

## Village Head 1091

Chapter 1091: Aurora's Ascension Trial, Vylkr Artefact Magical Formation Report

The Will of the Divine Mysteries didn't respond. Instead, he tilted his head skyward.

Aurora followed its gaze. "Mother..." she whispered, her eyes widening in disbelief at the sight above her.

The sun dimmed and descended to the west, and an eerie blood-red moon, radiating a haunting crimson light, painted the sky as it rose from the east. In front of the moon, a baby lay cradled in soft, glowing light.

Yet, standing protectively between the moon and the cradle was Aerialia, clad in crimson armour lined with silver. The armour hugged her form tightly, her two radiant wings spread wide. Bands of pristine white cloth, resembling living bandages, moved around her body as though possessing a mind of their own, reminiscent of her usual attire.

Her hair billowed wildly, caught in the fierce wind. In her grasp was a massive, four-meter crimson greatsword, its edges glinting ominously under the glow of the Crimson Moon. Her fierce stance made her resemble a goddess poised to smite any who dared to challenge her.

"I finally have the chance to destroy you," Aerialia's voice boomed across the heavens. "You will never ascend. And your child—" she gestured toward the cradle"--will suffer the same fate before you can even touch her!"

Aurora trembled as she witnessed the scene above her. Fear gripped her as she took a step back. She had suspected what her ascension trial might involve, but facing her mother—even if it was only an imitation—was beyond what she had prepared for.

Suddenly, a firm hand grasped her right shoulder. Startled, Aurora snapped her head back and distanced herself, turning to see who had touched her.

She was an inky, shadowy being that resembled her but with a grotesque, distorted appearance. And it wasn't alone. Rising from the soil were numerous shadowy figures with similarly grotesque faces, their hollow eyes locked on her.

The once-vibrant garden had transformed into a desolate, dead land. The plants were shrivelled, and the soil had lost its lustre, now dry and lifeless.

"Stop resisting," the shadowy figure hissed, stepping closer. "You are one of us-just another failure. Surrender, be reborn with us, or be consumed."

The shadows closed in, their fearsome presence growing, as Aurora stood frozen in dread.

Aurora snapped her head toward the position where the Will of the Divine Mysteries had stood, but to her dismay, he was gone. He had vanished as if he were a mere figment of her imagination. Yet, deep down, Aurora knew he wasn't.

Gritting her teeth, she focused on the decaying garden and Aerialia, who hovered menacingly in the sky. Her mind raced, trying to figure out how to handle the overwhelming situation. Suddenly, another hand pressed against her right shoulder. This time, she didn't pull away because there was nowhere to run.

The shadowy hand seeped into her shoulder, merging with her body. "Stop fighting it. You're just another failure. We can complete you," the voice whispered, cold and insidious.

Looking down, Aurora saw her feet gripped by the shadowy figures, slowly melding into her flesh. She could feel her strength slipping away-mentally and physically. Panic surged within her. Raising her head, Aurora screamed with all her might, "GET AWAY FROM ME!!" In an instant, the shadowy figure that had begun merging into her body burst forth from her back, transforming into two massive, inky-black wings-one larger.

The unexpected transformation left Aurora momentarily stunned. But there was no time to hesitate. She stretched her wings wide and soared skyward without second-guessing. Whoosh!!

Glancing down, she saw the tendrils of shadow still clinging to her, trying to drag her back to the corrupted garden. Aurora gnashed her teeth and flapped her wings with all her might, pushing herself higher and higher.

Driven by sheer willpower, Aurora knew she had to complete this ascension trial-no matter how daunting it seemed. Too many people awaited her return, and there was no way she would let them down.

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Observing as the intensity of the Vylkr and Divine energy on Aurora surged with increasing power, Orion frowned deeply. He turned his gaze to Ilse, about to speak, when she waved her hand dismissively as if already knowing what he intended to say.

"You can go ahead and summon her. I have no idea what's happening, but maybe she might help," Ilse said.

"Thank you," Orion nodded respectfully.

For Ilse to make such a suggestion meant she was growing more comfortable with their presence, which was a positive development for him and Paradise. She could also have been frustrated by the unfolding scene and wanted the perspective of another Divine Being.

Regardless, Orion preferred to believe it was the former.

