

Titan King 451

Chapter 451 451: Life essence

Arthas shifted his gaze away, refocusing on the slime molds' brood mother.

On the front lines, thunder rumbled across the battlefield. Orion, gripping his trident, dropped like a bolt of lightning into the layer of slime molds spreading over the ground below.

Boom!

An explosion rocked the area, sending waves of force rippling outward. The space around Orion was cleared of the slime mold layer. Yet the Legendary-level slime mold mutant he had targeted had vanished without a trace.

"Lord Orion, that one is among the parasitic types of slime molds mutants. They can merge themselves into the slime molds layer. Anywhere the slime molds layer extends, they can come and go undetected."

"On the ground, it's to their advantage; in the sky, it's ours."

As Vexis's voice echoed from above, she hovered in the air, deathly energy surging in her hands. Channeling that energy, she eroded the slime molds layer below, trying to force the two Legendary-level parasites up into the open.

Seeing his initial strike come up empty, Orion narrowed his eyes and transformed into lightning once more, appearing beside Vexis.

"So they're hiding inside that brightly colored slime molds?"

"Yes."

"Then how do we kill them?"

"The two Legendary-level beings that emerged just now are parasitic mutants of the slime molds. They're extra-planar creatures."

While continuing to corrode the slime molds layer with her deathly energy, Vexis explained:

"To slay them, you first need to draw them out of the slime molds layer. Either that, or extract or destroy the life essence within them. That's the only way to kill them for good.

"The life essence is something akin to a Lord's Stone, extremely pure. It can be taken directly to enhance one's own power or aid in breakthroughs. Lord Orion, you should know that in Valkorath Realm's current crisis, the greatest opportunity lies in obtaining this life essence."

Orion nodded silently. He had already heard of life essence from the Kraken. Hearing Vexis's explanation again filled him with keen interest.

His power was close to the peak of Legendary level, and taking in more life essence would definitely help him reach new heights. Then he could be better equipped to protect himself and prepare for a future attempt at arch lord status.

"They won't be so foolish as to leave the slime molds of their own accord, will they?" Orion asked. Vexis nodded, acknowledging his concern.

"Exactly. That's why our defensive perimeter keeps getting pushed back instead of advancing outward."

As though a new thought had just come to her, Vexis continued, "To kill these slime molds mutants, you need transcendent power that's different from their own attributes. Against the same transcendent power they wield, they have exceptionally strong resistance."

From Vexis's explanation, Orion realized the situation was even trickier than he'd anticipated.

"Do ordinary slime molds mutants have this ability too?"

Vexis shook her head, then added, "Only those at Legendary level or above. For those below Legendary level, powerful individuals like us can eliminate them easily."

But the troublesome part is that 99% of slime molds mutants can fuse into the slime molds layer. Look there."

Vexis pointed at the ground. "To keep those layers in check, we turned the nearby land into deadlands. In deadlands, the slime molds layer can't draw nutrients, so once it expends too much energy, it recedes."

Just as Vexis was about to say more, those two Legendary-level parasites reemerged from the slime molds spreading across the ground. This time, Orion saw them clearly. Both were humanoid, yet looked bizarre.

One had a head shaped like a giant axe, the blade arching from the top of its skull. Its arms and legs had become massive, gleaming axe-edges. The other was more normal in appearance, aside from the scorpion tail extending from its backside.

The scorpion's tail typically curled upward, but on this parasite it curved downward, making it even harder to notice when buried within the slime molds.

"One for each of us!"

Orion raised his trident and rushed at the axehead mutant. Lich Vexis fixed her gaze on Orion for half a second, then descended to the ground with him.

Countless translucent ice shields suddenly appeared, swirling around Vexis to keep her safely protected.

"Death descends, withering like a flower!"

Her incantation seemed to emanate with magic. Everywhere she passed, the slime molds layer disintegrated into nothingness.

Clang!

Just then, Orion and the axeheaded mutant collided. The screech of metal echoed with the whoosh of air, both sides releasing torrents of transcendent power, each trying to overpower the other through sheer force.

"Orion, you can't afford a battle of attrition with them!" Vexis called out anxiously. "Down here on the ground, slime molds mutants can draw strength from the layer—transcendent power included."

Her words sent a chill through Orion. Meanwhile, the tailed mutant darted toward Vexis.

Fighting on the ground gave the parasites no reason to retreat; even as Vexis's presence caused swaths of slime molds to crumble, new patches spread from the distance, faster than she could destroy them.

Crack!

The parasite's tail lashed out from within the slime molds, catching Vexis at an odd angle. One of the ice shields circling her shattered beneath the impact. Hidden by the slime molds, that tail seemed to extend indefinitely, making it diabolically hard to defend against.

Hearing the tail's whip-crack, Orion glanced toward Vexis, noting she was fully on the defensive.

"This not good!"

"They have nearly limitless supplies of energy in that layer. We can't keep this up."

Realizing the need to act fast, Orion made a quick decision. He forced some space between himself and the axeheaded mutant, then charged forward again.

The axehead roared and flung itself at Orion in return. Yet halfway through its charge, Orion abruptly vanished from its sight.

Simultaneously, the tailed parasite had its tail trained on Vexis, ready for another strike. But in the next instant, a trident punched straight through its heart.

Stunned, the parasite glanced down instinctively and tried to merge back into the slime molds layer to escape. It failed.

Chapter 452: Your might astonishes me

Wave after wave of ultrasonic pulses emanated from Orion's trident, making every cell in the parasitic creature's body tremble uncontrollably. It could no longer maintain control of its form.

Zzzt! Zzzt!

Along with the sonic onslaught came a terrifying current of electricity, scorching and paralyzing the creature's entire body.

Boom!

The tailed parasitic creature turned into a pile of rotted flesh, drifting through the air like dust.

Orion caught a mass of greenish-blue, sponge-like fluid hovering in midair and swiftly stored it in his spatial ring.

"Let's go. We're pulling back from the frontlines!"

Before the Axeheaded Mutant and Lich Vexis could react, Orion transformed into a bolt of lightning and withdrew from the battlefield.

Vexis responded swiftly as well. Stepping onto an ice shield like a magic carpet, she too departed the battleground.

Left behind was only the axeheaded mutant, still roaring and howling in the slime molds layer.

High in midair, seeing that Vexis had gotten out safely, Orion nodded approvingly at her performance.

Vexis was quick on her feet, with both offensive and defensive tactics at hand. She did, in fact, possess upper legendary-level strength.

"Lord Orion, your might astonishes me!"

He's too powerful! And it was so sudden!

No matter how hard she tried, Vexis couldn't imagine that while Orion was fighting the axeheaded mutant, he could also slaughter another legendary-level parasitic creature—one that was standing right in the slime molds layer.

"That was a fearsome upper legendary-level parasitic creature... and just like that, it's been slain?"

Even now, recalling everything that had happened, Vexis still found it unbelievable.

Vexis cast a side glance at Orion, forming a new impression of her master's friend.

"Ms. Vexis, there's no need to look at me like that. Compared to your master, I'm still a long way off!"

Vexis nodded, then shook her head, not daring to compare Arthas and Orion carelessly.

In truth, Orion was secretly delighted as well.

He was excited not only because he had seized a cluster of life essence, but also because he had found a method to counter the slime molds mutants.

That method was sonic attacks!

The technique Orion had just used to kill the parasitic creature was a skill known as [Instant Impact].

Besides taking the enemy by surprise, Instant Impact also unleashed a powerful sonic effect.

