

Titan King 881

Chapter 881: A Prisoner's Proposal

"A Lunar Serpent."

The one who answered Orion wasn't Leonidas, but Alexander.

"The monster in the chains is a Lunar Serpent," Alexander's voice was laced with shock. "A Jiao on the verge of becoming a true dragon."

The creature before them was draconic, but it was a world away from the brutish, winged lizards they were used to.

Normally, the dragons they encountered had massive, bat-like wings, four clawed feet, mouths full of sharp teeth, and long, winding tails tipped with spikes or barbs. But there were other, vastly different branches of dragonkind. There were Faerie Dragons and Tyrant Dragons, Bone Dragons and Sea-Drakes, even the divine Azure Dragons of legend. These creatures broke the mold—some had no wings, some had feathered pinions, and others had entirely different body structures.

"A Divine Dragon?" Leonidas's voice trembled, his dragon soul form wavering with excitement. It was obvious this Lunar Serpent had captured his complete interest.

Only then did it fully register with Orion. The monster before them had no wings. It had four legs, and a body like a colossal python.

"Look at its head," Alexander continued. "Those markings like fractured moonstones. That's the Lunar Mark. The lunar affinity is tied to water. A creature like this can passively generate and control the fundamental laws of ice and cold. It can freeze the land themselves."

His voice was filled with a strange reverence. "I never thought we'd find a mythological creature from the records of our last world, here."

Orion felt a flicker of understanding, a connection he couldn't quite grasp.

"It's trapped... and in a deep sleep. Its aura is incredibly weak," Leonidas observed. "Wait. No. This isn't the real Dragon Mausoleum! This is a Dragon-Burial Formation!"

His sudden shout was a shock. He had just sensed the dragon soul that led them here disappear completely after entering the magical formation beneath the Lunar Serpent. His eyes darted to the four giant dragon statues, and the memories of his time as a void dragon began to surface. He understood.

"Bro...?" Orion transmitted.

Before he could even ask, Leonidas was already explaining. "This place is a Dragon Mausoleum, but it's also not. The mausoleum we're seeing right now isn't the real deal. It's a prison, built specifically for that Lunar Serpent. This hall only becomes a true mausoleum after the serpent dies."

Leonidas's voice was rushed, his mind racing as more pieces fell into place. "The real Dragon Mausoleum is inside the magical formation beneath the serpent's body. It must be a hybrid—a mix of a spirit-siphoning formation and a teleportation array. It not only draws in dragon souls, but it also drains the magical power from the Lunar Serpent's body."

"This whole place... it's a vampire. It's feeding on the Lunar Serpent's energy to power the true mausoleum. With its incredibly long lifespan, the serpent is the perfect battery."

As he finished, Leonidas let out a low, greedy chuckle, like a cat that had just found the canary cage.

"So, killing the serpent would disrupt the power supply and shut down the real mausoleum?" Alexander's voice was cold, cutting straight to the point.

"No, no, no, now is not the time to kill it," Leonidas shot back. "If the serpent dies, the magical formation will become unstable. The real mausoleum could be damaged or lost, and that would screw up our egg hunt."

His dragon soul form did a slow lap around the fifty-foot-long Lunar Serpent before settling beside the spirit swordavatar.

“Then what’s your plan?” Alexander asked calmly. He knew Leonidas’s moods; the excitement meant he already had an idea.

“Same old plan. We split up,” Leonidas said. “Alexander, you stay here as backup and wait for me and our bro to return. If we’re not back in half a month, you kill this sleeping serpent. Cut off the power supply, throw the whole system into chaos.”

He paused. “And then we all run like hell.”

It was a reasonably solid plan. Alexander’s spirit swordavatar wasn’t suited for carrying dragon eggs anyway. By staying here, he could not only provide backup but also serve as a final trump card.

“Alright. We’ll do it your way.” Orion and Alexander both agreed.

Orion and Leonidas turned and flew toward the teleportation array beneath the Lunar Serpent. Just as they were about to enter, a weary, ageless voice echoed in all three of their minds.

“Perhaps... you would be willing to hear my proposal.”

In an instant, the spirit sword trembled. The dragon souls wavered. Orion, Leonidas, and Alexander froze, instinctively preparing for an attack. Orion and Leonidas exchanged a look, their shared shock palpable even in their soul-forms.

A strange voice, a calm tone—this had to be a demigod.

“Do not be alarmed,” the voice continued. “I am also in an ethereal state. I can do you no harm.”

Orion and Leonidas said nothing, their senses stretched to the absolute limit, searching for the source of the voice.

"Are you the Lunar Serpent?" After a long moment, it was Alexander who spoke, his spirit sword avatar flying to hover directly above the serpent's head, poised to strike at any second. It was both a threat and a warning.

The strange voice went silent for a long time before finally answering with a tired, drawn-out sigh. "I did not think anyone was left in this world who could recognize my kind."

"The Lunar Serpent is attuned to water, able to generate its own fundamental laws. That means you should be a demigod," Alexander pressed, his tone cold and questioning. "Why are you trapped here?"

"Look around you. Look at my body. You should be able to guess. I have been imprisoned, sealed... enslaved. I have been chained here since the day this mausoleum was built. Countless years have passed. I no longer remember how long."

The voice was filled with an ancient sorrow. "I do not know this term, 'demigod.' If you are speaking of power, I had not yet reached this level when I was captured."

The great hall of the Dragon Mausoleum fell silent.

"When I was first brought here, I had only two claws. Over the millennia, I have grown four, as well as these scales and horns. But my body is bound by the formation. I cannot move an inch. The one who sealed me was a dragon far more powerful than I. He not only carved a sealing array into my flesh, but he placed a seal upon my soul as well."

The Lunar Serpent's voice was incredibly faint, as if recounting its past was draining what little energy it had left.

"Your soul is sealed?" Leonidas, ever the old cynic, wasn't buying it. "Then how are you communicating with us right now?"

"The fact that you cannot sense my soul is the best proof," the serpent replied. "I am speaking to you now only by vibrating the Dragon Pearl within my body."

Leonidas was about to retort, but Alexander cut in first. "You said you had a proposal. What is it?"

Chapter 882: Mist of Delusion

"I will help you find your treasure. You will help me break my seals."

The weak voice echoed in their minds again. The Lunar Serpent's offer wasn't particularly appealing. Orion, Leonidas, and Alexander remained silent.

Orion looked to Leonidas, who just shook his head slightly. In the end, both of them turned their attention to Alexander's spirit swordavatar. The meaning was clear: this was Alexander's call to make. He was the one staying behind to hold the line. He would be the one facing the Lunar Serpent.

"What help can you offer us?" The spirit swordavatar vibrated softly, emitting an aura that promised a fatal strike if the answer was unsatisfactory.

"The magical formation beneath me... it does not lead to the true Dragon Mausoleum," the serpent revealed. "It leads to a realm between illusion and reality. A place called the Azure Mirage. That realm is filled with monsters called Lunarfin, creatures formed from my own siphoned power."

Sensing the deadly intent from the sword, the Lunar Serpent's thoughts came faster. "To enter the real Dragon Mausoleum, you must first defeat the Dragon God(demigod) Phantom hidden deep within the Azure Mirage. The phantom is not just a guardian. It is the passage—a living, mobile gateway."

To build trust, one had to offer something of value. The Lunar Serpent understood this, so it had shared a true secret.

"How do you know so much?" Orion pressed. The serpent was sealed; it shouldn't have been able to move freely, let alone gather this kind of intelligence.

"The Azure Mirage is filled with my power," the serpent explained. "As long as my fundamental laws still govern that place, I can perceive what happens within it."

Orion was speechless. Laws. That was a level of power only a demigod could touch.

“Are there dragon eggs in the Azure Mirage?” This was the only thing Leonidas cared about. It was the entire reason for their mission.

