They might not be able to do some things for you if it is not in their power no matter how much they want to but they have to try their best before offering you an alternative.

He thanked them for their generosity and said words that stroked their ego. The priests of the church of justice and the church of the sun didn't offer him anything. So they returned to silence after the seven priests were done delivering the message of their respective gods.

Helios smiled when he saw what is waiting for them in front of the ant mound.

He said to them, "It seems we will have some good news. We might be able to get the demigods."

The other priests were ecstatic when they saw all the demigods placed outside the ant mound. They were bound, gagged, and emaciated but it is a good sight. It indicated an increase in the possibility of their release.

Helios and his entourage reached the waiting royal guards. One of the royal guards spoke to them.

"We are willing to let all the demigods go but we want two things. If we don't get both of them, then we won't release any of the demigods. Do you understand? It's all or nothing."

Helios spoke. "We understand and we are willing to work towards satisfying the two requirements as long as they are reasonable."

"Don't worry it is reasonable. First, we want 50 pieces of divine items for each of the 7 demigods."

Helios consulted with the priests before replying. "That is reasonable and we are willing to fulfill that requirement. What is the second requirement?"

50 pieces of divine items are too much for a single demigod but the gods agreed to it because they don't have much use for it apart from battering with other gods. The Celestial Supreme has also placed a limit on the time they have to bail their kids.

So they are in a rush to finish this negotiation and they don't want to be the ones to delay. The Colossus can get here anytime. Plus the price of 50 looks like a bargain when compared to the amount Harkam had to pay for his and they are sure they will be able to retrieve it once the Colossus finishes its work on the ant colony.

Chapter 379 The Second Demand.

The royal guard replied to Helios's question. "Do not worry about that for now. We have brought the demigods out so we want an equal gesture of sincerity. Bring the items with divinity here. We want to see it before we accept it. We couldn't inspect them last time because of the Colossus and received some faulty items."

The ants want to confirm the authenticity of the items with divinity before they move on to the next request.

Helios agreed. "That's understandable. We will go back now and return when we have the items."

They returned to the camp for the priests to get the needed items from their gods. They don't have any Colossus that can enlarge and cave in the temple on the avatar of other gods in order to retrieve items with divinity from their gods. The gods have recalled their transcendents to the divine battlefield at the center of the plane.

Then the negotiation party returned to resume the negotiation. The priests displayed each item for the royal guards to see. Each item be it a jewel or a cup showed clear indications of divinity that proved that they aren't faulty. They glow and attract any sentient organism that gazes at them. One will feel a yearning for the items because it represents distilled power that can evolve one's state of existence.

"Now that the authenticity of the items has been proven, can we move on?" Helios asked impatiently.

The royal guard replied. "Yes, we can. We want one more thing. We want you."

He asked in a confused tone. "You want me to do what?"

"I mean we will only exchange all these 7 demigods for 50 items with divinity and you, demigod of the sun god. Either you agree and we make the exchange or you disagree and we can separate.

Helios was stunned. He didn't even know how to reply. He isn't the only shocked one. Apparently, someone else is and that person doesn't like what they heard one bit. This caused some changes to take place in the world immediately.

The sun in the sky suddenly brightened. It enlarged so much that it looked like it is falling to the earth. The temperature of the mortal realm increased to dangerous levels. It is obvious that the sun god is angry. Giants everywhere bowed their heads on the ground and pleaded for mercy from the sun god. They are asking him to forgive them for whatever has made him angry.

"What did you say?"

While Helios is still processing what he just heard and what was going on with the world, the 7 priests behind shared a look and nodded to each other. 2 of them went to hold off the priest of the church of the sun while the other 5 cast divine restraining spells on Helios. He was caught off guard without his runes activated so he became entrapped and unable to move.

"Don't do this. This is wrong. You can't do this to me." He pleaded with them with his divine sense.

"We are sorry but the request is reasonable. One demigod for seven." The priest of the god of mercy replied.

Helios didn't give up. "But you just thanked me and your gods owe me a favor. You owe me after everything I have done for you."

Another one answered indifferently. "We owe you a normal favor now. It will only become a divine favor after we get the demigods. Wait till we get the demigods first before you start trying to compel our gods."

Unlike the priest of mercy who had the decency to be remorseful, this priest didn't feel any regret. It is not that he doesn't feel bad for Helios, he does. But his god has decreed that Helios should be captured

and handed over for the exchange. He doesn't feel regret because he is simply obeying a command from his god. Sometimes faith makes believers capable of doing terrible things.

Helios turned to the priest from the church of order and justice. He shouted, "Help me. You can't simply watch and let this happen."

The two priests had gone to hold back the priest of the church of the sun. It is common knowledge that the priests of the sun god are more powerful than others because of the quality of their Stigmata. So they sent two to stop the priest from interfering.

Meanwhile, the priest of the church of justice chose to watch without interfering and they didn't bother him. The priest didn't say anything even when Helios called to him.

Helios was bonded amid his cries for help. Then the priests restrained his mouth and covered him with a cocoon of power to stop any means of communication too. Partly to stop him from making noise and mostly to stop him from talking and using his divine favor immediately after the exchange has been made. That didn't stop him from giving them venomous stares. So they made the cocoon opaque to stop him from seeing anything.

