

Titan King 551

Chapter 551 551: I'm gonna smash you to pieces

Buzz!

Orion stirred his battle spirit, sending a rippling barrier outward from within. A series of metallic strikes echoed as the blades rained down on his wave-like defense, causing him to stagger.

"WAAAGH!"

With a roar, Orion's Battle Will Surge flashed brilliantly and expanded outward like an inflating balloon. Not only did it block the broodmother evolution's attack, but it also delivered a countershock.

Rumble... Rumble...

Countless fragments of the Bone Blade Fiend were flung away but did not relent. Instead, they whipped around Orion in a rapid, swirling motion. In the blink of an eye, a tremendous tornado rose from the surface of the sea.

Standing at the center of the maelstrom, Orion gazed up at the ever-growing vortex, gaining a new understanding of the broodmother evolution's abilities.

Suddenly, a pulling force emerged above the twister, trying to yank Orion skyward. Meanwhile, the sea surged upward below, forming a colossal waterspout shaped like a blade that slashed at Orion from below.

Caught between the vortex and the towering blade, Orion's normal form had no advantage. He released his Titan Form, his body swelling mightily in the wind.

A surge of destructive battle intent erupted from within him—an ability inherent in his Titan Form known as Battle Craving.

Once in Titan Form, Orion's heightened perceptions quickly pinpointed where the Bone Blade Fiend's consciousness resided.

"You dare challenge the might of a Titan?"

Orion's voice was cold. The next moment, his figure flashed, activating Instant Impact, and he charged towards a vibrant green blade at the edge of the storm.

Boom!

The tornado halted, and the waterspout spun out of control, shooting high into the sky. The broodmother evolution's carefully orchestrated finishing move came undone in an instant.

Far off in the distance, that same green blade slammed backward—indeed, it was the broodmother evolution. The green blade whirled as it steadied itself, while the countless scattered bone edges flew back to reassemble into a towering Bone Blade Fiend.

"I must devour you...and become a true broodmother!"

A deep voice rumbled from the Bone Blade Fiend as it submerged, merging with the slime molds layer beneath the waves.

Orion ascended, surveying the nearby expanse of sea from above. He could sense that the broodmother evolution had not chosen to flee—it lurked just below the surface.

Orion was still pondering what this broodmother evolution had in mind when a host of thick, elongated tendrils burst forth from the water, whipping toward him with terrifying force.

Whoosh!

The whistling air from the lashing tentacles radiated a suffocating sense of dread. Orion's figure flickered repeatedly, evading each blow with swift precision.

"This is..."

The sight unfolding before him defied belief. His impression of fungal creatures' capabilities had to be revised to a whole new level.

A massive octopus!

The broodmother evolution had transformed itself into a colossal octopus more than ten times larger than Kraken. Those tentacles, rising continuously from the sea, blotted out the sky, creating an almost invincible illusion.

Not daring to be careless, Orion ascended further. Watching the massive octopus gradually break the surface of the water, he mentally reviewed the special abilities of such sea monsters: multiple hearts, multiple brains, color-changing, mimicry, regenerative powers... He could only hope its strength wasn't utterly overwhelming.

"Did it absorb Kraken's body and evolve by replicating its essence?"

Orion speculated on what might have led to this bizarre outcome. Neither the Bone Blade Fiend form nor this massive octopus form made sense—this broodmother evolution was simply extraordinary.

In Bone Blade Fiend form, the broodmother evolution was a being close to arch lord level. Now, as a massive octopus, it was nearing mid-arch lord level.

Another troubling point was that it continued to absorb the surrounding slime molds layer, growing even bigger by the second. That likely meant an active boost to both its destructive strikes and its regenerative power.

Meanwhile, at the Giant Beast Mountain in the southern battlefront, an equally gigantic storm descended.

Deputy Commander Edward's storm avatar emerged from the tempest and joined Leonidas, standing shoulder to shoulder.

"It seems this is the slime molds mother deity's contingency plan."

Leonidas turned and briefly regarded the storm avatar, his expression grim.

"Deputy Commander, are we truly not going to intervene?"

"Why would we?"

The storm avatar also looked out toward the distant sea, his tone calm.

"Aren't you curious to see how Hulk manages to survive against broodmother counterpart? After all, that broodmother counterpart is even stronger than this broodmother evolution."

Hearing that, Leonidas's eyes lit up at once.

"You mean this is a chance to gauge Hulk's capabilities?"

"Yes, something like that. We haven't really had the chance to watch him closely—let's use this opportunity to see his full potential."

Far out at sea, the skies shifted, wind and lightning weaving together into an oppressive churn.

"You know that when the commander first took an interest in you and Arthas, you two were already arch lords. Yet Hulk is still at the Legendary stage and has already obtained the same perks as you both."

Leonidas frowned, recalling the two sword beams Deputy Commander Edward had released last time to save Orion. That blade aura(light) was the commander's ability—and at a critical moment, it was nothing short of a lifesaving trump card.

"If Hulk maintains that ability to challenge higher-tier opponents once he becomes an arch lord or even a demigod..."

The Deputy Commander did not finish his sentence, but Leonidas understood perfectly. His reduced form shook briefly before settling down again.

"As long as we're keeping an eye on things, if Hulk finds himself in danger, we can step in just in time. That should prevent any serious mishaps."

The Deputy Commander did not respond to Leonidas's remark.

...

Deep in the sea, the battle raged on.

Sensing the broodmother evolution growing ever more substantial, its increasingly enormous body overpowering in presence, Orion finally made his decision.

He could not let the broodmother evolution keep absorbing the slime molds layer—nothing good would come of it.

With a flick of his hand, Orion produced three lumps of Legendary-level life essence, which turned into gleaming streams and flowed into the emblem on his chest. It was a ritual of sacrifice to the Titan Emblem.

By sacrificing to the Titan Emblem, Orion could invoke a mysterious blessing and further magnify his gargantuan form. As the life essences vanished, the emblem flickered bright, marking Orion's body with cryptic symbols.

In the next moment, his entire frame swelled yet again, surging with wild arcs of mysterious power.

By now, his body was comparable to a small mountain.

"I'm gonna smash you to pieces!"

Chapter 552 552: Hulk won

Orion's body swelled to an enormous size.

The surging power coursing through him turned his battle lust savage.

Whoosh!

Like a falling meteor, Orion plunged straight down, aiming directly at the broodmother evolution on the sea's surface.

The broodmother evolution was not about to surrender, either—four unbelievably thick tentacles whipped toward Orion with different angles of attack.

The strikes arrived in a split second. Yet despite being in this enlarged form, Orion kept his wits, opting not to clash with the broodmother evolution's direct assault. With a sudden blur of motion, he darted in with Instant Impact, appearing beside the broodmother evolution and activating Swift Charge.

Boom!

Two colossal fighters collided, producing a heavy, muffled crash. Even the seawater was blasted apart, rippling from the point of impact and quickly spreading. Moments later, the ripples became towering waves, rolling into the distance.

Orion roared, his feet planted on the ocean's surface as he reached out with both hands to grab a pair of massive octopus tentacles. He hauled the enormous creature from the water as if it weighed nothing.

With a thunderous crash, Orion flung the massive octopus into the sky. Then, at a gesture, his trident appeared in his grasp. He shot straight upward like a rocket, hurtling toward his airborne foe.

Midair, the broodmother evolution—transformed into the massive octopus—had not suffered much from being flung aside. The bulk of the impact had been absorbed by the sea. Rather than dodging Orion's attack, the massive octopus stretched every tentacle wide, completely shrouding the space around it.

