

Titan King 301

Chapter 301 This world is already ours

"Lord Orion, it's not wise to drag this out. Let's blast them to pieces in one go!"

"Understood."

Orion nodded, then poured all his energy into the Eightfold Spear Barrage. At the same time, the ripples of death spread outward on every side, unleashing a tremendous destructive force.

"Both of you, help me!"

"Black Sun Devour!"

A Black Sun that resembled a dark vortex suddenly appeared, swallowing the spider spears from the Eightfold Spear Barrage along with the death ripple shockwaves. The constant rumbling of battle abruptly died down.

Orion stood still where he was, while Rumbold hovered in the distance, expressionless—whether he was planning his next move or waiting for Orion's command was unclear.

As for Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod, they were gasping for breath, looking on the verge of collapse.

Orion hesitated. He still had a trump card he hadn't played, but worried the enemy trio might be holding back as well. Besides, Rumbold had just told him through telepathy that using the death ripples took a heavy toll—dragging the fight out would risk exhausting Rumbold.

In that scenario, if they kept pushing, both Orion and Rumbold might pay the price.

Eyes narrowed, Orion quickly turned things over in his mind and came to a decision. A sudden flash of light heralded the appearance of two mirror images, each identical to him in every detail—both stood there radiating powerful energy, surrounding Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod.

"Quite the Black Sun Devour. Its power is impressive!"

"In light of that move just now, I'll give you a chance: pledge your loyalty to us and work for us."

Orion's voice rang out, utterly self-assured, but then took on a sinister edge.

"However, my companion and I each get only one recommendation spot. There are three of you. We can only recommend two."

"You have three days to think it over."

"And remember—this world is already ours. There's nowhere to run."

While speaking, Orion directed his mirror images aside, opening a lone exit. Likewise, Rumbold opened a gap in the outermost layer of the death ripple.

Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod watched, torn by suspicion and doubt, unsure whether to retreat. None of them were fools; they clearly heard the malice in Orion's proposal and suspected it might be a bluff to sow discord.

In truth, Orion had summoned the mirror images for exactly that reason—intimidation and stage-setting, to underscore his offer. The sudden appearance of two clones, each with unmistakable life force and formidable power, only added to the confusion for the trio.

"S-Sir, Murktooth will definitely consider your offer carefully!"

After a long internal struggle, Murktooth finally separated from the group, flying out on his own. Caleb and Jarod almost shouted for him to stop, but when they saw Murktooth slip safely past the encirclement, they clamped their mouths shut.

"Sir, Caleb will also think seriously about your proposal."

"Jarod will do the same!"

One after another, Caleb and Jarod darted out of the ring.

Watching the three scramble off, Orion spoke in a haughty tone:

"Remember, you only have three days!"

"We'll keep sweeping through the eastern region. If we catch you resisting, the offer expires!"

"Hahaha..."

Orion's triumphant, malevolent laughter echoed across the distance.

Not long after, Rumbold approached Orion.

"Lord Orion, are we really letting them off the hook like that? We haven't finished our sweep."

Always respectful, Rumbold had stayed silent until now, just serving as muscle and essentially fading into the background.

"You saw it yourself. Those three Legendary-level powerhouses cover all ranges of combat, and one of them is a shield warrior with top-tier defense. Battling them head-on isn't worth the cost. If we forced a victory, we'd still take a big risk."

That risk was big enough that Orion was unwilling to lose his two mirror images. He planned to keep nurturing them until they became his permanent guardians.

Rumbold nodded, conceding Orion's point. That said, knowing his own master, Rumbold was well aware that all of his master's allies were ridiculously capable. Each had countless hidden trump cards. Even if Orion lacked them, Rumbold himself did not—he was confident in keeping both of them alive no matter what.

"Lord Orion, so what now?"

Orion shot Rumbold a cryptic look. There was no way Rumbold hadn't caught on; he was just feigning ignorance.

"We keep invading. No slowing down!"

"Plus, do you really think our attack ends here?"

From the way Murktooth broke away first, Orion could tell Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod were hardly united. Their shaky alliance was headed for trouble. That alone gave Orion some hope in his plan.

"Even if it doesn't spark infighting, at least we can sow suspicion among them."

"And besides, we just sealed a three-day window without resistance, right?"

"Hehehe..."

Orion and Rumbold exchanged a knowing smile. Even if this outcome wasn't perfect, their future confrontations with Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod would be far more manageable.

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In the central region, compared to Orion's approach, Leonidas and Arthas were taking a more direct tack.

"Boney McBoneface, you never disappoint!"

"Those two we let slip away will definitely search for the last Arch Lord. He'll promise them all sorts of goodies if they join him in taking us down."

"Heh... they actually think our strength is on par with theirs, that they can kill us if they band together."

"In truth, this was just our warm-up. They're dreaming if they believe they can beat us."

Leonidas and Arthas were putting on quite the show. By teaming up, they'd made it look like they barely managed to drive off Arch Lords Gollum and John. In reality, they hadn't even tapped ten percent of their true power.

"Let's hurry up and lay our trap. Even though they're nowhere near our level, they are genuine Arch Lords."

"Never be careless. That's how you end up in a ditch."

Perched on the head of his bone dragon, Arthas cut a solitary figure against the quiet Black Sun looming in the sky. A certain lonely-master aura clung to him.

"Hah! If they think this godforsaken land is enough to make me stumble, they're living in a fantasy."

"Woof, woof..."

Leonidas, in his canine form, landed atop the bone dragon as well.

"You think Hulk, who's running the cleansing in the eastern zone, might be in danger? There are three lords out there, and he only just advanced to Legendary level."

Arthas lowered his gaze to Leonidas.

"What's this—getting worried about him already? Where was that concern when you invited him to join in the first place?"

"Woof... so I'm curious about his real power, is that so wrong?"

Chapter 302 Bluffing

Night Elf Arch Lord Mia lived in the southern part of the godforsaken land. She was a night elf with an angelic face and a devilish figure—so stunning that both Gollum and John wanted to capture her and turn her into their personal sex slave.

Yet Mia herself wasn't exactly virtuous; in fact, she was infamous among the night elves as one of the most shamelessly promiscuous.

She was mistress to thirty thousand male lovers, and whenever she took a consort to bed, she'd have a hundred or so male night elves at her beck and call.

However, Mia was also a staunch racist. All her lovers were night elves—she didn't keep a single non-night-elf. For that reason, both Gollum and John yearned hopelessly for her attention, though Mia plainly wasn't interested in either of them.

"Mia, come out. Don't pretend you can't sense what's happening in the central region of the Perpetual Night Continent!"

Goblin King Gollum's voice, for once, lost its lecherous and foul undertones, sounding surprisingly righteous.

"Gollum, you little runt. The central region is your territory, not mine!"

From the depths of a dark forest appeared a night elf woman wearing next to nothing. Well, to be precise, Mia wasn't wearing clothes at all—she merely had an animal-skin belt slung around her hips, one that couldn't hope to hide her crotch. As for her upper body, that was bare. Her breasts were full and perky, her nipples still streaked with traces of semen.

Mia had only just finished fooling around with several male elves. She hadn't even bothered to wipe the fluids off and showed zero shame, letting both Gollum and John "admire" her body.

"Ah... The saddest thing in this world is seeing such a perfect figure but never getting to touch it. I really do pity you two!"

"Two long-standing Legendary-level powerhouses like you, and all you can do is stare to ease your lust."

Mia was a total seductress, a shameless flirt well-versed in beguiling men. She spoke softly, words dripping with warmth and tenderness.

Gollum and John couldn't help swallowing hard, staring at Mia's bare figure in silence. No one knew how long it went on until, unexpectedly, Corrupted Human John snapped out of it first.

"Mia, you're unbelievably beautiful. I'm willing to take you as my wife—willing to drive every hideous woman from my territory if it would please you!

"Mia, you're like the Luna in my heart, shining as brightly as that Black Sun in the sky over the Perpetual Night Continent."

