

Titan King 571

Chapter 571 571: She's my daughter

Orion had never proactively mentioned Violet's situation to anyone in his daily life.

Yet Violet was Orion's woman, and she had willingly chosen to bear his child—of course he would be thinking of her.

Violet, the seed, and the child... When all that happened, it was Orion's first time feeling a sense of belonging in this world.

"Everything will be fine!"

That was the phrase Orion had always used to reassure himself. Fortunately, as his power grew, everything was moving in a brighter direction.

"Next comes the process of extracting the world essence, which will take a fair amount of time. All of you should return for now."

Orion gathered the excitement and joy hidden deep within himself, then turned around and handed Lorelia a large teleportation scroll.

"If you feel this battle wasn't enough for you, you can bring your people to Mist Bay. Lysinthia City is currently facing an invasion from the Sea Race. You can head there to provide assistance."

These words were directed mostly at Lorelia, though they naturally included Gustalon as well.

"As you wish, master."

"As you wish, my lord."

Orion nodded. Under his watchful gaze, Lorelia tore open the teleportation scroll and returned to Blackstone City with her people.

...

Half a month later, the Source Siphon Array had been set up successfully.

After Gandalf was guided away, Orion went over to the World Tree to locate his task objective.

Heart of the Undying—that was the item Deputy Commander Edward had requested.

Sifting through a pile of ashes, Orion retrieved a lifeless phoenix egg, which was the Heart of the Undying.

He had no idea what Deputy Commander Edward needed a dead egg for, but he kept it anyway and sent it to the Deputy Commander through the Survivor's Platform as a delayed trade.

Once the task was complete, Orion surveyed the surroundings.

This once-declining, decaying, and corrupt magical world was on the verge of disappearing.

Orion activated the Source Siphon Array, causing the Radiant Continent to tremble.

Across its expanse, those malevolent creatures lurking in every corner wailed one after another.

Centered around the World Tree, a powerful suction force appeared, drawing out the last of the Radiant Continent's world essence.

In that instant, the entire continent turned to ash and dust, vanishing into the void.

However, Orion felt no delight in that moment—his eyes widened at what he saw.

After the Radiant Continent collapsed and the world essence was sealed within the World Tree, a little girl of about three years old, completely unclothed, suddenly materialized next to the tree and slowly opened her eyes.

It was a sight that severely challenged Orion's understanding. The little girl's appearance made no sound.

It felt as if she had been sleeping there all along, and the destruction of the Radiant Continent merely pulled away her warm quilt, waking her up.

Orion swallowed hard, motionless, unsure of how to proceed.

...

Titanion Realm, Stoneheart City.

When Gustalon and Lorelia returned to Blackstone City, she had already heard the news.

On the third floor of the mysterious tavern, Delilah summoned members of the Sentinel Corps.

"Deploy all the scouts into the ogre territory to monitor any sign of the lizardfolk."

The shadow lurking in the darkness hesitated, but before it could raise a question, Delilah explained further:

"Go without concern—the ogres will cooperate. The ogres and the lizardfolk are about to start an invasion war, and we of the Stoneheart Horde will present ourselves as allies of the ogres."

"Pay special attention to minerals, magical plants, and any unique items... those should be your primary focus."

Delilah paused for a moment. Her voice grew increasingly authoritative, taking on a regal air.

"Have the scouts pass along the news of our impending invasion of the lizardfolk to Prince Theodore of the human kingdom. If he responds with any information, report it to me immediately."

Delilah was somewhat puzzled by this final point.

Still, she acted as instructed by Orion.

"Could it be that since the human kingdom's territory borders that of the dragons, they need to claim a share?"

Delilah mumbled under her breath. She couldn't quite grasp why Orion would bring the human kingdom in to share the spoils.

The Stoneheart Horde's alliance with the ogre tribe was already potent, easily enough to breach the lizardfolk and Lokiviria territories.

Orion didn't clarify these plans for Delilah. Some matters require personal insight for a deeper understanding.

In truth, Orion had brought the human kingdom into the equation to strengthen the alliance among the three lands: the humans, the ogres, and the Stoneheart Horde.

A commercial route connecting the three territories was already established, granting each side massive benefits.

The more secure that alliance was, the safer the Stoneheart Horde's surroundings would be.

Thus, in the southern part of the Stoneheart Horde's realm, the only real threat left would come from the Sea Race.

From Stoneheart City to four newly founded cities, the Stoneheart Horde's expansion would finally gain true momentum.

Once her orders were given, the shadow vanished, and Delilah began organizing the necessary supplies.

Meanwhile, the elders Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, Drakthul, and Gormathar—who had been resting in the southern territory—each received their mobilization commands as well.

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Valkorath Realm, Soraya City.

After a fluctuation of spatial energy, Orion stepped out onto the teleportation array in Soraya City.

Sensing his presence, Lilith and Soraya quickly emerged from the palace to greet him.

They didn't rush over and cling to Orion; instead, both simply stared at him with wide-eyed fascination.

Because on Orion's shoulders sat a three-year-old girl, perched on his neck, her little legs dangling by his chest.

The girl's tiny hands clutched Orion's ears tightly as she curiously surveyed Lilith and Soraya.

"Honey!"

"Darling!"

Though they addressed Orion differently, Lilith and Soraya spoke in the same tone of shared emotion.

Orion nodded in response to the two of them and gently lifted the little girl down from his shoulders.

"Her name is Elara—she's my daughter."

Those words froze Lilith and Soraya in place.

A long, long time passed before Orion approached them again, waiting as the two stood there in a daze.

"Darling, she... she..."

Lilith finally roused herself. She stared straight at Elara, struggling for words but failing to speak coherently.

"Let's head inside. I'll explain everything to you both in a bit."

Orion placed Elara back atop his shoulders, took Lilith's hand in one of his, and Soraya's in the other, then walked toward the palace.

Meanwhile, Lilith and Soraya both kept turning their heads to glance at Elara, who was perched happily in place.

Elara was equally adorable. She kept looking back and forth—one moment at Lilith, the next at Soraya—her eyes full of puzzled wonder.

Chapter 572: A strange and wonderful feeling

On the throne, Orion held Elara in the palm of his hand, playfully teasing her while explaining her origins.

"So, she's our daughter, then?"

Lilith reached out and took Elara into her arms, her face brimming with maternal warmth. Perhaps because she herself was expecting, Lilith felt a strong affection for Elara, much like she had once felt for Lorelia.

"... Mama!"

"Mama!"

Elara's childish voice rang out, her eyes revealing a mixture of puzzlement and cleverness—a rather contradictory sight.

Yet the moment they heard Elara call them Mother, both Lilith and Soraya wore matching expressions of doting tenderness.

Who wouldn't like such an adorable foster daughter? Clearly, they both liked and accepted this child.

Orion couldn't quite say for sure what Elara's exact identity was.

She had awoken beside the World Tree; upon opening her eyes, the first person she saw was Orion. For a little girl who showed no hostility and whose first words were calling him "father," Orion pondered for a time before deciding to take her in.

Elara appeared to have lost her memories and couldn't recall anything. Since Orion had made the decision to adopt her, he gave her a name: Elara Stoneheart.

He then briefly spoke about some of his experiences in the Godforsaken Land before asking the two women about the other races in Valkorath Realm. Only then did their conversation wrap up.

"Daddy, there's some light beaming over here!"

At the top floor of the Purification Tower, Orion sat upright as gentle rays of light shone down on him and passed through his body.

Elara was perched on Orion's shoulders, clutching his ears while her large, violet-red eyes curiously examined everything around her.

Orion did not respond to Elara. He kept his eyes closed, wearing a serene smile.

The purifying beams not only penetrated his body but also reached into his sea of consciousness.