Darkness descended. Like a vast fishing net, the massive octopus descended, capturing Orion within its snare and fully enveloping him.

Splash!

They both slammed into the water, sinking into the slime molds layer together.

...

Down south, at Giant Beast Mountain.

"What do we do now?"

Leonidas frowned, his foreclaws raking the ground in evident worry.

"Don't rush."

"If Hulk still isn't using the blade aura the commander gave him, that means he's not yet at a dead end," Deputy Commander Edward replied, sounding utterly composed.

"That move we just witnessed—he might not only stand firm against an lower arch lord, but could even hold his own against a mid-level arch lord."

"Hulk is far stronger than I expected, once again impressing me."

Leonidas felt most of his anxiety dissipate at Edward's calm assessment, and he began running commentary on the battle between Orion and the broodmother evolution.

At that moment, however, a deafening boom echoed across the distant sea. Both Leonidas and Edward heard it clearly, as did Gustalon, Rendall, Grulbane, Dace, and the others.

Even in the far reaches of the deep sea, Kraken—resting inside a Nest to recover his injuries—abruptly opened his eyes, sensing the powerful shockwave.

"This power feels like an arch lord's!"

"Could Hulk be fighting that broodmother evolution now?"

"Should I go take a look?"

Kraken hesitated. His injuries were still severe, much of his body having been lopped off by the broodmother evolution during their last fight.

What Kraken did not realize was that the biomass taken from his severed flesh had enabled the broodmother evolution to develop its second form—directly boosting its power and causing a much bigger headache for Orion.

...

Back out at sea, at the heart of the conflict.

In the aftermath of a tremendous explosion, Orion—having returned to his original size—burst through the water's surface (and the slime molds layer) holding what looked like a person in one hand.

"Spare me! I'm willing to serve you as my master!"

The figure Orion gripped was an exceptionally beautiful woman. Strictly speaking, of course, it was a slime molds broodmother.

She possessed a strange sort of allure: her upper body was bare, while her lower half was covered in slime molds, as if wrapped in a floor-length gown. Her iridescent eyes flickered with mesmerizing colors, and one could easily become lost in their hypnotic glow. Her hair was long, merging seamlessly with the slimy "skirt" around her legs.

Faced with this vision of almost impossible beauty—especially with a lovely, pleading voice—Orion paused for a moment. He even began lifting his hand, ready to seal a contract with this slime molds broodmother.

"Kill her," came Deputy Commander Edward's voice in Orion's ear, solemn and earnest. "Fungal creatures have ways to sabotage a contract sigil; they won't be bound by it."

Orion extended his senses but could not locate Edward. At once, Orion understood that such was the power of a demigod. There was no way Deputy Commander Edward wouldn't be watching this tremendous commotion in the Valkorath Realm.

Splat!

Orion's raised hand, poised for a contract, suddenly moved to grip and crushed the broodmother's head—along with her breasts—without warning.

The slime molds broodmother dropped three items: a Survivor's treasure chest, a lump of life essence, and a bottle of mysterious potion.

Orion gathered them, then turned away and launched himself toward the mainland.

...

"The battle is over; Hulk won," the storm avatar said, gazing toward the southern sea. Admiration gleamed in his eyes.

"Sigh... Squiddy's still a good deal weaker than Orion," Leonidas lamented regretfully, thinking of Kraken. But his disappointment soon gave way to excitement.

Though Orion remained at the peak of Legendary level, he already wielded arch lord-level power.

"The Valkorath Realm shouldn't face any major troubles now. I'll guard this place, so you can carry on however you see fit."

Leaving these words behind, the storm avatar transformed into a raging wind that spiraled into the sky and disappeared into the south.

...

Survivor's Platform, on the Champions Alliance public channel:

Leonidas: "Squiddy, that broodmother evolution is dead."

He gave no elaboration, merely stating the outcome and giving Kraken the facts.

Kraken: "It seems Hulk is even more powerful than I imagined."

Leonidas: "Keep it up—reach arch lord level soon so I can bring you to see the wider world."

Edward: "In this competition, Hulk has emerged victorious. The Legendary tier of gear is his!"

With that brief comment, Deputy Commander Edward said no more. The entire channel went quiet.

...

Somewhere deep beneath the sea, in a certain Nest.

Kraken's giant form trembled faintly, betrayed by a trace of dejection. Losing to Orion despite both being at the peak of Legendary level did not discourage him; he simply regretted missing out on a legendary tier of equipment.

From Kraken's earliest awakening until now, he had yet to see what such legendary gear might look like.

"If Hulk's strength improves further after getting legendary equipment," Kraken reflected, "the gap between us will only widen."

"I need to work harder...I have to catch up!"

"..."

Chapter 553 553: My child, do you want to meet your father?

On the other side, Orion—who had just arrived on the continent—received a message and a delayed trade from Deputy Commander Edward.

"Well done. This piece of equipment is yours! By the way, speed up the cleanup of the fungal creatures. Hopefully, by next spring, the Valkorath Realm will be back to a normal state."

After thanking Deputy Commander Edward, Orion accepted the delayed trade.

[Lightning Cloak]

Quality: Legendary

Additional Skill 1: Heart of Lightning

Skill Description: When wearing the cloak, you gain the power to manipulate lightning. Your Constitution will be influenced by the lightning, and your lightning elemental affinity will gradually increase.

Additional Skill 2: Chain Lightning

Skill Description: When wearing the cloak, activating the magical formation on it allows you to cast the forbidden spell [Chain Lightning].

Skill Note: After releasing [Chain Lightning], the cloak must once again accumulate a massive amount of lightning energy before it can cast the forbidden spell again.

Item Evaluation: This is the life's work of a certain great mage.

[Lightning Cloak] truly stands out. It even comes with a built-in forbidden spell.

Orion took out the Lightning Cloak and donned it at once. The black cloak, supported by his muscular frame, appeared both luxurious and imposing. Orion flipped its hood backward, and the cloak instantly resembled a flowing cape.

He really liked this piece of equipment. Put on the hood, it's a cloak; take off the hood, it's a cape.

Compared to the [Titan Emblem], the [Lightning Cloak] was slightly inferior—or so was Orion's initial impression, because the destructive power of its forbidden spell seemed fixed.

Meanwhile, the augmentation from the Titan Emblem could keep growing stronger. Still, the Lightning Cloak's ability to steadily boost one's lightning element affinity was something Orion hadn't anticipated; it could enhance his control over lightning-element transcendent power and increase his spell force.

Orion glanced at the Champions Alliance public channel but did not speak. Having obtained legendary equipment, he had no habit of parading it before the others. Deputy Commander Edward's earlier reminder to speed up the cleanup of fungal creatures, however, sparked a new notion in Orion.

Now that Orion's combat ability had climbed dramatically, no fungal creature posed a true threat to him any longer.

He ought to head to the other two battlefronts without delay, to eliminate the remaining Legendary-level fungal creatures. If they escaped into the deep sea, they would be extremely difficult to track down.

A few days later, Orion returned to the front lines of the southern battlefront. After a quick word with Rumbold and Lupin, he promptly set off for the other war zones.

...

Titanion Realm, City of Lysinthia.

The ground beneath the city walls was clean—utterly spotless. The blood had been washed away by the ocean waters.

For the moment, the war had ended.

This Merfolk force from the Tidefang Clan retreated in disarray to hide in Mist Bay after losing tens of thousands of Merfolk.

"That Alpha-level Merfolk said they'll be back again!"

"Lord of the City, we need reinforcements!"

The speaker was Clawpincher. Back when Orion first hatched the Tidecrab Shield Warriors, there had been around a hundred thousand of them. After the purge of Mist Bay, eighty thousand remained.

