

Titan King 251

Chapter 251 Centaur khan

Crossing towering mountains and swirling clouds, then wading through swamps and plains, Orion kept sensing that formidable presence and continued traveling east.

Gazing down over the Desolate Plains, he saw endless stretches of tall, swaying grass.

The centaurs who lived there had some odd habits, at least in Orion's eyes. From what he could tell, these centaurs survived by hunting. They favored large prey—giant bears and tusked boars were particular favorites.

In one respect, they were much like giants: they too enjoyed roasted meat but weren't opposed to eating it raw either. It was a rough, almost savage way of life.

Even odder, male centaurs didn't have fixed abodes; they wandered from place to place. By contrast, female centaurs lived in tents. If a female centaur found a male she liked, she'd let him stay in her tent overnight and mate with him. Once that was done, though, almost every male ended up kicked right back out.

As Orion traveled east and witnessed their lifestyle, he found his horizons broadened.

"Get out!"

Seven days later, a furious shout echoed from below—a low, booming voice charged with intimidation. It was clear the speaker was absolutely enraged.

"Rayden, pay attention—climb a little higher."

Orion looked down at the centaur khan who had spoken, noticed the strange, massive bow in his hands, and thoughtfully warned Thunderhawk Rayden.

Once Orion had spoken these words, he pulled out his trident, the Flame of Will, and summoned a set of ice armor. In a flash, Orion transformed into a bolt of lightning and hurtled down at the centaur khan.

Crack!

Whiz!

An arrow streaking upward, wreathed in flame, came straight at him. Orion's reflexes were superb—he flung a lightning-charged trident in return.

Boom!

Trident and arrow collided, exploding in a brilliant blast that obliterated both.

Crack!

Whiz!

Almost at the same moment, Orion and the centaur khan attacked again. High in the air, another lightning-wrapped trident slammed into another fire arrow.

Boom!

It still wasn't over. In the chaotic seconds that followed, two more rounds of fiery arrows clashed against Orion's tridents. At last, after the fourth collision, Orion touched down, advancing on the centaur khan.

Zzzz!

Orion was suddenly knocked backward, managing to remain on his feet only after skidding a few paces. Meanwhile, the khan had taken such a powerful blow from Orion that the lower half of his body was driven deep into the ground.

Orion hefted his trident, regarding the centaur khan with stern caution. The man's transcendent power was fire-based, but just now he'd driven Orion back purely through brute force. The strength radiating off this centaur blew away anything Orion had encountered before—even the Glacial Dragon's physical might fell short.

"Mmmm-hhhrrnn!"

From where he was stuck in the earth, the centaur khan let out a whinnying sort of neigh.

Rumble!

A second later, instead of pulling himself out of the ground, he charged forward like a plow through soil, barreling toward Orion at impressive speed.

"Go to hell!"

Raising his trident, Orion instantly unleashed the skill "Titan Form." His bloodline surged, and he took on the shape of an ancient titan, his frame growing rapidly. Lightning danced in his crimson eyes as he rallied for a countercharge.

Thud!

This was a raw collision of force against force. Empowered by his amplified attributes, Orion had become like a primeval behemoth, sending the centaur khan hurtling a hundred yards away. In a test of sheer strength, the transformed Orion had the upper hand.

"Who are you? Why trespass on my territory?"

Such was reality: once you realized you were outmatched, you usually tried talking. Realizing his power and transcendent force fell short, the centaur khan finally spoke.

Seeing that the khan was willing to communicate, Orion lowered his trident to show he meant no harm.

"I am Orion Stoneheart, the Giant King from the Black Forest. The Black Forest, Poison Dragon Swamp, and Half-Moon Lake are all my territory!"

Hearing this, the centaur khan frowned, beginning to guess at Orion's intentions.

"Khan of the centaurs," Orion went on, "your people have been crossing the boundary."

Silence.

The khan fell mute, all the while sizing Orion up. He was dealing with a giant lord he'd never heard of before.

"Did you kill Gareth?"

That was the question nagging at the centaur khan's mind foremost, because he knew well that the Black Forest and Poison Dragon Swamp belonged to Gareth.

"Gareth is perfectly fine. The one I killed was Lord Ariel of Thunderwood Forest."

Orion's voice was deep, proud, and confident.

"What? That's impossible!"

The khan's first reaction was outright denial. Lords farther south were typically stronger than those in the north. The idea that Orion—or Gareth—could have killed Ariel sounded ridiculous.

But there the giant lord stood, face-to-face with him, and as a fellow lord, the khan understood a few truths: nobody reached Legendary rank or claimed the title of lord without a Lord's Stone.

And obtaining a Lord's Stone meant killing another lord or somehow forging one yourself. Considering how difficult the latter was, it seemed perfectly real that Ariel might have been slain.

"So, Lord Orion, why have you come into my territory?"

The centaur khan wasn't naive enough to think Orion was just here to complain. After all, as a lord, if foreigners invaded his domain, Orion could simply wipe them out, no questions asked.

Locking eyes with the centaur khan, Orion spoke in a faintly teasing tone.

"Honorable centaur khan, don't you want to introduce yourself? I still don't know your name."

For a moment, the centaur khan looked taken aback. Then, in a resonant baritone, he introduced himself.

"I am Ironhoof, centaur khan and lord of the Desolate Plains."

"Lord Ironhoof, as neighbors, I think we can get along."

Orion lifted his trident a little. His tone sounded polite enough, but the motion was clearly meant as a veiled threat.

Ironhoof had already hauled himself out of the ground. His four hooves stomped the earth as he gripped that strange double-string bow. Studying Orion and the trident in his hands, Ironhoof stayed silent for a few seconds before slowly declaring, "We can live in peace."

That was good—clearly, this fellow knew when to concede.

Orion put his weapon away and, smiling but saying nothing more, vanished in a flash of lightning from where he stood. Having reached an understanding with Ironhoof, the Centaur Khan, Orion quit while he was ahead. He didn't push for any concessions nor voice any explicit threats; leaving was also a way to avoid another fight.

After all, Orion hadn't come to the Desolate Plains simply looking for a brawl. His real goal was to show off his power, intimidate Ironhoof into standing down, and propose a peaceful arrangement.

Now that he'd accomplished that, why stay and risk being surrounded?

A thunderous boom tore the air as Orion soared skyward, landing back on Thunderhawk Rayden's back.

"Rayden, we're heading home. Let's go back to Blackstone City."

At Orion's instruction, Thunderhawk Rayden let out a piercing cry and wheeled around, leaving the Desolate Plains behind.

Truth be told, the thunderhawk was both excited and uneasy about ferrying Orion across other lords' territories. It was thrilled because its master was a Legendary-level giant, yet anxious because being left on its own—even temporarily—felt supremely unsafe.

That pretty much summed up how it felt when Orion had left it waiting on those icy heights, and especially when the Glacial Dragon's roar slammed into them earlier.

Down on the ground, Ironhoof the Centaur Khan glared at the thunderhawk sailing west. His features—part human, part equine—were dark with resentment.

"Respected Khan, shall we pursue?"

A few of Ironhoof's Alpha-level centaurs came trotting over, scrutinizing their khan's face as they edged the question in a tentative way.

"Chase them?"

"And just how do you propose we do that?"

"Even my blazing arrows couldn't take down that thunderhawk. You think you can?"

"Or were you planning to pick a fight with a lord who's stronger than me?"

Ironhoof's voice carried icy mockery. Even Orion himself, a Legendary-level giant, had actually spoken respectfully just now. Meanwhile, these cocky Alpha-level centaurs were talking about going after a Legendary-level foe who was downright scarier than Ironhoof.

"Gallopbridge, your clan roams that western patch near Poison Dragon Swamp, right?" Ironhoof fixed his gaze on one of the Alphas who'd just approached. "Tell them to watch where they set hoof. If they trespass on another lord's territory, the consequences are on them."

Half the reason Orion had ventured into the Desolate Plains was probably because Gallopbridge's centaur band had crossed into another lord's domain—a downright provocative move.

"Yes, Khan. I'll make sure my people behave," Gallopbridge muttered, not daring to defend himself under Ironhoof's searing glare.

"Khan, is that giant lord someone new who just rose to power?"

"Mhm."

At mention of Orion, Ironhoof's big eyes narrowed in thought. He could imagine that Orion had fought tooth and nail for a long time to ascend to lord status.

Slaying Lord Ariel must have come at a steep price—killing any Legendary-level being was tough. Even two Legendary-level opponents would have a hard time finishing each other off, since one side could always flee.

"That giant lord is more heavy-handed than that bitch Gareth ever was," Ironhoof huffed to himself before turning and galloping into the depths of the Desolate Plains. Countless tents awaited him there, full of female centaurs who'd let him do whatever he wanted with them.

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A few days later, Thunderhawk Rayden winged happily across the skies above Poison Dragon Swamp.

"Master, there are a bunch of our people hunting down there. Should we go say hi?"

Rayden had sensed Rendall's energy; as another Alpha-level warrior, Rendall was likely leading a hunting party, so the thunderhawk wondered if Orion might drop in to see the Horde's leadership.

From above, Orion looked down across Poison Dragon Swamp. Of course he sensed Rendall, too. As the hunting commander, Rendall regularly traveled the Horde's territories, both to keep order and to intercept any threats.

"No, head straight home."

Orion wasn't planning on touching down. He'd been away from the Horde for quite a while now and was eager to check on Blackstone City's remodeling.

Screee!

Thunderhawk Rayden let out a long, echoing shriek over Poison Dragon Swamp, as though Orion were sending Rendall a quick greeting. Deep in the swamp, many of the bloodline warriors looked up to watch Rayden vanish toward the Black Forest.