He has been essentially bonded, gagged, and blinded. Then he is used as an item exchanged with the royal guards for the 7 demigods. He tried all he could but he was dragged to the colony. The priests received the demigods and left merrily with them. Their mission has been accomplished. The only thing out of place is the blazing sun. It is still close to the plane and it is bombarding the plane with heat and light beyond what is pleasant to have.

Back in the temple of the gods.

"What nonsense is this?" Stelios stood up and shouted in anger when the royal guards asked for Helios.

One of the 7 gods said to the Celestial Supreme, "It is reasonable. One demigod for seven is a good deal."

Stelios's face contorted with anger. He couldn't believe it that they are actually considering the demand but he will not have it. He will do everything he can do to stop it. He has too much invested on Helios to risk him.

Chapter 380 Helios Is Not Worth 7 Demigods.

They chose to ignore Stelios' outburst and give the Celestial Supreme a suggestion about why exchanging Helios for 7 demigods is a good idea. The sight infuriated Stelios further.

"Are you being stupid right now? We will not consider such an idiotic idea. How have you sunk so low as to use a demigod to trade like a good and to ants nonetheless?" Stelios shouted at the god that dared to make such a statement.

"We use demigods for entertainment all the time. They are tools to be used for our pleasure. This is not so different from their purpose."

Stelios's voice rose higher with his anger. "He is my tool. He is mine to use as I wish not yours. I will decide what I want to use him for."

The other gods began to voice their opinions on the matter. Some agreed with Stelios. He did them a favor by allowing Helios to get involved in the first place. Asking for the life of his demigods is asking for too much and disrespecting him. Some disagreed with Stelios. 1 to 7 is a good exchange anyhow they look about it. Helios is not worth 7 demigods. He is just 1 demigod.

Both sides became heated. It all happened so fast. The temple became rowdy quickly and some gods were already getting ready to fight. It seems a repeat of the Colossus incident will happen again but this time it will occur very quickly.

The gods are currently divided because of the world war so they just raring to get at each other. It's like the timer of an explosion started close to the end instead of at the beginning. The explosion will go off without taking much time.

"Silence." The Celestial Supreme ordered.

Everyone became silent immediately.

"I make the decisions here." He informed them as the weight of his order pressed on them and enforced the silence.

They all bowed to him. He left them in that state for a while before he became appeased.

Then he gave his verdict. "I will allow the exchange."

Stelios tried to speak but he couldn't. So he directed his anger somewhere else. His divine power flared in his divine kingdom and empowered the sun shining on Zargoth plane.

The Celestial Supreme ignored his tantrum and instructed his priest to not get involved. The other priests got the go-ahead from their gods and restrained Helios. The god of order allowed this because it will reduce the casualty that will be experienced when he busts into the ant colony with a colossus.

He doesn't know what the god or the ants are thinking for making this deal but he wants to see it anyway. He knows he might be falling into the trap of the enemy but the consequence is the life of a single demigod, and a single life is certainly worth it to pacify 7 gods. What does the life of a single demigod even matter? It is also the demigod of the sun god. It's not like the sun god needs a demigod. He has hundreds of divine lords already so he won't miss one demigod.

No matter what the enemy wants to do with the demigod, the fallout from the sacrifice of a single demigod will be small and will reduce the resulting chaos. It will also prove that he didn't start this charade to reduce the number of demigods.

The deal is in his favor but what made him decide that he must go ahead with the deal is the way that Stelios shouted and raved in his presence. Such a thing doesn't happen in the past but the gods now seem to think it is allowed because he has been withdrawn these recent years. So he has to put his foot down and remind them who is the boss around here.

Stelios suddenly thinks his demigod is his to do as he wishes. He seems to have forgotten that it was the Celestial Supreme that forced him to allow Helios to participate in the heroic quest in the first place when he sensed the ant queen's attempt at becoming a demigod. He needs to be reminded that the Celestial Supreme was willing to sacrifice Helios for entertainment back then and is still willing to sacrifice Helios for the good of the plane.

The exchange was made and the demigod of the sun was taken away. The Celestial Supreme nodded his head in satisfaction. The gods were talking quietly amongst themselves. Harkam was smiling from ear to ear. He is happy about getting his demigod 120 years ago now he is very happy that Stelios is screwed over. It is not his victory or a big one either, but it feels good to see his rival lose out.

Silence returned to the temple when the Celestial Supreme began speaking again.

"Stelios, I will try to save your demigod but nothing is certain. These things happen. Bad, unfortunate, and unforeseen things suddenly happen for no apparent reason and there's nothing we can do about them. We just have to move on and ..."

He was still talking when Stelios exclaimed. "Oh crap. I have to go."

He sensed something really urgent that needs his attention. It is not something that can be put off or delayed.

"I have not declared this meeting over. You cannot..." The Celestial Supreme started to deny him the permission to leave.

Stelios didn't listen. His avatar winked out of existence leaving the Celestial Supreme fuming. It is this sort of disrespect that he doesn't like and he must put an end to it. He composed himself after a while and continued his speech.

"It is understandable that the god of the sun is distraught about his son. I will forgive him because he has been dutiful for his many years of service as the sun god without any problems. He always follows the proper protocol but it seems he really loves his son. I will forgive his transgression just this once."