Now, after the recent battle at the bay's entrance and this defensive fight—the number of Tidecrab Shield Warriors had dipped below sixty thousand.

Furthermore, the resident swamp crocodiles and marsh water pythons who defended Lysinthia had also been significantly reduced in number. The situation in Lysinthia was far from optimistic.

"I've already sent word back to Blackstone City," Lysinthia said. "Prophet has dispatched reinforcements. The lizardmen living in Thunderwood Forest are already on their way. They should arrive soon."

Her voice was cool and distant. In this defensive battle, the black serpent she summoned was critical. But the repercussions were serious—Lysinthia had exhausted every last drop of her bloodline power. She looked deathly pale and was forcing herself to remain upright only by leaning on her sword. She might well have collapsed otherwise.

"What about the task Orion assigned us? If things continue like this, the construction of the port will definitely be delayed!"

Lysinthia didn't speak right away; she was focused on regaining her strength. After a long silence, she spoke quietly:

"First fortify the city of Lysinthia—reinforce our defenses. That Sea Race army that attacked us was only a small fraction of their force. Once their reinforcements arrive, the battles here might drag on until winter."

With that, Lysinthia turned away, sword in hand, heading toward the fortress at the center of the city with several Gorgons in attendance.

Clawpincher let out a sigh and began directing his subordinates to repair the damaged walls.

...

Down south, in the human kingdom.

Rose Manor. Bathed in a crimson hue, with rose blossoms in full bloom, it was breathtakingly beautiful.

Princess Ava's determination was like the manor's rose garden—overflowing with vitality. Even after storms, it remained bright with blossoms and lush greenery.

Ava caressed her belly. She could clearly sense the pulse of the life in her womb—there was a powerful being growing inside her.

It had been over half a year since she left Stoneheart City, and her belly had expanded significantly.

According to a certain nun's examination, her due date would be two months later than that of an average human mother, because she was carrying an exceptionally sturdy child with an outstanding bloodline.

Sometimes, as Ava stroked her stomach, she envisioned what her future child might look like—envisioned the giant king who had raped her.

"My child, do you want to meet your father?"

Just as Ava's thoughts began drifting, one of her personal maidservants approached, handing her a letter.

"Your Highness, Sir Garrett, who is in charge of guarding the estate, received this letter. It's said to have come from Soaring Bird City in the north. Sir Garrett has already inspected it, and there's no poison or anything suspicious."

It wasn't until the maidservant finished that Ava turned around, took the envelope, and opened it. After she finished reading, she remained silent for a long time before speaking quietly to the maidservant who stood by:

"Tell the messenger that I understand. Have them leave now."

Pausing briefly, she continued:

"Please have Sir Garrett and Sir Lambert come see me. Tell them there is something I wish to discuss."

The maidservant left. Ava turned, gazing at a far-off rose.

"They think I'm the kingdom's laughingstock, do they? I'll make them realize that roses have thorns—and they carry venom, too."

"Soaring Bird City...giant territory...the first wave of benefits..."

"Time sure flies. They're already nearly finished building Soaring Bird City!"

Chapter 554: Advantage

"Soaring Bird City has successfully survived the dark beast tides; its city walls and fortresses have been built up."

"It's the first stop on the way to the territories of ogres, giants, and blood elves, and also the very first gathering place for the massive flow of resources and wealth entering the kingdom."

"That big piece of cake should include a share for the Rose Knight Regiment."

In the study of Rose Manor, three people were gathered around a desk—seated or standing. One was Garrett, another was Lambert, and there was also an elderly man dressed in an elegant steward's uniform.

Princess Ava took the envelope Torin had sent and first passed it to the seated elderly man, before handing it over to Garrett and Lambert.

"How would Your Highness like to proceed?" the steward-like elder asked, looking up at Ava after reading the letter. His clouded eyes contained a sense of worldly calm. He spoke slowly, neither arrogant nor servile.

"That's a slice of cake, and it's also a source of wealth. I don't want to give it up!"

"The Rose Knight Regiment wants to continue to grow, but with our current industries alone, that's impossible."

"So we must open up new sources of revenue and new industries."

"Soaring Bird City is our chance."

"Besides, in name, I also have a claim to Soaring Bird City."

Ava lifted the letter Torin had penned, showing it to the three. Since Torin had once sworn loyalty to her, Ava had every reason to be involved in Soaring Bird City. When she finished speaking, the atmosphere in the study fell silent for a moment.

"Soaring Bird City is indeed a prize, and it's our opportunity to expand," the elder agreed. Right now, Soaring Bird City offered countless possibilities.

"However, the nobility in this kingdom will never give us too large a share."

"Even if they can't block us in the other racial territories, they will exploit and oppress us through every means once we return to the human kingdom."

"Our only advantage is to work directly with the royal family for domestic distribution."

The elder did not oppose the idea of the Rose Knight Regiment splitting the benefits in Soaring Bird City—after all, that was a good thing. But he was quick to point out the most vital hazard.

"Your Highness, we do have one more advantage," the elderly man said, fixing his gaze on Ava without blinking.

Frowning, Ava followed the old man's eyes to her own abdomen. The child she carried was the offspring of that giant king. This was Ava's greatest advantage. By that alone, she could obtain tremendous benefits and conveniences from the Stoneheart Horde.

"No, I don't want any involvement with him. I don't even want him to know the child exists."

Ava refused the elder's suggestion, despite it being the path to maximum gain.

"If that's the case, for the Rose Knight Regiment to settle into Soaring Bird City, we need to send a trusted individual there to ensure our interests remain protected."

The elder seemed to have anticipated Ava's reaction long ago. He proposed a second plan the moment he saw Ava relax her furrowed brow.

"This way, Your Highness will also be responding to Baron Torin."

"And later, when we divide up the benefits from Soaring Bird City, we'll be taking them openly and legitimately."

The elder raised his head and glanced at Garrett and Lambert, who were both standing nearby. They were knights, and they were trustworthy.

"As for who should go to Soaring Bird City, I recommend Sir Lambert."

"Sir Lambert is a knight and also a noble; he knows how to deal with the nobility."

There was no doubt this was high praise from the elder. Lambert responded by bowing slightly in a knightly salute, expressing his gratitude. In terms of both strength and status, Lambert truly was the most suitable choice.

"Your Highness, before that, you should write to His Majesty and Prince Theodore for their opinions."

"After all, His Majesty the King and His Highness the Prince are your closest family."

Ava nodded. She understood the elder's meaning. Seeking the King's and the Prince's counsel was like taking out double insurance for her own faction.

"Sir Lambert, are you willing to travel to Soaring Bird City?"

Ava turned to pose a serious question to Lambert.

"It is my honor to serve Your Highness," Lambert replied.

...

Valkorath Realm, the western battlefield.

This was the area under Alexander's command, though at present, he had left the Valkorath Realm. His faction had been holed up inside the city all this time, paying no attention to the fungal creatures outside the walls.

Orion found it puzzling. The city Alexander had built was ordinary.

Other than its walls and arrow towers looking imposing, the rest of it could only be described as plain. Yet beneath that plainness lay a strange sense of incongruity that Orion couldn't quite pin down.

In short, although Orion saw the city's inhabitants as seemingly average, they also seemed anything but. With a quick shake of his head, Orion stepped away, body flashing like lightning as he sped beyond the city walls.

As he left the city, Orion took a moment to glance at the messages on the Survivor's Platform. He noticed Kraken had sent him a note:

"Would you mind sharing what kind of gear the Deputy Commander gifted you?"

It wasn't an unreasonable request. Kraken had previously been Orion's rival, and if the positions were reversed, Orion figured he might ask the same question.

