

## Titan King 351

Chapter 351 Are you ready?

"We humans are already short on manpower as it is, so I'm really not sure I understand this letter," Princess Ava said, glancing at Arthur and Galahad for their opinions. "Why would my brother, knowing we're at a disadvantage, send us along with twenty thousand imperial troops to help the Blood Elves?"

Arthur, who had met King Harold, stepped forward to share his viewpoint. "His Majesty is a wise man—I'm sure he has his reasons. Besides, Grand Duke Richard will be accompanying us this time. They've probably thought through every detail far better than we have."

Arthur knew King Harold was a composed ruler blessed with great insight. Most of the kingdom's top advisors were traveling with him, and Arthur felt confident these nobles would have everything planned out, big or small.

"The two divisions—twenty thousand troops—are already waiting in the western camp. When should we set off?" Coal Knight Galahad was new to these matters, so he made no suggestions, only asked the practical question.

"Let's pack up," Princess Ava said decisively. "We'll head out in two hours. When it comes to providing support, sooner is better than later." It was a royal command, after all. Even though she was the princess, she couldn't disobey.

In truth, King Harold was acting with her best interests at heart. He believed that, whatever happened, the western or eastern fronts were bound to be less volatile than the central warzone.

Sending Princess Ava west to help the Blood Elves was his way of making sure she had a better shot at survival. And as a top representative of the human kingdom, Princess Ava would undoubtedly be granted extra protection by the Blood Elves.

King Harold clearly cherished his sister very much.

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Meanwhile, on the western front.

Starveil City.

Half a month slipped by in a blink. Blood Elf Faelar had arrived from the Blood Elves' City of Blessings with sizable reinforcements. An entire legion of Blood Elf archers and Gnome crossbowmen had taken their positions atop Starveil City's walls.

Far off in the distance, the northern allied vanguard had already reached the outskirts of Starveil City. Rather than launching an assault, these advance forces waited patiently for Orion, Jorik, and the other lords to arrive.

"The hour of the Giant King is at hand!" Balor, the Giant King, proclaimed from high upon the walls. "I'll show them what real giant power looks like!"

He wore a armor, with a monstrous spiked club slung across his back. Its base was fitted with a long chain, coiling around his waist in multiple loops.

Balor let out a burst of excited laughter.

In the depths of the northern allied ranks, Orion sat astride his abyssal dragon, face and eyes calm as still water, betraying no emotion at all.

"Hey there, friend," Aldous said, suddenly turning to Orion after glancing toward Starveil City. "I can sense a restlessness in the air, and it's aimed right at you."

Orion had already felt the stirrings of Legendary-level power. He gave a faint smile. "My friend, that Blood Elf named Elanor is gorgeous. I want her for my woman—you promised, so don't you go back on your word."

Aldous grinned in return. "Ogres don't judge beauty the way elves or humans do—trust me, we have our own brand of aesthetics."

In the upcoming clash, Bluehide would be going up against Blood Elf Elanor. Orion's half-joking remark about wanting Elanor was as much a mood-lightener as it was a subtle reminder to Aldous about the plan.

"My friend, you have no idea how brutal this big lug can be," chimed in Bluehide's smaller head, casting a confident nod toward the larger, snoozing head.

Orion glanced at the drooling, half-asleep head and shook his own with an indulgent laugh. Befriending an ogre—especially a two-headed one—was an odd experience indeed.

Unlike Leonidas or Arthas, Aldous(Bluehide) was the first person in this world with a status like Orion's whom Orion felt truly comfortable with.

Having that kind of friend felt wonderful, making Orion sense he was sinking deeper into this world.

Just then, Jorik, Lokiviria, Gareth, and Ironhoof arrived together, forming a small group around Orion.

"Lord Orion," Jorik said, "we'll reach Starveil City in no more than half a day. Are you ready?"

Orion didn't answer immediately. Instead, he gave his abyssal dragon a reassuring pat to steady its nerves. Even though all five of these lords were doing their best to restrain their auras, the combined pressure still bothered the poor dragon.

"I don't need any special prep," Orion said. "From the moment I left the Black Forest, I've been prepared for battle. Isn't that how you operate, too?"

His calm tone caught the five off guard, including Bluehide.

The deeper their invasion pushed into southern lands, the more victories they won—and the more they risked falling prey to complacency, seeing only their success and forgetting to stay vigilant.

Orion's words were a wake-up call: in the final run-up to the big fight, they had to stay focused and keep the enemy's other lords fully occupied so Orion could meet his foe without distractions.

A pensive silence fell, lasting until half a day later. Then the colossal northern alliance arrived under Starveil City's walls, tens of thousands of forces rolling in like a black tide, blotting out the sunlight. For an instant, it seemed no ray of light could pierce into the city.

Suddenly, an eagle-like screech rang out, and a squadron of Hippogryph Riders soared from Starveil's walls—the Blood Elves' airborne cavalry.

After returning, Blood Elf Faelar hadn't just come with elven archers and gnomish crossbowmen; he'd also brought several thousand Hippogryph Riders.

The moment they took flight, it was as if a rip opened in the storm clouds, letting in a shaft of sunlight. The sky became a stark divide of swirling darkness on one half and brilliant white on the other.

A resounding roar tore from the northern horde, followed by the rising shapes of an airborne cavalry that Jorik had dispatched: dragon beasts.

There were only around a thousand of them, but among their ranks was an Alpha-level wyvern and a thunderhawk, their morale easily a match for the hippogryph riders above.

Chapter 352 The lesser must obey the greater

Wooo-wooo-wooo...

Rooarr...

In the next instant, a series of deep, resonant war horns blasted through the air, shaking the battlefield to its core. Countless bestial howls swelled from low rumbles to shrieking crescendos, creating a suffocating, heavy atmosphere.

The war had begun. The allied army had launched its attack.

A layer of dark-red armor materialized around Orion's body, and when the sunlight hit it just right, it flared with a dazzling, blood-like gleam. Holding his trident, Flame of Will, Orion let out a roar and shot forward like a bolt of lightning, rising to the center of the battlefield high above the ground.

At the same time, Jorik, Gareth, Ironhoof, Bluehide, and Lokiviria all used their own powers to ascend into the sky.

"Come! Let's get this fight started!!"

Surprisingly, it wasn't Orion who shouted these words—it was the other giant king, Balor, stepping off the city walls.

Orion saw it clearly: with each step Balor took, a surge of inky-black energy rose beneath his feet.

Meanwhile, Blood Elf Elanor took the lead on the other side, followed by Boarfolk Boarion, Gnome Brimli, and Blood Elf Faelar, each one joining Balor.

But just then, Orion and Balor spoke in unison:

"Praise the Titan God! By the oath of the Titan God, the lesser must obey the greater!"

"Praise the Titan God! By the oath of the Titan God, the lesser must obey the greater!"

Their voices boomed across the entire battlefield, echoing all the way to the rear of the allied forces and into Starveil City itself.

In that moment, every giant—whether from the Stoneheart clan or the Starveil clan—stood frozen, ears trained on those words. They knew this was the crucial hour for their kings, the moment that would honor the entire giant race. A true giant king would emerge from this conflict.

"I, Orion Stoneheart, Giant King, command the Starveil giants to follow me and wage war for the giants!"

"I, Balor Starveil, Giant King, command the Stoneheart giants to follow me, that we may wage war for the giants!"

Once again, they spoke at the same time, eyes locked on each other. The contest for the title of Giant King was packed with ritual and ceremony.

"Praise the Titan God! By the oath of the Titan God, I, Orion Stoneheart, grant Balor Starveil the right to challenge me and reclaim his freedom!"

"Praise the Titan God! By the oath of the Titan God, I, Balor Starveil, grant Orion Stoneheart the right to challenge me and reclaim his freedom!"

It was the giant race's way of declaring war internally, a pre-battle vow. Thanks to these formal words and rites, any vanquished giant bloodline warrior had the right to seek protection from other giants—essentially a safeguard to keep the giant race from tearing itself apart entirely.

"Hahaha... You guys didn't disappoint me—the fact you made it all the way down from the north says plenty," Balor said. "If you lose, I'll make sure to leave your body intact and give you a proper burial!"

His deep voice held an undercurrent of savagery.

Orion studied Balor, a surge of awe welling up inside him. It was Orion's first time meeting these southern Starveil giants, and he found it both jarring and fascinating.

The Blackstone Giants and Ironbone Giants both worshipped the Titan God and had received His blessings. Blackstone Giants got the lion's share of physical might, while the Ironbone Giants inherited more cunning and wisdom. (Orion and his kin were Stoneheart Giants—this surname hailing from the Titan.)