With a flicker of bright light, Orion summoned the Crimson Greatsword into the room. Aerialia soon followed suit, appearing before them.

"What's happening to my daughter?" Aerialia asked instinctively, noticing Aurora's condition the moment she appeared. She turned toward Orion and Ilse, and just as she was about to speak again, her eyes widened in astonishment at the newborn in Orion's arms.

"Is that...?" Aerialia asked, excitement lighting up her face.

"Yes, this is Liora. She finally decided to join us," Orion replied with a smile.

Aerialia squealed through her sealed lips, barely containing her joy. Her face flushed with excitement as her entire form trembled with delight.

Liora's eyes moved upward, locking onto Aerialia as she scrutinized her from above. Liora's gaze widened with emotion, and she stretched out her hand, reaching for the ethereal figure floating in the air.

Witnessing this, Aerialia felt her divine soul might dissolve into nothingness from the overwhelming display of affection.

Observing the scene, Ilse shook her head wearily. A faint sigh escaped her lips as she

understood Aerialia's excitement-after all, all of her children were extinct, and Liora, born a demigod with the direct bloodline of the One-winged race, represented hope for the race's restoration.

Still, with Aurora's complex identity, Ilse couldn't help but wonder why Aerialia hadn't tried to take possession of Aurora's body, considering she could be the perfect vessel for her

resurrection.

'Why am I even thinking about all this? I need to focus on my own children so they don't suffer the same fate,' Ilse thought, shaking the idea from her mind. She had no room for distractions -only the responsibility of ensuring her children's safety and managing her current

challenges.

Beside her, Aerialia soon regained her composure and spoke, "I'm Goddess Aerialia, the creator of the One-winged race, your mother's mother, and your..." She paused suddenly, clearing her throat. "Ahem! I'm your ancestor, but you may call me Goddess Aerialia when

you age."

At this, Ilse immediately let out a chuckle. Orion followed suit, bursting into much louder

laughter.

"What are you both laughing at?" Aerialia hissed, her solemn gaze flickering between Orion

and Ilse.

Ilse quickly sealed her lips, glancing briefly at Orion before refocusing her attention

elsewhere.

"Nothing," Orion said, clearing his throat as his laughter subsided. "We just thought we witnessed something amusing." He turned his attention back to Liora. "Liora, this is your mother's mother, Goddess Aerialia. When your mother recovers and awakens, you can ask her

how you should address her," he said gently.

Aerialia's brow twitched. She knew that Aurora wouldn't let Liora address her as 'Goddess Aerialia.' Aurora would likely choose a much more familiar term, given their current

relationship.

Aerialia's shoulders slumped slightly as she realized the inevitable unfolding of the situation.

Suddenly, Orion received a report through his mask.

"Chief, the Vylkr artefact magical formation looks as though it will be completed soon," Seth's voice rang in his mind.

Stunned, Orion stood rooted in place. This confirmed his assumption that the Vylkr artefact's magical formation differed significantly from the last one they encountered. This meant they wouldn't have to worry about attracting Vylkr spawns or other Divine beings to their location. Even though they were protected by the Aegis of the Arctic Deity's false presence, this new information provided another level of assurance.

Suddenly, Seth sent another message, causing Orion to raise an eyebrow. Seth sought permission to bring Zarelia, the Dragmin he had taken under his care, into Paradise. When the Aegis of the Arctic Deity had created the Primordial Barrier, only those within Paradise could enter and leave as they wished. Those outside could not locate or enter it without permission

from Orion or Ilse.

"Is something wrong?" Aerialia asked, her curious gaze fixed on Orion.

Orion shook his head and explained the information he had just received to Aerialia and Ilse. After he finished, both goddesses exhaled in relief.

"That's good. This means we don't have to worry about losing the Runaway Cities or the Vylkr alloys you worked so hard to secure for Paradise," Aerialia said.

"As long as the Vylkr artefact magical formation completes quickly, I'm certain that no god

will risk entering this territory, especially since this isn't the first time this has happened,"

Ilse said, exhaling softly.

She was relieved not to have to face any Divine beings soon.

Orion nodded in agreement. "Take care of her. I need to go check on it," Orion said, handing

Liora over to use.

Chapter 1092: Permission To Enter Paradise, The Flawless Aurora

Ilse took Liora and ensured the newborn was resting peacefully in her arms. With the time dilation within the Golden Palace, she had more time before returning to sleep.

