

New Eden 601

Chapter 601 Last Challenge

The air shook for a second around Astaroth, as a sizeable chunk of his mana disappeared.

Then, with a swirl of wind and bright motes of Aether, a large black dragon appeared in the sky above the open ceilinged room. As it roared mightily, making its presence known to the world, Astaroth grinned.

It might have been smaller than the actual one, but it stayed a dragon. He could feel the dragon's aura spreading across the room, some Elves shuddering to a stop.

But he wasn't interested in this battlefield. Astaroth's eyes drifted toward the iced-up portal.

"Violette! Unseal the portal. I'm going back in!"

Violette, who had been looking up at the dragon in fear of a potential new enemy, jumped in surprise at Astaroth's voice.

"On it!" she shouted back, seeing he was already walking towards it.

She snapped her head toward the foot-thick sheet of ice she had conjured and willed it to melt. She could see some Imps clawing at the barrier, but if Astaroth said unseal it, then she would.

As soon as the ice started melting, the sound of maniacal cackling started echoing in the room, with distant sounds of Jaxx screaming in rage, and painful wailing.

As the last bit melted, and the imps started disgorging out the portal, the black dragon came swooping in and spat out a torrent of acid. Wherever the acid hit, nothing remained intact for long.

The dragon dove into the portal, with Astaroth close behind.

"Don't bother closing it up again. In a minute, nothing will be left of them," he said, crossing the threshold into the demon plane.

Violette nodded, returning her attention to the fight at hand on this side. Only one ally remained stuck inside a soul space.

On the highest peak of the mountain, in the white dragon's soul space, Jeanne was still radiating golden healing light, as she maintained the white dragon alive. But her mana reserves were almost empty.

From an eagle's eye viewpoint, the mage that had sent them to help was currently observing the soul space, and he could see the black mist had almost reached the plateau.

He had been stuck as an observer for all this time, forced to maintain the spell on all the others. But now that this was the last one left, he finally acted.

With a ray of bright white light, the mage slammed into the top of the mountain.

The sudden arrival of a person startled Jeanne and almost lost focus on her healing spell.

But when she saw the familiar elf walk towards her, she relaxed a bit.

"You have done well. Few would have held out long as you did. But this is enough."

He leaned forward, reaching his hand lovingly toward the dragon's forehead.

"I'm sorry I couldn't come sooner, Idrizat. How terrible it is to see you in this state..."

The white dragon smiled weakly, her eyes almost closing. The pain she was feeling was incredible, but she had maintained her strong facade all this time.

Truth was, she was dying. Even with all the healing the human girl was lying on her, there was no coming back from her previous state.

She was only glad the human had kept her alive long enough for her master to come and see her in her last moments.

'Master Aravelle. You have come.'

"Shh. Don't talk yet. Let me get rid of this corruption before you say anything more."

The white dragon nodded meekly.

The mage stood, an unbridled rage in his soul. His clothes started flapping in a mystical wind as a storm kicked up around the mountain.

Already, the faint mist that was climbing the mountainside was blown away. But the massive cloud overhead remained.

"You have tormented my familiar long enough. May the hells swallow you back, and you be tormented for eternity," he said, with disconcerting calm.

But the slight trembling in his voice made it clear to Jeanne that the mage was about to erupt.

"Apocalypse grade magic; Flames of Draconia."

Jeanne felt the six words echo in her mind like the end of the world was coming. They were only words, yet the power they contained sent shivers down her body, making her shake uncontrollably.

Wisps of fire, in a myriad of colours, started appearing around the mage. So many, Jeanne lost count of them.

And then they grew. And grew.

Each wisp reached the size of a city block, filling the sky with orbs of pure destruction, before erupting altogether.

Jeanne closed her eyes as the flames washed over her and the mage, erasing everything in their path. But she felt no pain.

When she opened her eyes again, she was standing in a white space, with nothing around her other than the Elven mage standing before her.

"Where are we?" she asked, looking around.

"In a subspace. I needed to speak to you before sending you back out. Your friends need your help, so I will keep this short," the mage responded.

Jeanne d'Arc nodded her head. The mage seemed so solemn.

"Idrizat is the familiar I was most close to. And even if you couldn't save her, I thank you for giving it your all. This is why it pains me to do this."

Jeanne swallowed nervously. His words sounded like a threat, and she didn't like where this was going.

When the mage raised a hand, she jumped back a few steps. But he smiled in response to her reaction.

"I'm sorry if my words sounded threatening. It wasn't my intention. Idrizat asked me to do something for her, and I wouldn't agree to it if it wasn't her dying wish."

A white egg, dotted with blue spots, appeared in his hand, the egg the size of an ostrich egg.

"This is Idrizat's last bit of intact soul. She asked me to give it to you, as a thank you gift. It is a great honour for a mortal to get the reincarnation egg of a dragon. The dragon that will come out of this egg will contain all of its memories from its past and retain a large part of its power. Are you willing to take on this responsibility?"

Jeanne was shocked. But she maintained a sense of decorum.

The white dragon had died, and that, in itself, was to be mourned. Even if the gift was a great one, it had come at a significant cost.

"I will do my best to protect it and raise it into as powerful a being as it should have become," she replied, stepping closer to the mage and egg.

"Good. Now this may sting a bit, but bear with me."

A beam of golden light burst out of the egg, penetrating Jeanne's abdomen, a searing feeling taking hold of her. But she closed her eyes and grunted, tiding through the pain.

When it subsided, she opened her eyes, and she was no longer in the white space. Instead, she was back before the mage, who smiled at her as a tear rolled off his cheek.

"Thank your friends for me, in the next leg of your journey. We will meet again."

As he said that, time stopped for everyone in the room except the mage. He walked around, lightly tapping everyone that wasn't supposed to be present, even stepping into the demon plane, and tapping Astaroth and Jaxx.

Once he touched Phoenix, the last player present, he snapped his fingers. And they all disappeared.

"Now. Onto the bigger problem. You all gave me a chance to fix this. Let's see if I'm powerful enough to survive this ordeal..."

Chapter 602 Bonus Stage

The party appeared in an enclosed tent, some of them stumbling from the sudden change of scenery, or being transported mid-attack.

They all received a notification simultaneously.

Ding

Congratulations on clearing the third and final stage of the time capsule dungeon. For clearing it, the system has judged you worthy of the bonus stage. Welcome to the demon war, Players.

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Astaroth frowned, as did Phoenix, Violette and Chronos.

The sound of a private message dinged in Astaroth's ears.

'Do you think this is the ones in the history books?' he replied while turning to face the rest of the party.