Usually, Blackstone Giants outclassed Ironbone Giants in raw strength, while Ironbone Giants beat Blackstone Giants in brains and scheming. Starveil Giants and Shadowabyss Giants, by contrast, were bestowed a different kind of Titan gift. They both had bestial features. Starveil Giants had larger, longer fangs than the Shadowabyss Giants, while Shadowabyss Giants had longer, skinnier ears than the Starveil Giants.

Glancing at Balor's four massive tusks, Orion felt an odd sense of déjà vu.

"I never imagined giants would still be living in the south," Orion said. "I should thank you—your existence brings me that much closer to becoming the true Giant King."

Even as he spoke, Orion's gaze flicked toward the second title on his status panel: Giant King.

Its description stated that a king's authority and roar would instill fear in all other giants. Giants weaker than the king would most likely submit unconditionally, bending to his will. Orion, however, could confirm that the title had zero effect on Balor standing before him.

"And if you lose, I'll make sure to leave your body intact and give you a proper burial," Orion answered—almost word for word.

Balor just laughed silently, eyes gleaming with confidence. He clearly had no plans for what would happen if he lost.

"All right, let's get started. I'm ready to throw down."

Orion stayed calm. He gave a slow nod and answered with a simple, "Fine."

Boom!

Boom!

An instant later, a trident and a monstrous spiked club, each cloaked in transcendent power, crashed from the sky.

They struck the ground like cannonballs, exploding on impact. The shockwave emptied the area of the attacking allied forces—several giants and Blood Elves on Starveil's walls weren't spared either.

"No one step into this area—those who do will die!"

"No one step into this area—those who do will die!"

Together, King Orion and King Balor spoke as they each descended to the portion of the battlefield their weapons had just blasted clear.

Simultaneously, high above, Jorik hovered with Gareth, Ironhoof, Lokiviria, and Bluehide, blocking off Elanor, Boarfolk Boarion, Gnome Brimli, and Blood Elf Faelar.

"Until those two giant kings decide their match, I suggest nobody move," Aldous called out. He was an ogre, and the smaller of his two heads flickered with cunning. "If we start mixing it up now, the fallout of our fight could take out this entire city."

Elanor, the upper Legendary-level Blood Elf, stayed motionless and silent, which suited her just fine. Even with her formidable power, the northern alliance had one more Legendary-level fighter than her side did.

Although there were various gaps in ability among Legendary powerhouses, those differences wouldn't be obvious in such a short time. In other words, if it came to an all-out brawl, Elanor's side wouldn't be favored to win.

And so, a strange scene played out: nine Legendary-level fighters floating mid-air over the battlefield, like nine impartial referees gazing down on the showdown between the two giant kings.

On the ground below—except for the no-man's region carved out by Orion and Balor—the war raged on.

Cave spiders, centaur archers, insectoids, icefield snow wolves, ogres, scorpions... all swept around those two giants, continuing their fierce attack on Starveil City.

For rank-and-file warriors, the bloodshed never paused just because the lords had started their own duel.

Attack and defense, life and death—they all marched forward without stopping.

Chapter 353 A genuine giant-king duel

The battlefield was a deafening mix of battle cries and feral roars, rising all the way to the clouds.

All around the city walls and the soil beneath them, blood soaked in at a pace visible to the naked eye, turning everything a lurid shade of red. It was both vivid and gruesome.

The war drums pounded low and steady, wave after wave, echoing in everyone's ears.

Amid that thunderous beat, Giant King Orion and Giant King Balor now faced each other.

Balor reached up, unfastening the armor on his body and letting it clatter to the ground. Orion's eyes were cold and remote; the blood-red armor on him receded, returning to its original bone-bead form.

In the first phase of a giant king's duel, it was fist versus fist—a raw contest of strength.

"Orion Stoneheart, this is a battle of honor!"

Orion didn't answer. He merely pounded on his own chest with both hands, roaring all the while. Little by little, his mood and very blood began to burn.

Huff!

Wind whistled in their ears as both Orion and Balor, each worked into a frenzy of emotion, suddenly charged at one another.

Boom!

Their fists collided in midair—a pounding clash of flesh against flesh, strength against strength. Neither Orion nor Balor gave an inch. That opening punch left them deadlocked.

"Impressive. I wasn't expecting the Blackstone tribe to produce someone so powerful!"

Balor was caught off guard. His body was larger and sturdier than Orion's, yet in sheer brute force, Orion had matched him blow for blow.

Orion was even more astonished. He knew perfectly well that in his normal form, the extra might he wielded came from the Heart of Titan. Without that Titan boost, Balor would actually outclass him in raw power.

"The Starveil giants' strength is everything I'd hoped for!" Orion bellowed in reply.

More agile by nature, Orion wasted no time unleashing a second attack. He planted his left foot, thrust forward, then shot out a brutally fast, pinpoint flying knee with his right leg.

Thud!

Balor crossed his arms, blocking the blow at the elbows, but Orion's strike still sent him hurtling backward.

"Not bad. Now it's my turn!"

Landing from his backward flight, Balor smirked coldly. Then he dropped to one knee, both hands on the ground, as though preparing for a sprint.

Rumble...

Even without using any transcendent power, Balor's sheer physical might made a noise like rolling thunder as he charged.

"Let's see how you handle my 'Rapid Ram Fist.' Heh heh heh!"

His laughter sounded almost demented, as if a crazed hooligan had discovered some new joy.

This was a punch Orion couldn't afford to dodge—doing so would throw away all the momentum he'd built. He recognized that immediately. So instead of backing off, Orion barreled straight in.

He activated Berserk Aura, sending himself into a frenzy. In that state, his constitution rose a notch, and he felt less pain. That little edge was exactly what he needed.

"Go to hell!"

Driven wild by his berserk state, Orion's killing intent exploded, cold and rampant in his eyes. He didn't bother hiding it at all.

Crack...crack...crack!

The sound of bones grinding and popping echoed through the air, enough to make any onlooker's skin crawl.

Watching that fist-on-fist brutality from above—Boarfolk Boarion, Gnome Brimli, Lokiviria, Jorik, Gareth, Ironhoof, and Bluehide—found themselves at a loss for words, each swallowing hard. They were all power-based fighters in the Legendary level, but seeing the way Orion and Balor collided left them feeling inadequate.

Especially Lokiviria, who couldn't help feeling relieved that back when he clashed with Orion, he never allowed Orion to fight him that close.

"Heh heh...just wanting to be Giant King isn't good enough!"

Balor was unhinged. Blood was already leaking from his fists, but he paid no attention. Whatever pain Orion caused him only fueled Balor's excitement, driving him to new heights of savagery.

Abandoning his earlier fighting style of trading blow for blow from a distance, Balor now let Orion's fists hammer his body. Plainly, Balor planned on taking hits to land hits, blood for blood. Only that, in his opinion, was worthy of a genuine giant-king duel.

With this shift in style, Balor's giant fists began pummeling Orion right back. But Orion wasn't about to shrink away—especially in his own berserk state.

Smack...boom...slam...splatter...

Fists struck flesh in a savage, blood-soaked rhythm, their morale feeding off each other's frenzy in a relentless, violent collision.

On top of one of Starveil City's walls, in a nearby watchtower, Kitsune Sylvana stood alone, shutting her foxy, seductive eyes. Yet with them closed, she still "saw" Orion and Balor's every move.

In Sylvana's mind's eye, those two were like outlines drawn in blue lines, locked in an endless night, grappling, beating, and crashing into each other again and again.

"A sudden catastrophe...a world under domination...a fate no one can fight..."

"Change...no answers...an opportunity..."

Sylvana's face grew ever paler as blood trickled from her eyes and nose.

Before long, in that darkness behind her eyelids, the two blue silhouettes turned blood-red. At the same time, an enormous figure that stretched across the entire world seemed to be watching their struggle—so huge that its body alone engulfed an entire galaxy.

Kitsune Sylvana tried to lift her head to gaze upon that towering presence.

But she failed.

At that moment atop the watchtower, she teetered, unable to hold herself upright, and toppled right over the side.

Down below, an old woman of the Fox (Kitsune) Tribe had been keeping a worried eye on Sylvana ever since noticing blood oozing from her seven orifices. The instant Sylvana fell, the old woman caught her.

"Let's get back...this fight is beyond us..."

And with that, Seer Sylvana passed out completely in the elder Kitsune's arms.

Beyond the city walls, in the duel's forbidden zone, horns blared, war drums thundered, and both sides fought like mad.