“No,” the serpent replied. “The eggs are all stored in the true Dragon Mausoleum. They are hidden far more securely.”

If there were no eggs, the Azure Mirage was meaningless to Orion and Leonidas.

“The Azure Mirage is teeming with dragon souls,” the serpent continued. “They pilot the Lunarfin, inhabiting the realm as guardians of the true mausoleum. You must fight your way through the Azure Mirage to reach your goal. It is a dead end otherwise. You will never get in.”

Hearing this, Orion and Leonidas both frowned. They could smell a trap. The Lunar Serpent was subtly trying to coerce them.

“Heh heh... it feels like you’re holding something back,” Leonidas sneered, a mocking smile on his face as he stared at the serpent’s bound form. A prisoner, trying to gain leverage over them? Had countless years of imprisonment rotted the old serpent’s brain?

“The Lunarfin are forged from my lunar power,” the serpent quickly added under Leonidas’s pressure. “Take a bone from my body. Fuse it into your weapons. You will be able to shatter their defenses with ease, and it will have a powerful suppressive effect on them.”

ZING!

Before Orion could even move, Alexander’s spirit swordavatar shot forward and plunged into the Lunar Serpent’s body. With a sharp, wrenching sound, two hard spinal bones were pried loose and sent flying toward Orion and Leonidas.

They both reached out and caught the dragon bones. A massive great axe appeared in Leonidas's hands, and without a moment's hesitation, he fused the bone into the weapon. Seeing this, Orion did the same, merging his piece into his trident, Flame of Will.

"Bro, let's go. We'll leave this to Alexander," Leonidas said. With a chunk of its spine missing, the Lunar Serpent's power would be greatly diminished even if its seals were broken. Leonidas was confident Alexander could handle a weakened demigod. Besides, Alexander taking the initiative to cripple the serpent was a clear preventative measure for what might come later.

The Lunar Serpent made no sound as its bones were ripped from its body. But its silence was a tangible thing, a clear sign of it swallowing its rage.

Orion and Leonidas exchanged a look, nodded to the spirit swordavatar, and dove into the hybrid formation beneath the Lunar Serpent.

Only after their forms had vanished did the serpent's voice return. "That is a sharp sword you have. To cut my spine... it is comparable to the weapon of the one who sealed me."

Its voice was even weaker now. "When your friends return, would you be willing to help me sever the four chains that bind me? I can fight alongside you against the demigod dragon soul that resides in the Dragon Mausoleum."

The spirit swordavatar trembled. So that was its trump card. The demigod dragon soul. The serpent had deliberately withheld that information, saving it as a bargaining chip for Alexander.

SHINK!

The only response the Lunar Serpent received was the spirit swordavatar descending upon its head, its razor-sharp tip sinking two inches into its skull.

Silence.

Absolute silence.

The negotiation was over.

The Azure Mirage was a fantastical world. Ocean and sky blended into one another, clouds and waves intertwined, creating a magnificent landscape of impossible blues and whites.

When the dragon soul forms of Orion and Leonidas fell into this realm, they were immediately seized by a mysterious, pulling force.

“Don’t fight it. Let’s see where it takes us first,” Leonidas’s voice transmitted.

Orion said nothing, allowing the force to pull him down into the vast ocean.

Deep beneath the surface, countless monsters, each 700-800 feet long, lay motionless. Their forms were like small mountains, their spines ridged with sharp, uneven spikes. Two massive fins grew from their backs, resembling great wings. Their bodies were covered in shimmering, blue-silver scales that gave off an unnerving, terrifying beauty under the mystical light.

“Bro, are these the Lunarfin?” The closer he got to them, the more Orion was overcome by an indescribable, almost comical feeling—as if he and Leonidas were about to be reborn in these new bodies.

“They are,” Leonidas confirmed. “But don’t let your guard down. The Lunar Serpent was right. This world is a space between illusion and reality. The Lunarfin are real, but they aren’t. Don’t be fooled by that feeling of rebirth. This is still a massive illusion. That layer of mist between the sea and the sky... if I’m not mistaken, that’s a Mist of Delusion.”

As he spoke, Leonidas’s voice grew smaller, more distant, more distorted.

Orion felt something envelop him. When he opened his eyes again, he found that he had become a Lunarfin.

Chapter 883: Cover Blown

When Orion moved his new body, he immediately drew the attention of another Lunarfin nearby—it was Leonidas.

“Son of a bitch!” Leonidas’s thoughts echoed. “If I wasn’t so damn strong-willed, this illusion might’ve actually scrambled my brains. My poor bro, you haven’t forgotten who you are, have you?”

Leonidas was a real piece of work, swimming circles around Orion in a body that was an unsettling mix of a catfish and a seahorse.

“You’re an ass, bro,” Orion transmitted back.

Hearing Orion’s voice, Leonidas let out a mental chuckle and gestured with his head toward the center of the vast sea. In the distance, they could just make out a lone Lunarfin swimming in that direction.

“Bro, can we really trust that Lunar Serpent?” Orion asked. “I can’t shake the feeling that it’s just using us.”

Even though the existence of the Lunarfin had been confirmed, Orion still felt like he was caught in the eye of a storm of conspiracies.

“Doesn’t matter, bro,” Leonidas replied, completely unconcerned. “With or without it, we’re relying on our own skills for this expedition. If the serpent gives us good intel, great. If it tries any funny business, Alexander is watching it. It’ll have a world of hurt coming its way.”

After entering the Azure Mirage, the unexpected appearance of the Lunar Serpent seemed far less important. “Besides, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. It’s definitely trying to use us, but there’s a limit to how much. And we’re not some pushovers that a washed-up demigod on its last legs can intimidate.”

As he finished, Leonidas let out another strange, wheezing chuckle that sounded incredibly odd coming from the body of a Lunarfin.

“Come on, let’s go check it out.”

Leonidas spread his two fins and, with a powerful flick, churned the water into a vortex of bubbles. He shot forward like a torpedo, and Orion propelled his own body to follow.

To be honest, the sea within the Azure Mirage was a dreamlike, mystical place. There were no winds or waves on the vast ocean; its surface was a flawless, endless mirror. From the sky above, a mysterious light shone down, refracting into a kaleidoscope of colors in the transparent water.

After some time, Orion and Leonidas followed the other Lunarfin as it leaped from the water’s surface, revealing a massive temple floating on the sea. It was so large they couldn’t see its edges. Countless corridors, pavilions, and palaces extended outwards in every direction, shrouded in an ethereal mist that made the entire structure impossibly magnificent.

The Lunarfin they had been following spread its fan-like fins, momentarily blocking out the sky, and landed gently on an outermost corridor paved with jade. The moment it touched down, it transformed into a man with a crimson beard and hair to match—a dragonkin. The man looked around, confused, before taking a tentative step deeper into the temple.

“This has to be the center of the Azure Mirage,” Orion thought, floating on the surface and gazing at the distant temple. A thick fog hung perpetually over it, as if hiding something within.

“Bro, let’s play it safe. One at a time,” Leonidas transmitted. “Let your big bro go test the waters first.”

“Alright.”

With that, Leonidas flapped his fins and soared out of the water. Seconds later, he landed on the corridor, and his Lunarfin body began to shed away. But what appeared in its place was Leonidas’s own beastfolk form.

The dragon soul disguise had been completely consumed the moment they inhabited the Lunarfin bodies. The Beastfolk’s aura, so different from that of a dragon, instantly alerted the dragon souls nearby.

“Insolence! The stench of an outsider!”

“This is the temple of the dragon race! A holy land that cannot be defiled!”

“Seize the intruder! We’ll offer him as a sacrifice!”

A cacophony of voices erupted from the surrounding palaces and pavilions. Dragon souls in humanoid forms leaped from the architecture into the sea below. When they breached the surface again, they had transformed into massive, savage Lunarfin.