'It would make sense. But why show us this?'

Then he spoke to the rest of them.

"Alright. It seems this stage will be a lot more risky. I suggest we all stick together and work as a team."

Everyone nodded.

Astaroth threw a side glance at Jaxx, who nodded a second time, understanding the silent message.

Then another notification appeared.

Ding

You have been assigned to platoon fourteen, of the sixth company, third battalion of the allied Themiscus forces. Report to your Platoon Leader as soon as possible, for your orders in the upcoming battle.

Phoenix had half expected this since they would be in a war scenario. But she had also hoped they would be allowed to act independently.

But it mattered not. One way or the other, they would end up on the front lines, if she knew Astaroth as well as she thought she did.

Jaxx raised his hand, getting her attention.

"Yes, Jaxx?"

He retracted his hand, realizing he looked like a child asking for permission to speak.

"Ahem. I was wondering if we got rewards from the last stage. Or did we lose them?"

Phoenix looked at him before scanning her eyes on the party. She could already see some rewards from that stage, in the hands of Galtion, the face of Meat-Shield, and the entire body of SharpTusk, who was now apparently named RedWing.

"I believe we had rewards. Maybe not all of us, but certainly some of us got good stuff," she said, pointing at the concerned people.

Astaroth chimed in.

"I believe all the ones who went into the soul spaces were rewarded, in one form or the other."

Jeanne nodded, even if her reward was not something they could see. But Phoenix's face soured.

"Not all of us," she spat.

Astaroth recognized the look on her face and decided to change the subject.

"In this case, I think the rewards will be distributed at the end of the dungeon once we clear it. Or die on this stage. Which I would like to warn you all, is a very big possibility. Demons; actual ones, not those little imps, are not something easily defeated."

He saw a few confident smiles on the faces of Galtion, Jaxx, RedWing, and Meat-Shield. But he wanted them to understand what it was like to face a veritable demon.

So he summoned Asmodeus to his side while they were still in this enclosed tent.

As soon as the demon appeared, a heavy pressure descended on everyone present. For some strange reason, even Astaroth felt its weight.

Immediately, the players in his party started sweating, Phoenix, and Violette included.

"This is a demon king. His name is Asmodeus. He may not be your everyday demon, but the current pressure he is exuding is but a fraction of his true power. If he were to exude his full aura, most of you would faint. Asmodeus, say hello to my allies."

The demon looked at his master, a faint sneer on his lips.

"These weaklings are your allies? I sometimes wonder why Solomon let us become bound to you, Master."

Astaroth smirked at him.

"Shut up and go back into the ring, you prideful prick. I'll break you soon enough."

Asmodeus did an exaggerated bow before disappearing.

"Pay no heed to his words. Demons are overly proud creatures who only respect power. I still don't have his respect, but it will come.

"I want you all to expect the demons to look down on us in the upcoming battle. This is a good thing, as they won't expect our power level. We can use it to our advantage. But they are never to be underestimated. Understood?"

As the players recovered from the pressure it subjected them to, they nodded.

Another message rang in Astaroth's ears.

'Wasn't that pressure abnormally heavy? I've seen Asmodeus before. He wasn't this powerful.'

Phoenix was right. Astaroth also found it weird that even he was affected by the pressure.

He had summoned the demon king more than once before, and never felt it. The attitude of Asmodeus was also strange.

But then, he noticed the flicker of mana in the air. It was filled with demonic mana particles.

'I think we are inside the demon plane. Or something very close to it. I also think the time he spent in the ring has weakened him, and this dungeon's past timeline has given him his past power.'

Phoenix frowned slightly at his words.

'I'll keep the stronger demons inside the ring while we are here. I don't want them to break free,' he assured her.

As the party was recovering their sense, the tent flap burst open.

"Where is it?!" a soldier screamed, weapon at the ready.

Astaroth raised his arms at him, trying to calm him.

"It's gone. I was merely showing my platoon a demon I had contracted."

Astaroth took the lead here, since military folk often only respected power. And he had plenty to swing around if need be.

The soldier eyed him warily but stowed his weapon.

"Your platoon leader is looking for you. Report to him immediately, foreigners," the soldier spat, before leaving the tent.

Astaroth smiled in response, nodding his head.

"I guess we don't have more time to plan. Let's head to the platoon leader's tent."

He pushed the tent flap to the side, exiting it first, followed by the rest of them. Their minimap suddenly updated, and a yellow marker appeared on the map, showing them where to go for their mission.

'Hmm. Convenient,' Astaroth thought, as he started walking.

He wondered what the platoon leader would be like. But he would soon find out.

Chapter 603 Talking To The Platoon Leader

The party of twelve walked through the war camp, which was nothing more than tents, pitched up in neat rows. But the sheer size of it was astounding.

From the gossip a few of them gathered, with their heightened senses, they understood this wasn't the only war camp, either. They also quickly noticed that no one cared about their strange race composition.

Many other groups of varied races were hanging out around small campfires or on the training grounds.

What took Astaroth the most off guard, was the few clusters of Elves and Ash Elves, hanging around each other like everything was unicorns and butterflies. They talked, laughed, and sparred amicably.

Reaching the tent marked as their quest location on the minimap, Astaroth announced himself before entering.

"Party leader Astaroth, come to talk with the platoon leader of platoon fourteen."

From inside the tent, he heard a voice answer.

"Come in, soldier Astaroth. Bring in your party so I can meet my recruits."

Astaroth pushed aside the tent flap and signalled for his party members to go in. Once the last one passed him, he entered and closed the flap behind himself.

Inside the tent, the setting was minimalistic, to say the least. In the center of the tent, a large rectangular table took up most of the area, and on it, a large map with wooden markers.

Phoenix instantly recognized this as a war map. Her eyes were already darting around the multiple elements on it, judging what type of battle they would be engaging in.

And by the looks of the wooden markers, this was an encirclement. They were sieging a fortress of some kind.

Astaroth stepped around his party and saw the officer under the light of the few covered lamps around the tent. His breath cut short.

He recognized this person.

"Old man Aberon?!" he blurted out.

The officer lifted his head from the map, his robes fluttering around him. He frowned as he looked at Astaroth.

"Do we know each other, soldier? Also, I have been called many things. But old man? That is a first. I am barely forty years old, which is very young for an Elf."

Astaroth choked on his saliva.

This was Aberon, he was sure of it. The younger form of him, at least.

He had seen him in this form only a few times, but there was no mistake.

"I'm sorry, sir. We don't know each other. I merely heard rumours of your power," he lied.