"Arch Elder, Lord Orion's back from scouting the territory!"

Vespera, the succubus elder, lowered her gaze once the thunderhawk shrank to a distant speck in the sky.

"Indeed—that was definitely him, letting us know he's home," Rendall replied solemnly. He knew Orion's habits well.

"Arch Elder, there are loads of beasts in Poison Dragon Swamp, but they're tough to hunt! The moment we slip up, they dive into the marsh, and trying to haul them out is next to impossible."

That came from Hammerhoof, another member of the Horde council who'd joined Vespera to follow Rendall on this patrol. Though mainly meant as security, they still hoped to snag a decent catch of their own.

"You should let the lizardmen handle marshland hunts; they're the top predators down here," Rendall said. "Now, pack up—we're continuing east to see if any centaurs wandered into our territory."

Rendall's half-closed eyes snapped wide open, a glint of killing intent in them. Though Orion hadn't descended, he'd used his transcendent power to send Rendall a message telling him to sweep Poison Dragon Swamp's eastern reaches. Any centaur found trespassing was to be wiped out, no survivors.

Both Vespera and Hammerhoof were startled, then thrilled. The Horde's expansion made it rare to run into actual enemies these days.

Where there were enemies, there was glory in battle. Simple as that.

"All right, everybody up! Let's get going!

"Sharpen those weapons, cinch those leather armors. We've got ourselves a fight coming soon!"

Hammerhoof personally relayed the message, galloping from the front of the group to the rear. On hearing they might be in for a scrap, the warriors sparked with excitement.

Rendall scanned their faces with satisfaction. After so many fights, Stoneheart Horde's people no longer feared warfare.

Or, to be more precise, anyone too timid to fight had long since died. The ones left were hardened elites, fearless and eager for battle.

Chapter 252 Altar

A few days later, when Thunderhawk Rayden appeared in the skies above Blackstone City, Onyx, Delilah, and Lilith—who were all busy working around the city—looked up and finally let out a sigh of relief.

Without a doubt, Orion was the backbone of the Stoneheart Horde. Everyone in the horde revolved around him.

Once Orion returned to the horde, everyone's spirits were lifted.

"Quit staring and keep working!"

"Open up the passages on both sides of the Hall, and move all the rubble outside the city."

It was a rare sight to see Onyx shouting like this, driving the tribe members to hurry construction. Clearly, Orion's return had energized him.

Two months passed, and the main structure of the Horde Hall was already complete, with only a few finishing touches left.

Inside the largest tent, Orion was making love to Lilith. They hadn't seen each other for some time, and both were eager to lose themselves in each other's bodies.

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Early the next morning, Orion led four guards to the Horde Hall. The Hall before them already looked like a fully formed castle. The towering walls, the arrow towers standing like bolts on both sides, and the heavy stone gate all proclaimed the fortress's grandeur.

"My lord, allow me to show you around!"

Onyx volunteered, stepping forward. He used all his strength to push open the heavy stone gate.

"Wait here," Orion said to his guards, then followed Onyx inside the Horde Hall.

Right now, no one except Orion and Onyx was allowed to enter the Hall.

Boom...

After Orion stepped in, Onyx struggled again to close the gate behind them. Orion looked up at the stone ceiling. Even with his and Onyx's tall stature, they seemed tiny beneath its height.

"My lord," Onyx said respectfully, "this stone gate still needs a magical formation and some enchantments to block strong physical assaults."

Orion nodded. At this point, the castle was still just a big pile of rock. It needed the final step to unleash its supernatural potential.

"Take me to the forbidden area in the inner fortress, Prophet."

Onyx gave the stone gate a quick push to check that it was fully sealed before guiding Orion toward the restricted area inside the fortress.

"My lord, next to the outer fortress wall, we built a warehouse. During wartime, the warehouse can be turned into temporary lodgings or used for strategic reserves."

"We also reinforced the warehouse's roof so it can serve as a landing pad for flying beasts."

Onyx walked toward the inner fortress as he pointed to the enormous warehouse by the wall and the winding corridor leading up to its rooftop. This was something Orion had suggested before construction even began.

"My lord, as this road extends to the left and right, just like you asked, we built two tower towers."

Following Onyx's direction, Orion saw the towers as well as the walls that sealed off the inner fortress. The front of the Horde Hall faced Blackstone City.

Besides the arrow tower by the main gate, there were arrow towers placed at the eastern and western corners of the Hall. In short, from the front, the Horde Hall looked like a massive battle fortress.

Beyond the Hall stood Moonshadow Valley—Stoneheart Horde's military base. If that area were ever breached, Blackstone City would have already fallen.

Next, they came upon a vast plaza paved with countless giant stone slabs. At a glance, the plaza was boundless. Crossing it, Onyx led Orion into the inner fortress.

When they reached the entrance to the inner fortress, Onyx stopped. This area would become Orion's private space, off-limits without specific permission. Even now, Onyx knew to halt at the threshold.

"My lord, these are the tribal relics of our Obsidian Golem tribe. Rockwell is in the underground fissure rotation, and he asked me to give you these tribal relics personally."

Orion stayed silent and took the item Onyx handed over. It was a piece of pitch-black crystal. According to Onyx, this stone was very unusual, passed down through countless generations, a symbol of each chieftain's authority.

"Stay here. If anything strange happens, don't panic."

Expressionless, Orion left these words and walked into the inner fortress. Part of the inner fortress was Orion's future living quarters, while the other part was a forbidden zone for the horde.

Once inside, he activated a hidden passage, navigated a series of twists and turns, locked some mechanisms behind him, and finally arrived at the restricted area.

Even the Obsidian Golems had avoided building this place; it had been constructed entirely by small spiders. After the work was done, Lorelia had slaughtered all those spiders. In other words, Orion was the only one who knew the details of this area's layout.

At the center of the forbidden zone stood an altar made of special crystal; Orion had acquired these materials bit by bit at the Survivor's Platform. Approaching the altar, he took a deep breath.

Next, a crystal shining with starlight appeared in Orion's hand. This was the Lord's Stone he had traded for from Arthas.

Orion placed the Lord's Stone on the altar, and in the next instant, sparks of electricity danced across his brow as he communed with the transcendent power inside the stone.

Moments later, the Lord's Stone dissolved into a mass of dense, blood-red, mist-like transcendent power. That mist split into two parts—one merged into Orion's body, the other lingered on the altar, continuing to take shape.

Half an hour later, Orion opened his eyes, bloodlight flashing within them. He barely had time to savor the blood-based transcendent power he had just learned. Instead, he fixed his eyes on the altar.

A blood cocoon had formed there, hovering silently above the altar. Clearly, the other half of the Lord's Stone had finished transforming into the territory core.

Orion stared at the territory core for a moment, then pulled a few items from his storage ring. The first was a banner from the top of the tent—a tribal relic of the Giants. The mysterious symbol on that banner depicted a giant's silhouette, though time had weathered it so much that the design was blurred.

However, Orion sensed the figure looked somewhat like his father, and he felt the banner contained considerable faith energy.

Without hesitation, he placed the banner on top of the territory core. In the blink of an eye, the banner turned to ash, as though it had been utterly destroyed.

Chapter 253 Miracle

Orion did not pause. Next came a buffalo horn.

This was the tribal relic of the Buffalofolk. Orion had kept it ever since he killed Buffalofolk Torak Wildhorn. To be precise, it was called the Ancestor's Horn, a sacred relic of the Buffalofolk. Without a moment's hesitation, Orion placed the Ancestor's Horn on the territory core.

Crack, crack, crack!

Within the span of a single breath, the horn shattered completely. A furious buffalo phantom let out one final bellow before it, too, was absorbed by the territory core.

The third item was a whip.

This whip was the tribal relic of the Succubus race, which Orion had asked Delilah to hand over. Made from the tail of a high-ranking demon, it lasted fewer than five seconds before it disintegrated into ash, merging into the territory core.

The final item was the black crystal that Onyx had just presented.

It was the inherited tribal relic of the Obsidian Golems, imbued with a substantial amount of faith energy.

Crash!

Not only did this black crystal break—it turned completely gray. Orion exhaled, and with a breeze, the crystal powder scattered across the ground.

"And now," he murmured, "my true territory will descend."

Taking a deep breath, Orion closed his eyes. As soon as he did, the territory core on the altar began to radiate a brilliant, mysterious glow.

Inside the Horde Hall, Onyx stood outside the inner fortress like a statue, stone axe in hand, his expression as calm as ever.

Beyond the gates, a swarm of bloodline warriors continued working.

Previously, they had pushed aside two mountain slopes beside the Moonshadow Valley's walls. After using the resulting stones to build the Horde Hall, a huge amount of leftover rock had been piled in Moonshadow Valley. Even after using it for the Heroic Altar, the Military Fortress, and the Beast Pens, there was still plenty left for the outer city walls.

Right when everyone was busy, a sudden gust whipped through Blackstone City. Invisible, intangible, gone as quickly as it came—but everyone felt it. The wind expanded outward like a hurricane from the center of Blackstone City, surging across every direction at an unimaginable speed.

Soon, that gust swept through the entire Black Forest, then Poison Dragon Swamp, and then continued southward all the way to Half-Moon Lake.

In Poison Dragon Swamp, the wind brushed right past Rendall, tangling his beard. Rendall sensed a familiar presence, though he was certain Orion was nowhere nearby.

"That's strange," he muttered. "Must be my imagination."

He crushed a centaur's head with one stomp, then lifted his head and yelled, "Move out, you brats! We're patrolling along the swamp!"

"Remember—don't cross it. That's another lord's territory!"

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Farther south, at Half-Moon Lake.