Those sonic waves vibrated the slime molds mutant, scattering its bodily components. In addition, the burning and paralyzing capabilities of Orion's lightning transcendent power compounded the damage.

That was precisely why the tailed parasitic creature had no chance to flee.

"Honorable Orion, Bone City lies in that direction. Would you like to go there?"

Vexis's demeanor shifted drastically. Her voice took on a respectful tone, no longer the cold, polite flattery from before.

From that moment on, Vexis truly considered herself Orion's supporting ally, taking on the role of his aide.

Orion nodded, a bright gleam flickering in his eyes.

He had just slain an upper legendary-level parasitic creature, but it hadn't dropped a survivor's treasure chest, leaving him slightly disappointed.

"Ms. Vexis, please lead the way!"

Vexis nodded and guided Orion toward Bone City.

Titanion Realm, Soaring Bird City.

Prince Theodore and Princess Ava had already departed from Soaring Bird City, yet they left a squad of guards behind to deter any ill-intentioned individuals who might threaten Torin.

Not long after Prince Theodore departed, a caravan from the kingdom poured into Soaring Bird City. They brought not only numerous slaves but also a huge supply of construction tools and building materials.

Inside a tent, Torin gazed at the city planning in progress and the excavation underway to build the foundations of Soaring Bird City's walls. A surge of fervor flooded his heart.

This was his territory—Torin's city.

Even before Soaring Bird City was fully built, ninety-nine percent of its profits had already been carved up by the kingdom's high nobles.

Nevertheless, Torin had retained the position of City Lord and the right to manage Soaring Bird City.

He had given up his share of the profits and set aside his dignity, but now at last, Torin saw a glimmer of hope belonging to him alone.

"Master, a group of giant slaves has arrived from inside the kingdom. Word is His Highness the Prince made some sort of deal with the Giant King."

"They'll be heading to the giants' territory in three days. Should we follow them?"

The speaker was Wyatt, commander of the slave-hunting party. He was exceptionally sharp when it came to gleaning slave-related information.

"So, heading to the giants' territory?"

To be honest, Torin was quite tempted.

He truly wanted to go to the giants' domain, seek an audience with the Giant King, and barter for Galahad's armor and sword.

Torin hesitated, but in the end, he abandoned that plan.

It wasn't that he didn't want Galahad's relics, but he simply had no bargaining chips to offer.

Naturally, Torin was unaware that Galahad's relics had already been traded away by Prince Theodore and returned to Princess Ava.

Meanwhile, in the human kingdom, on the road to the Royal Capital.

Prince Theodore and Princess Ava rode side by side on their beast-blood mounts.

"Aunt, someone like Torin is a savage wolf you can never truly domesticate."

"You must keep him under constant watch. Don't grant him freedom, and don't let him use your name for his own ends."

"Soaring Bird City, as a commercial route to the ogres, giants, and Blood Elves, will surely attract plenty of influential interest groups."

"All we need to do is remain in the shadows and collect our profits. We must not let those filthy dealings in broad daylight sully our purity and light."

Prince Theodore was cautioning his aunt, giving Princess Ava a clearer sense of the upheaval and change that would soon unfold in Soaring Bird City, where Torin was stationed.

Since the territory of the human kingdom had shrunk significantly, reopening just a handful of trade routes to neighboring realms involved the interests of countless nobles.

The reason Prince Theodore demanded sixty percent of the profits was not for himself alone—he represented the royal family and the two Grand Dukes closest to the throne.

"I understand."

"Torin is just a pawn—merely a guard dog for our assets!"

"I'll only assign him tasks; I won't give him any promises."

Prince Theodore nodded. He realized that for some reason, his aunt had suddenly become both resilient and wise.

In Princess Ava, Prince Theodore could no longer see a trace of a pampered princess or naive romanticism.

"Theodore, my Rose Knight Regiment and I will always stand by your side."

"If anything happens, don't forget to let me know!"

Prince Theodore smiled.

With Princess Ava's support, he was now one step closer to the throne.

He was fully aware that Princess Ava had more behind her than just the Rose Knight Regiment.

Otherwise, the kingdom would never have invested so much effort in sending Prince Theodore this far to rescue her.

Hence, Prince Theodore believed that this long journey had been well worth it.

Chapter 453: I'll keep it in mind

Valkorath Realm, Bone City.

Lightning flashed; thunder abruptly ceased. Orion and Vexis landed atop the city wall, catching sight of Arthas, who was stationed there.

"Seems the battlefield is missing one legendary-level slime mold. You're stronger than I expected," Arthas remarked calmly, turning his head toward Orion.

Though he had not witnessed the fight himself, Arthas was certain Orion had struck the killing blow on that legendary-level slime mold.

"Bro, I was just testing them. These slime mold mutants are mightier than I imagined."

Orion's voice was equally composed, with a relaxed air—like speaking to a longtime friend after many years. Yet the moment he addressed Arthas as "bro," both Vexis and the subordinates behind Arthas watched him intently.

Faced with all that staring, Orion seemed utterly unbothered, as though he did not notice at all.

"Is the situation critical over here?"

Orion turned sideways, gazing out at the vividly colored world in the distance together with Arthas.

"We're holding out all right, but Leonidas and Alexander are not doing so well," Arthas replied.

"So it's those ordinary slime mold mutants causing them trouble?"

The very fact that Orion could say this proved he was no longer the novice who once depended on the Alliance's stronger warriors for protection. From his recent encounters and understanding of the situation, Orion saw that the problem plaguing their allies in Valkorath Realm was not so much the formidable slime mold mutants as it was the countless ordinary ones that, try as they might, they could never fully wipe out.

This was especially difficult for Leonidas and Alexander, who relied on beasts and sapient creatures as their main fighting forces; facing the slime mold mutants was especially disadvantageous for them.

"Sooner or later, you'll run into the same trouble. I sense you've brought plenty of scorpions, which I assume is your plan for a renewable fighting force?"

"Yes."

Orion nodded, his brow tightening reflexively.

"Slime mold mutants here are hardly limited to parasitic forms. We also have slime mold dragons and living-flesh undead," Arthas continued. "These wretched units have all been bred and split from the slime mold brood mother, tailored to our particular strengths."

His tone turned heavy. These fungal creatures were the most difficult foes he had faced in many years.

"Since you've come to assist the Champions Alliance, here are supplies for you."

Arthas raised his hand, and a cube-shaped storage device landed in Orion's palm.

A quick scan told Orion that it contained a huge amount of grain and military provisions. Without ceremony, he pocketed the cube. His 300,000-strong contingent consumed enormous quantities of food daily—no small matter indeed.

Once the scorpion tribe started breeding and spawning troops at will, the required resources would be even more frightening.

"Don't worry about your subordinates' growth," Arthas reassured him. "Those slime mold mutants make excellent nourishment. But understand, this war will be a long haul and might last at least ten years—or even a century—without ceasing."

Orion was taken aback. "Bro, you can't be serious?"

He turned, watching Arthas's distant gaze.

"Let me put it this way: this war is something the commander prepared for me, Leonidas, and Alexander," Arthas explained. "It's been far too long since any of us made a breakthrough. The battlefield offers both growth and testing."

He paused, unwilling to elaborate further, and shifted the conversation back to Orion.

"I noticed your broodmother(Soraya) doesn't have her own Nest yet. You can ask Leonidas for one—he won't refuse."

Orion nodded, making a mental note of that. When Soraya descended upon Valkorath Realm, indeed, she had arrived without a proper Nest or the conditions necessary to spawn troops on an ongoing basis.