This confirmed the theory he had, that this dungeon was a time jump dungeon. He quickly sent a message in the party chat.

'I want all of you to respect this man as if he were me. No, scratch that. Respect him as if he was your parent.'

Violette also recognized him, as she had seen him in this appearance once before. But she was too stunned to react.

When she read the message, she felt a bit of melancholy rise in her. But she said nothing.

Phoenix, though, wasn't so silent.

"Sir Aberon. It is a pleasure to meet a mage of your level. Our party leader is less of a tactician than I am. Would it bother you if I was to discuss the planning with you instead of him?"

The young Aberon looked at her with a keen look, before turning his gaze to Astaroth. Astaroth nodded his head in approval.

"If your team leader doesn't mind you stepping over him, then I couldn't care less who I talk this over with. But this will less be a discussion than me giving you your assignment for the next day of battle."

Phoenix nodded her head.

"Very well. Then let us be done quickly. I have other duties to attend to, and you have already made me wait."

The other players huddled closer to the table and the map on its surface.

The casters felt a wave of mana pass through them, which equated to a feeling of being stared at by the non-casters, who weren't proficient with mana. Aberon had scanned all of them in a flash.

"I see you are mostly casters. Not good. Our platoon is assigned to the left flank's front line. I hope all of you can handle yourselves in a massive battle. Because no one will be covering us once the battle starts."

The casters in the party nodded their head solemnly. They weren't sure how big of a battle this would become, but they had a bit of experience in all-out brawls.

Aberon proceeded to tell them their orders for the upcoming battle, which entailed only fighting, never running away, and taking out as many demons as they could without dying.

Once he was finished telling them the plan, if that could be called one, he ended on a more positive note.

"I know you are all Abnormals, and that you can revive. But this is a onetime deal battle. Once you die, our world will expel you back to yours. So try to survive as much as you can."

Everyone nodded their head.

"Alright. Dismissed."

As the party spun on their heels, ready to leave, Aberon's voice echoed one last time in the tent.

"Actually, you, Astaroth, and you, little girl, stay for a moment."

Astaroth's eyebrow rose, but he spun back, facing Aberon. Once all the rest of the party had left the tent, waiting on the outside, Aberon waved his hand.

As he did, a bubble of dense mana conjured on the inside of the tent, blocking out all the sounds coming from the camp, as well as obscuring them from the outside. Astaroth recognized this spell, as Aberon had used it in the Ash Elf palace long ago, to talk to him in private.

"I have a few words I want to discuss with the two of you, away from prying eyes and ears. It's about our common trait."

Astaroth quickly understood what Aberon meant.

"Is there a problem with us being Ash Elves?" he asked.

"Hah! A problem is putting it lightly. Listen, Astaroth. You say you have heard of my prowess as a mage."

"I have. You are a legend amongst the Ash Elves, sir," he lied again.

"Can it, you phony. If that were true, I wouldn't be in this war. But I am indeed a very powerful mage. Why do you think I am just a platoon leader?"

Astaroth frowned while Violette maintained silence. Seeing they couldn't find the answer on their own, Aberon sighed.

"It's because this battlefield is led by an Elf. Amongst the soldiers, there is no tension between our two races. But in the higher ranks, the Elves dominate us still. Be careful when addressing the Elven officers. They are looking for excuses to put us in chains."

Astaroth gulped at the implication.

'So it has already begun...' he contemplated, internally.

"Anyway, that's all I wanted to say to you. Be careful."

And with a wave of his hand, the bubble vanished. He shoed away the two players, returning to his map.

As the two of them exited the tent, Phoenix stood from a nearby crate.

"What now?" she asked.

"Now? We wait," Astaroth responded.

Chapter 604 Nearly A Pincushion

Assuming the tent they had spawned was their quarters until the battle began, the party of twelve made their way back. On the way there, they crossed many other platoons in a myriad of different moods.

But all across the camp, one sentiment seemed to echo through everyone. One of finality.

The entire war camp was settled upon a small hill, yet not a single tent went up the hill, all of them on the flat land behind. And Astaroth couldn't spot a single lookout up on the hill, either.

But when he extended his senses, he couldn't feel any demons.

"How far are we from the demon troops?" he asked, to a passing soldier.

The human soldier looked at him, a bit confused at the question.

"Uh... A mile out, over that hill. I'm sorry I'm busy right now. So I can't talk."

Astaroth nodded his head at him, thanking him, and turned to face the hill. He could see lookouts going around the camp, at the edge of it, right before the hill, but none on top of it.

This made him very curious, and he trailed away from his companions, walking toward the patrolling soldiers.

When they saw him approach, two of them lay their hands on their weapons and stopped in front of him.

"Get back, soldier. The hill is off limits," one of them said.

Astaroth stopped right in front of them.

"Why is that? I want to see what we are going up against. Can't I just have a peek?"

The other soldier laughed nervously.

"Listen, pointy ears. If you want to die, be my guest. But we warned you."

Astaroth frowned at his words. If the enemy was a mile out, how would they possibly kill him for just peeking over the hilltop?

He scoffed and walked right by the guards, who watched him go while shaking their heads.

"Call the cleanup team. We'll have another body on the hill in a bit..." he heard one soldier say to his buddy.

'Keep talking, guys. You are only making me more curious,' he thought to himself.

The hill wasn't a tall one, by any measure, and he was up its flank in less than a minute.

He crested it with just his head, crawling forward, and couldn't see them much. So he got to his feet and stood proudly on the top.

Instantly, his senses alerted him to danger. A shiver ran up his spine, and he felt something coming at him incredibly fast.

He couldn't see it yet, and already his body reacted.

The Ad Astra was out in a flash, in longsword form, and he swung it upward.

A loud clang echoed down into the camp, as Astaroth intercepted an arrow with the length of his body, with the blade of his weapon. The arrow came in with a lot of force, and he felt his feet slide back a few inches before he gripped his sword with two hands and shoved the force upward.

But his spine kept tingling.

He quickly understood why, as a rain of more of these arrows came at him, all with equal speed and power.

Astaroth knew he couldn't deflect them all. Instead, he pulled out his Ironbark Shield, making the Ad Astra disappear, and shrunk behind the shield's rounded triangular body.

He barely had enough time to crouch, that already the first arrows were impacting the metallic bark of his shield. Even though he had braced behind his shield, his position didn't allow for maximum resistance, and after the fifth arrow hit the shield, he felt his body lift from the ground.

The arrows that didn't hit him flew well above the camp, disappearing into the distance, while the ones that did ricocheted to the ground near him. As for Astaroth?