Bit by bit, the purifying light swept through his mental space. Any hidden malevolence, like shadows under sunlight, had nowhere to hide.

After about half a day, Orion's mind returned to him, and he opened his eyes.

The corrupt traces lurking in his consciousness had been completely eradicated, and that unsettling sense of discord was gone for good.

"Daddy!"

On Orion's head, Elara had somehow slumped over and fallen asleep. She was snoring softly, occasionally muttering as she dreamed.

Orion gently lifted Elara into his arms, and at that moment, the girl opened her eyes.

But when she saw it was Orion, she closed them once again.

Child. Daughter.

It was a strange and wonderful feeling.

For the first time, Orion felt what it was like to be a parent.

"I'm really looking forward to your births as well..."

Deep inside, Orion sighed, filled with anticipation for the children Violet and Lilith were carrying.

Titanion Realm, Stoneheart City.

In a lavish castle within the inner city, Dirtclaw reclined on a massive lounge chair, gazing proudly at a roomful of puppies—his offspring.

Among these young pups, Dirtclaw could faintly sense the Hellhound bloodline in a few of them.

At last, the gnoll bloodline had been upgraded. These little ones would become the hope and future of all gnolls.

"Honorable lord, Elder Drakthul has come to visit."

A gnoll hurried into the hall, causing Dirtclaw's eyes to light up.

"Go, bring out all the fine liquor I've been saving. Order the kitchen slaves to prepare a feast. I want to entertain Elder Drakthul!"

Dirtclaw got up from the pile of pups and headed toward the outer chamber.

During the battle against the fungal creatures in the Valkorath Realm, Dirtclaw and Drakthul had developed a close friendship.

In the past few days, several elders, including Dirtclaw, had been summoned back to Stoneheart City by Delilah.

However, Delilah had not disclosed the reason for the summons.

Now that Drakthul was here, he had presumably come to learn Delilah's intentions from Dirtclaw in advance.

"Drakthul, look what I have."

Dirtclaw lifted two kegs of liquor purchased from a dwarven caravan, handing one to Drakthul.

Drakthul, unreserved, took it and drank greedily.

After chugging away in one exhilarating go, Drakthul let out a loud belch, obviously pleased.

"This is good stuff! Dirtclaw, where'd you find such strong, potent liquor?"

"Hahaha, from those dwarves outside the city."

"Tastes great. I'd heard rumors about it, and I'll need to buy some as well."

"Drakthul, you won't have any luck. I bought the entire latest batch."

Dirtclaw also took a few huge gulps and smacked his lips in satisfaction, looking rather smug about his extravagant purchase.

A flicker of disappointment crossed Drakthul's face—it was a shame.

For elders like them, aside from striving toward Legendary level, enjoying fine food and drink was one of the last pleasures they had left.

"Hold on, Drakthul. Don't worry. I'll give you a few barrels before you head back."

At those words, the regret on Drakthul's face started to ease.

"By the way, is this summons another expedition?"

After an idle round of banter and feasting, Drakthul finally revealed the reason for his visit.

"Eh... I don't know!"

Dirtclaw shook his head, leaving Drakthul mildly surprised.

"Still, the fact we can hang around Stoneheart City enjoying ourselves for a few days suggests it's probably nothing serious."

Dirtclaw understood Delilah quite well. He was adept at reading her intentions and knew how to handle her orders.

This time, Delilah had called them back without clarifying a reason, only requiring that they remain in Stoneheart City. Hence, it couldn't be too pressing or dire.

"Bro, I heard you rotated through buffalofolk city recently. Tell me what it's like over there—I still haven't set foot in the new fortress."

Buffalofolk city was one of four new cities the Stoneheart Horde had established.

To outsiders, all four cities seemed alike.

But for people like Dirtclaw and Drakthul, those city names held great significance. They represented Orion's recognition of each respective race.

In reality, these cities were fiefdoms.

When buffalofolk city, obsidian city, Delilah City, and Lilith City were completed, they would become the fiefdoms of the buffalofolk, obsidian golems, and the succubus race.

And what did a fiefdom mean?

Both Dirtclaw and Drakthul, veterans of the Valkorath Realm, knew exactly what it implied—it meant a real shot at reaching Legendary level!

Chapter 573: It's time for revenge

"Buffalofolk City is being built quickly. When I left, the damaged city walls and arrow tower had already been fully repaired."

"The other buildings in the city are almost finished too!"

In truth, when it came to Buffalofolk City, Drakthul was quite excited.

Valkorath Realm had Soraya City and the soon-to-be-built Wind Fortress, the latter to be constructed in Gustalon's territory.

Orion had once promised that elders with sufficient battle achievements and the potential to reach legendary level would be granted land to build their own cities.

This was something both Dirtclaw and Drakthul envied and eagerly anticipated.

"What about your side? How are things with the Sea Race?"

After discussing Buffalofolk City, Drakthul inquired about the coastal region Dirtclaw was guarding.

"Just minor skirmishes. The sea race armies don't even dare come ashore to fight."

"Similarly, we don't dare get too close to the coast. Both sides are just stalling, occasionally trading insults."

Dirtclaw, stationed at the coastal region, followed the horde's orders strictly and felt no pressure.

"Ugh, I really wish we could rotate over there soon!"

"Same here!"

"Hahaha..."

Valkorath Realm, Soraya City.

After emerging from the Purification Tower, Orion brought Elara to spend time with Lilith and Soraya.

The four enjoyed seven wonderful days together, and amidst Elara's tearful reluctance, Orion teleported back to Stoneheart City.

The castle, Kitsune Sylvana's bedroom.

Orion appeared silently, sweeping Sylvana into his arms and tossing her onto the bed.

After a moment of panic, Sylvana caught a familiar scent, and the fear on her face slowly faded.

Along with it, their clothes vanished.

"Miss me?"

Orion caressed Sylvana's face, and just as she was about to speak, he kissed her.

"Mmm..."

Orion, who hadn't made love in a long time, was vigorous, only stopping with Sylvana at the dawn of the next day.

The following morning, Orion's presence briefly flickered in Stoneheart City.

At the same time, Delilah, Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, Drakthul, and others scattered across Stoneheart City received a telepathic message.

"Orion's back!"

"It's the Giant King!"

"That's Master's voice!"

"My Lord!"

"..."

In less than fifteen minutes, Delilah, Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, and Drakthul gathered in the castle's meeting hall.

"Tell me, what's the status of the horde?"

Orion gestured for everyone to sit before addressing Delilah directly.

Delilah gave a gentle smile, her voice carrying a refined tone.

"My Lord, the horde is doing well. Everything is progressing according to plan."

"The four cities planned within the territory are being constructed as scheduled, and progress is on track."

"No signs of foreign invasion have been detected around the territory, and the patrol teams report all is normal."

"The Merfolk along the western coastline are as usual, with no signs of a major tidal invasion."

"Stoneheart City's development is also proceeding smoothly. The outer city has recently opened..."

Delilah went on at length, recounting every detail of the Stoneheart Horde with familiarity.

Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, and Drakthul, listening to Delilah's report, gained a renewed understanding of the Stoneheart Horde.

Unbeknownst to them, under Delilah's management, the Stoneheart Horde had reached new heights.

"Well done. As long as our Stoneheart Horde keeps moving forward steadily, year by year, we'll eventually catch up to the other major races."

Orion acknowledged Delilah's accomplishments before shifting the conversation to the main topic.

"Have we gathered all the intelligence on the lizardfolk territory?"

This time, Orion had returned to assist Aldous in dealing with Lokiviria and Ssorin.

"Here's Prince Theodore's confidential letter!"

Delilah nodded. She had already dispatched scouts, and she knew exactly what valuables the lizardfolk territory held.

Moreover, some members of the succubus tribe skilled in stealth had infiltrated the area.

Orion took the envelope and read it carefully.