"Cryptopolis is essentially my territory. Once you get settled here and the time is right, you can move out and build a city of your own," Arthas went on.

Orion grasped his meaning. Cryptopolis was merely a base Arthas was lending him so he could learn about Valkorath Realm and get a feel for the military situation. Since it came with troops and defensive towers, it served as a secure stronghold.

Still, to establish a true foothold, collect faith, and claim territory in Valkorath Realm, Orion would eventually need a main city of his own, with a territory core.

Valkorath Realm was indeed large enough to accommodate many. However, Orion was well aware that the Alliance would almost certainly add more gifted survivors in the future—people who would also lay claim to portions of Valkorath Realm.

Therefore, the sooner he staked out his land, the better.

"Thanks for the tip. I'll keep it in mind."

Arthas did not respond to Orion. Instead, he continued speaking in his own way.

"Next, I plan to allow some slime mold layers to spill into the region around Cryptopolis. Your subordinates will get a chance to become familiar with how these creatures fight.

"You can go on the offensive yourselves, or you can rely on the defenses of Cryptopolis. Three days from now, it'll all begin. Make sure they're ready."

It was a peculiar sight indeed—at least for Arthas's Legendary-level subordinates. They had never seen him like this, talking at such great length: part aloof and distant, part eager to pass on tips for dealing with the enemy.

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Even after returning to Cryptopolis, Vexis still looked shaken and in disbelief.

"Lord Orion, what do we do next?"

Without realizing it, Vexis had already come to rely on Orion, treating him as her anchor.

"Get some rest. We'll strike first in three days."

Orion spoke these words, then headed toward the city's only palace.

Seated on the throne, Orion summoned his subordinates. Except for Gustalon, who was away cartographing the territory, everyone else—Soraya, Onyx, Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, Drakthul, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Thunderclaw—had arrived, none missing.

"Three days from now, a batch of slime mold mutants will appear near Cryptopolis," Orion began. "At that time, Marnok, Gormathar, Veldrok, and Thunderclaw will stay behind to guard Cryptopolis. The rest of you will come with me to launch an active offensive against the slime mold mutants."

"As for what exactly slime mold mutants are, Ms. Vexis here will explain shortly."

What followed was a short orientation session, with Vexis leading the discussion while Orion's subordinates raised all sorts of questions.

Only after that gathering broke up, and everyone left the palace, did Orion remain on his throne, taking out the life essence he had secured earlier.

Chapter 454: I never expected you to be stronger than me now

The life essence glimmered with a blue-green radiance, as though it had a life of its own, yet it emitted no hint of energy.

After observing it carefully for fifteen minutes, Orion placed the life essence in his mouth.

The moment it entered, before Orion could even chew, the life essence slipped down his esophagus into his stomach.

Even more astonishing, once it reached his stomach, there was no digestion process at all. It directly transformed into a surging wave of life energy, washing over Orion's entire body.

It felt wonderful—no pain, no itch, just a soothing sensation akin to an infant resting in amniotic fluid.

Half a day later, once Orion finished absorbing that life energy, he could clearly feel his strength grow yet again.

"What a pure surge of life energy!"

"I can sense that just one more portion of life essence should allow me to reach the peak of Legendary level."

That was Orion's conclusion after absorbing the life energy, revealing a deeper understanding of his own power.

"Since I've arrived in this realm(world), there will be plenty of chances to acquire more life essence."

With that thought, Orion collected his surge of joy brought by his increased strength.

Focusing his mind on the Survivor's Platform, Orion opened the public channel of the Champions Alliance.

Leonidas: "Damn it, I just lost another batch of my people to fend off this fungal creature assault."

Leonidas: "Anyway, Arthas, that subordinate of yours named Rumbold is really something. Let him follow me. Once this war is done, I'll take him with me to fight in other realms. I won't use him for free. I promise to give you back a Rumbold at the peak of Legendary level."

Arthas: "Leonidas, this isn't the time for that. I have something important to ask. Hulk has also come to Valkorath Realm, and he brought a broodmother. Do you still have a spare Nest?"

Leonidas: "Hahaha... That giant is here too! The entire Champions Alliance is now assembled!"

Leonidas: "I've got plenty of Nests!"

Leonidas: "By the way, Hulk, why aren't you saying anything?"

Arthas: "He just arrived in this world. Not too long ago, he killed an upper Legendary level parasitic creature."

Leonidas: "Uh... Hahaha... Well done!"

Edward: "Nice going, Hulk!"

Alexander: "Impressive!"

Kraken: "An upper Legendary level parasitic creature... Are you telling me Hulk took out something stronger than I am with ease?"

Arthas: "I figure he's busy absorbing life essence right now. Let's give him a moment."

Right after Arthas posted that message, Orion typed and sent his own.

Hulk: "Greetings, all you Big Bosses! I've arrived too!"

Leonidas: "Hulk, when did you get here? Why didn't you let me know in advance?"

Edward: "You got yourself a fine record as soon as you arrived. Well done—my teleportation scroll didn't go to waste."

Alexander: "Great. I'd love to hear more about your battle!"

Kraken: "Wow, I'm still just a middle Legendary level. I need to work harder!"

A smile spread across Orion's face. The reaction of these allies in the Champions Alliance offered him a sense of warmth and familiarity that he had long missed.

Perhaps only by communicating with survivors like them could Orion reveal that other side of himself hidden deep in his soul.

Hulk: "I just got to Valkorath Realm, and there's a lot I don't understand yet. Sorry for not speaking up, I was swamped!"

Orion gave a quick explanation, but before he could continue, Leonidas initiated a trade with him.

On the trading screen, Leonidas put up a Legendary level Nest, stronger by far than the Tidecrab Mother Nesthig Orion had obtained from Kraken.

After they completed the trade, Leonidas sent a message.

"If you need anything else, just let me know. I have plenty of items like Nests."

"I'd like one more of that same kind of Nest I just got from you!"

The moment Orion saw Leonidas's message, he stated his request without hesitation.

After reading the Nest's description, Orion suddenly thought of Spider Queen Lorelia and wanted to get one of these powerful Nests for her as well.

"Haha, I was expecting you to be polite about it, but you skipped that altogether."

Leonidas teased him, then initiated another trade, giving Orion yet another Legendary level Nest.

A Legendary level Nest is already extremely valuable.

This was a huge favor, added on top of the previous debts Orion already owed. He honestly wasn't sure how to repay them all.

"Wondering how to return the favor?"

"I suffered heavy losses in this war. How about repaying me with two clusters of life essence? That would make up for what I lost."

"Don't worry, I'm not in a rush. Get yourself settled first."

Leonidas specifically asked for life essence, indicating just how badly his forces had been hit.

"Alright, once I'm settled here, I'll start looking for life essence."

Orion agreed; that seemed like the best way to repay the debt.

Of course, Orion knew perfectly well that life essence wouldn't match the full value of a Legendary level Nest. He figured he'd find another way to compensate Leonidas once he was powerful enough and had the resources.

After finishing his conversation with Leonidas, Orion received a private message from Kraken.

"Hulk, I never expected you to be stronger than me now!"

Seeing Kraken's message, Orion replied humbly.

"I just got lucky, that's all."

"You're different from me. As far as I know, the deep sea is home to creatures dozens of times more powerful than those on land. The fact that you've survived there is already remarkable."

With a bit of humility and praise, Orion quickly earned more goodwill from Kraken.

Within the Champions Alliance, only Kraken and Orion remained at the Legendary level, making them equals of sorts—naturally, they had more in common and got along easily.

