

Titan King 181

Chapter 181 My dear chieftain, then go ahead and release inside my vagina

"Chieftain, the Black Forest is our home turf. No matter how powerful those icefield monsters are, we should face them without fear!"

Prophet Onyx sat cross-legged, his voice firm and resolute.

"That's right! If we could survive the Myriad Races Invasion, what's there to fear from the northern enemies?"

The mere mention of battle sent Rendall's emotions soaring. His voice carried an unmistakable excitement.

Rendall had watched the Stoneheart Horde grow stronger step by step. He had seen Blackstone City rise, stone by stone, from the ground.

To him, the horde wasn't just a faction—it was his life's work, the embodiment of his hopes and dreams.

Inside the chieftain's tent, Orion looked at the four senior elders he had personally nurtured.

Each of them had now ascended to Alpha-level, a testament to the horde's strength.

Rendall, full of passion and loyalty, was willing to do anything for the horde without a single complaint.

Prophet Onyx, calm and wise, possessed a far-reaching vision and a wealth of knowledge. Despite his age, he remained optimistic about the future.

Delilah, who managed the horde's logistics, ensured that every detail of the horde's operations ran smoothly, saving Orion an immense amount of time.

Thundar, the fearless warrior, thrived on leading charges into battle and had earned countless accolades for his valor.

"From the reactions of Arden and Slagor, it's clear that the monsters of the northern icefields will be a formidable challenge. Otherwise, Slagor wouldn't have written to us for aid," Orion said, his tone calm and measured.

"But I'm not like Slagor, and we're not like them."

Orion's confidence in the Stoneheart Horde was unshakable.

In this very tent, there were already five Alpha-level powerhouses.

In the eastern ridge, near the underground fissure, there were Lorelia and Lilith, both Alpha-level.

And then there were Orion's two mounts, the thunderhawk and the abyssal dragon, both Alpha-level as well.

In total, the Stoneheart Horde now boasted nine Alpha-level entities—a truly formidable lineup.

Orion was certain that even Lord Gareth and Lord Ariel, two of the most powerful figures in the region, couldn't match the strength of his horde.

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"I don't fear the invaders," Orion declared.

"But sitting idly in Blackstone City, clinging to the status quo, isn't my style. And it's not the way of the Stoneheart Horde!"

"For this invasion, I plan to take the initiative and annihilate the enemy before they even set foot in the Black Forest."

Orion's voice grew firmer, his eyes gleaming with a sharp, murderous intent.

"Chieftain, are you saying...?"

"Wow!"

"That's so cool!"

The reactions of the four elders varied. Delilah remained silent, her expression thoughtful, while the other three couldn't help but exclaim in surprise.

Prophet Onyx, in particular, seemed to have guessed what Orion was planning.

Orion's gaze swept over the four elders, his expression calm but commanding.

He began to lay out the plan he had been formulating since the start of winter.

"My idea is simple: strike first, block the enemy at the gates, and annihilate every invader who dares to enter the Black Forest."

"This will not only ensure the peace of the Stoneheart Horde, but it will also prevent the walls of Blackstone City from suffering further damage."

"By taking the initiative, we'll gain the upper hand and catch the enemy off guard."

Orion paused, taking a sip of water to wet his throat.

The four elders fell into deep thought, weighing the feasibility of his plan.

Orion didn't interrupt their contemplation. Instead, he waited until he saw the light of understanding—or doubt—in their eyes before continuing.

"What I've just described is the first step of my plan. It's the first phase of reducing the enemy's numbers."

"If this step fails—whether due to the sheer number of enemies or the presence of too many Alpha-level powerhouses among the invaders—we'll move to the second step."

"The Black Forest is our territory. No one knows its terrain and environment better than we do."

"In the second phase, we'll use our familiarity with the land to ambush the enemy and continue to whittle down their forces."

Orion took a deep breath, his voice steady as he continued to outline his strategy.

"In this phase, we must fight while retreating. We are allowed to lose battles, but we must not win."

"The ultimate goal is to show the enemy our supposed weakness and lure them deeper into the forest."

"Finally, we'll draw them to Blackstone City, where we'll use the city walls and the cave spiders to launch a pincer attack and wipe out every last invader."

When Orion finished explaining his plan, his expression was calm, and he waited silently for the elders' reactions.

Delilah stared at Orion with wide eyes, her shock evident.

In her heart, she couldn't help but marvel at her giant lover, Orion Stoneheart.

"Orion is so clever! Most giants are brave warriors, but they're not known for their strategic thinking!"

"To come up with a plan like 'fight while retreating, allow defeats but not victories'—how did he even think of that?"

Even though Delilah had long known that Orion was intelligent, she couldn't help but be surprised. Her gaze toward him grew even more admiring.

Prophet Onyx was the next to react.

To him, Orion's plan was bold and wild, yet it made perfect sense.

"Yes, the icefield monsters aren't like the dark creatures. Their numbers are limited, and they fear death and strong enemies."

As these thoughts ran through his mind, Onyx turned to look at Orion, a newfound respect in his eyes.

For the first time, he felt that Orion's ambitions were no longer out of reach.

As for Rendall and Thundar, they weren't as perceptive as Delilah and Onyx.

But their trust in Orion was absolute.

They were willing to follow his lead and give their all for his vision.

"Chieftain, I support your plan. The Stoneheart Horde should face the enemy without fear!" Rendall declared, his voice filled with conviction.

Orion smiled in response, as Rendall's agreement was expected.

"Chieftain, Thundar is willing to lead the vanguard and fight the invaders head-on!"

Thundar's enthusiasm was palpable.

He had assumed they would continue defending Blackstone City, relying on its walls to fend off the invaders.

He hadn't expected Orion's plan to be so bold and aggressive.

Orion nodded, meeting the gaze of each elder in turn before speaking again.

"This is just the broad outline of the plan. It's our strategy for dealing with the northern icefield invaders."

"Along the way, there will undoubtedly be unforeseen changes. That's why we must start planning now."

Orion dipped his fingers into the blood-red wine in his goblet and drew a triangle on the table in front of him.

Then, from the triangle, he traced a wavy line heading north.

"While the dark beast tides haven't fully receded and the dark creatures remain scattered, we need to consider every detail and prepare for every possible scenario."

"The more prepared we are, the fewer resources we'll expend, and the fewer bloodline warriors we'll lose."

Orion pointed to the wavy line he had drawn and began elaborating on his ideas, raising potential challenges they might face.

The four elders listened intently, their expressions shifting between awe and contemplation.

For Onyx and Delilah, Orion's plan was bold but logical.

For Rendall and Thundar, it was nothing short of revolutionary.

They had never imagined that war could be more than direct confrontation.

Orion's strategy of deception and misdirection completely reshaped their understanding of warfare.

In that moment, Orion's plan didn't just inspire them—it redefined their perception of him as a leader.

Orion gazed at his subordinates, suppressing the urge to tell them that in the future, they would encounter far more advanced and cunning intelligent species.

Humans, for instance. Or elves. And even some unknown, enigmatic races. These intelligent beings were masters of deception, skilled in manipulation, and often possessed unique talents that made them formidable foes. Compared to them, the enemies Orion faced now were laughably mediocre.

In the future, Orion's adversaries would only grow stronger, more devious, and infinitely more dangerous.

"Elders, you'll need to hold your ground!"

He muttered this silently to himself, his thoughts drifting to Arthas—a figure as cunning as a fox.

"Delilah, I'm assigning the task of refining our counter-strategy to your team, Strategy."

"From this moment on, no member of Strategy is allowed to leave Blackstone City—not even a single step!"

Orion's tone was cautious, almost paranoid. In a world rife with magical illusions, the risk of Strategy members being captured and revealing the Horde's plans was too great to ignore.

"Delilah will ensure the task is completed. I swear, not a single detail of the plan will be leaked!"

Delilah smiled confidently, pressing her chest against Orion's arm in a flirtatious gesture. Being entrusted with such an important mission was proof of her high standing in Orion's eyes.

"Does anyone else have anything to add?"

Orion's expression softened, his commanding tone easing into something more approachable.

Prophet Onyx shook his head. He believed Orion's plan was already near-perfect. It was far better than recklessly charging out to confront the invaders head-on.

Rendall and Thundar also shook their heads, their expressions brimming with excitement—especially Thundar. Having recently ascended to Alpha-level strength, Thundar was eager to test his newfound power against worthy opponents and earn more glory for the Horde.

Delilah, however, narrowed her eyes slightly and raised a question.

"Chieftain, does this mean the cave spiders won't be part of the decoy force?"

"Correct. The cave spiders must remain stationed at the underground fissure and guard the now-vulnerable Blackstone City. This isn't the time for them to venture far."

Orion's tone was calm as he explained.

"Additionally, we can't afford to expose too many of our Alpha-level warriors in this operation."

"Feigning weakness is key. Once we lure the invaders outside the city, that will be the perfect moment to reveal our full strength."

After a brief pause, Orion added a few more sentences to clarify his reasoning.

"Chieftain, if that's the case, then as soon as the spring rains arrive and the dark beast tides recede, our scouts must be dispatched immediately."

"We need to gain a clear understanding of the northern region of the Black Forest and track the invaders' movements as soon as possible."

"Our bloodline warriors should also be sent north without delay."

Orion nodded firmly. Delilah had hit the nail on the head, demonstrating a growing grasp of tactical thinking.

"The Sentinel Corps is under your command. Handle their deployment as you see fit. Use flying beasts to transport the scouts ahead of time."

"When the time comes, I'll have the thunderhawks assist you in relocating a batch of scouts."

"As for the northern invaders, I'll personally head north to assess the situation. It's important for me to get a clear picture."

Delilah's eyes lit up. With such arrangements, she would indeed be able to gather intelligence on the invaders at the earliest opportunity.

"My dear Chieftain, I have no further objections!"

"Good. Tomorrow, we'll convene a council meeting. You'll have full authority to request any personnel you need."

With most of the key points addressed, the meeting came to an end.

After Onyx, Rendall, and Thundar left, Delilah remained seated.

"Do you have something else to report?" Orion asked.

"Yes, my dear Chieftain. I have something very important to report—I want to make love to you."

Delilah stepped closer, placing her hands on Orion's shoulders, her voice dripping with seduction. Her clothes dissolved into a mist, leaving her completely bare.

Delilah was very close to Orion, her ample breasts swaying right in front of his face.

Orion did not resist Delilah's allure; he reached out and began fondling her breasts.

"Delilah, your breasts are truly perfect."

"My dear, everything about me belongs to you—not just my breasts and my body, but even my soul. If you desire, feel free to take full advantage of me..."

Faced with Delilah's overtly passionate words, Orion naturally didn't hold back. He began to suck Delilah's nipples just like he did when he was a child.

At this moment, Delilah acted like a loving mother, holding Orion's head with both hands and thoroughly enjoying herself.

"My dear Orion, come on, let's get down to business. My vagina is completely wet," Delilah whispered softly.

"Okay, then help me take off my clothes first."

"With great pleasure! My dear, lie down first, and let me take care of you next."

Delilah responded with a smile, watched Orion lie down, then leaned forward, her breasts gently drooping, her long hair cascading, and with a smile, she straddled Orion, helping him undress.

As Orion's pants were removed, his large and thick cock was instantly revealed.

"Wow, even though we've made love many times, every time I see such a big cock, I'm still amazed by its size."

Delilah sighed in admiration as she bent down to take Orion's penis into her mouth.

Delilah's lips and warm tongue wrapped around Orion's penis, sucking up and down the head... Her oral skills were remarkable, rivaling those of Lysinthia.

Orion quickly closed his eyes in pleasure. His big and hard penis soon reached her throat, but she persisted in going deeper with each movement...

Delilah's oral performance made Orion feel extremely comfortable, but there was still a difference compared to actual intercourse.

When Orion inserted his penis into her body, Delilah immediately let out lascivious moans...

Orion thrust into her with all his might. Delilah's breasts and hips moved in rhythm with his motions. Watching her enjoying it, with her cheeks gradually reddening, Orion felt his cock grow even harder...

As the succubus queen, Delilah's sexual techniques were exceptional. She knew exactly how to please a man. Every time Orion changed his position, she could instantly respond perfectly to his thrusts...

Moreover, she seemed to climax easily, reaching orgasm approximately every three minutes. Each time she climaxed, Delilah's lower body released fluids...

The process of making love was wonderful, but the climax was inevitable. After an hour, Orion finally felt he was about to ejaculate.

"Delilah... I...I'm going to cum..."

"My dear chieftain, then... go ahead and release inside my vagina..."

The next morning, Orion emerged from his tent after giving Rolan some guidance. Accompanied by his guards, he arrived punctually at the Chieftain's council tent, where the council members were already assembled.

The elders of the Stoneheart Horde regarded Orion with curiosity. They knew he wouldn't call a council meeting without good reason. Every council meeting signified a major event for the Horde.

Seated at the head of the table, Orion's gaze swept across the room, his expression calm. After his customary glance at the elders, he began to speak slowly.

"Based on the current strength of our Horde, I've discussed with the four senior elders that the day the dark beast tides recede will be the day we march to annihilate the invaders from the northern tundra."

"Elders, while the dark beast tides persist, the Horde remains in a state of survival. Do not let your guard down!"

"As for the northern invaders, we..."

Orion outlined the general plan, leaving the details to Delilah and Thundar. As the Elder of Combat and the Elder of Stewardship, they were indispensable to any military operation.

Meanwhile, Orion, Onyx, and Rendall waited for the plan to be refined.

The Horde now had many elders, and as the council members debated and questioned the plan, numerous details and potential emergencies were brought to light.