"Of course," Orion replied, agreeing to Kraken's request. He sent over the attributes of the Lightning Cloak.

"It even comes with a forbidden-level spell. That's incredible!"

Orion could easily imagine Kraken's surprise and shock upon seeing this item. If Orion himself hadn't already obtained the Titan Emblem, he would surely have been overjoyed as well.

"By the way, how are your injuries?" Orion asked, recalling how Kraken had been wounded in the broodmother evolution incident.

"No problem. Though the wounds are severe, I can still heal and regenerate. It's just slow," Kraken replied.

The second stage of the broodmother evolution flashed through Orion's mind. He quickly formed a preliminary idea of Kraken's combat capabilities and tactics.

"Most of the fungal creatures up north have moved into the ocean. You can send your subordinates to clear out that area first."

After updating Kraken on the bigger picture, Orion closed the Survivor's Platform and refocused his thoughts as he set off toward the distant slime molds layer.

...

Titanion Realm, Stoneheart City.

Delilah sat on the third floor of the mysterious tavern, gazing at the bustling streets with her eyes half narrowed.

Watching the various nonhuman races pass by in their different garments, each with unique expressions, gave Delilah a whole new appreciation for excitement and prosperity.

Chapter 555: Three Proposals

With large quantities of silk and cotton textiles brought in by merchant groups from the human kingdom and shipped into the Stoneheart Horde, the members of the Stoneheart Horde finally started shifting from an age of wearing animal pelts to one of cotton and linen.

Even Delilah herself had purchased quite a few new outfits. At this moment, she was wearing a cool, silken gown from the human kingdom—both seductive and comfortable.

Of course, many nonhumans in the crowd still wore animal furs. For many of them, furs remained essential winter attire and offered protection against both enemies and beasts.

"Crops and cotton traded for minerals, grain swapped for animal pelts, crystal cores, and those low-grade weapons and armor... No matter how you look at it, the Stoneheart Horde always gets the short end of the deal!"

Clearly, in trade between the human kingdom and the Stoneheart Horde, the Horde usually found itself disadvantaged. This was unavoidable when one side lagged behind in economics, resources, and technology.

Still, even these unequal dealings had raised the living standards of the Stoneheart Horde. At least in terms of clothing and food, their quality of life had visibly improved.

Delilah, as the real power behind Stoneheart City, saw the changes within the Stoneheart Horde from a high vantage point, observing from many angles and perspectives. To her, these transformations were both a source of experience and a form of growth in her own understanding. Every word and action from the Horde's people, every advance the Stoneheart Horde made, and every war they fought all contributed to Delilah's development alongside the Horde.

"Your Majesty, half of those storefronts set aside in the outer city have sold. The buyers are those two humans you instructed us to look after," a maidservant succubus reported as she appeared behind Delilah with the latest information.

"Nico and Kadir, huh? They're certainly patient, only making their move now. What type of businesses did they file for?"

Delilah's voice was languid. As her administrative skills improved, she had embraced her own methods and perspectives for managing the Stoneheart Horde. Focusing on core issues, overseeing the leadership, addressing gaps, and learning new ideas and knowledge—through Delilah's delegation of powers, her style now leaned toward a "hands-off" approach.

"They're in daily commodities—mainly silk, cotton textiles, spices, jewelry, liquor, and food."

It was quite a miscellaneous mix, showing Nico and Kadir had big ambitions. But to Delilah, these items more likely meant something else.

"They're avoiding weapons, gear, minerals, magical plants, horses, slaves—these high-stakes categories. They really are shrewd," Delilah remarked.

Indeed, Nico and Kadir were clever. They wanted to make money without courting death.

Weapons, gear, minerals, and magical plants were under the domain of powerful merchants and major factions. Anyone without strong backing who tried to bite off a piece of that pie would be surrounded and devoured in no time.

"Keep watching them. I want to see just how far they can go," Delilah said, her voice trailing off with a low, velvety resonance.

...

Stoneheart City, at the Fatty's General Store.

That was the shop's name, chosen by Nico without regard for Kadir's teasing. As Nico put it, since he put up the money, he got to name the shop. Whether it sounded good or tacky was of no concern to him.

What mattered was that it felt down-to-earth, fitting for common folk, and easy to remember. Nico wanted every traveler who visited the outer city to remember Fatty's General Store.

"We have the storefront, and we have funds. What we're missing now are goods and supply channels. Kadir, any ideas?" Nico regarded himself as better at business than Kadir, but when it came to problem-solving, Kadir was undoubtedly the pro.

"Simple. I have three proposals," Kadir replied, glancing around the store before shifting his gaze to the travelers outside. Something in his eyes turned calm and steady.

"The first proposal is to buy the goods we want to sell directly from the mercenaries, at a price slightly above their bottom line. We'll need some capital, and early on, the profit will be small. But once we build a rapport with those mercenaries, we can start placing orders for exactly what we need, and then push the prices down. This is the safest and least demanding method. Personally, I like it best."

Kadir's voice was steady and had a slight, magnetic quality. Nico nodded repeatedly in agreement, finding this idea highly feasible. Those mercenaries wouldn't store their goods in Stoneheart City to sell off bit by bit. They'd rather offload it quickly at a lower price, head back to the human kingdom, and run another trip to earn even more.

"What's the second proposal?" Nico had already decided to adopt the first idea, but he was still curious about what came next.

"The second proposal is that we form our own merchant group to go back and forth among the human kingdom, the ogre territory, the blood elf territory, and the giant territory, carrying whatever goods we wish to sell. It's risky, though."

Kadir narrowed his eyes, sounding slightly subdued, as if he could feel the pressure.

Indeed, the plan came with a large degree of uncertainty. If it went wrong, they could lose both their investment and their lives.

"Giant territory has regular patrols that we can tag along with. But once we leave giant territory, all bets are off. The chance of being robbed or attacked by bandits is high. On the other hand, if the trip succeeds, profit could multiply several times—even dozens of times."

This approach had another advantage: the Stoneheart Horde had legions of powerful bloodline warriors for hire. But even that was no guarantee of safety once outside giant territory.

Greed and wealth can drive people to commit any crime, and this sort of person was all too common in the human kingdom. Nico and Kadir both hailed from there and had lived through plenty of hardships, giving them a deep understanding of human nature.

"The danger's too great, and we don't have enough capital to gamble. We don't have the manpower either, and I sure don't trust bloodline warriors I don't know." Nico's attitude was firm, and Kadir was in agreement—he had no interest in that route either.

"The third proposal is to cooperate with some of the major factions."

"Major factions?" Nico repeated.

"Yes. For example, human nobles, high-level blood elves, dwarf elders, senior leaders in the Stoneheart Horde's tribes, or at the very least a large mercenary corps."

Frowning, Nico mulled this over. The third proposal did seem workable.

"How exactly would we cooperate?"

"We'd provide the store and staff, then take a commission from sales."

"And how much would that earn us?"

"Not a fortune, but enough to ensure we never go hungry."

Chapter 556: Heart of the Undying

Nico and Kadir finished their exchange of questions and answers quickly, and both fell silent after their brief conversation.

The third proposal also carried low risk. They could earn plenty of Blackstone coins without leaving the city or risking their lives.

However, for two people who had ventured far from home, it wasn't the best option. If they wanted to rise to prominence, they couldn't choose the third method.

"We'll just have to work a little harder and purchase goods directly from those mercenaries," Nico said. "Even though we'll earn less, there's no danger, and we can still maintain our own operating space."

Kadir nodded; he agreed wholeheartedly with Nico's opinion.