"How's the Tidecrab Mother Nest I gave you last time? If it's not working out, I'll set aside a better one for you when I can."

Truth be told, Orion's modesty truly impressed Kraken.

At that moment, hidden somewhere in the deep sea, Kraken felt as though he had found a kindred spirit, someone he could genuinely trust.

"It's working great. Thanks again!"

"By the way, how are things on your end, out there in the deep sea? Are you safe?"

Orion expressed his gratitude, then added a question about Kraken's circumstances.

"It's safer here compared to land."

"There's a vast expanse of ocean, and in my immediate area, there aren't any threats stronger than Legendary level. Underwater, I'm in my element."

"If I run into something I can't beat, I just retreat deeper into the ocean, and nobody can find me."

Kraken's reply carried a note of confidence.

Indeed, the deep sea was Kraken's stronghold.

He had arrived in Valkorath Realm earlier than Orion precisely because he had the advantage of this expansive underwater territory. Since coming here, Kraken had chosen a hit-and-run strategy, specifically hunting slime molds mutant creatures weaker than him.

Kraken believed that if he stuck to his plan, he would eventually reach the peak of Legendary level.

That was Kraken's choice. This time, he wouldn't return to his own world until he achieved the Legendary level peak.

"You and I are at the bottom of the Alliance's firepower. We have to motivate each other!"

"Absolutely—let's keep pushing forward!"

Chapter 455 455: Scorpion soldier

Inside Cryptopolis, Orion slowly opened his eyes.

He already had a rough understanding of the current situation. As long as his subordinates learned how to fight the slime molds, the Stoneheart Horde could establish a strong foothold here.

"Have Soraya come see me!"

Orion's voice echoed through the palace. The giant warrior standing guard outside answered with a resounding "Yes, my king!" before turning to deliver the summons.

Half an hour later, Soraya entered the palace, walked up to the throne, and settled into Orion's lap.

"My dear lord, the guards said you wanted to see me?"

Soraya gently lifted her right hand, stroking Orion's cock and stoking the fires of his desire.

Orion reached out and pulled Soraya closer, pressing her against him.

"Do you like this world?"

Because Soraya was Orion's woman, he normally cared about how she felt and took extra steps to look after her when he could. Bringing Soraya into the Valkorath Realm was, in fact, meant to help her develop more rapidly. However, this meant she could never return to where she used to live; the Stoneheart Horde's future territory in the Valkorath Realm was now her home.

"Can I say I don't like it?"

Soraya rested her head on Orion's chest, listening to his heartbeat.

"I'm just Alpha-level, the moment I arrived, I sensed how dangerous this place is.

Aside from feeling somewhat safe by your side, I sense countless powerful beings lurking in the surrounding space, like they could devour me at any moment."

Orion understood her worries. The Valkorath Realm was full of formidable enemies in this war. Plenty of legendary-level powerhouses roamed the land, and there were even more Alpha-level adversaries. Soraya's sense of unease was completely natural.

"It's too late for regrets now," Orion said softly, his tone carrying a trace of tenderness for Soraya.

"I have no regrets!

Being able to face a new world with you is both a challenge and a new beginning for me.

Now I see why you've grown so quickly, Orion. Even if I die in battle, I'll never regret following you."

Though Soraya spoke flatly, her words felt warm to Orion. He reached out his other arm, turning her so that she sat on his crotch, facing him.

"I brought you here not to let you die, but to make you stronger!"

A flash of light appeared in Orion's hand as a Miniature Nest, shaped somewhat like an ant colony, materialized in his palm.

"Here, it's yours."

He placed the Nest in Soraya's hand. More than just a Nest, it was also a defensive artifact. As long as Soraya hid inside, anyone below upper legendary level would find it impossible to extract her.

Soraya took the Nest in her hand and carefully tuned in to it. Her eyes grew wide with astonishment.

"This...this...this is..."

"A Legendary-level Nest. I got it from a friend who's stationed here, and now it belongs to your scorpion tribe."

"Honey, kiss me...love me!"

Soraya threw herself into Orion's arms, kissing him passionately. Brimming with gratitude, she decided to express her delight by giving Orion a perfect lovemaking session.

After their passionate encounter, Orion held Soraya while reclining on the throne.

"I've stocked the Nest with a lot of supplies. All you have to do is get the scorpion tribe to multiply as quickly as possible. The more, the better. I can sense that things aren't stable here, and Cryptopolis could come under attack at any moment."

A Legendary-level Nest wasn't a gift without a price; after Orion satisfied his own desire did he mention his demands.

"As you wish, my lord!"

Soraya lay limply across his shoulder, still weak from their recent intimacy. She had remained on top the whole time, making her even more exhausted.

After a while, Soraya suddenly lifted her head, looking Orion in the eyes.

"My lord, I'd like to personally hatch a batch of scorpion soldiers using your semen.

I believe that with your bloodline, the resulting scorpion soldiers will be extremely powerful."

Orion frowned slightly, looking down at Soraya.

"Offspring?"

"Mm...no." Soraya shook her head with a playful sparkle in her eyes. "Scorpion soldiers are a special existence of the scorpion tribe. They're all male, and they emerge from their eggs already strong. They use all their bloodline potential to improve their combat abilities, sacrificing both reproductive capability and any chance to advance further. They're none too bright, but they're born to fight.

They're not really 'children.' I definitely don't want such silly offspring!"

At this point, Soraya was beginning to pout somewhat adorably.

"As long as they're not actual children, do whatever you want."

Orion let out a sigh of relief. Clearly, he didn't want his offspring with Soraya to be an entire swarm of scorpions. In this world, it was commonly understood that humanoid creatures tend to produce humanoid children—everyone frowned upon so-called 'reverse evolution.' It was exactly why Lokiviria preferred humanoid children.

"Then whose child is Jarex?" Orion suddenly recalled the once-defeated Jarex, a scorpion soldier with a volatile temper but unshakable loyalty.

"That one was hatched by the High Priestess. As for whose semen was used, I really don't know!"

Orion nodded thoughtfully, and Soraya squinted with a grin, having noticed Orion's flicker of jealousy earlier.

"Go ahead and do it.

But one thing's for sure: if we ever have children, they have to grow normally in your womb."

Soraya giggled, nodded, and leaned in to kiss Orion's cock, licking away the last traces of semen. At that moment, she found Orion downright adorable.

...

Stoneheart Horde, Meadowland Plains.

Led by Dace, Otho, Beyn, Torba, and Grulbane, Rolan and Steelblade finally challenged every major tribe(clan) inhabiting the Meadowland Plains.

During those challenges, Rolan lost three matches, while Steelblade lost twelve.

Now they were preparing to head back to Stoneheart City to continue their training and digest everything they had gained on this tour of their territory.

"Three years from now, Rolan will come back to challenge you again!"

Having lost three matches, Rolan felt slightly disgruntled and unwilling to accept the defeats. Dace and Grulbane exchanged knowing smiles.

Truthfully, they were pleased with Rolan and Steelblade's overall results. Rolan's three losses were to Orcs a few years older than he was—though both sides were minors, that age difference still mattered in terms of power and experience.

"Sounds good. If I'm still in Stoneheart City then, come find me, and I'll go with you."

"Count me in, too!"

"..."

Chapter 456 456: Hatred is powerless before power and profit

Dace, Otho, Beyn, Torba, and Grulbane all voiced their support for Rolan in turn.

Grulbane glanced at Rolan, then let his gaze fall on the group of young giant warriors behind him. Compared to when they first arrived, these younglings now looked strong and robust, eyes gleaming with resolve. A hardened determination was clearly etched on their faces.