"Watch over them while I'm gone," Orion said, refocusing on Aerialia.

Receiving Aerialia's nod of assurance, Orion turned around and exited through the illuminated front door.

Arriving on the other side, Orion swiftly changed into his Supreme Leader's outfit-the same one his wives had prepared for his exploration before he ascended into the sky. He quickly reached the barrier, where Seth and a Dragmin woman, dressed in an elegant red and white long-sleeved midi dress, were waiting.

Seth nodded respectfully. Meanwhile, Zarelia looked around in confusion, a deep frown etched firmly on her face. She quickly noticed Seth's actions and composed herself, her expression becoming emotionless.

At that moment, Orion soared out of the Primordial Barrier. Zarelia's eyes widened in shock, startled by his sudden appearance. She flinched backwards instinctively, almost hiding behind Seth. But realizing it was the Supreme Leader of Paradise, she remained where she was, her body tense.

"Normally, you wouldn't be allowed into Paradise until you've proven yourself worthy. But, considering the current situation and the fact that you serve directly under one of our key leaders, I will make an exception. You may enter," Orion said, his voice cold and focused on Zarelia.

"Thank you for your benevolence, Supreme Leader," Zarelia replied, bowing respectfully.

Initially, she thought she would suffer worse after being taken by Seth, one of Paradise's key leaders, unlike Evaline, who was taken by a high-ranking warrior. However, to her surprise, she had been given an apartment within the Outward Stronghold, guarded by numerous powerful warriors capable of defeating any elite group from the Trekking Flamingo Runaway City.

It made her realize how foolish it had been to think they could battle Paradise and emerge victorious. Seth, however, had shown interest in learning about the Dragmin race and the Trekking Flamingo Runaway City.

As for engaging in intimate acts, Seth had been surprisingly open-minded, choosing to learn about her culture before engaging. His words were,

'If this is what your parents and ancestors did before becoming intimate, then I see no reason I shouldn't study it too.'

Although Zarelia had an inkling that he was planning on making her bear his child- something she foresaw as futile, given that only a one-in-a-billion Dragmin could give birth to an offspring with three bloodlines-she couldn't wrap her head around his words, leaving her confused by him.

Zarelia didn't understand the dynamics of their relationship but treated him with the utmost respect like a servant does to a master.

And now, during a strange phenomenon capable of making her senses go haywire and nearly sending her unconscious out of fear, he had brought her to Paradise-the mysterious land she believed was home to beings capable of rivalling those from myths and legends.

Witnessing the Supreme Leader of Paradise appear out of thin air only confirmed her suspicions. In some way, she couldn't help but pity Evaline, as she was certain Evaline had gotten the short end of the stick.

Seth gestured for Zarelia to follow him, flying forward. Zarelia nodded and followed, but to her surprise, an invisible oppressive force-far more powerful than anything she had ever sensed-filled her with dread as it scanned her entire being before vanishing.

Zarelia's eyes widened in amazement as a floating island appeared before her, stretching as far as the eye could see, as wide as the Vylkr alloy mine and encased in a bizarre, powerful barrier.

It wasn't a mechanically mobile city that had to keep moving for survival, but a fertile land filled with trees and a thriving civilization in the distance- the place she had only read about in stories of myths and legends.

'This is Paradise!' Zarelia thought. '... it's beautiful!'

Zarelia was sure she hadn't gotten the short end of the stick. She knew she wouldn't have the luxury of enjoying the view for long, so without hesitation, she followed closely behind Seth as they made their way to the edge of the floating island.

Watching the two disappear into the distance, Orion decided to take a moment to survey his surroundings while waiting for Seth's return.

After several minutes, Seth reappeared, and together, they soared toward the Vylkr alloy mine. They saw Zogar observing the Vylkr artefact's magical formation from the sky as they approached.

They landed beside him.

Zogar nodded respectfully toward Orion.



"Has it shown any other strange behaviour?" Orion asked, his eyes fixed on the dense whirlwind of immense Vylkr energy above the alloy mine. Instinctively, he commanded Morphic Puppet to wrap around his body like armour, ready to defend against hidden attacks.

"No, it hasn't. Though I suspect it might soon," Seth responded thoughtfully, glancing at Orion before refocusing on the magical formation.