“Create a diversion!” Leonidas yelled to Orion. “I’ll make a scene here! You find a chance to sneak into the temple and take out that Phantom! And watch yourself, this place can probably identify dragon souls!”

Orion didn’t respond. Instead, he dove deep beneath the sea, intending to find another place to make landfall. If he landed there, he’d be in the same mess as Leonidas.

As he swam away from the battle, he had a flash of inspiration. He released the Deathly Soul-Reaper avatar that was hidden within his main avatar. In the Azure Mirage, the Deathly Soul-Reaper avatar was like a fish in water. It hid in the void, and even Orion himself wouldn’t have been able to detect it without their soul-link.

An idea began to form. He commanded the Deathly Soul-Reaper to leap from the water and cautiously approach the temple. Just as it was about to land, it activated its teleportation skill, blinking deep into the temple complex.

“It works!”

Orion, hidden in the depths, was overjoyed. The Deathly Soul-Reaper had passed by a patrol of dragon souls on its way in, but none of them had sensed its presence. It was clear that in this space, the Deathly Soul-Reaper avatar had a massive stealth advantage.

Since it could infiltrate the temple undetected, Orion decided he needed to change his battle plan. He had two options: rejoin Leonidas, where they could support each other with greater power and destructive force, or open up a second front himself, drawing more dragon souls away to create a bigger opening for the Deathly Soul-Reaper .

“What’s the right call?”

The decision came to him in an instant. He turned and swam back toward Leonidas’s position. Sticking together was safer. If something unexpected happened, at least they’d have someone to strategize with. Two arch lords fighting side-by-side was a much better insurance policy. Exploring and finding the eggs was important, but keeping their avatars intact was paramount.

ROAR!

In the distance, Leonidas’s berserker avatar had enraged at the very start of the fight. In his berserk state, the Beastfolk’s body grew even larger, his muscles like iron, his eyes glowing like blood.

He swung his massive great axe, cleaving through the Lunarfin that swarmed him. An aura of pure killing intent clung to him, and a red-black miasma of blood energy pulsed across his skin like veins, radiating a palpable sense of destruction that even Orion could feel.

“This bro’s Beastfolk avatar is no simple thing,” Orion noted.

His Lunarfin form didn’t surface. Instead, he swam closer to the battle, approaching the injured Lunarfin that Leonidas had knocked into the water.

“What happened?” Orion asked, pretending to be just another guard arriving from a different part of the sea, his voice transmitted through the water.

“Intruders!” the injured Lunarfin replied, one of its fins torn. “They came from nowhere! They’ve invaded our holy land! Quick, we have to kill him! Find out how they got in!”

Chapter 884: Domain of the Bloodhowl Axe

A cold light flashed in Orion's eyes as he faced the injured Lunarfin.

"What? Intruders?" he transmitted, feigning outrage. "Unforgivable!"

With a furious roar, he swung his own sharp fins, plunging them directly into the other Lunarfin's body.

"What are you doing?!" the injured one cried out in confusion. "The intruder is in the temple! Are you out of your mind?!"

Clearly, it hadn't realized the 'ally' before it was the real problem.

Orion let out a silent, vicious laugh. With a twist of his fins, his trident, Flame of Will, burst forth from his spectral body, shredding the Lunarfin to pieces. The dragon soul residing within it was instantly incinerated, becoming fuel for the trident.

The sneak attack was a success. Orion continued to swim, moving on to the next Lunarfin that had been knocked into the water.

Up on the temple corridor, Leonidas was on a rampage. Far from being stopped, he had actually managed to push deeper into the temple complex.

"Hahaha! Trash! You're all trash! Fucking useless!"

After going berserk, Leonidas's fighting style was wild and unrestrained, his attacks impossibly wide and brutal. His speed and strength had been massively boosted. The sheer, unbridled savagery he unleashed was enough to make any enemy hesitate. A whole mob of Lunarfin swarmed him, ganging up on him, yet not a single one could withstand a single blow from the bro.

Leonidas wasn't stupid, nor was he some mindless beast. Through the fighting, he'd figured it out. The dragon souls piloting these Lunarfin bodies couldn't even use fifty percent of their real power—maybe thirty or forty percent at best. Most of them were only Legendary level dragon souls to begin with, enemies that Leonidas wouldn't even glance at twice.

"Intruder! You have disturbed the peace of all dragon souls! You will pay the price!"

"The glory of the temple is inviolable! Seize this outsider! We will wash away this insult with his blood!"

"He has defiled the sanctity and faith of this temple! He is a blasphemer and must be destroyed!"

"This sacred territory of the dragon race will not be tainted by outsiders! Let him feel our wrath and die in fear!"

Just as Leonidas was in the middle of his killing spree, four deep, powerful voices echoed from the depths of the temple. With them came the auras of four arch lord-level temple guardians.

To be precise, it was one guardian and three monsters.

The Temple Guardian was a giant. It wielded a massive greatsword and was clad in battle armor, its face covered in fish-like scales. Bathed in a divine light, it strode out from the temple's depths, its presence both majestic and solemn.

Next was a Solarfin, a monster that was the polar opposite of the Lunarfin, though similar in appearance. It was significantly larger, and its presence was the primary force used to suppress the Lunarfin, which were born of the Lunar Serpent's power and needed to be kept in check. The dragon souls inhabiting the Lunarfin bodies not only gained a physical form but also served as part of this suppression system.

Then came an Abyssal Stalker and a Sea Fiend. These were the true monsters that dwelled in the Dragon Mausoleum.

The Abyssal Stalker was a shifting mass of black sludge, its true form impossible to discern, though the grotesque face of a woman would occasionally surface from the ooze. The Sea Fiend was a Merfolk holding a trident, dragging a long fish tail, with four powerful arms sprouting from its back and a body covered in dense scales.

Both the Abyssal Stalker and the Sea Fiend radiated the power of an arch lord peak.

"Two upper arch lords, and two arch lordpeaks. These must be the real guardians of the Dragon Mausoleum's entrance," Orion thought, lurking in the water. He watched the four arch lords approach, knowing the real battle was about to begin. As the hidden operative, he had to make another choice.

Leonidas versus four of them? With his Beastfolk avatar's current power, it was impossible.

"Hang in there, bro!" Orion began to gather his power, slowly moving closer to Leonidas's position, hoping to launch a surprise attack and take one of the enemies out of the fight.

"Hahaha! Just a bunch of pathetic clowns without real bodies!" Leonidas roared, completely unfazed. "Leonidas can slaughter you as easily as butchering chickens! Look at yourselves! You don't even look like dragons anymore! You're all just monsters, and monsters are meant to be slain!!"

Leonidas knew dragons. Their powerful magic and physical might were the core of their pride. Attacking that pride was the most effective insult.

"You lowly Beastfolk, a base mongrel your own beast god would abandon! An intruder in the Dragon Mausoleum, a destroyer who disturbs the peace of the netherworld!" The Temple Guardian's voice rolled over him like a tidal wave, thick with rage and killing intent. "I will use your blood to paint a sacrificial ritual! I will burn your body and let your soul be scorched for eternity by the sacred flame on the temple's torch!"

"Can you? Have you got what it takes?" Leonidas bellowed back. "Let the revelry begin! A war cry from the Beastfolk! Roooar!"

As the enemies closed in, Leonidas became even more frenzied. He raised his great axe high, offering it up as if in tribute to some unknown god. The axe shattered, dissolving into a visible mist of blood-red energy. The mist roiled and rose, coalescing into a crimson cloud directly above him.

"Welcome to the domain of the Bloodhowl Axe!" he screamed. "Here, I will revel! Here, I will slaughter every last one of you!"

Orion had never seen Leonidas this wild.