Nearby, Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, and Drakthul exchanged quick glances.

They were familiar with the lizardfolk territory.

The territories and races near the Stoneheart Horde were common knowledge among the horde's leadership, thanks to the efforts of the Sentinel Corps.

Ever since the Stoneheart Horde established itself in the south, all levels of leadership had been educated on this information.

"Prince Theodore has invited us to meet in Soaring Bird City, in the human kingdom. That's Torin's territory, right?"

"Yes, respected Lord!"

"What's the situation with Torin now?"

Orion asked casually, treating it as a minor move in his strategy.

Torin was a survivor. As long as he wasn't too foolish, he could rise in Soaring Bird City with the help of the Survivor's Platform.

The timing of that rise, however, was uncertain.

"He's lost control over Soaring Bird City."

"But according to the scouts' reports, with the arrival of the Rose Knight Regiment, Torin's situation has improved somewhat."

"My Lord, the Rose Knight Regiment is Princess Ava's faction."

Delilah's face carried an enigmatic smile as she said this.

"Keep monitoring Torin and have our people infiltrate Soaring Bird City."

Orion understood the meaning behind Delilah's smile but stayed focused on business, offering no reaction.

"You four, prepare yourselves. Three days from now, bring your armies and join me in conquering the lizardfolk territory."

Earthshaker, Gronthar, Dirtclaw, and Drakthul stood, responding with a serious yet excited "Yes, My Lord!" before leaving to make preparations.

...

Ogre territory, a patch of flowers.

This was the border between the ogre and giant territories. The two-headed ogre Aldous lay among the flowers, one head dozing, the other gazing at the sky.

Aldous plucked a nearby dandelion and blew on it.

"White clouds drift, dandelions drift, and even Aldous drifts."

"A beautiful, peaceful life is always interrupted by enemies. Aldous's good days have barely begun."

"..."

As Aldous was about to complain further, Orion's aura flickered briefly in the giant territory.

The ogre Aldous froze, then slapped the dozing head.

"Idiot, wake up! It's time for revenge!"

"Damn insectoids, wretched lizardfolk—I'll eat them!"

"Get up! Head to Soaring Bird City in the south!"

"No, we'll go straight to the border and wait for my friend."

"With a friend, we'll be safer!"

When the larger of Aldous's two heads woke, he had already taken control of the body and stood, letting out a rallying roar.

In the ogre territory, countless ogres responded to Aldous's call with roars of their own, converging toward Soaring Bird City in the south.

Chapter 574: I will pave the way for your growth

Human Kingdom, Rose Manor.

On this day, the maidservants of Rose Manor came out one after another to welcome a distinguished guest.

A squadron of gryphon knights flew in from the sky, the gryphons screeching, stirring up gusts of wind that sent the rose petals of Rose Manor fluttering.

After the gryphon knights landed, Prince Theodore dismounted from the strongest gryphon and, guided by the maidservants, arrived at the manor hall.

"Aunt!"

Prince Theodore bowed, his face full of sincerity and concern.

"I brought the cake you loved as a child. Come, try my handiwork."

Ava's belly was already quite large, making it inconvenient for her to stand. She leaned back at a dining table, savoring the cake she had personally baked.

"The taste of childhood, I had almost forgotten it!"

Prince Theodore glanced at Ava's belly, nearing full term, a touch more concern showing on his face.

Coming to sit at the dining table, Prince Theodore tasted three pieces of cake before speaking.

"Is everything here still plentiful?"

Princess Ava smiled, shook her head, a gentleness she had never shown before gracing her features.

"This is one of the finest manors in the kingdom. It has everything one could possibly need; nothing is lacking."

Prince Theodore nodded, picking up another piece of cake and chewing it thoughtfully.

"A new batch of magical plants has matured in the palace. My father asked me to bring some for you. I've already had the guards store them in the manor's warehouse."

Princess Ava nodded, the gentle smile unwavering on her face.

"Tomorrow, I'm heading north to Soaring Bird City. There are rare items there from other territories. Is there anything you desire?"

Prince Theodore's tone was casual, like everyday conversation, neither deliberate nor concealing.

Princess Ava looked up, glanced at Prince Theodore, her gentle expression unchanged.

"I don't lack supplies here!"

"You're going north alone; be cautious, stay safe!"

Speaking of the north, the image of that giant flashed fleetingly in Princess Ava's eyes.

The north was a dangerous place; it was where she had been imprisoned by the giant.

Thinking of this, Ava offered a reminder to Prince Theodore.

"Soaring Bird City has stabilized and developed. I'm going this time precisely to finalize our interests there."

"I will claim your share for you."

Ava nodded, noncommittal about Theodore's initiative.

Following this, Prince Theodore rested at Rose Manor for a day, then mounted his gryphon(griffin) the next morning and headed north.

By the window of the manor's master bedroom, Princess Ava watched the receding squadron of griffins, her hand resting on her belly.

As her belly grew larger, the child within became more distinct, and Princess Ava was trying to accept everything.

Initially, Ava had felt disgusted. She wasn't Orion's wife; she had been forced, treated merely as a toy for Orion's sexual release.

But then she became pregnant, carrying the child of Giant King Orion.

Such a thing was truly unimaginable, unacceptable to her.

Sometimes, Ava even felt hatred towards the child in her womb, stemming from her hatred for the child's father.

But slowly, as she began to feel the small life's breath and heartbeat within her, Ava changed.

She didn't know when, but the hatred in Ava's heart vanished, replaced mostly by confusion.

And then, breaking through the confusion, was the increasingly clear connection from within her belly.

That thrumming connection of shared blood allowed Ava to let go, and gradually, anticipation began to grow.

"If there's anyone to blame, it can only be myself! Honestly, besides being a bit rough, that Giant King wasn't bad to me, especially since his sexual prowess was too formidable..."

The concern from Ava's brother and nephew, Prince Theodore, was genuine; Ava could feel it.

Furthermore, Ava could also sense that His Majesty the King and Prince Theodore held great expectations for the child in her womb.

This child carried not only the bloodline of the Giant King but also that of the human royal family.

His birth would be a link, a connection deepening the alliance between the Human Kingdom and the Stoneheart Horde.

Ava understood these implications.

At first, she had resisted.

But now, she accepted it, and she hoped to secure more benefits for her child.

"No matter how difficult the future may be, I will pave the way for your growth."

Prince Theodore's visit was not just out of concern for Ava, but also for the child within her.

Through this child, Prince Theodore could gain much more.

Of course, conversely, a Prince Theodore who gained more could also provide more support for the child in Ava's womb.

After all, they shared half of the same bloodline.

"What matter would require you to travel north alone?"

Ava didn't know the specifics, but whatever could compel Prince Theodore to go personally must be significant.

And in the northern Soaring Bird City, only the blood elves, ogres, and giant tribes possessed Legendary level beings.

Only when Prince Theodore's figure became a black dot and completely vanished into the sky did Ava withdraw her gaze.

Meanwhile, aboard the flying mount, the griffin.

Prince Theodore wore an expression of hesitation and contemplation.

As Ava's relative, Prince Theodore and his father were genuinely concerned for her.

Of course, the desire to leverage the impending birth for greater benefits and connections was also real.

These two aspects didn't conflict, nor could they truly be called scheming.

Because there were certain things, certain truths, that the child in Ava's womb would have to face sooner or later.

Since facing them was inevitable, Prince Theodore felt that laying the groundwork early and securing the necessary benefits was the best course of action.

During this visit, Prince Theodore hadn't seen resistance or hatred on his Aunt Ava's face.

Undeniably, this was a positive sign.

The aunt with a gentle face was the aunt of his memories.

"Sigh..."

Prince Theodore slowly exhaled. Before coming to see Ava, he had already decided to subtly inform the Giant King about the child.