"If Orion could see them now, he'd be gratified indeed," Dace sighed. Not accompanying Orion on his cross-realm invasion felt like a dereliction of duty to these guards. Although they were still carrying out Orion's orders, a guard's rightful place was always by the side of the Giant King, was it not?

"Let's go. Winter is coming—we should return to Stoneheart City," Grulbane said, reminding Dace, the other warriors, and the younglings, as well as himself.

Stoneheart City, Mysterious Tavern.

Delilah had been relatively idle lately. She came up to the second floor of the tavern, half-reclined on a lounge chair, and gazed out the window at the scenery of Stoneheart City.

"Your Majesty, that human knight who's been staying at our tavern... He's already been here for nearly two months."

"Is he short on money now?"

"No, that's not it. I just think he should harbor some hostility toward us."

"Go on."

Delilah raised her eyes, glancing at her personal guard—a succubus maidservant whose knack for scheming and intrigue Delilah held in high regard.

"Your Majesty, his name is Godfrey. He came along with the human kingdom's envoy on their last visit.

For reasons unknown, he chose not to return with them. I suspect that the human knight who died in the Colosseum might have been his companion.

He likely wants revenge but hasn't found a suitable opportunity."

Delilah said nothing, simply gazing at Stoneheart City under the night sky. Now that Stoneheart City was open to outsiders, many different races had flooded in from the blood elves' territory, the human kingdom, and the ogre lands, bringing new liveliness to the city.

Delilah felt fortunate that Orion had promptly issued the Blackstone Code. Thanks to that, the upper ranks of the Stoneheart Horde had a set of laws to govern this newly thriving Blackstone City.

"As long as he's not stirring up trouble, let's leave him be. If there's any resentment, just have someone keep an eye on him. Hatred is powerless before power and profit."

Delilah withdrew her gaze and sipped her wine.

Valkorath Realm, Cryptopolis City.

Three days later, at the city gate, Orion sat astride an Abyss Dragon, with Gustalon, Onyx, Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, Drakthul, and five armies under their command arrayed behind him.

"Gustalon, share what you've discovered," Orion ordered.

Gustalon transformed into a whirlwind, floated higher, and addressed the soldiers about what he had seen.

"About 50 miles from Cryptopolis, a new slime molds layer has appeared. We're still not sure how many mutated slime molds are in it, but it's creeping toward this city. It could reach us in half a day at most.

On the bright side, that slime molds layer has split off from the main frontline, so they can't receive support or supplies."

Gustalon spoke for a good five minutes, explaining the situation in detail.

In truth, all this was a chance Arthas had arranged for Orion to train his troops—a demonstration that one way to defeat the slime mold mutants was to isolate their layer so they'd have no resupply or reinforcements.

"Open the gates," Orion said calmly.

He glanced at Vexis, who stood on top of a massive summoned spider. She gave him a subtle nod, whereupon the north gate cracked open, slowly and heavily. The five armies plus fifty thousand sand scorpions surged out like a rising tide.

Half a day later, the Stoneheart Horde and the slime molds layer clashed for the first time. As soon as they spotted the oncoming enemy, lumps and bumps of all sizes began to swell across the slime molds layer. Oddly shaped mutants lumbered out of the seething mass of slime, taking the initiative to charge the Stoneheart Horde's forces.

The fierce battle commenced at once!

"Charge, you lot! For the Horde, for freedom, for our great lord!"

"For our wives and children, for life essence—charge! Charge! Charge!"

With a resounding canine howl, Dirtclaw took the lead at the head of the Gnoll armies. After two rousing shouts, he shifted into a giant Hellhound and rushed forward.

As the charge rang out, Orion and Vexis ascended into the skies, overlooking the clash below. Freed from Orion's presence, the Abyss Dragon unleashed its beastly nature, accelerating even faster than Hellhound Dirtclaw. It was the first to engage the slime mold mutants.

"Lord Orion, that's a living-flesh undead," Vexis said, hovering in midair. She pointed at the slime molds mutant grappling with the Abyss Dragon and explained:

"In truth, the bodies of these slime mold mutants are composed of countless pathogens. They occupy an enemy's corpse, then adapt that body according to the original creature's combat traits and their own race's attributes.

Living-flesh undead are fungal creatures that have taken over some undead body; they use slime molds as flesh, so the occupied host retains certain undead qualities as well as those of the slime molds themselves.

Lord Orion, the being fighting your mount was originally a four-horned bone-beast, but it lost its vitality and was overtaken by fungal creatures.

You'll find all kinds of variations among these fungal creatures—some are undead tyrants, some even Legendary-level slime mold dragons."

Orion narrowed his eyes, watching this living-flesh undead tear at the Abyss Dragon. He realizing just how horrifyingly evolved these seemingly simple slime molds had become.

"So you're saying this entire slime molds layer is made up of slime mold mutants occupying enemy bodies?"

Vexis nodded, neither confirming nor denying. "Some were indeed once our own people, but others were creatures brought in from other realms by the slime molds' main colony. Before invading Valkorath Realm, they surely invaded other worlds, too."

Orion never expected slime molds, which looked so rudimentary, to evolve into such a terrifying force.

"At least this time, the slime molds layer isn't connected to the main nest(queen's nest) at the frontline. They have no reinforcements or supplies."

Roar!

A sudden draconic roar cut through the din of battle. It was the Abyss Dragon, howling in fury.

Chapter 457 457: Dying on the battlefield is their honor

After clashing with the living-flesh undead for a while, the Abyss Dragon became increasingly furious as it realized the creature couldn't be bitten to death.

With a thunderous roar, the Abyss Dragon began releasing a wave of abyssal energy, growing denser by the second until it enveloped an area over 2,000 feet in radius.

This was the Abyss Dragon's rarely used bloodline skill, known as Mist Domain.

Mist Domain was excellent for team battles and surprise attacks, making it incredibly effective on a large battlefield.

As the Mist Domain unfolded, the Abyss Dragon's figure gradually vanished into the mist.

Soon after, the domain echoed with the dragon's ferocious, bloodthirsty roars.

"Lord Orion, your mount has remarkable potential."

"It's not far from Legendary level now!"

While the Abyss Dragon's Mist Domain could conceal it from the slime mold mutants, it couldn't hide from Legendary-level beings like Orion and Vexis.

Within Vexis' perception, the Abyss Dragon had already killed three Alpha-level slime mold mutants in the mist, directly devouring the life essence they dropped.

"I've invested quite a bit of effort into raising it," Orion replied truthfully.

Since Orion had advanced to the Legendary level, the Abyss Dragon had spent most of its time embedded within his heart, continually nourished by the Titan's Heart energy. This significantly boosted the dragon's strength and potential.

"After this battle, your mount will probably need a lot more life essence!" Vexis remarked, her voice filled with envy.

Having a mount with unlimited potential was a luxury even for powerful beings like them.

A growing mount was far superior to ordinary summoned creatures and would become an invaluable asset in the future.

Much like Arthas's bone dragon, capable of holding its ground even against weaker Arch Lords.

Orion nodded, a smile forming on his face. Rather than continuing the discussion, he shifted his attention to other parts of the battlefield.

As a wind-elemental being, Gustalon was practically invisible amidst the chaos of battle.

In just a brief period, he had swept injured slime mold mutants into the sky, cutting off their supplies and effortlessly killing them.

Witnessing this, Orion smiled to himself.

"Perhaps, with just a bit more effort, Stoneheart Horde will soon gain two or three more Legendary-level powerhouses."