The council meeting dragged on intermittently for three days before finally concluding.

During this time, the Stoneheart Horde's combat units and cannon fodder troops received their battle preparations. The bloodline warriors were restless, eager for the upcoming conflict.

Moonshadow Valley, Eastern Ridge, City Walls

Tonight, it was Prophet Onyx's turn to stand watch. Accompanying him was Rockwell, who had specifically requested to join the rotation.

"Are you surprised by Dirtclaw's sudden surge in strength? Can't figure it out?" Onyx asked.

"Yes, Prophet," Rockwell replied respectfully. He had deliberately taken this shift to seek guidance.

After all, Prophet Onyx held a higher status than him, both within the obsidian golem tribe and the stoneheart horde. Rockwell approached him with humility.

"You're doing well—diligent in your duties and consistent in your training. I'm pleased, and so is the Chieftain."

"Prophet, does Chieftain Orion truly think highly of me?"

"Yes. He's noticed your efforts. In fact, he's predicted that you might be one of the next elders to receive Alpha-level resources."

"Prophet, I..."

"This isn't about you. Dirtclaw is simply more ruthless and determined than you."

Prophet Onyx wasn't lying, nor was he trying to console Rockwell. Orion genuinely valued Rockwell and had even placed bets with other elders on his potential. But no one had anticipated Dirtclaw's meteoric rise.

Standing on the city wall, Prophet Onyx gazed into the darkness. After a moment of silence, he spoke again.

"Rockwell, you were there when we invaded the south."

"You've seen Dirtclaw's background and experiences firsthand. I don't need to say more—you should be able to draw lessons from them."

"My guess is that Dirtclaw's rapid progress is tied to his exploitation of the cannon fodder troops—the gnolls and geckos."

"Of course, whether they were coerced or volunteered is another matter."

"As for why, that's for you to figure out."

"Rockwell, you're an obsidian golem. You're the chieftain of the obsidian golem tribe."

Onyx's final words were a subtle reminder to Rockwell.

Rockwell hadn't yet realized the extent of the resources and connections he had within the obsidian golem tribe. If he used them wisely, he could reach the peak of hero-level strength and secure Alpha-level resources ahead of others.

Chapter 182 Eightfold Spear Barrage

Meanwhile, in a small stone hall within the succubus district, two elders of the succubus tribe, Desdemona and Vespera, stood before Delilah, bowing respectfully with an air of humility.

"Your Majesty, what are your orders?"

Compared to Rockwell's proactive demeanor, Desdemona and Vespera seemed far more passive.

Delilah reclined on her throne, resting her chin on one hand, her half-lidded eyes lazily studying the two succubus elders before her. She knew their strength still had room for improvement, but their progress was hindered by the deeply ingrained conservatism of their tribe.

For years, whether it was foreign races, beasts, or dark creatures, the succubi had lived in fear, their cautious mindset holding them back.

"Desdemona, as an elder of the succubus tribe, you have the full support of our people when you need it." Stay updated through empire

As she spoke, Delilah casually tossed a pouch of dark source crystals onto the ground in front of Desdemona.

"Desdemona, you're close to reaching the peak of hero-level strength, but your lack of battle achievements makes it hard for others to fully respect you."

"Take these crystals. Lead a team to hunt down the invaders from the tundra and prove yourself."

Desdemona was deeply moved. She was indeed just a step away from the peak of hero-level strength, but she had run out of dark source crystals to aid her advancement. Watching Dirtclaw's meteoric rise had left her both envious and frustrated.

"Your Majesty, I..."

Desdemona's aged hands trembled slightly as she clutched the pouch of dark source crystals, her voice faltering with emotion.

"There's no need for words. Just focus on doing your job well."

"Don't overthink it. Some things will come naturally when the time is right."

Delilah's expression remained unchanged, but her demeanor exuded an irresistible allure.

"As you wish, Your Majesty."

Desdemona fell silent, accepting Delilah's orders without further comment.

"Vespera, you're still young. Be more proactive and don't fall behind the other elders of the succubus tribe."

"Additionally, I expect you to secure your position on the council through your own battle achievements."

Delilah produced another pouch of dark source crystals and tossed it to Vespera.

"Your Majesty, I'm deeply grateful for your trust. I will—"

Before Vespera could finish, Delilah interrupted her, waving her off.

"Go now. Speak less, act more. Earn your glory through battle."

"As you command!"

Delilah, now not only an Alpha-level powerhouse but also the Elder of Stewardship of the Stoneheart Horde, exuded a regal elegance beneath her seductive exterior. Her demeanor was both commanding and refined, radiating an air of nobility.

As the two most promising elders of the succubus tribe departed, Delilah watched their retreating figures with an unchanging expression, as if everything was unfolding exactly as she had planned.

Similar scenes were playing out elsewhere in the Horde.

In Rendall's tent, three young giants—Slate, Samson, and Ursa—sat before him, watching as the elder downed cup after cup of ale.

"You younglings better make me proud. Drive those tundra invaders back to where they came from. Kill them until they're too scared to ever set foot in our Black Forest again."

Rendall's straightforward personality left no room for subtlety. To him, the solution was simple: kill the enemy. The more enemies you killed, the more battle achievements you earned, and the stronger you became. The Horde would naturally reward you with resources.

However, Slate, Samson, and Ursa hadn't come just to hear motivational speeches. They were here for guidance. While Rendall's words stirred their blood, they didn't provide the answers they were seeking.

It wasn't until an hour later, when Rendall was thoroughly drunk and the three were about to leave in disappointment, that he finally muttered something useful in a slurred voice.

"These... tundra monsters invading us... there's bound to be... some Alpha-level beasts among them... hic..."

Rendall hiccupped, his speech becoming slightly clearer.

"If your strength isn't up to par, even if you manage to kill an Alpha-level beast and get its crystal core, what good will it do you?"

"Let me guess—you're all feeling the pressure because of Dirtclaw's recent progress?"

"What's the point of worrying?"

"Focus on your training. Rack up more battle achievements. That's what matters."

"When your strength is sufficient, Orion will notice your efforts. He'll make sure you're taken care of..."

With that, Rendall slumped over the table and began snoring loudly.

Slate, Samson, and Ursa exchanged glances. After a moment, Slate and Samson left the tent, leaving Ursa behind to look after her father.

In the days that followed, the Stoneheart Horde was abuzz with activity, preparing for the impending invasion from the tundra. The once-terrifying dark beast tides and the scattered dark creatures no longer seemed as daunting.

To the Horde's members, the dark creatures had become little more than training resources, a means to grow stronger.

Even Orion, as the chieftain, wasn't idle. He, too, sought to improve himself.

Inside his tent, Orion opened twenty-two survivor's chests in one go. These were spoils of war collected by the abyssal dragons during the dark creatures' massive invasion.

The drop rate for survivor chests wasn't high, but the sheer number of dark creatures slain by the abyssal dragons ultimately resulted in a decent number of chests being obtained.

Most of the items were low-grade, with the best being an elite-tier weapon. Orion dismissed these items as unworthy of his attention and instructed one of his guards to store them in the Horde's warehouse.

What truly interested him were the two survivor's chests he had saved for last—both dropped by Alpha-level enemies.

The twenty-two chests were merely a warm-up.

Rubbing his hands together, Orion opened the two Alpha-level survivor's chests. Three items fell into his hands.

Two chests yielding three items—this was the first time Orion had experienced such incredible luck.

The first item was a black butterfly hairpin, a delicate accessory with intricately carved wings that seemed to flutter faintly. It had a special ability to generate a mental barrier, providing immunity to certain illusions and psychic attacks. It was a hero-level accessory and an excellent find.

The second item was a bundle of spider silk, surprisingly a hero-level weapon. It came with the skill Illusionary Prison, making its attacks insidious and unpredictable.

Orion immediately identified the perfect users for these two items.

The final item was a skill scroll.

[Eightfold Spear Barrage]

- Type: Skill Scroll

- Quality: Hero-level

- Description: A formation of spears converging from eight directions, ensnaring and annihilating enemies.

Moments later, after reviewing the skill's description, a satisfied smile spread across Orion's face.

[Eightfold Spear Barrage] was a powerful area-of-effect attack skill—his first group-damage combat technique.

Chapter 183 I have a gift for you

At midnight, the flap of the chieftain's tent was lifted, and a gust of icy wind swept in.

Lilith entered, wrapped in a thick fur cloak, followed closely by Lysinthia and Violet.

"My dear Orion, is there something to celebrate? You're smiling so brightly!"

The moment Lilith stepped inside, she noticed the faint smile lingering on Orion's face.

Orion lifted a corner of the massive fur blanket covering him, gesturing for Lilith to join him and warm herself.

Lilith's face lit up with a blissful smile. She quickly shed her clothes and slipped under the fur, pressing her body against Orion's, rubbing against him like a playful cat.

Orion wrapped his arms around her, halting her teasing movements.

"I have a gift for you."

Lilith poked her head out from under the fur, looking up at Orion with wide, expectant eyes.

"My dear Orion, do you really have a gift for me?"

Hearing this, Lysinthia and Violet, who had been standing quietly, turned their attention to Orion, their curiosity piqued.

Orion nodded slightly and reached into his cloak, pulling out the delicate black butterfly hairpin.

"It's yours."

Lilith extended her hand, taking the hairpin with its gently fluttering wings. Her eyes sparkled with delight.

"My love, is this really for me?"

"Yes, my Lilith. It's yours."

Overcome with emotion, Lilith leaned in and kissed Orion passionately. The kiss lingered, deep and fervent, until Lilith finally pulled away, breathless and reluctant.

"My dear, will you put it on for me?"

"Of course."

Orion took the hairpin and carefully placed it in Lilith's hair.

The black butterfly nestled in her locks, its wings fluttering faintly, exuding a charm that was both sweet and elegant, noble and seductive.

"I can feel it... This hairpin is incredibly precious. Where did you get it? Could it be..."

Orion raised a finger to her lips, silencing her before she could finish.

"You already know the answer."

Lilith's eyes widened briefly before she understood. A sly, seductive smile spread across her face, her allure undeniable.

The next moment, Lilith slipped back under the fur, trailing kisses down Orion's body. She moved from his chest to his waist, stopping only when she reached his cock. Without hesitation, she took him into her mouth, her movements slow and deliberate.

It didn't take long for Orion to harden fully, his cock growing larger and firmer. He lifted Lilith effortlessly, positioning her above him, and they began to make love in a passionate, intimate rhythm.

Lilith moved with fervor, her body rising and falling as she moaned seductively.

From the side, Violet and Lysinthia watched with envy, their gazes lingering on Lilith and the black butterfly hairpin in her hair.

The hairpin seemed almost alive, its wings fluttering in time with Lilith's movements, adding an ethereal beauty to the scene.

Both Violet and Lysinthia, skilled in magic, could sense the powerful aura emanating from the hairpin. It was undoubtedly a high-grade magical artifact.

What others had, they did not. It was only natural to feel a pang of jealousy. Violet and Lysinthia were no exception.

That night, under Lilith's lead, Orion's tent was filled with romance and passion. Each woman reached her climax before falling into a deep, satisfied sleep.

As the days passed, the long winter began to wane.

One morning, the familiar sound of Rolan's grunts and shouts during training echoed outside the tent, like a natural alarm clock.

Orion slowly opened his eyes, pushing aside the large breasts pressing against his face. He pulled the fur blanket over the sleeping women, got up, and began preparing for the day.

Stepping outside, he was greeted by the sight of Rolan practicing his stances while wielding a trident.

"Mentor!"

"Hmm. Good work. Keep it up."

Orion nodded approvingly before turning toward his guards.

The four Frost Wolves stationed nearby perked up at his approach, their tails wagging as they let out low, eager whines. Their massive heads jostled against each other as they vied for Orion's attention.

Orion chuckled, patting their heads affectionately before pulling out four Pet Pills to feed them.

Today, all four of his guards were present—a rare occurrence.

Orion studied them closely. These guards were his personal protectors, fiercely loyal and dependable.

After enduring the trials of the dark beast tides and with the assistance of the Frost Wolves, each of them had grown significantly stronger.

The strongest among them, Dace, had already reached the late stages of hero-level strength.

"Keep working hard. I expect all my guards to become Alpha-level warriors one day!"

Orion's words were both encouragement and a challenge, a way to motivate them further.

Just as he was about to say more, a drop of rain landed on his forehead.

Orion wiped it away and looked up at the sky.

The spring rain had begun to fall, light and steady. Orion closed his eyes, letting the cold droplets wash over him.

For a brief moment, all of Blackstone City fell silent, as if the world itself was holding its breath.

Then, cheers erupted from both Moonshadow Valley and Blackstone City.

The spring rain was a signal—the dark beast tides were retreating, and the northern icefield monsters were preparing to invade.

"Dace, send word. The council will convene for an emergency meeting in thirty minutes!"

"As you command, Chieftain!"

Orion's voice dropped, carrying a weight of authority that demanded immediate obedience.

Rolan, distracted by the sudden shift in Orion's tone, glanced over.

"What are you looking at? Focus on your training. Starting today, you'll train two extra hours every day. If you don't finish your tasks, you won't eat!"

For the first time, Orion spoke to Rolan with a cold, commanding tone, leaving no room for argument.

"Yes, Mentor!"

Rolan didn't know what had happened, but he was smart enough not to ask. Orion's stern demeanor made it clear that now was not the time for questions.

A moment later, Lilith, Violet, and Lysinthia emerged from the tent, their expressions a mix of joy and apprehension as they gazed at the rain.