Orion landed a kick right against Balor's massive chest, caving it in. At the same time, Balor unleashed a devastating punch to Orion's gut, launching him into the air.

"Orion, I'll admit you're strong. I can't kill you in the first phase."

Chapter 354 A genuine giant-king duel II

Giant King Balor sucked in a ragged breath, clutching his chest. The piercing pain helped clear his head a bit. If he kept brawling like this, he felt he might be the first to fall, forfeiting all glory and power.

"As you wish. I acknowledge your strength as well, Balor of the Starveil giants!"

In a contest for the Giant King's title, once fists alone fail to force a competitor to submit, the fight escalates to a battle of weapons, growing even bloodier.

After Orion spoke, Giant King Balor turned back to his armor and carefully donned each individual piece. Then, he moved to his spiked club, pulled it from the ground, and slung it over his shoulder.

"I've changed my mind—now I'm going to smash you to pieces!"

With the club in hand, Balor seemed to recover his confidence, brimming with renewed self-assurance.

Orion said nothing. The blood-red Ghostbone Armor appeared once again, covering his entire body. He stretched out one hand, and the trident Flame of Will flew up from the ground into his grip. At the same time, an icy coating formed around Orion's armor.

"You're strong, headstrong, and irrational. I know you'll never bow to me."

"That's why I've decided to kill you."

Still in his berserk state, Orion's intent to kill hadn't faded in the least; in fact, it only grew stronger with a weapon in hand.

"Ha ha ha... Come, entertain me!" Balor let out a wild laugh as he hoisted the spiked club and charged forward.

"Die!"

Not to be outdone, Orion gripped his trident and activated Swift Charge.

Beyond the no-man's-land, beasts of all kinds thundered across the battlefield. Bloodline warriors, armed to the teeth, stormed forward.

Arrows fell like endless shuttles of death; boulders crashed like falling stars. In the fires of war, countless lives ended in sweeping, tragic songs.

Behind the carnage stood Delilah, Onyx, Rockwell, Earthshaker, and Slagor, along with a host of cannon-fodder troops. They kept watch on Starveil City, now bathed in flames, and on their lord Orion's duel with the other giant king.

Before departing, Orion had explicitly ordered that none of the Horde's Alpha-level elders join the battle. Now that he was caught up in the giant-king duel, he couldn't guarantee their safety.

Besides, until Orion and Balor decided the outcome, it was mainly expendable troops clashing below—hardly the true finale.

"This is an intense fight, and they've moved on to the second stage," Onyx observed. As the former ruler of the Black Forest, he understood some of the giants' customs. Indeed, once Orion had advanced to Legendary and gained the title of Giant King, Onyx had made an effort to learn about giant-king traditions.

"Prophet, why isn't our lord going all in—finishing off that Starveil giant in one go?" Rockwell asked. He knew just how mighty Orion truly was. Whether you looked at battle skill or his transcendent power, their lord was terrifyingly strong.

"Rockwell, this is a contest of two giant kings, not a simple skirmish.

To defeat the other fairly and let every giant witness the true power of the Giant King—that's the whole point of this duel.

It may look brutal, but from the very start, it's been a performance for all giants."

While speaking, Onyx gestured behind them at the crowd of giant bloodline warriors. Under Ursa's leadership—along with sentries Dace, Otho, Beyn, and Torba—they knelt in utter devotion, chanting prayers under their breath.

Onyx pointed then to Starveil City. At some point, the giants on the city walls had started kneeling in prayer as well. That left only the Blood Elves and Gnomes actively fighting on the ramparts.

"It's no exaggeration to say that for the giant race, this giant-king duel is a sacred war."

No sooner had Onyx finished speaking than a harsh, metallic clang rang out from the duel's restricted zone.

Inside that zone, the collisions came one after another, relentlessly.

Giant King Orion's trident struck Giant King Balor's spiked club again and again.

After countless clashes, Balor's club snapped in half, the sharper portion crashing to the ground. Clearly, its quality was no match for Orion's Flame of Will.

Even so, Balor ignored it, continuing to drag the half-broken club in his fight with Orion. He was nothing if not a true berserker at heart.

The Starveil giants had received more of the Titan God's darker gifts—they were fiercer, more savage, and refused to bow to any obstacle.

"WAAAGH... I'll kill you. I'll bash in your skull!"

"I'm the real Giant King. The strongest giant wins the crown!"

"I'm gonna crush you!"

Balor was in a frenzy, attacking faster and hitting harder with each swing.

Fortunately, he still held on to a sliver of sense—he had not yet drawn on his transcendent power. The second phase was supposed to be a weapons-only match, after all. Anybody who broke that rule would lose the right to be Giant King.

Boom!

Orion sidestepped Balor's wild overhead smash at close range. By now, the ground was a crater-riddled mess from their battle. Seizing his chance, Orion employed Shadowstep, boosting his speed and slipping behind Balor. Before Balor's club could swing back, Orion drove his trident clean through Balor's right arm.

"Let's move to the next phase. You're still not going to beat me in the second stage. You're a hothead, but rage alone isn't real strength."

Orion's tone was cold. Those who knew him well understood his voice went icily calm at the height of his killing intent.

Balor was undeniably formidable—apart from Orion, he might be the mightiest giant alive, maybe even the strongest Legendary warrior on the field.

Orion would have loved to absorb such a powerful giant into his horde, if only he felt confident controlling him. But if Orion wasn't there in person to keep him in check, no one else in the horde could keep Balor under control.

So Balor had to die.

That was why Orion was eager to enter the third phase: the point where they could use transcendent power freely, a life-or-death confrontation.

At that stage, the real war between Orion and Balor would begin.

Listening to Orion, Balor stopped in his tracks. He looked Orion in the eye and said one word, quietly, "Fine."

### Chapter 355 A genuine giant-king duel III

High above the battlefield, the nine Legendary-level fighters all held their breath when they heard the fight was about to move into its third phase. This phase also marked their own cue to act—at any moment, all-out war could erupt.

Truth be told, Orion had relished both the first phase of barehanded combat and the second phase of weapons. Ever since advancing to Legendary level, he'd never felt so thrilled by a fight. Giant King Balor was like a fierce sparring partner of equal rank, someone who could really take a beating.

"I'm the strongest one here. I'm the true Giant King!"

"My patience with you is shot—I'm going to kill you," Balor growled, fixing Orion with open malice in his gaze.

The murderous intent in Balor's eyes was unfiltered, growing stronger by the second.

Dark, swirling Abyssal energy began pouring off Balor's body; countless strange runes materialized across his skin. In the blink of an eye, a suit of black armor formed around him, leaving only his blood-flecked eyes glaring out with lethal intensity.

"This is... Abyssal energy?"

Abyssal energy was another form of the Titan God's power, and its appearance made Orion's brow crease. His instincts kicked into high gear.

Tzz-rah!

Acting fast, Orion hurled a spear to test Balor's newfound defenses.

Boom!

Balor raised the half-broken spiked club and smashed the airborne spear to pieces in one brutal sweep.

"Orion, your life is mine!"

Balor stayed rooted to the spot. For some reason, his voice carried a certain echo when he spoke. Then he launched himself with a burst of black energy, a swirling mass of shadow chasing him as he rushed Orion.

Orion answered by shifting into living lightning, charging straight back at Balor with equal force.

When they collided amid a thunderous crash, not only did they blow apart the original no-man's-land they'd carved out, the shock wave slammed into Starveil City itself. Countless bloodline warriors were knocked clean off their feet, and the horde outside the walls was blasted away in wide swaths. The duel zone expanded once more.

Inside that zone, lightning flashed and Abyssal energy rose in sweeping arcs. Orion and Balor kept crashing together, again and again.

This time they were both channeling transcendent power, spawning an even more colossal force that seemed to freeze the battlefield in place.

Even the forces besieging Starveil halted their assault, and the city's defenders—giants, Blood Elves, Gnomes, and the rest—couldn't tear their eyes away from the duel below.

A fresh exchange of blows forced Orion to pull back. He was starting to look grim. That black armor covering Balor had clearly increased Balor's stats, making him more agile. Orion's constant attacks didn't faze him much anymore—ordinary moves just wouldn't cut it.

Seizing the moment after being knocked away, Orion opened a gap between them and raised his trident. Transcendent power surged inside him with frenetic intensity.

In the span of a single breath, his Eightfold Spear Barrage took shape, enveloping Balor completely. Orion concentrated, channeling all his focus into controlling the barrage to kill Balor on the spot.

Boom!

From within the Eightfold Spear Barrage, Giant King Balor swung that half-spiked club in wild arcs, sending Abyssal energy surging off him. Spear after spear rained down on him, keeping him locked in a desperate struggle.