The Abyss Dragon and Gustalon would undoubtedly reach the Alpha-level peak after this battle.

As for Soraya, Orion planned to prioritize resources acquired in battle for her until she reached Alpha-level peak as well.

While planning for the future, Orion continued observing the battlefield.

"Charge!"

Amidst the crowd, Onyx, riding atop his Dark Armored Beetle, was enveloped by blood-red chains. Like a war chariot, he tossed slime mold mutants into the air wherever he went.

Near Onyx, Earthshaker controlled Blood Sharing, linking Gronthar, Dirtclaw, Drakthul, and other elders, ensuring they wouldn't be instantly killed.

The chaotic fight between various armies and slime mold mutants lacked tactics or formations entirely.

Having lost their numerical advantage and supplies, the slime mold mutants gradually fell into defeat under Stoneheart Horde's relentless assault.

Yet at that very moment, death energy surged around the lich Vexis beside Orion, who began summoning undead.

The fallen sand scorpions, gnolls, minotaurs, and giants from Stoneheart Horde rose from the ground, rejoining the fight and charging once again at the slime mold mutants.

Orion's expression grew grim as he watched—these were his subordinates, his people.

"Lord Orion, I apologize for doing this, but it's the best way," Vexis glanced at Orion and explained.

"If I don't summon them, their corpses will be overtaken by slime molds and used as tools against us."

"When we first fought against the slime molds, our lack of vigilance allowed them to create powerful beings like the living-flesh undead, undead tyrants, and slime mold dragons."

"Lord Orion, the fate of every being that enters Valkorath Realm is filled with opportunity and brutal reality—here, death is never the end."

As she spoke, transcendent power once again surged from Vexis.

A magical formation filled with deathly energy appeared on the ground, spinning slowly as spirits emerged from beneath the earth.

These were the recently deceased warriors from Stoneheart Horde. Vexis quickly made hand gestures, directing the spirits to enter the surviving bloodline warriors of Stoneheart Horde.

The spirits took refuge within warriors' armor, attached themselves to their weapons, or formed ghostly cloaks around their bodies.

In short, everything was utilized fully; the spirits strengthened the surviving bloodline warriors in a different way.

"Lord Orion, my master summoned me for exactly this purpose," lich Vexis sighed faintly upon completing the summoning.

This was not something Vexis enjoyed doing.

The dead bloodline warriors' bodies were turned into undead soldiers, and their souls were summoned forth to aid their living kin—continuing until either the enemies were annihilated or their allies completely wiped out.

Orion remained silent. Suddenly, he realized he had underestimated the true cruelty of Valkorath Realm's war.

The deaths on this battlefield were genuine—complete annihilation, body, and soul.

Only then did Orion finally understand why Arthas had assigned lich Vexis to him—not just for protection, but also to prevent fallen Stoneheart Horde warriors from becoming nourishment for fungal creatures.

"This must be the true reason Leonidas sought help from Skeleton General Rumbold in the Champions Alliance's public channel," Orion thought to himself.

"It wasn't because Leonidas lacked powerful subordinates, but because he didn't want to nourish enemies."

Orion exhaled slowly. He wasn't a merciful man by any measure.

"Dying on the battlefield is their honor!"

Seeing Orion come to terms with the situation, Vexis felt relieved at last.

Summoning Orion's fallen warriors as undead right before his eyes had been uncomfortable for her, but the brutal reality of war demanded adaptability.

Orion fell silent again, this time focusing even more intently on the battle.

Under continuous attacks from the slime mold mutants, Stoneheart Horde suffered heavy losses. Cannon fodder troops such as the satyrs and beastfolk had the most casualties, followed by the younger scorpions of the scorpion tribe.

Fortunately, the slime mold layer Arthas had allowed to enter wasn't extensive. Without further reinforcements, the battle ended within two hours.

Orion led the group back to Cryptopolis, returning with plenty of life essence and undead warriors converted from his fallen horde members.

Sometimes, the very essence of war was sacrifice and plunder.

Chapter 458 458: This war is his opportunity

Bone City. Arthas looked north, and a trace of confidence flickered in his gaze.

"Master, that slime molds layer has been wiped out!"

The subordinate behind him, cloaked from head to toe, broke the silence to deliver good news.

"How did it go?"

Arthas did not turn around. His voice, though calm, betrayed his keen interest in the outcome of the battle.

"Master, that friend of yours—his troops are surprisingly capable."

"The fight took two hours from start to finish."

Arthas cut his subordinate off and continued coolly, "Get to the point."

It took a moment before the hooded figure responded, face devoid of emotion. "They're a force skilled in combat. They have many different types of units, which makes them hard to counter."

"Though the variety of their powers can be dizzying, it's not easy for enemies to find a specific weakness."

"In that troop, I sensed a wind-element being."

"An elemental being with an affinity for wind can naturally restrain slime molds mutants."

"In my opinion, we can draw that army to the front lines to ease some of our burden."

Those last words were precisely what the cloaked figure had come to report—exactly the answer Arthas was expecting.

"I understand."

Arthas's tone was flat, revealing no emotion. Yet everyone familiar with him knew that such calmness signified his pleasure.

From Arthas's perspective, he had invited Orion to the Valkorath Realm so Orion could broaden his horizons and receive some training. However, things had not gone exactly as planned—Orion's strength was growing too quickly.

During the last visit to the Godforsaken Land, Orion was only at the early Legendary level. Now he was already close to the Legendary level peak. The moment he arrived, he effortlessly killed a slime molds parasitic creature of upper Legendary level strength, and his troops adapted to the battlefield in no time.

Clearly, Orion was not going to slow Arthas down; in fact, he could offer substantial help.

"Hulk's main weakness is that his foundations are too shallow," Arthas mused. "He and the faction behind him still need time to build up their strength."

"This war is his opportunity."

Countless thoughts buzzed through Arthas's mind, and he let out a small sigh.

"Take one-third of the life essence we've obtained and send it to Cryptopolis."

"And take these as well."

He produced three bone-white boxes in his hands, each containing a cluster of Legendary level life essence.

"Pass along a message for me—tell him..."

Arthas paused for a second, then continued in a measured tone. "Tell him this battlefield needs a Legendary level broodmother, as soon as possible."

"As you wish. May the master's glory shine upon all worlds!"

A Legendary level broodmother would have a massive impact on this war. Valkorath Realm needed countless cannon fodder and endless corpses so that Arthas's undead armies could exert their full advantage.

...

Cryptopolis. The Stoneheart Horde returned in force.

Under the direction of Orion and Vexis, the high-ranking members of the Stoneheart Horde conducted a thorough debrief of the recent battle.

Their primary goal was to identify the most effective methods of dealing with slime molds mutants. With Vexis providing guidance, the meeting went smoothly.

Toward the end, they divided the spoils of war.

Orion scanned the faces of everyone in the hall, each gaze practically howling with hunger. With a dramatic flourish, he set aside 40% of the life essence for his own use and distributed the remaining 60% to the others.

The scorpion tribe needed resources to grow stronger, and the several armies that had come with the horde also required resources to enhance their power.

No one objected to Orion keeping 40% because they all understood that a stronger, larger scorpion tribe was vital to their success on the battlefield.

"Gustalon, stay. The rest of you, go teach our allies how to handle slime molds mutants."

Onyx, Earthshaker, and the others whispered excitedly among themselves and left the hall.

Once they were gone, Orion turned over his hand to reveal a mass of Alpha-level life essence.

"Besides the two shares the horde owes you, this is something extra from me."