However, after seeing Aunt Ava, he found himself hesitating.

"Aunt, since you've chosen to let him be born, you must let him face everything."

"Having the Giant King as support might actually be a good thing for him!"

One stark reality was that the child of Princess Ava and Giant King Orion would certainly not be acknowledged by the mainstream factions of the Human Kingdom.

To put it bluntly, the child would definitely not gain acceptance from the upper echelons obsessed with noble bloodlines.

This meant Ava's child wouldn't have a particularly bright future within the Human Kingdom.

However, this unborn child possessed the bloodline of the Giant King.

This also meant the child's potential for growth would be very high.

And everything His Majesty the King and Prince Theodore were doing was aimed at helping this child draw more 'nourishment' from the precarious space between humans and giants.

Chapter 575: This is an excellent gift

"My friend, Aldous is happy to see you again!"

Orion and Aldous met on the border between the ogre and giant territories.

"Aldous, I'm happy to see you too!"

"Now, I've come to fulfill our agreement."

Orion leaped down from the back of a Raptor and bumped arms with Aldous.

"Hahaha... This time, I'll definitely smash those lizardfolk heads!"

Aldous was overjoyed, waving his arms and legs while roaring continuously.

"Idiot, quickly bring out my gift!"

Aldous extended his left hand and smacked the other large, drowsy head hard.

Bluehide was jolted awake, its first groggy question being: "Is it a fight?"

A look of disgust appeared on Aldous's face as he turned and gave Orion a helpless smile.

"This fellow has been a bit irritable lately!"

"We've divided the labor; he controls the right hand, I control the left."

As he spoke, Aldous manipulated both hands, reaching into his pouch.

The next second, Aldous pulled out a massive iron ball, slamming it onto the ground with a thud.

"Friend, this is my gift to you. This big guy found it; it's one of our treasures."

Orion watched the iron ball sink deeply into the ground, his eyes twitching involuntarily.

"Is this... meteorite iron?"

"Hahaha, no, this is Aether Iron, rarer even than meteorite iron! My friend, do you like this gift?"

How could Orion not like it?

Aether Iron was one of the auxiliary materials used by the Stoneheart Horde's Bureau of Weapons to research weapon transcendence techniques.

Such a large amount of Aether Iron would significantly accelerate the process of creating transformative weapons.

"This is an excellent gift!"

Orion reached out, and with a light wave of his hand, stored the Aether Iron away.

"Aldous, let me give you a little something too!"

Orion thought for two seconds, then selected a Hero-level piece of equipment from his inventory and gave it to Aldous.

It was an item resembling a bracelet, capable of slightly enhancing mental attacks.

Aldous was quite curious after receiving the bracelet.

However, due to its incompatibility with his size, he couldn't wear it on his wrist at all.

Orion mentally transmitted the bracelet's function to Aldous, whose large eyes instantly lit up brightly.

To Orion's astonishment, Aldous lifted the bracelet and hung it directly on his ear.

The bracelet instantly became an earring.

"Hahaha... Aldous has never received such an exquisite gift. Aldous likes it very much!"

Orion forced a few laughs along with Aldous. Afterward, they each summoned their subordinates and headed towards the Human Kingdom's Soaring Bird City.

"Friend, why are we bringing those tasty humans along this time?"

"Lokiviria and Ssorin aren't enough for the three of us to divide!"

Good grief, in Aldous's eyes, Lokiviria and Ssorin were already his food.

Orion gazed at the road winding into the distance and spoke calmly.

"This trade route passing through giant, ogre, and human lands is ours; it's important to all of us."

"Giant caravans were attacked by lizardfolk, human caravans were also plundered, and the ogres were even driven out by them."

"We are invading the lizardfolk territory to protect our own interests."

Orion stated it as a fact, not a question.

Aldous was clever; he understood.

This battle, initiated to protect themselves, was not an invasion, at least not overtly.

"The lizardfolk territory is to your east, bordering the Human Kingdom and also bordering the territories of other races further east."

"If a part of this territory becomes human territory, given our alliance with the humans, don't you think the ogre territory would become safer?"

"This way, both our peoples will see better days!"

After hearing Orion's explanation, Aldous's eyes shone brightly, gleaming with a cunning light.

"You mean give a portion of the lizardfolk territory to the Human Kingdom, letting them become a protective wall to the east of our territory?"

"Correct!"

Orion nodded affirmatively.

If the ogre territory stabilized, the Stoneheart Horde's territory would become more stable, benefiting population growth and the economy.

"This time, Lokiviria's territory is our true target."

Aldous paused for a moment, then frowned in thought.

He had reservations about Orion's idea because it meant the Human Kingdom would take the lion's share of the benefits from this war.

"Friend, if that happens, we'll become neighbors with the humans."

"Those humans are cunning and filthy. They cannot be friends; they aren't worthy of our trust."

Aldous spoke with conviction, holding no goodwill towards humans.

In Aldous's perception, the relationship between ogres and humans was that of hunter and prey.

Aldous and his kin had eaten humans.

From the fragmented memories left in the flesh, they had learned something of human nature.

Selfishness, cowardice, greed... and cunning. Therefore, allowing human territory to border ogre lands made Aldous somewhat resistant.

"Therefore, in the south, ogres and giants must always stand united."

"Only then can we contend with the humans and blood elves, isn't that right?"

Orion spoke plainly, telling Aldous clearly that if ogres and giants wanted to live peacefully in the south, they had to unite.

"Yes, we must unite, become true allies."

Aldous nodded while raising his left hand, fondly fiddling with the earring on his ear.

Orion smiled. With Aldous agreeing on the general direction of distributing the benefits, even if Prince Theodore objected vehemently, it wouldn't have much effect.

"My friend, you are cleverer than Aldous!"

Orion and Aldous looked at each other, chuckled, and quickened their pace towards Soaring Bird City.

...

Human Kingdom, Soaring Bird City.

Ever since Prince Theodore arrived, he had essentially taken control of Soaring Bird City.

Whether in terms of power or status, no one dared to oppose Prince Theodore.

"Soaring Bird City is territory of the Kingdom, a home under the protection of law and faith."

"Everything here must be done according to the rules."

"The rights of the nobles are inviolable. The portion belonging to Baron Torin must not be diminished."

This was the final word, Prince Theodore's stance, representing the position of His Majesty the King and the two Grand Dukes.

Henceforth, from the profits generated by Soaring Bird City, the local lord, Baron Torin, would receive 10%.

As for the remaining 90% profit, 60% would be divided among the royal family and the two Grand Dukes, with the other 30% split among the major nobles of the Kingdom.

Of course, behind those major nobles stood the royal family and the two Grand Dukes.

No one would oppose Prince Theodore's decision; they lacked the courage and strength.

Regarding the outcome of this meeting, Torin, seated at the very back, was both dissatisfied and satisfied. His feelings were conflicted.

Chapter 576: 10% share

Of course, this complex mood was built on a foundation of hatred and unwillingness.

The meeting was held in the newly constructed palace.

It was temporarily requisitioned by Prince Theodore; Torin could only move in after the Prince departed.

What followed was the incessant chatter of the nobles, bickering passive-aggressively, and even coming to blows over the distribution of the remaining profits.

Listening to the cheers of the nobles who had gained advantages, Torin's heart felt unusually calm.

However, beneath this calmness lay an anger suppressed to its absolute limit.

In fact, the 10% share allocated to Torin wasn't even his; it belonged to Princess Ava.

What Torin truly obtained was merely a requisitioned palace and the nominal title of Lord of Soaring Bird City.

Of course, from now on, when Torin entered Soaring Bird City, he would no longer suffer the indignity of being taxed.

As a noble of the kingdom, the necessary decorum had to be maintained.

"Your Highness, thank you for your assistance. Torin is eternally grateful."