He flew off into the air, the ground no longer holding him in place, as many more arrows slammed into his shield until his body lowered under the hill's height. He crashed into the camp, a few hundred feet away from the edge of it, unable to control his flight.

His ears rang from all the metal-on-metal clanking he had just been subjected to, and he couldn't react in time. After rolling a few times, he came to a stop, his ears ringing like crazy.

He saw the surrounding soldiers encircle him, some with weapons drawn, others looking at him with worried faces.

Phoenix pierced through the crowd, reaching his side, and hers was the first voice he heard through the ringing.

"-re yo- a-ight?!"

"WHAT?!" he shouted back, unaware he was screaming.

"I sa-d ar- you al-ight?!" she repeated.

Astaroth shook his head, trying to get rid of the incessant ringing in his ears.

"I'M SORRY! I CAN'T HEAR YOU!" he shouted back.

It took him a few moments, during which the soldiers amassing around him scattered once more, seeing he was fine, and wasn't a threat, before he could hear enough of Phoenix's words for them to make sense.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?! The guards said you climbed the hill after they warned you you could die! What the hell happened?!" she howled at him, anger mingling with worry on her face.

"I'm sorry. I was curious as to what we were going to face. How could I have guessed they would shoot at me with arrows that could take down a dragon?" he replied, still rubbing his ears.

Phoenix lightly punched his shoulder.

"You idiot! Stop taking unnecessary risks," she admonished.

Astaroth looked at her with a grin.

"Oh, but it wasn't unnecessary. I saw what I wanted to see. The battle will be exhilarating!" he responded.

Phoenix felt an incredible urge to smack his pretty little face hard enough to wipe the grin off of it. But she held back.

It wouldn't look good if the soldiers still watching them saw her striking him.

"You imbecile. Come on, let's get to the tent. The others are waiting there," she said, helping him up by the arm.

Astaroth looked at his shield, which was lying a few feet away from him. It was dented all over, with many scratches covering its surface, with small dents accompanying them.

'Good thing that shield is extremely durable...' he thought to himself.

But when he inspected it, he gulped.

Ironbark Shield (Heater Shield)

Grade: Elite

Defense Power: 20%

Durability: 50/500

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'That was too close... I'll have to get it fixed...'

He also noticed he had lost about half his large health pool, even with all his defences. He suddenly agreed with Phoenix that it had been a stupid thing to do.

Chapter 605 Unwanted Visitor

After grabbing the shield and stowing it inside his inventory, Astaroth and Phoenix walked toward their tent. A few soldiers looked at him like he was a fool, while others grinned at him with big, dumb grins.

Arriving back at the tent, Violette was waiting on the outside, looking worried. But seeing Astaroth was fine, she went back to smiling.

"One of these days, Phoenix is going to incinerate you," she said, pulling her tongue out at him.

Astaroth chuckled, even though he knew she was probably right.

They entered the tent, where the rest of the party was waiting.

RedWing stepped up to Astaroth, with a shy look.

"I'm sorry to ask you this, guild leader. But could you teach me how to use these?" he asked, pointing at the two massive wings folded behind him.

Astaroth squinted for a moment, trying to figure out when they had gotten a dragon humanoid in their party. He hadn't had time to check out everyone's changes yet.

But looking around, he noticed SharpTusk was nowhere to be seen, and he assumed this dragonoid was him.

"Sure, Tus- I mean RedWing. But it might have to wait until after the battle. I'm not sure flying up is safe right now."

RedWing smiled a dangerous-looking smile, with teeth aplenty, nodding his head happily.

Watching the long snout go up and down vigorously, Astaroth had to contain the laughter that wanted to burst out of his mouth.

As RedWing walked back to his corner of the tent, doing a little fist bump to the air, Astaroth looked over his party.

He noticed the scales around Meat-Shield's eyes, and the new spear strapped to Galtion's back, as well as the large egg Jeanne seemed to be cradling with a soft smile, Jaxx hovering behind her, a curious look on his face.

He already knew what he had gotten from the last stage, so he turned to Phoenix. She wasn't wearing anything new, or sporting a change in her physical appearance.

"Did you get anything from the dragon you saved?" he asked her.

As soon as he finished his sentence, Phoenix's hair started flaring up. Her face darkened as she gritted her teeth in rage.

"No. I didn't," she said, through clenched teeth.

"What? That seems strange. We all got something... Did you piss off your quarry, or something?" Astaroth asked, frowning.

Phoenix looked at him with a murderous stare.

"Let's not talk about it. Unless you want to receive the dragon's punishment in his stead?" she said, her tone venomous.

Astaroth gulped as his face paled.

"Nope! I'm good with not talking about it! On to other matters then!" he said, turning to face the rest of the party.

"The battle seems to be scheduled for tomorrow, at dawn. But let's not get too complacent. The demons might ambush us before the night is over, so we shouldn't go to sleep. We can alternate who goes back out, to at least tend to basic needs. But since we don't need to sleep in New Eden, let's do just that." He said, putting his hands on his hips.

He was certain the demons wouldn't let the army sleep on their two ears until morning. So he preferred being cautious.

The party agreed to this and started deciding the order to go out. They had a long night ahead.

In Bastion City, sitting in a large round room, with books lying on the ground everywhere, Aberon was watching on the tied-up Argos. Ever since their fight, Aberon had kept him in magic-suppressing cuffs and waited for the mage's guild to send someone over.

He had expected an almost immediate confrontation after the incident. But it had already been days, and still no movement on their part.

"Hmm. They never wait this long when a mage acts against them. This is out of the norm..."

As he mumbled this to himself, a powerful surge of magic erupted in the room, sending many books on the ground flying to the walls.

"Speak of the wolf..." Aberon grumbled.

He would have almost preferred nothing happened. But it was too late now.

As a figure stepped out of the opening portal, Aberon sighed deeply.

"I should have known you would be coming, with how long it took for the guild to act."

A wise-looking Elven man stepped out of the portal, wearing a tight-fitting robe, strapped at his waist with a string of shiny orbs. His silver hair, along with emerald-green eyes, exuded a sense of power and wisdom which could only be acquired through a long-lived life.

"It is a pleasure to see you as well, Aberon. Although I would prefer to speak to your true self, not this disguise you put on to fool others."

The Elven man snapped his fingers, and the portal behind him disappeared, as did Aberon's old man facade.

"Bold of you to come to my home and start cancelling out my spells. What if I had linked that disguise to a trap?"

The Elf laughed elegantly.

"Oh, Aberon. Young and naïve Aberon. You still think your magic would work against me? After all these years of trying? I see you still retain your arrogance."