"Get ready. You'll be joining me at the council meeting."

"Understood."

Lilith nodded, fully aware that the arrival of the spring rain signaled the start of a new battle.

Half an hour later, in the chieftain's tent.

The council had gathered, and the Horde's two Wardens, Lilith and Lorelia, were present. The atmosphere was heavy with tension.

"Elders, the spring rain has arrived," Orion began, his tone cold and his gaze sharp as he addressed the council.

"According to our plan, our bloodline warriors and cannon fodder troops will depart north tomorrow. They must arrive at the ambush points designated by Elder of Stewardship Delilah on time."

"Rendall, Lilith, and Lorelia will remain in Blackstone City to ensure the Horde's safety."

"Onyx, Delilah, and Thundar will accompany me on the expedition."

After outlining the key points, Orion left the remaining details to Delilah.

The elders had anticipated this meeting, so it concluded swiftly, wrapping up in just thirty minutes.

Once only the four senior elders and eight council elders remained, Orion continued.

"Gather your scouts. I'll be departing shortly to survey the northern regions."

Delilah nodded, glancing at Dirtclaw, who immediately understood and scurried off to assemble the scouts.

"Prophet, during tomorrow's expedition, you'll temporarily lead the troops. Delilah will join once she's finished handling logistics."

"Chieftain, rest assured. I'll ensure the troops are in position at the ambush points and that all traps are properly set."

Orion nodded. He trusted Prophet Onyx to handle the task with precision.

"Rendall, while I'm away, you'll be in charge of Blackstone City. If anyone dares to cause trouble—kill them without mercy!"

A flash of cold intent flickered in Orion's eyes. The Stoneheart Horde, being a coalition of multiple races, naturally had members of varying temperaments and loyalties. Among them, there were always those who refused to follow orders.

For those who dared to undermine the Horde during critical moments, Orion had no tolerance.

"Don't worry. If anyone stirs up trouble or harbors ill intentions, I won't hesitate to deal with them!" Rendall replied firmly.

Orion nodded but decided to give Rendall one last piece of advice.

"If you encounter a situation where you're unsure, consult with Lilith and Lorelia. The three of you can make a decision together."

"I understand!"

Orion took a deep breath and stood up, his voice calm but resolute.

"Then that's settled. Everyone, take your positions. Let's work together for the glory of the Horde!"

The four senior elders and eight council elders rose to their feet, their voices ringing out in unison.

"For the glory of the Horde!"

"For the glory of the Horde!"

"..."

Moonshadow Valley, Western Peak

By the time Orion arrived at the western peak, a team of scouts was already waiting for him.

Also present were the thunderhawk and two Wind Eagles, their wings spread wide and ready for flight. The Blood Vulture, however, had been left behind in Moonshadow Valley to assist Delilah in relaying messages and handling emergencies.

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"Honored Chieftain! You've arrived!"

"Good afternoon , honored Chieftain!"

The greetings came from Elan of the Skytalon Tribe and his son, Lorne.

Seeing the father-and-son duo both present for this mission stirred something in Orion.

Orion regarded Elan thoughtfully. Since joining the Stoneheart Horde, Elan had worked tirelessly to build and maintain the Horde's aviary for flying beasts and the nurseries for magical plants.

"You've done well. If we succeed in driving the tundra invaders out of the Black Forest, I'll grant you a seat on the council."

Elan's body trembled slightly at Orion's words.

He understood the significance of joining the council—it meant becoming part of the Stoneheart Horde's inner circle. For the Skytalon Tribe, it symbolized full integration into the Horde and an end to any marginalization.

"Thank you for your trust, Chieftain. Elan will lead the Skytalon Tribe to drive out the invaders with all our might!"

"Good. Prepare yourselves. We're leaving immediately."

Orion's gaze swept over the team of scouts—twelve in total. Among them were eight succubi, three gnolls, and one gecko.

Just as Orion was about to mount the thunderhawk, he paused, as if remembering something. Turning to Delilah, he handed her the spider silk weapon he had obtained earlier.

"This suits you. It's yours now."

Delilah's face lit up with surprise as she accepted the spider silk. Almost immediately, she sensed its unique skill—Illusionary Prison—and her expression turned to one of disbelief.

"What's wrong? Don't like it?"

"No, no! I love it!"

"Hahaha... That's good!"

Orion laughed heartily, then turned and leapt onto the thunderhawk's back. With eight scouts in tow, the thunderhawk took to the skies, heading north.

Elan and Lorne exchanged a quick word with Delilah before urging their flying beasts to follow the thunderhawk.

Delilah watched the thunderhawk disappear into the distance, her eyes curving into crescent moons, her expression brimming with charm.

She couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret. If only she had reacted faster, been a little bolder—perhaps she could have stolen a kiss from Orion.

A kiss in exchange for a gift? That didn't seem unreasonable, did it?

The thought made Delilah's smile deepen, her mood growing even brighter.

High Above the Black Forest

On the thunderhawk's back, the scouts remained silent, gazing down at the vast expanse of the Black Forest below.

From this height, the landscape stretched out like a living map—mountains, rivers, and trees shrouded in a perpetual black mist. It was a sight none of them had ever seen before.

"Do you have a leader among you?"

Orion, after surveying the surroundings of Blackstone City from above and finding nothing unusual, suddenly turned to address the scouts behind him.

The question caught the eight scouts off guard. For a moment, none of them spoke.

"Honored Chieftain, I am the leader of this forward team and the one in charge of this group!"

Orion raised an eyebrow in mild surprise. The one who had spoken was the only gnoll among them.

"What's your name?"

"I ... I am Ragscrape, cousin to Dirtclaw!"

Orion studied the gnoll for a moment before speaking in a calm, reassuring tone.

"Don't be nervous. As a scout, you must remain composed in all situations."

"Yes, Chieftain!"

Orion gave Ragscrape another glance. The gnoll had quickly regained his composure after Orion's words of encouragement, a trait that impressed him.

It was no wonder this gnoll had been chosen to lead the team—he was performing better than the succubi, who were typically more adept at such roles.

"Did Delilah give you specific instructions before departure?"

"Yes, Chieftain!"

"Do you know where to land?"

"Yes!"

"Are your supplies sufficient?"

"They are!"

"Good. Keep up the good work."

Orion was pleased with Ragscrape's responses. He didn't ask about the specifics of their mission, but his questions confirmed that the scouts were well-prepared.

Satisfied, Orion turned his attention away from Ragscrape and began contemplating the broader situation.

The Black Forest, geographically speaking, occupied a highly advantageous position within the Four Domains.

To the south, it bordered the Thunderwood Forest, which bore the brunt of the beast tides. But in other directions, the environment was far more favorable.

To the north lay the vast territory of Lord Gareth, part of the Abyssal Chasm, the largest region in the Four Domains, covering nearly half of its total area.

The northeastern and northwestern edges of the Black Forest were flanked by the Abyssal Chasm's lands, forming an inverted U-shape that bordered the Desert Oasis, the Black Forest itself, and the Poison Dragon Swamp.

In essence, the Black Forest was nestled in the center, its location both strategic and advantageous.

However, this time, the tundra invaders were forcing their way through the Abyssal Chasm, threatening not only the Black Forest but also the Desert Oasis and Poison Dragon Swamp.

To be honest, sending only twelve scouts to cover such a vast area was far from ideal.

But Orion had no choice. The Stoneheart Horde's flying beasts were too few in number, and this was the most they could deploy at once.

Even so, the fact that they had twelve scouts was largely thanks to the thunderhawk's capacity.

Orion glanced eastward and westward, his thoughts drifting. He wondered how Soraya of the Desert Oasis would handle the tundra invasion.

And what of Slagor in the Poison Dragon Swamp? After being rejected by Orion, would he choose to go to the Abyssal Chasm?

Seven days passed in the blink of an eye.

One by one, the scouts on the thunderhawk's back were dropped off at their designated locations.

After such a long flight, Orion and his team had yet to reach the northernmost edge of the Black Forest. However, they had entered the pre-planned battle zone.

From this point onward, the scouts would operate within this area, gathering intelligence and preparing for the battles to come.

Chapter 184 Glacial Dragon

Poison Dragon Swamp

A long migration convoy stretched across the swamp, forming a striking scene against the backdrop of the post-spring rain landscape.

At the forefront of the procession, Slagor sat atop a massive swamp crocodile, his face and eyes filled with urgency.

"Chieftain, are you sure migrating to the Black Forest without prior notice won't provoke the giant chieftain's hostility?"

The question came from a lizardman elder riding alongside Slagor on another swamp crocodile.

"Who told you we didn't send notice?"

Slagor's tone was sharp, his inner turmoil evident.

"Last autumn, didn't I send a messenger with a letter?"

The elder hesitated, his concern deepening. "But, didn't the giant chieftain reject us?"

At these words, Slagor abruptly turned his head, his gaze venomous as he stared down the elder. His voice dropped to a menacing growl, each word laced with lethal intent.

"The messenger I sent never returned. He must have been killed by the beasts of the Black Forest!"

"Our messenger didn't come back, and I never received a reply!"

"Or... are you saying you've seen the messenger I sent?"

The final question was delivered with an unmistakable threat, Slagor's killing intent palpable despite the elder's well-meaning concern.

Under the weight of Slagor's glare, the lizardman elder suddenly realized what his chieftain was implying.

"Chieftain, I did send my men to search for the messenger, but we never found him. It's true—our messenger must have perished in the Black Forest. We had no way of knowing the giant chieftain rejected us!"

Catching on to Slagor's intentions, the elder quickly adjusted his tone, his words flowing more smoothly, his eyes brightening with understanding.

"You're absolutely right, Chieftain. Our messenger never returned!"

"This time, as we head to the Black Forest, I've prepared gifts for Orion. And while we're there, we'll search for our missing messenger."

Slagor smirked, satisfied with his own reasoning. It was both clever and shameless.

The moment the spring rain began to fall, Slagor had wasted no time leading his tribe toward the Black Forest.

Time was of the essence. If they delayed and the icefield monsters reached the swamp, surrounding the entire region, Slagor and his tribe would have no chance of escape.

"Chieftain, can we really trust the giant chieftain of the Black Forest?"

The lizardman elder's voice carried a hint of doubt. He had stayed behind to defend the swamp during the Myriad Races Invasion and had not witnessed Orion's strength firsthand.

"As long as no Legendary-level figure shows up, Orion won't lose!"

"I'm certain of that!"

"Elder, all you need to know is that Orion's strength as an Alpha-level warrior rivals that of Lord Gareth!"

The elder frowned, skepticism etched across his face. To him, the idea of an Alpha-level warrior matching a Legendary-level figure was absurd—a joke, even.

Slagor glanced at the elder but chose not to address his doubts further.

"Pass the word—pick up the pace. Up ahead are the Barren Mountains. Once we cross them, we'll reach the Black Forest."

Northern Icefield Region

On a southern-facing cliff of a snow-covered mountain stood a warrior clad in icy armor, a massive sword strapped to his back.

The warrior's skin was frost-white, his head adorned with two horns, and his piercing blue eyes glimmered with an otherworldly light.

This was Jorik, a half-blood Glacial Dragon and the lord of the icefield region.

Lord Jorik gazed southward, his expression filled with longing.

It was said that far to the south lay lands teeming with beasts and magical plants, a treasure trove of resources that could elevate one's strength.

To grow stronger, Jorik needed to begin his conquest from the icefield, pushing ever southward.

But time and again, his ambitions had been thwarted by the half-dragon Gareth of the Abyssal Chasm.

However, this time was different. Gareth had been gravely injured and could no longer stand in his way.

As Jorik pondered his next move, a sudden gust of wind swept up the mountainside, carrying snowflakes in its wake.

"Gustalon greets Lord Jorik!"

The wind stilled, and a small whirlwind materialized at the edge of the cliff. Within it stood a strange creature—its upper body humanoid and translucent, its lower body a swirling vortex of wind.

"Gustalon, the only wind elemental in the icefield. You've arrived quickly."

Jorik's expression remained stoic as he regarded Gustalon, though a faint glimmer of approval flickered in his eyes.

"Lord Jorik, the wind is free and unbound. I, too, yearn for the air of the south. I want to stir the leaves of its forests and scatter the petals of its flowers!"

Jorik's gaze bore into Gustalon, making the wind elemental visibly uneasy. Finally, Jorik spoke.

"Gustalon, go. Scout the Abyssal Chasm for me."

"As you command!"

Gustalon bowed slightly before transforming into a whirlwind and speeding southward, with snowflakes swirling in the wind.

Once Gustalon had departed, a massive head emerged from the mountainside below, followed by an equally enormous body.

The thunderous sound of footsteps echoed as the colossal creature began ascending the mountain toward the cliff.

At the base of the mountain, a large gathering of monsters was assembling in an orderly fashion. From their midst emerged a beautiful girl with snow-white skin.

Abyssal Chasm, Underground Cavern

Lord Gareth slowly opened her eyes, gazing at her three most trusted subordinates: Ridi, Arden, and Gurnar.

"Have your tribes gathered?"

"Yes, my lord. All our people have been brought together and are hiding in the underground caverns."

"The monsters of the icefield are stirring. Lord Jorik is rallying his forces. Do not leave the caverns."

"We understand!"

"Remember, if Jorik catches you, even I may not be able to save you."

Gareth's tone was bitter, her frustration evident. But there was little she could do.

She was injured. In her current state, she could at best hold Jorik at bay.

If she failed, Gareth would not hesitate to have Jorik seek the help of the defiant and audacious giant chieftain.