Orion nodded in acknowledgement.

The three of them stood silently, observing the Vylkr artefact's magical formation, hoping for the best.

Aurora hovered high in the sky. Her entire body, except for a considerable part of her face, had transformed into a slightly thicker shadowy figure, almost identical to the inky black beings she had been trying to escape.

They continued their persistent attempts to merge with her. Behind her, two large black wings, threaded with tendrils that stretched skyward, connected her to both the heavens and

the Garden below.

"Why continue?" Aerialia taunted from a distance, her expression twisting into disdain. "You are destined to fail like the rest. And your child will die soon after. That's all you are-a hollow weapon that will destroy itself."

Aurora's eyes flickered open, her irises now deep inky black, replacing the whitish hue they once held. She locked eyes with Aerialia.

Aurora attempted to move forward with a flap of her wings, but her body felt weighed down, and her strength seemed to dissipate into thin air. Her mind echoed with the voices of the shadowy figures, each urging her to surrender to them.

Gritting her teeth in frustration and anger, Aurora stepped forward, her foot pressing firmly onto an invisible platform beneath her. She stretched out her leg again and took another step.

Her outstretched wings followed.

Step by step, she advanced.

By her sixth step, she stood before Aerialia, her movement ceasing as she came to a halt.

Behind Aerialia, in front of the cradle, a colossal ethereal figure materialized in the sky. Aurora's eyes widened in shock as the form continued to take shape.

The enormous figure was a replica of her, except for the two radiant wings emerging from her back. Her feathers glistened with an otherworldly glow and scattered around her like falling leaves in autumn. She was adorned in a bright, shimmering dress that reached her ankles. Her eyes were whitish, radiating a calming yet chilling glow that would cause anyone to bow their heads in reverence. A halo appeared behind her with such intensity that Aerialia's radiance paled in comparison.

Aurora felt this was somehow the flawless representation of what she was meant to be but never could become.

"You were meant to be me," the perfect Aurora said, her voice tinged with contempt. "Yet, you could not live up to the perfection that I am. You are so irritating to look at." Unable to maintain her gaze on the perfect Aurora before her, Aurora closed her eyes. She reflected on everything that had transpired. She felt that the shadowy figures represented her doubts about her worth, her previous failures, and the haunting truth of her imperfection, which stemmed from her internal fears. Her mother, Aerialia, and the flawless Aurora before her must also mean something.

Aurora's mind spun as she tried to decipher the meaning of their presence. Suddenly, Aurora stopped, snapped her eyes open, and fixed her gaze on her child in the distance, illuminated by the calming radiance of the crimson moon. Her expression shifted to one of realization. Aurora opened her lips and laughed for the first time since her ascension trial began, "HAHAHA!!"

Tears streamed down her face, starkly contrasting her joyful expression. "I've been thinking about completing this trial all wrong," Aurora said, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "I have a child born from this imperfection," she said, glancing at the thick, inky black, shadowy

form.

"A husband who loves me with all his heart, extremely possessive and would never trade me for anything, even if you offered yourself to him in my place," she continued, raising her head

to look at the rageful Aerialia wielding her crimson Greatsword. "And most of all, I have a mother who looked at all I am and willingly called me her child."

"What are you talking about?" the perfect Aurora asked, her flawless expression morphing into a deep frown.

"It means that I no longer have to be haunted by the fears of my flaws. They are a part of who I am, so getting rid of them would be the same as getting rid of the Aurora everyone knows,"

Aurora replied.

Her thick, swirling, shadowy form began to refine, revealing her slender figure. The tendrils stretched outwards towards the Garden, and the heavens behind her slowly retracted, becoming more stable.

#### Chapter 1093: Aurora's Rebirth, The Expected Guests

"So you have accepted your fate? You were not born a goddess, and you'll die as nothing?" the perfect Aurora replied.

"You still don't get it. You-the so-called perfect version of me-are nothing more than a shadow of what I could have been. You are my past: predictable, fragile, and unchanging. But me? I am the flaw that defies reason, the anomaly that was never meant to exist. I grow, adapt, and rise beyond every flaw, every weakness," Aurora replied, chuckling softly.