"Ms. Elanor, that 'spear magic array' is nasty. If no one helps him, Giant King Balor could really end up dead," Boarfolk Boarion said quietly from their vantage point in midair, where nine lords were all but glaring at each other.

He'd been trapped in Orion's Eightfold Spear Barrage once before—had Elanor not attacked Orion so decisively back then, Boarion would likely have been done for. Now he was sending Elanor a pointed reminder.

Elanor's eyes never left the duel zone, though she kept the northern alliance lords in her peripheral vision. Jorik, Gareth, Ironhoof, Lokiviria, and Bluehide all watched her group in return. With the slightest provocation, a larger clash seemed sure to explode.

In the restricted zone, Orion appeared close to sealing the victory. Driven by his will, the endless array of spears began morphing into tridents, boosting the attack's power yet again.

Several of those tridents had already landed on Balor, and the black protective plating wrapped around him started to fracture, exposing the armor underneath. Soon enough, Balor began to bleed, rivulets of red running from deep wounds. Clearly, he was taking real damage now.

"Attack!" Blood Elf Elanor cried. She no longer cared about rules or the two-king duel. Without hesitation, she sounded the signal for battle.

In a flash, Elanor loosed her bow, firing nine consecutive arrows in one rapid shot.

"Not so fast!"

Crang! Crang! Crang!

Nine metallic clangs rang out as Ironhoof shot down Elanor's arrows. He was armed with a bow himself, and since he'd been ready for her, she couldn't repeat her earlier success.

"Pin 'em down—don't give them a chance to stop Orion from killing that giant king!" Jorik bellowed as he morphed into his Glacial Dragon form and unleashed a cone of frigid breath, hindering Elanor's group before they could make another move.

Meanwhile, Bluehide and Lokiviria charged in, trapping Elanor between them. They struck out in turns, battering her and giving her precious little breathing room.

"Damn you! You'd even break a giant taboo?" Jorik shot Gnome Brimli a scornful look, all the while breathing ice in a wide arc to keep him from slipping away. "You won't be butting in here!"

Ironhoof's deep voice boomed. He kept nocking arrows of flame, blocking Blood Elf Faelar at every step.

"And what's a one-armed warrior like you gonna do?!" Boarfolk Boarion tried to charge, but was intercepted by Gareth. With a ghostly dragon shimmering behind her, Gareth drove him back.

In the blink of an eye, all nine Legendary-level fighters in the sky were tangled in a chaotic free-for-all.

Blood Elf Elanor was every bit as formidable as they said; that upper-Legendary-level aura came from real substance.

She unleashed her full power, blanketing herself with a haze of blood-red energy—a transcendent power of the blood element.

Chapter 356 A genuine giant-king duel IV

As the blood haze swirled around her, Elanor's figure began to grow blurry.

In that split second, both Lokiviria and Bluehide briefly lost their target. When Elanor's form solidified again, six arrows shimmering with a crimson glow were already flying through the air. Their marks were the leaders of the Northern Coalition—all of them, including Orion, were in the line of fire.

"Watch out!"

At this critical moment, the smaller head of the ogre suddenly shouted, warning everyone. On the battlefield, Orion and several others quickly mustered portions of their transcendent power to block the blood-tainted arrows.

Clang!

While controlling the Eightfold Spear Barrage, Orion also raised his trident to knock aside and extinguish Elanor's blood arrows. But right then, a shadow appeared behind Orion without a sound, thrusting a dagger straight at his heart.

Crack!

The attack was so sudden that even Orion couldn't react in time. The layer of ice armor surrounding Orion instantly shattered, crystals of ice clattering to the ground. At the same time, he was thrown forward by the force of the dagger's impact.

"What... How is this possible?!"

"You're not dead!"

"That armor...what the hell are you wearing?!"

The voice came from Blood Elf Faelar. Moments earlier, while Ironhoof had been nocking an arrow to intercept Elanor's blood bolts, Faelar slipped into the shadows, vanishing before Ironhoof's eyes with a secret technique. Unlike Elanor—who excelled at traditional Elven archery—Faelar specialized in daggers and enjoyed striking from the shadows.

Their plan seemed foolproof: with Elanor's support, Faelar's assassination of Orion should have been successful. The Blood Elves had arranged this behind the scenes, determined to guarantee that the giant Balor would triumph over Orion.

Put simply, they didn't want the giants of Starveil to side with the Northern Coalition.

Yet neither Faelar nor Elanor had anticipated that the armor Orion wore could defend against a Legendary-level assassin's sneak attack.

Off in the distance, Orion steadied himself, then glared at Faelar with fierce hatred blazing in his eyes—and, underneath it all, a hint of relief. Arthas's gift had indeed proven its worth.

"Damn you, Blood Elves. How dare you interrupt my ceremony!"

"Anyone who breaks the rules will be smashed to pieces!"

From across the battlefield, the Giant King Balor let loose a guttural, savage roar. He sounded furious, his words dripping with murderous intent.

Normally, Orion's Eightfold Spear Barrage would have held Balor in check, but the sudden attack had knocked Orion away, giving Balor time to free himself. However, instead of striking Orion, Balor now focused his rage on Faelar.

"Orion, our ritual was disrupted—this breach of etiquette demands a sacrifice to wash away our disgrace. And this damned Blood Elf will serve perfectly!"

As he spoke, Balor unleashed a surge of Abyssal energy, hoisting what remained of his spiked club and charging straight at Faelar.

"This giant's ritual really does call for a sacrifice."

Getting ambushed like that had enraged Orion, and though he'd taken some precautions, he never expected such a vicious assault.

"WAAAGH!" Lightning crackled as Orion lunged at Faelar.

"Balor, have you lost your mind?!" Faelar shouted, voice tinged with panic. "I did this for you, for Starveil Giants, for the greater war effort!"

With two giant kings coming at her, Faelar sensed the looming shadow of death. "Ms. Elanor, help me! Ms. Elanor...!" She kept trying to plead with Elanor for rescue while explaining herself to Balor.

But Lokiviria and Bluehide were nobody's fools. Seeing the enraged Balor turn on the Blood Elves, they were happy to join in. They attacked Elanor with renewed vigor, leaving her fighting for her own life. She had no time to save Faelar.

Back at the focal point of the battleground, Balor was closing in on Faelar. She kept dodging, hoping to find a chance to slip back into the shadows. Balor, however, gave her no such opening. The second Orion joined in with his lightning form, Faelar had even fewer options. Pinned between Orion and Balor, she avoided death by a hair's breadth multiple times.

"Spectral Blood Blast!"

Suddenly, Faelar's entire form dissolved into a dense swirl of blood. The blood mist seethed and compressed before erupting in a massive explosion. Orion and Balor emerged from the smoke moments later, transcendent power crackling around them—both had escaped serious harm.

Simultaneously, they looked up at a floating mass of blood mist in the sky. Within that swirling haze, Faelar's body was beginning to take shape again. Clearly, that explosion had been nothing but a ruse. She hadn't dared to actually self-destruct.

Then came a sharp whoosh: a flaming arrow soared right into the blood mist, piercing Faelar's body. In an instant, flames spread across her form.

"You're done for!"

"You left me behind—treated me like I was just a bystander to watch your show?!"

"You think you can look down on a centaur?!"

It was Ironhoof. Enraged at being ignored—and thus insulted—he refused to show mercy. In the culture of the centaurs, anyone who slighted them paid the ultimate price.

With a roar of thunder, Orion transformed back into lightning and dived into the blazing blood mist. Sparks crackled across the sky, and a few seconds later, he reemerged, clutching a Lord's Stone in his hand.

The first Legendary-level casualty of the southern and northern war had fallen in the western theater: Blood Elf Faelar.

"Faelar!"

In the distance, Blood Elf Elanor let out a heart-wrenching shriek as she struggled against Lokiviria and Bluehide's combined assault.

"Ha ha ha... Little Blood Elf, I'm gonna tear you to shreds! Then I'll offer you to my giant friend—maybe you'll bear him a bunch of babies."

"Let's see, what would you call a child of a giant and a Blood Elf, huh? A 'giant elf'? Or maybe a 'blood giant'?"

Blood Elf Faelar's death was a windfall for the Northern Coalition. Losing a Legendary fighter drastically tipped the scales in their favor.

Ogre Aldous was practically beside himself with excitement, allowing his larger head to unleash its raw physical might while his smaller head kept up a nonstop verbal barrage, taunting Elanor with gleeful, foulmouthed insults.