Once the meeting ended and the interest groups representing the various nobles had left, Torin expressed his "heartfelt" gratitude to Prince Theodore.

"Don't thank me. Thank Princess Ava; she asked me to speak up for you."

"These things are what you deserve!"

"Offer your loyalty to the kingdom, manage this territory of Soaring Bird City well, and that will be the greatest reward for me."

Prince Theodore's words were tactful. By mentioning Princess Ava, he was reminding Torin not to privately usurp the share belonging to her.

"Thank Princess Ava. May beauty and peace always accompany her!"

Prince Theodore nodded and waved Torin away.

Walking out of the palace, the gratitude and joy on Torin's face gradually faded, eventually leaving only a shadow of gloom.

Returning to a courtyard in Soaring Bird City, Mike and Wyatt immediately rushed forward.

"Master, what was the outcome?"

It was Mike who voiced concern for Torin; both he and Wyatt wore faces etched with anxiety and nervousness.

Truthfully, the outcome of the meeting held in the palace concerned the future prospects of the three of them.

"Not bad. Nominally, Soaring Bird City is still my territory."

"Besides the palace, I was also allocated 10% of Soaring Bird City's profits."

"Furthermore, I retained the tax exemption rights for related commerce and trade in Soaring Bird City."

"This place is still ours!"

Honestly, the current outcome was far superior to what Torin had anticipated.

Before this, after Prince Theodore had temporarily taken control of Soaring Bird City, Torin felt he had completely lost ownership of the land beneath his feet.

"Excellent!"

"Master, this means we still have a chance to rise again."

"10% of Soaring Bird City's profits will still amount to a huge fortune."

As one of the pioneers here, Mike knew the situation in Soaring Bird City better than anyone.

Even a 10% share would be a substantial reward.

"In fact, we won't see a single gold coin from those profits of Soaring Bird City."

"That 10% share belongs to Princess Ava."

"What we obtained are the tax exemption rights and the palace."

"However, this is already enough!"

Torin was quite candid as he explained.

He couldn't count on the profits from Soaring Bird City.

But possessing the palace and the tax exemption rights were the two things he absolutely could not lose and needed the most.

"Master, perhaps this current situation is the best we could hope for."

"In the forest, only the beast that hides can survive until the end."

"With tax exemption, there's much we can do."

Wyatt was a slave leader; he understood the hearts of the lowest slaves and the habits of beasts.

"That's what I think too. In the days to come, we must keep a low profile."

"As long as we maintain our cooperative relationship with the giant territory, we can accumulate resources bit by bit."

"Sooner or later, I will reclaim ownership of Soaring Bird City."

Over the recent days, Torin, Mike, and Wyatt had analyzed and discussed their situation at length.

Firstly, they wouldn't undertake any expansion in Soaring Bird City, nor would they encroach upon the interests of the major nobles.

Torin had already decided: until he regained ownership of Soaring Bird City, all his resources and faction would be hidden within the giant territory.

What Torin needed to do was present the image of an honest, well-behaved lord preparing for retirement to the noble interest groups in Soaring Bird City.

This was the best choice; this was Torin's plan.

"Master, do you know how long His Highness the Prince intends to stay here?"

It had to be said, moving into the newly built palace was something Mike and Wyatt were also eagerly anticipating.

"I don't know either!"

Torin shook his head. At the mention of Prince Theodore, his brow furrowed slightly.

"However, there are rumors circulating that Prince Theodore will receive the Giant King and the Ogre Lord here in Soaring Bird City."

"For now, we don't know if the news is true or false!"

Mike and Wyatt had no channels to probe such high-level information; even Torin lacked them.

"Master, since Theodore is still in Soaring Bird City, should we hold back on the caravan matter?"

This was Wyatt's reminder. The so-called caravan was actually a slave group.

Although the Human Kingdom did not prohibit the slave trade, selling human slaves to foreign races was forbidden.

"Let's put it on hold for now. After Theodore leaves Soaring Bird City, you can set out for Stoneheart City."

Wyatt nodded. In such sensitive times, he didn't want to take unnecessary risks.

...

Valkorath Realm, Southern War Zone Frontline.

Thundar, mounted on a dark fiend, led armies of wolf-mounted cavalry, continuously charging laterally into the fungal creatures.

Amidst the howling of wolves, Thundar felt the bloodlust in his heart being unleashed.

Thundar felt exhilarated; feasting on meat, gulping down wine, boldly slaying enemies – this was his current reality.

Charge after charge, the wolf-mounted cavalry slaughtered many fungal creatures, harvesting a considerable amount of life essence.

Nourished by this life essence, not only the giant bloodline warriors but also their icefield snow wolf mounts made significant progress in a short time.

Previously, the vast majority of the wolf-mounted cavalry were still at the Elite level.

After the baptism by fungal creatures, all wolf-mounted cavalry had advanced to Hero level.

The best among the wolf-mounted cavalry were even beginning to push towards the Alpha-level.

"These fellows, their momentum is getting stronger and stronger!"

Dace slew an Alpha-level fungal creature, looked up at the wolf-mounted cavalry that had just charged past, and sighed with emotion.

"Except for losing a batch of elites at the very beginning, they rarely suffer losses now!"

Otho was not far from Dace; he too saw the charge of the wolf-mounted cavalry.

In fact, they were also part of the cavalry regiment. The reason they hadn't joined the charging group was that they needed to band together to specifically hunt Alpha-level fungal creatures.

Only in this way could the strength of the four guards – Dace, Otho, Beyn, and Torba – rapidly increase.

Of course, improving alongside them were the frost wolves they rode.

Chapter 577: The distribution of benefits

Those four frost wolves required a total of ten clumps of Alpha-level life essence to all advance to the Alpha-level.

The one with the poorest aptitude among them consumed four portions of Alpha-level resources consecutively before successfully advancing.

Such consumption pained Dace and the others greatly.

However, the good news was that after the four frost wolves successfully advanced, the difficulty for Dace and his group to hunt fungal creatures also decreased somewhat.

The significant initial investment was finally yielding returns.

The strength of the four guards—Dace, Otho, Beyn, and Torba—was also steadily increasing.

Improving were not only the guards but also Rendall and Slagor.

"Hahaha... Arch Elder, do you regret giving away the taming collar?"

Seeing Dace and his team kill fungal creature after fungal creature, Slagor was envious.

Slagor had already decided that upon returning this time, he absolutely had to tame a high-apititude swamp crocodile mount.

He wouldn't hesitate even if it meant raising one from a hatchling.

With so many fungal creatures in the Valkorath Realm, as long as one was diligent, they could certainly rapidly increase their mount's strength.

"There's nothing to regret. I'm already very content with my current achievements."

Rendall hefted his spiked club, found another fungal creature, and swung wildly, his attacks ferocious and unrestrained.

Initially, excluding Onyx, Orion had gifted each of the four senior elders in the horde a taming collar—a valuable item capable of directly taming Alpha-level mounts.

Thundar used his collar to tame a dark fiend, and Delilah used hers to tame a four-winged blood bat.

Only Rendall hadn't used his collar; he gave it to his daughter, Ursa.

Fortunately, Ursa used the collar to tame a dark fiend, and using this as a foundation, she achieved numerous battle merits for the Stoneheart Horde.

"Can I still climb to higher levels?"

Since arriving in the Valkorath Realm, Rendall had constantly pondered this question.

While desperately killing fungal creatures, Rendall continually interrogated his own heart, digging into his potential.

Rendall's strength, which had long stagnated, also saw improvement after consuming some life essence.

These changes transformed into fragments of confidence, constantly nourishing Rendall's self-belief.

"Perhaps, progress is still possible for me!"

...

Titanion Realm, Soaring Bird City.

With the arrival of Orion and Aldous, the atmosphere in Soaring Bird City became serious and tense.