More than anything, he needed to settle down securely in Stoneheart City and build a solid foundation. Now that they had a store and a way to make money, it was time for them to take root in this land and expand their network of contacts.

...

Valkorath Realm, Western Battlefield.

Compared to Delilah's leisure, Orion was kept far busier. His last fight against the broodmother evolution made him realize his own strength. With Orion's current combat capabilities, it was easy for him to kill a Legendary-level foe.

Moreover, because he himself exuded Legendary-level aura, he could catch his opponents off guard in battle.

Boom!

Orion charged out of the slime molds layer, clutching a bundle of life essence in his hand.

"The Titan Emblem is powerful, but activating Gigantic Form requires a sacrificial offering. Last time, I sacrificed three bundles of Legendary-level life essence just to kill that arch lord broodmother evolution. I need to collect more sacrificial items!"

As his strength grew, Orion found it easier to obtain Legendary-level resources, but his ability to consume them and the speed at which he did so also kept increasing.

"With more of these on hand, I'll have that much more confidence," he murmured. Turning into lightning, Orion prepared to race westward.

Just then, the skies churned, and the realm formation that had appeared once before descended again, enveloping the entire Valkorath Realm.

"What's going on? Is there an enemy invasion?" Orion looked skyward, eyes vigilant.

"I should ask the Deputy Commander!" he thought.

Ascending a bit higher, Orion set his mirrored guardians to protect him, then focused his mind on the Survivor's Platform.

Kraken: "Deputy Commander, the realm formation has been activated. Did something happen?"

Edward: "It's nothing. There's no enemy attack. I'm just repairing the realm formation."

Upon stepping into the public channel of the Champions Alliance, Orion spotted Kraken and Edward's conversation and quickly figured out the situation. Without saying anything, he left the public channel.

Moments after Orion exited the Survivor's Platform and withdrew his mirrored guardians, a sudden storm burst forth. The storm avatar of Deputy Commander Edward emerged from the vortex and appeared before Orion.

"Something has happened. I need your help," Edward said bluntly, locking eyes with Orion as he continued.

"Remember what you promised me?"

"I do," Orion replied.

He had once requested teleportation arrays from Deputy Commander Edward—two arrays that would connect Blackstone City and Stoneheart City. At that time, Edward had told Orion to help him invade a Godforsaken Land.

"That divine domain has run into some issues. Now that I'm at demigod level, I can't manifest my true body there. Moreover, that Godforsaken Land can't accommodate an arch lord-level fighter. I need you to go and find an item for me."

Orion nodded. He agreed to the request immediately.

"Deputy Commander, what item do you need?"

"The Heart of the Undying. It's a phoenix egg hidden in the World Tree of that Godforsaken Land."

Edward handed him three scrolls, and Orion accepted them without hesitation.

"The first two are large teleportation scrolls. The last one is information on that Godforsaken Land. Get ready and head out as soon as you can."

"What about the Valkorath Realm and those fungal creatures?" Orion asked.

"My storm avatar will handle clearing them out, and I'll set aside the resources we gather for you."

Orion nodded, fully satisfied with this arrangement. Besides, it was a commitment he'd personally made before—time to fulfill it.

"I'll be sending a mage to assist you. He's skilled at carving the Source Siphon Array."

At the mention of the Source Siphon Array, Orion's eyes gleamed with recognition. Memories came flooding back: Leonidas and Arthas had once used that formation to siphon the world essence from a Godforsaken Land.

"All I want is the Heart of the Undying," Edward clarified. His meaning was obvious: any gathered world essence would belong to Orion.

"Thank you, Deputy Commander!"

"Head there as soon as you can. Things aren't looking good on that end."

With those words, the storm avatar transformed into a gale, surging skyward and vanishing almost instantly.

Watching the Deputy Commander depart, Orion lingered in midair, thinking for a long while before directing himself toward the southern front.

This trip into the Godforsaken Land would include Gustalon. With Gustalon's strength and concealment abilities, there was no better candidate for reconnaissance.

Three days later, Soraya City.

Inside the palace of Dusk Castle, Orion sat upon the throne, gently stroking Lilith's and Soraya's hair.

"Eliminating the slime molds will be a long-term task; the fighting here won't end anytime soon. According to the plan, replace every fallen small scorpion with another," he said to Soraya.

By Orion's design, she wouldn't be accompanying him to the Godforsaken Land. He had a more suitable candidate in mind—Spider Queen Lorelia.

Now that Lumi, a Legendary-level combatant, guarded the underworld beneath the bottomless abyss, Lorelia was essentially free.

Orion planned to bring Lorelia and the entire tribe of cave spiders along. Under his supervision and protection, Lorelia could finally see more of the outside world.

"As for you," he added, turning to Lilith, "take good care of yourself. This is the Valkorath Realm. It's even safer here than in Blackstone City."

Security was exactly why Orion had brought Lilith to the Valkorath Realm. Otherwise, he'd never have let Lilith and Soraya meet, especially not in Soraya City.

Lilith was his wife, and both Soraya and Lumi had entered the Legendary level ahead of her. Letting her interact with them was bound to make Lilith uneasy under normal circumstances. But for the sake of the unborn child, Orion had no choice.

As for taking Soraya along to the Godforsaken Land, that simply wouldn't work. Once she left, should the small scorpions perish, there would be no replacement forces. If they lacked reinforcements, the Stoneheart Horde's bloodline warriors would surely suffer massive casualties.

"Don't worry," Lilith and Soraya assured him. "We'll be fine."

Learning that Orion was headed to the Godforsaken Land, they behaved themselves and got along quietly.

"That's best."

Chapter 557: Radiant Continent

Blackstone City, Moonshadow Valley.

A burst of spatial energy rippled, and Orion and Gustalon successfully arrived at the Moonshadow Valley plaza, returning to the Stoneheart Horde. The guardian of Blackstone City, Onyx, immediately sensed Orion's presence and hurried down from the ridge in the west.

"Cool air, and a familiar breeze!"

Gustalon surveyed his surroundings, relishing all that the North had to offer.

"Let's go!"

After Orion sent a mental message to Onyx and Lorelia, he headed toward the Horde Hall.

"Lord!"

"Master!"

Inside the Horde Hall, Orion nodded, swept his gaze over Onyx and Lorelia, and spoke calmly.

"Prophet, you will remain here in Blackstone City, taking full charge of everything that happens."

"Lorelia, get yourself ready. Summon every member of the Cave Spider clan to follow me in invading a Godforsaken Land."

Both Onyx and Lorelia were no strangers to the Godforsaken Land. Onyx had personally participated in an invasion war there, and Lorelia had once sent many small spiders into battle.

"Master, do I really have to go too?" Lorelia asked, her bright eyes shimmering with an almost childlike innocence as she sought Orion's confirmation.

"Yes, bring your nest. You must come. The underground fissure is safe, but are you still planning to laze around there all day?"

Lorelia responded with a giggle, excitedly withdrawing to make her preparations.

"She's grown up in Blackstone City, never having ventured far beyond. I imagine she's bored out of her mind here, so she probably wants to see the outside world!" Onyx remarked, watching Lorelia's departing figure.

Orion remained silent. Whether Lorelia was willing or not, she had to join the campaign this time.

"Lord, there's been an issue in Lysinthia City."

Onyx turned back, speaking solemnly about the war that had broken out in Lysinthia.

Orion raised his eyebrows, puzzled as to which foolish local lord would dare challenge him. Unless... it was the Sea Race—those who hailed from the sea.

"What happened?" Orion closed his eyes briefly, looking inward at the will projection he had placed in Lysinthia. Sensing nothing amiss, he let out a discreet sigh of relief.