Chapter 357 A genuine giant-king duel V

"Hey, big guy, crush her—but don't turn her into a stain on the ground. "

"Keep her alive. I want to hand this pretty elf over to my giant friend, Orion. "

"Yeah, just knock her out with one good whack! "

"She dodged it? No big deal. Go in for the next swing! "

"..."

Blood Elf Elanor wore a dark expression. Bluehide was clearly messing with her head.

No one else seemed to notice, but Elanor could tell: every time that smaller head of Bluehide's hurled an insult, she felt a burst of mental pressure.

"Is that ogre actually using some kind of mind magic?"

"Ogres can do mind magic?"

It was a ridiculous and horrifying thought—so much so that Elanor started to feel she must be losing it.

And yet, that mental harassment and psychic assault undoubtedly existed. Even though it wasn't very strong, it still got under her skin.

A hint of doubt began to brew in Elanor's heart. And doubt often sows the seeds of fear.

The unknown is always the most terrifying thing of all.

Meanwhile, in the heart of the restricted zone, the giant-king duel raged on.

"The sacrifice has been made, but the fight doesn't end here."

Orion's tone was icy as he put away the Lord's Stone and strode out of the receding blood mist, heading straight for Giant Balor.

"Heh heh heh... I'll smash you in one shot, and that Lord's Stone will be mine!"

Balor's laughter was unbridled, arrogant. When he opened his jaws wide, four fangs ground against one another with a spine-tingling hiss.

"You handle that trident pretty well—but that's about all you've got! "

"Worms consume corpses, giants eat meat, and a mightier apex predator devours giants. "

"Keh keh keh... hrr hrr hrr..."

Balor stared at Orion, letting out a series of disturbing, mocking cackles that dripped with malice.

Roaring at the sky, Balor suddenly hurled aside the broken spiked club in his hand. Abyssal energy burst outward from every inch of his body.

In just a few heartbeats, Balor's form melded into that swirling, seething darkness. It churned and swelled before receding moments later—revealing Balor once again.

But now, he was no longer the Balor from before.

"An Abyssal Devourer!"

Orion blurted out in shock, eyes wide with disbelief.

An Abyssal Devourer is a freak occurrence in giant bloodlines, possible—though rare—in any of the four major branches of giants.

Recorded history states that these devourers feed on their own kin. Though still considered giants themselves, they prey upon giants as their primary food source.

Orion gazed at this nightmarish evolution. Balor had once been just twenty percent taller than Orion; now, as an Abyssal Devourer, he loomed at twice Orion's height.

From the crown of his head down his spine jutted backward-curving fangs. Under Orion's watchful stare, Balor's tailbone extended outward, forming a scythe-like barbed tail bristling with Abyssal energy. As it swung from side to side, illusory afterimages fanned out behind it.

"In my territory, I'm the true Giant King! "

"The giant king who feasts on giants—heh heh heh!

"Giant Orion, why don't you scream for me? Beg me for mercy—ohoho..."

High above, Blood Elf Elanor—who had intended to flee—now abandoned all thoughts of retreat the moment she saw the Abyssal Devourer. This monstrous presence surpassed even her upper Legendary power.

In a flash, the momentum reversed.

"Gustalon, Brimli—go all in! Stall them so Balor can finish off the other giant lord!"

Not so long ago, it had been the Northern Coalition's leaders tying down Elanor and her allies. Now Elanor's trio unleashed everything they had, forcing Jorik's group to hold their ground.

Jorik, Gareth, Lokiviria, Ironhoof, and Bluehide exchanged uneasy glances, unsure what to do.

Leaving Orion to his fate would play right into Blood Elf Elanor's hands, but getting involved in a duel between two giant kings was risky—Faelar's demise had proven that.

Their hesitation split the Northern Coalition(Alliance) right down the middle, tossing them into chaos. Lokiviria, in particular, hoped Orion would bite the dust—preferably getting gobbled up completely by that Abyssal Devourer.

Elanor watched them dither, secretly jubilant. She'd predicted most of their thoughts correctly. Deciding not to force their hand yet, she eased off her attack to give them time to agonize.

---

Back at the fight's epicenter, Orion exhaled a long breath. He'd have to show another card, revealing his true might to both the Northern Coalition and the Blood Elves.

"Balor, if you can transform into an Abyssal Devourer, you must've eaten plenty of giants already."

Balor's mutated form only let out a creepy laugh, giving no real answer. In the next instant, he dropped into a crouch and sprang at Orion.

"In that case, I won't let you walk away this time. You have to die!"

With a thunderous boom, Orion became a streak of lightning, shooting up into the air and forming seals with both hands.

"Behold the mightiest bloodline among giants—the power of the Titans!"

A torrent of bloodline energy and transcendent power erupted within him, swirling together lightning and blood-based magic.

High above, a mighty Titan apparition towered even larger and stronger than Balor, clutching a trident as it dove toward the Abyssal Devourer below.

This was Orion's Titan Form, bestowing a massive boost to all his stats.

"Damn it—you really possess Titan blood?!"

"No! I'm the Giant King. I'll devour you!"

From the ground, the Devourer's scythe-like tailhook lashed out in a phantom arc, hurtling straight at the Titan illusion dropping from the sky. But Orion's Titan form swung the enlarged Flame of Will, flipping to slash off that hook with the trident's tip.

The Devourer roared in agony, its scythe tail shredded.

Bending its knees, the Devourer began spinning in place before driving its feet into the ground so forcefully that the earth shook. As it whirled, the tusks on its head formed a kind of spiral auger, hurtling straight for Orion.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

One deafening explosion after another ripped through the battlefield, drowning the restricted zone in lightning and Abyssal energy. For a while, no one could see a thing.

When the dust finally settled and the swirling magic dispersed, a gigantic crater now marred the heart of the restricted area. Lying spread-eagle in the pit, the Abyssal Devourer howled in pain. Standing at the rim of that crater was Orion in his Titan form, peering down at the Abyssal Devourer.

"Get up. If this is all the fight a mutant giant can offer, I'm going to be seriously disappointed."

Orion's voice echoed with a chilling calm. He refused to believe the Abyssal Devourer had perished under his previous devastating blow.

"Orion, I'll kill you. Then I'll swallow you whole!"

"Praise the Titan God, Forbidden Bite! I'm going to devour you!"

Down in the massive pit, the Abyssal Devourer's body began dissolving like ice under a scorching sun, turning into pools of Abyssal energy. At its center, something writhed and churned, as though generating a nightmarish spell.

Sensing imminent danger, Orion raised his trident. Above him, a colossal trident forged from his blood-based transcendent power took shape, crackling with electricity.

"Go to hell!"

With a sharp hiss, the enormous trident plummeted from the sky, aimed squarely at the roiling Abyssal energy deep in the pit.

Boom!

A deafening blast tore through the air, threaded with low, furious roars.

Orion was poised to strike again when a mammoth head suddenly burst out of the crater, jaws open wide. It snapped him up in a single gulp.

Darkness.

Wherever Orion found himself, it was pitch-black. The space around him was closing in, bringing such a crushing pressure that Orion felt it instantly. Worse, he realized he couldn't move.

Sensing his life on the line, Orion channeled all of his transcendent power, letting it surge through him in an attempt to relieve that suffocating pressure. It helped a little, but still, he remained immobilized in the void.

"What is this place? I can't see anything. Can't hear anything. I can't even move."

While Orion's mind raced to figure out a way out, Balor's raspy voice echoed in the darkness.

"Don't bother resisting, Titan Orion.

This is the Forbidden Bite. You're inside my stomach now. And I've inherited the power of some great Abyssal Devourer from ancient times.

Sure, this place is only a projection, but you still can't fight your way out.

Even though you have transformed into the form of a titan, I am still the true Giant King!

Ha ha..."

Surprisingly, Balor's words helped Orion center himself. If this truly was the belly-projection of some Abyssal Devourer, that being probably at least demigod-level.

"How do I break free?"

Even as Orion pushed back the crushing pressure with his transcendent power, his thoughts kept spinning.

"Balor's not here, which means maybe he can't step into this projection himself. If this is indeed the Devourer's stomach projection, it should have some kind of limit. Is the limit in the pressure or in this void itself?"

He had plenty of guesses, but his only immediate option was to summon the Eightfold Spear Barrage and probe this black space for any weakness.

Moments later, the Eightfold Spear Barrage coalesced around Orion, but the pressure battering him from all directions did not let up. Clearly, the presence of the barrage did nothing to lessen its grip.

Hissing softly, Orion poured more of his transcendent power into resisting the crushing force, all while launching the spider spears of his barrage in multiple directions. Unfortunately, when he lost all sensation of the spears, nothing in the darkness had changed.

