

Legion lich 201

Chapter 201 Natural aversion

"Why did you make that deal with them? You could have demanded much more and I didn't see much advantage for our side." Kalesi asked doubtfully.

"It's nothing very important. I don't want the Gods war to start yet and I needed them to retreat, but letting them go without demanding something would sound strange, so I put an absurd condition and then offered a more reasonable one for them to accept the withdrawal without many suspects."

I knew my former disciples would accept and that arrogant one would be forced to back down with the two of us working together." Illum explained with a shrug. He sat down in a chair next to hers as a cup of coffee floated from the kitchen into his hands.

"Hmm...I see. But what do you think of this war to come? What are the chances that humans will be able to defend themselves from the invasion?" She changed the subject after nodding her head in understanding.

"Without the armies of the human empires and just the guild, church, and order of magic to back them up? I'd say around a 30% chance for the port cities of Mirkor and 10% for the islands of Belaster." Illum spoke while scratching his chin thoughtfully.

"Why so low? Are the evolved demihumans that strong?" Kalesi didn't seem to believe their words. She knew demihumans were strong, but if humanity joined forces, she believed they could at least fend off the first wave of enemies.

"The problem is not the strength of the demihumans, but the humans. Even if they join forces and the order of magic shares weapons and technologies to help defend, the cities' own defenses will be weak, since they were not created with intended to serve as strongholds."

"A month and a half isn't enough time for them to upgrade every city's defenses, so the most they can do is bring in magic cannons or artifacts to aid in the defense. Humans can also use mages to cast temporary large-scale spells, but I still have confidence that the evolved demihumans will win most battles."

"Speaking of which, do you know how these demihumans are getting their giant blood back? I thought the lineage of giants was lost forever." Kalesi asked as he ordered a coffee as well.

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"It's a mystery to me too, although I know of some spells that were lost that could have similar effects, but were unstable and incomplete spells and would shorten the lifespan of demihumans." He said and refused to share anything, making Kalesi pout.

She had hoped to use these spells on her lesser kin, like the wyverns or drakes, but it wouldn't be worth it if they died in a short time.

"The only thing left to decide is which side we will take in this war. Are we going to ally with the demihumans, ignore the war, or attack both sides?" Kalesi asked, the idea of joining forces with the humans not even crossing his mind.

"It is geographically impossible for us to get directly involved in the war and until I find out the goals of the evolved demihumans and how they managed to evolve, I want to avoid associating with them. Just keep attacking the human empires to stop them from sending their armies in the guise of mages of the order of magic or paladins church." Illum decided to keep things as they were.

"You're right. The only undead realm we have on the continent is Darkwood and they're on the other side of the continent." Kalesi agreed with him and was about to leave when he suddenly remembered. "Do you have any news of the new species?"

"Not much. My spies went to the fortress they were in, but the undead had already left for the deserts. The fortress itself had been destroyed and all they found were a few bones left behind." Illum spoke and an excited glint appeared in Kalesi's eyes, but it quickly disappeared.

"I'm sorry, but the bones are old and have lost all their energy signatures, so they won't be of any use to you." He said quickly before she demanded the bones.

"It would be difficult for my spies to continue chasing them across the desert, so I've asked Selena to continue the search on the other side. These new undead seem to be moving further east, so they should find each other eventually."

"Isn't it dangerous to leave the undead alone in the desert? From what you told me, these undead are too weak to survive in such an environment." Kalesi seemed uncertain that leaving Athos and the black skeletons alone was the right decision.

The desert monsters were powerful, but that wasn't the only thing she was worried about. All living things have a natural aversion to the undead, but while intelligent races feel fear or hatred, less intelligent monsters would feel threatened and attack undead on sight.

It was an instinct to destroy something that wasn't natural and shouldn't exist. An undead in such an environment would be constantly attacked by monsters until it was destroyed or killed all monsters.

It was the reason why Athos and the skeletons were attacked so many times and why Selena was able to create a kingdom of her own in such a short time. If the new species didn't have enough power, they would be destroyed before Selena's search parties could find them.

"It won't be a problem. He has a dragon to protect him." Illum explained all the information his spies could gather. The dark elder had been arrested in the middle of the order's main headquarters and the water elder was keen to spread the news to all human realms, so the news reached Illum quickly.

It was a huge surprise that the new species had gathered enough power to kill a juvenile zombie dragon, even if its mind had been destroyed by the necromancer who transformed it.

"Then he must be safe. I can't wait to find out what abilities he possesses." Kalesi said relieved and left the hut. There were few creatures that could match dragons, even if it's a juvenile.

'It may still be months to years before the search teams find the new undead, however.' Illum thought with a wry smile, but kept the thought to himself. Both were immortal beings and saw time differently than mortals.

Months or years passed in the blink of an eye for them.

In the Demi-human Empire, in the temporary base on Athos.

Treevor was standing outside the base looking up at the sky, which was returning to normal now that the eclipse was over. They were being attacked by a pack of tyrannical Mammoths when the solar eclipse began, giving the undead an overwhelming advantage.

The tyrannical mammoths were huge monsters over 7 meters tall, but they panicked upon seeing the eclipse and became momentarily unable to see, so the undead monsters had an easy time against them.

The surviving tyrannical mammoths were now retreating and Athos was leading the chase, using his new set of equipment. Since receiving Dwarvin's equipment, Athos has been on watch on the walls to always be the first to fight when monsters attack.

Treevor was here mostly on watch and to make sure nothing happened to Athos, as the generals always liked to have someone around to make sure nothing happened to him.

Not that they doubted his ability, as between his fourth layer core, his magic organ, and his equipment, there wasn't much that could threaten him in the vicinity, as long as he wasn't surrounded. What they feared was that he would get carried away and run away from the base to continue fighting.

"Looks like it's over." Treevor muttered uninterestedly as he turned his gaze to Athos and saw that he was standing around the furthest corpses and turning them into skeletons.

He watched until Athos approached and entered the gates, making sure he didn't run away and went back inside the base.

"The willow is low on energy, so I'll leave the guard to Ruy and Astrus for now." Treevor reported to Athos that he was too busy cleaning the blood on his sword to listen.

"Of course, I agree too. Did you see how the shield managed to block a tyrannical mammoth's charge without retreating a step? Or how my sword pierced the mammoth's skull as if it were made of paper?" He started bragging, ignoring everything Treevor said as he boasted about his weapons.

He was like that for hours, ignoring everything the skeletons told him.

Treevor turned his back on Athos and walked to a building far from all the others, a small one-story building he had built for himself and ordered that no skeletons enter.

Athos had already invaded the place out of curiosity, but the building had nothing, just a small empty space.

Treevor entered the building and waved his hand, making the door behind him disappear and darkening the interior of the building, but it wasn't a problem for him. Treevor used every sense he could to make sure he was alone and only when he was sure, did he step out of the corrupted willow tree.

Chapter 202 Corrupted Avatar

His skeleton fell forward for an instant, before his avatar returned to his body and regained his balance. The corrupted willow returned to its tree form, but kept a small size to fit inside the building.

Treevor looked at his own skeleton for a few seconds with disgust, before lying back against the corrupted willow tree and freeing his avatar again.

“As expected, it’s getting worse.” Treevor sighed wearily, but thanks to his incorporeal form, nothing happened.

His formerly translucent avatar was now stained black in several places, the black chains that bound his limbs even thicker than the last time he’d seen them and slowly corrupting his avatar, as if they were snakes spreading their venom.

The black chains were five in total and bound their wrists, ankles and neck, one for each general in the army. The unique nature of Treevor’s soul allowed him to resist the corruption of the black currents to some extent, but with time and the increase in the number of chains, the balance tipped in the direction of the currents.

It took Treevor a while to realize the problem, as he normally jumped from his skeleton straight to the willow tree and back again. He only noticed the problem when he started to have bouts of sudden aggression and urges to kill for no reason.

But the worst part was that Treevor didn’t feel bad about seeing his avatar corrupted. He knew he should be disgusted at the thought of becoming a slave in mind and body or thinking of a way to break free of his chains, but he didn’t think the idea of serving Athos was so bad.

The corruption was changing his mind on a fundamental level, making him think that serving Athos was right and resisting was wrong. Treevor had chosen to watch Athos precisely so that he could gauge how he felt about Athos.

Before he knew it, the hatred of being killed had completely disappeared and was replaced by loyalty. He now honestly cared about Athos’ safety, instead of just worrying about him for his own safety.

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“What am I supposed to do now? I feel like I’m already at my limit.” Treevor muttered half in despair and half in relief, realizing how his avatar’s pure side and corrupted side were balanced.

If he waited any longer, the corrupted side would take over and he would end up bending the knee to Athos.

“On the one hand, Athos is a bastard who kills for pleasure and doesn’t care about anyone, not even himself. If I decide to follow him, I’ll spend the rest of my life fighting and killing until I get unlucky and face an enemy that I won’t be able to face it and die.” Treevor muttered, but then he remembered what his life had been like up until the moment Athos killed him.