This was Gareth's contingency plan. Of course, if it came to that, her reputation as the Lord of the Four Domains would be in tatters.

Black Forest, Northern Border

Orion stood atop the thunderhawk, his mood calm. So far, the Black Forest remained quiet, with no signs of trouble.

He gazed toward the Abyssal Chasm, briefly considering scouting the area. After some thought, however, he dismissed the idea.

"Rayden, head east. Let's check on the swamp."

The thunderhawk, Rayden, let out a sharp cry before banking eastward, swiftly flying toward the Poison Dragon Swamp. Read the latest on empire

Barren Mountains

Two forces stood at a tense standoff, the atmosphere thick with hostility, ready to erupt at any moment.

Slagor captured one of the Troll bloodline warriors, successfully drawing out the Troll chieftain, Gronthar.

"Honorable Slagor, if my people have offended you, we are willing to apologize and offer tribute," Gronthar said humbly from a distance, his tone polite and measured.

Outwardly, Gronthar appeared calm, but his mind was racing.

"Slagor, the Alpha-level powerhouse of Poison Dragon Swamp, has brought his entire tribe to the Barren Mountains. Are they planning to take over the Barren Mountains? Or worse, are they here to conquer Trolls?"

Gronthar was strong, but he knew he stood no chance against an Alpha-level warrior like Slagor.

Perched atop a massive swamp crocodile, Slagor gazed at Gronthar with a look of quiet admiration. He appreciated the Troll chieftain's composure in the face of such a precarious situation.

However, Slagor hadn't come to conquer the Trolls. His goal was far more strategic.

To ensure his tribe's survival in the Black Forest, Slagor needed to curry favor with Orion, the giant chieftain. And the Trolls were part of his plan—a gift to present to Orion.

In Slagor's mind, persuading the Trolls to join him wouldn't even require force.

"Gronthar, your Troll tribe has been isolated in the Barren Mountains for far too long," Slagor began, his tone neither condescending nor aggressive. Instead, he sounded like a concerned elder, brimming with sympathy.

"If you stay here, your tribe is on the brink of extinction, and you don't even realize it."

The calm expression on Gronthar's face faltered. His brow furrowed as he stared at Slagor, confusion evident in his eyes.

Slagor turned his gaze northward, his voice tinged with a sorrowful empathy that seemed almost genuine.

"You Trolls have been forgotten by Lord Gareth for so long that you don't even know the icefield invaders are preparing to descend upon the Four Domains. It's truly tragic."

The words "truly tragic" carried a weight that seemed to resonate deeply—not just with the Trolls, but with Slagor himself. He wasn't just speaking about the Trolls; he was also lamenting the plight of his own lizardman tribe.

"What?"

"The icefield invaders are coming this year?"

"That's impossible!"

Gronthar's composure shattered. His face turned pale, and his body trembled slightly.

It took him a long moment to recover. When he finally did, his eyes were filled with worry as he stared intently at Slagor.

"Honorable Slagor, are you certain? Could this just be a rumor?"

Slagor had anticipated this reaction. He smirked faintly, his tone casual but laced with a hint of mockery.

"Hah... A rumor? This information came directly from Lord Gareth herself. Do you think she would spread falsehoods?"

In truth, Slagor wished the news were false. Life in the Poison Dragon Swamp had been peaceful and comfortable.

But now?

To secure Orion's protection and assistance, Slagor not only had to persuade the Trolls but also prepare gifts that would appeal to the giant chieftain.

"I and my tribe are migrating to the Black Forest to seek the protection of the giant chieftain."

"The Black Forest has at least five Alpha-level powerhouses. They have the strength to resist the icefield invaders."

"Gronthar, will you join us? Or will you stay here and face the icefield monsters alone?"

Slagor's words were framed as a personal choice, free of coercion. But in reality, his statements were a form of subtle pressure, forcing the Trolls to make a decision.

"This... this..."

Slagor maintained his kind, patient demeanor, standing atop his swamp crocodile in silence, waiting for Gronthar's response.

But even after half an hour, Gronthar remained hesitant, unable to make up his mind.

Slagor narrowed his eyes, studying the Troll chieftain. After a moment, he sighed.

"Ah... Time is running out. I'll move on ahead."

"Gronthar, take your time to think it over."

With a wave of his hand, Slagor signaled his tribe to resume their march. The convoy began descending the mountain, heading toward the Black Forest.

Before leaving, Slagor cast one last glance at Gronthar.

This retreat was a calculated move—a psychological tactic. Slagor was confident the Trolls would eventually follow.

Of course, he wasn't lying about the urgency. Slagor needed to reach the Black Forest and join forces with Orion's group before the icefield monsters arrived.

By combining their strength, their chances of survival would greatly increase. This was the essence of Slagor's plan.

During the Myriad Races Invasion, Slagor had tasted the benefits of cooperating with Orion. This time, he was determined to do the same.

What puzzled him, however, was Orion's initial rejection of his proposal. Slagor still couldn't figure out the giant chieftain's reasoning.

As the Poison Dragon Swamp convoy disappeared from view, Gronthar's younger brother, Brakthul, grew restless.

"Big brother, what should we do?"

"If those icefield invaders really come, what are we going to do?"

"This stretch of the Barren Mountains will definitely attract the attention of the snow ogres, and they're already our enemies!"

Brakthul was straightforward and impulsive, incapable of hiding his thoughts or emotions.

Gronthar suddenly turned, his voice booming.

"Stop talking! We're going back to gather the tribe members!"

Though Gronthar was still uncertain, he understood the urgency of the situation. The tribe needed to be ready to act immediately once a decision was made.

Gathering the tribe would also give him time to think things through.

"Ah... Righ! Let's gather the tribe quickly!"

"And, big brother, shouldn't we hurry? What if we can't catch up to Slagor's group?"

Gronthar shot Brakthul a stern glare.

"Shut up! I'll make the decision!"

Meanwhile, Slagor's convoy continued its march, albeit at a slower pace.

Slagor deliberately reduced their speed, giving the Trolls time to catch up.

The Trolls were a key part of the gift Slagor intended to present to Orion. There was no way he would give up on them so easily.

Slagor didn't look back at the Barren Mountains. He was confident the Trolls would follow—it was only a matter of time.

Northern Abyssal Chasm

A gust of wind and snow cautiously swept into the region. Finding no resistance, it grew bolder, swirling through the area with increasing confidence.

"How strange. Aside from beasts and subterranean creatures, there are no Abyssal Chasm troops stationed here!"

"Could it be true, as Jorik said, that Gareth is injured and has withdrawn all her forces?"

"Gareth is such a coward!"

"Ah... I can smell freedom. The air here is so much warmer. I want to sweep through every corner of this place!"

"..."

Chapter 185 From now on, you will follow my orders

Half a Month Later – Abyssal Chasm

Jorik, leading his vast army, officially stepped into Gareth's territory.

"Snow Wraiths, you'll invade from the west. Keep an eye on those scorpions!"

Lord Jorik turned to the Snow Wraiths, a race that left a trail of ice and snow wherever they went. From the frost they conjured, countless Snowlings were born, making them impervious to overwhelming numbers.

"As you command, my lord. If those scorpions dare crawl out, I'll slaughter every last one of them!"

The Snow Wraith's voice was raspy, her transparent eyes devoid of emotion, filled only with an icy calm.

Jorik nodded and turned to the Icefield Snow Wolf King, standing beside him.

"Wolf King, you'll invade the Black Forest. Its environment is perfect for your kind."

"Awooo!"

The Snow Wolf King, already enslaved by Jorik, howled in acknowledgment. Jorik trusted it completely; the Snow Wolf King would carry out his orders without fail.

Finally, Jorik's gaze fell on a Frost Giant, a towering figure as large as a small mountain, with spiraling horns and a thick coat of white fur.

"Chillrend, you'll head east. Years ago, your father was slain by the Trolls. Those same Trolls now dwell near the Barren Mountains, close to the Poison Dragon Swamp."

"ROAR! Honorable Lord, thank you for granting me this opportunity!"

Jorik stood tall, his icy expression unwavering as he faced southward.

"Go. Before I settle my score with Gareth, I want every resource in the Four Domains plundered!"

"Remember, you owe me sixty percent of your spoils."

The Snow Wraiths, Frost Giants, and Snow Wolf King all nodded, leading their respective tribes southward to begin their invasions.

Meanwhile, Jorik remained with his main faction, encircling the Abyssal Chasm, preparing to confront Gareth directly.

Black Forest – Border Region

After much deliberation, Gronthar, the Troll chieftain, had made his decision.

Once the tribe had been gathered, Gronthar and his elder council had discussed their options and ultimately decided to follow Slagor to the Black Forest, seeking refuge under Orion's protection.

When Slagor saw the Trolls catching up, he was overjoyed.

He welcomed them warmly, putting on a show of camaraderie and solidarity, engaging the Trolls in friendly conversation.

"Honorable Slagor, is it true that the Black Forest has five Alpha-level powerhouses?"

As the Troll chieftain, Gronthar was the most qualified to speak with Slagor, and he cautiously probed for information.

"I've seen it with my own eyes. It's no lie!"

Slagor's tone remained gentle, though inwardly he was muttering to himself.

"If not for those five Alpha-level powerhouses, do you think I'd uproot my tribe and migrate from the swamp to the Black Forest?"

Images of Orion, Onyx, Rendall, the Thunderhawk, and the Abyssal Dragon flashed through Slagor's mind.

With Alpha-level powerhouses both in the skies and on the ground, the Black Forest was the safest place outside of Gareth's Abyssal Chasm.

Slagor's confident response eased Gronthar's anxiety.

As the chieftain, Gronthar had been plagued with unease ever since deciding to relocate his entire tribe.

"Slagor, may I ask—"

Before Gronthar could finish his question, a sharp eagle's cry echoed from the sky above.

The piercing sound was followed by a cold, commanding voice.

"Slagor, you've trespassed into my territory. Are you looking to die?"

BOOM!

A bolt of lightning struck the ground near Slagor, instantly charring several crocodiles.

"Chieftain Orion, please don't attack! Didn't I send word ahead of time?"

Slagor looked up at the Thunderhawk circling overhead, hurriedly explaining while signaling his people to lower their weapons.

From atop the Thunderhawk, Orion gazed down coldly. He hadn't expected Slagor to actually migrate to the Black Forest—and with his entire tribe, no less.

Judging by their speed, Slagor must have set out the moment the spring rain began to fall.

"Heh... Slagor, I made it very clear in my letter—I refused."

Orion didn't order the Thunderhawk to attack again. The earlier strike had been a warning, a show of dominance.

Slagor understood this perfectly.

"Honorable Orion, did you send a reply? My messenger never returned to the Poison Dragon Swamp!"

"Could it be that he was killed on the way, perhaps devoured by one of your Black Forest beasts? I've heard there's some Flame Bears in the forest, a particularly powerful creature."

At this point, Slagor had no intention of saving face. His tribe had already migrated here—turning back would be a death sentence.

Before Orion could respond, Slagor pressed on.

"Chieftain Orion, I didn't come empty-handed."

"I've brought gifts for you—plenty of crystal cores and a variety of magical plants."

"And them—" Slagor gestured toward the Trolls. "The Trolls from the Barren Mountains. I've brought them as a gift for you as well!"

Slagor knew that being direct was more effective than arguing.

However, Gronthar's face darkened.

Only now did he realize that the Trolls had essentially been offered up as slaves to Orion.

What stung even more was that Gronthar couldn't protest or speak out.

If Orion refused to accept them, the Trolls would face two grim fates: annihilation at the hands of the Frost Giants, or a desperate migration southward, only to be slaughtered by the southern races.

Either way, the Trolls were doomed.

Standing atop the Thunderhawk, Orion remained silent, deep in thought as he assessed the situation.

To the east, Slagor had brought his tribe to the Black Forest. If the icefield monsters found no targets to plunder, they would inevitably turn their attention to the forest.

The same logic applied to the west, where the desert tribes might also redirect the invaders toward the Black Forest.

In short, the Black Forest was on the verge of becoming a prime target for all sides.

The thought of this looming crisis irritated Orion.

Looking down at Slagor's convoy and the trolls within it, Orion weighed his options.

"What should I do?"

"Drive them away? They'd likely refuse and stubbornly linger in the Black Forest."

"Temporarily take them in? But with so many people, how would I manage them?"

After a long moment of contemplation, Orion finally urged the Thunderhawk to descend.

As the Thunderhawk landed, it let out a sharp, warning cry, spreading its wings wide before taking off again, circling above to keep watch.

Orion stepped off the Thunderhawk, his trident in hand, his expression cold as he strode toward Slagor.

"Do you want to live, or do you want to die?"

This was the first thing Orion said, his voice cold and laced with killing intent.

"Of course, I want to live. That's why I brought my tribe here—this is the only place where survival is possible," Slagor replied, his tone calm but calculated.

Slagor had worked with Orion before and knew his temperament well. The fact that Orion had descended from the Thunderhawk meant he had already decided to take them in.

Still, Slagor maintained his shameless demeanor. He understood that cooperating with Orion was his tribe's only path to survival.

Orion's icy gaze bore into Slagor as he spoke, his words deliberate and sharp.

"Very well. From now on, you will follow my orders."

"Remember, this time is different from the last. I am in charge, and you have no choice but to obey."

"If you can't do that, you and your tribe will remain in the Black Forest forever."

"Our Black Forest has always dealt with invaders the same way—complete annihilation."

This was both a threat and a declaration of hierarchy.