"Initially, I thought the Will of the Divine Mysteries was trying to fix me, but I now realize I was wrong. He was merely trying to ensure I didn't become a more significant anomaly than I am now."

"Are you trying to say that you are stronger than me?" the flawless Aurora asked, her fierce gaze fixed on Aurora, her lips curving into a deep frown.

Upon hearing her voice, Aurora's lips curved into a light, cruel smile. She could no longer hear the voices of the shadowy figures in her mind, screaming at her to surrender or be consumed. She sensed they were under her control despite already merging with her being, including her broad, inky black wings with tendrils stretching outward at their edges.

Without hesitation, Aurora willed the wings toward the flawless Aurora. Instantly, the wings surged outward like a dome, closing in on the flawless Aurora.

"What are you planning to do?" the flawless Aurora asked, her voice tinged with anger. She cast glances at Aurora and the encroaching shadowy figures. Swinging her right hand forward like a sword, a sharp crimson arc emerged from her hand and slashed toward the approaching shadowy tendrils.

The sharp crimson arc effortlessly cut through the shadowy tendrils. However, in an instant, the shadowy figures reformed and began to wrap around her, merging with her being just as they had with Aurora.

"Get away from me!" the flawless Aurora exclaimed, her voice and expression filled with horror.

She pulled at the shadowy tendrils, merging with her like a second skin, while releasing several wide crimson arcs at the encroaching tendrils. However, they remained relentless no matter how hard she tried, rendering her efforts futile.

Within minutes, the flawless Aurora was entirely encased in a thicker, inky black shell, even larger than Aurora's previous one, except for a part of her face. Her previously unblemished form was now tainted.

Aurora advanced forward, appearing before the flawless Aurora within seconds. She raised her hand to grasp the flawless Aurora's chin.

"The faintest whisper of truth about your worth is enough to shatter you, right? Because you are perfect, you have nothing left to gain, no struggle to overcome. You have become so brittle that you can't be reforged from your pain nor reborn from your failure. And that's why I'm much stronger than you. You should have remained in my shadow," Aurora said, her inky black iris now possessing a much whiter hue, as she observed the shadowy tendrils beginning to cover the flawless Aurora's face entirely.

The tendrils consumed the previously flawless Aurora, and as they remerged, Aurora's body filled her with immense power.

Aurora turned to look at Aerialia, who had shifted to the side to observe the unfolding scene.

"What did you do to her?" Aerialia asked, narrowing her eyes at Aurora, tightly gripping her Crimson Greatsword.

Without responding, Aurora commanded the shadowy tendrils to advance toward Aerialia. Her sudden action prompted Aerialia to swing her Crimson Greatsword forward, attempting to land a hit on Aurora directly.

Aurora swung her right hand forward, sending a crimson arc that collided with Aerialia's blade, causing the space around it to ripple. The relentless tendrils attacked once more, forcing Aerialia to defend and counterattack. A battle raged against her on two fronts.

Two days later

The relentless battle had raged for forty-eight hours before it began to die down. The torn space around them from their clashes slowly started to mend itself. The Garden was annihilated, and the only things that remained were Aerialia, bound by the shadowy tendrils, Aurora, the crimson crescent moon, and the cradle before it.

"Unlike her, I don't need to eliminate you," Aurora said, observing as Aerialia ceased her attempts to break free from her bonds. Realizing the futility of her actions, Aerialia fixed her eyes on Aurora.

"I must show you I am more than a failed imitation." Aurora withdrew her gaze from Aerialia and focused on the cradle. She advanced forward, appearing beside it in seconds.

However, in that instant, the cradle vanished, and the soft glow encircling it wrapped around her. Her body began radiating a bright light. Soon, the crescent moon behind her revealed itself as a full moon. An inky black hue emerged on the other half of the moon, and a mixture of crimson and dark hues began to rain down on Aurora's figure.

Aurora had passed her Ascension trial.

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Besides the Vylkr Artefact Magical Formation,

Orion and Zogar were suspended in the air, sitting quietly. It had been sixteen hours since the Vylkr Artefact Formation began, and although it appeared to be stabilizing, they were unsure when the artefact would emerge. Nevertheless, they weren't tired. Instead, they felt more alert and cautious, knowing the enemy might attack them at any moment.