It was almost impossible to believe such flowery words came from a human with three faces. As John spoke, a spiked tongue in his mouth flicked out to lap up some oozing pus on his body. Then, shifting his tone:

"But Mia, the Perpetual Night Continent is facing a catastrophe. Only by driving out the invaders can you become the Luna in the hearts of everyone who lives here."

Sweet talk has always been the best way to sway a woman's heart—and that includes female night elves.

"Become the Luna of every living being in the Perpetual Night Continent, huh?

"That's... not such a bad offer."

"Grotesque John, because of your little line there, tell me—what do you want me to do?"

Just like that, Mia agreed to work with Gollum and John. Ostensibly, it was because John fed her some flattering lines. Who knows the real reason? You don't become an arch lord by being an idiot. Anyone who thinks the Night Elf Arch Lord Mia can be easily fooled is the real fool.

Two days later, the night elf army from the south and the corrupted human army from the west began marching, forming a steady encirclement aimed at invading the central region where Leonidas and Arthas had set up.

In the eastern region, tension simmered on the surface, and danger lurked beneath. Within Night Elf Jarod's territory, inside a simple wooden house, Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod sat in tense silence.

"Goblin Murktooth, your cowardice and sly tricks are gonna get us all killed."

Shield Warrior Caleb was fuming, still furious that Murktooth chose to flee first in their recent battle.

"Damn you, Corrupted Human Caleb. Were you hoping to die right then and there?"

"Didn't you and Jarod also run away in the end?"

"That makes the two of you just as chicken as me. You're just too proud to admit it."

Murktooth shrugged off his decision to escape, apparently confident it'd been the smart move. After all, they were all still alive, which proved he was right, at least in his own mind.

"Enough arguing!

"We need to figure out what to do next."

After Jarod's sharp command, the cabin fell quiet enough that they could hear the wind howling outside.

"I believe our enemies were bluffing in that last fight. A magic formation that powerful would cost them a huge amount of transcendent power.

If you, Goblin Murktooth, hadn't bolted, maybe the three of us could've taken down those two foreign invaders and saved ourselves a world of trouble."

Caleb drained his cup of water, feeling grumpy about the whole ordeal. From his perspective, such a massive show of force had to be hugely draining—especially for that skeletal creature controlling the widespread death ripples.

Caleb figured Orion was faking it.

But not everyone agreed.

"Bluffing?"

"Caleb, are you messing with me and Jarod?"

"Those two Legendary fighters that appeared last—didn't you sense anything?"

Murktooth slammed a fist on the table, jabbing a finger toward Caleb in outright fury, all while rebutting his claim.

"Those last two looked exactly like the trident-wielding invader. You ever consider they might've been illusions?"

At that, the goblin regarded Caleb even more disdainfully.

"An illusion?"

"Caleb, is your perception off?"

"Could you not feel their life force?"

"Both of them were genuine Legendary-level powerhouses!"

"Hmph!"

Murktooth laughed scornfully, eyeing Caleb with mocking amusement. Just then, Night Elf Jarod spoke up as well:

"My senses tell me those two were no illusion, either. They were genuine Legendary-level entities.

At least we're still alive, so I can't say Murktooth's choice was wrong back there."

Caleb had no comeback; the simple fact that they were alive to discuss it spoke for itself.

"You're not seriously thinking of taking them up on those two 'recommendations,' are you?"

Caleb scanned Murktooth and Jarod solemnly.

"It's a trick. They're trying to drive a wedge between us and break up our alliance."

In the wooden house, no one said a word. Goblin Murktooth and Night Elf Jarod stared off at their goblets, lost in thought, the wind still audible outside.

Chapter 303 Rebirth Stone

Jarod finally broke the silence with a heavy sigh.

"I know that giant is trying to sow discord among us, but the question is: how should we respond?

Do we surrender?

Or do we gather our forces and fight back?"

Goblin Murktooth took a fierce swig of liquor, then roared in righteous anger,

"Let's take them on!

Mobilize your troops. With three of us against two of them, I refuse to believe we can't win if we go all out."

Shield Warrior Caleb exchanged a glance with Jarod, and both of them showed a strange gleam in their eyes.

"I agree. We'll risk it all and fight them to the death!"

Caleb's calm, steady tone seemed to carry a surge of battle spirit.

"All right, Caleb. Gather the army. We'll settle this once and for all!"

That decided, Caleb headed out to rally the troops. Inside the wooden cabin, Murktooth and Jarod stayed behind a while, whispering who knows what. Murktooth finally emerged long after.

Early the next day, Murktooth dragged Caleb aside, murmuring in hushed tones about unknown schemes.

Murktooth City, its battle over, held both joy and sorrow for different people.

"Don't blame me. Back then, the only reason I supported Delilah was because she was more suited to be chieftain than you.

Looking at it now, I made the right call—you're nothing like her, and your personalities naturally led you to different paths.

I'm already old and well past my prime. I thought maybe this time I'd find a chance to break through. But...

What a pity. I've let Lord Orion down—and wasted a precious Alpha-level resource from the Horde."

Inside a tent lay the dying elder succubus, Desdemona.

She'd already been hovering between hero level and Alpha level; during the siege, she'd challenged an Alpha-level goblin and lost, suffering terrible wounds. Had Lilith not intervened in time, Desdemona would have died on the spot.

"I never blamed you," Lilith said softly, gently holding Desdemona's pallid, wrinkled hands. "And I won't blame her either. It's all in the past now."

"Good... that's good..."

"Remember... our succubus clan... is already... tied to the giants. Even if you die, don't betray them... Betrayers never come to a good end... and they won't be truly accepted anywhere."

"Lilith, work hard... keep up with Lord Orion..."

She still had more to say, but she was out of time. Her life slipped away completely.

Thus died Elder Desdemona, one of Stoneheart Horde's eight council elders, killed in action during the cross-realm invasion.

"Lady Lilith, Lord Orion sent me to tend to Elder Desdemona's body. We'll carry her back to the Horde for a proper burial."

Thundar entered the tent and explained, bowed low. Lilith nodded and helped prepare Desdemona's remains.

"All right."

Once Lilith finished dressing Desdemona's body and combing her hair, she stepped out of the tent.

Outside, Orion had been waiting. He reached out and gently took Lilith's hand, speaking in a low voice,

"I learned a saying recently: death comes when it will. Perhaps this is her release, in a way."

Lilith merely nodded, saying nothing. She and Delilah had grown up under Desdemona's guidance. Before the two sisters ever rose to prominence, it was Elder Desdemona who led their small succubus tribe in the Black Forest.

"I'm not truly sad. I'm just realizing that if we don't keep striving for a higher life form, we'll all grow old and die someday."

Ever since Orion advanced to Legendary level, everyone in the Stoneheart Horde sensed that his existence had become fundamentally different. Put plainly, Orion would have little trouble living for over a thousand years—assuming nothing catastrophic happened.

But as Orion's women, Lilith, Lysinthia, and Delilah all worried that one day they'd wither and die, losing their beauty while he endured.

So each of them seized every chance to sleep with Orion, hoping to bear his children. Thankfully, they were still young, with plenty of time to try to change their fates.

"Lord Orion, who's this?"

"She's my wife, Lilith—one gorgeous succubus!"

Orion introduced Lilith to Rumbold.

"So this is Lord Orion's lady!"

"Lady Lilith, please accept this small gift. It's not much, but I hope you like it."

Rumbold extended his hand and offered her a bone bead.

Orion recognized it—it was the Ghostbone Armor in its initial form, which could be extremely valuable to anyone outside undead race.

"Mr. Rumbold's gift is quite good. Go ahead and take it."

At Orion's prompting, Lilith nodded and received the bead.

"Thank you, generous Mr. Rumbold."

Rumbold gave a cheerful laugh, shrugging it off.