Aberon growled at him, with his now young appearance restored.

"Enough of the verbal joust, Aravelle. Why did they send you? Why did they send one of the seven founders to iron out what we could consider a dispute, at worst?"

The old Elven mage looked at Aberon, his smile widening a bit.

"I am not here for this. That matter has already been put to rest. Argos is to be transferred out, and I am to take his place."

Aberon's heart skipped a beat.

"Excuse me, what?! Why would a founder come to a city, as a mage's guild representative?!"

Aravelle laughed once more.

"You misunderstand my role here, young Aberon. The mage's guild no longer offers its support to Bastion City and the kingdom of Stellar Woodlands. I am here on personal related business. But before we discuss any more of this, let us get rid of unwanted ears."

With another snap of his fingers, Argos was unbound of his manacles and teleported out of Bastion City. This left only Aberon and Aravelle in the room.

Aberon had a bad feeling about the old monster's presence here.

"Now. Let us discuss the future of this city, nay, this world. Shall we?"

Chapter 606 Global Movement

Far away from Bastion City, in the lands of the Ash Elves, another portal opened. This one led into the top floor of the tree that stood in Prince Nalafein's new territory.

Out from it stepped an elegant-looking older human woman, with pitch-black hair which was only sullied by a single strand of white hair, on her left bang.

Nemus watched as the portal opened, curious who was powerful enough to step into her newly hidden domain, aside from another god.

When the human woman walked out of the portal, the brightness of the room took aback her. But she rapidly saw where it came from.

"A goddess? I am honoured you have decided to make my old tower your domain, your grace. But I am perplexed as to why it is so heavily warded. If I hadn't established my teleportation circle centuries ago, I doubt I would have been able to enter at all."

Nemus looked at the woman up and down, but couldn't recognize her.

Seeing the goddess wasn't responding to her question, the mage woman bowed down.

"My apologies, your grace. I forgot to introduce myself. I am Edith of Themisca, Sorceress of a Thousand Spells, and founder of the kingdom of magic, Themiscus. At your service."

She did a low curtsy and smiled warmly at the goddess still sitting on her dais.

Nemus raised an eyebrow at the woman. She may not physically recognize her, but she had gathered information on the world ever since she was set free.

And the name Edith of Themisca was not an unfamiliar one to her. She finally opened her mouth to respond.

"The great sorceress, in the flesh. You don't look a day older than forty, Edith. Which is quite the achievement, for someone who recently crossed into her twentieth millennia of life."

Edith blushed lightly.

"You flatter me, your grace. You look quite ravishing yourself, if I may say. But I would like to know why a goddess has elected to make this old tree her domain, especially in the mortal realm, if you don't mind answering my question."

Nemus smiled warmly at her.

"My reasons are my own, and cannot be discussed lightly. But know that I cannot make my way elsewhere. So if you come to reclaim your home, I will have to inform you that you will need to co-habit with its current residents."

Edith raised an eyebrow.

"Residents? Plural?"

"Yes. And not just a few," Nemus responded.

"Ah... That is quite unfortunate. I would have preferred to be alone. Cohabiting with a goddess would not have bothered me. But other people... That is less ideal."

Nemus maintained her smile.

"Well. If they are already established and have your blessing, then I guess I will have to tolerate their presence," Edith said, brushing the matter aside.

She didn't have time to care more about this.

"If you don't mind, I will be making a hidden floor right under yours for my privacy. I will try to be as discreet as I can with my projects."

Nemus nodded her head.

"Thank you, your grace," Edith said, doing another curtsy.

After which, she drew sigils in the air before her, at an incredible speed, and formed an arcane circle with a complexity that would baffle any caster in this world.

Once the circle was complete, with hundreds upon hundreds of sigils composing it, a flash of blue light exploded outwards, and she disappeared from Nemus' floor.

She reappeared in an enclosed area, with no light to it. She had just created a subspace within the tree, and no one could access it except her.

"This will do just fine," Edith said to herself as she started conjuring out furniture.

Nemus, who was right above this subspace, frowned lightly.

"Why is one of the seven founders of the mage's guild coming back to their old mage tower? Don't they have a new seat of power?" she mumbled to herself.

But she had no way of finding out this information, without doing a larger sweep of the continent, and that would assuredly attract the attention of another god. And she wanted all but that, at the moment.

Around the world of New Eden, on both continents and even on an island stranded in the middle of the ocean between them, five more portals like those opened, with mages of different races walking out of them. All of which appeared in a large tree like the one in Bastion City.

These were the seven founders of the mage's guild, also known as the seven progenitors of magic.

These mages were believed to be so old, the world had forgotten when they had seen the light of day first. Their powers were unrivalled in the ways of magic, and could only be compared to minor deities.

Very few mages ever got to meet these seven mages, which were the last echelon in the mage's guild. Aberon had been one of these lucky few, but only because one of them had taken a liking to him.

It was also this one that had made sure he stayed out of trouble when he left the guild. He was lucky to be alive and free, given that most mages that did the same as him ended up dead, or imprisoned for life, which could be considered worst, given the life span of powerful magic users.

And right now, these seven figures of great power were on the move, for the first time since the demon war, that had happened over two thousand years ago. But very few people would know about it until they made their moves out in the open.

Aberon knew he couldn't just talk about this openly, as he risked death. And the only other that had seen one of them, Argos, already had his memory altered.

In his mind, one of the other arch mages had come and settled the issue with Aberon, and they had castigated him. So he would never talk about what really transpired that day.

Only time would dictate this event and its repercussions.

Chapter 607 Sharing Secrets

Across the ocean, on the dark continent, Khalor was currently sitting on a mound of dead demons, panting heavily, with his death knight at his side. All around him, piles upon piles of dead demons, demonoids, and undead.

The battle against the demon stronghold had just concluded after days of combat. The demons had looked unprepared at first view, but it had been a subterfuge.

It seemed a high-level demon, with powerful illusion magic, had come out of the portal early, and it hid their actual progress on building a base from the world, behind an illusion that belied their actual might.

Only once they had passed the illusion threshold did they find out what mess they had stepped into. And it was already too late by then.

The reinforcements they had from the capital were far from being enough, being outnumbered five to one. Khalor had thought of abandoning this fight in its entirety at some point.

But he remembered the promise he made to himself, to never back away again, and powered through his instincts.

After four days of almost non-stop fighting, Khalor losing many of his undead army to the demons, a Demonoid general had finally breached into the inner layer of the demon camp, and slain the powerful sorcerer. Once the sorcerer died, the horn for retreat had resounded, and the demons ran back into the portal.