Ever since his clan was wiped out and he lost his family, all he’s done is just survive, killing and feeding in order to survive. Treevor had already tried to get in contact with other clans of demihumans, but he was always branded as an aberration and expelled.

He had no family, friends, lovers or anything worth living for. In fact, he had talked more in the past two months than he had decades living in the desert, even if the conversations were mostly about slaughter or runesmithing.

Though he didn't like to admit it, Treevor had become attached to the skeletons.

"Even if by some miracle I find a way to break free and run away, what would I do next? I was judged before I was undead, what would I do now that I am one?" Treevor muttered as he gripped his hair in frustration, only to let go and sigh.

"If I stay and decide to serve Athos, at the very least I'll have a place to stay and people who don't despise me for who I am. How ironic, the place I would feel accepted would be among a bunch of bloodthirsty undead." Treevor started to laugh at the irony of things.

Among all the defects of Athos, prejudice was not among them. He hated all races equally and judged people by how useful they could be after he killed them, regardless of race or appearance.

"Here, I have not only a place to stay, but also a high position among the skeletons. It's not very useful for now since our numbers are low, but I'll have a big influence when we form a permanent base and start to expand." Treevor was suddenly excited by the idea of being the commander of a large army, but quickly realized that it was corruption's influence and shook his head to recover.

"But most importantly, this is a real chance to get revenge on that son of a bitch. If the army grows big enough, I might have a chance to kill Kastil and get revenge for what he did to my family and clan." Treevor thought as his mind was filled with a deep hatred that the corruption increased tenfold, but this time he didn't care.

Treevor harbored a strong hatred towards Kastil, but he never had the necessary power to kill him, so he had to swallow his hatred.

"The boss will continue to expand without stopping and if it continues like this, at some point it will clash with Kastil. It may take decades or even centuries for that to happen, but they will definitely face each other and I will have my chance." Treevor spoke and returned to his own body, before rising determinedly.

He exited the small building and confirmed Athos' position on the wall before going over to him. Athos was still standing on top of the wall as he surveyed the surroundings, or at least he pretended to, as his eyes never left the sword in his hand.

Ruy and Astrus were on his side and were slightly surprised to see Treevor approaching.

"Commander, haven't you decided to retreat for today?" Ruy asked as soon as he approached.

"I need to talk to the boss in private. Get out." Treevor demanded in a serious tone, making both Ruy and Astrus look at each other for a few seconds before retreating.

Treevor used earth magic lightly on the rock under Athos' feet, turning it to mud and making him slip.

"Gha?!" Athos was focused on his sword and didn't notice Treevor's approach or the magic under his feet, at least until gravity did its work and made him fall while letting out a strange scream.

"Shit! Why did you do that?" Athos asked angrily as he got up. He didn't take any damage after falling thanks to his armor and enhanced body, but he was still irritated by the sudden fall.

"I'm sorry about that boss, but I need to talk to you about something important and I need you to listen to me." Treevor spoke in a serious tone and Athos put his sword in its scabbard to hear him.

"I've thought a lot about my current condition and I've come to a conclusion, but I need to ask you a question first." Treevor took a deep breath despite having no lungs. "What are your plans for the future? Do you have any goals, or are you just going to kill until you find an enemy strong enough to destroy us all?"

Noticing the serious tone and implications behind Treevor's sudden questions, Athos also became serious and remembered that among all the skeletons, Treevor was the only one who wasn't totally loyal to him.

They both had an agreement and Treevor was working diligently for him until now and it was impossible for Treevor to run away, so he ended up forgetting this important detail.

"I intend to kill until everything in this world is dead, because it's the only thing in this world that makes me feel better." Athos answered honestly, knowing that it would be useless to lie to someone who can see into someone's soul.

"And as for my future plans, I first plan to settle in the desert and slowly expand like a disease and when we are strong enough, contact the undead realm to the east." Athos spoke calmly and Treevor confirmed that it was all true.

"If they're friendly, we can form an alliance, if not, we'll devour them and take their power for ourselves. After that, all of the South will be in our or my hands and I'll begin the march north, starting through the central mountain range." Athos explained the outline of his plan, but Treevor interrupted him here.

"Wait a minute. If the goal is to gain strength before contacting the undead realm, then why are we moving further and further east? Wouldn't it be better to go west and slowly expand east?" He asked confused, but Athos laughed at the stupid question.

"It's a way to limit the unknown undead. As undead, it's very likely that they are thinking of expanding like me, but I doubt that they can invade the sea of trees and defeat a yggdrasil sprout, so they will change target and tried to expand into the desert."

"I intend to create my empire in the middle of the desert and block the passage to the west, stopping the advance of the unknown undead. They will be forced to fight us or expand in another direction. In that case, against the sea of trees and the yggdrasil sprout." Athos smirked and Treevor had to agree that the plan made sense.

Chapter 203 Treevor's Loyalty

"They would become a shield of bone, flesh, or whatever they're made of in a future war against Evergreen and the yggdrasil sprout."

"And how are you so confident that you can defeat the enemy undead if they decide to fight us?" Treevor crossed his arms and asked. Athos' plan was really good, but only if they were able to defeat the enemies. Otherwise, they would be devoured by the enemy.

"We don't know the strength of the undead or the level of enemy technology, but we have no other choice at the moment if we want to gain a proper foothold in this world." Athos was honest about their chances, holding nothing back from Treevor.

"But that's a matter for a few years or maybe even decades to come. My initial plan is to trade with the undead and go to war as a second option." Athos spoke honestly about the negotiations, as he did not see much point in fighting the undead.

"The priority for now is hunting monsters and demihumans to increase our power, as well as mapping everything we can and gathering information about the region to find a good place to settle down permanently." Athos finished speaking the outline of his plan and waited for Treevor to speak.

"So you really do have a plan, even if it's just an outline, and you also intend to face Kastil, even though you know how powerful he is." Treevor muttered to himself before making a decision.

He knelt on the ground under his right knee and said. "In that case, there's no point in continuing to resist. I agree to serve you, as long as you remain true to your word and face Kastil in the future."

Athos was taken aback by the sudden act of loyalty, but more taken aback was Treevor. When he stopped resisting and accepted to serve Athos, his avatar stopped resisting as well and the black chains corrupted his soul completely.

"Does this mean you are now loyal to me?" Athos asked still confused by the sudden turn in events. He didn't notice any difference in Treevor, but from the shock Treevor was showing, it looked like something had changed internally.

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"Yes, that's right boss- I mean master." Treevor quickly corrected himself and got to his feet.

"I don't know what caused this sudden change in you, but I won't complain. Welcome to the world of the crazy. How about a hunt to celebrate?" Athos patted Treevor on the shoulder and asked.

"I thought you'd never ask." Treevor also seemed strangely excited for battle and his avatar quickly left his body, returning in less than a minute with the corrupted willow tree.

"Let's leave before Emilia realizes what happened and starts complaining." Athos jumped on Treevor's shoulder and they ran towards the nearest monster nest.

A few days later.

The dwarf skeletons finally finished runesmithing all the shared curses and melting down all the debris, greatly lightening the load on the carriages. The undead prepared everything necessary to resume their match in less than a day, using information gleaned from the kobolds they managed to hunt.

None of the kobolds were able to speak human language, but Vanilla and Treevor were able to speak demi-human language and translated the words of the kobold leader.

They discovered that the reason there were so few demihumans was that they were close to the territory of a couple of wyverns, a lesser dragon species, so no demihuman tribes dared approach.

The ability to fly was an absurd advantage in the desert, where there were no mages and technology was poorly developed, so lesser dragons would reign supreme here. Their power wasn't as great as a real dragon, but they were still much more powerful and intelligent than normal monsters.

A few demihuman tribes lived under wyvern rule, but most shunned and shunned the territory, as these kobolds were wont to do.

Many of the desert regions were dominated by powerful monsters, some intelligent that dominated other creatures, others violent and less intelligent that just killed anything that entered their territory.

There were few regions dominated by Demihuman clans, showing how strong the monsters in that region were.

After learning this, the high ranking undead gathered to decide what to do, but their opinions were strongly divided.

Most generals were against the idea of fighting the wyverns and the tribes that served them, but Athos and Treevor were in favor. Treevor and Athos began to understand each other after Treevor became loyal and went out hunting several times, much to Emilia's stress.

Treevor had become more violent and reckless, forming a good team with Athos. The skeletons had resigned themselves to fighting the unknown enemies since both the commander and Athos himself wanted the fight, but Athos still listened to their opinions, much to everyone's surprise.

Athos was crazy, not stupid, and he knew that his life experience was limited and his leadership ability was almost nil, so he still listened to the advice of those more experienced. Whether he actually followed the advice he received was another story.

In the end, Athos and Treevor managed to convince them that fighting was the only option, explaining Athos' plan for the unknown undead and the need to gather power quickly.

They sent out skeleton birds to confirm the enemy's position, discovering that they were a few tens of kilometers away, at the top of a ravine. The ravine was nearly 50 meters high and nearly 500 meters long, and the demihuman tribes had set up camp at the top, while the wyverns were nowhere in sight.