"The battle has just begun!" Leonidas roared, charging the nearest enemy, the Temple Guardian. As he moved, massive, blood-red axe-heads made of pure energy rained down from the sky. Any Lunarfin struck by an axe was either sliced in two or splattered into a pulp. The scene was horrifically bloody.

Worse, the axe Leonidas had just sacrificed was the one fused with the Lunar Serpent's spine bone, giving it a suppressive effect against both Lunarfin and dragon souls. Countless dragon souls were extinguished in the rain of bloody axes, utterly destroyed.

"Dragon's Fury Slash!" The Temple Guardian swung its greatsword, unleashing a dragon-shaped blade of energy.

Leonidas met it with a single fist, shattering the attack into nothing. That one exchange proved it: the Temple Guardian might be an upper arch lord, but its actual combat power was garbage.

"Hahaha! Sword attacks?" Leonidas's taunt was designed to kill the spirit, not just the body. "Have you slept so long you've forgotten you're a dragon?"

With his ultimate ability active, Leonidas was an invincible god of war within his Bloodhowl Axe domain. The Lunarfin that had been swarming him were suffering catastrophic losses.

"Insolence!" a new voice shrieked. "This is my master's place of slumber! You will not run rampant here!"

WHOOSH!

The sea churned as a massive waterspout, a tornado of churning water, ripped through the air.

BOOM!

Leonidas was blasted back. Before him now stood the arch lordpeak Sea Fiend, the ugly Merfolk with the harpoon.

Compared to a fake like the Temple Guardian, the Sea Fiend was a true arch lord. Its power was absolutely on par with Leonidas's Beastfolk avatar.

Chapter 885: A Pathetic Fake

Death is, in fact, a new beginning. The genesis of another kind of life. When a flower withers, it leaves behind a fruit. When the fruit ripens, it holds a seed. When the seed falls to the earth, it will sprout once more.

"Dra... gon... Dragon of Light!"

"Mon... Mondusath! Mondusath!"

"I am Mondusath, the Dragon of Light, ruler of Uynting, sovereign of dragonkind, guardian of the Light!"

"Have I... returned?"

"No. Not yet. The vessel is not yet mature!"

"Why has this happened?"

"It is the ants... two pitiful little ants. They have disturbed me!"

"Heretics who profane the Dragon of Light must be destroyed... destroyed..."

.....

In an unknown space, where the true Dragon Mausoleum lay hidden, an ancient dragon soul stirred from its slumber, only to drift back into a hazy, mumbling sleep.

"He's awake!"

The Lunar Serpent's voice suddenly erupted in the mausoleum hall, startling Alexander.

"Who's awake?"

Alexander could hear the pure shock and terror in the serpent's voice. The spirit swordavatar trembled, its tip pressing a fraction deeper into the Lunar Serpent's skull. "Answer me!"

A thick killing intent condensed around the blade as Alexander's voice turned colder than ice.

"The being who sealed me! I just felt the Azure Mirage tremble! It is the sign of his awakening!" the serpent explained frantically. "But... the trembling has stopped. It seems he has fallen asleep again! I hope your friends can fight their way through the Azure Mirage quickly, or none of us will escape!"

The Lunar Serpent's voice was laced with regret. If it had just stayed silent, perhaps it could have avoided this calamity. Then again, the three intruders were its only real chance at freedom.

In fact, Alexander had already tried to contact Leonidas and Orion on the Survivor's Platform, but ever since their avatars had entered the other realm, they had been too caught up in combat to check in. Even their true bodies had no idea what was happening to their artifacts.

Deep within the Temple, The Plaza of Light.

The moment Orion's Deathly Soul-Reaper arrived, it was finally discovered.

"An evil heretic from the abyss must be judged by the Light!"

A sword of pure, radiant energy coalesced in the void and slashed down viciously at the Deathly Soul-Reaper. Orion felt the will within that blade—an absolute intent to sever all darkness—and for a moment, it felt like he was facing a mighty, impossibly powerful god of light.

But when the Deathly Soul-Reaper raised its scythe to block the attack, the feeling the sword gave Orion was... off.

"Wait, this isn't right."

Orion was no stranger to the power of Light; in fact, his memory of it was crystal clear. During the fight for the Spring of Life in the Emerald Dream Realm, he had experienced the light of the demigod Valthor up close. The feeling had been even more potent when Valthor merged with the laws of the Emerald Dream Realm itself.

The light radiating from this Dragon God Phantom felt... impure.

And that feeling wasn't limited to its power. Its very form was strange. The more Orion looked at it, the more jarring it became. The Dragon God Phantom had the upper body of a dragonkin, but its lower half was a long, serpentine tail, much like the Lunar Serpent's. And sprouting from its back was a pair of huge, fleshy wings, like those of a standard dragon.

"Why does this thing look like a total chimera?"

The Deathly Soul-Reaper reacted instantly. After a quick teleportation, it swung its scythe. A giant phantom of the scythe appeared in the void and cleaved through the Dragon God Phantom.

The phantom blade met little resistance, slicing the creature in two at the waist. But there was no spray of blood, no cry of pain. The Dragon God Phantom's severed body simply swirled like mist and seawater before seamlessly reconnecting.

"Hold on... this aura... is it a body of faith?"

Orion could scarcely believe his own theory. A powerhouse at the arch lord level or above would almost never deploy their body of faith unless it was a life-or-death struggle. The body of faith was their foundation, their ultimate backup, the very thing that allowed them to start over from scratch if their physical form was destroyed.

"No, that's not quite it either!" He could sense the aura of a faith-body, but something was still deeply wrong.

Just then, the Dragon God Phantom attacked again. "Light's Radiance!"

The phantom in the plaza raised its greatsword of light, and ten thousand beams of white energy shot forth, bathing the Deathly Soul-Reaper in a painful glare. But the pain was only momentary; it didn't linger.

Gradually, Orion finally understood what was wrong. The light being unleashed by the Dragon God Phantom wasn't pure. It was mixed with a strange energy, one that didn't do much damage to his Deathly Soul-Reaper avatar. An energy that was, in fact, faintly familiar.

"This power... this power... could it be Lunar Power?" he realized. "Yes! This is the exact same energy I felt when I was inhabiting the Lunarfin's body! That means the bulk of the Dragon God Phantom's power is coming from the Lunar Serpent's siphoned energy!"

Sudden clarity washed over him as the pieces clicked into place.

"Holy shit. He's using a tiny remnant of his body of faith and powering it with Lunar Power to create a whole new body."

Having seen the truth, Orion had the Deathly Soul-Reaper swing its scythe with renewed purpose. If these cosmic energies had alignments, then Lunar Power and the Deathly Soul-Reaper were on the same team—both belonged to the side of shadow and darkness. In other words, the Lunar Power couldn't do much harm to it. The real threat was the small, residual amount of pure Light, which was a direct counter to the Deathly Soul-Reaper.

SWISH!

The scythe cut through the Dragon God Phantom again. But the body had no physical substance; it was a construct of Lunar Power. The scythe was just dissipating that energy. This was a war of attrition. To win, Orion just had to exhaust all of the Lunar Power that made up the phantom's body.

He suddenly regretted not giving the Flame of Will trident to his Deathly Soul-Reaper. With the trident's power—which was specifically empowered to counter Lunar Power—he could have finished this massive phantom off much faster.

"And you call that Light?" Orion's thoughts were projected through the Deathly Soul-Reaper, a cold, mocking voice filling the plaza.

"Light represents hope. It warms all beings, nurtures life. It brings color to the world, gives birth to justice, kindness, and beauty. And your 'Light'? It just hides in this empty, false world, leeching someone else's power to survive on borrowed time."

"Your Light is a fraud. A pathetic fake."

Chapter 886: Sea of Faith

The cold, resolute, and disdainful voice that issued from the Deathly Soul-Reaper was Orion's denial, a refutation of the very concept behind the body of faith hidden in the Dragon God Phantom.