Lysinthia stood atop the Twilight Viper, wearing nothing but a skimpy bone armor. She was simultaneously seductive and dangerous. Her black hair streamed behind her, and two small serpents coiled into circles dangled from her ears, spinning in the wind and giving her presence an exotic flair.

Suddenly, Lysinthia raised her head, her eyes clouded with confusion. She could've sworn she sensed Master Orion's aura a second ago. Yet, with the blink of an eye, it vanished. Her brow furrowed, and her gaze grew darker.

"Surrender seventy percent of your resources and swear fealty to our lord, and you will be spared!" she declared.

Standing on the Twilight Viper's crest, Lysinthia released the full might of her Alpha-level aura, crushing the row of trembling creatures prostrate before her. Meanwhile, the hundreds of Gorgons behind Lysinthia lifted their crossbows in unison, aiming at the crowd with lethal intent.

Fireraven, Thunderstorm Bearmen, Gnolls, Satyrs, Geckos... countless races begged for mercy, many opting to submit. More than a dozen different races had settled around Half-Moon Lake, and the arrival of Lysinthia, Thundar, Slagor, and Twilight Viper had stirred them into chaos.

Yet Lysinthia, Thundar, and Slagor were not lovers of wanton killing. Those who agreed to serve and pay tribute were allowed to live by Half-Moon Lake. Those who refused... had already returned to their maker.

The captives now kneeling were the latest rebels to be seized.

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Back at Blackstone City, within the Forbidden Zone of the Horde Hall.

Orion slowly opened his eyes. In that brief moment, he had transformed into a gust of wind that roamed across his entire territory—or more precisely, a boundary line.

Guided by Orion's will, powered by transcendent energy, and anchored by the places that nurtured faith in him, the territory core unleashed its boundary for the first time and defined the limits of Orion's domain.

"The supernatural world... a land of wonders, a might beyond imagining!"

This epiphany sparked a smile on Orion's face. He closed his eyes once more.

Immediately, the entire Horde Hall began to change. Centered on the territory core atop the forbidden altar, a subtle and invisible force spread out, transforming the Hall itself.

The very first to sense this was Onyx, standing guard outside the inner fortress. Before his eyes, the bluish-black walls of the Horde Hall turned vivid red at a speed visible to the naked eye. It was as though blood were overflowing from the inner fortress and staining the entire complex.

Nor was that the only change. In Onyx's perception, the buildings made of giant stones were melding together more tightly. The clearest evidence was right under his feet, on the stone slabs that made up the plaza.

Initially, they had been pieced together, with some gaps still visible between them. Though special mortar was used, small separations remained. But after the blood-red hue spread across them, the slabs fused seamlessly into one continuous slab, leaving no trace of a gap.

"This... is this the supernatural power?" Onyx murmured. "This is practically a miracle!"

Though Orion had warned him beforehand, Onyx still found it overwhelmingly shocking to witness such a miracle firsthand. And it wasn't over yet.

As that blood-red color continued to spread, the walls and towers of the Horde Hall each underwent subtle changes.

For instance, the battlements on the walls grew smoother underfoot, and the battlements themselves bulged outward slightly for better defense. The towers rose a bit taller, grew reinforced spikes at their corners, and took on a rounder shape.

Outside the Horde Hall, the tribespeople at work could only stare wide-eyed at the castle's ever-shifting contours, rendered speechless by the spectacle unfolding before them.

Chapter 254 Second title

"By the Titan God above, is this a miracle?"

"Look—Horde Hall is changing!"

"This has to be supernatural... definitely our lord's power!"

...

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

In Blackstone City, a crowd of elders and clanspeople hurried over after hearing the news, and they could only stare in astonishment at the scene unfolding before their eyes.

"So this is the supernatural construction Lord Orion was talking about?"

"This is unbelievable!"

Delilah gazed at the grand Horde Hall, watching the flickers of mysterious patterns and symbols ripple across its walls. Her beautiful eyes widened in awe.

"This kind of power is beyond incomprehensible!"

After some time, the changes in the Horde Hall slowed and finally stabilized, becoming almost imperceptible. But for mages like Delilah and Lilith, who were highly attuned to magical elements, they saw the entire Horde Hall shrouded in an enormous magical formation.

Now, the Hall was saturated with magic. The walls and main building shimmered with faintly glowing runes. Nobody could tell how much time had passed, but when the magical energy finally merged into the Horde Hall, the entire structure shifted toward a deeper, darker style.

The dark red fortress complemented the look of Blackstone City, and behind the castle was Moonshadow Valley, home of the horde's army. Its somber red hue suggested an unyielding resolve—of blood spilled by warriors on the battlefield.

Inside the forbidden area of the inner fortress, Orion opened his eyes once again. This time, they shone with delight and excitement.

He reached into his robes and withdrew four miniature arrow towers, then fused them into the territory core. Unlike the fusion of the tribal relics from various races, this process went unbelievably smoothly, with no signs of destruction.

Outside, at the main gates of the Horde Hall and on the towers to the east and west, something unexpected happened. In the eyes of the clanspeople, those towers shot up even taller, sealing off their former lookout spaces.

One by one, waves of supernatural power built in the tower interiors, radiating terrifying energy. After a while, the transformations stabilized, leaving the four towers looking even more grim and menacing.

Whish!

Just when everyone thought things had returned to normal, a fresh surge of supernatural energy pulsed from the right-side arrow tower near the main gate. A lightning-fast arrow, trailed by rainbow light, tore into a nearby mountain slope.

Boom—rumble!

The mountainside exploded, sending rubble flying everywhere. That was the power of the arrow towers: Orion had performed a casual test shot, to devastating effect. Everyone outside the Horde Hall saw it clearly and found themselves too stunned for words.

In the forbidden zone, Orion opened his eyes yet again, a smile curling his lips.

"Not bad."

He was pleased by the power of the arrow towers. From the day he'd arrived in this world, he had killed countless enemies and collected seven arrow towers in total.

Recently, while browsing for materials to build the altar in the forbidden zone, Orion spotted a bargain on the Survivor's Platform. He bought an additional arrow tower outright from another survivor. That meant he now had eight in all, one of which was purchased.

Horde Hall was the most important construction of his territory—home to the territory core. Orion expended four arrow towers on this fortress in total; one could say he'd spared no effort.

At long last, Orion walked out of the inner fortress and met Onyx, who had been waiting near the gate.

"Surprised?" Orion's mood was bright now that the territory had officially settled, and he couldn't resist teasing Onyx.

"Such supernatural power is beyond imagination," Onyx replied, voice full of sincerity.

Legendary-level transcendent power, compared to an Alpha-level fighter, was simply on another plane of existence.

"Prophet, blow up those two mountain slopes!"

As Orion spoke, the arrow towers at the east and west corners each fired a solitary arrow, blasting the summits of those two slopes. The mountains collapsed with a roar.

"For the city walls in these two spots, push them outward and build taller towers to defend the Horde Hall from the outer edge—and guard Moonshadow Valley, too."

This was Orion's latest plan: those slopes flanking the Hall had to go, since they blocked the arrow towers' line of sight and limited their firing range.

"Yes, my lord!"

Onyx gazed at the collapsed mountains a moment longer, then glanced back at the arrow towers by the main gate, catching on right away.

"We'll wrap up the thoroughfares on both sides of the Hall as soon as possible, and seal off the buildings inside Moonshadow Valley."

He nodded, agreeing to Orion's instructions.

"My lord, besides building the towers on each side, how about including two hidden passages?" Onyx added after a moment's thought.

Orion's eyes lit up at that suggestion. If they built hidden passages at the same time, the warriors training in Moonshadow Valley could exit the valley more swiftly, and they'd have a chance to flank enemies assaulting the city gates.

"Prophet, that makes sense. Use the little spiders for the hidden passages."

"Understood!"

Onyx was pleased that Orion recognized his idea—the two of them were clearly on the same wavelength.

"Oh, by the way, go let Delilah know the Horde Hall is ready for use. Have her station some of our troops in the outer fortress."

The moment the territory core became rooted in the Horde Hall, the supernatural properties of this place took hold. From now on, the Horde Hall would be the heart and soul of Orion's territory.

Onyx nodded and prepared to carry out Orion's request as they exited the Hall. Outside, Orion and Onyx's arrival caused an inevitable stir among the crowd.

Without offering any explanation, Orion transformed into a bolt of lightning and vanished from sight. Onyx sighed quietly; he would have to handle the crowd's questions himself.

Returning to his tent, Orion half-lay on a pile of furs, eyes half-closed as though drifting off. His thoughts, however, were fixed on his status panel. Ever since the territory core had successfully merged with the Horde Hall, something had changed.

Beyond a new territory-building interface, Orion's data panel now featured a brand-new title:

Giant King: The king's dignity and roar will intimidate all giants. Any giant whose rank is lower than the Giant King's stands a high chance of submitting unconditionally to his authority and obeying his commands.

This was Orion's second title, an identity he had established within this world. His first title, Survivor, remained as a reminder of the old world he had left behind.

Chapter 255 You're incredible

The establishment of the Horde Hall and the arrival of the Giant King title seemed like a signal—the dawn of a rising power.

The next day, Orion did not show himself at the Horde Hall. After all, yesterday's divine sign at the Hall had drawn countless tribe members who wanted to witness the "miracle" with their own eyes. By now, the area outside the Horde Hall was jam-packed with onlookers from different tribes.

As for Orion, he had ventured straight to the Cave Spiders' domain.

Underground fissure, bottomless abyss.

"Master, let me come with you!" Lorelia stood a step behind Orion, clutching her favorite longbow, peering eagerly into the bottomless abyss.