The high-ranking skeletons made assumptions that the wyverns lived within the ravine or if they were just outside at the time, but it was certain that they would appear once the attack began.

They organized a plan of attack with the information obtained, aiming to fight both an air battle and a ground battle and left as soon as night fell and their preparations were ready.

The undead army marched in formation, skeleton soldiers carrying shared curse shields mounted on monster skeletons surrounded the entire army, while the rest of the skeletons stayed inside.

They would only implement the barrier once the battle started, relying on the monsters they were riding to defend against any attacks.

In the center of the formation, skeletons of mages and priests sat atop chariots, ready to cast spells at any moment and transmit to the hive hawks that were circling the army, along with the flying monsters.

Half of them were responsible for casting large-scale spells, while the other half would cast quick spells to bombard enemies and buy time. They had just under 700 mage skeletons, more than enough to cast a second barrier that would cover the entire army or a powerful offensive spell, depending on the circumstances.

Treavor was leading the army this time along with Emília, Ruy and Vanilla, while Astrus and Malti were accompanying Athos on Simogo's back. They were flying high in the sky, using cloud cover and the darkness of the night to hide their massive body.

Athos couldn't pass up the opportunity to experience an aerial battle on Simogo's back, while Astrus could fight in the air thanks to his boots conjuring corrupted mana platforms and Malti's bow skill.

The army marched for hours, the flying monsters spotting all the monsters in front of the army and quickly eliminating them, before the army caught up with them and turned them into new skeletons.

'Looks like they were already waiting for us.' Treavor thought as the army approached the enemy camp, looking through the eyes of a hive hawk that a crowd of demihumans was hastily gathering at the front of the camp.

A demihuman hunting party had spotted the skeletons and hurriedly returned to the camp to warn of the attack and prepare a defense.

'Although we were discovered earlier than expected, the attack continues. Wizards, start casting.' Treavor thought and ordered the mages to start casting a large-scale spell.

The demihumans gathered at the front of the camp numbered approximately 15,000 and were composed of different species such as orcs, goblins, and trolls. They were poorly equipped, most using crude, unenchanted weapons, none of them having armor.

There were some mounted on monsters as a kind of cavalry, but they were few in number and numbered less than 500.

More demihumans were gathering as they spoke, but the defensive team's number was no more than 17,000. The hawks also noticed a few thousand demihumans descending the ravine for shelter, likely children or those unable to fight.

'Start the first part of the plan.' Treavor ordered and the march stopped, confusing the demihumans. The skeletons of birds or flying monsters quickly descended under, where skeletons carrying bags of alchemical items were waiting.

The flying monsters grabbed all the items before flying back into the ravine, but unlike what the demihumans thought, they weren't aiming at the fleeing army, but at the ravine behind them.

The demihumans belatedly realized that the target was their families who descended the ravine and tried to take down the skeletons with arrows and spears, but the flying monster skeletons flew high to avoid being hit.

Once they reached the area above the ravine, the flying skeletons dropped the alchemical items at once, generating an incredibly powerful earthquake.

The alchemical items numbered more than two hundred and the earthquake generated was enough to destabilize the ravine.

Chapter 204 Wyverns territory

Half of the demihuman camp was hit by the earthquake and the ravine collapsed, dropping giant boulders under the non-combat demihumans. The rocks crushed hundreds to thousands, raising a cloud of dust that obscured the interior of the ravine.

The demi-humans roared in fury at seeing their families crushed and rushed back to try to help them, but Treevor ordered the skeletons to resume their march.

“Trolls, help the women and children! Goblins and Orcs, don’t let these things get close!” An orc larger and more robust than its peers shouted in the demi-human language, causing the defensive army to split. The big trolls were the only ones strong enough to move the rocks, so the defensive army leader’s decision was right.

Goblins were physically weak, while Orcs relied on their emotions to enhance their physical prowess. If they were ordered to retreat to help earthquake victims, they would only feel concern or sadness for the victims, rendering their racial ability useless.

Fighting the hateful creatures that attacked their families, on the other hand, the orcs would fight with unrivaled fury. They were the first to race against the undead, using their key abilities to further strengthen their already powerful bodies.

The demi-humans didn’t know what the undead were, as they couldn’t use necromancy and were far from the undead realm in the east, but it didn’t matter to them. Thousands of orcs threw themselves at the first rank of undead, using offensive abilities to try to cut them like paper, but Treevor was quicker.

‘Activate the shared curses.’ Treevor commanded and the skeletons obeyed, a dark barrier rising around them and blocking all orc attacks. The barriers absorbed the kinetic energy from the orcs’ attacks, surprising everyone.

The orcs were shocked that thousands of attacks using all their strength were not able to break a single barrier, while Treevor was shocked that the orcs’ attacks filled half of the shields’ kinetic energy storage.

At this rate, the shared curses would only last for a few more seconds before being forced to release their stored energy. It was incredible that the orcs could exert such a powerful physical force.

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“Keep attacking! Your defenses won’t last forever!” The patriarch shouted, waking the orcs from their stupor. They screamed in rage and resumed their attacks, spreading out along the barrier so that their attacks would be more effective and avoid hitting each other, the thousands of attacks from the enraged orcs quickly filling the barriers’ kinetic energy.

The slower goblins reached the barrier soon after, but it was a big mistake. The shared curses became saturated and unable to accumulate more energy, so they released everything in a shock wave in all directions.

The shock wave crushed the small goblins into a pulp of flesh, while the orcs were sent flying with several broken bones. The shared curses fired the shockwaves in a circular fashion, greatly decreasing its power.

It was the only reason the orcs were able to survive.

The orc patriarch ground his fangs in rage not knowing what to do. The explosion injured many of his orcs and killed even more goblins. To make matters worse, the enemy barrier was still intact, as all the attacks had been absorbed and did not damage the energy barrier.

“ROARRR!” A roar of fury sounded from behind him, interrupting his thoughts. The patriarch looked back, only for a pillar of fire to explode through the rocks.

A red wyvern emerged from the pillar, looking angrily around as it sought out the bastard who had destroyed its nest. Another wyvern came out right behind him, but this one’s scales were yellow.

They were the pair of wyverns that ruled the region and both were incredibly furious at being disturbed in their sleep.

Adult wyverns were approximately 10 meters long from snout to tip of tail and lacked arms, their wings were prehensile limbs, and they had claws on the ends of the wings. Their tails ended in a retractable stinger that dripped red and yellow liquid respectively.

“Who dared attack my nest?? Attack my hatchlings?” The red wyvern screamed in demi-human language. The female wyvern had recently laid two eggs, but the rocks would have crushed them had it not been for the yellow wyvern’s intervention, which protected them with its own body.

Just as the skeletons predicted, the wyverns set up their nest within the ravine in a cave large enough to accommodate their size. The yellow wyvern was still carrying the eggs on her hind legs as she cast a wind barrier spell around them.

The hatchlings inside the eggs were still fragile, so the yellow wyvern was moving them slowly so they wouldn’t get hurt.

The red wyvern glared at the fallen demihumans he recognized as his servants and the undead army surrounded by a black barrier, his enemy was obvious.

“I don’t know what you guys are, but you’re going to pay for invading my territory and trying to touch my hatchlings!” The red wyvern screamed and flew towards the undead, conjuring fireballs and blasting away any flying skeletons in its path.

‘Flying monsters, spread out and avoid contact. Wizards, is the spell ready yet?’ Treevor ordered through the mind link, realizing that the flying undead were being slaughtered without being able to fight back.

Treevor prepared to intervene seeing the wyvern approach, but the mages finished their cast in time and fired a beam of corrupted mana at the wyvern.

The red wyvern thought about dodging for a second, but realized the beam would hit his partner behind him if he dodged, so he stayed put and took a deep breath, before spitting out a flaming breath.

Like dragons, wyverns were capable of firing elemental breath weapons, but their breath weapons were weaker than their larger cousins and they didn't need to spend as much time breathing in world energy.

The breath of red flames and the beam of corrupted mana collided, their similar forces pushing each other and not giving up even a step. But to the wyvern's surprise, he was the one who lost the contest of strength.

There was a limited amount of world energy his lungs were able to absorb and he quickly ran out of gas. His breath disappeared and the beam of corrupted mana hit him in the chest, but its power had been heavily reduced and it only pushed the wyvern back.

"Malic, step away from the fight! Take the eggs to safety!" The red wyvern craned its neck back and screamed.

The yellow-scaled wyvern nodded and cast a float spell on the eggs so they wouldn't feel the turbulence as much and started flying away.

'Master, one of the wyverns is trying to escape. She's carrying wyvern eggs and trying to get away from the fight.' Treevor spoke, using the hive hawks flying overhead to relay the message.

"Finally it's our turn. Attack with your best spells from the start, anything less than your best will be useless against a dragon." Athos ordered Astrus and Emilia.

Everyone nodded as Simogo dove into the clouds below, meeting the fleeing wyvern. He folded his wings and stretched his body like an arrow to accelerate even more, while taking a deep breath to fill his lungs with world energy.