If not for Prince Theodore temporarily residing here, the local merchants would have thought the Stoneheart Horde and the Ogres had united to launch an invasion against Soaring Bird City.

"Giant King Orion, Lord Bluehide, welcome to the Human Kingdom."

"This is Soaring Bird City, the first stop upon entering the Human Kingdom."

Outside Soaring Bird City, Prince Theodore, accompanied by a retinue of subordinates, came to welcome Orion and Aldous.

After settling the accompanying giant armies and ogre armies outside Soaring Bird City, Orion and Aldous entered the city accompanied by Prince Theodore.

Soaring Bird City, apart from some towers and fortresses beneficial for military defense, didn't feature many tall or magnificent buildings.

The streets were mostly lined with two-story stone houses, and numerous temporary tents were clustered together in the square.

Orion could see that the Human Kingdom's investment in Soaring Bird City was not particularly significant.

This was understandable. Soaring Bird City bordered foreign territories and could become a frontline of war at any moment.

Those human nobles were clever; investing too much was risky, fearing they might not recoup their losses.

Besides, this wasn't truly their territory.

Strolling slowly and sightseeing, even Aldous was filled with curiosity about the human city.

Fifteen minutes later, Prince Theodore led Orion and Aldous towards the palace.

Inside the palace, within a large, modified hall.

A magic crystal lamp hung from the ceiling, casting a soft, bright light.

The floor was covered with a layer of wool carpet, exceptionally comfortable to walk on.

Even in the corners, there were potted magical plants in bloom, emitting fragrance.

At Prince Theodore's invitation, Orion and Aldous came to the dining table, where human maidservants brought out dish after dish of delicacies.

"Your Excellencies, Soaring Bird City is newly built and lacks resources. Please forgive any inadequate hospitality."

Prince Theodore raised his goblet to invite them to drink. Orion and Aldous exchanged a glance, then picked up the nearby wine barrels, looking at Prince Theodore with gazes that were strange yet tinged with provocation.

The warm smile on Prince Theodore's face froze for an instant but quickly relaxed. He put down his goblet and also picked up a wine barrel.

"Haha, drinking like this is more interesting!"

Orion chuckled, broke open the barrel's seal, and took a deep swig.

Heavy drinking was the preferred way for barbaric races like giants and ogres to enjoy strong liquor.

"Giant King Orion, as long as you enjoy it!"

While Orion and Aldous were chugging from their barrels, Prince Theodore matched them drink for drink.

Orion lowered his barrel, looking at Prince Theodore with a newfound appreciation for the human prince.

Unfussy, composed in the face of events, smooth in handling matters—this temperament greatly appealed to Orion.

"Your Highness, I won't waste time with pleasantries."

"The lizardfolk race allied with Lokiviria to invade ogre territory, affecting the trade route that runs through the territories of our three peoples."

"The alliance between our three races has been damaged and threatened."

Orion was stating this as a conclusion, pointing out that the Stoneheart Horde, ogres, and humans were allies, and this relationship had been compromised.

"Our caravans were plundered by the lizardfolk, and many of our people died as a result."

"The lizardfolk race must be punished!"

Only by framing it this way could their actions be considered legitimate.

Even if lords from nearby regions raised questions, Orion and his allies would have justification.

Prince Theodore joining this battle carried a certain probability of provoking a coalition and questioning from some northern lords.

Now, Orion was coordinating their narrative with Prince Theodore, setting the tone for this invasion.

Because neither the Stoneheart Horde nor the Human Kingdom wished to incite a large-scale war.

This time, they would only conquer the territories of Lokiviria and the lizardfolk, which seemed unlikely to provoke a united resistance from nearby lords.

However, taking precautions was always wise.

"Rest assured, after we leave Soaring Bird City, my father the King will issue an explanation to the lords of the nearby regions in the name of the Kingdom regarding this matter."

"We will not, and cannot, enter the territory of other lords."

Prince Theodore was echoing Orion, while also revealing their bottom line.

Orion glanced at Aldous. Both nodded in response to Prince Theodore.

"Then let's talk about the distribution of benefits!"

"The Human Kingdom obtains the lizardfolk territory, the Ogre race obtains the Insectoid territory, and the Stoneheart Horde obtains the Lord's Stone."

"Any objections to this division?"

As Orion finished speaking, silence fell within the hall.

Aldous had no issue; he and Orion had already divided the benefits before coming.

The proposal was now primarily directed at Prince Theodore.

Chapter 578: Information

"Generally, I have no objections, but some minor adjustments are needed."

"We can concede a portion of the lizardfolk territory."

"However, we require one Lord's Stone."

Prince Theodore picked up a dining knife, carved a large chunk from the whole roasted lamb on the table, and tossed it directly into his mouth.

Chewing the roast meat, Prince Theodore looked at Orion with a smile.

Evidently, the Human Kingdom, by participating this time, wanted both territory and a Lord's Stone.

They would not allow the ogres and giants to gain more benefits than them.

Orion didn't speak. He studied Prince Theodore, seeing calmness and conviction in the latter's eyes.

Prince Theodore seemed very confident about these terms.

"Your Highness, do you know what you're saying?"

"If your appetite is too large, you might burst."

Orion's tone was neutral. After exchanging a glance with Aldous, he continued drinking.

"That one Lord's Stone is something I am personally requesting from Giant King Orion."

"I am willing to trade a piece of information for it."

Prince Theodore swallowed the last bite of roast meat in his mouth, wiped his lips with a napkin, raised the nearby wine barrel, and invited Orion and Aldous to drink.

"Giant King Orion, this information I have will definitely make you feel it's worth the price."

Orion put down his wine barrel, leaned back in the leather chair, and quietly observed Prince Theodore.

The latter's composure made it difficult for Orion to discern his strategy.

"What information?"

Orion wasn't lacking Lord's Stones.

The Valkorath Realm had plenty of fungal creatures; with some effort, killing them yielded equivalent life essence.

If Orion asked, allies like Alexander and Leonidas would gladly trade Lord's Stones for life essence.

However, Orion was genuinely curious about Prince Theodore's information.

What kind of information could be worth a Lord's Stone?

"Rose Manor!"

Prince Theodore looked steadily at Orion, an inexplicable emotion flickering in his eyes.

Orion remained silent. Prince Theodore was also a Legendary-level being; he certainly wouldn't make such a statement without reason.

"Hahaha... I look forward to it!"

Orion neither objected nor nodded, instead raising his wine barrel to drink with Prince Theodore.

"Human prince, your words sound like a deceitful lie."

"I hope you do not deceive my friend!"

Although Orion hadn't spoken, Aldous, beside him, seized the opportunity to state his position.

Aldous's meaning was clear: if you dare deceive Orion, we become enemies.

Hearing this, Prince Theodore shook his head with a smile and didn't pursue the topic further.

Following this, hosts and guests enjoyed themselves thoroughly, and the atmosphere in the reception hall became even more relaxed.

...

Stoneheart City, Mysterious Tavern.

Delilah, handling affairs on the third floor, suddenly waved her hand, dismissing the two succubus maidservants waiting nearby.

"Rose Manor. There's intelligence we need in the Human Kingdom or Blood Elf territory. Send people to investigate."

A voice echoed near Delilah's brow—the sound of Orion's will projection.

Rose Manor was most likely in the Human Kingdom, but just in case, Orion added the Blood Elf territory.

"Understood, I'll arrange it immediately!"

No voice replied to Delilah; the will projection fell silent once more.

Delilah looked up, gazing at Stoneheart City outside the window, her fine eyebrows slightly furrowed.

Delilah knew from past experience that matters Orion personally instructed were typically major events or highly important intelligence.

"Rose Manor?"

Delilah turned, formed hand seals, and summoned forth a shadowy figure.