"A little while ago, Mist Bay received a group of Merfolk calling themselves the Tidefang Clan. They demanded we leave Mist Bay entirely. Since then, Lysinthia City has suffered repeated harassment from these Merfolk.

The construction of the harbor was disrupted, and the armies stationed there have taken considerable losses.

"I've already sent the Lizardman tribe to support them, accompanied by Rockwell."

Onyx outlined the current situation, then fell silent, waiting for Orion's decision.

After a moment, Orion lifted his gaze toward the south, where Lysinthia City lay.

"The Sea Race, huh? Dealing with them might be a good chance for our people to gain some experience."

Muttering this, Orion turned to Onyx and issued orders.

"Deliver my command: send the Sentinel Corps to Abyssal Chasm in the north. We've been breeding fiend serpents for the past two years, so their numbers in the serpent pit should have recovered somewhat. Tell Gurnar to drive the serpent horde to Lysinthia City, where they will follow Lysinthia's orders."

Onyx's eyes lit up at this. He had long heard rumors of an Alpha-level powerhouse in Abyssal Chasm who had once served Gareth, yet Onyx had never met him in person until now.

"Also, pick out any of those young and idle tribe members who meet the requirements, and have them head to Lysinthia City to broaden their horizons."

This was Orion's task for Onyx. Giants, Gnolls, and Thunderstorm Bearmen were all numerous, including many young warriors who might benefit from real combat.

"I'll see to it immediately!"

Orion gave a slight nod. Watching Onyx leave, he expanded his senses over Blackstone City to confirm things were secure before relaxing fully.

"My Lord, shall I make a trip south?"

"No need. We'll rest for one night. Tomorrow, we set out for the Godforsaken Land."

Orion shook his head. Before he left, the Deputy Commander had asked him to head to the Godforsaken Land as soon as possible. Time was pressing. Orion was in a hurry on this return trip; he had no plans to head back to Stoneheart City or travel to the underworld. As soon as Lorelia gathered the Cave Spiders near Blackstone City, he intended to teleport over immediately.

"Have you made any progress on your plan for advancing to Legendary level?"

Gustalon had been at Alpha peak for some time, and Orion was quite eager for him to take that step, becoming a vital part of his forces.

"Not yet," Gustalon replied, disappointment flickering across his face. He yearned for Legendary power, especially after witnessing the Storm Avatar of the Deputy Commander—a display of elemental might that gave Gustalon a clearer vision of his future path.

Seeing it was one thing, but grasping it for himself was another.

"I can't give you much advice on how to advance to the Legendary rank. It all comes down to personal insight. You're an elemental lifeform, so rising to Legendary might be easier for you than for others. Perhaps you just need to build more experience and gather deeper understanding before you make that breakthrough."

He meant these words as both encouragement and consolation. Gustalon nodded, treating Orion's advice as guidance.

Early the next morning, at the underground fissure, Lorelia watched with curious eyes as Orion tore open a large teleportation scroll.

A massive teleportation array appeared, enveloping all Cave Spiders in the vicinity. After a surge of powerful energies, everyone in the underground fissure vanished without a trace.

Godforsaken Land: the Radiant Continent.

Following an intense fluctuation of void energy, Orion, Gustalon, Lorelia, and a million Cave Spiders all descended together into this world.

"Lord Orion, welcome to the Radiant Continent!"

Not far away stood an elderly man in a white mage's cloak. His hair and eyebrows were silvery-white, and he raised his staff in a gesture Orion had never seen before.

"You must be Gandalf?"

"Indeed, that is I!"

Gandalf was the mage Deputy Commander Edward had sent to assist Orion, a master skilled at inscribing the Source Siphon Array. Orion probed Gandalf's power, finding it to be of lower Legendary level—a bit lacking, but still impressive for this Radiant Continent.

"Where exactly are we?"

Beckoning Gandalf closer, Orion signaled him to speak.

Gandalf put away his staff and straightened his robe before stepping forward. Up close, Orion noticed that while Gandalf appeared elderly—his hair and beard resembling winter frost—his skin remained as smooth as a newborn's.

"Lord Orion, this is the underground plaza of Desolation City, a place of ruins."

"Tell me about this land."

At Orion's command, Gandalf led the way. As they walked, he began his explanation of the region.

Chapter 558: Glorious Mages

"The place we're in is called the Radiant Continent. It used to be the heart of the Glorious Magic Realm."

"However, three hundred years ago, external invaders laid waste to the Glorious Magic Realm. The area of the Radiant Continent now is less than ten percent of what it once was."

At first, Gandalf's voice carried pride, but it gradually turned forlorn and sorrowful. In fact, the current size of the Radiant Continent is not even a quarter of the continent Orion inhabited.

"Ninety-nine percent of our world essence was drained, leaving the people here tainted by dark forces. Most of the mages of the Radiant Continent were transformed into evil mages. Only a small portion remained faithful, devout to the elements, and held magic in reverence."

As Gandalf reached this point, his voice grew more vibrant, as though believing that everything would soon improve and that light would ultimately drive out the darkness.

"The mages who kept their faith and purity are called the Glorious Mages."

"Lord Orion, once you climb out of these ruins, you'll see Desolation City above. It's the last haven of the Radiant Continent."

In that moment, Orion noticed a faint flush across Gandalf's face, seemingly caused by his own excitement.

"Gandalf, are you a native to this land?"

"Yes, Lord Orion. Please forgive me for getting overly excited just now."

So he really was a native of the Radiant Continent. No wonder he spoke about those evil mages with such agitation.

"Then, do you know why I'm here?"

There was a peculiar smile on Orion's face, as though he was someone in the know watching a Whitefur who was still in the dark. But that smile quickly faded.

"I do. This is exactly the promise granted after I begged my master for help—to lay them to waste, to destroy this land, to bury all evil so that everything can finally settle."

Gandalf turned around, gazing at Orion with expectant eyes, as if dreading the possibility that Orion might say he could not fulfill such a task.

"In that case, Gandalf, as you wish."

Orion turned to exchange a glance with Gustalon and Lorelia, who immediately fell in step beside him.

"Gandalf, you don't mind showing us around Desolation City, do you?"

Some things, simply hearing them from Gandalf was not enough for Orion to believe, even if Gandalf was recommended by the Deputy Commander. Certain matters and certain pieces of information had to be personally investigated and verified.

"With pleasure. This way, please!"

Thus, the four of them navigated a dark, ruinous passage leading to the surface.

Desolation City was indeed a kind of paradise. It was a profoundly magical metropolis, with towering, grand structures endowed with various magical abilities.

Within Orion's field of vision, tall buildings in the darkness could automatically shift and even transform into fearsome magical monsters. Many other buildings glowed brilliantly with magical light in the dark of night.

Even the distant roads featured mysterious little sprites, dozing on street lamps shaped from magic crystals. Perhaps those street lamps were the sprites' homes—that was Orion's honest thought at that moment.

Just then, the straight trees lining both sides of the road began to sway and bow their heads, each opening wooden eyes and mouths to stare curiously at Orion's group.

"They're Treants! It's a pity that the magical elements here are much too scarce—they can no longer continue to evolve. If these Treants could keep growing, they would blossom and bear fruit. Word has it that their flowers boost one's energy and aid meditation, and their fruit can assist people in cultivating magic..."

As Gandalf highlighted the wonders of Desolation City, his eyes radiated excitement. But when his raised fingertip moved slowly, pointing to the magical towers on the far side of the city walls, he fell silent.

Following his gesture, Orion saw towering magical towers within the walls, their faint glow illuminating the dark expanse outside the city.

"All this splendor is but an illusion. Everything will eventually turn to ashes."