The skeletons were forced to bend over and grab the scales to keep from being hurled through the air, while Athos conjured a blade of wind to lighten their burden.

Malic, the yellow-scaled wyvern, sensed their approach and craned her neck back, her eyes widening as she saw the dragon almost behind her. She couldn't make too sudden movements because of the eggs, so she just released her breath in a rush.

Unfortunately for Malic, Simogo did the same, his black flames almost twice the size of the wyvern's yellowish flames. The black flames hit the yellow flames for half a second before overcoming them and continuing forward.

Malic veered sharply to the right, conjuring a storm of wind under her wings to get away from the breath of darkness. The black flames were powerful, but not fast enough to keep up with the wyvern's speed.

The black flames still managed to reach its tail, turning it into dust. Malic stopped holding on and flew as fast as he could, using wind magic to reduce air resistance and increase his speed.

Her hatchlings could end up crushed to death against their own eggs by speeding, but they would definitely die if the dragon caught up with her.

Simogo started casting darkness breath spells as soon as the black flames were gone, but the spells were slower than the dragons' flying speed and were left behind as soon as they got away from Simogo.

'A little more, just a little more.' Athos thought of Simogo's back, noticing that the speed of both dragons was practically equal. Although Simogo's physical strength was superior, the wyvern was more skilled in flight and used magic to increase its speed, so the distance was not decreasing.

They had already distanced themselves from the ravine and were too far away to communicate with the skeletons, so they had only themselves to rely on if they wanted to win.

Chapter 205 Air battle

'We need to make the wyvern stop, or at least slow it down enough for Simogo to reach it.' Athos spoke through the mind link. since it was almost impossible to talk at the speed they were at.

'It's almost impossible to hit him with a spell at the speed we're at.' Malta replied. His lightning arrows might be able to hit, but it wouldn't even tickle a wyvern.

'Let's use Simogo's roar. It should destabilize the dragon enough for us to be able to.' Astrus spoke and prepared to avoid falling.

"ROARR!" Simogo did as ordered, using the skill roar influx. The stricken skeletons felt the darkness in their bodies weaken because of the foreign mana invading their bones, but they didn't lose consciousness this time.

The similarity between their mana was enough to allow them to retain consciousness, they just felt a sense of temporary weakness.

Malic, on the other hand, was hit by the roar and lost control of the wind spells, the corruption sapping her strength. The float spell was also undone and the sudden weight of the eggs caused Malic to drop them by accident.

"Not!" The yellow wyvern screamed in the demihuman language and turned to try to grab the eggs, but Simogo lunged at her. He bit down on her hind leg and spread his wings to slow himself down, using his claws to tear at the wyvern's hind leg.

Malic clenched her teeth to hold back the pain and kicked him with her free paw, releasing lightning bolts to electrocute him and free herself to fly to the eggs, but two skeletons jumped out of Simogo's body to stop her from fleeing.

Athos was the first, using lightning impulse with his mind and magic organ to propel himself further. He flew in a straight line, activating the meteor charge enchantment and slamming bonesaw into the wyvern's back.

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The sudden explosion threw the wyvern off balance and crushed several scales, at the same time sending Athos flying through the ricochet, but he only conjured a platform of air from under his feet and returned to Simogo's back.

Astrus attacked soon after, summoning the sword of judgment and taking aim at the wyvern's right wing. The original spell would use light and air to conjure a huge sword made of light surrounded by lightning, but the new spell replaced the light with darkness and black lightning.

The darkness rotted the leather of the wings and the black rays burned their joints, rendering the wing useless.

Malti attacked without leaving Simogo's back, firing a lightning bolt charged to the limit along with his blade tornado spell, destroying the left wing.

"Filthy things, let go of me now!" Malic unleashed a lightning storm to try to get rid of Simogo and the skeletons, but the dragon didn't suffer from seizures and pure electricity did little damage. Simogo wasted no time sinking his fangs even deeper into Malic's hind paw, while gripping the other paw with his front claws.

Astrus wasn't so lucky and even activating his armor's barrier, the electricity still destroyed the barrier and electrocuted him, making him fall while releasing black smoke. He wasn't dead, but his bone and armor had suffered severe damage and was in dire need of healing.

'The ground is approaching, watch out!' Malti's voice rang in the skeletons' heads, making everyone look to the ground and realize it was true. They hadn't gained much altitude as they flew, so they weren't high when they started to fall.

'Let the wyvern fall and use wind magic to float. We can continue the fight on the ground.' Athos ordered and all the skeletons cast float on themselves to break the fall, but Simogo kept attacking instead of retreating.

He pulled the wyvern's body closer to him and bit down on the long neck, digging his front claws into the wyvern's back and bringing her beneath him.

Malic fell to the ground as he kicked up a cloud of dust, several of his bones breaking on impact and internal organs nearly exploding. The only thing that saved her was a wind barrier conjured beneath her and mana being circulated to the max to bolster their body.

"You freaks..." Malic muttered as he spat out a mouthful of blood, his eyes focused on two wrecked eggs on the ground a little way off. The eggs had fallen a few seconds before and exploded, unable to bear the fall.

Malic tried to roar in rage and attack Simogo in a last stand, but Athos landed on her head with dragontusk in hand and pierced her through the skull, killing her instantly.

"Phew. Good thing that wyvern was more concerned with trying to save the eggs than fighting." Athos sighed in relief as he removed the sword from the wyvern's skull and turned to Simogo. "Are you okay? The fall was pretty bad, despite the wyvern mitigating the attack."

Simogo showed his paws to Athos whose bones were cracked in several places. Athos quickly began using darkness to heal him, slightly diminishing the black mist across his body.

“Let’s go back quickly and help the others. Astrus, you are the only injured one among us, so stay back to heal and turn the wyvern into a skeleton once you’ve recovered.” Athos ordered and quickly climbed onto Simogo’s back and departed.

Meanwhile, the battle at the camp was reaching its climax.

Despite all the mages’ efforts to cast large-scale spells to hit the red wyvern, he was simply too agile to hit now that he had no reason to stand still and parry the blows.

Restraint spells were also useless, the red wyvern only needed to fly a little higher to get out of the spell’s range.

The red wyvern made use of its high mobility and magic to launch its best spells against the barrier and flee before the mages could reach it. The demihumans also resumed their attack, ignoring their injuries and attacking the barrier with all their might.

Broken bones would never stop orcs and the goblins that weren’t hit also joined the fray. The mages responsible for releasing individual spells conjured a barrage of spells that the hive hawks rained down on the demihumans, killing hundreds of goblins and dozens of orcs with each wave, but they refused to stop.

The fighting demihumans had already resigned themselves to defeat and knew that only death awaited them if they continued fighting, but they continued willingly to buy time for the trolls to rescue the earthquake survivors.

Cracks had built up along the barrier from the continued efforts of the red wyvern and demihumans, making Treevor cluck his tongue.

‘Bearers of shared curses, prepare to retreat as soon as the barrier breaks. Mages, prepare one great barrage of spells to protect the retreating skeletons.’ Treevor ordered and prepared to fight as well.

The red wyvern would have an easy time hitting the skeletons without the barrier and he was the only one with the strength to stop him.

With one last burst of flame conjured by the wyvern, the barrier finally broke and the demihumans roared in victory, but it only lasted a second. The wizards’ spells fell on them once more, the darkness of the spells suffocating the demihumans and further worsening the already open wounds.

The skeleton monsters pounced on the demihumans as they entered, allowing most of the skeletons holding shared curses to safely retreat. The skeleton monsters they were riding defended the skeletons from most attacks, but occasional skeletons were still destroyed by the orcs’ attacks.

The battle on the ground quickly became confusing, with monsters and demihumans tangled in a melee and the occasional spells from mages. The orcs were powerful and surpassed the monsters in terms of brute strength and skill, but the monsters were more numerous and had unique abilities to compensate.

Despite the orcs’ physical superiority, it only takes a moment of distraction or a strike in a blind spot to kill an orc.

“ROAR!” The red wyvern roared as it hurled a pillar of concentrated flame at the nearest hive hawk skeletons, the ones responsible for casting the spells that were killing its servants.

The hawks were unable to dodge the attack, but they didn't have to. A barrier of ice with an amber glow appeared around them and protected them from the pillar of fire.

Treevor leaps off the ground, using his legs as springs, the spirit impulse ability, and conjuring platforms of corrupted mana to reach the fire wyvern quickly. He whipped the wyvern with the vines at the same time as he cast ice age around him to ward off fire magic.

To her surprise, the wyvern easily dodged her attack. In a single flap of wings the wyvern soared above Treevor and in a second it landed on top of him with claws aimed at Treevor's exposed back.

Its claws ripped into its back and dug deep into the wood, reaching the base of its neck and hips, while its tail pierced the middle and injected a red liquid. The red wyvern's flaming venom seared Treevor's back like boiling oil and burned its way up his spine.

The freezing air lessened the strength of the flaming poison and was the only thing that kept the willow from burning like a torch.