Below them, Seth was dealing with a plant-like Vylkr variant that had emerged from the Vylkr alloy mine five hours after the magical formation started. He poured a thick stream of molten lava into the mine to prevent further growth. However, since the Vylkr Artefact Magical Formation also utilized the shards of Vylkr alloys from the mine, it was restricted to a lower output.

This led to the plant-like Vylkr variant emerging again, resulting in a repetitive cycle. Suddenly, the space beside them split open.

"It seems our worst fears weren't unfounded. It did attract guests," Zogar said with a cheerful tone, trying to lighten the suddenly tense atmosphere. He straightened his legs alongside Orion and looked toward the direction of the rift space.

Seth swiftly dealt with the variant Vylkr vines before soaring and arriving beside them.

"Don't tell me you're already afraid?" Seth asked.

"Afraid? I've been waiting for an opponent to drop by to test the full extent of my abilities. Fortunately, they didn't kill my anticipation," Zogar replied, glancing at Seth.

"That opponent might be a god," Seth retorted.

"Even better," Zogar responded with a smile.

They both fell silent as the rift rippled, and two beings stepped out.

The first being to emerge was a 12-foot-tall, bulky bird of prey with no visible head. Instead, its head was a swirling vortex-a void that devoured matter, energy, and even light. Its dark brown feathers, streaked with dark purple veins, had a sleek, liquid-like texture that absorbed light and distorted the surrounding air, creating a shimmering, rippling effect. He wore a purple robe with golden ascents.

The second was a woman with purple-gold skin and shimmering scales on her arms, legs, and torso. Her piercing purple eyes, with slit-like pupils, gave her a dragon-like gaze. Long, silver hair with an iridescent sheen flowed down her back, and her pointed ears had a slight dragon curve. Two elegant, curved horns emerged from her forehead, large, leathery gold wings extended from her back, and a dragon-like tail covered in metallic scales. She wore purple, high-collar scaled armour.

Both were Vylkr spawns. The immense Vylkr energy they exuded made it easy to figure out. Nonetheless, their attire appeared ragged, as if they had just survived a gruesome battle.

They looked around their surroundings.

An overbearing pressure enveloped their surroundings, pressing Orion, Seth and Zogar down to the ground, their knees firmly planted in the earth. Their hearts sank as they observed the Vylkr spawns above them. The Primordial barrier had protected them during their last encounter, so they could not feel the presence of the Vylkrspawns.

But now, sensing the overbearing pressure, they felt a deep foreboding in their hearts. Their only relief was that their numbers were far lower than those who had arrived previously. Soon, their bodies tensed as they heard the chilling voices of the Vylkr spawns. "Oh! A Vylkr artefact Magical Formation. Despite arriving too late, who would have thought we'd encounter one here? It seems we're fortunate," the second Vylkrspawn spoke. "Yes, it appears we are. Nonetheless, it would have been better if we had arrived more quickly rather than being delayed by one of the Divine corps. Fortunately, we were able to subjugate them. And make them lose their trail, or else it would be troublesome if they also noticed the Vylkr Artefact Magical Formation and decided to destroy it," the first Vylkr spawn spoke. It was difficult to identify his features since he possessed neither a face nor lips.

The second Vylkrspawn nodded silently. She turned her head downwards and narrowed her eyes at Orion, Seth and Zogar below.

"Don't they look interesting?" The second Vylkr spawn asked, her lips curving into a deep frown.

## Chapter 1094: Confronting The Terrifying Foes

"True, I can sense something familiar in them," the dark brown feathered Phoenix Vylkr spawn replied, agreeing with her words.

In an instant, Seth was lifted from the ground as if held by an invisible force. He was dragged forward, arriving before them. Seth tried to open his mouth to speak but found he couldn't move his lips. Even his voice was sealed, preventing him from screaming.

"Such pure Vylkr energy! It's unlike anything I've ever seen," the dark brown feathered Phoenix Vylkr spawn said.

He sensed the bracelet on their wrists, though it was vastly different from what the gods' chosen wore. Combined with the pure Vylkr energy they exuded and the fact they had been sent by their sovereign to investigate this territory-following the deaths of the previous Vylkr spawns killed by a god-he began to doubt their identity.

"Introduce yourselves," the dark brown feathered Phoenix Vylkr spawn added.