In truth, he was curious about the scheme Orion had pulled against the trio of enemy lords, and he was more than impressed by Orion's combat skills and potential in the prior battles. Between Orion's mastery of the trident, Titan Form, and the Eightfold Spear Barrage—plus his balance between close-range and wide-area attacks—Orion seemed to be in a league of his own at the Legendary level.

That alone was reason enough for Rumbold to give Lilith a small token of goodwill.

Just then, Thundar, who had finished preparing Desdemona's remains, walked over.

"My lord, the little spiders discovered some unusual ore in an underground structure!"

Orion's eyes lit up, clearly intrigued.

"Bring me a few samples. I'd like to see what's so special about them."

"As you wish!"

A moment later, Thundar returned with two pieces of ore, placing them in Orion's hands. Before Orion could react, Rumbold let out a soft exclamation.

"Huh! This is... Rebirth Stone?"

Orion frowned, no clue what that meant.

"Mr. Rumbold, what exactly is Rebirth Stone?"

Rather than answering right away, Rumbold took the ore from Orion and channeled some transcendent power into it. To Orion's surprise, that unbreakable energy didn't destroy the mineral but was instead absorbed by it.

"From death comes life. It is reborn from nothing—that's Rebirth Stone."

Rumbold sounded thrilled. He knew how rare Rebirth Stone was. His master, Arch Lord Arthas, had invaded countless godforsaken lands and never found many chunks of it.

"Mr. Rumbold, is this stuff really that valuable?"

Rumbold grew more excited and placed the Rebirth Stone back in Orion's hands with the utmost care.

"Lord Orion, Rebirth Stone won't do much for you, but it's exceptionally rare. You could trade it for wonderful treasures.

To us undead, Rebirth Stone is the foundation of hope.

The hope of being truly reborn!"

Chapter 304 I exist solely to serve you

"Mr. Rumbold, consider this piece of Rebirth Stone a return gift from Lilith."

Under Rumbold's surprised gaze, Orion placed the Rebirth Stone back into Rumbold's palm.

"Lord Orion, think this through—isn't that return gift pretty valuable?"

Orion merely shook his head with a mild laugh.

"No matter how precious an item might be, it can't compare to winning the favor and friendship of a Legendary-level powerhouse, right?"

Facing Orion's sincere, confident expression, Rumbold suddenly broke into hearty laughter.

"In that case, I'll skip the polite refusals and accept it!"

Orion nodded. Reciprocity is just common courtesy—and sometimes it's a way of breaking the ice and building trust. Then he stowed away the other piece of Rebirth Stone and briefly glanced at Thundar. Thundar, still displaying a bit of quick thinking, kept quiet about how many more pieces of Rebirth Stone he might've found.

"Take half a day to rest. Then we move."

After Orion gave the order, Thundar nodded and withdrew.

"Three-Tails, I'll be needing your guidance again," Orion called to Leonidas's representative, Three-Tails. The fellow had been hovering around like a silent bystander, taking everything in.

"Lord Orion, whatever orders you have, I'm here to carry them out. I exist solely to serve you!"

Orion nodded. Three-Tails was only at Alpha level, which made it natural for him to stay quiet while Orion and Rumbold planned and discussed.

Orion signaled to one of the succubus scouts, telling her to bring a Sentinel Corps squad and join Three-Tails's team.

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Titanion Realm, Lokiviria.

While Orion was leading his cross-realm invasion, Gareth had already set out with the forces she'd gathered in the Thunderwood Forest, targeting territory further to the south—Lokiviria.

Lokiviria was the domain of the insect race, with a lord who shared its name. Among the insects, naming a territory after yourself was considered a badge of honor.

In a green woodland setting, countless snail-shell-like stone fortresses dotted the landscape—these fortresses were the palaces of insect folk, their prime nesting spots.

"My darling, lie still and take care of the baby in your belly," came the voice of Lokiviria himself, the insect lord, who'd evolved from a cockroach-like species. His kind boasted tremendous physicality and could lift many times their own body weight; they were also fast. Thanks to these advantages, they controlled a territory filled with abundant resources—a genuine paradise for insectfolk.

Eighty percent of the insect race kept Beast Forms—large, roach-like creatures—while only twenty percent had even the slightest chance of evolving into humanoid figures as they advanced, developing higher intelligence. That's why Lokiviria's clan put massive importance on their offspring—especially those that were humanoid.

"Lokiviria, be careful. The northern enemies are ruthless," said a pregnant woman resting inside one of the stone fortresses, gazing at Lokiviria with equal parts admiration and awe.

"My darling, you should understand that in the eyes of us southern lords, the lords up north are just barbarians."

Lokiviria brimmed with confidence. In the past, he'd fought off numerous invasions from Lord Ariel, and this new threat from the far north—a half-dragon named Gareth—didn't worry him at all.

"Stay put in the palace. Once I drive away the invaders, I'll take you south for a little trip. There are brighter flowers down there and even mightier thunderhawks!"

After consoling his beloved, Lokiviria left the palace. With one agile leap, he disappeared from sight.

Meanwhile, at a palace window, a beautiful woman radiating a wife-like gentleness stared at the northern sky, eyes smoldering with hatred like a living flame.

"So Gareth is the one invading Lokiviria—damn her!

And that giant lord... why didn't she come here?

Brother, I swear I'll avenge you!"

The woman leaning against the windowsill was Rowena, the last known survivor of the Skybond clan who had once fled on a thunderhawk, only to vanish for a long time.

Now, she stood there with a swollen belly, pregnant with an insect child. After fleeing the Thunderwood Forest, she'd been captured by a chieftain of the insect tribe. Admiring her beauty, he'd presented her to Lokiviria as a prize.

Lokiviria had a powerful physique—but each time he mated, it never lasted long, and he'd go through hundreds of women in a single night. Rowena was one of them.

By sheer twist of fate, she ended up carrying his child. The moment that unborn baby began to form, Lokiviria sensed it through their shared bloodline, and from then on, Rowena became his favored partner.

The reason? The odds of conceiving cross-species offspring were extremely low. In this world, it was widely accepted that such children often inherited exceptional traits. Having detected the baby in her womb, Lokiviria singled her out.

"Lokiviria, my man, please kill that bitch Gareth!"

Rowena prayed silently for her partner to succeed. Oddly enough, though Lokiviria was indeed an insect with incomplete evolution—his head still sprouted two antennae—Rowena had no hatred left for him, despite his savage behavior toward her that night.

Maybe it was because she'd been with so many men before that she'd grown numb. In this moment, the only thing that mattered to her was the child inside her.

"My baby, I'm sure you're blessed with extraordinary blood. After all, your father is a Legendary-level lord."

Rowena covered her belly, thoughts drifting back to memories of her beloved brother and the good old days.

...

Godforsaken Land, Eastern Region.

With Three-Tails leading the way, Orion and Rumbold advanced, sweeping aside various territories in their path.

Most of these territories held only the elderly, the sick, or the infirm. The healthy young humans, goblins, and night elves had all been instructed to migrate farther south days before.

"Lord Orion, looks like those three are playing games with us," Rumbold said, lowering his weapon. This battered, nameless city had few signs of life, and almost no corpses for him to convert. Consequently, he'd spent virtually no transcendent power.

"They're definitely up to something, but I wouldn't say they're not resisting," Orion replied quietly. He pointed toward the southeast.

"I can sense them in that direction, drawing closer. Maybe it won't be long before we've got a real fight on our hands!"

Chapter 305 Sorry. My orders are to kill you

Rumbold's pupils contracted. He couldn't sense the auras of Murktooth, Caleb, or Jarod—proof that Orion was far stronger than Rumbold had imagined, stronger even than Rumbold himself.

"Lord Orion," Rumbold said, "now I understand why my master regards you as a true friend."

Orion answered with only a faint smile, ignoring the flattery.

"Honestly, I'm kind of looking forward to this. Those three lords are each plotting their own angle. Something's bound to go down between them."

It was both an intuition and an oddly exciting expectation. Deep down, Orion now understood why strategists love weaving schemes—watching your opponents stumble into your plans is one heck of a confidence boost, and he was more than a little hooked on the feeling.