Chapter 206 Camp destroyed

"Annoying lizard." Treevor cursed, more angry than hurt. The vines that made up its hair curled around the wyvern's paw, releasing a dozen blades of amber aura. causing several deep cuts across the paw.

At the same time, he conjured up a second ice age, but released it from the inside out like a blast of frost. The cold air froze the flaming venom and stinger before freezing the wyvern's paws.

The red wyvern roared in pain and lit up like a torch to try and fend off the blast of cold air, but Treevor fed both spells mana and amber energy, so it would take time for the spells to dissipate.

He kicked Treevor with his uninjured paw into the ground to try to get away, but the vines dug deep into the injured paw and refused to let go.

"You won't get rid of me that easy!" Treevor shouted in the demihuman language, but his voice was more fearful than angry. He leapt up to face the wyvern impulsively, only to look down and find his bones chilling with fear at the height they were.

"Let me go!" The red wyvern continued to roar in pain, feeling its paw being torn apart by the vines that seeped into the flesh and crawled like worms. The paw had already gone limp and the wyvern couldn't move it, but the pain was still real.

Treevor also tried to spread his poison, but between the freezing cold in the willow and the wyvern's absurd heat, the parasitic poison disappeared before it got out of the vines.

The red wyvern realized that he would lose if he continued like this, so in an act of desperation he bit his own leg until he pulled it off, making Treevor fall in free fall against the ground. He quickly conjured flames to cauterize the wound and prevent further blood loss.

"KYAAAA!" Treevor went down while screaming like a little girl and flailing his limbs desperately, but that did nothing to improve his situation.

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It was the queen of the hive hawks who saved him from the free fall, who watched the fight and approached him as he fell, casting the float spell on him and the severed leg he was reflexively clutching.

"Phew. Thanks-" Treevor sighed in relief for a second, but he celebrated too soon. The queen quickly undid the spell, causing Treevor to fall again, her scream even higher pitched than the last in the surprise of betrayal.

The queen had cast the spell for an instant just to ease the effect of the fall, the rest of Treevor could overcome on their own.

"You damn chicken! I swear I'll cut you to pieces!" Treevor cursed as he rose from the fall, using dark magic to quickly regenerate the corrupted willow tree.

He looked up at the red wyvern in the sky, only to realize it was already gone. The wyvern was flying in the direction the yellow wyvern had and it would be impossible for Treevor to keep up.

'Good, they'll probably be fine with Simogo with them.' Treevor thought, before leaping back quickly, an orc crashing to the ground where he was a second later. The orc tried to chase him, but a stone spike came out of the ground and hit him in the balls, making the orc fall to the ground unconscious.

'It's better to end the fight here before they come back.' Treevor thought and cast his falling star spell. Spheres of darkness appeared around him, before scattering in all directions.

The spheres were slow, but during the night and on a messy battlefield like this, every sphere hit a target without missing. Whether goblin or orc, anyone hit would die or have their flesh rot on contact.

Even so, there was a limit to how many sphere he could conjure and how far they could go.

Suddenly, all of their surroundings went dark, forcing Treevor to use death vision to see. The demihumans on the other hand, weren't able to breathe or see anything, creating a gap that the undead couldn't pass.

'Emilia, were you the one who gave the order?' Treevor asked recognizing the effects of the field of the dead and that the only thing that could cast the spell on such a large scale were shared curses.

Even if they retreated, the effects of the shields would still add up and generate a large dome. It wouldn't be as effective as having the shared curses scattered around the army, but with the demihumans and undead so mixed up, it would be incredibly effective and would surround almost all demihumans, with the exception of distant trolls.

'Yes, it was me. The orcs were cutting through the line of skeletons and closing in on the mages, so I ordered the skeletons to activate the field of the dead.' Emilia replied, taking advantage of the moment of confusion to cut down as many orcs as possible.

She wasted no time killing them, just cutting arteries or nerves to cause a bleed or knocking them to the ground was enough, the other skeletons took care of the rest.

'That was the right decision.' Treevor responded a little embarrassed, doing the same and killing the nearby demihumans. He focused so much on the red wyvern that he forgot his role as commander, even after Athos had entrusted him with that important role.

'Well, he pushed this role on me because he thought it would be fun to fight on Simogo's back, so you can't blame me.' Treevor thought and the guilt disappeared at the thought of his irresponsible master.

All the demihumans were quickly killed after that and the mage skeletons began injecting corrupted life force into the corpses as the field of the dead did the rest of the work.

'Let's finish the job.' Treevor ordered through the mind link, causing the skeletons to deactivate the field of the dead. The skeletons have now marched into the ravine, or at least what's left of it.

The trolls were busy moving rocks in an attempt to save the few surviving demihumans when they noticed the undead approaching and roared in rage. They tried to block the path of the undead to allow at least the few who managed to survive to escape, but in vain.

Treevor led the vanguard of the skeletons and his body began to glow as all the darkness was absorbed by the corrupted willow tree. He fired dozens of cannons of darkness mixed with corrupted mana, piercing the first rank of trolls and tearing through them without resistance.

Not would trolls die from having their body pierced, but the darkness still festered from the wound and drained the body fat that trolls used to heal. The beams of darkness didn't lose strength even after piercing through three trolls, so Treevor spun the vines horizontally to cut the trolls in half.

Their regeneration could not keep up with such extensive wounds and they died in a short time. The survivors tried to counter-attack, but the trolls numbered less than a thousand in total, and Treevor's initial attack unsettled them.

The battle only lasted a few minutes, as the trolls weren't particularly powerful or intelligent, just relying on their brute strength and a raw use of mana to power their bodies.

'Pursue the fugitives and let none escape. Kill them all.' Treevor ordered as soon as he saw that most of the trolls were dead or in serious condition. He tried to join the chase, but a roar from the sky stopped him.

The red wyvern and Simogo were falling to the ground as spiraled, but it was obvious even from this distance that Simogo was dominating the fight. The wyvern was missing a wing and several black spots where the darkness spells hit, but it fought fiercely, hurling breaths of flame and spears of fire at the dragon.

'Looks like I have nothing to worry about.' Treevor returned his focus to the demihumans, but most were already dead or being pursued and he had no desire to hunt down women and children running for their lives. The other skeletons could take care of that.

The red wyvern and Simogo fell on the half of the camp that hadn't collapsed into the ravine, kicking up a cloud of dust on impact, but Simogo learned from his earlier mistake and spread his wings just before they reached the ground, letting the wyvern fall on its own.

"Cough, cough...you traitorous bastard." The red wyvern spoke as it coughed up a mouthful of dust and tried to get up, but Simogo was relentless and bit down on the wyvern's throat before twisting, breaking its neck.

‘That was quick. The skeletons had already seriously injured this one.’ Athos thought as he landed softly next to Simogo with Malti.

The battle against the red wyvern can barely be called a fight. As soon as the wyvern saw Simogo approaching it lunged at it while launching a pillar of fire, which Simogo naturally responded in kind.

The red wyvern was furious when he saw Simogo returning from the same direction as his partner and smelled her blood on his fangs. They collided in mid-air, which was naturally a loss for the physically weaker wyvern.

“What should we do now?” Malti asked as she watched the skeletons slaughter the demihumans. They weren’t able to get very far thanks to the flying monsters, and the skeletons began to scour the cave-in for surviving demihumans or their corpses.

Athos closed his eyes for a second, feeling the life force build up in his core, but not nearly enough to form a new layer.

Chapter 207 Post battle

‘I’m not even close yet. Even after killing so much, my core doesn’t feel like it’s even close to forming a new layer. I haven’t done a rough count, but I’m pretty sure the number of new undead must have exceeded 30,000.’ Athos thought, calculating the number of new skeletons.

It was just an approximate count and the real number was probably higher, but it helped Athos to realize that he would need to work even harder if he wanted to keep his pace of evolution from now on.

‘Well, even if my development slows down in the future, I’m still at an absurdly higher pace than anyone else in this world, so I don’t have much to worry about.’ He finished the thought and ordered Simogo to drag the corpse of the red wyvern to the skeletons.

There were parts of the wyvern that were missing that they could find in the midst of the army, saving energy on turning him into an undead.

Athos suddenly remembered something and called out to Treevor through the mind link. ‘Hey, is there anyone alive among the demihumans?’

‘We’re scouring the landslide for survivors or the bodies of demihumans. Why do you need someone alive? lab rats?’ Treevor asked curiously.

‘No, but it wouldn’t be a bad idea. Anyway, imprison some demihumans if you find any alive.’ Athos ordered.

Athos and Malti approached a few seconds later and received the red wyvern’s leg. Athos healed the corpse until it was in mint condition, using the disfigured corpses of goblins that had died from shared curses as fuel and avoiding overburdening the corpse.

It would take a lot of work to heal so many disfigured corpses, and goblin skeletons weren’t all that useful.

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Once the healing was finished, Athos cast the raise undead spell over the corpse. He was prepared to inject a second spark of life force if necessary, but it wasn't necessary and the skeleton wyvern slowly rose to its feet.

'Looks like wyverns don't have a dragon core. It is a pity.' Athos thought slightly disappointed.