"I need intelligence on Rose Manor at top speed. Do not miss a single clue!"

"As you command!"

...

North, Lysinthia City.

On the city walls, a smile finally appeared on Lysinthia's face.

With the fiend serpent Gurnar arriving with reinforcements of several hundred thousand snake beasts, the Merfolk occupying Mist Bay were thoroughly repelled.

Especially when the fiend serpents dove underwater, their combat effectiveness undiminished, Merfolk casualties increased further.

"Mistress, the fiend serpents have completely driven the Merfolk out of Mist Bay."

"We have also regained control of the estuary."

For Clawpincher, this had been the most satisfying battle in recent times.

Everyone worked together to expel the Tidefang Clan Merfolk who had seized Mist Bay.

This was a true victory!

"Maintain vigilance; they won't give up so easily!"

"Merfolk hold grudges. Once they regroup, they will surely attack again."

Lysinthia reached up, smoothing strands of hair disordered by the sea breeze, a sense of accomplishment filling her heart.

She had commanded this battle; she had defended the city that belonged to her.

"Compile the situation here and report the relevant intelligence upwards."

Lysinthia's voice was cold, carrying an added layer of authority.

Like the wind from the sea: sometimes sparse, sometimes dense, always cool and clear.

...

South, Human Kingdom.

Under Prince Theodore's guidance, Orion and Aldous had already led their forces away from Soaring Bird City.

"Master, Theodore and the others have left. Should we also depart?"

It was Wyatt speaking. It was nearly autumn now, and he wanted to set off for the giant territory soon.

After selling off all the goods and slaves in hand and spending some time in Stoneheart City, by the time he returned to Soaring Bird City, it would be almost winter.

At that time, the dark beast tides would descend again.

Inside the palace, Torin stood on the balcony of the highest floor, gazing out over Soaring Bird City.

"Go. Take those giant warriors with you."

"With them in your group, you'll be safer and find things more convenient in the giant territory."

Mike and Wyatt heard this, nodded, and then withdrew.

The midday sun slanted down, falling on the balcony, illuminating half of Torin's face.

Torin didn't feel the heat; instead, he felt a sense of comfort.

Looking out at Soaring Bird City, Torin's eyes were shadowed yet resolute.

...

Roar!

An ogre swung a massive spiked club, smashing a lizardfolk's head to pulp, then bent down to ravenously devour the remains.

Pouncing alongside it was a group of Gnoll warriors who had been waiting nearby for an opportunity.

Lizardfolk flesh was prey they could never hunt on their own.

In their own territory, the lizardfolk race was being slaughtered by a combined force of ogres, humans, giants, beastfolk, and gnolls.

Yet, the lizardfolk Lord Ssorin had not appeared.

"Lord Ssorin's presence is moving northward. He must be going to contact Lokiviria."

As soon as the presence of Orion, Aldous, and Prince Theodore appeared in the lizardfolk territory, Lord Ssorin detected them.

Being a lord, Ssorin was not foolish.

His first action wasn't to rescue his slaughtered people but to flee at full speed towards the territory of his neighbor, Lokiviria.

Chapter 579: I'll smash him

However, what Ssorin hadn't expected was that Lokiviria didn't respond to him at all.

Now, Ssorin began to panic.

"Damn Lokiviria, you can't hide! We invaded the ogre territory together!"

Ssorin's furious voice echoed across the insectoid territory, traveling for miles.

Inside a massive stone palace, Lokiviria looked at the child in his hands. It was his son; although an insectoid, his bloodline potential was exceptionally outstanding.

"Take the child and flee north!"

"You are also from the north. With your current strength, as long as you don't infringe upon the interests of those lords, you should know how to survive."

"Inside here are all the resources our son needs to grow to the Legendary level."

"If I can survive this calamity, I will come back for you soon."

Lokiviria pressed his son into Rowena's arms and also handed her some crucial resources.

Rowena's strength was now much greater than before.

With the significant resources Lokiviria had poured into her, Rowena had also advanced to the Alpha-level.

Furthermore, with Lokiviria's help, she had signed a contract with an Alpha-level thunderhawk.

"Lokiviria, let's flee this place together!"

"With your strength, as long as we abandon the southern territory, we can preserve ourselves."

Rowena spoke with sincerity. She didn't know if she had feelings for Lokiviria.

But Rowena knew that, apart from her brother, Lokiviria was the man who treated her best.

"I cannot leave!"

"The Insectoid race struggled greatly to reach the south. As long as there's a sliver of hope, we cannot give up."

"Don't worry. Even if I die, as long as our son survives, the Insectoids can rise again."

Lokiviria truly didn't want to abandon this southern land. This time, he had deceived and instigated Ssorin precisely to lure Orion out and kill him.

Now the plan had succeeded; Ssorin was undoubtedly doomed.

Lokiviria, Orion, and Aldous had once been allies. He believed that as long as he paid a sufficient price, there was a high probability he could resolve this crisis.

However, when facing Orion alongside Ssorin, he had to be fully prepared.

"Go now. You've experienced enough; you should understand how to make choices."

Rowena gazed at Lokiviria, her expression solemn. She wanted to say something, but when she opened her mouth, she changed her words.

"My dear, I will wait for you to come for us."

"Mm."

A high-pitched hawk cry sounded. Rowena mounted her thunderhawk, a squad of insectoid guards standing behind her, and fled north.

...

"Damn Lokiviria, we signed a contract! We agreed to face enemies together! Do you intend to break the contract?"

"Ssorin, what are you screeching about? You can feel fear too?"

At the border, sensing Lokiviria rapidly approaching, Ssorin launched into an angry interrogation.

"Have the ogres and giants made a move?"

Lokiviria voiced his doubt, sensing that today's Ssorin lacked his usual arrogance and dominance.

"Not just ogres and giants, but humans too! They're involved as well!"

"Humans?"

"Yes! Why else do you think I'd be scared? We're facing three Legendary level beings now."

Lokiviria fell silent. He hadn't expected humans to get involved either.

Humans—a race even stronger than the blood elves.

Lokiviria's heart sank. Things had not developed in the direction he had anticipated.

"Gather our forces. We'll go meet them together."

"If negotiations fail, then we'll just have to concede more territory and benefits."

This was the solution Lokiviria came up with. He realized that this time, the Insectoid race might also suffer heavy losses.

"Damn it! If I'd known earlier, I shouldn't have listened to you! We shouldn't have invaded the ogre territory!"

"Ogres, giants, and humans have formed an alliance!"

Lokiviria didn't speak. In the current situation, complaining offered no benefit.

What they could do was strive for negotiation, offer enough benefits to avoid war.

And also, be prepared to flee at any moment.

"Prepare. Display our strength. Ideally, make them reconsider due to the difficulty, reducing their greedy appetite!"

"..."

South, Lizardfolk territory.

"This race performed exceptionally well in the last North-South War."

"Their strength, healing ability, and charge are well-suited for sieges and conquering land. They are outstanding among their level."

"Of course, they also make excellent land mounts."

Prince Theodore spoke knowledgeably. During the last war, he had personally witnessed lizardfolk transform into giant lizards for siege purposes, leaving a deep impression.

"That damned reptile! He fled! He actually fled!"

"This time, I'll show him the ogre's club is hard, hard enough to crush his skull!"

Aldous was furious. Entering the lizardfolk territory without immediately encountering Ssorin left Aldous extremely disappointed.

"I'll smash him!"

Aldous's other head was no longer dozing at this moment but was waving its club, roaring continuously.

"He didn't flee. He went to find help."

As the most powerful being in the group, Orion had already sensed the presence of Lokiviria and Ssorin.

"Before they arrive, let the warriors have their fill of slaughter."

"After all, the entire lizardfolk body is a treasure!"