Gandalf's voice was subdued, laced with despair.

"Only through destruction can we attain rebirth and a fresh start."

"You and the others in this city are still alive, aren't you? As long as you live, there's hope."

Gandalf was indeed a native of this place. Since he had become the Deputy Commander's subordinate, the Deputy Commander must already know everything about this land. The Glorious Mages of Desolation City certainly wouldn't be allowed to be wiped out; that would be a terrible waste of magical talent.

"Yes. Bury this place and we can all make a new beginning."

This was an old man who loathed evil, who brimmed with hope for the future, who fervently sought a way forward. That was Orion's first impression of Gandalf.

"Tell me about our enemies."

Orion had already extended his senses, scanning Desolation City once over. On the surface, Desolation City appeared vibrant, but in truth the elemental energy here was extremely thin.

This land was little more than a barren place without hope. Its fleeting brilliance was only the final flicker of Glorious Magic civilization.

"Lord Orion, the Radiant Continent has five mage adversaries: Alaric, Corvinus, Thornas, Elowen, and Gavriel. Among them, the Cursed Mage Gavriel is just outside the city, laying siege to Desolation City."

In reality, Orion wasn't especially concerned about how many mage enemies were present. He wanted to pinpoint the exact location of the World Tree, so he could secure the Heart of the Undying for the Deputy Commander. That was his true objective.

"Do you know where the World Tree is?"

Orion cast a sidelong look at Gandalf, who had been positively brimming with fighting spirit when detailing their foes, looking as if he wanted to charge straight out of the city to confront them.

"The World Tree stands at the continent's center, guarded by Corvinus—the fiercest of them all. The tree is protected by a barrier they're slowly corrupting."

Now that Orion knew the whereabouts of the World Tree, a relaxed expression came over his face.

"How many people do you still have who can fight?"

"Three thousand Glorious Mages are ready to join the battle at any time."

"Very well. At dawn tomorrow, march with me."

There was no room for refusal in Orion's tone.

After a moment of thought, Gandalf nodded in agreement.

"Once we wipe out those evil mages outside the city, the ordinary folk here will no longer be threatened."

Orion said this as casually as if it were nothing more than a passing comment. But in Gandalf's ears, it came across as a promise of bloodshed and turmoil.

For the briefest moment, Gandalf felt as though the Radiant Continent had returned to the chaos of three hundred years ago, when foreign armies had invaded.

"All... all right..."

...

Titanion Realm, the human kingdom, Soaring Bird City.

Wyatt—the head of a slaver group—rushed into Torin's makeshift tent, bringing two pieces of good news.

"Master, all the goods we brought back from the giants' territory have sold out completely. We've made a massive fortune in gold coins."

Chapter 559: Bury the enemy

Wyatt extended five fingers. He wasn't indicating five hundred gold coins, nor five thousand, but rather that he had made five times his initial investment.

Five times, even after being exploited by the merchant groups in Soaring Bird City.

This shows just how huge the trade route between the Giant territory and the human kingdom really is.

Of course, Torin, Wyatt, and their group were reaping the initial benefits.

As time went on, this trade route would inevitably become more refined, and the profits would surely drop.

"Wonderful! Now we can hire more people!"

Five times was no small amount. At the very least, Torin could double the size of his team.

"Master, there's also more good news. I've already gotten in touch with the slave traders in the kingdom."

"They'll soon be delivering a batch of slaves. We can purchase the robust ones and send them off to the Giant territory."

"There are quite a few beautiful women among them. Would you like me to pick out a few for you to keep?"

Wyatt's eyes glimmered with lecherous intent.

Given Torin's personality, once he had his fun, he'd reward some of the women to Wyatt and Mike.

"Keep a few, just in case."

Torin nodded, a lustful gleam also flickering in his eyes, but he was actually thinking of using those women to bribe the officials in Soaring Bird City.

Of course, Torin had his own sexual needs as well.

"Oh, by the way, have we heard anything back from Mike?"

"Not yet. With the speed of his beast-blood mount, I'd estimate at least two more days."

"Let me know as soon as there's any news!"

Princess Ava was extremely important, and Torin had to maintain a good relationship with her at all times.

Without that protection, Torin could lose his life at any moment.

"Set aside Her Highness's share of the profits. I have a feeling they'll definitely send someone to Soaring Bird City."

"The pie here is enormous. I don't believe they'll just give it up."

Torin felt quite confident about that.

Because at that moment, not only did the people of two Grand Dukes reside in Soaring Bird City, but even those representing His Majesty the King and His Royal Highness the Prince had also arrived within that same period.

From that perspective, Princess Ava's representative would definitely show up soon.

"Hurry up and come. Once you're all here, that'll be the moment I head to the Giant territory for the second time."

At this thought, Torin narrowed his eyes, and his gaze was full of scheming.

"Master, about those non-human slaves from other territories—should we purchase some?"

"Explain yourself!"

Torin looked at Wyatt, annoyed by his half-finished statements.

"From what I know, during the civil war, our people captured quite a few non-human slaves. Most of them came from the central region."

"For example, half-dragons and goblins... Should we buy some to sell to the Colosseum in the Giant territory?"

That suggestion brought Torin back to reality. Before, he'd only ever focused on human slaves.

The Giant territory did indeed have many non-human races, but that didn't mean they had all of them.

Non-human slaves from the central region and the eastern region were definitely rare in the Giant territory.

"Buy them. Buy as many as possible. Besides those from the central region, get some from the east and the north, too."

"If there are Sea Race members, especially mermaids with some beauty, don't let those slip by either."

Torin's thoughts were crystal clear. Until his power caught up, money and allure were the two greatest weapons at his disposal.

"Understood. I'll pass on the word right away."

"Mm, go!"

...

Godforsaken Land, Desolation City.

The next morning, when all the Glorious Mages of this city gathered and learned they were about to fight to the death with the enemies outside the city, they were both excited and forlorn.

They were the natives here, fully aware of the sort of enemies they were up against.

"Gandalf, have you truly made up your mind?"

"The elements are exhausted. We have no path left."

"For our faith, for the Radiant Continent, for the families behind us—fight!"

"Fight! Fight!"

"..."

The masses were indignant and roused. That was the state of the Glorious Mages, who had endured too much humiliation and sorrow.

However, today's main character wasn't them, but Orion, who had arrived here.

"Aren't you going to say something?"

Orion stood atop the city wall alongside Gandalf, their cloaks billowing in the wind.

"There's nothing much to say. In past battles, I've already spoken countless words of inspiration."

"Perhaps they've grown numb to it all! A thousand words can't inspire people as much as a true victory."

Orion grinned, understanding what Gandalf meant.

In the past, Gandalf had offered too many grand promises, leaving everyone numb.

"If that's the case, let me say a few words."

With that, Orion took a step forward, and his body floated into the air until he was high above, gazing down at the gathered Glorious Mages.

"He's walking on air! Is he a wind mage?"

"No, that's not right. There's no wind-elemental fluctuation around him."

"Then how can he stand in midair?"

"He's a lord... a Legendary-level powerhouse!"

"..."

In an instant, the Glorious Mages began whispering among themselves. In the face of countless murmurs, Orion smiled freely.

The next moment, the oppressive force of his peak Legendary-level power burst forth, crushing all the Glorious Mages to the ground.

Even Gandalf on the city wall was not spared, trembling all over—fearful yet incredibly thrilled.

"My name is Orion Stoneheart, King of Giants, and I'm the reinforcements Gandalf invited."

"As you can see, I possess power at the peak of the Legendary level."

Orion's voice was indifferent and lofty, as if a deity gazing upon ants below.