Their retreat came at a heavy cost, though, as the demonoids and undead tore at their backs with abandon.

Khalor looked further into the burning fortress, seeing the body of his drake lying upon the walls, the neck and head severed and strewn further inside.

"Tch! What a fucking waste... If I had known the sorcerer could cancel out my powers, I would have targeted him first..."

Reaching out with his magic senses, Khalor could no longer feel his connection with many of his undead. Their connection had been magically severed, and he knew these bodies would forever remain bodies from now on.

He knew he had to regrow his troops after this massive loss. Luckily for him, many more corpses littered the battlefield, and from most of them, he could feel the call of resurrection.

These corpses wanted to take revenge. Wanted to walk the world again, to get a second chance at felling their killers.

But he would need to ask permission from the Demonoids. He couldn't simply resurrect people without consent from their families.

It would be unethical.

But this would be a task for later. Khalor was exhausted and wanted nothing more than to go wash all the gore on him away in a hot bath, as well as take a long-awaited night of sleep.

As he stood up from the pile of corpses, Khalor had a stray thought for his old friend, from a time yet to come.

'I wonder how Chronos is doing... By now, in the past timeline, he was just reaching level fifty, and he was dragging me into Aces High. He couldn't have known, back then... Maybe this time, he'll make a better choice...'

Back inside the time capsule dungeon, Chronos was currently lying on his back, under the stars, looking at the sky.

But he wasn't watching the skies. Instead, he had his time vision active, and was looking at the time web, and how it differed from theirs.

The amount of threads in the time web was so much fewer, that he almost couldn't recognize it.

'By the looks of it, this dungeon is set at least a millennium before our time. But something seems strange...'

The more he looked at the time web, which usually spun itself slowly as time went by, the more he felt something wrong with it. It was a nagging feeling at the back of his mind, which he couldn't understand where it came from, and what caused it.

But it was making him restless. So much so that he failed to hear the light footsteps of Astaroth, who came to sit next to him by the campfire outside the tent.

"Beautiful night sky, isn't it?" Astaroth said, leaning back next to Chronos.

Chronos jumped a bit, startled by the sudden presence of someone else next to him.

"Huh? Ah, yes. That wasn't what I was looking at. But it is indeed a pleasant night."

Astaroth eyed him from the corner of his eye and smiled.

"So! Chronomancer, huh? How does one become a Chronomancer, if you don't mind me asking?"

The question took Chronos by surprise, a bit. He wasn't sure if he should tell anyone where he got his class from.

But something in Astaroth made him feel like he was trustworthy. And this was reinforced by the ever-so-strong tether between their time threads.

With an inaudible sigh of resignation, he spoke up.

"I guess I could tell you. But you have to promise me no one else will find out."

Astaroth turned his head towards him.

"That much of a secret, huh? Your secret is safe with me. I can even trade one with you if you want, so you don't feel like this is an interrogation."

Chronos nodded his head absent-mindedly.

"Do you know of the gods, Astaroth? Do you believe in them?" he asked.

With a chuckle, Astaroth lay down on his back before replying.

"If you had asked me that a few months ago, I would have told you no. But with all that's happened since I entered this new world, I can't say the same as back then. Especially since I met two of them myself."

Chronos' eyes widened a bit before his face returned to its placid, emotionless mask.

"Then it will make explaining this a lot easier. I'm sure you heard of the man that stayed stuck inside the game during the last update."

Astaroth nodded his head, before realizing where Chronos was going.

"That was you?!" he said, rising back to his elbows.

Chronos looked at him with disapproving eyes.

"Yes, that was me. But can you keep it down? There is no need to alarm the world about this."

Astaroth realized he had almost shouted and shut his mouth tight after apologizing.

"I was stuck here because I was in a cave that was outside of time itself. I was learning to use these powers under a very powerful being. The god of time, Tyr."

Astaroth looked at him wide-eyed.

He had met two gods, and not a single one of them had taught him special magic, so felt a little jealous.

'Lucky bastard,' he thought.

Chapter 608 Aerial Verbal Joust

Keeping their conversation hush-hush, as much as they could in the circumstance, Chronos explained his circumstances to Astaroth, giving as much detail as he could recall. After an hour of

talking, they had gone around the subject, and Astaroth felt it was time for him to share a secret of his own.

"I figure it's my turn to share. So I will tell you a closely guarded secret. One that could put me in trouble if it came out to the wrong people. At least for now."

Chronos looked at him for a moment, wondering what his guild leader was about to tell him.

"Our powers aren't limited to New Eden. I don't know if you tried experimenting outside the game, but we can access all our powers in from here, in our world, with enough practice."

Chronos wanted to feel surprised. His heart fluttered for a mere moment.

But somewhere inside of himself, he had already felt this was the truth. There were times when, outside of the game, he felt like time wasn't functioning properly around him.

Sometimes it went faster than it should, and he lost precious hours, seemingly gazing into nothing. And other times, time slowed to a crawl, and he felt like everything became so sluggish aside from him.

He had assumed it might just be a perception thing because he had passed so much time in a space where time was wonky. But Astaroth's words rang true inside his mind.

'That would make sense...' Chronos mused.

As he silently mused on the information, Astaroth looked back toward the sky. And immediately, something struck him as weird.

Toward the hill, the night's veil seemed to part with a light source. But it wasn't remotely close to being morning yet.

Looking towards the hill, where the night lookouts were supposed to be watching ever so stealthily the demon forces, he couldn't see a single one of them.

'This isn't normal...'

He remembered that as soon as night fell, a few lookouts had climbed the side of the hill to look at the demon war camp over the crest while staying out of sight. But now, not a single one was present.

The light source became increasingly bright, as other soldiers began noticing it as well.

"Hey, look over the hill. What is that?" Astaroth heard a soldier nearby ask.

But he could already tell what it was. Because he had seen Phoenix lobbing one of these at his face, many months ago, in the tournament. This was a sun-sized fireball, coming directly toward the camp in an arcing path.

"Wake up the others, Chronos! The battle is about to begin!" Astaroth barked, before launching into the sky with Sky Steps.

As the soldiers started screaming, a few other figures flew up next to Astaroth.

One of them, an Elven man with wheat blonde hair and cerulean eyes shining in the orange blaze of the incoming fireball, rushed to Astaroth's side.

"Get back on the ground, soldier! You are too weak to stand in the way of this!"

But Astaroth ignored him. He reached into himself.

'Luna. I know I've had you stay inside me all this time, but I need to borrow your powers.'