When dealing with a body of faith, a denial of its core belief, a collapse of its will, was a far more direct path to victory than slowly chipping away at its power.

Unfortunately, Orion's attempt at psychological warfare was useless. The conviction of the faith-body hidden within was far more stubborn than he had imagined.

"You, a mongrel from the abyss, are you even worthy of speaking to me of the Light?"

Ouch. That one hurt. And Orion's Deathly Soul-Reaper avatar had no real comeback. The abyss itself was synonymous with evil, sin, and cruelty, and his avatar was a prime example of its power.

"The race of sin must be purged! It must be set aflame!"

Seeing that the Lunar Power was ineffective against the Deathly Soul-Reaper, the Dragon God Phantom raised its greatsword and spat a glob of luminous dragon flame onto it. The blade ignited, wreathed in a white, holy fire. The fuel being burned, shockingly, was the Lunar Power itself.

A sense of crisis washed over Orion. The Deathly Soul-Reaper was locked on; he felt that even teleportation wouldn't be enough to evade this attack.

"Kill!"

If he couldn't dodge, then the only option was a life-or-death struggle. In that critical moment, the giant's savagery hardwired into his bloodline and his spirit roared to the surface. The Deathly Soul-Reaper swung its scythe and charged forward, meeting the attack head-on.

The next second, fire met flesh, and scythe met sword. Savagery and holy fire, light and evil, clashed in a symphony of glorious violence.

Azure Mirage, Outer Temple.

Being surrounded and attacked by four arch lords was proving to be a difficult battle for Leonidas's Beastfolk avatar. Just as Orion decided he couldn't watch his bro get beaten down any longer and prepared to jump in, Leonidas's actions once again left him stunned.

"One, two, three, four... as long as I'm still breathing, even if a god stood before me, I'd cut you all down!"

Just as Orion was thinking his bro's edgelord syndrome was flaring up again, the Beastfolk avatar let out a furious roar and began to repeatedly slam its fists into the ground. This kind of violent outburst usually meant one of two things: a new power was awakening, or something was about to burst out of its body.

Mooooo!

It was the sound of an elephant, but not quite. It was more ancient, more primal, more savage.

This was a Behemoth.

On the corridor, Leonidas's Beastfolk avatar underwent a second transformation. This time, its very form changed dramatically. A cloud of red-black blood mist enveloped the avatar, and in the blink of an eye, a colossal creature nearly one hundred feet tall strode out of the fog.

It had a massive gut, long fur, sharp claws, and tusks that pointed to the heavens. Its entire being radiated a wild, brutish power.

A Behemoth. A true Behemoth. It possessed an incredibly powerful body and the terrifying divine power that was its birthright. This kind of monster was the apex predator of beastfolk warriors. They were born with extreme physical attack and defense, and an absurd resistance to magic.

"I'll tear you worthless crawlers to pieces!"

BOOM!

The Behemoth stomped its foot and charged, aiming straight for the Sea Fiend. It was a savage, direct, all-or-nothing ram.

The Temple Guardian raised its greatsword. The Solarfin gathered a ball of energy in its mouth. The Abyssal Stalker manipulated the seawater. A sword beam, an energy ball, and a wall of toxic ice appeared in front of the Behemoth.

But Leonidas ignored them all, his charge unbroken, his will fixed on a single goal: to smash the Sea Fiend to bits.

CRACKLE!

BOOM!

This was the savage charge of a Behemoth, ignoring all attacks and all defenses. The attacks from the front were shattered upon impact. The attacks from the sides struck its powerful body and were simply shrugged off.

The Sea Fiend, its target, was hit head-on. Its bones shattered, and most of its body caved in. With a final, massive explosion, the Sea Fiend was sent flying through the air.

"My chance!"

The Sea Fiend was airborne. Orion knew the Behemoth had only severely wounded it, not killed it. And his whole purpose for hiding was to play the opportunistic assassin. Kick 'em while they're down.

"Bro, keep them busy!" Orion transmitted to Leonidas as he shot through the water.

Up on the corridor, Leonidas's eyes lit up.

"Behemoth Whirlwind!" the Behemoth roared. With no time to ask Orion for details, its massive body began to spin rapidly. A powerful suction force emanated from its form, pulling on the Temple Guardian, the Solarfin, and the Abyssal Stalker, preventing them from going to the Sea Fiend's aid.

In the distance, Orion burst from the water. The Lunarfin body dissolved, and he held his trident, Flame of Will, which crackled with electricity before igniting. Before the Sea Fiend could even hit the ground, Orion activated Instant Impact and Titan Form, appeared behind it, and thrust his trident forward without hesitation.

SQUELCH!

The sound of the trident piercing flesh was followed by a violent, crackling sizzle, and then the whoosh of flame igniting blood and bone.

"Aaaargh!"

The Sea Fiend's miserable, desperate roar echoed from within the flames. Orion's eyes were like ice. He was completely focused, not daring to relax for a second. The Sea Fiend's physical body was destroyed, but its body of faith had yet to appear.

"You goddamn filth!" a new voice shrieked. "I'll tear you apart!"

A body of faith that looked like a cross between a fish and a soft-shelled turtle, protected by a shimmering shield of faith, strode out of the flames. It ignored the fire, its eyes filled with rage and locked onto Orion, who had already sensed the danger and backed away.

"Faith's Advent! Let the oceans surge! All rules and all power shall be suppressed!"

The Sea Fiend's body of faith assumed a heaven-embracing posture, and a vast amount of faith energy poured out of it. The entire area around the temple was instantly enveloped. This was a sea of faith, an inherent ability created when a body of faith unleashed its energy. Within this sea, the body of faith was, for all intents and purposes, omnipotent.

It stared at Orion, and in the next instant, it appeared behind him, its claws slashing toward his heart.

But Orion was prepared. Battle Will Surge activated, and a spherical wave of power erupted around him, pushing back the surrounding faith energy. At the same time, crimson rays of light shot from his Boots of the War-Tyrant, striking the Sea Fiend's body of faith at close range.

"I said... all things shall be suppressed!"

The sea of faith surged violently. The crimson light was suppressed, then dissolved bit by bit. Even Orion's Battle Will Surge was being compressed.

In this situation, it wasn't that Orion didn't want to escape; it was that escaping was nearly impossible. The entire area was dominated by the sea of faith. Using Instant Impact was like trying to sprint while carrying a mountain. He'd probably be crushed by the terrifying pressure before he could even break out of the faith-field.

Chapter 887: Thunderclap Apocalypse

"You cowardly ambusher! You can't escape!" the Sea Fiend's body of faith shrieked, lunging for Orion's head.

On the other side of the battlefield, Leonidas was having just as rough a time. After the sea of faith descended, the immense pressure had slowly ground his Behemoth Whirlwind to a halt. And as the Sea Fiend's allies, the Temple Guardian, the Solarfin, and the Abyssal Stalker were completely unaffected by the suppressive field.

It was fair to say that Leonidas was enduring three times the agony Orion was.

Thankfully, the Behemoth's natural defense and horrific regenerative abilities were keeping him in the fight. With every wound he took, he only seemed to fight harder. But Leonidas knew this was just a facade. A body as tough as the Behemoth's still had its limits, and against three opponents of the same level, he was approaching that limit fast. When he finally reached it, the beatdown would be just as epic as his grand entrance had been.

For fuck's sake, Leonidas thought, desperately holding on. Don't tell me I have to self-destruct another avatar. These things don't grow on trees...

"Bro, it's time to go all out!" he transmitted to Orion. It was a reminder. He believed Orion still had an ace up his sleeve.

Orion, of course, heard the call. He wasn't entirely surprised by the appearance of the faith-body, but this was his first time fighting one, and he was short on experience.

"Thunderclap Apocalypse!"