Meanwhile, farther east, Caleb and Jarod had already rallied their troops. As for Goblin Murktooth, he was now a lord in name only, stripped of his territory. What's more, his transcendent power had sharply diminished.

"I propose we kill that undead being first," Murktooth announced, standing between Caleb and Jarod. "He's the one deploying those death ripple arrays. His attacks are invisible and far-reaching, and he'll gum up our movement."

"That array really is troublesome," Caleb growled in agreement. "It's powerful and covers a huge area. Yes, we should take him out first. This time, we can't just sit around and defend; we have to strike first. Murktooth, do me a favor—show some courage next time around."

Shield Warrior Caleb fixed the goblin with a piercing glare, voice hushed and grim.

"Murktooth, if you run off again in the middle of battle, I won't hesitate to make you pay for it."

"Caleb, maybe worry about yourself first."

Murktooth gave a dismissive sniff. Truth be told, in their previous skirmish with Orion, he hadn't done much except help with defense.

"Enough," Night Elf Jarod said, stepping in as mediator. "We're allies right now, and our fates are bound together. Those two invaders are powerful. We need to stand united and fight our hardest."

"Fine. For Jarod's sake, I'll let it go."

Murktooth seized his chance to back down. Caleb and Jarod exchanged a glance—something dark flickered in their eyes, then vanished just as quickly. From that moment, the three of them quit bickering, apparently ready to present a united front.

Elsewhere, Orion and Rumbold had sensed their gathering presence drawing closer.

"It's showtime," Orion said, voice turning cold. "No matter what happens, we take them out for good, Mr. Rumbold."

"As you wish, Lord Orion."

A sudden thunderclap roared as Orion transformed into living lightning and streaked toward the camp where Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod waited.

"I can sense your armies converging all around," Orion's voice echoed in the distance, "so I guess you're going all in. Fine by me—time to die."

Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod exchanged uneasy looks.

"Caleb, hold the front line," Murktooth shouted. "Jarod, pick him off from range. I'll plug any gaps and provide backup!"

He'd been timid before, but now he was the loudest one of the bunch. Caleb raised his shield and braced himself out front. Jarod nocked three arrows at once, aiming straight at Rumbold in the rear—just as planned.

But the second Orion and Rumbold's attacks arrived, Caleb abruptly lowered his shield, leaving Goblin Murktooth wide open.

At that same moment, Jarod whipped around and fired an arrow right into Murktooth's unprotected back. All of it happened in a split second: Murktooth lurched forward—straight onto the tip of Orion's trident.

Bzzz!

Shockwaves rippled over Murktooth's body, costing him half his life right there. Orion surged forward in a crackle of lightning, driving his trident right into Murktooth's heart, severing any chance of survival.

"N-no... That's not how it was supposed to go. You... you betrayed me!"

Murktooth hardly seemed to care about the trident skewering his heart. Instead, he craned his neck to stare at Caleb and Jarod, the two who'd just kicked him out of their defensive circle.

"Murktooth," Caleb intoned from behind his shield, "you're just a cowardly little traitor. I never trusted you for a second."

Murktooth's eyes were clouded with hopelessness at that merciless statement.

"But we... we planned this together! How dare you go back on the plan—damn you...!"

He was fading fast, life pouring out of him. In truth, Murktooth had intended to backstab Jarod alongside Caleb.

Once Jarod was dead, Murktooth and Caleb could accept Orion's surrender offer and snag those "recommendation slots."

To fool Jarod, Murktooth had privately suggested they team up and kill Caleb first. But in the end, the goblin discovered—too late—that he was the expendable one.

"My lord," Caleb said to Orion, nodding at Murktooth's body, "this gutless goblin had no territory, no people left. Apart from the Lord's Stone inside him, he was worthless."

Then he glanced up warily, Jarod at his side watching Orion and Rumbold.

"We hope this gift meets your satisfaction, honorable lord."

"Hahaha... satisfied? Hell yes. Very satisfied!"

Orion's deep laugh burst out, as if he'd been watching some grand stage drama. In fact, he had—he'd stood by doing nothing, eyes coldly taking in each twist of betrayal.

He hefted his trident, peering at the goblin still impaled on its prongs, then gave it a vicious twist. Any last bit of transcendent power guarding Murktooth's heart was snuffed out right there.

"Poor goblin. Let me send you off."

Szzz!

A burst of flame shot from Orion's trident, igniting the greasy film on Goblin Murktooth's body. He let out a final howl before going limp, life snuffed out in an instant.

Even after Murktooth died, the mood remained tense—Caleb and Jarod were still on guard against Orion and Rumbold.

Orion roared with laughter, sounding completely at ease. Out of the three enemy lords, only two were left, and there was no more need for pretense.

Since Orion had decided to play the part, though, he went through with the little show. Fishing out two tokens from his storage ring, he tossed them to Caleb and Jarod.

They were old, weathered bone tiles—something he'd specifically asked Rumbold to provide. When infused with energy, they could command a squad of skeleton warriors. Of course, at this point, those two tokens were just props, bait to trick Caleb and Jarod for a little longer.

"These are our recommendation tokens, keyed to our aura. If you lose them, you should probably worry about staying alive."

Orion put away his trident, and Rumbold seemed to call back his death ripple. Everything looked as if the battle was done. But Orion's rasping voice soon broke the lull:

"One more thing: aside from the two of you, all those corrupted humans and night elves you brought with you will have to die."

His grim tone actually came as a relief to Caleb and Jarod.

"Oh, great lord, that's exactly why we brought them here: to make things easier for you."

Orion nodded, a flash of cold shock in his eyes. Such was the nature of lords in this godforsaken land—to save their own skin, they'd sell out anyone, sacrifice whomever.

"You at least understand your place."

Rumbold moved in beside Orion, evidently withdrawing the death ripple for good. Caleb and Jarod glanced at each other, lowering their weapons and slowly approaching Orion and Rumbold.

"Giant Lord, my name is Caleb. I'm human."

"I'm Jarod, a night elf."

Orion nodded, wearing a faint smile and speaking in that lofty tone again.

"I am Orion, and this is my companion, Mr. Rumbold. Let me remind you once more: we'll grant you our recommendation, provided you behave yourselves and follow the rules."

Hearing Orion's calmer tone, with no weapons raised, Caleb and Jarod finally unclenched a little.

"Lord Orion, understood. We'll follow the rules," Caleb said, and since he was human, Orion gave him an extra glance.

"Good that you do."

Then Orion's voice dropped:

"Good—now drop dead."

Boom!

In an instant, Orion activated Titan Form. His body size ballooned, and in that split second he lunged straight for Caleb.

At the same time, Rumbold swung his weapon into a close-quarters strike against Night Elf Jarod.

This assault was exactly what Orion and Rumbold had planned beforehand. If their scheme worked, they'd take out the two remaining lords one by one. If it failed, they'd each unleash their trump cards.

As a shield warrior and an archer, Caleb and Jarod were too dangerous to face as a pair. Orion had stowed his weapon and canceled the death ripple purely to lure both men close so he could isolate them.

"You tricked us?" Caleb barked. Although he was wary by nature, Orion's sudden rush forced him to raise his shield in a panic to block the blow.

"Lord Orion, we can negotiate! Jarod and I truly want to surrender! Think about it: a living Legendary-level subordinate is worth more to you than a corpse!"

Caleb was clever, no doubt. Banking on the idea that a living lord might be more valuable, he believed Orion had genuinely planned to recruit them.

"Sorry. My orders are to kill you."

Eightfold Spear Barrage reappeared, but this time, its focus was solely on Caleb. Orion lifted his trident, unleashing a rain of blood-red spears from above, bombarding the shield warrior relentlessly.

Caleb gripped his giant shield with both hands, conjuring a pitch-black energy barrier.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Trident and shield clashed in a grinding stalemate. Orion poured his concentration into channeling transcendent power, summoning more and more phantom spears from the sky.