Luna's crystalline voice echoed in his head.

'Of course, papa! My powers are your powers!'

Astaroth cringed at the 'papa' but still melded with Luna's soul. As he did, power erupted from his body, sending the pompous Elven man tumbling back further into the sky.

As he reached a few hundred feet height, now over the height of the hill, he saw the full size of the attack.

'Shit. This is much bigger than Phoenix's attack... It's gonna take all I got,' he figured.

Both his hands lit up with a milky white glow, as lunar Aether amassed around them. And then he slammed them together, causing them to beam forward in a large ray of pure white light.

"Moon Beam!" he shouted.

The Elf, who was coming closer again, to shout at the Ash Elf that had ruffed him, stopped mid-flight, as a ray of pure power left the young man's hands, on a direct course toward the fireball.

'Who in Sylvanus' name is this Ash Elf?!' he screamed internally.

His immediate thought was, 'If this young Ash Elf Survives the Demon War, he will be a threat to Elven Perrenity.'

As soon as the Moon Beam reached the gigantic fireball, Astaroth felt the pressure it exerted back on him, and it was more than he had anticipated. Already, he was only keeping himself afloat with Sky Steps, and now he had to push back against this colossal force.

He could already feel himself losing ground with every step.

But someone flew up next to him, berating him immediately.

"I thought I had told you to stay low-profile! How are you still alive if you can't follow such basic instructions, is a mystery to me! And why are you using such rudimentary magic to fly if you can unleash such a powerful spell?!"

This was Aberon, who floated next to him, looking toward the demon war camp. He reached Astaroth just in time to start deflecting the two-meter-long arrows already flying toward him at high speed.

Aberon conjured a thick mana shield, which bounced off the arrows like they were twigs, and turned to Astaroth.

"Focus on the wind, young man. Make it answer to your will, and will it to hold you afloat. Stop wasting time and energy on these bursts of air."

The Elven man flew up next to them.

"Cease this immediately, soldier! You are disobeying a direct order! If you don't go back to camp right now, I will have you tried for mutiny!"

Aberon gave the Elf a vicious stare.

"Can't you see the boy is holding this threat at bay, Galan?! Bugger off! He's under my purview, anyway! He is of no concern to you!" Aberon seethed.

"Shut up, you dirty imitation of an Elf! Even if we hold the same rank, you don't get to talk to me like this! We are not equals!"

The Elf man pulled out a hilt, with no blade on it, and a blade of mana flared up from it.

"You are right! We aren't equals! You are lesser! Now fuck off!" Aberon responded, his tone venomous.

But before the Elf could reply, Astaroth barked at them both.

"If you want to argue, both of you fuck off! You are making it hard to focus!"

He could feel himself slipping downward, and once knew he wouldn't be able to resist the fireball's push for much longer.

He didn't have time to listen to this old couple bicker.

Chapter 609 Battle Begins

The Elf, Galan, was about to attack Astaroth for talking to him this way, but Aberon was quicker.

With the flick of his wrist, he conjured a portal before Galan, and sent him to the other end of the war camp. It wouldn't keep him away forever, but long enough to resolve the issue at hand first.

He then immediately turned toward Astaroth.

"Focus, boy. I told you what to do. I can't do it for you. You must learn, or you will die in this battle."

Astaroth recalled Aberon's words and tried to put them into action, but it was harder than he made it sound. Especially with this massive pressure he was keeping at bay.

Astaroth recalled that Gale had reached some level of flight-capability, last he saw him, and felt a bit of shame at not being able to emulate this. But his magic affinities were all so low that flight was a hard concept to grasp for him.

But, try as he may, he couldn't figure it out. And he was losing the strength contest against whichever mage had shot this fireball spell.

Until the pressure on his mind and body lessened several-fold.

Looking at the fireball, Astaroth saw a thick jet of water pushing against it. Following it with his gaze, he fell on Violette, who was standing on the hilltop, hand extended, helping him push away this attack.

In front of her stood Meat-Shield, his shield raised as he deflected most of the incoming projectiles on her. And what he couldn't catch, Jaxx stood behind, knocking away with his two handaxes.

But this wasn't the only help he was receiving.

Not far from him and Aberon, a bright burning woman was floating in the air, with a gout of fire between her and the massive fireball. But it wasn't flowing towards it.

On the contrary, it seemed like Phoenix was absorbing the flames from the attack and consuming them into herself. The more fire she absorbed, the brighter her flames burned, already starting to tint in bluish colours.

The enormous fireball slowly shrank, before he could push it back. By the time he knocked it back to its sender, it had already shrunk by half its size.

It collided with the ground in the middle of the demon war camp, a mile out, and caused a minor explosion.

But this was only the beginning. Already, demons by the hundreds were pouring out into the field that separated both camps.

The battle had begun.

But something else caught Astaroth's attention, as well as Phoenix's and Violette's. A counter had appeared in the quest log.

**

Bonus Stage Quest: Survival

1) Survive the onslaught for as long as you can, and your party will be rewarded accordingly. (Time survived: 1:28)

2) Kill as many demons as you can, and your party will receive bonus rewards accordingly. (Enemies killed: 216)

3) ???

**

This was it. The last stage had truly begun.

Astaroth grinned like a maniac. This was just his type of quest.

Kill everything that posed a threat, and survive as long as possible. He could do that.

Looking at his melding timer, he saw he had a little less than four minutes left, and kicked himself into gear.

Turning his face toward Phoenix, he shouted, "Grab the others and make sure you survive as long as you can. I'm going to the front!"

Phoenix shouted back at him to wait, but he was already gone.

As soon as he finished speaking, he burst forward, aimed at the middle of the plain separating the camps. The demons were reaching there as well, so he would be the first one in the melee.

But he didn't even make it to the ground, that already his neck tingled. He barrelled to the left, as a blade suddenly swung where he had been.

Standing in the air was now a completely black demon, only visible through the glow of the still-burning demon camp. He had no wings, and no tail, but the horns on his forehead stood straight and reached at least a foot high.

"Strange. I have no recollection of an officer like you in our intel. Where did you sprout from, Ash Elf?" the demon asked.

His suave voice, tinted in curiosity, and much too calm for one that was floating over the middle of a battlefield, grated against Astaroth's mind. He wore tight-fitted clothes, with a sleeveless shirt, and boots that looked made of some kind of tanned skin.

"It doesn't matter where I'm from. Only where I'm going. And that is straight into your camp to murder your kind in swathes," Astaroth responded, suddenly on guard.

"Ha ha ha ha," the demon slowly laughed.