Orion thrust his trident, Flame of Will, forward, simultaneously unleashing the forbidden spell stored in his Lightning Cloak. The cloak's ultimate spell hadn't naturally recharged after the duel in the Crucible of the Gods, but for this mission, Orion had specifically asked the Deputy Commander's storm avatar to channel his power into it, filling it to the brim.

Lightning was the ultimate expression of raw power. It was an energy of punishment and judgment, capable of easily erasing any unholy spirit. And existences like faith energy and a body of faith were, to some extent, vulnerable to various types of supernatural power. Lightning was chief among them.

In seconds, a thundercloud materialized in the void above, and a storm of lightning descended. The bolts raged everywhere, striking all targets without discrimination. The faith energy, the Lunarfin, the temple architecture, the very seawater—everything was vaporized under the forbidden spell's bombardment, erased into nothingness.

"No... no... don't...!"

The Sea Fiend's body of faith, caught at the very center of the storm, became the prime target. Under the blitz of lightning, its form began to collapse, shrinking rapidly. A shield of pure faith energy flared up around it as the Sea Fiend tried desperately to flee.

"Trying to run? Not a chance!"

Orion's combat instincts were razor-sharp. He used Instant Impact to block the Sea Fiend's path, his trident flaring with intense fire.

With the appearance of the Thunderclap Apocalypse, the oppressive sea of faith was instantly dispelled. Orion and Leonidas were free.

"Hahaha! After taking a beating for so long, it's your daddy Leonidas's turn!" the Behemoth roared. "I'm gonna run you all over!"

This time, Leonidas had learned his lesson. He didn't bother charging the Abyssal Stalker; ramming a puddle of sentient sludge was pointless, and it might just force out another body of faith.

Instead, he charged the Temple Guardian. Both the Guardian and the Solarfin were just dragon souls inhabiting constructs. If he destroyed their bodies, they'd be knocked back to square one, as helpless as ants.

"Adamantine Hide!"

"Savage Roar!"

"Behemoth's Great Rend!"

The Behemoth activated three skills at once, locked onto the Temple Guardian, and charged with kill-or-be-killed ferocity.

Deep within the Temple, The Plaza of Light.

The Dragon God Phantom pressed its attack, its greatsword relentlessly hacking at the Deathly Soul-Reaper. Black tendrils writhed from the Reaper's body, attempting to repair the damage, but holy fire clung to every wound.

The speed of the tendrils' regeneration versus the speed of the holy fire's consumption became a desperate tug-of-war. To keep regenerating, more and more tendrils were needed, which in turn became more fuel for the fire.

Orion was getting frantic. He knew that if this kept up, the flames would soon outpace his regeneration. When that happened, his Deathly Soul-Reaper avatar would be burned to nothing.

So he fought with a wild, desperate abandon. The death-scythe became a blur in his hands, the entire Plaza of Light filling with its phantoms. At any given moment, the Dragon God Phantom was being assaulted by dozens of blades at once.

KILL!

It was the only thought in Orion's mind. He was in a war of attrition with the phantom, in a race against death itself. The battle raged, a high-speed competition between cutting and burning.

The Deathly Soul-Reaper's form flickered, constantly weaving around the Dragon God Phantom. The clash of sword and scythe, of holy fire and dark decay, painted a tragic, beautiful picture of a duel between wills.

Outer Temple.

The battle raged on.

"Hahaha! Just die! DIE!" Leonidas was like a mad bull, ramming the Temple Guardian again and again, pushing it deeper into the temple complex. Behind him, the Solarfin and the Abyssal Stalker rained down attacks on the Behemoth's body. Ignoring his own grievous wounds, the Behemoth just kept charging, determined to ram the Temple Guardian to death. The hatred and determination in Leonidas's eyes were cold and crazed; he would utterly destroy the enemy who had humiliated him.

Not far away, Orion's expression was impassive. He channeled his power through his trident and into the Sea Fiend's body of faith. Pinned by the trident, it had nowhere to run. Lightning and fire raged within its faith-body, and with a final, violent sizzle, the Sea Fiend finally fell into despair.

"Spare me! I surrender! I submit!"

The only answer it received was Orion's icy gaze and an even more violent surge of supernatural power.

CRACKLE... POP!

Finally, the Sea Fiend's consciousness, and its body of faith, were annihilated into nothingness.

Orion withdrew his power and looked up toward Leonidas's battle.

"Death is your destiny!" a voice roared. "And remember, it is a gift from Leonidas!"

Leonidas emerged from a pile of rubble, hair wild, looking like a demon. He glared at the approaching Solarfin and Abyssal Stalker, his eyes burning with murderous rage. Just moments ago, those two had been torturing him. If he'd been in his old fire dragon or void dragon avatars, he would have been toast long ago.

Chapter 888: Got the Goods

Valkorath Realm, Northern Coastal Region.

Ever since Orion and Isabella's main armies had withdrawn, the fungal creatures they had pushed back began to flourish once more.

The creatures that had been driven into the sea now crawled back onto the shores.

SPLASH!

A shark-like slime molds lord burst from the waves, but a black shadow shot out of the water right behind it.

A series of dark blade flashes blinked into existence, and the slime molds lord was sliced in two. As its remains fell back into the ocean, Demon Makareth's figure emerged from the bloody mist. Clutched in his hand was a pulsating orb of life essence.

"What a wonderful sensation," he mused. "Compared to the Abyss, the Valkorath Realm is practically heaven."

He paused. "Still, I think I prefer the Abyss. There's more freedom there."

Demon Makareth muttered to himself for a moment before popping the life essence into his mouth and swallowing it whole, letting out a satisfied groan.

"According to the Big boss, these fungal creatures are just leftovers now," he thought.

"It's hard to imagine what this place must have looked like when the entire Valkorath Realm was covered in them. Would it have been heaven? Or Hell?" He let out a low chuckle.

His gaze drifted south, toward the territory belonging to the demigod Big boss and the arch lord. Makareth yearned to visit their city.

Even if he couldn't buy any useful or rare resources there, he could at least learn a thing or two from their city-building and the foundations of their civilization.

In the end, though, he snuffed out the idea.

He was a Demon. His future, his development, was in the Abyss.

Makareth knew what he had to do: continuously increase his own strength and improve his chances of survival back home.

Compared to any external advantage, raw power was his only true foundation. It was no exaggeration to say that his mindset and willpower were both top-notch; it was how he'd gotten this far.

"Ah, what a shame," he sighed. "The Big bosses aren't in the Valkorath Realm, and I don't have a single friend to talk to. Guess I'll just stick to grinding mobs..."

Uynting Realm, The Plaza of Light.

The sword of light had shattered. The sky full of scythe phantoms was also dissipating.

All that was left of the Deathly Soul-Reaper was its head and a small piece of its torso attached to its right arm.

Even so, it still gripped its scythe, bringing it down one last time on the enemy before it.

The enemy was no longer the Dragon God Phantom. The phantom's body had already been annihilated by the Deathly Soul-Reaper.

Now, pinned beneath the scythe, was a flickering mote of light, so blurry it could no longer form a cohesive shape or manifest any features.

If one had to describe it, it was like a dying firefly, its light so faint it could only sustain the barest flicker of will.

This was the body of faith of a demigod, one that had been crippled and nearly destroyed long, long ago. It had used the Dragon Mausoleum's formation, borrowing the Lunar Serpent's power, just to assemble that phantom body for itself.

In the end, it was nothing more than a lingering will.

"In the end... I still won," Orion's cold, triumphant voice echoed from the Deathly Soul-Reaper.

In this race against death, he was the victor.

The firefly-like body of faith didn't respond. Pinned by the scythe, it was on the verge of extinction and had no strength left to speak.

Pop.

In a final flash of fire and a shearing cut, the dim body of faith was extinguished, vanishing without a trace.

After it disappeared, a single, hexagram-shaped badge was left on the ground.