Caleb couldn't help regretting killing Goblin Murktooth in front of Orion with Jarod's help.

"Damn it... If Murktooth were still alive, at least he could feed more transcendent power to keep our defense stable."

Once Orion went all-in on the Eightfold Spear Barrage, its destructive force was devastating.

Meanwhile, Rumbold had Night Elf Jarod pinned down. Wisps of pale green vapor streamed from Rumbold's body, morphing into a massive serpent that twined itself around Jarod.

Rumbold cackled, launching himself at Jarod.

Clang!

He lurched back, grin turning eerie.

"Not bad—you can handle yourself up close too, huh? Looks like you're not just some archer."

Rumbold stretched, one bony spine after another protruding from his body in a hideous, nightmarish display.

"You're a lower-tier Legendary lord. I'm upper-tier. I'm gonna wrap this up in five minutes, give or take. Gahaha..."

Jarod's face went dark. By now, he realized Orion had been lying the whole time—so much for "recommendation slots" and "tokens." It was all nonsense.

"If you want me dead, I won't make it easy for you."

Night Elf Jarod lifted his longbow with both hands; black light flared across his body. In mere moments, Jarod himself transformed into a streak of black-sheathed arrowfire, engaged in a frantic chase with Rumbold.

Orion caught the faint glow of Jarod's transformation out of the corner of his eye, but seeing Rumbold unshaken, he refocused on his own target. Intensifying his hold over the Eightfold Spear Barrage, Orion conjured even more spears to pummel Caleb.

One deafening series of explosions later, Caleb's dark barrier finally shattered, leaving him exposed.

"So your mighty shield has broken, huh? That means you're done for."

With that, Orion lunged, trident in hand, using Swift Charge to close in on Caleb.

Orion himself wanted to deliver the final blow—just in case Caleb had a hidden move up his sleeve. Terror flashed in Caleb's eyes, but he didn't freeze; instead, he drew his longsword to parry Orion's thrust.

Orion pulled his weapon back, about to go in for a second strike. Suddenly, Caleb's sword flared like a blinding torch—an intense burst of light consumed their surroundings.

Hastily, Orion swept his trident in a defensive maneuver, thinking Caleb was counterattacking. But as the glare subsided, Caleb was already making a break for it, fleeing due south.

Chapter 306 Embrace your death, corrupted human

"Trying to run? Not a chance!"

Orion transformed into a streak of lightning, hurling tridents from his hands one after another. Caleb, who had already fled some distance, heard the crackling of electricity and the piercing shriek of tridents ripping through the air. He was forced to slow down and dodge, veering off his path.

Orion seized the opportunity, closing in with murder in his eyes.

Rumbling thunder tore across the sky as lightning clashed with flickers of black energy—both forces colliding and annihilating each other.

Orion and Caleb were locked in a fierce aerial battle.

When the lightning dissipated and the black aura vanished, Orion floated above, staring at the gaping wound in Caleb's neck.

"Embrace your death, corrupted human."

With an echoing crash, a bolt of lightning hurdled down from the clouds and struck Caleb, blowing his body to pieces. A pitch-black Lord's Stone fell into Orion's hand, and a satisfied smirk formed at the corners of his mouth.

Caleb also dropped a "survivor chest," which Orion claimed into his Survivor's Platform. Murktooth, for his part, had only yielded a Lord's Stone and no chest.

Not far off, the battle between Rumbold and Jarod was ending as well. Jarod's transformed bolt form was now ensnared by Rumbold. The odd weapon in Rumbold's hand had turned flexible like a whip, binding and restricting Jarod's movement.

"Snapping in half is your destiny," Rumbold growled.

Crack!

Rumbold drew out his own spine and brought it down in a fierce chop on the imprisoned bolt, splitting it into two. Moments later, the sundered bolt fell away to reveal Night Elf Jarod, cut right through the waist, his body lifeless.

"Lord Orion, it seems your opponent was stronger than the elf I took on, but you still finished before me," Rumbold said with a chuckle.

Orion only shook his head. He could sense that, for whatever reason, the lords of this godforsaken land were generally weaker than typical lords elsewhere.

Orion had fought Jorik and the centaur khan Ironhoof and knew their abilities far surpassed Caleb's.

To be fair, when he still wielded his massive shield, Caleb's defense had been formidable. Yet once he lost that shield, his power plummeted, forcing him to flee.

"Caleb's combat strength nosedived once he couldn't use his shield," Orion murmured. "I can't find much pride in taking him down."

"Heh, Orion, I think I've got an answer," Rumbold said. He bent over, picked up the bow lying next to Jarod's corpse, and handed it to Orion.

"That Night Elf drew power from transforming into a living arrow thanks to this bow. He assumed I wouldn't know his weakness. But after following my master around, invading countless godforsaken lands, I've seen plenty of similar fighting styles."

Orion accepted the bow, examining it carefully. Whatever material it was made of radiated a mysterious aura, and its hue echoed the Black Sun hanging in the sky here.

"This is a peculiar weapon," Orion remarked, unable to pinpoint specifics beyond its unusual resonance.

"Lord Orion," Rumbold said, "most godforsaken lands are worlds without faith. So their Legendary-level fighters usually come up short compared to normal lords. After all, a lord's strength doesn't lie in transcendent power alone but also in will and faith energy.

These 'forsaken ones' have given up on faith, turning to darker methods to compensate for their deficits—like this bow, that shield, and the bronze hammer used by the goblin lord."

With Rumbold's explanation, Orion gained a clearer picture of how things worked in a godforsaken land.

"All three lords are dead now," Rumbold went on. "Which leaves us only with mopping up the stragglers."

As he spoke, Rumbold held out Jarod's Lord's Stone. Orion understood how valuable such an item was.

"Mr. Rumbold, what's your intention here?"

With a mild laugh, Rumbold replied, "I'm following my master's orders. On this sweep, we take no spoils. And really, Lord Orion, a Lord's Stone is nothing compared to the Rebirth Stone you gave me."

Orion didn't argue. He simply nodded and reached out to accept the Lord's Stone. Even as he did, Rumbold offered a caution:

"Lord Orion, a word of warning—the Lord's Stones in a godforsaken land are tainted. You can't use them directly, or something truly evil will take notice."

Orion frowned, lifting his gaze to Rumbold with a perplexed look.

"You saw it yourself. Their transcendent power was nearly all black," Rumbold explained. "In other words, they all share a particular attribute."

Orion wrinkled his brow further, having observed that detail long ago. "Please, continue."

The bony spikes covering Rumbold's frame slowly retracted into his body—his other battle form, which Orion tactfully chose not to question.

"I'm no teacher," Rumbold said wryly. "I've just traveled more. Anyway, they've been corrupted by evil forces. If you want to make proper use of these Stones, you'll have to purge that corruption first. I know of a special structure called a Purification Tower that can cleanse them."

At that, Rumbold stopped, leaving the rest to Orion's imagination. Orion nodded, a plan forming in his mind.

"Lord Orion, about the weak stragglers... how do you want to handle them? Kill them all?"

After a moment's thought, Orion spoke.

"Keep some of them alive. I need them for a ritual."

Rumbold nodded, wisely declining to ask what Orion intended with that ceremony.

...

Meanwhile, in the central region, atop a towering structure:

"All three Legendary auras out east just blinked out," Leonidas muttered, perched on a railing and staring toward the horizon.

"As expected," Arthas said, glancing eastward. He had some faith in Orion's abilities but wondered how Orion had pulled it off. He was curious what sort of trump cards or equipment Orion had used—and whether Orion had been forced to reveal his secrets to pull off the kills.

"Boney McBoneface," Leonidas grumbled, "I gotta admit, your eye for talent is better than mine. Every promising upstart I pinned my hopes on ended up dead. Damn. Not a single payoff, and I wasted a fortune on them."

Arthas ignored Leonidas's grouching, eyes drifting south.