Suddenly, the overwhelming pressure surrounding Orion and Zogar dissipated. They stood to their feet and looked upward. Orion's gaze fixed on Seth, suspended in the air before he nodded and stepped forward.

"It's an honour to be in your presence, emissaries of Lord Naka," Orion said, bowing toward the two Vylkr spawns.

"How do you know that name? If you don't want this to be your last breath, speak truthfully," the dark brown feathered Phoenix Vylkr spawn demanded, his voice booming.

The slender dragon Vylkr spawn frowned deeply, scrutinizing the mortals before her more closely.

Orion nodded swiftly in response. From the report he had received from Aegis of the Arctic Deity during the previous Vylkr spawns' arrival, he knew they were unaware of the territory's history or the identities of its inhabitants.



So, Orion understood they hadn't been informed about their true identities and were primarily interested in the god who had killed the prior Vylkr spawns investigating the Vylkr artefact. His task now was to rectify that oversight and show the utmost respect to Naka, hoping this would ensure smoother future discussions.

If things went wrong, they would have no choice but to abandon everything and return to Paradise. Orion hoped that Ilse would rescue them on time.

"I am Orion, the Supreme Leader of the now destroyed Paradise; Naka once cared for my ancestors, and we, in return, worshipped his name for generations. But some time in the past, he vanished, leaving us to survive on our own. Because of him, we learned to harness Vylkr energy, so after learning about your identities, we decided to honour your presence as his return," Orion said.

"When the previous emissaries arrived during the first Vylkr artefact magical formation, we suspected another arrival after the second artefact emerged. So, we waited. Thankfully, you've come, confirming our assumption. Emissaries of Naka, we desire only peace and understanding. We would be grateful for any information about Lord Naka and his current location."

"But we were informed that the last Vylkr spawns who came here were killed by the god of this territory. How can we be sure that you're telling the truth?" The slender dragon Vylkr spawn asked, her slit eyes narrowed on Orion.

Although the mortal's words moved her, especially considering that her companion remained silent and contemplative, they did not show visible expressions. They were aware of their creator's various experiments and his tendency to abandon failures.

Nonetheless, they were still weakened from their encounter with the Divine Corps and needed time to recover. So, they were vigilant to avoid any potential attack by the suspected god.

"Oh! You are mistaken. The god who attacked the previous Emissaries of Naka was not the ruler of this territory. He was simply attracted to the Vylkr artefact, which resulted in a battle between outsiders. The battle was so horrific that we lost our home," Orion said, channelling his lightning to make tears stream from his eyes. His voice cracked as he stretched his hand towards the direction of the Vylkr alloy mine.

Hearing the mortal's words, the slender dragon Vylkr spawn turned to look at the immense crater before her and surveyed the territory's state. Although faint, they could sense various rifts in space and lingering divine energy, indicating a significant battle had occurred here. The heavy presence of Vylkr energy made the mortal's words believable to them.

"If your words are true, then you should have no problem allowing me to see through your memories to verify," the dark brown feathered phoenix Vylkr spawn said.

Orion opened his mouth to speak, but a mysterious force seized him. Like Seth, he was immediately lifted into the air and suspended before the Vylkr spawns.

Internally, Orion's mind raced as he tried to find a solution to his current predicament. Unsure of the Vylkr spawn's power, he could only hope that the Divine Technique that Aerialia had taught to protect his mind was effective.

Zogar moved to act, intending to pursue Orion and Seth. He realized their plan would fail if the Vylkr spawns probed the Village Chief's memories. However, an invisible force pressed upon him, slamming him to the ground with a resounding "BOOM!" Cracks spread outward like spiderwebs as Zogar discovered he couldn't lift a finger or move.

"The only reason I spared your lives is that you appear more interesting. If you move again, I will not hesitate to kill you," the slender dragon Vylkr spawn said.

Zogar clenched his teeth, locking eyes with Orion. Despite expecting a significant difference in strength between himself and the Vylkr spawns, feeling it firsthand sent chills down his spine. He wasn't even given the chance to launch an attack.

Meanwhile, Orion suddenly experienced a sharp pain in his mind. After a few minutes, the pain subsided, but then a familiar and dreadful scream erupted below him.

Orion glanced around and quickly realized that the scream had originated from Zogar. He also understood that Zogar and Seth were undergoing memory searches by the Vylkr spawns.