A trickle of panic flickered in Orion's mind.

"Am I really going to have to use Blood Sacrifice again?"

He hesitated. Wasting half his life energy just to kill a Legendary-level giant seemed more than a little extravagant.

Suddenly, Orion felt his flesh compress and heard the crackle of bones.

"Damn... Summoning that barrage ate up too much power. Now I can't even stay in Titan form."

Gritting his teeth, Orion resigned himself to using Blood Sacrifice—dying here was not an option.

But right as he was about to activate the skill, his body was crushed even further, and the Titan projection around him collapsed. Blood surged into his mouth, and he couldn't hold it back any longer, spitting it out.

"Raor...Roar..."

But the moment Orion's blood left his lips, a giant, thunder-like bellow shook the void.

He felt some invisible lock inside him shatter. In that roar, the darkness—once so impenetrable—began to break apart at a speed he could actually see.

"Titan's Roar!"

"No... That's impossible! How could you awaken the Titan's Roar? Only the ancestor Titans could do that!"

Balor's voice, echoing in the crumbling blackness, was filled with disbelief. And behind his fury, there was a trace of bitter despair.

Titan's Roar?

Catching that phrase, Orion refocused on his own stats, mentally checking his data panel. Just as he thought, a new awakened skill had popped up under Titan Form.

[Titan's Roar, a supernatural-level sonic attack skill. It's locked to Titan Form, only usable when transformed.]

The titans' strength didn't lie in mere physical might—it also arose from their thunderous roars.

To be honest, Orion was stunned to have awakened this skill right now, of all times. How had he triggered it?

At least now he finally understood: the Titan Form he'd been using wasn't just a simple stats boost. If he could truly shift into Titan form, that meant all sorts of Titan abilities were theoretically within his reach—he just needed to awaken them first. Before, he'd only been tapping into part of the power.

There was no time to ponder it further. The void around him was collapsing by the second, finally releasing Orion from its crushing grasp.

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Outside Starveil City, at the center of the battlefield's forbidden zone, Orion and Balor's presences flared up again.

This time, one was mighty and the other was feeble.

Orion had canceled his transformation and stood there looking somewhat unsatisfied, as if he'd been forced to end it too soon. Down in the bottom of the massive pit, Giant Balor still clung to life, just barely.

Orion became lightning once again, diving into the crater until he was standing beside his fallen adversary.

"I never expected you to have Titan Form," Balor rasped, voice weak.

"And I sure as hell didn't see that Titan's Roar coming, not in a situation like that."

Chapter 358 Orion, you're the true Giant King now

Balor's voice was ragged and hoarse, with each phrase followed by a labored breath.

It was obvious that his life was hanging by a thread. Resorting to the powerful Forbidden Bite had clearly come at a steep cost. If Orion hadn't possessed Titan Form and the Titan's Roar, he would've been digested in that black void long ago. But when that space collapsed under the Titan's Roar, Balor wound up suffering a horrific backlash, leaving him gravely wounded and close to death.

"I've lost."

"Orion, you're the true Giant King now."

But I, too, was once king of the giants...if only for a time."

And so ended the reign of Balor of the Starveil Giants. There was no flourish or pity—just the bare fact that victory belongs to those who earn it, defeat to those who fail.

"Travel well—may you return to the Titan God's embrace."

Orion reached into Balor's body, retrieved his Lord's Stone, then picked up Balor's corpse and rose steadily into the sky.

High overhead, the cluster of Legendary level fighters locked in battle abruptly froze. All eyes turned to Orion—and to the lifeless body of Giant Balor in his hands.

"Giant Balor... has fallen?"

In that moment, even Blood Elf Elanor's voice shook with disbelief and dread.

"Retreat!

Gustalon, Brimli—get out of here!"

Elanor reacted quickly; the second she heard her own voice tremble, she pivoted and bolted southward, aiming for the Blood Elves' City of Blessings.

Boarfolk Boarion and Gnome Brimli also turned to flee. If a mighty Giant King like Balor lay slain, sticking around would only mean getting swarmed and put down. Worse yet, Blood Elf Faelar had been killed, too. Even though Elanor was strong, six against three gave her zero incentive to linger in Starveil City.

Elanor's retreat instantly tipped the battle in the Coalition's favor.

"Don't chase them. They won't get far," Jorik called out, halting Lokiviria and the others who looked ready to pursue. He pointed toward Orion, who still held Balor's corpse aloft.

Orion was already heading for Starveil City, and he wasn't making any effort to mask his presence.

"The once king of the giants, Balor, has returned to the Titan God's embrace," Orion declared. "From this day on, I, Orion Stoneheart, am the true king of giants.

Praise the Titan deity(god)! Abide by the Titan's oath—those of lower station must serve those of higher station!

I, Orion Stoneheart, the Giant King, command the Starveil giants to follow in my footsteps and fight for the Stoneheart Horde!"

Hovering above Starveil City, Orion looked down over the entire population. His cool, austere voice rang through the battlefield, echoing across every corner of Starveil.

"How can our king be gone? I don't believe it!"

"Gods, the mighty King Balor was defeated?"

"He lost... He really lost! Starveil's giants lost the duel..."

"How is that even possible?"

"Balor was so powerful, unbeatable... Why... Why is he dead...?"

"..."

Below in Starveil City, the giants were stunned into silence, struggling to wrap their heads around the news. Their greatest king, the one who'd stood his ground against the Blood Elves, had fallen in the giant-king duel.

Orion took in the grief on their faces but paid it no mind. He understood their sorrow for Balor—if Orion had died, he was sure Rendall, Thundar, and the others would have mourned him just as deeply. After all, Orion had been their source of glory.

"In honor of Balor, once the Giant King, I'll give him a proper burial suited to his rank."

Orion's voice grew gentler, trying to soothe the shock that gripped Starveil's giants. After all, they were now his people—his kin under his reign.

"But at this moment, you must all take up your weapons and kill any enemies lurking inside the city.

That's a direct order from the Giant King. Anyone who defies me will pay in blood."

With that, his tone darkened again. Outside the city, the Northern Coalition—briefly pausing after Balor's death—resumed its assault.

Within Starveil, a storm of mixed emotions arose among the giants: some were itching to rebel, some wanted to surrender, a few tried to flee, and others just fell to their knees, bowing to Orion.

Orion floated there above Starveil City, motionless. His presence served as a warning to both the Starveil giants and the Northern Coalition: anyone who violated his orders—be they giant or coalition ally—would get blasted by his lightning.

Moments later, Jorik and the others—Gareth, Ironhoof, Lokiviria, and Bluehide—joined him in midair.

"Lord Orion, that was a major victory, and all kudos go to you," Jorik said politely, his tone measured.

None of them could dispute Orion's true power, having just witnessed him take down a mid-Legendary-level giant lord by himself.

Given how the tide had turned, Orion no longer bothered to hide his abilities. Casting a quick glance at them, he spoke curtly:

"According to our original rules, the Starveil giants are now my subjects. You may not slaughter those who surrender.

And I warn you, if anyone's dumb enough to break that law, I won't show mercy."

Orion's voice boomed across the battlefield, sweeping through every corner of Starveil City. Many giants froze, abandoning thoughts of resistance and silently gazing up at his lone figure in the sky—the new king of giants, Orion Stoneheart.

Meanwhile, Jorik and the others kept their faces carefully neutral. They neither opposed nor supported him out loud.

In the rear lines of the battlefield, Rockwell, Earthshaker, and Slagor stared wide-eyed, as elation and pride washed over their features in waves.

Delilah and Onyx could barely contain their joy. To them, Orion slaying a Giant King was proof that he radiated limitless strength, and that the Stoneheart Horde held a brilliant future in its grasp.

"Prophet, our lord did it!"

Grinning from ear to ear, Delilah pressed a hand over her heart, almost as though in prayer. She'd waited anxiously for this moment, and now it had finally come. Because to Delilah, Orion wasn't just her lord—he was her lover, the man who had utterly conquered her body with his big cock.

She adored him, heart and soul.

"Yes, our lord achieved victory!" Prophet Onyx replied. "I never doubted Orion's might, not once. But seeing him triumph in the duel of giant kings still has my heart pounding.

The Stoneheart Horde has a brand-new future."

A horn's blare cut through the air, and twilight darkened the sky once more. Starveil City was gradually swallowed by shadow.

Yet despite the fierce fighting and deafening roars, most of the Starveil giants felt a sense of security in their hearts, perhaps thanks to the presence of their new king.

Chapter 359 Are you willing to serve me in all things?