Unlike their previous collaboration during the Myriad Races Invasion, the balance of power between Orion and Slagor had shifted. Orion was now the superior, and Slagor the subordinate. This dynamic had to be made clear and unshakable.

"I understand. This time, I'll follow your lead in everything," Slagor replied, his tone submissive but with a hint of cleverness.

"Once we get through this crisis, we'll return to the Swamp immediately."

Slagor was a smart lizardman. He knew how to navigate delicate situations.

His final statement, "Once we get through this crisis, we'll return to the Swamp," was a subtle reminder to Orion that the Lizardmen were not like the Trolls. They were not slaves, nor had they pledged allegiance to Orion.

Orion nodded, satisfied with Slagor's response.

"Clever lizard," Orion thought to himself. "When the time is right, I'll make sure to enslave him completely."

Orion then stepped past Slagor and approached Gronthar, the troll chieftain.

"The last time I crossed the Barren Mountains, we met," Orion said, his tone indifferent, as though addressing a stranger.

"You're Gronthar, the chieftain of the Troll Tribe?"

"Yes, honorable Orion," Gronthar replied, his unease evident despite his efforts to remain composed.

"Swear fealty to me. Submit to my enslavement."

"Otherwise, I will slaughter all of you here and now."

As Gronthar stared at Orion in shock, the giant's figure seemed to grow taller, his voice colder and more oppressive.

"Slagor, if your gift—the trolls—refuses to submit, you will personally execute them on the spot."

Orion's words were calculated. He knew enslaving the Troll chieftain would breed resentment within the tribe.

He had faced similar issues before when enslaving the Buffalofolk, though those problems had been swiftly dealt with by Earthshaker. Your journey continues on empire

By involving Slagor, Orion was shifting the trolls' resentment away from himself and onto the lizardmen.

This tactic of redirecting hatred was meant to ensure that the trolls wouldn't harbor too much animosity toward him.

Slagor, ever the cunning lizardman, immediately understood Orion's intentions.

But he didn't dare refuse. Raising his right hand, he signaled his troops from the Poison Dragon Swamp to draw their weapons, surrounding the trolls.

The tension in the air was palpable, and all the pressure fell squarely on Gronthar's shoulders.

The decision—whether to fight or submit—was his alone to make.

"Honorable Orion, I... I am willing to submit. Gronthar is willing to submit. The Trolls are willing to submit!"

At first, Gronthar's words came out haltingly, his voice heavy with bitterness and anger.

But as he spoke, the fight drained from him. His tone grew steadier, though his expression remained one of deep sorrow.

Orion felt no sympathy for the Trolls. In this world, the strong ruled, and the weak obeyed.

Without hesitation, Orion had Gronthar sign a slave contract.

During the process, Gronthar's younger brother, Brakthul, stepped forward, attempting to stop him.

Orion expected a dramatic display of brotherly love, but instead, Gronthar kicked Brakthul away with brutal efficiency.

"Brakthul, wake up! Everything I'm doing is for our tribe!"

Orion didn't spare Brakthul a glance. He understood that Gronthar's harsh actions were meant to protect his brother.

Gronthar knew that if Brakthul clashed with Orion, the situation would only worsen.

Better to discipline his brother himself than let him provoke Orion's wrath.

It was clear that Gronthar, despite his circumstances, was a wise and pragmatic chieftain.

With the situation resolved and the two groups successfully united, it was time to discuss the next steps.

"My first demand: separate your tribe's elite warriors and send them north."

"My second demand: escort the elderly, women, and children to Blackstone City, where they'll be safer."

These two demands served dual purposes. The first was to bolster the northern frontlines, while the second, under the guise of safety, was a way to hold hostages.

Both Slagor and Gronthar breathed a sigh of relief. At least their non-combatants would be spared and temporarily safe.

"In this icefield invasion, the Stoneheart Horde has been preparing for a long time. We are ready."

"With our strength, we won't sit back and defend. We will strike first."

Hearing Orion's declaration, both Slagor and Gronthar were stunned.

"Orion, are you really planning to go on the offensive?"

It was Slagor who spoke, as he was the only one present with the standing to question Orion.

Orion glanced at Slagor, his gaze cold and tinged with disdain.

Slagor forced an awkward smile but pressed on.

"Orion, I'm not doubting your strength. I'm just concerned that you might underestimate the icefield invaders."

"This is their season. The current climate makes them more dangerous than ever!"

"Whether it's the Snow Wraiths or the Frost Giants, wherever they go, snow falls, the ground freezes, and their combat power reaches its peak..."

Fearing for his life, Slagor spilled everything he knew about the icefield invaders, giving Orion valuable insights.

"They're formidable. I expected as much," Orion replied, his confidence unshaken. "Head north and join my forces. Further instructions will follow."

Despite Slagor's detailed warnings, Orion's unwavering confidence left the lizardman in awe.

After finalizing arrangements with Slagor and Gronthar, Orion stood and let out a sharp eagle cry.

The Thunderhawk swooped down, and with a single leap, Orion landed on its back.

"Slagor, I'll see you in the north."

"And you'd better behave. If your convoy to Blackstone City causes any trouble, I'll wipe you all out in the Black Forest!"

Chapter 186 Wind elemental Gustalon

Black Forest Border – Days Later

This was a rugged region of intersecting ravines and dense forests, a unique terrain created by the intertwining of underground caves and woodland.

It was also one of the main routes connecting the Abyssal Chasm to the Black Forest, and the first ambush site Orion had prepared.

Screech!

A sharp eagle cry pierced the sky as Prophet Onyx emerged from a nearby cave, waving to guide Orion down.

"Chieftain, over here!"

Onyx and Thundar approached to greet Orion as he dismounted from the Thunderhawk. They had arrived two days earlier and had been busy setting up traps and defensive lines.

"Chieftain, any news?"

Prophet Onyx, ever perceptive, noticed that Orion seemed troubled.

"Several days ago, I scouted east on the Thunderhawk and discovered that Slagor has migrated his entire tribe from the Poison Dragon Swamp to our Black Forest."

Orion didn't hold back, sharing the details of Slagor's actions.

"Chieftain, didn't you reject Slagor's request? Why would he still migrate to our territory?"

Thundar frowned. Slagor's actions were tantamount to an invasion—a blatant provocation.

"Hmph! That shameless lizard claimed his messenger never returned and must have been killed by the beasts of our Black Forest!"

Orion snorted, clearly unimpressed by Slagor's excuse.

"Chieftain, that's obviously just a pretext," Onyx said, his tone sharp. "Slagor migrated here because he fears the icefield invaders and their monsters."

Orion nodded. Onyx had hit the nail on the head.

He then explained how he had dealt with Slagor and the Trolls, leaving Onyx visibly stunned.

"Chieftain, Slagor really tricked the Trolls into coming here and offered them to us as a gift?"

"That lizard is insane!"

Orion nodded again, offering no further explanation.

In the past, the Trolls' decision to submit would have been a cause for celebration. But things were different now.

With the Stoneheart Horde growing stronger, the Trolls' value had diminished.

Slagor's actions had merely accelerated the inevitable.

"Slagor and Gronthar are heading north to join us. For now, let's focus on the current situation."

Orion had already informed Delilah about Slagor and Gronthar while en route. He trusted Delilah to handle the elderly, women, and children being escorted to Blackstone City.

"Chieftain, look here," Onyx said, leading Orion to a ridge overlooking the ravines. He gestured toward the sprawling network of gullies below.

"This area of ravines is the main route connecting the Abyssal Chasm to the Black Forest."

"Other routes require crossing mountains, which would exhaust the enemy and waste their time."

"That's why we're certain this is the path the enemy will take to move south."

Orion nodded. This area had been discussed extensively during the council meeting and was unanimously agreed upon as the first ambush site.

"How are the preparations?"

This time, it was Thundar who answered.

"Chieftain, Elder Dirtclaw is leading the cannon fodder troops to set traps throughout the ravines. They've been working for two days, and the traps in the forward areas are nearly complete."

"Our warriors have also dug numerous tunnels along the ridges to conceal themselves."

Orion squinted, observing the faintly visible activity of the gnolls and geckos in the ravines below. After a moment of thought, he turned to Thundar.

"The first wave of attacks will hit when the enemy is at their strongest and most numerous. We need to crush their morale right from the start."

"This terrain is ideal for blocking and flanking. Have our bloodline warriors attack from the ridges with ranged weapons. Focus on killing as many as possible."

"Remember—hit and retreat. Avoid direct confrontation."

Orion's strategy was sound, but it deviated slightly from the original plan.

"Chieftain, aren't we aiming to take out their leaders in this ambush?"

The decapitation strategy had been one of the primary objectives of the first ambush.

"We'll decide on the decapitation strike based on the situation," Orion replied.

"For now, our priority is to conserve our forces and minimize casualties."

Orion glanced at Thundar, who was staring at him intently, and at Onyx, who was frowning in thought. He decided to share his concerns.

"Slagor's forced migration to the Black Forest was unexpected."

"Slagor is cunning. He's a coward, yes, but his actions indirectly confirm how powerful and troublesome the icefield invaders are."

"When the invaders find the Poison Dragon Swamp empty, they'll likely redirect their forces toward the Black Forest."

Orion's prediction was highly plausible, and it was his greatest concern.

If things got worse, the invaders attacking the western desert might also turn toward the Black Forest.

If that happened, the Black Forest would become the focal point of the invasion—a dire situation.

"What?"

"This..."

Both Thundar and Onyx were visibly shaken by the implications.

The Horde had brought only a limited number of bloodline warriors for this campaign. Even with the cannon fodder troops, their total force barely exceeded 50,000.

If both the northern and eastern fronts were invaded, this force would be woefully insufficient.

"I don't know the situation in the western desert yet," Orion continued.

"But we must prepare for the worst."

"That's why conserving our forces during the ambush is our top priority."

The possibility of a western invasion left Onyx and Thundar feeling disheartened.

"The situation is grim, but there's some good news," Orion said, attempting to lift their spirits.

"At least Slagor and Gronthar have brought their tribes' bloodline warriors. Our numbers are increasing."

"I've also instructed Delilah to send more scouts to the eastern and western fronts."

"If anything happens, we'll know immediately."

Orion gazed out over the ravines, summarizing the current situation for Onyx and Thundar.

This was to ensure they understood the stakes and could adjust their approach during the ambush.

"Prophet, Thundar, I'm leaving this area in your hands."

Orion placed two fingers in his mouth and let out a sharp whistle.

The Thunderhawk appeared in the sky, diving toward Orion's position.

With a powerful leap, Orion mounted the Thunderhawk's back, leaving the ambush site in the hands of Onyx and Thundar.

He had no intention of staying. With the situation evolving, Orion needed to scout the northern frontlines personally.

This time, his destination was clear—the Abyssal Chasm.

Orion intended to infiltrate Gareth's territory and uncover the current state of affairs.

Abyssal Chasm

This was a region riddled with craters and pits, at least from Orion's vantage point high in the sky.

From above, the terrain appeared harsh and uneven, with countless shrubs growing in the depressions and numerous beasts roaming the area.

Orion couldn't help but feel curious. On the surface, the Abyssal Chasm seemed far less hospitable than the Black Forest.

And yet, Gareth had chosen this place as her lair, making it the first target of the icefield invaders and their monsters.

"Could there be something here that Gareth values?"

As Orion surveyed the land below, his mind wandered with speculation.

He had been in the Abyssal Chasm for a full day and had yet to encounter any of Gareth's guards. The region was blanketed in snow, giving it an eerie sense of calm.

Suddenly, a gust of wind and snow swept through the sky. Orion didn't notice anything unusual at first.

Even the Thunderhawk, accustomed to battling storms and soaring through turbulent skies, paid it no mind.

Ssht!

It wasn't until a sharp sting on his cheek—where the wind had left a small cut—that Orion realized something was wrong.

In an instant, his Ghostbone Armor activated, covering his entire body and shielding the Thunderhawk's vital areas.

Whoosh... BOOM!

A deafening roar filled the air, a sound that was part howling wind and part the rumble of an enraged storm.

Orion and the Thunderhawk were suddenly surrounded by a screeching noise, like blades scraping against armor.

Bang!

The force of the wind was immense, creating a vacuum that exploded outward. Orion and the Thunderhawk were sent plummeting toward the ground.

Screech!

The Thunderhawk let out a sharp cry, flapping its wings furiously to stabilize itself. With a graceful arc, it regained altitude and continued flying.

"Orion, there's an enemy! That was a strange attack—it came from the wind itself!"

The Thunderhawk, Rayden, sounded shaken. The earlier explosion had left parts of its body—those not covered by Ghostbone Armor—injured. Feathers were ruffled, and faint traces of blood were visible.

Orion wasn't unscathed either. His ice armor had shattered in several places, and he gripped his trident tightly, scanning the skies around him.

The attack had clearly been aimed at him.

"Rayden, can you sense where the enemy is?"

"No, Orion. I can't sense anything. The wind elements in this area feel... off. They're no longer attuned to me."

"The wind elements?"

Orion frowned. The Thunderhawk was naturally attuned to both wind and lightning elements. If the wind elements were no longer responding to Rayden, it meant they were being controlled.

This strongly suggested that the enemy was either a wind mage or a wind elemental beast.

"Rayden, keep moving. Don't stay in one place. Gain altitude!"

Trusting Orion's judgment, Rayden flapped its wings vigorously, climbing higher and higher until they broke through the cloud layer.

Whoosh...

As they ascended, the wind and snow returned, swirling around them once more.

The snowflakes vanished as they entered the clouds, leaving only the invisible, relentless wind.

But the disturbance in the clouds gave Orion a clue.