The Deathly Soul-Reaper approached the badge and picked it up. The moment it did, a staircase that only it could see appeared before it.

The steps were long, winding upwards into the layer of fog that hung in the temple's sky.

Having come this far, Orion wasn't about to back down. After thinking for a few seconds, he floated up the stairs toward the clouds.

The closer he got to the cloud layer, the more grim and terrifying the atmosphere on the staircase became.

The dead silence, the complete lack of any sign of life, made Orion feel like this was a true land of the dead.

Thankfully, the air wasn't thick with the suffocating stench of rot and decay, otherwise he might have thought he'd ended up in Hell or the Abyss.

Perhaps fifteen minutes, perhaps half an hour later, Orion guided the Deathly Soul-Reaper to its destination.

Hidden within the clouds was a small temple.

It was dark, with no guards and no enemies. The only light came from the faint, weak pulsing of mysterious purple flames scattered throughout the hall.

Under the eerie purple glow, the temple felt desolate. And beneath that desolation lay a dead silence—the end of life, an eternal stillness.

Without hesitation, the Deathly Soul-Reaper walked into the temple.

Once inside and up close, Orion realized that the purple flames illuminating the temple weren't flames at all.

They were dragon eggs, hundreds of them, each emitting a faint, weak glow.

But the eggs didn't hold his attention. What drew his eye was a massive sarcophagus resting in the center of the temple.

The sarcophagus was covered in extremely complex patterns and runes. The Deathly Soul-Reaper extended its scythe, attempting to push the lid open, but it didn't budge.

As Orion was trying to figure out how to open it, a stone statue standing before the sarcophagus, hidden in the darkness, began to tremble, as if something within was about to awaken.

An indescribable sense of crisis welled up from Orion's soul, making it shudder violently.

Faced with such a bizarre scene, Orion didn't dare linger. He glanced at the sarcophagus and made an instant decision.

The ruined Deathly Soul-Reaper threw itself on top of the sarcophagus. Before the statue could fully awaken, black tendrils shot out, wrapping around the massive stone coffin.

Then, the Deathly Soul-Reaper tore a fixed-point teleportation scroll.

"Hurry... hurry... come on, hurry!"

The Deathly Soul-Reaper looked up, its gaze fixed on the slowly opening eyes of the stone statue, its mind screaming with urgency.

Space rippled.

The Deathly Soul-Reaper and the sarcophagus vanished without a trace.

Meanwhile, at the Outer Temple.

Orion's trident flared with intense fire, forcing back the Abyssal Stalker that had reformed into a pool of black water around him.

"Bro, got the goods! Time to bounce!" he yelled.

As the words left his mouth, he activated the teleportation function on his legendary equipment, the Boots of the War-Tyrant.

Orion's mirror avatar vanished, leaving the Abyssal Stalker staring in shock.

By the time the Solarfin and the Abyssal Stalker reacted, Leonidas, ever the old pro, had also disappeared from the ruins.

Chapter 889: Freedom and Fury

At the same time, a groggy yet furious voice echoed throughout the entire Azure Mirage.

The true master of the Dragon Mausoleum was awake, and upon discovering its vessel had vanished, its fury was boundless.

"Who?!"

"Who was it?! Who stole my vessel?!"

"You wretched thief, you cannot escape!"

"Cannot escape..."

Outside, in the Dragon Mausoleum.

The sealed Lunar Serpent's eyes shot open. A panicked and terrified voice flooded Alexander's mind.

"Quickly, he's awake!"

"Hurry... quickly... break the seals!"

If tears could have bought it more time, the Lunar Serpent would have been weeping.

Alexander's spirit swordavatar had paused for a fraction of a second just moments before. He was always monitoring the Survivor's Platform, and he had just received the notification that Orion and Leonidas were clear.

With the mission accomplished, Alexander had no more reason to hesitate.

He didn't mind freeing the Lunar Serpent; most of all, he was curious to see what kind of game it was trying to play.

The spirit swordavatar flew out from the Lunar Serpent's skull and split into four, striking the chains and the four giant dragon statues they originated from with immense power.

The spirit swordavatar was incredibly sharp. The chains snapped. The statues crumbled.

Seeing this, Alexander didn't linger. He teleported away from the Uynting Realm immediately.

If he stayed any longer, he risked drawing the attention of other demigod-level entities.

As Alexander departed, the newly freed Lunar Serpent began to stir.

Thump. THUMP.

With every stretch of its long-imprisoned limbs, the very earth of the Dragon Mausoleum trembled.

A moment later, the thrashing stopped. The Lunar Serpent soared into the air, its body weaving through the sky and across the land.

"ROAR! How many years... how many years has it been?!" its voice thundered across the realm. "I can no longer even remember! You wretched crawlers! The pain and injury you inflicted upon me... now you will repay it all!"

The Lunar Serpent landed and whipped its tail, smashing it into the ruins of the Dragon Mausoleum. From the four shattered dragon statues, four dense clumps of Lunar Power flew out and merged into the serpent's body.

At the same time, the magical formation beneath it, its seals now broken, began to glow erratically, showing signs of collapse.

"My power... did you really think you could use it?" the Lunar Serpent snarled, its eyes blazing with madness and murder.

Its face contorted, muscles tightening, its entire form a vessel of infinite rage and resentment. A powerful suction force emanated from its body, and all the Lunar Power that was leaking from the collapsing magical formation began to flow back into its rightful owner.

In the Azure Mirage, the world was ending. The sky cracked, and the earth split apart.

This space, a realm between reality and illusion, had been created from Light, borrowing the power of Lunar. With the Lunar Serpent's seals broken, the Lunar Power was like a river returning to the sea, flocking back to its source.

This instantly destroyed the Azure Mirage's delicate balance, and the entire space began to rapidly destabilize and collapse.

"Millions of years of work, all turned to ash in an instant! I will not accept this! I WILL NOT!" a voice even more furious than the Lunar Serpent's shrieked.

It ignored the collapsing realm, ignored the temple guardians who were fleeing for their lives.

A radiant dragon soul of pure light shot up, tore through the void, and vanished.

Outside.

By the time the Lunar Serpent had absorbed enough of its power back, the demigod guardian of the Uynting Realm's dragons had finally arrived. He was an old man with a long green beard and hair, dressed in magnificent, ornate green robes.

"Could this be the resting place of the Great Dragon King of Light from the clan records?" he wondered aloud. "And that being below... its aura... it's draconic... but also not..."

The green-robed elder stared down at the Lunar Serpent, who was still absorbing its power, a look of hesitation and uncertainty on his face.

The serpent's aura was that of a dragon, yes, but just as he was about to call down to it, the ground suddenly shook as if something had exploded deep within the earth.

Even the Lunar Serpent was thrown into the air by the blast.

A moment later, a ball of pure light erupted from the ground, screaming.

"No one takes what is mine!"

"You cannot escape... cannot escape..."

The voice was high and low, mad and furious, and laced with a hint of utter despair.

On the ground, the Lunar Serpent finally saw its ancient, powerful enemy. Its body began to tremble uncontrollably, its claws digging so hard into the ground that they shattered rock and soil.

The serpent's face twisted, its eyes instantly flooding with blood-red light. Consumed by hatred, it could no longer control its vengeful body.

It shot into the sky and, facing the ball of light, unleashed a torrent of pure, condensed lunar dragon flame.

The heavens changed color.

For half a day, flashes of light and draconic roars filled the sky.

Eventually, another green dragon joined the battle.

South of Lubrae, in a hollow within an unknown, giant tree.

The three sole survivors of Lubrae—Neil, Yala, and Alilien—cowered inside the tree, trembling. To them, the raw demigod auras clashing nakedly in the sky were like the wrath of gods.

Listening to the dragon roars, each one more piercing than the last, the trio fell into despair. Could the Resistance, based here in the south, truly stand against such power?