Very soon, Orion withdrew his oppressive force and continued speaking in a cajoling tone.

"My purpose in coming here is to help Gandalf annihilate his enemies."

"The Radiant Continent is on the verge of becoming a memory, and Desolation City will soon crumble. You all know this better than I do."

"Who brought all this about?"

"Those wicked(evil) mages outside the city!"

Uncovering the root of evil and directing hatred to a target—Orion was well-versed in that sort of business.

"Are you willing to come with us?"

"Bury your enemies in this hopeless land."

"And let yourselves and your loved ones behind you be reborn amidst the annihilation."

Unnoticed until now, the trident called Flame of Will had appeared in Orion's hand. Transcendent power surged within him as he brandished it.

Boom! A bolt of lightning struck the ground, cleaving a massive fissure into it.

Nearly a million cave spiders crawled out from the depths, like demons rising from hell.

They scuttled past the Glorious Mages, heading out of the city and off into the distance.

"If you're willing, they can be your mounts, your companions."

"Come now—let us bury the enemy together!"

Chapter 560: Reinforcements have arrived

The scene before them was both awe-inspiring and horrifying.

The rustling sounds of the cave spiders, their crimson multi-faceted eyes, and the occasional clicking of their mandibles all reminded the Glorious Mages present that this was neither a dream nor an illusion.

Gulp!

No one knew who started it, but someone swallowed hard, setting off a chain reaction.

"It's a swarm of beasts—endless beasts!"

"Are these our reinforcements?"

"Spider-type extra-planar creatures?"

"Are we saved?"

"..."

After the initial shock came wild elation, an eager anticipation for the final battle.

"Let's go—bury those evildoers!"

"Destroy them, destroy all the wicked mages!"

"Revenge... revenge..."

Orion descended back onto the city wall and watched the Glorious Mages, who were looking furious and frenzied as they scrambled to climb onto the backs of the cave spiders.

"They've been bottled up for so long—it's even more desperate than I imagined."

Seeing the crazed expressions on the faces of Desolation City's Glorious Mages, Orion felt confident about them. Only a war fought with hatred would be unwavering and merciless.

"Indeed. If not for your arrival, I believe we'd have ended up just like our predecessors."

"Predecessors? The same as what?"

Orion grew curious about what those before them in the Radiant Continent had done.

"Yes. Once all hope is wiped away and the world is consumed, we choose to self-destruct. At least that way, we can drag a few of them down with us and dispel some of the evil."

Gandalf looked into the distance, then glanced back at the city behind him. His gaze was full of reluctance—and a certain indescribable light.

"Gandalf, please lead the way. Together, we'll purge this evil!"

Orion settled onto one of the Alpha-level cave spider guardians, sparing a look for Lorelia, who was busily peering around.

"Stay alert. Aside from our own forces, everyone we encounter is an enemy."

Lorelia wore a slightly embarrassed expression and vanished into its nest with a whoosh.

The cave spiders' Nest was carried by a massive guardian spider, hidden within the swarm for concealment.

Orion sighed, glanced at Gandalf who landed next to him, then nodded and set out on the warpath.

...

Titanion Realm, the city of Lysinthia.

Seawater flooded in, battered by wind and waves. Countless merfolk surged from the water, assailing Lysinthia. The city was in grave danger.

Fortunately, no ordinary land-dwelling citizens had settled here yet. The inhabitants were all amphibious races unafraid of the water.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Hiss, hiss, hiss!

Like unflinching guards, the arrow towers on the city walls sent bolts slicing through the air, felling wave after wave of invaders.

Standing atop the wall, Lysinthia pressed her left hand into a seal to channel her bloodline power into a serpent, while her right hand gripped a sword, cutting down the Merfolk who drew near.

One giant black python after another slithered out of her long hair, attacking the enemies that charged her position.

Compared to before, however, the strange black serpents emerging from Lysinthia's hair were dwindling in number.

Which meant that Lysinthia's bloodline power was nearly drained.

Just then, a high-pitched eagle screech rang through the sky.

Then came a sudden shadow overhead, followed by bolts of lightning crashing down among the Merfolk and into the raging sea, throwing them into chaos.

Another eagle cry rang out.

This time, the sound was very close.

Rayden seized hold of an Alpha-level Merfolk, darting and weaving to soar high into the sky.

"It's Thunderhawk Rayden!"

"Reinforcements have arrived?"

Lysinthia looked up at Thunderhawk Rayden, who was ripping through the Alpha-level Merfolk in midair, her eyes shining with excitement.

"Hang in there—our reinforcements have come!"

She hardly needed to rouse them. Everyone fighting already saw the thunderhawk suddenly joining the fray, and their flagging spirits immediately soared.

Half a day later, from the rear side of Lysinthia City came a rising clamor of beasts, startling the Merfolk still attacking the city.

Within moments, large numbers of lizardmen broke through the forest in groups, quickly entering the battle.

"The enemy has reinforcements—retreat!"

"Fall back, fall back!"

"..."

Shrill cries echoed from deep within Mist Bay. Hearing those cries, the Merfolk who had come ashore withdrew one after another, retreating into the sea.

For the moment, the battle had halted with the arrival of the lizardmen.

"At last, we made it in time!"

Rockwell strode out from among the lizardmen and waved in greeting at Lysinthia.

Lysinthia returned the gesture. The city gates opened, allowing Rockwell and his companions inside.

"Hope we're not too late?"

"No, you arrived just in time!"

"Is the fight over now?"

"It won't be. They're cunning. They'll pause to observe for a while, then resume their assault on the city."

"Fine by me. Sitting around in Thunderwood Forest had me feeling rusty. This gives me a chance to stretch my muscles."

Rockwell burst out laughing, then introduced the people who had come along with him to Lysinthia. Together, they set about rebuilding Lysinthia's defensive fortifications.

...

Godforsaken Land—these battles were fierce beyond measure.

Shortly after the cave spiders crawled out of Desolation City, they slammed into their first wave of enemies.

Of course, the conflict was provoked by the cave spiders themselves.

They had been ordered to kill every living thing they encountered, devouring the enemy entirely.

"Lord Orion, these wicked fleas are low-grade beasts tainted by corruption."

"Perhaps, compared to us, pollution for them feels more like rebirth."

Evidently, fleas had stronger adaptability and survival instincts than humans.

As they traveled, Gandalf explained every enemy they met to Orion, from beasts to wicked mages, giving Orion a deeper understanding of the Radiant Continent.

"What kind of power is corrupting these fleas?"

Orion was curious. From the wicked mages and corrupted beasts they had already come across, he saw neither Abyssal energy nor curse magic. Instead, it was something he had never encountered.

"Lord Orion, it's a form of spiritual contamination—sin that roots itself deep within one's soul."

"Those corrupted creatures forsake their faith and humanity. They no longer fear death."

"Some of them go so far as to see death as their homecoming."

Boom!

As Gandalf spoke, a series of powerful explosions echoed ahead.

Orion sensed at once that the wicked fleas had self-destructed at the last moment.

"They're unafraid of death—this is what you mean?"

Orion frowned, his tone turning grim.

"Exactly. Any creature that's been corrupted may choose to self-destruct."

"The stronger they are, the more devastating the explosion."

"Especially those wicked mages whose minds have been tainted—if they manage to self-destruct, the resulting power is terrifying."

Gandalf's expression revealed sorrow. Part of the reason the Radiant Continent had declined to this point was that many normal mages had been wiped out by these self-destructive blasts.

"Is there any way to stop these explosions?"

From that brief moment of perception, Orion saw clearly that a single tiny flea's self-destruction could take down a cave spider many times its size.