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He noticed a suspicious movement—a patch of cloud seemed to be chasing the Thunderhawk, trailing closely behind.

"Rayden, release lightning behind us!"

Crackle!

A bolt of lightning shot out, striking the suspicious cloud.

For a moment, the sky lit up with electric arcs, and the wind howled in response.

But just as quickly as it had appeared, the phenomenon vanished.

"Hehehe... How interesting. This is the first time I've encountered an enemy who uses clouds to track my position!"

A voice echoed from the nearby clouds.

A small tornado emerged, its winds swirling with diminished intensity.

From within the tornado, a translucent humanoid figure appeared, its gaze fixed on Orion and the Thunderhawk with a mix of curiosity and amusement.

"Orion, it's... it's an elemental! A wind elemental!"

Rayden's voice trembled as it sensed the overwhelming concentration of wind elements emanating from the figure.

Orion placed a reassuring hand on the Thunderhawk's head, signaling it to stay calm.

He turned his attention to the elemental and spoke.

"Who are you? Why did you attack me without provocation?"

Orion's first instinct was to skewer the elemental with his trident, but he held back. He needed information, and diplomacy—at least for now—seemed the wiser course.

"Hehehe... My name is Gustalon, as you can see, I'm a great wind elemental!"

The wind elemental's voice was both gleeful and unhinged, its exaggerated mannerisms giving it an air of unpredictability.

"Are you one of the icefield invaders?"

"Correct! But unfortunately for you, knowing that won't save your life!"

Orion's brow furrowed. Gustalon's arrogance was infuriating, as if killing Orion and Rayden would be a trivial task.

"You think you alone can invade the Abyssal Chasm and the Black Forest? Isn't that a bit overconfident?"

Orion's tone was probing, trying to bait Gustalon into revealing more.

But the wind elemental wasn't so easily fooled. It tilted its head, studying Orion with curiosity.

"From what I know, giants are a race that relies on brute strength and lacks intelligence. Why are you so clever?"

Orion's expression darkened. He couldn't tell if Gustalon was insulting him or paying him a backhanded compliment.

One thing was clear: this enemy was both intelligent and difficult to manipulate.

And for an opponent like that, there was only one solution—eliminate them.

Orion's face turned cold as he raised his hand and shouted.

"Eightfold Spear Barrage!"

The shout wasn't just for show—it was meant to draw Gustalon's attention.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Energy surged from Orion's body as eight jagged, spear-like constructs materialized around him. Resembling spider legs, the spears radiated a menacing aura as they locked onto the tornado.

"Go to hell!"

Whoosh!

The spears tore through the air, forming a coordinated formation as they closed in on the tornado, aiming to pierce the translucent figure within.

But just as the spears struck, Gustalon's form vanished.

The tornado disintegrated into a dozen smaller whirlwinds, scattering in all directions and slipping through the gaps in the Eightfold Spear Barrage.

"Impressive! Your technique has some ability to lock down elements and space. But alas, your control isn't strong enough!"

The scattered whirlwinds reassembled, and Gustalon's figure reappeared, though this time its gaze held a hint of caution.

Orion's expression grew grim.

His newly learned skill had made its debut—and it had failed to land a decisive blow.

Chapter 187 Snow Wraith Lumi

This was Orion's first time using his newly learned skill, and it was clear he hadn't yet mastered it. There were many nuances he hadn't grasped, such as the fact that the eight spears forming the Eightfold Spear Barrage could actually be controlled individually. For now, Orion lacked the precision to manipulate them effectively.

"Rayden, don't let him get close. Physical attacks are useless against him—we need elemental attacks!"

Orion remained calm, his voice steady.

After two exchanges, he had gleaned some insight into Gustalon's abilities.

As a wind elemental, Gustalon was an elemental lifeform. Physical attacks were ineffective against him, as he could transform into a tornado and disperse any blows. However, elemental attacks—such as lightning or fire—could harm him.

Hearing this, Thunderhawk Rayden let out an excited screech, its body crackling with lightning. It seemed eager to exact revenge for its earlier injuries.

Orion also had a theory: illusions might be able to control a wind elemental like Gustalon. Unfortunately, neither Delilah nor Lilith was present to test this idea.

Even so, Orion recognized Gustalon as a significant threat.

Aside from himself, any of the Stoneheart Horde's Alpha-level subordinates could easily fall victim to Gustalon if they weren't careful.

Orion's gaze toward Gustalon was filled with killing intent.

"Rayden, let's go!"

Rayden let out a low cry, its body glowing with lightning as it dove toward the tornado that was Gustalon.

Boom!

Before it even reached its target, Rayden unleashed a bolt of lightning.

"Such a troublesome creature!"

Gustalon muttered, his form dissolving into an invisible gust of wind, effortlessly evading the incoming lightning.

Rayden, anticipating this, flapped its wings and began circling the area, scanning for any signs of movement.

Orion, gripping his trident, also observed his surroundings carefully.

If one paid close attention to the traces of wind and listened to its whispers, Gustalon's movements could be tracked.

However, Gustalon's position shifted constantly.

Every time Orion's gaze locked onto him, Gustalon would already have moved to another location.

High above the clouds, the wind howled, and lightning crackled as the two sides entered a tense standoff.

"You're a clever giant. You've earned the right to tell me your name. Who are you?"

Gustalon's voice echoed from all directions, his form nowhere to be seen.

"Orion Stoneheart!"

"I am the Alpha of the Black Forest. Any invader who dares trespass into my territory will be annihilated!"

Orion declared his identity and his stance toward enemies.

This wasn't a secret—Orion's name was well-known among the Four Domains. By revealing it, he hoped to bait Gustalon into revealing useful information.

"Hahaha... Annihilate?"

"For someone like me, who moves freely between the Abyssal Chasm and the Black Forest, do you really think you can stop me?"

Gustalon's tone was arrogant, his words dripping with disdain. As the embodiment of wind, he considered himself untouchable.

"Are you truly free?"

"Last year, why didn't you invade the Black Forest? Why didn't you come to the Abyssal Chasm?"

"Because you didn't dare!"

Orion's retort was sharp, his confidence unwavering.

Gustalon's expression darkened, but before he could respond, Orion pressed on.

"Submit to me, and I'll lead you southward. You'll see denser forests, brighter sunlight, and more vibrant flowers!"

This was Orion's attempt to recruit Gustalon—a rare move for him.

Typically, Orion would beat his enemies into submission before offering them a chance to join him. But Gustalon, as a unique elemental lifeform, was too valuable to pass up. Whether as a subordinate or a subject of study, Gustalon's potential was immense.

"Hahaha... What did I just hear?"

"A giant... wants me to submit?"

"Wind, free and unbound, did you hear that?"

"An Alpha-level giant wants to recruit me!"

Gustalon's laughter was tinged with madness, disbelief, and anger.

Despite this, Orion remained composed, his tone serious as he continued his offer.

"Follow me, and your life will be far better than aimlessly drifting across the icefields."

Gustalon's laughter abruptly stopped. He stared at Orion as if the giant had lost his mind.

"Giants truly are a brainless race. How dare he entertain such a ridiculous notion of subduing me!"

This was Gustalon's inner thought, and his gaze toward Orion was filled with contempt.

Boom!

At that moment, Thunderhawk Rayden seized the opportunity. While Gustalon was lost in thought, Rayden unleashed a bolt of lightning.

Bang!

The lightning struck the tornado, causing the wind to roar violently. Gustalon's voice, now filled with rage, echoed through the air.

"Damn thunderbird! If I get the chance, I'll pluck every feather from your body!"

Whoosh...

Along with his voice came a massive wind blade, slicing horizontally through the air.

Rayden, quick to react, flapped its wings and ascended higher, narrowly avoiding the attack.

When the Thunderhawk stabilized, the skies around them fell silent.

Gustalon was gone.

Orion directed Rayden to circle the area, but they found no trace of the wind elemental.

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"Rayden, let's head north."

After a moment of thought, Orion decided to continue northward.

He wouldn't rest until he had seen the invading forces from the icefields with his own eyes.

The Next Day

From atop the Thunderhawk, Orion finally spotted the invaders on the horizon.

Like a flood, they surged southward—a massive wolf pack, their numbers seemingly endless.

Sensing the Thunderhawk's presence, a deep, resonant howl echoed from within the pack, long and powerful.

Rayden carried Orion closer, flying above the wolves. As Orion looked down, he couldn't help but gasp.

The sheer number of wolves was staggering.

By his rough estimate, there were no fewer than 200,000 icefield snow wolves, ranging in size from small to massive.

It was clear that entire wolf families—young and old—had joined the invasion.

Orion felt a surge of frustration and anger, his thoughts turning to Lord Gareth.

"Does Gareth even know the scale of this invasion?"

He extended his senses, scanning the pack for any signs of Alpha-level power.

To his relief, he detected only one Alpha-level aura.

"Rayden, let's head back."

Having confirmed the identity and scale of the invaders, Orion's mission was complete.

It was time to return and ensure that Onyx, Thundar, and the others were fully prepared for the battle to come.

Two Days Later.

Orion returned to the first ambush point on the Black Forest border.

"Chieftain, you're back!" Onyx greeted him immediately upon seeing him.

"Yes, I'm back. Where's Thundar?"

Not seeing Thundar right away, Orion found it odd.

"Chieftain, Thundar went to inspect the defenses and traps in the ravines. He should be back soon once he hears of your return."

Orion nodded, then asked Onyx another question.

"Any news from Slagor and Gronthar? When will they arrive?"

"According to the scouts' reports, at their current pace, it'll take them another seven or eight days to reach here."

Onyx relayed the information he had received, and Orion's eyes narrowed slightly.

It was clear that Slagor and Gronthar wouldn't make it in time for the first ambush.

Given the speed of the icefield snow wolves, they would reach the ravines in no more than five days.

"Send word to the scouts: instruct Slagor and Gronthar to head directly to the second ambush point."

"Chieftain, has something unexpected happened?"

Orion nodded, confirming Onyx's suspicion.

However, he didn't elaborate immediately. He waited for about half an hour until Thundar returned with a few subordinates. Only then did Orion share what he had seen and learned during his reconnaissance.

"In no more than five days, the snow wolf pack from the icefields will arrive here. Their numbers are no less than 200k."

"In this direction, I've only identified two Alpha-level threats so far."

"One is a wind elemental named Gustalon. His movements are elusive, his attacks are strange and difficult to counter, and physical attacks are ineffective against him."

"The other is likely the Alpha of the wolf pack—the Wolf King. I couldn't determine its exact strength."

The intelligence Orion brought back left Onyx and Thundar exchanging uneasy glances.

The sheer number of 200,000 icefield snow wolves was terrifying enough. But the addition of Gustalon, with his invisible and unpredictable attacks, made the situation even more dire.

"Chieftain, how do we deal with the wind elemental?"

Onyx's tone was heavy. While his petrified skin could enhance his defenses, he wasn't confident it could withstand sustained wind blade attacks.

Wind elementals, being composed of pure wind energy, could release wind blades with minimal effort. Onyx's concern was well-founded.

"Chieftain, what if that wind elemental specifically targets our bloodline warriors during the battle?"

Thundar's question hit a nerve. It was something neither Orion nor Onyx had considered.

Orion's expression grew grim.

Given Gustalon's abilities, the bloodline warriors in the Horde would be as vulnerable as ordinary soldiers. If Gustalon decided to focus on slaughtering them, it would be devastating.

Orion frowned, deep in thought for a long moment, before asking Thundar a question.

"When will Delilah arrive?"

"According to the last report, the Elder of Stewardship will arrive in three days."

Orion let out a sigh of relief. As long as Delilah arrived before the ambush began, there was still time.

"Chieftain, are you planning to use illusions to counter the wind elemental?"

Onyx quickly deduced Orion's intentions.

"Yes. While Rayden's lightning attacks can harm the wind elemental, it's difficult for the Thunderhawk to track Gustalon's movements."

"And once the ambush begins, the noise of the battlefield will make it even harder to locate him."

"Our best option is to rely on Delilah's large-scale illusions. With her controlling the battlefield, we'll have a better chance of managing the situation."

Orion's explanation reassured Onyx and Thundar, giving them a sense of direction.

However, Orion himself was still uneasy.

The idea that illusions could restrain Gustalon was just a theory—he couldn't guarantee it would work.

But he couldn't voice these doubts. Doing so would only demoralize his forces.

If he expressed uncertainty, it would ripple through the ranks, from Onyx and Thundar down to the bloodline warriors, leaving everyone anxious and hesitant.

"Chieftain, should we send an urgent message to Delilah, urging her to arrive sooner?"

"Delilah doesn't know the situation here as well as we do. I'm worried she might delay her arrival while handling logistics and coordinating Slagor and Gronthar."

Onyx's suggestion to expedite Delilah's arrival made sense. After a moment of consideration, Orion nodded in agreement.

"Thundar, send word to the Sentinel Corps to urge Delilah to hurry."

Thundar nodded, immediately leaving the cave to relay the order.

With that, Orion and his team at the first ambush point continued their preparations, awaiting the enemy's arrival.

To the West – Desert Oasis

The Desert Oasis was a vast expanse of sand, where the temperature was perpetually high.

But for some reason, snow had begun to fall in the scorching desert. A thick layer of white now blanketed the ground, burying the endless dunes beneath it.

Snow Wraith Lumi was a strikingly beautiful woman, her hair and brows as white as silver threads.

Her whiteness was different from that of the Weeping Banshees—it was purer, almost ethereal.

Her demeanor exuded a cold, sacred elegance, making her seem untouchable.