"Knock it off. Stay here and guard this place. Don't let anything in or out," Orion replied, shooting a glare at the Spider Queen, who reflexively ducked her head in an almost endearing way.

The moment the Horde Hall was finished, Orion had been itching to explore the bottomless abyss. Now that he'd advanced to Legendary level, his strength had soared, and he was determined not only to see what lay below but also to claim it as his own territory if possible.

"Have those fifty thousand little spiders follow right behind me. No straggling!"

No sooner had Orion spoken than he jumped down along the wall of the abyss. Lorelia watched him go, then waved her hand. An endless wave of small spiders poured forth from the passageway behind her, skittering down into the bottomless abyss in pursuit of Orion.

"You three get down there, too, and guide him!" she said. At her command, three Death Spiders—stronger-looking and unnaturally lively in the heavy air—bounded after Orion.

Darkness reigned in the bottomless abyss, with not a hint of light. It was a suffocating landscape, the rocks jagged and imposing, cold mists swirling in every crevice. Strange mucus dripped from the walls in places, and the environment felt downright hostile.

Without question, this was no place for ordinary creatures. Once, Orion had considered hiding tribe members here in case of emergency, but that had clearly been too optimistic. Unless he completely took over the area below and cleared out a habitable zone, this cavernous underworld would be lethal to most. It was like an underground prison locked away from daylight.

Initially, Orion was content to climb along the stone himself. But eventually, he simply fastened himself to one of the Death Spiders, letting it carry him forward.

In the pitch-black gloom, time lost all meaning. Orion, who had been resting with his eyes closed, suddenly snapped them open. Jumping off the Death Spider's back, he landed at the mouth of a tunnel ahead.

"Who goes there?"

The wind howled, and Clymene—who was guarding a makeshift camp—sprang to her feet, peering up at the entrance from the bottomless abyss.

Rumble...

Lightning flickered, and Orion appeared before Clymene, bathed in crackling arcs of electricity.

"Sis!" Orion beamed at Clymene, genuinely pleased, his excitement evident.

"That's lightning... a supernatural power?"

Clymene looked both shocked and ecstatic, struggling to believe her own eyes.

Orion didn't bother explaining. Instead, he unleashed the full force of his Legendary-level aura onto Clymene and the five elders—Vargrum, Mordak, Zorn, Balgor, and Grendel—who cowered under that overwhelming presence.

All they could feel in that moment was power, fear, and helplessness. The electric sparks zapping around Orion's body made them sense a terrifying annihilation at the slightest misstep. Lightning naturally suppressed death energy and the undead, after all.

"Orion... you really reached Legendary level?" Clymene's deep voice shook as she spoke—part awe, part happiness that was suddenly too much to handle.

"Sis, I made it," Orion replied with a smile. He was truly eager to share his joy and accomplishments with her.

But instead of cheering, Clymene and the five elders—Vargrum, Mordak, Zorn, Balgor, and Grendel—all fell to their knees in unison, paying him proper homage.

"Clymene greets the King of our race!"

"Vargrum greets the King of our race!"

"Grendel greets the King of our race!"

"...!"

They were honoring Orion as the Giant King, following the rites and customs of their people. Clymene had clearly said "King of our race," not "my brother Orion."

"Rise, all of you."

Orion composed himself, his expression solemn. He accepted this homage and responded with dignity.

"Haha! Orion, you're amazing! Absolutely incredible!"

Clymene stood up and stepped forward, hugging her brother happily.

"A Giant King—our Blackstone clan actually gave birth to a Giant King!"

"Vargrum, pinch me. I feel like I'm dreaming."

"No kidding. It's unbelievable."

"..."

Vargrum, Mordak, Zorn, Balgor, and Grendel all came closer, regarding Orion the same way one might admire some legendary beauty. Clymene's entire group was so excited that Orion found it a bit overwhelming.

Amid their enthusiastic questioning, Orion calmly explained his breakthrough to Legendary level, along with the major recent events in the horde.

"The Horde Hall is complete. The territory boundary even reached this place earlier, so I took the chance to come down and check things out."

He spoke casually about the horde's latest developments, then explained why he was exploring the bottomless abyss.

"Orion, I'm so proud of you. You're truly my brother—and the Giant King of our people!"

Clymene patted Orion's shoulder, then kissed his forehead in a familiar, affectionate gesture. Deep down, she could scarcely imagine the courage it took for Orion to stay independent amid the maneuvers of Ariel and Gareth—not to mention his eventual defiance.

At the bottomless abyss, in front of a tower built entirely of bones...

"The last message our little spiders delivered said we needed stronger bones, so we refined some and built this bone tower," Clymene explained as she led Orion to the large structure, sounding both puzzled and proud.

"We haven't found any rare materials or resources in this underground world so far. But there sure are a whole bunch of bones. For us, that's basically the perfect building material."

Orion nodded. From the moment he arrived, he could tell this underworld was a massive graveyard—at least in the surrounding areas.

"Have you explored any other regions?"

"Not yet," Clymene admitted, which surprised Orion. She raised her hand, gesturing upward.

Orion glanced up the dark passage, suddenly understanding.

"Lorelia's guarding the top, so no worries there," he said.

Clymene shook her head. "The ones above are the tribe I used to lead. I may have reached Alpha-level, but I died too soon to fulfill my duties as chieftain. If not for you stepping up, our tribe could never have risen again."

She turned toward Orion, her gaze carrying a hint of guilt.

"Sis, it's all in the past," he said gently.

Without replying, Clymene fixed her eyes on the bone tower. "Since we ended up down here, this spot is the starting line—our horde's very first line of defense. I, Clymene, swear that as long as I have strength left, no subterranean creature will survive crossing here to harm our people!"

In that moment, Orion felt both touched and full of respect.

"That's exactly why I came, Sis."

He took a calming breath, hiding the swirl of emotion inside. Under Clymene's surprised stare, he approached the bone tower and placed his hand against it.

Far above, in the Horde Hall's forbidden zone, the territory core hovering atop the altar flashed briefly, then went still.

Deep underground, at the bottom of the abyss, a surge of blood-red transcendent power flared from the point where Orion's palm touched the bone tower. Starting at his hand, it radiated outward at incredible speed.

Within a minute, that entire bone structure was infused by scarlet power, crackling and creaking in the process.

To Clymene's eyes, the tower was growing taller as its body narrowed slightly, but at the same time it became more solid, its bones merging together seamlessly. Originally, there were plenty of gaps between the stacked bones—but now, under the effect of that transcendent power, they became one solid mass.

Moments later, Orion withdrew his hand. The tower before him had turned into a dark-red fortress spire.

"Orion, this—?" Clymene started to speak, but Orion held up a finger, pointing at a pile of unidentified beast bones three hundred feet away.

Whiz!

A surging, blood-tinged bolt streaked across the distance so fast it was nearly invisible.

Boom!

In the next instant, those scattered bones exploded into tiny fragments that sprayed across the area.

"This...this..." Clymene was rendered speechless, too shocked to form her words properly. Nearby, Vargrum, Mordak, Zorn, Balgor, and Grendel had seen the incredible display as well, eyes full of disbelief.

"This is a special building of our horde—an arrow tower," Orion explained calmly. "Unfortunately, we don't have many of them. For now, we can only set up one here underground."

He had eight arrow towers total, all fully merged with the territory core. Four were used in the Horde Hall, one had just been placed here in the underworld, and the remaining three would be erected along the outer city walls.

"Orion, so this means our horde is really on the rise... right?" Clymene asked, wanting an official answer though it was obvious enough.

"That's right, Sis," Orion said confidently.

Clymene's expression shifted from solemn to overjoyed, and then to outright euphoria. She hugged Orion so tightly her considerable chest pressed against him.

But just as she was ready to float away on cloud nine, Orion brought her tumbling back to earth.

"Only problem is, aside from me, no one can directly control the arrow tower."

"Huh?"

Clymene spun around in disbelief, thinking she must have misheard. Orion met her gaze and, seeing her crestfallen look, continued.

"Even though nobody else can operate it, the arrow tower can still attack targets on its own. It can defend against intruders."

"Really?"

"For sure."

"Does it know friend from foe?"

"In a certain sense, yes..."

Orion didn't sound terribly confident, though. The tower could indeed fire automatically, but it had some flaws. Essentially, it identified hostiles by whether they contributed faith energy toward Orion. Neutral creatures were often not recognized as allies and risked being shot.

Stepping closer to Clymene, Orion whispered a few more arrow tower secrets into her ear. When he was finished, her brow furrowed.

"Don't worry, little brother," she said softly. "As long as we're camped here, even the undead can't slip past us unnoticed."

Orion simply nodded, keeping his thoughts to himself. Truth be told, there was another weakness: the arrow tower couldn't pinpoint undead or creatures with advanced stealth abilities.

"In any case," Clymene said at last, "with this tower, the six of us have something big to rely on. We'll defend this outpost no matter what!"

Shhhhh...

Right then, a rustling came from the abyss passage above, steadily drawing closer.

"It's fine—it's the group of little spiders I brought down," Orion said. He looked up at the tunnel overhead, watching wave after wave of small spiders emerge. They clung to their silk threads, descending headfirst.

Still, Orion couldn't help raising an eyebrow.

He'd originally brought fifty thousand spiders, but only around thirty thousand had survived to reach the underworld.

Roughly twenty thousand were corroded to death by the noxious air during the descent—but not wasted, since they became food for the others along the way. That was just how cave spiders lived; Orion didn't interfere.

"We started with fifty thousand. Now we're down to thirty," he said with a tinge of regret. "They're all yours, Sis. These spiders adapt well, but let them stay close to the arrow tower to better their odds of survival."