"Yala... is there any hope for the alliance?" Alilien's voice was filled with uncertainty. "Lord Leo and Orion... could they still be alive?"

The power Leonidas and Orion had displayed before was something they could comprehend. It was Legendary level—a height that, while distant, was not entirely unreachable.

But this... this demigod war in the heavens... it extinguished every last spark of courage in their Alpha-level souls.

"Maybe," Yala replied, her voice soft and low. "Maybe they're still alive."

But the helplessness in her tone was something Neil and Alilien couldn't possibly miss.

"As long as we're alive, there's hope," Neil said, trying to rally them. "If we have hope, then so do Lord Leo and Orion."

His words gave Yala and Alilien a sliver of hope, a reason to keep going.

"We have to get to the south," he urged. "The north is too dangerous."

Emerald Dream Realm, Marshlight Sanctuary.

This was Leonidas's personal sanctum, and the designated rendezvous point for Orion, Leonidas, and Alexander.

"Nice, bro. You ran even faster than your big brother." Leonidas plopped down on the ground next to Orion.

His double-berserker transformation had completely shredded his clothes. All that was left was a pair of specially-made custom briefs.

Chapter 890: A Slash That Rends the Heavens

Orion just gave a bitter smile.

He summoned the Deathly Soul-Reaper, gesturing for Leonidas to take a look at the avatar, which was now missing more than half its body.

"The aura of the Death-Soul race?" Leonidas's eyes went wide. "Whoa... and it's at the arch lord peak!"

He whistled. "Nice one, bro!"

Orion just shook his head, looking completely spent.

This time, the Deathly Soul-Reaper had been countered by the holy fire of Light, and more than half of its body had been incinerated. The amount of time and resources it would take to repair it was incalculable.

In other words, the Deathly Soul-Reaper was out of commission for the foreseeable future.

"I can't believe you actually got your hands on one of these."

Just then, Alexander walked slowly into the palace, his spirit sword avatar slung over his back.

"Bro, you recognize this thing?" Orion pointed at the battered Reaper, his eyes fixed on Alexander.

Alexander walked over, ignored the annoyed glare from Leonidas, and snatched the glass of wine his friend had just poured.

After taking a sip, he spoke, his voice calm.

"Death's Tendril, the Abyssal Tentacle, the Rootless Vine, the Undying Source... the Deathly Soul-Reaper. It has many names."

He looked at the Reaper, his eyes shining. This was a level of avatar that even he and Leonidas would have trouble dealing with.

"Several arch lords from my Blade Hall have ventured deep into the Abyss searching for one of these, and all of them came back empty-handed."

"The Deathly Soul-Reaper is a product of many intertwined forces—ghostly, shadow, void. It is an embodiment of the Abyss's power," Alexander continued, laying out its characteristics. "It's almost completely immune to physical damage and has an immunity to certain types of elemental magic. Only very specific attributes and secret techniques can counter it."

Orion didn't deny it, simply nodding in acknowledgment.

"You got it from your opponent in that last duel?" Alexander asked.

Orion smiled. He wasn't surprised Alexander could guess the Reaper's origins.

First, it was at the arch lord peak. Without some heaven-defying luck, there was no way Orion had the power to acquire an avatar of that level on his own.

Second, the Deathly Soul-Reaper was absurdly rare, and since Orion wasn't from an abyssal race, it was even more unlikely.

The only plausible explanation was that he'd looted it from his Death-Soul race opponent during the Crucible of the Gods.

"Actually, I'm more interested in how you managed to beat that opponent," Alexander said.

"Me too!" The interjection came from Leonidas, who was gnawing on a piece of roasted meat.

Orion and Alexander exchanged a look, completely ignoring him.

"Judging by the residual aura on this thing, you ran into an enemy who specializes in the laws of Light?"

At the mention of the enemy, Orion's expression turned serious. He gave them a detailed account of everything that had happened after he entered the inner temple and the Dragon Mausoleum.

"And this... is what we got out of it," he finished.

With a wave of his hand, the sarcophagus appeared in the palace. Lying silently on top of it were three lifeless dragon eggs.

Orion had swiped them with his scythe on his way out during the teleport. His thinking was simple: if the sarcophagus turned out to be empty, at least he wouldn't have made the trip for nothing.

The moment the treasure appeared, Leonidas dropped his food and hurried over, circling the sarcophagus and eyeing the eggs.

"They're dragon eggs, alright. Dead ones, too," he confirmed. As he had a dragon avatar himself, he knew what he was looking at.

"But something feels... different about these three. It's like they're missing something." He shook his head. "Bro, these eggs are pretty much worthless to us. Even if we used a secret technique to hatch them, they'd only produce Legendary level dragons at best. Not worth the effort."

To be honest, Leonidas was a little disappointed. The dead eggs Orion brought back weren't the prize he and Alexander had been hoping for.

"So what's hidden inside this sarcophagus?"

Leonidas reached out, trying to lift the lid. But no matter how much force he used, it wouldn't budge.

"Bro, this thing is the real treasure!"

Although he didn't know what was inside, the fact that an arch lord couldn't open it meant that whatever it held had to be incredibly precious.

"Alexander, you take a look."

Leonidas stepped back, giving Alexander a clear view. Alexander wasn't just an assassin; he also had some expertise in mechanisms and formations.

He stepped closer, about to reach out and touch the sarcophagus.

ROOOOAR!

Just then, a high, piercing dragon roar tore across the sky of the Dusk Continent.

"I'VE FOUND YOU!" a voice boomed. "NO ONE TAKES WHAT IS MINE!"

But immediately following that roar, two other powerful, commanding voices answered with a rebuke.

"Insolence!"

"How dare you!"

It was the voices of Deputy Commander Edward and Arthas. The will projections they had left on the Dusk Continent had instantly responded to the demigod's aura.

No questions were asked. No negotiations were attempted. No pointless banter was exchanged.

A torrent of magical energy and a greatsword of bone descended upon the spot where the ball of light had appeared.

In that moment, every living being on the Dusk Continent who looked up saw space itself collapse. A brilliant light erupted, and a blade of bone flashed within it.

"NO ONE TAKES WHAT IS MINE!" the furious dragon roar echoed again, shaking the entire Emerald Dream Realm.

In the Valkorath Realm, Deputy Commander Edward and Arthas's true bodies, resting within their territories, both snapped their eyes open.

"A powerful enemy," Deputy Commander Edward whispered, emerging from his meditative state and preparing to rise.

"Interesting." Arthas stood from his Bone Throne, a bone-forged sword materializing in his hand.

But just as they were about to move, a familiar voice spoke.

"I'll handle this. That is a third-stage soul. If you don't go all out, you are no match for it."

The familiar voice spoke, and then faded.

"Commander, you're awake?"

"Commander!"

The Deputy Commander and Arthas froze, calling out into the empty air in shock and awe.

"Not yet awake," the voice replied faintly. "It is not yet time."

Emerald Dream Realm, Dusk Continent.

Orion, Leonidas, and Alexander had already rushed out of the palace, their faces grim as they stared at the demigod battle raging in the sky.

Just then, a familiar voice spoke directly in Orion's mind.

"Hulk. Leonidas. Alexander. Watch closely. This is how you're supposed to use blade flashes."

In the northern region of the Dusk Continent, Isabella, who was patrolling her territory on her colossal dragon, had also noticed the enemy in the sky. Before she could even react, the demigod battle had already begun.

A moment later, she felt the blade flashes that had been hidden in her sea of consciousness activate on their own.

They flew out of her mind and shot toward the heavens.

The next second, half the sky was sliced open, revealing the black, unknowable void of spacetime beyond. The realm formation that enveloped the entire Emerald Dream Realm had been cut open.

That single, terrifying slash woke countless powerful beings across the realm.