Like Gustalon, Lumi was also an elemental lifeform, though her form was more complete and refined.

Lumi's relationship with Lord Jorik wasn't one of subordination. However, in exchange for resources and territory, Lumi had agreed to follow Jorik in his southern campaign.

This desert was the territory Jorik had promised to Lumi.

The fact that Jorik had chosen to grant a desert to the snow wraiths as their domain spoke volumes about his wariness of Lumi.

But Lumi didn't care.

Unless she encountered a powerful fire elemental, she could bring snow and cold wherever she went. To her, all places were the same.

The once-scorching desert had been transformed into a frozen wasteland. Snow fell endlessly, and in the midst of the storm, Lumi stood alone.

She moved southward, leaving no trace in the snow, like a spirit of ice and frost—beautiful yet solitary.

Lumi alone was an army, capable of conquering the south by herself.

"Soraya, it's been so many years. Won't you come out to greet an old friend?"

Lumi's voice was cool and clear, like the sound of ice crystals chiming together.

Her words carried across the snow-covered desert, lingering in the air.

Deep beneath the desert, in a vast underground palace, Scorpion Queen Soraya sat on her throne, sipping a goblet of fresh blood.

Suddenly, Lumi's voice echoed through the palace, startling the scorpions within.

"Soraya, it's been so many years..."

Soraya's movements froze for a moment. Slowly, she raised her head, her gaze fixed on the dark ceiling of the underground palace.

"She's quick to arrive," Soraya muttered, downing the rest of her blood in one gulp.

"Your Majesty, shall we go out and teach her a lesson?"

The speaker was Jarex, a hot-tempered giant scorpion warrior. Lumi's words, though not overtly insulting, carried an air of condescension toward the scorpion tribe.

This infuriated Jarex, who was eager to surface and confront the snow wraith.

"Snow has fallen, burying the desert in thick ice. Jarex, do you really enjoy fighting in such a cold environment?"

"If you want to die, I won't stop you."

Soraya's voice was calm, devoid of emotion. Her gaze toward Jarex was cold and indifferent.

Jarex fell silent, unsure of what to do.

Chapter 188 Focus. This is a battlefield

"Jarex, calm yourself. If she can't find us, she'll leave eventually!"

"Besides, with the ground frozen and covered in snow, once you go out, it'll be nearly impossible to return!"

"Fighting those little snow creatures in this icy terrain would be pure folly!"

The one who spoke to ease the tension was High Priestess Selenis, an elder of the scorpion tribe known for her sharp insight into people's minds. She fully supported Scorpion Queen Soraya's current strategy.

Avoiding battle was the best choice for the scorpion tribe.

This way, they could evade the foreign invaders without losing a single warrior.

Soraya glanced at Selenis, her lips curling into a faint smile, but she said nothing.

To the East – Poison Dragon Swamp

When Frost Giant Chillrend arrived at the Poison Dragon Swamp with his horde of icefield monsters, he found nothing but a few scattered beasts and some abandoned tribes left behind by Slagor. Stay updated with empire

Unable to find Slagor, Chillrend turned his attention to the Barren Mountains, where the Trolls who had once killed his father resided.

"Send the order: we're turning toward the Barren Mountains. Begin the invasion!"

Chillrend's deep voice echoed through the swamp, filled with rage and hatred.

Black Forest – Border Region, First Ambush Point

Three days later, Orion finally met Delilah.

"How's the Horde doing?"

Delilah smiled warmly, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear as she replied in her soft, soothing voice.

"Don't worry. The Horde is doing well. Rendall is overseeing the fortifications in Blackstone City, and progress is steady."

"The underground fissure is stable, and the Spider Queen is hatching more spiderlings, ready to deploy at any time."

Hearing this, Orion, Onyx, and Thundar all breathed a sigh of relief.

Knowing that the Stoneheart Horde was safe and secure was the best news they could have hoped for. It was their greatest assurance.

If their base were to fall while they were out fighting, it would spell disaster.

Delilah glanced at the three of them before continuing in her melodious voice.

"The lizardmen and Troll women and children have been settled in Blackstone City. Rendall has assigned a team of bloodline warriors to guard them around the clock, ensuring they don't wander."

"Before I came here, I met with Slagor and Gronthar. They've been directed to the second ambush point to set up defensive lines."

"Our logistics team has been relocated to the third ambush point to ensure our retreat route remains clear."

Orion nodded. This was the best news he'd heard in days.

Delilah had proven herself to be an exceptional support, a true partner in leadership.

Orion couldn't help but feel that Delilah had fully lived up to the high authority and status he had entrusted to her.

Of course, Delilah had also lived up to the "special care" Orion had shown her.

Orion then briefed Delilah on the situation at the first ambush point and the enemies she would soon face.

Two Days Later – Noon

At the edge of the ravines near the first ambush point, the howls of wolves echoed through the air.

"Awoooo... Awoooo..."

Orion stood on a ridge overlooking the ravines, gazing into the distance.

"There are too many of them. After the first wave of attacks, we'll need to retreat immediately," Delilah said, standing beside him.

She stared at the dark horizon, where the sheer number of wolves made her scalp tingle.

"Don't worry. Onyx and Thundar know what to do. They'll act with caution," Orion replied, gripping his trident.

For now, Orion's role was to act as Delilah's personal guard.

His primary responsibility was to ensure Delilah's safety and to have her use illusions to restrain Gustalon the moment he appeared.

Only then could Orion, Onyx, and Thundar execute their decapitation strategy, aiming to kill the Wolf King, cripple the wolf pack, and shatter their morale.

"Awooo!"

A deep, resonant howl echoed through the ravines. It was the Icefield Snow Wolf King, issuing the command to attack.

The wolf pack responded immediately, surging forward in an orderly charge toward the first ambush point.

It was clear that the wolves were aware of the ambush. They could smell the presence of many living beings.

"Orion, we must kill the Icefield Snow Wolf King. If it continues to command the pack, they'll be unstoppable!"

A pack of 200,000 wolves, moving in unison under the Wolf King's command, was a terrifying force.

Delilah's voice trembled slightly, betraying her nervousness. The sheer scale of the wolf pack was overwhelming.

"This is bad. If even Delilah is shaken, our other bloodline warriors must be in even worse shape!"

Sensing the urgency of the situation, Orion quickly placed two fingers in his mouth and let out a sharp whistle.

In response, the Thunderhawk unleashed several bolts of forked lightning, striking the front ranks of the wolf pack and killing dozens of wolves instantly.

The thunderous roar of the lightning was followed by the anguished cries of the wolves. These sounds jolted the Stoneheart Horde's bloodline warriors out of their daze.

"Spearmen, ready!"

"Crossbowmen, ready!"

"Rock-rolling team, ready!"

Amid the chaos, Thundar's deep, gravelly voice rang out across the ravines. The bloodline warriors instinctively raised their weapons, snapping into battle formation.

The Thunderhawk's attack had successfully boosted morale.

Orion's quick decision had proven wise.

"Chieftain, what do you need me to do?" Delilah asked.

"Focus on the battlefield. Keep an eye out for Gustalon. The moment he appears, it's your turn to act!"

Orion didn't look back as he spoke, his eyes fixed on the approaching wolf pack. His confident tone reassured Delilah, calming her nerves.

Delilah wasn't inexperienced in large-scale battles, but the sight of 200,000 wolves moving in perfect unison was undeniably intimidating.

Standing on higher ground only amplified the oppressive feeling brought on by the sheer number of wolves and the thunderous sound of their charge.

Delilah took a deep breath and retrieved the spider silk weapon Orion had given her. She released the silk into the air, where it became nearly invisible.

Next, she pulled out the black whip, a relic passed down by the succubus tribe. Holding it in her hand, she exuded a unique aura of authority and elegance.

"That whip of yours looks... unusual," Orion remarked, noticing the weapon.

"This is the succubus tribe's ancestral relic. It's said to be crafted from the tail of a high-ranking demon. It's quite special," Delilah said, swaying her hips as she handed the whip to Orion. If Orion was willing, she wouldn't mind at all if he used the whip to spank her.

Orion didn't take the whip. Instead, he turned his attention back to the battlefield.

"Focus. This is a battlefield!"

Chapter 189 Three Wolf Kings

Icefield Snow Wolves were creatures forged by the harshest of environments.

To survive, they had developed patience and resilience, traits honed by their unforgiving habitat. Their piercing eyes, their ability to wait for the perfect moment, and their reliance on teamwork to tear apart their enemies were their most common tactics.

These traits were also the hallmark of the Icefield Snow Wolf King, who led them.

However, at the first ambush point, the wolves had no need to wait. Their enemies weren't beasts—they were intelligent beings.

The Wolf King knew that to achieve victory, it had to rely on the strength of its pack. Sacrifices were necessary for the greater good of the pack's success.

"Awooo..."

Countless snow wolves charged forward recklessly, throwing themselves into the ravines and toward the ridges.

In the ravines, numerous traps—each at least 30 feet deep, wide, and long—were triggered one after another. The spikes within the traps were deadly, claiming wave after wave of snow wolves.

"Those spikes are coated with poison!"

Delilah observed the wolves that fell into the traps, never to rise again. She immediately realized that the spikes had been treated with a deadly toxin.

This puzzled her, as such measures hadn't been part of their original plan.

As the Elder of Stewardship, Delilah was well aware of the Horde's limited stock of poisons.

"That was Thundar's idea. The spikes are coated with the saliva and blood of the geckos from the cannon fodder troops," Orion explained.

"And it's not just poison—we've also used burning oils."

As Orion finished speaking, a group of snow wolves charged into a trap filled with burning oils.

Boom!

A small mechanism within the trap was triggered, igniting the oils. Flames roared to life, and the air was filled with the anguished howls of burning wolves.

"Wooooo..."

At that moment, the Stoneheart Horde's war horn sounded.

The wolves had entered the range of the Horde's weapons. The ambush had officially begun.

"Chieftain, I'm back."

Prophet Onyx approached Orion and Delilah, his footsteps steady. He had come to take over Orion's role as Delilah's protector.

Orion needed to fully utilize the Thunderhawk's aerial advantage to strike at the snow wolves and maximize the ambush's effectiveness.

At the same time, Orion had another critical task: to locate and eliminate the Icefield Snow Wolf King.

"Stay alert, listen to the wind, and remain vigilant!"

This was Orion's parting advice. With that, he leapt onto the back of the descending Thunderhawk.

The Thunderhawk soared into the sky, heading toward the rear of the wolf pack.

"Rayden, find the Icefield Snow Wolf King!"

"Understood!"

From the air, the Thunderhawk's keen eyesight made it an exceptional hunter. Finding prey was second nature to it.

It didn't take long for Thunderhawk Rayden to locate the Wolf King.

The Thunderhawk descended slightly, drawing the Wolf King's ire.

"Awooo!"

The Wolf King's howl was filled with rage—a territorial fury.

To the Wolf King, the sky might belong to the Thunderhawk, but the ground was its domain.

The Thunderhawk's low flight was seen as a direct provocation.

The howl caught Orion's attention.

"Rayden, veer left. It's in that direction!"

The Thunderhawk let out a low cry, expressing its displeasure at the Wolf King's howl. It retaliated by releasing a bolt of lightning, striking the densely packed snow wolves below.

"Orion, there it is—the one with black fur. That's the Alpha(Wolf King)!"

Orion peered down, following the Thunderhawk's guidance, and spotted the Icefield Snow Wolf King.

It was a massive wolf, its fur as black as night, with equally dark eyes that gleamed with intelligence.

At that moment, the Wolf King was staring up at the Thunderhawk, its gaze unwavering.

"Keep flying!"

Orion remained cautious, refraining from jumping into the fray immediately. He directed the Thunderhawk to continue flying toward the rear of the wolf pack.

Orion wanted to ensure there were no other Alpha-level beasts hidden among the wolves.

After several passes and finding no other Alpha-level auras, Orion finally directed the Thunderhawk to return.

"Rayden, lower your altitude and stay alert. Be ready to extract me at any moment!"

The Thunderhawk let out a low cry and obeyed, gliding closer to the ground.

Moments later, Orion leapt from the Thunderhawk's back.

Boom!

He landed with a resounding impact, sending a shockwave that knocked nearby snow wolves off their feet.

Before the wolves could recover, countless others bared their fangs and charged at him.

"Roar!"

A deafening roar echoed across the battlefield. It was the cry of a dragon.

A flash of red light appeared as Orion summoned his Abyssal Dragon.

The dragon's massive claws and tail swept through the wolves, tearing them apart with ease. Those that ventured too close were shredded or crushed instantly.

"Xalathar, charge!"

The Abyssal Dragon, Xalathar, moved in perfect sync with Orion. At his command, the dragon adjusted its stance and charged forward, trampling and smashing through the wolves in its path.

"Awooo!"

As the Abyssal Dragon closed the distance to the Wolf King, the black-furred Alpha's eyes flashed with a sharp glint. It threw its head back and let out a piercing howl.

In an instant, two identical black wolves emerged from the Wolf King's body.

"Three Wolf Kings?"

Standing atop the Abyssal Dragon, Orion was stunned.

He had suspected that a wolf pack of 200,000 wouldn't be led by just one Alpha-level Wolf King.

Despite his caution, despite scanning the pack multiple times, he had failed to detect the other two. The Wolf King had hidden them well, waiting for this moment.

"Damn it!"

Orion cursed under his breath. He wanted to retreat, but it was too late.

"Awooo! Awooo! Awooo!"

The three Wolf Kings howled in unison, and the wolf pack parted to create an open space.

The three massive wolves, their bodies radiating power, charged toward the Abyssal Dragon.