"With your abilities, it won't be long before you reach the peak of Alpha."

With a gentle push, Orion sent the Alpha-level life essence into Gustalon's hand.

"You're an elemental life(being), so your perception is more sensitive than most."

"This battlefield is teeming with powerful enemies. It's dangerous, but full of opportunity. Go and win more glory for the Horde. When you reach the Alpha peak, I'll grant you a chance to attain Legendary level."

Gustalon felt a wave of emotion as he held the life essence. There was a strange feeling welling up inside him, an emotion he couldn't name.

Advancing to the Alpha peak, then to the Legendary level?

When Gustalon had first sworn loyalty to Orion, he knew he was receiving special treatment. Orion had not restricted him; in fact, he gave Gustalon a great deal of freedom. In that early period of service, Gustalon's most crucial task was simply wandering through the southern territory, mapping it.

For an elemental who loved roaming freely, that was an effortless job. Gustalon never imagined that his special treatment would extend to receiving Alpha-level and even Legendary-level resources. Not in his wildest dreams had he pictured such a scene.

Serving under Glacial Dragon Jorik, he'd never received anything like this before. But Orion valued him greatly and treated him extraordinarily well.

"Oh, boundless wind! Gustalon feels like he's finally found a purpose!"

"Noble lord, Gustalon will spread your glory across the world!"

Orion merely smiled and ushered Gustalon away with a wave of his hand.

"Lord Orion," Vexis said, "that subordinate of yours is remarkable. If he reaches the Legendary level, he'll be a tremendous asset."

Vexis had also noticed Gustalon's unique qualities. Elemental beings existed in the Necro Realm as well, born of death energy. They were, in many ways, favored by their worlds. Should they grow and develop, their might could be astonishing.

"Exactly," Orion replied. "That's why I rank him near the top of my priority list for development."

Vexis nodded, clearly approving of Orion's approach. A long time ago, Arthas had used the very same method to cultivate talent, and Lich Vexis herself had been one of the beneficiaries.

"Lord Orion, I plan to rest within the undead tower to recover the death energy I consumed."

"If you need me, you can rouse me at any time."

Orion nodded, giving Vexis free rein.

Valkorath Realm was not the Necro Realm. After she used a large-scale summoning spell, her death energy could not be replenished in normal ways. Only by resting in the undead tower built within Cryptopolis could she restore it.

This was also one reason the battle line was so pressed. Valkorath Realm had no grand deadlands, and the enemy, too, seemed endless—factors that kept the undead forces from claiming a clear advantage.

Chapter 459 459: A big gesture

Once Vexis had exited the palace, Orion spent a few more moments reflecting on the previous battle before focusing his thoughts on the Survivor's Platform to exchange information with his allies in the Champions Alliance.

Leonidas: "Deputy Commander, I feel the main nest is producing more and more. Are you taking it easy on them over there?"

Edward: "Taking it easy? Velora, that damn bitch, was promoted to demigod long before I was. Be glad I've managed to intercept the situation as much as I have."

Alexander: "I wonder if I can assassinate a demigod!"

Edward: "How about assassinating the slime molds brood mother hiding in the main nest first? I'd hate to see you throw your life away!"

Arthas: "The fungal creatures are much more active lately. Did they get reinforcements?"

Edward: "Yes. While I was making the teleportation scroll, Velora pulled a few tricks."

Leonidas: "Honorable Deputy Commander, when will this ordeal finally be over?"

Arthas: "I think it's fine the way it is."

Alexander: "I agree—it's challenging!"

...

Orion browsed the recent chat among the Alliance members, gleaning many useful details.

First, Orion confirmed that Deputy Commander Edward was indeed a demigod, currently locked in battle with a female demigod called Velora.

Second, based on all indications, that Velora was likely the figure behind the fungal creatures. It was even possible that Velora herself had ascended to demigod status through these fungal beings.

Third, Arch Lord Alexander had not yet successfully assassinated a single slime molds brood mother. This suggested that the defenses around the slime molds Nest must be airtight.

Lastly, it appeared that the areas where Arthas, Leonidas, and Alexander were stationed all faced severe fighting. The cause might not be a shortage of troops but an intensified onslaught from the slime molds mutants.

Hulk: "Those living-flesh undead in the slime molds mutants are hard to deal with. Apart from digging out their life essence, there's not much else we can do."

After reading the chat, Hulk shared his own recent experiences.

Leonidas: "Hahaha...bro, those living-flesh undead are the result of Arthas underestimating the enemy. The slime molds took over a bunch of skeleton warriors and mutated them."

Leonidas: "You probably haven't seen the slime mold dragons. Those are what happen when slime molds occupy bone dragons—creatures terrifying in the sky alike."

Arthas: "Says the man who's not arrogant himself, hmm?"

Arthas: "And whose fault was it for willingly sacrificing beasts and creating Rotten Flowers, Vine Splitters, and Undead Tyrants?"

Arthas: "Leonidas, the more I look at you, the more you seem like an undercover agent for the enemy!"

Orion suddenly felt he shouldn't say anything, as Arthas and Leonidas were once again mocking each other.

Yet just as Orion was about to speak, Deputy Commander Edward intervened.

Edward: "Hulk, Kraken, whenever you two get the chance, travel to the central region and meet the will projection of our commander stationed there."

The moment Deputy Commander Edward said this, Arthas and Leonidas immediately fell silent, as though they knew precisely what Orion and Kraken would soon face.

Edward: "Hulk, Kraken, I have a retired piece of legendary gear here—a very valuable item."

Edward: "Whoever among you reaches arch lord level first—I'll give it to you!"

No doubt, this was a gift from the Deputy Commander, presented to the strongest up-and-coming allies on the team.

Legendary equipment is ranked above Alpha-level gear, typically accessible only to beings at arch lord or beyond. Orion had never even laid eyes on such a rare item.

Seated on the throne in Cryptopolis, Orion's breathing grew a little uneven.

Meanwhile, in some deep corner of the sea, bubbles were rising to the surface in profusion.

Just as Orion and Kraken were daydreaming about owning a piece of legendary equipment, Deputy Commander Edward brought them back to reality.

"Of course, if we recruit new members into our Champions Alliance who reach arch lord level before either of you does, the gear will be theirs instead."

While Deputy Commander Edward explained these benefits, Leonidas and Arthas shared a private conversation:

Leonidas: "A big gesture—unbelievable generosity!"

Leonidas: "When you and I first joined, the Deputy Commander only gave out one Alpha-level item."

His message clearly dripped with envy. Arthas, however, thought it entirely reasonable.

Arthas: "Times have changed. Deputy Commander is now a demigod. You think he'd bring out some Alpha-level trinket just to make a fool of himself?"

Arthas: "He's using the legendary gear to motivate Hulk and Kraken."

Arthas: "The fact that both of them came to Valkorath Realm is proof they see us as genuine partners."

Arthas: "They both showed real potential. Besides, Kraken's not as bad as you say."

Leonidas let out a smug chuckle.

Leonidas: "Absolutely. Kraken was my recommendation. I've got a keen eye."

Arthas responded bluntly: "Bullshit!"

He knew Leonidas's personality all too well. For the longest time, Leonidas had practically overlooked Kraken. It wasn't until Orion showed up that Leonidas decided he couldn't let Arthas outshine him—only then did he start guiding Kraken and taking him around.

Edward: "Arthas, Leonidas, Alexander, keep a sharp eye out. The slime molds main nest is definitely going to erupt soon."

Alexander: "If that brood mother dares show itself, I'll try to assassinate it again!"