"Did I say something funny?" Astaroth growled.

"Yes. You said you would reach our camp. For someone weak like you, to claim something so wild is indeed hilarious."

Astaroth frowned at him.

That was when he tried scanning him.

**

Demon Lieutenant Colonel Belenos:

Grade: Rare (Zone Boss)

Level: 100

Health: 10,250,800

Mana: 151,410

**

Astaroth felt his heart go cold.

'What the fuck?!' he screamed internally.

It was a miracle he had even dodged the attack coming his way, from these kinds of stats.

The demon, noticing his scan and his sudden angst, laughed another time.

"Did you finally realize how much of an ant you are? Of course, you would lay waste to most of our footsoldiers. But people of your calibre don't get to fight demons of low calibre. You fight officers and die trying."

Belenos charged forth, sword raised, and this time, Astaroth recognized the clear intent to kill in the strike. He barely saw the demon move, and that was with Luna's added stats.

But the attack never connected.

Another blur appeared before him, and a shockwave blasted him back. And now floating a foot in front of where he had been, another person was weapon locked with the demon.

A woman whose traits seemed tired and stretched by age. But Astaroth recognized this old woman.

"General Isarrel?!" Astaroth blurted out.

"Find a target you can take on, soldier! This one is mine!" she responded, not even looking at him.

The demon and she started slamming their weapons together, creating a light show of sparks, and loud clanking. The demon's single longsword clashed with her twin scimitars, matching blow for blow.

Astaroth understood he had no business in this fight, and flew off. He couldn't fight at that level, yet.

But a fire lit up in his heart.

'One day. One day, I will be that powerful. And no one will look down on me again.'

Chapter 610 Causing Chaos

This time, as Astaroth darted into the now completely devolved battlefield, he collided with the foot soldiers.

And even they were more than capable of holding their own. Most of them were well over the power level of even the current strongest players.

Every demon he scanned in the foot soldiers was level fifty and over, and most of them were at least special grade.

Astaroth wasn't sure what kind of army could overpower this kind of raw strength. From what he saw in the few cities he travelled to, the armies weren't this level or grade.

Then again, with the mix of races, he assumed every kingdom and clan of the continent of light had pitched in their most powerful troops. He couldn't see demonoids or undead anywhere, though.

Even orcs were a rare sight. At least from what he could see in the middle of this hectic battlefield, every time he took some altitude.

Astaroth fought with all he had, summoning his soul companions, aside from his recent addition, the dragon, and spreading them around himself.

Luna's meld soon ended, and she flew out of his body, shifting to her animal form midair, before stampeding through the ranks of demons.

He wasn't killing the demons as fast as he wanted, but they still couldn't hold a candle to him. But, because of this, he caught the attention of a field officer fast enough.

Melding with White Death next, Astaroth felt a tingle in his spine. Something was coming for him from behind.

Spinning around, with claws lashing out, Astaroth slammed both his claws into a shield, raking across it, sparks flying. A sword was already coming at him from the right, so he kicked at the arm to cancel out the attack.

As both he and the demon jumped back from each other, he finally caught sight of his new foe.

A stoutly built blue demon, decked in a set of plate armour, chain mail rustling beneath it, its shield gleaming in the orange glow of the burning camp in the background. Astaroth eyed him up and down, as did the demon to him.

"A demon in armour? That's not something you see every day," Astaroth said, lowering his stance.

"I could say the same about a mortal using souls like tools. You are an oddity yourself," the demon replied, slowly strafing to his right, shield still raised and ready.

Both men twitched slightly before lunging at each other, crashing in a trade of blows.

Astaroth grinned, as both of them were almost evenly matched. He was technically weaker than the demon, level and grade-wise, but with his boosted stats from melding, he was actually slightly stronger.

In their exchange of sword swings and clawing strikes, Astaroth understood his opponent would hold him here for a while, if he stayed at this pace. But that wasn't his intention.

With their quest tracker showing a continually climbing kill count, he assumed his allies had done the same as him, and were gunning for the foot soldiers as much as they could. They were aiming for maximum rewards.

So he could hardly let himself get held up by a single foe.

'Luna! Morpheus! Genie! On me!' he commanded through their mental link.

Before the demon officer could understand what was going on, a gigantic deer, an equally enormous wolf, and a bat the size of a cathedral gargoyle suddenly swarmed him. And with Astaroth closing the encirclement, he was downed faster than he could cry for help.

But once he killed the field officer, Astaroth noticed something on the kill count, making him grin wider.

It had gone up by ten instead of one.

'Oh, hell yeah! The hunt is on!' he mentally cheered.

He quickly relayed the information to his allies before taking to the skies, melding with Morpheus to maximize his flight capacity.

"Luna, White, and Genie! You guys follow from the ground and kill anything that looks like a demon! When I find an officer, I will call you over!" he shouted to his companions.

He didn't want to pull out the dragon just yet. Shegror was still in a weak state while he assimilated to his soul.

Since he hadn't contracted the soul of a dead being, the connection between this soul shard and its previous owner was still fighting to snap them back together. It would take a while until the tether between his soul and the shard was stronger than the tether to the live Shegror.

So he had to use this new companion sparingly, and keep it close to his soul, to enforce the tether.

He also knew that Shegror's soul shard would always have double allegiances, as long as the main body lived. He silently hoped the main body was dead in his timeline.

Reaching a comfortable height to scan through the battlefield, Astaroth quickly found a foe that was higher level. And when he did a deeper scan on it, he grinned.

**

Demon Lieutenant Barthos

Grade: Special

Level: 60

**

This would be child's play, he thought.

He sent in the group chat a description of what he thought was the first rank of the command chain, so his party knew what to look for. Then he darted toward the demon, calling his soul companions to him.

He noticed that the sky was where most of the higher command of both the mortal side and demon side fought, so he didn't want to reach too high lest he become a target of choice.

He even wondered how some of these officers on both sides could maintain aerial combat. Some of them, he couldn't sense an ounce of magic from, aside from the gear they wielded and wore.

But it wasn't his concern. As long as he stayed out of their way, he wouldn't die for nothing.

Astaroth and his allies sprang on a hunt for low-level commanding officers. Their intention was only to gain more rewards for their quest, but another also happened.

As more and more of the lieutenants on the demon side died, the more the demon foot soldiers became erratic. Their combat line spread thinner, causing gaps and dead zones.

The mortal forces quickly took advantage of this, filling those zones with complete platoons, overpowering their counterparts.

Every bit of chaos Astaroth and his friends caused pushed the battle more and more toward victory for the mortal forces.