In the face of this sudden assault, Orion activated his Ghostbone Armor, covering the Abyssal Dragon's vital areas.

The Abyssal Dragon showed no fear. With a thunderous roar, it accelerated, meeting the three Wolf Kings head-on.

Chapter 190 Song of Bewilderment

Meanwhile, Orion activated his skill, Titan's Rage, and his attributes surged dramatically. With his strength amplified, he grabbed a trident and hurled it with immense force.

Boom!

The trident streaked through the air like a thunderbolt, aimed directly at one of the Wolf Kings. But just as it was about to strike, the Wolf King vanished from its position, reappearing in another direction and continuing its charge.

"What a bizarre way to evade!"

Orion was startled. He couldn't discern how the Wolf King had managed to shift positions so quickly.

Roar!

There was no time to dwell on it.

The Abyssal Dragon and the three Wolf Kings had already closed in on each other, and the battle had begun.

The three Wolf Kings spread out, surrounding the Abyssal Dragon from three directions. Their snarls were low and menacing, their sharp fangs bared as they prepared to strike.

The Abyssal Dragon turned its massive body, its cold, merciless eyes scanning for an opening.

Orion, standing on the dragon's back, was connected to it through their shared consciousness. With a single glance at the three Wolf Kings, he and the dragon reached an unspoken agreement.

Roar!

The Abyssal Dragon chose the Wolf King directly in front of it as its target and charged forward.

Its massive jaws opened wide, revealing rows of sword-like teeth, a terrifying sight of pure ferocity.

At the same time, the two Wolf Kings on the dragon's flanks launched their own attacks.

The Wolf King on the left leaped into the air, its jaws wide open, aiming directly for Orion.

The one on the right, equally cunning, lunged for the Abyssal Dragon's neck, its fangs glinting with deadly intent.

Roar!

The Abyssal Dragon was prepared. With Orion acting as its third eye, it had anticipated the flanking attacks.

Its eyes flashed with killing intent as it twisted its head, snapping its jaws toward the Wolf King on the right with lightning speed.

Simultaneously, the dragon's massive foreclaws pinned the Wolf King in front of it to the ground, its claws sinking deep into the beast's flesh.

As for the Wolf King leaping toward Orion, the giant warrior was ready. With a fierce battle cry, he leaped into the air, his trident aimed straight for the Wolf King's head.

Too fast!

The three attacks happened in an instant, a deadly exchange of blows.

In midair, just as Orion's trident was about to pierce the Wolf King's skull, the beast vanished again.

Whoosh!

The Wolf King reappeared on the Abyssal Dragon's neck, its jaws clamping down hard.

Boom!

The dragon's long tail whipped around, striking the Wolf King and sending it flying.

Orion landed smoothly on the ground, his trident already raised as he charged toward the Wolf King pinned beneath the dragon's claws.

The pinned Wolf King, despite its predicament, was relentless. It arched its body and sank its teeth into the dragon's foreclaw.

This brought it face-to-face with Orion, their eyes locking in a deadly exchange.

One gaze was filled with bloodthirsty ferocity; the other burned with unrelenting killing intent.

"Go to hell!"

Orion's Berserk Aura had long since been activated. Both he and the Abyssal Dragon were in a state of frenzy, their fighting spirit at its peak.

Squelch!

Orion's trident plunged deep into the Wolf King's skull, triggering the weapon's special effect. Flames erupted from the wound, engulfing the beast's body.

Boom!

As the flames consumed the Wolf King, the Abyssal Dragon retracted its foreclaw and turned its attention to the Wolf King biting its neck. With a swift motion, the dragon tore the beast open, spilling its entrails onto the ground.

In mere moments, two of the three Wolf Kings lay dead, their bodies lifeless and burning.

Orion, his expression cold and unfeeling, stood like a butcher amidst the carnage. Before the eyes of the wolf pack, he methodically split open the skulls of the two dead Wolf Kings and extracted their crystal cores.

"Awooo!"

The third Wolf King, the one that had been struck by the dragon's tail and survived, let out a mournful howl. It was a call for vengeance.

The wolf pack, driven by hatred, surged forward in a suicidal charge.

Screech!

A sharp eagle cry pierced the air as Orion leaped onto the Abyssal Dragon's back. Using the dragon as a springboard, he launched himself into the sky.

At the same time, the Abyssal Dragon dissolved into a red light, retreating into Orion's heart.

Now safely atop the Thunderhawk, Orion didn't relent. He retrieved a set of throwing spears and began hurling them at the remaining Wolf King from above.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Each spear struck with the force of a missile. Though the Wolf King managed to evade the attacks, the ground below was left riddled with craters.

The nearby snow wolves weren't so lucky. Many were caught in the blasts, their bodies torn apart by the shockwaves.

Just as Orion prepared to throw another spear, a wind blade came slicing through the air from the distance.

The blade's sharp whistle was deafening, its speed terrifying.

"Watch out!"

Rayden folded its wings and tilted its body, narrowly avoiding the attack.

Gustalon had finally appeared.

Orion's eyes narrowed as he processed the situation. He decided to stop targeting the Wolf King and directed the Thunderhawk to return to the ridge.

Once there, he picked up Delilah and brought her onto the Thunderhawk's back.

"Do it. He's here."

Delilah nodded, her lips parting as she began to chant a mysterious incantation. Her voice was melodic yet haunting, a rhythm that was neither song nor spell but carried an undeniable magical resonance.

The battlefield suddenly became eerily quiet as pink snowflakes began to fall from the sky.

The snowflakes landed on the icefield snow wolves, causing them to close their eyes and stand motionless, as if entranced.

Even Orion, standing beside Delilah, could feel the battlefield's sudden stillness. The Horde's bloodline warriors stared in disbelief at the sight before them.

Earthshaker, who had just pushed a massive boulder into the ravine, watched as the snow wolves below made no effort to dodge. They stood still, allowing themselves to be crushed into pulp.

"What kind of illusion is this?"

As a Buffalofolk, Earthshaker had encountered succubus illusions before.

Before the Black Forest was unified, the Buffalofolk had often oppressed the succubi.

But Earthshaker had never imagined that succubus illusions could be this powerful on a battlefield.

What he didn't know was that Delilah and Lilith's illusions had been enhanced twice.

The first enhancement came from the blessing they received after defeating a large number of Weeping Banshees.

The second came from their ascension to Alpha-level, which significantly boosted their abilities.

"Delilah, what is this technique? I've never seen you use it before!"

"It's the Song of Bewilderment, a spell from the Nightmare Arts. Impressive, isn't it?"

Delilah smiled seductively, licking her lips as she cast a flirtatious glance at Orion.

Orion rolled his eyes at her, his focus returning to the battlefield.

"Did Gustalon fall for your illusion?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

Delilah pointed north, toward the rear of the wolf pack. Her tone was curious as she added, "He ran away."

"What?"

"I don't know what he saw in his dream, but he turned into a gust of wind and fled north."

Orion frowned. Letting Gustalon escape was a significant risk. The wind elemental remained a dangerous threat.

Gustalon's retreat left Orion somewhat disappointed.

Standing atop the Thunderhawk, Orion scanned the wolf pack below, searching for the last Wolf King. He wanted to seize the opportunity to eliminate it.

"Orion, give the order to retreat!"

"My Song of Bewilderment covers a wide area, but its effects won't last much longer."

"This is the best time to pull back!"

Orion withdrew his gaze and looked at Delilah. After meeting her determined eyes, he reluctantly issued the retreat order.

"Awooo..."

At the rear of the wolf pack, beyond the reach of the Song of Bewilderment, howls echoed continuously.

The howls began to wake the wolves trapped in the illusion, one by one.

"Retreat! Everyone retreat! Don't linger!"

"Do you all want to die?"

"Do you want to be torn apart and devoured by the wolves?"

On the ridge, Dirtclaw cracked his whip, driving the frenzied and reckless gnolls and geckos of the cannon fodder troops back into formation.

After receiving the retreat order, Dirtclaw had been working tirelessly to maintain order.

On another ridge, Earthshaker stood at the edge of a cliff. After pushing the last boulder in front of him down into the ravine, he turned to the bloodline warriors behind him and roared.

"We're leaving! Fall back to the second ambush point as planned!"

On yet another hill, Rockwell hefted a massive boulder and hurled it with all his might.

The boulder crashed into a densely packed group of icefield snow wolves, crushing several of them instantly.

Seeing the devastation caused by his throw, Rockwell grinned widely.

The feeling of taking lives with such ease was exhilarating to him.

"Elder, the chieftain has ordered a retreat!"

"You go first! Don't worry about me—I'll catch up after I throw these last few rocks!"

"But..."

"No buts! Get moving, or I'll hold you responsible for delaying the retreat!"

"Understood!"

The obsidian golems, naturally attuned to earth elements, handled the boulders as if they were toys.

Rockwell approached the remaining three boulders and lifted them all at once.

"Damn wolves, taste my triple-shot special!"

From atop the Thunderhawk, Orion directed the beast to cover the retreat of the Horde's bloodline warriors.

Any ridge where the icefield snow wolves pursued was bombarded by Orion and the Thunderhawk, leaving destruction in their wake.

Only after the main force had safely withdrawn did Orion guide the Thunderhawk back.

Two Days Later – Second Ambush Point

The second ambush point was set near a wide river. This particular stretch of the river was the calmest and narrowest, making it the safest crossing point for the wolves to continue their march southward.

Inside a temporary command tent, Orion sat at the head of the table, his gaze sweeping over the gathered elders.

As Orion observed them, they, in turn, watched him.

Many of the elders had witnessed the battle at the first ambush point. From their vantage points, they had seen Orion and his Abyssal Dragon take on three Wolf Kings, slaying two of them.

The memory of that feat still filled them with awe and excitement.

Finally, Orion's gaze settled on Slagor.

Slagor and his forces had arrived at the second ambush point several days earlier. The riverbanks were now lined with traps set by his troops.

"Slagor, your forces will take the lead in this ambush."

"Your people are better suited for water combat than mine."

"The battle won't be too intense. All you need to do is hold the riverbanks and prevent the icefield snow wolves from crossing."

"Of course, I'll assign some of my bloodline warriors to assist you."

Orion's tone left no room for negotiation.

Slagor narrowed his eyes in thought but eventually nodded in agreement.

Orion then turned his attention to Gronthar.

The Troll chieftain stood up, his towering 25-foot frame and bulging muscles making him an imposing figure.

"This is Gronthar, chieftain of the Trolls. He has submitted to us."

Orion's words were directed at the gathered elders of the Stoneheart Horde.

Hearing this, Earthshaker, Desdemona, Vespera, Rockwell, Dirtclaw, Ursa, and the others widened their eyes, scrutinizing Gronthar closely.

From their senses, they could tell that Gronthar's strength surpassed their own.

This meant that Gronthar's power exceeded the peak of hero level, putting him on the cusp of Alpha-level.

Another contender for Alpha-level resources!

This thought echoed in the minds of every elder present.

Fortunately, Gronthar was a newcomer to the Horde and had yet to make any significant contributions. This realization brought a sense of relief to the elders.

At the same time, Gronthar's presence served as a reminder to them all: they needed to keep improving.

"Prophet, Gronthar will be under your guidance for now. Help integrate the Trolls into the Horde as quickly as possible."

Prophet Onyx nodded, accepting the task.

Orion's decision was a careful one. He knew that Onyx and Gronthar had a good rapport. With Onyx's guidance, the Trolls would likely adapt to the Horde much faster.

Hearing this, Gronthar looked at Onyx, his eyes lighting up with gratitude.

Onyx, in turn, met Gronthar's gaze and gave him a slight nod, a silent acknowledgment.

In truth, Gronthar had been overwhelmed the moment he entered the command tent.

The sheer presence of the gathered powerhouses had left him in awe.

Aside from Orion and Slagor, Onyx, Delilah, and Thundar were all Alpha-level. The faint pressure emanating from them made Gronthar's heart tremble.

Including Orion and his Thunderhawk, the Stoneheart Horde now boasted five Alpha-level powerhouses.

"Slagor wasn't lying. The Black Forest is nothing like it used to be."

After introducing Gronthar, Orion handed over control of the meeting to Delilah, Thundar, and Slagor.

The ambush had been planned well in advance, and Slagor's unexpected arrival had turned out to be a significant boon.

Slagor's forces, composed of swamp-dwelling species adept at water combat, would serve as the main force for this ambush. Delilah and Thundar would coordinate their efforts to maximize the Horde's gains.

Orion estimated that the first ambush had cost the icefield snow wolves around 20,000 casualties.

While significant, this was still a small fraction of the wolf pack's total strength of 200,000.

As Delilah, Thundar, and Slagor discussed the finer details of the battle plan with the other elders, Orion and Onyx closed their eyes, reflecting on the lessons learned from the first ambush.

If Gronthar was merely impressed by the Horde's strength, Slagor was outright shaken.

The two senior elders he was now working with—Delilah and Thundar—hadn't even been Alpha-level during the Myriad Races Invasion.

Slagor had met Delilah before and knew her to be a capable strategist. But after the dark beast tides, she had ascended to Alpha-level, now standing on equal footing with him.

As for Thundar, Slagor had also seen him during Orion's first expedition to the Poison Dragon Swamp. Back then, Thundar hadn't been Alpha-level either.

Now, sitting in the same room as these powerhouses, Slagor couldn't help but feel uneasy.

He stole a glance at Orion, who sat silently with his eyes closed, and felt a chill run down his spine.

"This neighbor of mine is becoming more dangerous by the day."