Without more numbers, there wasn't much point in pushing farther into unknown territory.

At that moment, Clymene was tempted to blurt out, "Orion, you're incredible—who would've thought we giants could ever become this strong?"

Chapter 256 A cross-realm teleportation array

Sizzle—crackle!

Thunder rumbled, lightning crackled.

Orion had left the makeshift camp three days ago. Even traveling in lightning form, he had already come a long way. It was rare for him to get a chance to venture down here, so aside from helping his sister Clymene and the others settle in, he also wanted to thoroughly explore this underworld.

But after three days of rushing around, he still hadn't finished mapping out this entire underworld. Evidently, the place was huge.

Dropping to the ground, Orion summoned his Abyssal Dragon to haul him onward. As it emerged, the dragon let loose a roar, clearly energized by the dense aura of death all around.

"Xalathar, go on ahead and scout."

With that order, Orion half-closed his eyes to recuperate what remained of his nearly-spent transcendent power. From what he could sense, there were no Legendary-level beings in the immediate area—meaning Clymene should be safe enough.

Still, the sheer number of underground creatures living here had exceeded his expectations. Most of them were remarkably good at blending in, sometimes staying motionless for ages to avoid being noticed.

If Orion truly wanted to claim this territory, leaving only Clymene and a handful of elders to hold it wouldn't be enough. Fortunately, he'd brought tens of thousands of little spiders, giving him at least a foothold.

Occupying such a massive area would take time—he'd need to wait for more Cave Spiders to transform into Death Spiders first.

Half a day later, the Abyssal Dragon was attacked as it traversed a rocky stretch of terrain.

Hiss! Hiss! Hiss!

The underground creatures that attacked moved across the ground the way snakes slither through undergrowth. More than a dozen python-sized monsters lunged from behind the rocks, wrapping themselves around the dragon's hind legs, neck, and tail.

Roar!

With a furious bellow, the Abyssal Dragon unleashed its Alpha-level aura, hoping to scare them off. Oddly, the hulking monsters showed zero reaction to that pressure.

Orion opened his drowsy eyes. Noticing one of the freakish creatures slinking around his own legs, he grabbed it by the neck. It looked snake-like but much thicker.

Hiss!

Its head bloomed open like a flower, revealing a maw lined with rows of jagged teeth. The sight reminded Orion of certain dark creatures he'd encountered elsewhere.

Splurt!

A foul slime sprayed from the monster's open mouth. With just a slight surge of transcendent power, Orion reduced the thing to a pile of char in a flash.

Meanwhile, the Abyssal Dragon growled and ripped apart the monsters latched onto it, clawing and biting without mercy.

After about ten minutes, all the weird snake-like beasts were dead, their bodies torn into multiple pieces. Orion hopped off the dragon's back, checking for injuries. No major wounds, but a few small ones—mostly from that corrosive slime.

"Better head back and recuperate."

He patted the Abyssal Dragon. A ray of crimson light flashed, and the creature vanished back into Orion's heart.

These monsters weren't a good match for its brute-force approach. Forcing the dragon to continue fighting them would just lead to more injuries, and it wasn't all that effective anyway.

Drawing his trident, Orion kept moving. Something felt off in this region—he could sense these same vicious, disgusting monsters lurking all around.

Boom!

As he walked, Orion casually swung the trident. Any monster that tried mobbing him was instantly taken out with a single strike—many burst into Flame of Willignite, burned to ashes on the spot. While that fire repelled them for a moment, they rushed back in once the flames died down.

It was bizarre that these creatures ignored not only Alpha-level aura but even Orion's Legendary-level suppression. That alone provoked his curiosity.

He focused, pinpointing the strongest presence in this stony labyrinth and forged deeper in. The area was filled with towering slabs of rock, like an ominous stone maze.

A few hours passed before Orion stopped in his tracks, staring ahead with a grim expression.

There, on a small patch of flat ground, coiled a much larger version of those monsters. It looked like a giant worm about 150 feet long, covered in dense scales, with the same petal-like maw at its head.

Despite Orion cutting down countless snake-worm monsters along the way, this Alpha-level worm hadn't tried to attack. Only when he came upon that clearing did the beast finally lift its head and roar in his direction.

Up close, Orion could see the thing had no eyes—truly none at all—though it must have had some way to sense enemies.

Hiss... hiss... hiss...

The bigger worm let out a piercing series of hisses laced with faint sonic ripples. Orion observed it for a bit, then noticed it start slithering his way. He made no attempt to hold back—thunder crackled around him as he charged with the trident.

Boom!

The creature's head exploded, but it didn't die right away. Its snake-like body coiled, trying to trap Orion in a suffocating bind.

With a snort of contempt, Orion swung the trident, slicing the Alpha-level worm into several segments. Planting his foot on one section, he sensed something, then moved to another chunk to cut it open. From there, he fished out a black crystal core.

Only after the core had been removed did the worm's body go rigid, then finally die.

Strangely, even after their leader expired, the nearby horde of Hero-level monsters didn't flinch. They just kept mindlessly attacking Orion.

Fighting them off as he went, Orion inched toward where that Alpha-level worm had been curled up. The moment he stepped onto that spot, the remaining worms froze and slipped away into the darkness, no longer attacking.

Pulling back his trident, Orion gazed around in surprise.

"Is there something weird about the ground I'm standing on?"

Orion surveyed the area, taking in every detail, yet nothing seemed out of the ordinary. If anything stood out, it would be the massive stone rising roughly 200 feet high in the center of the clearing—an odd sight indeed. But the rock surface was severely corroded, making it impossible to discern its original form or any particular features.

"This isn't right... there's definitely something fishy going on."

After circling the stone twice, Orion finally fixed his gaze on it. He thought for a while, then cautiously placed his palm on the rough surface.

In the next moment, lightning flashed—transcendent power surged forward from Orion's palm and enveloped the entire stone.

Crash!

Chunks of rocky debris went flying as the weathered, corroded surface began to crack and flake off. Orion slammed his right foot down onto the ground, triggering enough force to shake loose any remaining flaky layers from the stone, revealing what lay beneath.

"What the—?"

Is this... a stone door?"

Orion's eyes went wide. He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

Afterward, he swept his trident around, clearing away the remaining rubble near the base of the stone. Underneath was not a simple foundation, but rather an altar.

"No way..."

Even Orion couldn't hold back his surprise.

Because what stood before him was actually a teleportation gate.

He could tell because Arthas had once given him notes on a teleportation formation—how to set one up, how certain sigils worked. The gate in front of him, by comparison, seemed a bit more primitive, though a lot better concealed.

Staring at it, Orion fell deep into thought.

"Could this underworld be tied to some hidden portal from another realm?"

His heart throbbed at the possibility. Arthas had mentioned that building a teleportation array from scratch required some top-tier backing—at the very least, an established Legendary-level figure in the faction. Sure, there were a few exceptional beings within Legendary-level, but they would definitely be the types who had the power to establish entire territories.

After all, a teleportation array was itself a special kind of construction. No territory meant no way to build one. Let alone the fact that this here was a cross-realm teleportation array.

Narrowing his eyes, Orion studied the dormant structure, sparks of caution flickering across his gaze.

He wasn't sure how much time passed. In a sudden flash of bloodlight, the Abyssal Dragon appeared before him. Orion rested his hand reassuringly on its massive head—leaning against his chest—then spoke quietly:

"Don't leave this place. Any intruders get taken out, no exceptions."

"Roar..."

The dragon's rumble carried overt murderous intent. Orion leapt onto its back and turned his mind toward the Survivor's Platform.

This time, he didn't bother scrolling through the market; he contacted Arthas directly:

"Bro, what would it mean if I found a cross-realm teleportation array underground that hasn't been activated in—let's say—at least a couple hundred years?"

No small talk. Orion cut straight to the point.

"A cross-realm teleportation array?

You sure?" Arthas's reply came fast, honed in on the crucial bit.

"I'm sure—it's really similar to the teleportation formation you showed me.

But it looks like it hasn't been fired up for centuries now.

I can also confirm that no sizable armies or mysterious races have shown up around here for at least that long,"

Orion elaborated, mixing in some of his observations and guesses. For a while though, there was no response.

Necro Realm, atop the Bone Throne.

Arthas, still perched as if carved from stone, lifted his right hand and stroked his bony jaw.

"A cross-realm teleportation array... interesting. Seems like Hulk's future may not be so clear after all."

If a cross-realm teleporter had popped up in Orion's territory, that spelled trouble eventually—trouble in the form of a powerful adversary. Arthas well knew that cross-realm teleportation was no joke. It devoured massive amounts of materials and magical energy.

Previously, Arthas had given Orion some notes and runes for a teleportation formation, but not the actual materials to build it. His plan was for Orion to gather them himself, and maybe Arthas could cover whatever Orion couldn't scrounge up. Also, Arthas didn't exactly have an unlimited stockpile, either.

As for Orion's claim that the portal hadn't been used for centuries, Arthas was skeptical. He basically ignored that. It made more sense that if anyone stood on the other side, they wouldn't want the portal discovered—and would leave some sort of security measures in place that killed any trespassers.

That was the standard approach. Whenever Arthas built a teleportation gate, he always created a death trap around it, barring outsiders from access.

"Hulk, try hitting the teleportation gate with your strongest attack. Let me know if it has any defenses or countermeasures."

After a while, Arthas finally sent Orion a reply—he wanted to test whether that portal really was centuries out of commission.

Underworld—standing before the dormant portal:

Orion read the message, his eyes narrowing in contemplation. He'd actually already tested the portal with his transcendent power when he discovered it.