Leonidas: "Understood, Deputy Commander!"

Arthas: "Got it!"

In the public channel, after explaining the prizes to Orion and Kraken, Deputy Commander Edward reminded everyone else to stay alert.

Orion reread Edward's statements one more time, then exited the public channel of the Champions Alliance.

"A piece of legendary equipment—what a display of generosity!"

Orion was well aware that higher-level foes appeared the stronger one became, and that acquiring items of matching rank would grow more difficult. Only because Deputy Commander Edward had reached demigod status could he afford to bestow such a treasure.

At Orion's present level, he couldn't even begin to hand out Alpha-level gear to his own subordinates. He needed all such resources himself. Hero-level and Elite-level weapons were another matter—those he could give away freely.

"I'm determined to reach arch lord level soon!"

While Orion was lost in thought, Arthas messaged him.

"Get ready. During the next slime molds surge, I intend for you and your armies to hold back the slime molds mutants to the immediate north of Cryptopolis."

"My troops are sending a large amount of life essence over to Cryptopolis—you'd better see that brood mother of yours makes good use of it."

The news energized Orion.

"You'll need to hold the line for at least three days against the slime molds tide. That way, I can rotate in other undead forces to relieve you."

Taking a deep breath, Orion understood it was time for him to step up. After all, he had not come to Valkorath Realm for a vacation.

"Don't worry. I'll hold the front!"

Chapter 460: I'm going to have this child

Human Kingdom, Rose Manor.

This manor belongs to the Rose Knight Regiment. It was named for the surrounding fields of roses.

At this moment, Princess Ava is standing atop the manor castle's watchtower, gazing into the distance at the swathes of blooming roses.

Ava caresses her stomach, momentarily lost in thought.

She is pregnant!

If Ava used to suspect this possibility, now the slight rounding of her belly has torn away any illusions she harbored.

This child carries the blood of the Giant King!

Ava's thoughts are in disarray. She doesn't know what to do.

A princess of the kingdom, bearing the blood of a giant—this would be a major scandal for the royal family.

Fortunately, the information has long been sealed off. Those who needed to keep quiet have done so. Those who needed to disappear are gone.

Just as Ava stared blankly toward the western horizon, a squadron of Royal Griffins flew in from outside Rose Manor.

Leading them was a griffin whose rider, standing on its back, turned out to be Prince Theodore.

Moments later, Prince Theodore landed at Rose Manor and made his way to Princess Ava.

"Aunt!"

Prince Theodore softly called out to Princess Ava and let out a gentle sigh.

He was still too late!

If he had received the intelligence sooner and gone to Stoneheart City earlier to bring his aunt back, perhaps Ava would not be in this predicament. She might not be pregnant.

"What is your father's attitude about this?"

Princess Ava turned, looking at Prince Theodore, her eyes revealing worry and a faint hint of hope.

"My father says he fully respects your wishes!"

"My father asked me to pass along a message: any choice carries pressure and responsibility, so once you choose, don't regret it."

Princess Ava stayed silent. In her mind, she pictured her brother, a brother she could trust.

"I understand. I'm going to have this child. No matter what, he carries the bloodline of the Leofric family."

Princess Ava's full name was Ava Leofric—the surname Leofric belonging to the royal house of the human kingdom.

As a princess of the Human Kingdom, Ava was clever. She gathered the meaning behind her nephew Prince Theodore's tactful words:

The child growing inside her is the Giant King's offspring. Whether Orion acknowledges this or not, it's a fact that can never be erased.

With this child as a link, the Leofric family might develop stronger trade relations with the giants in the future. Perhaps they might even form a military alliance with the Stoneheart Horde. Whatever path they choose, it holds great promise.

Thus, although the child in Princess Ava's womb has not yet been born, his fate is already decided.

"Aunt, this might be the best choice."

After a long silence, Prince Theodore finally spoke in a gentle tone.

As a younger member of the royal family, Prince Theodore had no right to interfere in Princess Ava's affairs, especially with the old king still on the throne.

However, afraid that his aunt Ava might act rashly, Prince Theodore thought it over and decided to offer a few words of advice.

"For you, Aunt, this is your child and your hope.

"For the kingdom, he will bear part of the burden of peace."

"As for the Giant King, he will have a descendant—"

"And everyone knows that for a Legendary-level powerhouse, begetting a child is exceedingly difficult."

This final point was precisely what the high-ranking members of the kingdom had in mind.

According to the information the Human Kingdom had obtained, that Giant King in the west did not yet have an heir. This gave the kingdom's upper nobility boundless possibilities to imagine.

Princess Ava said nothing. She gazed into the distance, lost in thought.

In Ava's pupils, an image gradually surfaced: the Giant King's towering body, his big and hard cock, their rough sex, and his incomparably overwhelming strength.

...

Valkorath Realm, Cryptopolis.

In the underground nest Soraya had prepared, Orion repeatedly thrust his cock into Soraya's vagina. The sound of flesh slapping together filled the air.

Amid Soraya's alluring moans, they reached climax at the same time. Soraya's body went taut, the intense surge of pleasure pulling her fully into its grip. Her breathing turned ragged.

"From this moment on, stop the task of hatching small scorpions."

Once Soraya's breathing had steadied, Orion uttered these words.

Covered in sweat and utterly exhausted, Soraya opened her eyes, trying to lift her head to look at Orion.

Yet she was too drained. All she could do was nudge Orion's cock with her thigh, signaling for him to continue—she was listening.

"Take this. When you advance to Legendary level, use the rest of the life essence entirely for hatching the little scorpions."

A ring appeared in Orion's hand, and he slid it onto Soraya's finger.

Soraya was confused. She slowly raised her hand, examining it closely.

"Honey, is this a gift for me? It's such a beautiful ring!"

Orion nodded. Seeing Soraya hadn't grasped the deeper meaning, he reminded her, "It's a storage ring."

This was not just any ordinary storage ring. Inside, it was filled with various levels of life essence sent by Arthas's subordinates.

However, even after Orion finished speaking, Soraya stayed silent for three full minutes, saying nothing.

Without lowering his head, Orion could imagine the speechless look of astonishment on Soraya's face.

"Compared to the enemies we're about to face, this amount of life essence isn't that significant," Orion said, bringing Soraya back from her shock.

"My dear Orion, please tell me I'm not dreaming."

Smack! Smack!

Orion extended his hand and firmly slapped Soraya's shapely buttocks.

A burst of intense pain shot through her. Soraya touched her reddened backside, then glanced at the ring on her hand.

"All of this is for me?"

Soraya lifted her head, seeking confirmation from Orion once more.

Orion nodded, continuing to look at Soraya.

Arthas had provided these life essences with the sole intention of having Soraya produce a large number of small scorpions.

Living scorpions would be a tremendous help, and dead scorpions would also be a significant force in battle.

The brutal battlefields ahead would lead to the deaths of many small scorpions.

It wouldn't just be a small number, but a staggering figure. For a Broodmother of her species, that magnitude of sacrifice was something truly terrifying.

Then Orion produced a white bone box.

"Inside this is a Legendary-level life essence. It will make your advancement to Legendary level easier."

"From now on, focus on your training. If you haven't reached Legendary level, you're not to leave this nest."

When he finished speaking, Orion got dressed, leaned down to kiss Soraya, then turned and left the nest.

As for Soraya, she stared blankly at the white bone box in her hands, but her heart was racing faster and faster.

No one knew how much time passed before a cry of delight echoed through the underground nest.

"Wow! This is so amazing—I'm about to reach Legendary level!"