"They're gathering their forces. The final showdown draws near."

Chapter 307 Nicely done

Godforsaken land, in a hidden valley.

Succubus Elder Desdemona awoke from darkness to find herself staring into Lilith's ravishing face.

"So, even in the boundless blackness of death, dreams can still exist?"

"I... I really saw Lilith!"

Desdemona murmured in a low voice, but what she heard in return was a husky rasp mixed with crackling sounds. The air suddenly grew oppressive. Desdemona couldn't believe it was her own voice—so coarse and rough.

"Elder Desdemona, death isn't the end—it's just another beginning."

At the sound of Lilith's voice, Desdemona snapped out of her confusion. She peered closely at Lilith.

"You... you really are Lilith?"

Lilith nodded calmly.

"Take a moment to feel out your own body. Then you'll understand what happened."

Desdemona nodded and instinctively examined herself. The very next instant, bones sprouted from her body, wrapping around her completely.

"I... died... then was transformed... into a Skeletal Knight?"

She sounded totally stunned—unsure whether to be happy or bewildered. She stood there, mouth open, at a loss for words.

"It was Orion who transformed you all!"

"All of us?"

"Yes—all of you!"

Lilith raised her hand, motioning behind Desdemona. There, the clanmates who'd fallen in battle were rising to their feet, one after another. A total of two hundred and two, all turned into Skeletal Knights.

Desdemona spun around, gazing at the familiar faces. She opened her mouth but couldn't think of a thing to say.

"Skeletal Knights come with heavy restrictions. If you die again, you'll be gone for good, with your souls completely obliterated.

Elder Desdemona, this incomplete path of evolution was obtained with countless sacrifices."

Lilith's voice grew louder, loud enough for the newly awakened clanmates to hear:

"You are still bathed in the Horde's glory, shining under Orion's radiance."

There was a fevered passion in Lilith's tone—mixed with a subtle excitement.

Three days later, Orion's army gained a new contingent of armored Skeletal Knights.

"Lord Orion, I didn't expect you to get your hands on a resurrection array from my master," Rumbold remarked when he sensed the presence of the Skeletal Knights.

He could hardly miss something that obvious—plus it confirmed how close Orion must be to his master, Arthas.

"Skeletal Knights are basically an incomplete evolutionary path," Rumbold continued. "In the Necro Realm, we've never seen a veteran Legendary-level Skeletal Knight make it that far.

But for those lacking innate talent, or anyone with regrets in life, this path sure beats the alternative."

Rumbold wanted to emphasize the shortcomings of Skeletal Knights as a friendly heads-up. Orion nodded; Arthas had warned him about this back when he provided the sacrificial ritual.

Honestly, for these horde members, simply reaching 'lord' status (Legendary level) could have been a dream they'd never fulfill on their own.

"Lord Orion, we've cleared out the entire eastern region. Time to head for the central region and help out."

Orion lifted his gaze, looking toward the center of the land. After a brief pause, he nodded to Rumbold.

Originally, based on Orion's agreement with Leonidas, finishing this sweep would fulfill his mission—he could leave the godforsaken land early and get a world's core as compensation. But bailing right in the middle might seem a little cold.

Besides, he wanted to see for himself how old-school Legendary-level entities fought. That was the path he'd soon be walking, so it wouldn't hurt to watch and steel his resolve.

"All right. Let's head for the central region."

It was precisely the decision Rumbold hoped for. His master, Arthas, was in the central region, and Rumbold wanted to do his part there.

An arch lord might not consider a lord-level fighter worth losing sleep over, but from Rumbold's perspective, if things went south, at least he'd ensure Arthas went down later than he did.

And so, their entire force changed course and set out en masse. Orion, seated astride his Abyssal Dragon, sank his consciousness into the Survivor's Platform to update Leonidas and Arthas on current events.

Hulk: "Hey, bros—east side is done. All three lords who were holed up here are killed."

Arthas: "Nicely done."

Leonidas: "Wahaha... Lil' bro, not bad! Thought you'd get stuck fighting them for a while!"

Hulk: "Just luck. I had Rumbold's help—no telling how it would've gone otherwise.

Bro (Arthas), that subordinate of yours is seriously awesome!"

Leonidas: "Boney McBoneface's guy is pretty legit, all right. Upper Legendary-level, basically on the brink of arch lord status."

Hulk: "Bro Leonidas, I'm heading for the central region with Rumbold to assist. Think we can make it in time for the final showdown?"

Leonidas: "If you get here within half a month, I'd say yes!

Hey, Squiddy (Kraken), how're things on your end?"

Kraken: "Just about finished. Some random lord popped up but I already took care of 'em."

Leonidas: "No worries—that must've been the only oceanic lord in this godforsaken land. Better off dead."

...

Godforsaken land, on a lone island in the northwest.

Kraken sprawled out, its colossal body draped across a massive shark as it tore off huge chunks of flesh. That shark was precisely the lord Kraken had killed.

"Scored a Lord's Stone. This trip's already paid off!"

A Lord's Stone isn't just for building your own territory—you can trade it for all kinds of rare goods. Whether on the Survivor's Platform or back home, Kraken stood to profit.

"Too bad it's one of those polluted Lord's Stones... gonna need some hotshot to purify it," Kraken muttered between bites of shark meat. "Figures that guy Hulk's still a beast. Three lords down... guess he's bagged at least one Lord's Stone, maybe all three!"

Kraken sighed. "What to do... the more I think about it, the more jealous I get..."

He had a little quirk: whenever he ate, daydreaming made him feel extra amped and happy.

...

In the central region, atop a certain tower.

Leonidas disconnected from the Survivor's Platform and blinked, glancing reproachfully at Arthas with big, soulful eyes—there was something endearingly naive in that look.

"Once our commander wakes up and meets Hulk, I bet Hulk'll get even stronger.

Boney McBoneface, you gotta teach me how to pick out talented survivors. I'm sick of all my 'promising' newbies ending up dead."

Arthas didn't bother responding to Leonidas, instead gazing south, clearly trying to gauge the situation over there. After a long moment, he finally lowered his head to give Leonidas a glance.

"I've mentored plenty of survivors who had tons of 'potential,' but only Hulk made it to Legendary.

If you want your eyes opened, maybe wait 'til our commander can teach you."

Leonidas perked up at the mention of "commander," but just as quickly, his excitement evaporated.

"Meh, our commander's snoozing all year long—there's nothing to learn that way!"

Chapter 308 Tell me what happened

Champions Alliance's commander, Thresh, ranked as an idol in both Leonidas's and Arthas's eyes.

After all, Champions Alliance's Deputy Commander Edward, Arthas, and Alexander had all been mentored and guided by Commander Thresh. Leonidas himself had also received Thresh's advice more than a few times.

"Sigh. Who knows when we'll finally reach the demigod stage?"

The moment Leonidas uttered the word "demigod," both he and Arthas fell silent.

For years, demigod was the goal they had pursued, yet it remained frustratingly beyond reach. In the Champions Alliance, only Commander Thresh was known to have achieved demigod status. As far as anyone could tell, Arthas, Alexander, and Leonidas definitely were not demigods. Whether Deputy Commander Edward had attained that level was still in question.

The main reason people suspected Deputy Commander Edward might also be a demigod was because every time he gave out gifts, they were always forbidden spell scrolls. This habit led Arthas, Alexander, and Leonidas to speculate about his true level.

"You'd think we've absorbed plenty of world essence, right? Arf, arf... So why can't we even touch the threshold of demigodhood?"

The more Leonidas talked, the heavier his mood grew—he actually let out a dog-like bark in frustration.

"You're asking me? Like I'd know," Arthas replied, sounding uncharacteristically disheartened.

"Maybe we haven't absorbed enough world essence."

"Or maybe our cultivation just isn't quite there yet."

"Or perhaps we're missing that single, crucial element..."

Arthas gazed into the distance, momentarily lost in thought.

Lokiviria, above a city built from stacked stone.