Balor's defeat wasn't all bad news for many of the giants, because they ended up welcoming an even stronger Giant King.

On the city walls, countless Blood Elves and Gnomes who hadn't managed to escape in time were slain, dismembered, or even devoured. The siege continued for another half-day, even after most of the giants lowered their resistance.

"This city now belongs to me," Orion declared. "You're welcome to come settle in my city, but leave all your cannon-fodder troops outside."

He was addressing the other coalition lords. His tone left no room for argument.

Jorik, Gareth, Ironhoof, Bluehide, and Lokiviria exchanged a few glances, silently reading each other. In the end, nobody spoke up as they followed Orion into the city—now renamed Stoneheart.

Indeed, with Balor dead and Starveil City at an end, Orion planned to rename the place "Stoneheart City." This giant-held territory was about to become his southern stronghold, the foundation on which the Stoneheart Horde would rise.

As soon as Orion learned there was a southern giant lord, he'd already been making plans.

If the Northern Coalition won this push into the west, they'd probably split up the Blood Elves' territory among themselves. That would inevitably breed conflict and chaos. Even if the north triumphed over the south, Orion didn't plan to join them in carving up the Blood Elves' lands. Seizing this Giant territory gave him absolute priority, whether seen through the eyes of the northern lords or the southern factions.

No matter how the war might end, Stoneheart City would anchor Orion's presence in the south—for he was a giant, and this belonged to the giants.

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Half a day later, inside Balor's former palace.

"I'm taking over the entire Starveil Giant territory," Orion said, seated in the main hall with five guests: Jorik, Gareth, Ironhoof, Bluehide, and Lokiviria. "Don't think you're getting any cut of the profits here."

Jorik said nothing, just quietly downing his drink.

Gareth frowned and occasionally looked over at Orion, clearly wanting to speak but keeping her thoughts to herself.

Lokiviria's face was dark and sour—this fertile southern land was obviously something he wanted for himself, but Orion's strength made him hold his tongue.

Ironhoof was also sipping his drink in silence, brow furrowed as if lost in thought. Only Bluehide ate and drank with abandon, clearly enjoying the feast.

"My friend, this land was always the giants' domain," Bluehide said loudly after draining an entire jug of liquor. "It's only natural for you to take it over. Nobody seems to have a problem with that."

Since Bluehide was formidable, no one wanted to risk provoking him over something so trivial.

Orion drained his own cup, then set it down and waited. When no one else spoke, he said with a calm smile:

"Of course, I promise that, for the next stage of the invasion, I won't fight over any other southern territory with you.

Taking over the Starveil Giants' lands is more than enough for me. I couldn't be happier with this."

Jorik and the others shot quick glances at each other, then fixed Orion with attentive gazes.

"Giant King Orion," Jorik said, sounding both cautious and excited, "you truly mean that?"

Originally, the far south belonged to the dragons, and the White Dragon Frostsire was still alive. So even if the war ended in victory, that region would remain in Frostsire's claws.

In other words, Jorik's best outcome would be seizing the Blood Elves' territory under Frostsire's sponsorship. Orion bowing out of that scramble meant one less rival.

"I do." Orion nodded. "And I'll follow through on my promise by bringing my spider armies to help you attack the Blood Elves' City of Blessings."

At last, Lokiviria, Jorik, Gareth, and Ironhoof broke into smiles. Orion was basically becoming a half-free mercenary force for them.

"Still," Orion went on, leaning forward a bit, "before that happens, you should fill us in on the details, Lord Jorik. You don't really think our handful of troops alone is enough to breach the Blood Elves' City of Blessings, do you?"

We've all seen how powerful Elanor is. And rumors say the Blood Elves have both their Elf King and an Elven Prophet holding down the City of Blessings. Are you expecting the six of us from the north to just march in and pick a fight with the south's elite?

Or are you trying to send us to an early grave?

That's not a funny joke."

Orion's cool, mocking laughter resonated through the palace, echoing around the chamber.

A few heartbeats later, Orion, Lokiviria, Gareth, Ironhoof, and Bluehide all fixed Jorik with cold, piercing glares.

The tension in the room was suffocating; if Jorik couldn't offer a convincing plan, he probably wouldn't make it out of that palace alive.

Time seemed to crawl in a suffocating silence. At some point, outside in Stoneheart City, the voices of mourning giants rose in unison, chanting prayers for the dead and honoring the memory of Balor, their fallen king.

"Relax, you guys. The Elf King and the Elven Prophet in the City of Blessings are mine to handle. All you need to do is press the siege."

As the giants' solemn chanting started to fade, a powerful, resonant voice spoke from within Jorik. Simultaneously, an arch-lord's presence flooded the hall, overwhelming everyone there.

For a moment, Orion, Lokiviria, Gareth, Ironhoof, and Bluehide all felt an immense pressure: the will projection of the Arch-Lord White Dragon Frostsire had made itself known through Jorik's body.

"Understood. We await your commands," Orion replied with a broad grin, rising from his seat and bowing toward Jorik. Lokiviria, Gareth, Ironhoof, and Bluehide followed suit.

But that was all.

Frostsire's voice did not speak again, and the arch-lord's presence dissipated as if it had never appeared. With his oppressive aura gone, the group's mood turned instantly buoyant.

The Northern Coalition couldn't have made its southern invasion happen by relying on its own abilities alone. White Dragon Frostsire's will projection was the trump card he'd granted them, a means to pin down several top-level powerhouses from the other major races. It was only thanks to that hidden ace that Orion and the others had the guts to push south.

"Lord Jorik," Orion spoke again, "how about we catch our breath before continuing south?"

Securing Stoneheart City was only the first step, and Orion had plenty of matters to handle there. He needed time, and manpower as well.

"Suit yourself," Jorik replied flatly, then turned and left the palace. Being forced to reveal his trump card in front of everyone had ruined his mood, and he was clearly not pleased.

Next, Gareth, Ironhoof, and the others also departed in turn.

Though Starveil(Stoneheart) City had fallen, Orion was the big winner. None of the other lords had gained anything tangible.

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Once they were gone, Delilah and Onyx led the Stoneheart Horde's Alpha-level fighters into the palace, followed by the four council elders—Gronthar, Gort, Dirtclaw, and Ursa.

"My lord!"

At Orion's nod, Delilah and the others dutifully took their seats.

"How's the work going on rounding up and reorganizing the Starveil Giants?"

That was Orion's primary focus. Compared to the Blackrock and Ironbone Giants he'd annexed before, the Starveil Giants boasted a far more formidable foundation.

Delilah looked a little breathless with excitement, equal parts admiration and fervor in her eyes.

"My dearest lord, we got our hands on massive amounts of crystal cores, minerals, meat...and plenty of armor and weapons as well. The Starveil Giants' stockpiles are huge—lots of everything."

Seeing Orion raise a hand to stop her, Delilah paused. Clearly, he wasn't too interested in the basic resources; knowing roughly how much of that they had was enough.

"Tell me about the giant clans themselves."

That was the real issue at hand. Orion could already sense the presence of a handful of Alpha-level giants outside the palace—those who had survived the war.

Delilah nodded and organized her thoughts before speaking slowly:

"Lord, from our initial headcount, the Starveil Giants inside Stoneheart City number around three hundred thousand right now.

Out of those, fewer than one hundred thousand are bloodline warriors who can fight. The rest are ordinary giants with unawakened bloodlines, plus older folk, children, and the injured.

Our current stats indicate there are five Alpha-level giants: Drakthul, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Grulbane."

Delilah paused to see if Orion had any questions. He stayed silent, still listening closely, so she went on:

"From what we learned, Stoneheart City used to have ten Alpha-level giants in total. Three died defending the city during the siege. Two others refused to surrender, choosing to follow King Balor into the Titan God's embrace.

As for hero-level bloodline warriors, there are around forty thousand of those. Everybody else is somewhere between elite and standard rank."

Orion kept his silence, eyes half-closed in deep thought.

"Lord, those five Alpha-level giants are waiting outside the palace, hoping for an audience. Would you like to see them now?"

Orion seemed to snap out of his reverie as Delilah spoke. He'd just been thinking about the two Alpha-level giants who had been Balor loyalists and declined to yield, dying under his lightning. A pity, but it was what it was.

"Show them in."

His words weren't loud, but they reached the palace guards Dace and Otho.

Dace bowed toward the inner hall, then turned to the five waiting Starveil Giants.

"Elders, the king will see you now."

The five Alpha-level Starveil Giants, led by Drakthul, nodded at Dace and stepped inside.

Orion remained half-reclined on his throne, calmly observing Drakthul, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Grulbane. He'd already memorized their names from Delilah's report.