He began to tremble as he tried to attack Athos with all his might, but Athos relinquished control of a hundred goblins to him, quickly breaking down his resistance.

"***** ...*****" The skeleton wyvern tried to say something, but Athos didn't know the demihuman language and didn't understand a word of what he said.

"He's introducing himself. His name is Wilver and he said it's an honor to meet you." Treevor translated the wyvern's words. "What happened to the other yellow one? Did you kill him?"

"Yes, and Astrus is with him at the moment. Astrus should arrive with the wyvern skeleton any moment now." Athos answered and in good time they could see the dragon approaching in the distance.

They weren't flying, as both of the wyvern's wings were destroyed and Astrus had no corpses on hand to use as energy to heal.

It was a funny sight to see wyvern skeleton trying to walk on its hind legs, as its bone structure wasn't suited for that.

Athos also ceded a hundred goblins to her and healed their corpse.

"My king, can I use them to heal myself too?" Astrus asked, pointing to the goblin corpses in pieces.

"Yes. We'll use them to heal all demihumans anyway." Athos spoke, not attaching much importance to the goblins. "Were you able to gather any living demihumans?"

"I got less than twenty so far. Half were trolls and half were orcs. Is that enough for you?" Treevor asked and Athos nodded.

'Someone bring me the storage ring that Malti brought from the fortress. Let's force one of these demihumans to remove all the items it contains there.' Athos spoke through the mind link.

Treevor and Athos went to what was left of the ravine, where the survivors were being held. There were no men among the survivors and all the women had bruises or broken bones, but they glared at Treevor and Athos as they approached.

"You bastard! How dare you slaughter our clan?? Our families??" An orc woman with a broken arm screamed, but Athos did not understand and ignored her.

'Translate my words so that they will understand.' Athos spoke to Treevor, who nodded in understanding.

"I am Athos, the commander of the army that just overpowered them-" Athos introduced himself, but the orc woman spat in his face and cut him off.

“You know what, let’s skip the education and introductions. On our knees.” He ordered as he cleaned his face, the skeletons behind the women forced them to their knees. The orc and troll women tried to resist, but the skeletons were also demi-human and trained warriors, so the women’s effort was in vain.

“You have two choices now. Die like all the warriors who opposed me, or do me a favor and run away with the survivors.” Treevor translated each of his words, but the demihuman women just snarled at him.

“Why would we believe your words after you destroyed everything we built??” A female troll spoke while snarling at him and Treevor translated for Athos to understand.

Athos looked at the trolls woman for a few seconds, trying to find any difference between the male trolls he had seen before. They looked exactly the same, except for the hair which was a bit longer than the rest.

“Because it’s your only chance to save what’s left of your clan and your family. If you follow my order, I will allow you to escape with any woman or child that survived the landslide.” With those words, the demihuman women didn’t immediately respond.

All they wanted was to attack Athos and rip him to shreds, but the mention of children made them hesitate. Most of them had children and were separated during the landslide and still hoped they were still alive.

“What do you want from us?” The orc woman with the broken arm asked cautiously, wanting to at least know what Athos’ objective was before making a decision.

“I have a dimensional ring with me, but I can’t access it because of my current condition. I want you to activate it and take out all the items inside, then you’re free to go.” Athos spoke seriously, making the kneeling demihuman women look at each other for a few seconds, before the orc nodded.

“We accept, but I’ll be the one left behind. I want you to let them go and not follow them.” She demanded in a cold tone and as soon as Treevor translated, Athos nodded, not caring about the terms.

“Fine, I don’t mind. But try to trick me and my dragon will chase you all down and kill you one by one.” Athos threatened and Simogo lifted his head to look at them, making the demihumans swallow hard.

The skeletons stepped back and let the women get to their feet. The demihumans looked worriedly at the orc woman, but the latter just nodded for them to flee.

The army of skeletons cleared a path for the women to pass. and they ran as fast as they could, those who could not walk or had injured legs being carried by others.

‘Have the mage slayer units chase them and kill them as soon as they are out of sight.’ Athos mentally ordered Emilia and the assassins began to follow the demihumans surreptitiously.

“I’ve already done my part. Do yours.” A skeleton appeared and handed the dimensional ring to Athos and he offered it to the orc woman.

The woman took the ring and for a second thought about destroying it, but then she remembered the women fleeing and the few living demihumans being pulled out of the landslide. The skeletons weren’t being careful with them, but they weren’t attacking either, just dragging them off the rocks.

She took a deep breath and activated the ring, removing everything that was inside the dimensional ring. Bags containing alchemical items, a few dozen magic potions of different types and a pile of magic crystals of different purity.

The kingdom had sent the magic supplies before winter started, so the dimensional ring was a small treasure.

"Is that all there was in the ring?" Athos asked and the orc woman nodded.

'Is that all there was in the ring?' Athos repeated the question, but this time to Malti. Since she was the previous owner of the ring, she would know if anything was missing.

'It's all here, master. The alchemical items are less than I remember, but I spent some while we were fighting.' Malti responded and Athos took the ring back before snapping his fingers, ordering the skeletons to execute the rescued demihumans.

"You bastard-" The orc woman screamed indignantly and leapt at Athos, only for Treevor to step in the way and snap her neck with a flick of her wrist.

'Were all the fugitives killed?' Athos asked the murderous skeletons, who nodded in the affirmative.

'Excellent. Collect all the items and take them to one of the carriages and search the camp for any usable resources. Continue the search for corpses in the landslides and once you're done, give me a list of our current numbers.' Athos ordered all the skeletons, making the army move to do his bidding.

Even the demihumans who were unable to speak human language complied, as it wasn't them moving their bodies but the black chains.

Chapter 208 Neighboring territories

The skeleton wyvern Wilver suddenly approached and spoke some words that Athos was not able to understand, at least until someone translated for him.

"He said he accumulated treasures over the years and kept them safe inside his nest. The demihuman tribes offered items to them as offerings to live in their territory, so anything of value is under the landslide at the moment." Treevor stayed by his side and acted as an interpreter.

"So dealing with the cave-in is a priority. Have the earth mages and dwarf mages work to dig up the corpses and create a safe tunnel to the wyverns' nest. A lot must have been lost during the cave-in, but try recover everything that's can."

The wizards and dwarves set to work, using earth spells to detect the corpses under the rocks and digging several tunnels to retrieve them. They also managed to dig a tunnel that led to the nest, discovering that the wyvern's treasure was several kilograms of different magical metals, magical wood of different types, herbs and magical roots, as well as teleportation crystals.

The most sensitive magical materials had been destroyed, but the most resistant ones were still useful.

According to the wyverns, some tribes used the teleportation crystals to try to invade the camp in the past and after killing them, the wylver claimed the crystals as loot, even though he wasn't able to use them because of their size.

It was a petty act and the clans that lived under their rule could have benefited greatly from these crystals, but the wyverns didn't care about the demihumans. They were servants, not something worth protecting.

The skeletons didn't care about the history of the items and just collected everything that had mana. Using what was left of their mana, the mages and priests cast the undead raise on the gathered corpses, but it wasn't enough and the high-ranking skeletons had to step in and spend their own mana to finish the job.

His troops gains were approximately 10,300 goblins, 6,700 orcs, 2,400 trolls and 2 wyverns.

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Their losses, however, were not small either. 10000 monster skeletons were destroyed, 5000 skeleton soldiers and 200 dwarf skeletons. For Athos, the dwarves were the greatest loss, as it was nearly impossible to replenish their numbers.

In the end, their total numbers rose to approximately 70,000 skeletons and Athos made a new redistribution of the skeletons among the generals and placed the wyverns to fill the general positions that opened up with the new skeletons.

Athos did not order them to leave immediately after they had finished collecting the corpses, but they decided to camp in the ravine and prepare before setting out again.

The dwarves would have to corrupt the weapons of the orcs and Athos took advantage and ordered them to be enchanted too, so they would stay at least a few weeks camping. Even if human mages help runesmith, there were still thousands of weapons that would need to be enchanted.

Dominating the region also gave access to new hunting grounds, and the undead spread out across the land to hunt them, further increasing their numbers.

During these weeks that were stopped, Athos and the generals met with the wyverns a few times, as they would have knowledge of the nearby regions and the enemies they would have to face when they began to expand.

They had found a crude but useful map among the wreckage of the camp in a tent larger than the others, presumably the patriarch's tent. The map roughly showed nearby regions, clearly marking where the territory itself ended.

The closest regions were also marked, but anything further from that was off-limits on the map.

Wyverns explained to him that most of the nearby regions were ruled by intelligent and powerful monsters like themselves or some were the territory of stupid and violent monsters.

There was only a nearby territory ruled by demihumans, but there were also clans living under the rule of intelligent monsters, in addition to nomadic tribes that were impossible to predict where they would be.

"According to the map and wylver, there are a total of seven nearby regions, and three of them are ruled by intelligent monsters, two regions are territories of powerful and violent monster groups, one

era ruled by a demi-human tribe, and one era a special case.” Athos spoke looking at the map in front of him.