"Get back to your own territory, you hideous half-dragon bitch!"

Hearing Lokiviria's insult, Gareth felt both furious and helpless. Roaring in anger, she channeled her transcendent power, temporarily morphing into a giant abyssal dragon, and unleashed a blast of draconic breath.

"Dragons are only powerful when their bloodline is pure," Lokiviria taunted. He threw a punch, sending a howling gust of wind to scatter Gareth's dragonfire.

"You ugly half-dragon, your breath is so damn weak!"

Boom!

A sonic boom echoed in the sky. As a lord with wind-based transcendent power—and an extraordinary Constitution—Lokiviria's punches packed terrifying force.

Bang!

Gareth was slammed backward, wounded severely. Unwilling to stay longer, she fled the insect territory at once.

Of course, the armies Gareth had led into the insect-folk lands suffered a merciless counterattack, incurring heavy casualties. Lokiviria chose not to pursue Gareth; he knew if she was intent on escaping, she could get away.

Returning to the insect city, Lokiviria surveyed the invaders outside the walls and let out a sadistic yell:

"Children of the swarm, mealtime!"

As soon as he spoke, countless insectfolk swarmed out from the city and the subterranean depths, scrambling to tear into the enemy's ranks.

Several days later, Lokiviria came back to his city—to the palace where Rowena was staying.

"My beauty, my child, I'm back!"

Rowena, belly swollen with pregnancy, stepped out of the palace to greet him personally.

"My dear husband, thank goodness you've returned safe and sound! Now my child and I can finally be at ease."

She gently stroked her belly, immediately drawing Lokiviria's attention to the baby. Just as she expected, he lowered himself to press an ear against her stomach.

"Hahaha... I can hear him! My son is kicking me with his little feet!"

Lokiviria was delighted. Though he had many children, none had ever been born in a humanoid form—only bestial bodies. Rowena's unborn child, on the other hand, was destined to be humanoid from birth, which meant he would undoubtedly possess incredible potential.

"My dear, did you slay the northern invaders?

Is our child safe now?"

Rowena spoke carefully, aiming to learn about the intruders under the guise of concern for their baby.

"My beauty, it's tough to actually kill a lord in this part of the world.

That half-dragon woman tried to run, and I wasn't able to stop her.

Don't worry. As long as I'm here, you two are perfectly safe."

Listening to the baby's movements, Lokiviria casually mentioned that Gareth had managed to escape, leaving Rowena with a pang of disappointment. She'd lived through so much—and been with plenty of men—but she hid every flicker of emotion deep inside.

"My dear Lokiviria, I'm sure you'll find a chance to wipe out those invaders," Rowena offered.

"Just like that giant in the north, who killed Lord Ariel of the Thunderwood Forest."

Lokiviria tensed at the mention of Lord Ariel. His multi-pupiled insect eyes flicked up to meet Rowena's, unsettling her.

"My beauty, you're saying some Alpha-level giant took out a Legendary-level lord? Did you see that with your own eyes?"

His tone became suddenly serious, gravely earnest.

Rowena shook her head, answering honestly.

"I didn't see it myself. But my brother was an Alpha-level fighter, and that same giant killed him."

Lokiviria relaxed his voice, returning his ear to Rowena's belly for a moment.

"Oh? So tell me what happened."

Rowena dared not defy him. After a moment to gather her thoughts, she explained:

"My brother was once a thunderhawk knight. Both he and his thunderhawk were at Alpha level—he was the most powerful of all Thunderwood Forest's Alpha-level warriors.

Later, my brother's thunderhawk went up north to drive away a beast tide... but it never returned.

Then, the following year, northern invaders hit Thunderwood Forest. Without his thunderhawk, my brother couldn't hold on and was killed by that giant."

Even now, Rowena still looked anguished. It had been a long time, yet the death of the brother who'd loved her unconditionally was a heartbreak she couldn't set aside.

"An Alpha-level fighter beating your thunderhawk-less brother—that makes sense," Lokiviria remarked. "Alpha-level can vary in power. But it doesn't prove some random Alpha giant can knock off a Legendary-level lord.

My beauty, you shouldn't believe that rumor.

There must be something fishy about Ariel's death—most likely she was ambushed by several northern lords working together."

Having heard Rowena's story, Lokiviria let out a derisive snort, then offered her a quick explanation of how wide the gap was between Alpha level and Legendary level.

"My dear, if you want revenge, then let our child be born safe and sound. Let him grow big and strong.

And when he's ready, he can avenge you—and avenge his uncle."

Chapter 309 Tell me everything you've observed

Lokiviria spoke in a booming, arrogant voice.

As a lord risen from among billions of insectfolk to reach the apex, it was impossible for him to be a fool. No matter how well Rowena tried to hide her intentions—no matter how cautious she was—he had clearly picked up on the clues. Yet, he simply didn't care.

In Lokiviria's mind, having his powerful son kill that giant one day seemed far more fitting—an even greater demonstration of insectfolk superiority.

Meanwhile, Rowena felt her hands and feet go cold, an icy dread seeping through her body.

Only moments ago, a lord had fixed his gaze on her, and she felt as though she'd died on the spot. That sense of powerlessness, of being at someone else's mercy, made Rowena realize she'd been too reckless—that she'd made a misstep. A lord wasn't someone a mere hero-level individual like her could manipulate.

"Rowena, keep it together. The lord before you is a Legendary-level fighter—being his woman means you're safe."

She kept telling herself to calm down, to maintain her composure. Moments later, Rowena was steady once more, aware that such a mindset was best for her child's sake.

"My dear, I'm certain our child will be the strongest of all!"

Those were the words Lokiviria loved hearing most. He broke into hearty laughter, gave Rowena a grin, and went back to listening to the little life forming inside her belly.

...

Godforsaken Land, Central Region.

Eager to catch the grand finale, Orion and Rumbold had forced a faster march and arrived earlier than expected.

"Hey there, you two!"

Orion walked up, smiling as he greeted Leonidas and Arthas.

"Haha! Not bad for the seventh member of the Champions Alliance. This is your first time stepping out and look how fierce you are already!"

Leonidas sprang lightly into the air, landing on Orion's shoulder. He stared at Orion up close.

"I can smell blood on you, so I'm guessing you killed at least two Legendary-level toughies."

He leapt back down, half joking as he spoke. Orion froze for a second, but quickly relaxed and replied matter-of-factly,

"You're not wrong. That's about how it went."

Reaching out a forepaw, Leonidas gave Arthas's thigh a friendly pat—though it echoed like metal striking metal.

"See that? Straight shooter. Unlike you, always hiding some tidbit. You pregnant or something?"

Arthas merely nodded at Orion, then lifted a leg to punt Leonidas aside.

"Get lost with that nonsense. I'm not the one who's biologically inclined to pop out pups."

Orion watched, smiling. The fact that Leonidas and Arthas could jest so freely spoke volumes about the depth and warmth of their friendship. He figured they'd faced life-and-death challenges together more than once—otherwise they wouldn't be so relaxed, never mind that they were both arch lords.

As for Orion, back in the Stoneheart Horde, he was often forced to maintain a certain air of authority. Even his old friends among the giants rarely treated him purely like a pal anymore.

"This place is radiating some serious magical energy," Orion remarked. "Aren't you guys going to show me around?"

Arthas shook his head and pointed south.

"The enemy is drawing close. I need to keep an eye on them, so let Leonidas show you the heart of the region. There's a withered sapling of the World Tree there—worth a look."

At the mention of the World Tree and the siphoning magic array, Leonidas suddenly perked up like a clown on call, hopping around as though ready to perform.

"Hulk, come with me! I'll show you my big handiwork!"

Leonidas sprang ahead to lead the way. After giving Arthas a slight nod, Orion followed him deeper into the central region.

When Orion was finally out of sight, Rumbold—who had been standing silently to one side—spoke up.

"Master!"

"Mhm. Tell me everything you've observed—leave out nothing."

"Yes, sir."