"Drakthul...swears eternal loyalty to the new Giant King!"

"Marnok...swears eternal loyalty to the new Giant King!"

"Gormathar...swears eternal loyalty to the new Giant King!"

"Veldrok...swears eternal loyalty to the new Giant King!"

"Grulbane...swears eternal loyalty to the new Giant King!"

All five of them knelt in supplication.

Orion said nothing, simply watching them. Like Balor, these five had tusklike fangs and pointed ears, each taller than Orion.

"Are you willing to serve me in all things?"

After a substantial pause, Orion's voice came down from the throne.

"We are!"

"We are!"

"..."

A faint smile appeared on Orion's face. This was exactly the outcome he'd been hoping for. Having five native Alpha-level giants from Stoneheart City on his side would make it infinitely easier to reshape the city and administer the Starveil population.

"According to the rules of the Stoneheart Horde, all five of you are now promoted to Warden status, on par with our senior elders.

As for additional honors—those will come after you've proven yourselves on the battlefield."

Led by Drakthul, the five Starveil Giants bowed deeply once more. Under their tension lay a pulse of excitement.

This new Giant King, Orion, had arrived so abruptly that many Starveil Giants were still reeling from the change. Yet the fact remained: Orion had earned the title by besting Balor in their duel.

"Now," Orion continued, "tell me more about the Starveil Giants: our past situation, our present situation, and which enemies and allies we might have. You five should be the experts."

"Yes, my lord—what would you like to know most?"

Drakthul was cautious enough to call Orion "lord" instead of "king," implicitly adopting the ways of the Horde. At least that seemed to be his intention. This implies that he has recognized his identity and is willing to be fully loyal to Orion and his Horde.

"Start with Stoneheart City itself. How many people we actually have, how many bloodline warriors we can field, what defenses are in place—everything."

Drakthul, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Grulbane exchanged looks. After a moment's silent debate, Drakthul raised his head and spoke in a heavy voice:

"My lord, up until recently, there were over four hundred thousand Starveil Giants in the city's reach. Once they learned foreign races were invading from the north, most of them returned to Stoneheart City.

There were some who refused to fight and scattered into hidden valleys or mountain caves around the territory.

Right now, Stoneheart City has around three hundred thousand giants in residence...maybe a bit fewer."

He spoke carefully, even going so far as to call the place "Stoneheart City" instead of "Starveil City." It was obvious the city's population alone hadn't been enough to safeguard this realm, not even under Balor's lead.

Though Drakthul didn't say so outright, it was clear there must have been more factors at play.

Chapter 360 The situation was unpredictable

"Do the Starveil Giants have any vassal races?"

Orion posed the question because, during the siege, he'd noticed more than just Blood Elves and Gnomes defending the city—there were also Gnolls and Beastmen among them.

Drakthul nodded respectfully before replying to Orion.

"Honored Lord, our Starveil Giant tribe does have two main vassal races: Gnolls and Beastmen.

They were conquered by Balor and made their homes in our territory, serving as our dependents."

Orion gave no response, but his guess was confirmed. With Gnolls and Beastmen as vassals, the city's troop numbers made sense.

"I recall seeing a cavalry unit in the city," Orion said, bringing up something else that had piqued his curiosity. Hovering above Stoneheart City earlier, he'd spotted a contingent of raptor cavalry.

"Honored Lord, under our former lord's leadership, our Starveil Giants constructed two special buildings: one is the Raptor Nest, and the other is the Flame-Tiger beast pens.

But those beast pens are still in the incubation stage. They aren't yet ready to mass-produce Flame-Tigers."

This revelation startled Orion. It also clearly astonished Delilah, Onyx, and the others in the palace—nobody had expected the southern Starveil Giants to be so wealthy and resourceful.

"Do we face any external threats in this territory?"

As quickly as the excitement rose, Orion forced himself to calm down. His voice, though quiet, carried through the throne room.

"Honored Lord, our ancestors once depended on the Blood Elves for survival, so we've historically offered them large annual tributes.

However, under Balor's rule, we'd already begun cutting back on those.

Within this region, aside from the Blood Elves, the Giants here were the mightiest force.

On occasion, slaver teams led by humans show up. They pose a threat to our clansmen living outside the city.

..."

Alpha-level Giant Drakthul delivered a thorough overview of Stoneheart City.

Overall, the Starveil Giants' internal situation was stable. Though King Balor had fallen, they now had a new Giant King, Orion, so the fundamentals of their existence wouldn't change overnight.

They'd already been a dominant power in the south—barring the Blood Elves and a smattering of human slaver bands, there weren't many who could challenge them. In other words, Stoneheart City was a prime staging ground for long-term growth. The key, of course, was Orion establishing a firm foothold.

Seated on the throne, Orion fell silent, lost in thought about securing the city and shaping its future. Only after a good while did he finally speak, his tone brooking no argument.

"Three days from now, the five of you will come with me when we press our invasion on the Blood Elves' City of Blessings.

Leave the rest of the bloodline warriors here in Stoneheart City. Just bring a hundred guards each."

Drakthul, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Grulbane all prostrated themselves and roared, "We obey!" before leaving the hall.

As they withdrew, Orion couldn't help eyeing Grulbane—the Alpha-level Giant shaman. Such a figure was exceedingly rare, especially since the Stoneheart Horde had yet to produce an Alpha-level shaman of its own. Now wasn't the time for deeper discussion; once the invasion was settled, Orion would give the city—and its people—a proper reorganization.

"Lord, aren't you planning to make them sign any slave contracts?"

Slagor spoke up. In his mind, truly taking over Stoneheart City required binding those five Giants with formal oaths.

Orion shook his head. Drakthul, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Grulbane had only just surrendered. They hadn't been let in on the Horde's real inner workings, nor were they holding any major authority. Forcing them to sign now was pointless.

Besides, Orion's public victory in the battle of the two Giant Kings had gifted him the title of "True Giant King," something not granted lightly. With that title, the Giants of Stoneheart City had little reason to betray him.

Glancing at Delilah, Onyx, Rockwell, Earthshaker, and Slagor, Orion briefly regretted not bringing Rendall or Thundar along. Either one of those two Giants could have made integrating Starveil City's inhabitants far more seamless. Giants tend to trust other Giants by nature, and Rendall or Thundar would have given him a distinct edge in winning them over.

"You five will remain here in Stoneheart City with our cannon-fodder troops. Learn everything about the place and assume control as quickly as you can.

I'll be issuing orders to reorganize the city's Giant forces into four armies—three infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment.

Delilah, you'll be assisting in that process. The guards Dace, Otho, Beyn, and Torba will take command of each regiment."

Orion had spent a long time mulling over this solution. With tens of thousands of Giant bloodline warriors in the city, having Alpha-level outsiders like Delilah, Onyx, Rockwell, Earthshaker, and Slagor directly lord over them could cause pushback—or even spark revolt.

But Dace, Otho, Beyn, and Torba—though all hero-level—had a special status as Orion's guards. That might make the Starveil Giants more likely to respect and follow them without conflict.

"Remember, before I return, use our cannon-fodder troops to repair the city walls and hold this place firmly.

All the spoils from this invasion go into storage here at Stoneheart City. From now on, this city is essentially our 'Blackstone City' of the south."

Orion's voice carried absolute authority. He deliberately invoked Blackstone City to emphasize how crucial Stoneheart City was to the Horde's future. At his words, Delilah, Onyx, and the others stood and bowed deeply, promising to defend the city at all costs.

"Off you go. There are things that can't move forward without your involvement."

Taking their leave, Delilah, Onyx, and the rest exited the palace. Orion remained on the throne, alone with his thoughts.

He had no idea how this colossal north-south war would end.

Yes, the Northern Coalition had the White Dragon Frostsire's will projection on its side, but that was still no replacement for Frostsire's physical presence. The Blood Elves had been building up their homeland for thousands of years; it was impossible to imagine they had no countermeasures.

The situation was unpredictable, and the Northern Coalition wasn't exactly a model of unity. Orion saw trouble ahead—especially now that he'd stepped in and claimed Stoneheart City, tying his future to these new lands. He'd have to tread carefully.

If the invasion succeeded, great—he'd keep the Starveil Giants' territory as his own.

But if the campaign failed, the Northern Coalition would likely scatter to the winds, each faction retreating to its own domain. Orion wouldn't have that option. He already occupied Stoneheart City.

Abandoning this new realm would be unthinkable—he was the Giant King to tens of thousands of Giant subjects. Fleeing would turn him into a laughingstock.

"Ah... This is trickier than I'd hoped."