Enemy territories were marked with numbers, as they were conveniently in the same position as the numbers on a clock.

He was meeting with his generals in the patriarch’s tent, the top of which had been removed so the wyverns could stick their heads inside and join in the meeting.

“The first region was ruled by a 4-headed hydra, a kind of lesser dragon like wyverns. They have less agility and are not able to fly, but they have exceptional defense and can cast magic from all four heads.” Treevor spoke, placing a small statue of a four-headed lizard made of stone in one of the regions of the map.

“The next one is ruled by a basilisk, a serpent capable of petrifying with just a glance. We don’t know much about this region, as the wyverns hated and tacitly ignored them.” He placed a second statue of a coiled snake with unnaturally large eyes.

“The third region belongs to a species of manticores, a chimera monster with the body and head of a lion, tail of a serpent, and wings of an eagle. Manticores are weaker physically and magically, but they are a group rather than an individual, so their powers cannot be underestimated.” He spoke and placed a statue of a lion with wings.

“The fourth and fifth regions are dominated by different stupid and territorial monsters that attack anything that enters their territory, so the other species avoid approaching.” Treevor placed two statues of random monsters on the map, as they wouldn’t know what they would find when they attacked.

“The sixth region is the most interesting for our army, as it is dominated by demi-human clans, something rare in the deserts. There is a main clan of ogres that dominate the region, but there are other clans under their dominion and they were very powerful.” Treevor placed a small statue of an ogre on top of the area and paused for a few moments.

“The seventh and final region is special. Rather than monsters or demihumans, it was spirits who ruled. It was a forest more than ten kilometers long and nearly a dozen spirits. There were monsters and demihumans who lived under the domain of the spirits, but they were few in numbers.” He placed a statue of a tree in the last region and stopped talking.

All the generals looked at the map, trying to think of the best course of action to take. The army would be able to overcome the regions infested with monsters or with intelligent monsters, but it would be doubtful if they would be able to face the demihuman clans or the forest of spirits.

If each spirit were as strong or had a power close to that of Treevor, it would be almost impossible to face them with their current power and even if they won, they would suffer so many losses that it would not be worth it.

“Does anyone have any ideas where to start? I personally think we should start with monster regions, but they’re between the territories of demihumans and intelligent monsters.”

"If we're discovered by either side, we run the risk of being ambushed. Communication between the different regions is minimal, but it's likely they'll be watching their neighbors for a chance to expand and eliminate an enemy." Athos spoke and looked at the wyvern skeletons, who nodded in agreement.

"That's true. We keep minimal communication with each other, but it's rare and only happens a few times a year. I also ordered the goblins and orcs to keep an eye on the enemies to make sure no one has accumulated too much power." Wylver spoke and Treevor translated his words for the rest of the generals to understand.

"If they are not stupid, they must have done the same to us and in a few days they will already be aware of our presence."

"If you were spying on them, you must know what the best decision is. Any ideas?" Emilia asked. She was also analyzing the map and trying to decide which route would be the safest and the one that would lead to the fewest losses for the army, but she was still undecided.

"I suggest we start in the hydra's territory. They're the furthest away and only border us and that damn basilisk, so it's impossible for us to be surrounded." Malic suggested, nodding at the small four-headed lizard.

"Hm... are the demi-human tribes that live under the hydra's rule strong?" Astrus asked.

"Not much. It's just desert lizardmen, kobolds and minotaurs. Both desert lizardmen and kobolds are just more intelligent than normal monsters, so it wouldn't be wrong to say that the only demihumans that serve the hydra are the minotaurs." Wylver informed him, but Athos ignored the information as it was not relevant to him.

"The enemies' origins don't matter, only their power. If we start with the hydra's territory which is north of our position, the only viable option to follow would be to attack the basilisk's territory and descend clockwise to destroy all neighboring territories. What do you think?" Athos suggested.

Chapter 209 Taken decisions

"You can't forget the territories beyond, master. The more we expand, the more neighboring territories we'll have and we run the risk of being surrounded if we expand in just one direction." Astrus spoke.

"Furthermore, it is inefficient for an army as large as ours to move as one. I believe that after we destroy the hydra's territory, we should separate to move efficiently." With those words, all eyes moved towards Astrus, but he stood firm in his decision and didn't give in to the pressure.

"I... agree with him. There is a size limit to shared curse barriers and it's difficult to command such a large army. The only reason we are able to organize such a large army is thanks to the mind link and the skeletons that obey our orders without hesitation." Athos agreed with Astrus' opinion, making the skeletons curse internally.

They all knew that they would soon have to split up, but none spoke aloud. The black currents in their minds constantly force them to worry and ensure Athos' safety.

The black chains did not stop corrupting even after the souls were completely stained black, ensuring that all skeletons remained loyal to Athos no matter what.

“Let’s leave plans to split up for another time. For now, let’s focus on the now. Does everyone agree that our next step should be to hunt down the hydra and take its power for ourselves?” Athos asked and everyone nodded.

“Then send the hive hawks to confirm the exact position of the enemies and an estimated number of them.” Athos ordered. Unlike skeleton birds or unintelligent monsters, hive hawks had intelligence and could make a count of enemies.

The skeletons avoided sending the hive hawks to investigate the wyverns for the risk of them being destroyed by them, but there was no danger when it came to investigating the hydra. According to descriptions of wyverns, hydras resembled lizards with short limbs, multiple heads, and a long tail.

“Master, please let me participate in the information gathering as well.” Wylder and Malic asked, knowing they wouldn’t be much use here. They had already shared everything they knew with Athos and were not good at commanding troops.

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The orc patriarch would have made a more suitable general than they had, but the wyverns were too proud to admit that and afraid of losing their current rank. As scouts, however, they could be useful.

“Actually, I have a job for you. While the falcons investigate the hydra, I want you to investigate the basilisk. He is our next target and we have no information about him, as you ignored him.” Athos commanded and noticed the wyverns released a little killing intent, but quickly controlled it.

“It will be done, master. We will finally be able to take revenge on that wretched snake.” Wylder spoke with a snarl, making Athos curious.

“What did that basilisk do to make you two so angry?” he asked curiously.

“Basilisks are snake monsters and although they can feed on monster flesh, they still have a preference for eggs. In the past, they invaded our territory while I was away and devoured our eggs in the nest.” Wylder growled every word.

“Malic was alone in the nest and could not defend the eggs alone and only escaped with her life because the basilisk did not bother to finish her off. When I returned and saw the nest destroyed, I was furious and went after him in search of revenge, but I was completely defeated.” Athos could clearly hear the shame and self-loathing in the wyvern’s voice.

“Is the basilisk really that powerful?” Treevor asked doubtfully.

“Our physical and magical abilities are on par, but racial abilities make them the natural predators of us wyverns.” Wylver spoke in frustration. “Basilisk have a racial ability called petrifying gaze, which releases a beam of light that petrifies anything it touches.”

“I was grazed by this ability and lost my maneuverability, the greatest weapon of a wyvern. After that, the battle was completely in favor of the basilisk who could use earth and light magic and I barely escaped with my life, unable to avenge myself.”

“Since then, we’ve cared for the eggs together and never left the nest until they hatched. The basilisk wasn’t able to attack our eggs with the two of us together protecting them and we cared for them until they were big enough to fend for themselves.

‘It’s better not to remind him that I also killed his whelps inside the eggs. He won’t be able to betray me or seek revenge, but there’s no reason to cause unnecessary pain to my servants.’ Athos thought in the corner of his mind, making sure the skeletons couldn’t hear.

“Anyway, I want you to leave immediately and start investigating. I’ll order the weapons that haven’t been enchanted yet to just be corrupted and we’ll leave in a few hours for hydra territory, so don’t come back here and meet us there. .” Athos commanded and the wyverns nodded, before taking flight and leaving.

The hive hawks left shortly thereafter and the skeletons made preparations to leave again.

The dwarves were the busiest between corrupting weapons, runesmithing and maintaining equipment, but all the essentials had already been done.

They left a few hours later, making sure they hadn’t left anything behind. Skeletons were using the same formation as before, despite increased skeleton numbers.

‘Soon, our numbers will increase too much and the shared curses won’t be able to cover the entire army.’ Athos thought, looking at the front line of soldiers carrying shared curses.

They still had a lot of mithril in storage, as they had used up just over half of the metals obtained in the platinum fist fortress. The fortresses had enough mithril to cover the entire outer wall which was miles long in length, so they had enough mithril for more than three armies.

The problem was that they needed to stop and give the dwarves time to produce more shared curses, time they didn’t have right now.

They needed to find a suitable location soon and form a base, so they could develop instead of just accumulating soldiers’ skeletons. Athos wanted to find a place with magical resources to form his base, such as a mine of magical metals or magic stones, but so far they had not found anything like that.

Athos hoped that one of the territories he planned to attack from now on would have the requirements he wanted so that they could settle in place.

In the Makima empire at the same time.

Emperor Canan Makima sat on the throne as he received reports of the demi-humans’ advance. The order of magic had already evacuated all the islands between mainland Caprio and Doravon, but the buildings were still functional and they could access the recording devices, so they were tracking the demi-humans progress in real-time.