Rumbold nodded, launching into a steady account. Starting with how he and Orion had invaded the eastern region, he described the goblins and night elves, as well as the three lords—Murktooth, Caleb, and Jarod. Going over every detail without rushing, he recounted the story at length.

After he finished, Rumbold stood like a silent skeleton behind Arthas.

"While Orion's scheming might still be a bit rough," Arthas muttered to himself, "the godforsaken land's races aren't exactly united to begin with. The plan had the perfect environment to work, so getting results is decent enough. At least it proves Orion's not some dullard."

Rumbold made no sound, like he'd entered a trance.

"He can transform into a Titan, has that big-area attack skill, plus a pair of identical clones. Pretty versatile—good at both ranged and melee, not easily hamstrung by the environment.

Also, he's got both lightning-element and blood-based transcendent power. It's clear he can take care of himself."

Though Arthas didn't know the exact names of Orion's skills, Rumbold's explanation had given him a good idea. From that, Arthas arrived at a conclusion: Orion definitely possessed the strength to protect himself now.

"Rumbold, what's your personal impression of him?"

Rumbold's reply was calm.

"Lord Orion is a giant who's hard to dislike.

I found my interactions with him quite pleasant, and we developed a bit of a bond. That friendship really began after Orion gave me that Rebirth Stone."

Arthas didn't look back or press further. Rumbold, accustomed to Arthas's manner, went on.

"Orion's personality can be forceful; most of the time, he's not easily swayed. But in moments of crisis, he's willing to hesitate, to think about the bigger picture—he doesn't always insist on getting his way."

You could tell as much from Orion's first encounter with the goblin lord—he hadn't gone after Murktooth full-force.

"Orion's subordinates worship him with a near-fanatical fervor. Their discipline in battle is remarkably solid, which indirectly shows Orion's skill at running things."

Rumbold kept going, elaborating on his thoughts in detail, since his assessments would be important to Arthas.

"He's not averse to killing. He's neither clearly good nor clearly evil—more of a pragmatist..."

Chapter 310 World Tree

Rumbold had a lot to say, starting with Orion's temperament. Through endless details—character, spirit, upbringing, combat style, and ability to handle stress—he painted a lively and vivid picture of Orion for Arthas.

"Anything else?"

Arthas's calm voice broke the silence. Rumbold paused in thought for a moment, then shook his head, saying nothing.

"Alright then. Go guard the central area. When the big battle starts, keep an eye out for a good opportunity to make a move—make sure you protect the magic array!"

"Understood!"

Once Rumbold left, Arthas's expression lit up with delight—despite being a skeleton whose face gave no visible clues.

Yet there was no denying his joy.

"Let's wait a bit longer. If he can grow into an arch lord, he'll truly become a valuable asset to our alliance!"

Meanwhile, Leonidas bounced along and led Orion into the depths of the underground.

There was an underground palace here that had been reworked by undead creatures, so most of the structures were cloaked in a heavy aura of death.

"You've probably never seen a World Tree before. Neither have I, not that many anyway," Leonidas said, his tone laced with a random sort of glee and a smugness that was more about lightening the mood than showing off.

Orion, curious, thought for a moment, then asked, "Bro, from what you're saying, you've encountered quite a few World Trees?"

Leonidas didn't even turn around. He kept walking as he answered, "Yeah, I've seen some, but only a few Godforsaken Lands actually have them."

Orion took note of Leonidas's words. This was all brand-new information to him.

"Each world's World Tree is different, right?" he asked.

That guess came from the way Leonidas was talking.

"Of course! Think about it—every world out there is unique, and they all contain different life forms. How could their World Trees possibly be the same?"

Orion fell silent, wearing a half-puzzled, half-enlightened expression.

"Here, let me give you an analogy: You're a giant, a living being. Your giant kin are also living beings, correct?"

Before Orion could reply, Leonidas continued, "But if you think of yourself as a standalone world, then your fellow giants would each be their own standalone worlds. Does any one of your kin look exactly like you? No way, at best they're just similar! Same principle applies to World Trees."

This straightforward example was enough for Orion to get the point right away. Every world had a World Tree, but each one's essence and structure was totally different.

"You see that? That there is the World Tree. Kinda disappointing, huh?"

"Ha ha ha..."

Talking while they walked, Leonidas and Orion finally arrived at the subterranean center.

Right in the middle of a magic array stood a withered sapling.

Orion couldn't help feeling let down. The World Tree he saw had been turned to stone, exuding a sense of utter silence.

Though it was streaked with five-colored patterns, there was no trace of life to it—just cold, rock-like stillness.

"The heart of this World Tree has been drained. The fact it's not obliterated, and still keeps its form, means the one who stole its world essence has to be a demigod."

"Bro, how're you so sure it was a demigod?"

Leonidas glanced at Orion, then fixed his eyes on the World Tree again.

"If it had been a god, there'd be no world essence left at all. This broken world wouldn't even have left scraps behind for us to cross-realm invade and scavenge. So it had to be a demigod who came in and took most of the world essence."

He sighed. "As for the finer details, you wouldn't get it yet. Once your power goes up, you'll naturally understand. The big battle's about to start—come on, let's head out."

Orion nodded. There was indeed much he didn't grasp. Casting one last look at the World Tree, he turned around and followed Leonidas out of the underground.

Three days later, war erupted in full force.

Gollum the goblin, John the human, and Mia the night elf—three arch lords—attacked, only to be sealed inside a special space by Leonidas and Arthas, who had been preparing for them all along.

They resorted to this method because arch lords wield such devastating power. Leonidas and Arthas didn't want their carefully prepared Source Siphon Array to be destroyed in the chaos.

Orion had come mainly to watch and see first-hand how fearsome arch lords could be. Now it looked like he wasn't going to see anything.

Still, the method of sealing off an entire dimension was eye-opening for him. It made him realize there was a massive gap between a lord and an arch lord—Orion certainly couldn't seal off space yet, and probably wouldn't be able to for a good while.

With no battle to witness, Orion transformed into lightning and dropped to the side of the skeleton general, Rumbold.

"Mr. Rumbold, let's fight side by side!"

"An honor!"

In this Godforsaken Land, besides the three arch lords, there were six Legendary-level enemies. On Orion's side, including himself, there were eight Legendary-level fighters total.

He loved those odds—outnumbering the opposition was basically a breeze.

In the central zone, in the innermost area, Orion's underlings had been stationed there, clearly the safest and easiest spot. Leonidas and Arthas were still looking out for Orion's team.

"I gotta admit, even here in the Godforsaken Land, their power is something we can only look up to," said Onyx, hefting his stone axe and gazing skyward.

More than ten Legendary-level auras from both sides were colliding in the distance, barbaric and terrifying. This was beyond anything Onyx had ever seen in his life.

"Compared to them, we're nothing. Just ants," Thundar lamented. He'd picked up the word "ants" from Orion.

"If every one of these powerful lords decided to invade our home world, it'd be a full-scale disaster," Slagor said, standing side by side with Earthshaker. The two had formed a tight bond, a partnership of life and death.

"Our lord is up there somewhere. Wherever you see lightning flash, that's Master Orion's work!" said Earthshaker, Orion's enslaved soldier, completely devoted to him.

While talking, he raised his chains and sword, energetically shouting Orion's name over and over.

Dirtclaw was just as fanatical, whipping around his long lash, which whistled through the air.

"Take down the goblins, plunder the night elves—whoever grabs 'em, they're yours! Those busty, curvy elves are up for the taking. You can do whatever you want with them—satisfy your lust to your heart's content!"

"The smoke of war is upon us! We fight for glory! Praise be to our lord!"

"Raise those axes and warhammers—victory will be ours!"

"..."

Honestly, no one was more fanatical than Dirtclaw the gnoll.

Sadly, his shouts were drowned out by the thunder of countless arrow towers and magical artillery, as well as the roars of giant beasts across the battlefield.

The war had begun in every corner—sky and earth alike.