"Bro, I didn't detect any kind of barrier or retaliation mechanism.

When I infused transcendent power, that's how I uncovered what it really was in the first place.

The gate showed no sign of runic glow or magical flow—it looks like all its energy is drained."

Orion texted back. Arthas went silent again.

Necro Realm, on the Bone Throne.

Arthas's focus was no longer on the teleporter itself; it was on Orion's offhand remark about using "transcendent power."

He froze, stared into space, whispered to himself, "It's only been a few years...

Has this guy already hit Legendary level?

He said he used transcendent power...

Alright, I need to confirm this."

Suddenly sitting more upright—like addressing a critical matter—Arthas sent Orion a short, direct question:

"You've ascended to Legendary level?"

It was a vital piece of info. If Orion had truly reached that stage, then the cross-realm portal might not be such a big deal—at least from Arthas's point of view. In fact, it might even be an opportunity.

Chapter 257 This is just the beginning

"Yes, I've recently ascended to Legendary level!

As for that cross-realm teleportation array, do you have any good suggestions on how to handle it?"

That was Orion's reply. When Arthas saw the message, he rose from his Bone Throne and paced about.

"He actually did it! Hulk has reached Legendary level!

That was way too fast...

Unbelievable.

Are giants really that full of potential?"

After a long while, once he accepted the fact of Orion's ascension, Arthas broke into a delighted grin. Settling back onto his Bone Throne, he began drafting his reply:

"Since you've reached Legendary level, that cross-realm teleportation array is a minor issue. I have three possible approaches for you to consider.

First, you can keep blasting the cross-realm teleportation array with your transcendent power. Even though the materials used to build a teleportation formation are tough, they won't last long under sustained transcendent barrages.

However, while this method can destroy the array, it also ruins all its valuable components. I personally don't recommend doing it."

Reading that first approach, Orion felt his tension ease. He glanced back at the towering stone in front of him, confidence growing in his chest. If he couldn't find a good solution, he'd definitely choose to demolish the teleportation array for the horde's safety.

With that worry eased, Orion focused on continuing through Arthas's reply.

"Second, based on what you said, you tested the cross-realm teleportation array with transcendent power and got zero response.

That suggests one thing: the energy has been completely depleted. There's also a chance the faction that built it was wiped out and never repaired the array.

I think that possibility is pretty high because a teleportation formation is critical to any faction.

So the second approach is to leave the array as is. Once you can build your own territory and reach a solid power level, you could use this portal like a forward base and invade whatever realm lies beyond.

In other words, it might not be a threat—it could be an untapped gold mine."

Orion's heart thudded at this second option. From Arthas's perspective, the portal wasn't just a potential danger; it might be a hidden treasure. Excitement pulsed through Orion—obviously it also carried risks. The other side might still have some secret plan on standby, somewhere near Orion's territory.

Taking a breath, Orion gathered his composure, knowing that Arthas wasn't done yet.

"Third, you could share this teleportation array with me and some of my friends, because we're quite curious about the world on the other side.

Naturally, we'd pay you for that access and offer you appropriate compensation.

We'd also give you a cut of whatever spoils we earn there."

Orion understood the implication without further explanation. They'd build a few additional teleportation formations in this underworld, allowing Arthas and his allies to come through, then team up to invade whatever lay beyond.

Of course, the biggest pitfall here is that Orion would expose both his territory and his own world to them. No matter the payment, that might not be worth the risk.

"Thank you."

Orion finished reading and offered Arthas his sincere gratitude.

"Don't mention it. Just lending you a hand.

Let me guess—knowing you, you'll probably go with the second option, right?

Am I right?"

Orion read those lines, stayed silent, and logged off the Survivor's Platform.

No question, Arthas understood him well. As a Survivor and as a giant with big ambitions, Orion was beyond driven. From hearing old legends about the Ancient Titan God in childhood, to suffering the Flower Goddess's Curse of a Hundred Blossoms, and finally channeling Titan God power into himself to slay Ariel and reach Legendary rank—he'd experienced both divine power and the supernatural first-hand.

It was impossible for him not to dream of rising to godhood. Because he held that vague but fiery goal in his heart, Orion refused to surrender in the face of Ariel or Gareth; he'd chosen a third path entirely.

Now, in the underworld, Orion stood atop the Abyssal Dragon. He suddenly opened his eyes, sparks of lightning dancing inside them like twin orbs of thunder.

"This place is my territory.

And whatever world lies beyond that teleportation array... that's my backyard too.

It's mine.

All of it!"

Rumble... Rumble...

Lightning arced outward from Orion's body. Monsters lurking in the darkness were obliterated as currents snapped their way, scattering every last one.

"Xalathar, let's head back."

Three days later, Orion returned to the makeshift camp and informed his sister Clymene about the big picture down here in the underworld.

"Orion, are you serious?"

Clymene and the giant elders listened, stunned. Cross-realm teleportation array? An entirely unknown world? It was all way beyond anything they'd imagined possible.

"Sis, come with me. We're going to set up another camp near the portal. I'm going to build an arrow tower there."

Clymene hesitated. "Who's gonna guard this place, though?"

"Leave ten thousand little spiders. That's enough."

"What if some Alpha-level monsters push through here and head above ground?"

"It's all good. Lorelia and Rockwell are holding the line up top. They'll sound the alarm if something shows up, and our other Alpha-level fighters will rush over to help."

"Well... okay."

"Don't worry—any Alpha-level beast that surfaces becomes just another resource for the horde. The council elders are all keeping an eye on the underground fissure anyway."

That eased Clymene's mind. In truth, she and the other five elders had also been itching to explore more of the underworld, but they stayed here out of concern for Orion and the rest of their people.

"In that case, no sense wasting time. Let's head out now, dear brother!"

"Right!"

Orion nodded, then summoned the Abyssal Dragon to lead the way. Meanwhile, Clymene and the elders each hitched a ride on a giant spider, following Orion.

Seven days later, darkness still shrouded everything.

Orion stood before a newly constructed arrow tower, eyes locked on the cross-realm teleportation array. The tower's firing range completely encompassed the portal.

"Orion, you're heading back now?"

Clymene was beside him. During the past several days, day and night blending under the spiders' tireless work, they'd finally managed to finish building the arrow tower.

"Yeah, Sis," Orion said softly. Over this time, he'd only grown more intrigued by the cross-realm teleportation array. The idea of conquering the world beyond it—of hogging its resources—was burning ever hotter in his mind.

"You're not planning to check out the rest of the unexplored underworld?"

"You can handle that, Sis."

Orion turned to look at her. He had already confirmed that no Legendary-level threat existed in this area, and discovered the most critical piece: the cross-realm teleportation array.

"Don't worry, Orion. We'll guard this place for you."

He nodded without speaking and gently tapped the center of Clymene's forehead with one fingertip.

"I may not be able to come down here again anytime soon. If anything comes up, use this will projection to reach me."

With that, Orion left behind a small will projection on Clymene's brow. She stayed quiet for a second, then pulled a leather pouch from her robe and passed it to him.

"There are three Alpha-level crystal cores inside. We got them during our time in the underworld.

My situation is pretty unusual, so they don't help my power any. You'd be better off taking them back topside to develop the horde more."

Orion accepted the bag without protest.

"Sis, elders—take care."

He summoned the Abyssal Dragon, vaulted onto its back, and then left the place. Clymene and her five fellow elders watched him, saying nothing. After their brief reunion, the shadow of parting lingered heavily in the air.

Orion left without looking back, commanding the Abyssal Dragon on through the rocky hills.

"Clymene, it's been a while since he vanished," Elder Grendel remarked, stepping up as Clymene continued gazing at Orion's silhouette long after it disappeared.

She finally glanced at the elders around her.

"This is just the beginning," she said.

They all paused. Indeed, it was only the beginning.

"Rest up for half a day, then we'll go explore the surrounding area."

...

Half a month later, at the bottomless abyss:

Spider Queen Lorelia arrived early at the edge of the bottomless abyss, awaiting the aura she sensed coming closer, a presence she found deeply comforting. Soon, a soft skittering noise echoed. A small spider scrambled up over the ledge, with Orion following close behind.

"Master, you're finally back up!"

He calmly asked, "Anything happen around here?"

Lorelia tilted her head, scratching her chin with her little hand while studying Orion's face.

"Hmm, not much, I think!"

But Mistress came by three times asking about you, and four of the senior elders also stopped in. They all left disappointed when you didn't show."

Orion nodded, scanning Blackstone City's condition through his senses. Everything seemed normal.

"Stay on your toes. If any subterranean creature tries crawling out, sound the alarm."

He patted Lorelia on the head, then made for the exit of the bottomless abyss.

"Lord."

Rockwell emerged from the shadows at the tunnel mouth and bowed. Orion nodded, exchanged a few words, and finally departed the underground fissure.

When Orion arrived at the Horde Hall, Lilith, Delilah, and Onyx were already waiting. He beckoned them along into the meeting room built within the outer fortress of the Hall.

Though the outer fortress was small, it had everything: a guardroom, a couple of weapon caches, and now a meeting room. Its layout wasn't like some standard human conference chamber; it was more like a big tent.

In the front sat a throne with four seats for the senior elders lined up beneath it, each with its own small table. Next came the Wardens in an oval arrangement that enclosed the central area. After that were eight council elders' seats, behind the Wardens. Finally, the rest of the elders fanned out around the chamber's edges.

Orion entered. Once Lilith, Delilah, and Onyx had settled, his first words left them reeling:

"Prophet, I need two statues built—one in the small courtyard of the Horde Hall and another in the main square of Blackstone City."

"The statues will be modeled on me."