The demihumans were approximately a month away from the mainland and both the order and the church were sending forces to the human realms to help, but the process was slow because of the loss of the portals.

To make matters worse, the undead of the Sytrer continent had intensified their attacks, forcing the empires to divide their efforts between defending their own territory and preventing them from sending troops undercover.

The undead normally attack a few times a year, but since the fight between Eishin and Illum, the undead have attacked the Caria empire almost daily and with an intensity never seen before, forcing the angels to form camp in the port cities to prevent them from being annihilated.

To worsen, the Fae alliance of the Setlan continent began a major attack to try to retake the lands that the Makima empire had conquered on the Setlan continent, forcing the empire to reinforce the bases to avoid losing its bases on the enemy continent.

Canan found the timing of the attack too convenient for the enemy and the fact that they only attacked the bases of the Makima empire only increased his suspicions. He suspected Illum was in a secret deal with the Fae alliance, but didn't have enough manpower to investigate.

They were under constant attack from two continents, forcing both empires to do their best not to lose ground and soon Doravon would be starting its attacks, so everyone had their hands full in preparation.

Canan also needed to keep an eye on Eishin, to make sure he didn't do anything stupid. Eishin was strangely silent even though the church was not making any strange moves and was proactively helping in the defense of the Caprio continent.

He feared that Eishin was planning something that would break the agreement with Illum and tried to visit Eishin several times, but the latter refused all attempts to visit.

'Eishin is definitely planning something, but I don't have the means to investigate it and I'm already too busy with preparations to worry about him.' Canan thought as his subordinate finished his report.

'Don't forget that in a few minutes I have a meeting at the order of magic, so you need to get some free time soon.' Eirin spoke in his mind and reminded him of his appointments.

'Damn it. Do you really need to attend this meeting? I'm sure war preparations are more important.' Canan answered doubtfully, but Eirin mentally shook her head.

Chapter 210 Judgment Day

'I need to be there personally to intervene if things get out of hand. Today is the judgment day of the elder of darkness Luís Zahara and I need to be present.' Eirin reminded Canan, who only sighed in response.

Despite being on the brink of war, the order of magic was more divided than ever, with one faction accusing the dark elder of betraying the order, while another faction tried to defend him from the accusations. There was a third faction that was neutral and was just watching events unfold rather than getting involved, but that did nothing to resolve the situation.

'It sucks, I know. With the war imminent, I tried my best to ease the case so that the elder could continue to exercise his role and just share his knowledge and pay a fine as compensation for his crimes, but new crimes continued to be revealed until recently and the investigation of the facts dragged on.' Eirin was as frustrated as Canan, but there wasn't much she could do.

Unlike Adula empires which were ruled by emperors who had absolute power, the authority of the order was divided among the elders. Although Eirin had authority above an elder as the founder of the order of magic, the dark elder had committed many crimes and was seen fleeing the crime scene alone by three elders and a master of magic, as well as dozens of staff at the scene.

He wouldn't be sentenced to death, but he would definitely lose his position and spend at least a century in prison, something Eirin had to avoid at all costs. There was no necromancer or dark mage who could take his position and become an elder, so the position of elder of the Mirkor realm would be vacant until a powerful enough dark mage appeared.

Just as the adventurers' guild assigned a guild master to be in charge of each kingdom, the order placed one elder in each kingdom, while four others resided in the Makima empire.

With Mirkor becoming the front line against Doravon, Eirin had to prevent the elder Louis from being arrested at all costs, or at least ensure he paid for his crimes by fighting on the front lines.

'I understood. We need that necromancer. I'll cancel my appointments for the day and give you the time you need.' Canan responded after Eirin explained the dark elder's importance to war.

'Thanks.' Eirin responded and stopped talking, letting Canan refocus on the subordinate in front of her.

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He waited for the man to finish speaking and nodded as if he had heard everything before he spoke.

"Thank you for the report. I'll discuss the matter with my advisors, then you can go now. You are excused." Canan waved his hand and the man reporting nodded and withdrew from the throne room.

"Sir, may I let the next one in?" A royal guard beside the throne room gate asked, but Canan shook his head in denial.

"No, the dark elder's judgment is today and Eirin will participate as a founder. I had forgotten and scheduled meetings for the whole day, but I'm going to have to cancel them all." Canan spoke clearly, not caring one bit about keeping it a secret from the surrounding royal guards.

He trusted each of them with his life and they knew all of his secrets, so there was no reason to keep such a small thing a secret.

'You know, I'm a little jealous of the confidence you have in them. I wish I had trusted subordinates like that.' Eirin spoke in her mind, interrupting the conversation.

'What are you talking about all of a sudden? They are your subordinates as well and are as loyal to you as they are to me.' Canan replied confused, I don't understand her words.

'No, they are loyal to me because you and I are one. It was you who founded this empire and ensured their loyalty.' Eirin spoke in a self-deprecating tone. 'By comparison, I founded the order of magic, a place where even on the brink of war, they still pettily fight in mindless squabbles for power.'

'The empire's mages, on the other hand, work together and share knowledge among themselves freely, rather than being forced to cover up crimes or out of ambition. They believe in our ideal that we are doing this for humanity.'

‘Didn’t you create the order to be like this? Create a competitive environment where mages would compete using their knowledge or skills to develop themselves?’ Canan asked, somewhat confused by Eirin’s sudden sentimentality.

As Canan said, Eirin created the order to be a competitive environment and they actually evolved many different magical disciplines, developing technologies like the portal tower, but the order’s mages were greedy, arrogant and jealous.

They trampled on each other to climb higher positions, sometimes even stealing each other’s knowledge and sharing it as their own.

‘I know and still believe that this kind of environment is the best for magical development. Unlike empire mages, order mages don’t have proper inhibitions or laws restricting them within the order, so they can experiment that would be forbidden in the empire and achieve things we could only dream of.’ Eirin spoke, making Canan frown in displeasure.

The only laws that restricted mages in the Makima empire were the prohibition of experiments on humans and the protection of the rights of non-mages, to ensure that mages would not abuse their power to commit crimes.

The laws that Eirin readily admitted the order’s mages didn’t abide by was something he’d created to protect humanity from mages and ensure that magical progress didn’t infringe on human rights. He knew that many order mages didn’t follow the laws, but hear her admit it to her mind was still irritating.

‘We’ll talk about some rule changes once the situation calms down.’ Canan spoke and Eirin mentally cringed, knowing she had said too much. She just wanted to vent a little because she was jealous of her brother’s achievements, but realized that she would be scolded for talking too much.

“My king, is it over yet?” one of the royal guards asked once Canan’s eyes focused again. They knew that when Canan and Eirin were standing and looking off into space, they were talking and kept silent so as not to disturb.

“Yes, just realizing I need to discuss some things with my little sister.” Canan complained, but still ceded control of the body to Eirin.

The royal guards didn’t even blink when they saw their emperor and god transform into a beautiful woman and a female royal guard stepped forward and handed over a sky blue dress with silver details and a small bag with underwear and shoes suitable for her.

Eirin thanked the female guard and conjured a barrier of darkness that darkened their surroundings, causing more than one royal guard to grunt in disappointment and the female royal guard to stare coldly at them.

‘These bastards.’ Canan thought in exasperation but kept the thought to himself.

Eirin finished changing and undid the barrier of darkness, earning more than one flattering whistle and making Canan rethink her trusted subordinates.

“A joke never gets old.” Eirin laughed along with the royal guards, reading her overprotective brother’s thoughts.

She took a communication cube and called one of the mages who worked as a jailer in the dungeon of the forgotten. The dungeon had been created by her and was in an unknown location even for the elders of the order like the tower of the portals, it had no entrance, the only way to access it was by teleportation and had to be notified in advance, or the automatic defenses would pulverize the invaders.

Eirin wouldn't die from something like that, but being attacked by spells capable of laying waste to a mountain was no fun.

"Defensive spells and forced teleportation are currently disabled, so you can teleport now." The mage on the other end of the line spoke after a few seconds of conversation.

The process would normally take much longer, but the jailers knew about the trial and the fact that all the elders would be visiting the prison, so the process was quick.

Eirin bid farewell to the royal guards and grabbed a teleportation crystal and disappeared, reaching the dungeon of the damned in an instant. The place where she teleported was a small but luxurious waiting room, destined to receive important guests.

Wine and snacks were set out on a small table in the middle of the room, with comfortable sofas on either side of the room. A mage was standing on the other side and as soon as he saw the purple light from the teleport, he knelt down with his head down.

"Supreme Elder, it is an honor to see you in such good shape. My name is Vishen and I will be your assistant for as long as your stay in our prison lasts." The man spoke the lines he had spent all morning memorizing.

'Supreme Elder.' Canan repeated in his mind, but his tone was the exact opposite of the fawning mage. Eirin had chosen that pompous title for herself because she thought it sounded cool, only to regret it later when she realized that being called the oldest of the oldest was not a good compliment.

'Shut up.' She replied dryly, before focusing on the mage in front of her.