Neither Aldous nor Prince Theodore objected to Orion's suggestion, because their purpose in invading the lizardfolk territory this time was precisely to acquire resources and territory.

In this territory, aside from minerals and magical plants, the greatest resource was the lizardfolk race itself.

"Your Highness, this territory once belonged to the Human Kingdom. You should be quite clear about any important resources here, I imagine."

Orion gazed at the distant slaughter, casually mentioning this.

"This territory is rich in Cupid Grass, Silver Needle Grass, Blood Flower, and So on... Among them, Cupid Grass and Royal Blood Flower are the most popular. Cupid Grass is the main ingredient for crafting an aphrodisiac potion; it's very popular among nobles."

"There are also two mineral veins here: one of Silver Iron ore, and one of Magnetite ore."

Prince Theodore's voice was calm, with no attempt at concealment.

"After the war, the Stoneheart Horde requires half the Silver Iron ore and Magnetite ore."

"Consider this part of our spoils!"

Orion's tone permitted no refusal. Prince Theodore glanced at Orion and nodded in agreement.

In reality, throughout this journey, Prince Theodore's heart had been far from calm.

Ordinarily, when Orion concealed his aura, he seemed unremarkable.

However, when Orion utilized his transcendent power, Prince Theodore sensed something extraordinary.

Chapter 580: You broke your promise

Legendary level peak!

Orion's aura was Legendary level peak!

Excluding the white dragon Frostsire and the Human Saint, Orion's strength already stood at the absolute pinnacle of this continent.

Prince Theodore dared not ask, nor did he dare to easily offend Orion.

Given Orion's current immense power, his willingness to share the benefits from the lizardfolk territory was already considered generous.

"Why did he drag the Human race into this war?"

"Why?"

Prince Theodore pondered silently. If he possessed power equal to Orion's, he certainly wouldn't allow anyone else to touch these benefits.

"Could he know about Ava's pregnancy?"

"Is he trying to compensate Ava through me?"

It had to be said, Prince Theodore's train of thought had diverged wildly at this moment.

Orion felt somewhat uncomfortable. The way Prince Theodore looked at him was strangely inexplicable.

It was a sense of disharmony devoid of hostility!

This reminded Orion of the information Prince Theodore had offered—Rose Manor. What exactly happened there?

Awooo... Awooo...

In the distance, a series of wolf howls rang out. It was the gnoll armies led by Dirtclaw.

At this moment, Dirtclaw had already transformed into his Hellhound form.

Flames burned upon his body, and his massive frame was in no way inferior to the lizard he battled.

"Awooo... No being has better teeth than Dirtclaw, except the great Mistress and the great Orion!"

"Damned four-legged reptile, Dirtclaw will end your life!"

The Hellhound radiated a terrifying aura, transforming into a ball of fire as it lunged towards the lizard.

Although the current Dirtclaw hadn't yet reached Alpha peak, he wasn't far off.

Dirtclaw's strength far surpassed the lizardfolk he fought against.

Crack!

Dirtclaw bit through the lizardfolk's neck, licked its fresh blood, found the crystal core within the corpse, and swallowed it whole.

For others, the energy within crystal cores was too violent, but for Dirtclaw in his Hellhound form, he could digest anything.

"Awooo... Woof woof woof... Gnolls, charge!"

It was a very strange sight, wolf howls and dog barks issuing successively from Dirtclaw's throat.

The first sound was a form of deterrence; the second, a command.

Receiving the order, the gnolls abandoned their current prey and pursued the lizardfolk in the distance.

"Damned younglings, do not test my patience! Abandon the flesh in your mouths and obey Dirtclaw's command!"

"Those who disobey my orders, I will turn them into corpses, reduce them to dust!"

Dirtclaw had risen from the cannon fodder troops and participated in countless major battles alongside other Stoneheart Horde armies.

Dirtclaw knew very well that only disciplined armies possessed greater combat effectiveness and wouldn't miss crucial opportunities.

However, the concept of discipline seemed ineffective when applied to the greedy, gluttonous, and short-sighted gnolls.

Even after Dirtclaw's brief display of intimidation, gnolls would still lower their heads to gnaw on their prey after killing an enemy.

This was their nature; few gnolls could restrain it.

"Dirtclaw, this is just a warm-up. Let them eat their fill!"

"A full stomach makes for good work!"

Drakthul lifted his blood-stained battleaxe, emerged from the rear, and came to Dirtclaw's side.

"Compared to the enemies we've encountered, these lizardfolk(lizard) are pathetic!"

Resting his axe on the ground, Drakthul gazed at the main force streaming towards the distance like a river. Compared to fighting the fungal creatures, battling these lizardfolk presented absolutely no pressure.

"Gnolls who don't learn will never amount to anything!"

Dirtclaw continued to complain about his gnoll armies. This batch of gnolls, compared to the ones sent to the Valkorath Realm, was vastly inferior in both strength and discipline.

"Bro, do you want to ride a Hellhound across the battlefield?"

Dirtclaw turned his head, a light called temptation flashing in his eyes.

"Ah... Can I really?"

"Yes, of course you can! Just give me half your spoils this time, and you can ride until the war ends."

Riding a Hellhound—it must be an incredibly cool moment. Drakthul had long wanted to experience it.

After a brief internal struggle, Drakthul leaped onto Dirtclaw's back without hesitation.

"Are you ready? I'm about to run wild!"

"Awooo..."

Dirtclaw threw his head back and howled, then charged off carrying Drakthul.

Wherever Dirtclaw passed, he kicked up enormous gusts of air, affecting not only beasts and lizardfolk but also the cavalry armies brought by Prince Theodore.

The beast-blood mounts ridden by the human knights only gradually calmed down after Dirtclaw had run far into the distance.

"Giant King Orion, your subordinates are all fierce warriors and valiant generals."

Orion nodded with a smile; he knew Prince Theodore was referring to Dirtclaw.

Dirtclaw, having returned from the Valkorath Realm, was among the top tier of Alpha-level beings in the entire Stoneheart Horde.

Excluding Gustalon, likely no one could reliably defeat Dirtclaw; even Onyx wasn't certain.

"That fellow's nature is a bit wild. He gets very excited and fierce on the battlefield. We have the dragons to thank for his growth."

At the mention of dragons, Prince Theodore grew curious and asked about Dirtclaw.

Orion didn't mind talking and briefly explained how Dirtclaw's bloodline evolved in the dragon colosseum, leaving Prince Theodore amazed.

"So it's a Hellhound! That gnoll's bloodline evolved, no wonder!"

This was idle conversation. Since Ssorin hadn't appeared, Orion, Aldous, and Prince Theodore strolled through the battlefield, following the invading forces towards the center of the lizardfolk territory.

Only after seven days did the figures of Lokiviria and Ssorin finally appear before the trio.

In the distance, a mixed force of lizardfolk and insectoids brought the invading armies of the Stoneheart Horde, the Human Kingdom, and the Ogre race to a halt.

"Lord Orion, this time it was just a misunderstanding. We are willing to cede a portion of territory as compensation to the three of you."

Lokiviria's voice carried from afar. Orion, Aldous, and Prince Theodore exchanged a glance, then flew out in unison, appearing in mid-air.

Facing Lokiviria and Ssorin from a distance, Orion's terrifying aura caused the faces of the former two to change drastically.

Legendary level peak!

It's over!

Flee!

This thought flashed through the minds of Lokiviria and Ssorin, but they didn't immediately turn and flee because Orion hadn't spoken.

Orion's face was calm, remaining silent.

He wasn't the main protagonist in this war; the protagonist was the ogre Aldous beside him.

"Damned Lokiviria! What did you say back then? You broke your promise!"

"After this war, we are no longer allies!"

"Now, let me tell you, in the eyes of ogres, if you're not an ally, you're an enemy!"