It was abrupt, to say the least. Orion wasn't even talking about the underworld. He jumped right to a "peculiar" request.

"My lord, what size should these statues be?" Onyx asked promptly, nailing down a key detail.

Orion flashed him a smile, looking serious as he replied, "The one in the Horde Hall courtyard should be carved at about three times my actual height. The one for the main square should be about ten times my height."

Onyx nodded. Sculpting was a trivial task for an Obsidian Golem.

"Lord, can I ask what the statues are for?"

Orion paused, then spoke with solemn weight in his voice: "They'll help strengthen unity within the horde and make it easier to gather faith.

Also, anyone among you who racks up monumental achievements might receive their own statue someday."

The first part was pretty clear: it was all about the horde—and Orion himself.

The second part revealed Orion's generosity: even though the horde's faith energy revolved around him, he was willing to share some of it with his top contributors.

Lilith, Delilah, and Onyx stayed silent for a moment, each caught up in private thoughts. Faith energy was something well beyond their usual sphere; they needed time to process that.

While they mulled it over, Orion casually recounted his trip underground. This time, though, he left out any mention of the cross-realm teleportation array. All he said was that he had built a temporary camp in the underworld for the little spiders and that they would continue exploring down there.

Chapter 258 Sounds good

When Orion finished explaining what the underworld was like, Onyx, Lilith, and Delilah were all stoked beyond words. Based on Orion's description, the underworld was basically another stretch of territory for the Stoneheart Horde.

It was the Horde's final refuge, a safe harbor for survival, and their fallback route.

"Lord, while you were away, the Heroic Altar, the Military Fortress, the Hall of Glory, and the Beast Pens were all finished. Only the outer city wall isn't done yet," Onyx announced with a broad smile, making Orion's eyes light up.

"Since those special buildings are complete, shift your focus to the city walls. But don't let the ongoing transformation of Moonshadow Valley grind to a halt," Orion said.

Onyx nodded, clearly agreeing. Moonshadow Valley was just too important for the Stoneheart Horde. Making the most of this period of peace and properly upgrading it would bring plenty of future benefits to the Horde.

"Lord, Lysinthia, Slagor, and Thundar have already consolidated Half-Moon Lake!"

"Over the past few days, huge amounts of resources have been transported from Half-Moon Lake back to Blackstone City."

"This time, at Half-Moon Lake, Thundar and the rest captured more than a dozen women from the Garland Tribe."

"Thundar wants to bring them back to the Horde—he's already on his way," Delilah said, after Onyx finished his own report.

At the mention of the Garland Tribe, the entire meeting room fell silent. Even Orion said nothing, narrowing his eyes as if lost in thought.

Ever since Violet chose to transform into a seed so she could bear Orion's offspring, the Garland Tribe had seemed almost forgotten by the Stoneheart Horde. Even Violet's subordinates, Jasmine and Ivy, stayed the whole time in the western ridge of Moonshadow Valley, immersed in tending magical plants and avoiding contact with everyone else.

"Tell Thundar to protect those Garland Tribe women well. Their enchantment powers matter a lot to us," Orion said at last, then paused. "Delilah, once those Garland Tribe women arrive, gather them together and have them enchant our newly built special structures."

"Afterward, they can enchant the outer city walls. If we run short on magical plants, come see me. I've got a stash of high-tier ones."

Orion's meaning was crystal clear. With Violet away, he was handing Delilah the authority to oversee the Garland Tribe. Delilah acknowledged and accepted.

"Lord, Thundar is also traveling with several important figures and promising youngsters from various clans around Half-Moon Lake. How do you want us to handle them?" Delilah asked.

Orion already kind of knew: these newcomers were all hostages. While hostages didn't always carry that much weight in this world, there were still emotional ties that could affect certain people, and that was sometimes enough to be useful.

"Send them to the cannon fodder troops and give them some low-tier supervisory jobs. Let Dirtclaw educate them," Orion said without a flicker of hesitation.

First of all, the cannon fodder troops had plenty of strict rules—there were time limits for leaving or entering camp—so it would be easy to keep watch over these hostages.

Secondly, Dirtclaw was basically Orion's biggest devotee and also Delilah's slave, making Dirtclaw the perfect candidate to brainwash them. If the brainwashing worked, Orion could always release them back home later and help them gain authority. That would make managing Half-Moon Lake a breeze.

Orion glanced at Delilah, wordlessly asking if there were any other pressing matters within the Horde.

"Lysinthia and Slagor won't be back in Blackstone City until winter sets in!" Delilah said. "All those swamp crocodiles and marsh pythons need time to get used to Half-Moon Lake's environment. They won't be returning anytime soon."

Orion fully understood that relocating entire species to a new habitat wasn't just talk. It took a lot of time and effort.

Then he turned to Lilith. Under normal circumstances, if Lilith had something to say, she'd tell him in private. The fact she'd come to the Horde Hall herself meant it was definitely not a small or personal matter.

"Dear Orion," said Lilith. "All those broadskull ravens holed up in the cave in Moonshadow Valley are finally tamed. They've all been placed in the Sentinel Corps. Right now, the ones serving us—and still alive—total 197."

That number sounded way too low. Orion's first thought was how 197 broadskull ravens was nowhere near enough. Most were elite-level beasts, and only two or so had reached hero-level strength. They couldn't form a truly formidable force.

Originally, there had been more than six hundred broadskull ravens trapped inside that cave by the cave spiders, but after Lilith's lengthy taming, only a couple hundred had yielded. Dozens died once they were put to work. Broadskull ravens were definitely fragile. Those that refused to submit either starved or were so stubborn they got put down.

"Can our current broadskull ravens breed?" Orion asked, cutting right to the heart of the matter.

"They can," Lilith replied, "but it takes three years to feed and raise a broadskull raven from birth to adulthood where it's battle-ready. And by the time it's grown, it usually only reaches elite-level at best."

To Orion, an elite-level beast wasn't all that useful anymore—broadskull ravens offered flying capabilities, but that was it. Given their size, they'd need to reach hero-level before they could even carry a rider.

"Orion, if we want the broadskull ravens to breed, we need a place for them to nest," Lilith added.

Orion frowned. Nothing around here immediately came to mind. "Any suggestions on where that might be?"

Lilith knew broadskull ravens best, so he trusted she had a clue. "The cliffs north of Moonshadow Valley would do the trick, but we'd have to carve out some stone caves for them," she said.

"Sounds good. Lilith, it's all on you," Orion said.

Lilith nodded—she'd figured any taming-related job would fall on her shoulders eventually.

"Orion, that frost giant egg you gave me finally hatched," Lilith went on, obviously excited to share the news. Under her dedicated care, the egg had successfully broken its shell.

"Oh? How is it?" Orion asked, brightening up with curiosity.

"It's pretty awesome," Lilith said. "It was born as a hero-level beast, and this little one's super tough."

"Raise it well. Once a frost giant matures, it can usually climb to Alpha-level without too much trouble," Orion noted.

Lilith agreed. The successful hatching of the little snow monster had her in a great mood, especially since the baby recognized her as its master the moment it was born.

Chapter 259 Heroic Altar

Early the next morning, Orion was jostled awake by the sounds of a scuffle outside the tent.

Pulling his arm from beneath Lilith's neck, he got up, threw on his leather armor, and stepped outside. He and Lilith hadn't moved into the inner keep of the Horde Hall yet because there were still some hidden passages connecting to Moonshadow Valley that needed sealing and improvement. Plus, the enchantments on the Horde Hall still weren't finished, so they had to wait a bit longer.

"Lord!"

"Lord!"

Guards Dace and Otho were already waiting outside the tent. As soon as they saw Orion, they bowed in greeting.

"Here—catch."

Orion tossed them two bottles of Pet Pills and had them feed the Frost Wolves themselves.

"What's the deal with those two brats?"

He glanced at the open area not far off, where Rolan and the little snow monster were going at it hammer and tongs, their grunts and shouts filling the air.

"Apparently, the little snow monster heard that Rolan's the strongest youngling around, so it just had to challenge him," Dace said. "Rolan didn't back down. The two of them locked horns the moment they met."

Orion watched the clash between Rolan and the little snow monster. Neither was armed—they were testing pure physical strength to see who would come out on top. And it was clear Rolan was on the losing side.

"That's fine. Let the little snow monster grind down Rolan's pride a bit. He needs a good humbling," Orion muttered, prompting bemused chuckles from the two guards.

On the other side, the little snow monster had just hatched, so it had zero fighting techniques. It was basically relying on its tremendous raw power to overwhelm Rolan. Rolan, stunned to find his usual strength advantage useless, had to resort to the combat moves Orion had taught him to hold out for as long as he could.

"You two—one of you stay behind to keep an eye on these two younglings. Don't let them get too carried away and hurt each other," Orion ordered.

Otho nodded and volunteered to stay.

Orion didn't linger to watch. Instead, he set out for Moonshadow Valley with Dace in tow.

Moonshadow Valley looked totally different by now. The Heroic Altar, the Military Fortress, and the Beast Pens—three special structures—had been built on the main plaza in a triangular formation. A thick layer of stone slabs now covered the plaza itself.

Waiting at the entrance to Moonshadow Valley were Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, and Earthshaker. They all stood there, ready for Orion's arrival.

These special buildings required one final step—something only Orion could do. Yesterday, he had specifically ordered these four elders to show up today.

All three special structures in Moonshadow Valley would be enhanced through transcendent power. Of the three, the Heroic Altar was by far the most crucial. Once established, it could grant certain abilities.

Since the giants, succubi, buffalofolk, and obsidian golems had all offered up their respective tribal relics, Orion owed them something in return. Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, and Earthshaker were here on behalf of their four major races in the Stoneheart Horde.

They greeted Orion with respectful bows. He acknowledged them, said nothing, then led them in silence toward the Heroic Altar.

The Heroic Altar was meant to be a place of worship for a deity—a site where faith was channeled. But for the Stoneheart Horde, it was a special structure used to pass on power and strengthen the tribe.

Positioned due north, the Heroic Altar resembled a square pavilion with ornate interlocking beams, surrounding a central dais. Stone steps ran in all four directions—east, west, south, and north. There were 36 steps total, each measuring about 10 ft in height. At first glance, it looked imposing and tinged with a sense of ancient grandeur.

Still silent, Orion climbed the dais and pressed his hand to the altar. In the next moment, everything changed.

Deep within the Horde Hall's forbidden area, the territory core began to blaze with brilliant light, red transcendent power churning like a fierce tide. At the front of the Heroic Altar, a cloud of dark red transcendent power began to pulse outward from beneath Orion's hand. As it spread across the Heroic Altar, the structure was visibly infused with energy at a rapid pace.

Where the transcendent power flowed, magical runes glowed into existence. Surges of magic crackled, and all kinds of carvings came to life in bas-relief: titans, monsters, phoenixes, elves, dragons...an endless array of races appearing in mid-battle, then fading away—a sight both mystical and holy.

Faint echoes of a sacred chant, coupled with murmurs from titan deities, seemed to unfurl around them like a half-remembered dream.

Orion sensed it vividly—he could see the carvings' powerful frames, their varied maneuvers in combat, and the way their armor and robes whipped through the air.

After a quarter hour, the infusion of transcendent power finished. The Heroic Altar became solid and seamless, its fairly dark red color exuding a deep, weighty presence. Orion took his hand away and removed a bundle of crystal cores from his storage ring, piling them on the altar. These were offerings. The Heroic Altar wouldn't activate without them. It wasn't a free ride, after all.

Once enough C-level crystal cores had been heaped on the altar, Orion stepped back down to face the four elders. "Who's up first?"

He had already told them beforehand what was about to happen and what they stood to gain.

"I'll do it," Rendall replied, striding forward before anyone else could speak.

Orion nodded sagely and said nothing further.

The moment Rendall set foot on the altar, Orion triggered the inheritance process.

Poof—poof—poof! Every C-level crystal core on the altar disintegrated into gray dust, their energy fully absorbed by the altar.

Immediately afterwards, crimson strands of transcendent power rose from the base of the altar and wrapped around Rendall, swallowing him in a dazzling swirl. Before long, he was shrouded in a misty, cocoon-like shell.

Everyone waited in rapt silence, the entire Moonshadow Valley so hushed you could hear a pin drop. Orion stared at the cocoon of swirling mist around Rendall, lost in thought.

Originally, Orion had possessed two Lord's Stones. He'd absorbed one himself, while splitting the other in half. Half of that second stone's transcendent power was used by Orion, with the remaining half transformed into the territory core. Through various special buildings, that power now took physical form.

Put simply, the Heroic Altar's inheritance feature consumed sacrifices—fueling a conversion of transcendent power—to help anyone below Legendary level gain substantial benefits.

After about half an hour, the misty cocoon began to thin until it finally merged into Rendall's body. Moments later, Rendall opened his eyes, looking a bit dazed. But the daze vanished and was replaced by pure joy—an indescribable excitement that lit up his face.

Rendall hopped off the Heroic Altar and walked over to rejoin Orion and the others.

"Arch Elder," said Orion, "why don't you show them what you can do?"

Rendall nodded at the three elders who were staring at him, then let out a hearty laugh. "Watch closely—this is a supernatural power like you wouldn't believe. I'd call it nothing short of a miracle!"

With that, and without any visible movement, two dark red energy shields rose around him in quick succession, surrounding him entirely.

"Prophet, how about you give it a try with your stone axe—maybe at eighty percent power first?"

Onyx, shaking himself out of his momentary shock, hefted his stone axe from behind his back and took a swing.

Chapter 260 Blood shield

Bang!

The stone axe was knocked back, leaving Rendall firmly rooted where he stood, totally unscathed. The blood shield protecting him quivered slightly, then stabilized.

"Hahaha... Prophet, isn't my blood shield solid as a rock?" Rendall shouted gleefully.

Onyx lowered his stone axe, staring at Rendall with a hint of envy. "It's not just sturdy—it even bounces some of the impact right back."

Rendall chuckled, clearly already aware that his blood shield had a built-in counterforce.

"Dear Lord," Delilah said, her voice trembling as she stood next to Orion, "did Elder Rendall get that blood shield from the Heroic Altar's inheritance?"

Her question instantly hooked the others' attention. All three turned their gazes on Orion.

Orion sighed, shook his head, then replied calmly, "It's not as easy as you think."

"Yes, if you offer enough sacrifices, the Heroic Altar can indeed grant some sort of bloodline ability," he continued. "But it's not as simple as it sounds, and you can't just roll it out to everyone."

Delilah's voice had shaken with excitement because she'd been picturing the idea of having the entire Horde benefit from the Heroic Altar. Orion and Delilah were not only bedmates but also shared a like mind; he had a pretty good idea what she was thinking.

"Although the Heroic Altar doesn't have a hard limit on how many times it can be used," Orion explained, "every use devours loads of sacrifices. Not to mention it also drains the Horde's accumulated faith energy and transcendent power. Right now, having just been built, the Heroic Altar is only capable of handling four inheritance rituals. We've no clue how long we'll have to wait before a fifth time."

After Orion's explanation, Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, and Earthshaker realized how lucky they were.

"We got these four chances only because the giants, succubi, buffalofolk, and obsidian golems all provided their tribal relics," Orion went on. "From here on out, for any member of our Horde to enter the Heroic Altar and trigger an inheritance, they must be one hundred percent loyal and have rendered truly great service."

He glanced at the four elders, making it clear that for others in the Horde, the bar was now set high. They all nodded in agreement—it was a fair rule.

"Lord, I believe we should add one more criterion," Onyx said.

Orion nodded for him to continue.

"The Heroic Altar's inheritance really ought to be given either to Alpha-level powerhouses or to outstanding young talents," Onyx suggested. "Especially the latter. The Heroic Altar can unlock greater potential for our Horde's young bloodline warriors."

It was hard to argue with that logic. Orion took the suggestion seriously: giving an inheritance to a rising star meant investing in the Horde's future. Then again, bestowing it on Alpha-level beings strengthened the Horde's power base in the present.

"Delilah, do you have any other ideas?" Orion asked, knowing she was the most meticulous thinker among them.

"If we're talking about future generations of the Horde," Delilah replied, "I recommend saving up until we've got at least two inheritance chances before we activate the altar again. Then we could give one slot to a seasoned Alpha-level warrior and the other to an up-and-coming talent."

Orion, Onyx, and Rendall all brightened at the suggestion.

"All right," Orion said, "pull together a draft plan like that for me."

"Certainly, my dear Lord," Delilah purred, dipping her head in a graceful bow.

"Onyx, you're up next," Orion said.

Delilah and Earthshaker both waved off their turn, allowing Onyx to be the second to receive an inheritance. Orion handed him a bagbird's satchel—packed to the brim with C-level crystal cores.

"Scatter the crystal cores on the altar," Orion instructed. "Then close your eyes, empty your thoughts, and wait for the inheritance."

Nodding, Onyx climbed the steps of the Heroic Altar. What happened next mirrored Rendall's earlier experience to a T.

"This...this is incredible," Onyx whispered, staring at his own hands. Clearly, his body looked no different, but he spoke as though he'd laid eyes on a god. A few moments later, he returned to the group.

"Prophet, how do you feel?" Rendall asked.

Onyx nodded, then shook his head, unlike Rendall, who had immediately shown off his talent. Orion cut in before Onyx could reply. "Prophet's new ability can't really be demonstrated on the spot, so he'll just describe it."

Onyx looked at Orion in surprise, but Orion merely shrugged and tapped the altar and then his own chest, indicating that when each inheritance finalized, he himself could sense what power had been granted. After all, the Heroic Altar was bound to him via his mind.

Calming himself, Onyx spoke in that deep, resonant voice of his: "I inherited a power called 'Blood Spirit Summoning.' Once I kill a foe, I can use their blood and flesh to conjure a blood spirit that looks exactly like them."

He paused, bright-eyed. "The blood spirit's power can be on par with mine, all the way up to Alpha-level."

Effectively, that meant Onyx had gained a personal Alpha-level companion at will. Of course, the ability came with limits.

The summoned spirit couldn't surpass Alpha-level—unless someday Onyx himself broke through to Legendary level, then used transcendent power to upgrade Blood Spirit Summoning. Only in that case might he manage to conjure something mightier than an Alpha-level being. As for whether the summoned spirit itself might reach Legendary level...it seemed pretty unlikely.

In fact, there was a hidden benefit that Orion didn't share: The Altar's inheritance powers typically matched the inheritor's nature.

Quiet as Orion was about it, the Heroic Altar could only grant five types of abilities at the moment: Blood Sharing, Blood Spirit Summoning, Blood Shield, Blood Shadow Split, and Blood Energy Siphon—all tied to blood synergy. The reason for this was that, when the Lord's Stone had evolved into the territory core, the transcendent power it contained happened to be keyed to blood.

"You're next," Orion said, nodding at Delilah.

Among the four elders present, Delilah was also Alpha-level, outranking Earthshaker. As for the buffalofolk's tribal relics, strictly speaking, Orion had seized them in battle. He'd invited Earthshaker here because Earthshaker was his slave, meaning part of his inner circle. Orion had no problem handing out perks to someone who belonged to him outright.