"You claim to be telling the truth, yet you are all practising a Divine Technique capable of protecting your minds from outside interference. Why would you learn such a technique if not to hide your secrets from prying eyes? Regardless, it's still not enough to keep me away. I simply have to rip your mind open piece by piece and glimpse through everything as I wish. You should have taken my benevolence when you had the chance..." The dark brown feathered Phoenix Vylkr spawn replied, but he was suddenly interrupted. "Wait, I'll tell you everything you need to know."

He bent his body to look downwards.

The person who had spoken was none other than Zogar.

Zogar gritted his teeth in anger. If any of them were to die now, it would be a massive setback for Paradise. However, Goddess Ilse must be prepared to rescue them from their current plight. As the only one capable of speaking, Zogar knew he had to say something to delay their attempt to kill them.

Zogar felt his body rise from the ground, suspended high in the air by an overbearing invisible force. He groaned painfully at the sudden movement.

"Go ahead and speak; I don't have much time to waste," the dark brown feathered Phoenix Vylkr spawn replied. If he wanted to break through the Divine Technique protecting their minds, they would lose some of their memories, potentially rendering them incapable of remembering who they previously were. Whether the lost memory would be essential was a risk he wasn't willing to take.

Nonetheless, they hadn't planned to release them but to take them with them. Their words were merely to help them verify the validity of their statements before they began to break through their minds to ensure they hadn't missed any vital information. He was confident that they would get what they wanted, as no mortal would dare lie in the presence of a god, especially with their lives on the line.

Zogar gulped internally. "I can...," he began but was interrupted as the space above them tore open.

Zogar sighed inwardly, realizing that Goddess Ilse had finally decided to rescue them. 'It's about time,' Zogar thought.

Seth sighed in relief within his heart.

Orion was also incredibly relieved by Ilse's dramatic arrival.

The two Vylkr spawns turned to focus on the direction of the torn space in the sky.

Sensing a familiar signature, the slender dragon lips curved into a frown. "It appears they were clever enough not to follow the false trail we left behind but to follow our original trail," she remarked, her tone cold.

"Take them and flee. I'll hold them off and catch up with you later," the dark brown feathered pheonix replied, soaring towards the direction of the torn space.

"Are you sure? We are in no condition to engage in another battle," the slender dragon Vylkr spawn replied, her frown deepening.

"We still aren't sure if a god is waiting in hiding to attack us. And although I doubt their strength will be sufficient, it's best not to take the risk," the dark brown-feathered phoenix Vylkr spawn's voice sounded behind as he arrived before the torn space.

#### Chapter 1095: Divine Corps, Stowaways

Initially, Orion, Seth, and Zogar were confused by their words. They were so focused on their encounter and survival with the Vylkr spawns that they hadn't considered their discussion when they arrived. But now that they thought about it carefully, they realized that the Vylkr spawns were running away from an enemy.

What kind of opponent would make the Vylkr spawns take a rear guard action?

Orion, Seth, and Zogar were brought to the ground. But they fixed their eyes upward as a figure finally revealed itself, stepping out of the rift.

A woman was dressed in a form-fitting, matte black bodysuit covering her entire body except her head. A silvery exoskeleton was attached to her spine, arms, and legs. Thin blue lines of glowing, moving runes ran along the exoskeleton's contact surfaces. Behind her was a mechanical floating ring, rotating slowly and glowing with ever-changing symbols on its surface.

She had dark caramel skin and tightly braided raven-black hair that reached her mid-back. Her glowing blue eyes shone with an unnatural hue. She radiated an overbearing presence no less powerful than that of the Vylkr spawns, causing the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere to drop by several degrees again.

Orion, Seth, and Zogar were held on the ground, observing the scene above them with wide eyes, especially Orion, who couldn't take his gaze off the woman.

The unknown woman's inhuman tone resounded, "Vylkr energy signature detected. Analyzing... High-profile target detected. Initiating engagement protocol." Her cold gaze locked onto the two Vylkr spawns. "I've found you. You won't be able to run away this time," she added, her eyes briefly lingering on the Vylkr artefact and Orion, Seth and Zogar.

Instantly, a ripple resembling nanites spread out from the mechanical ring hovering behind her, creating a one-meter greatsword with a glowing bluish hue along its edges. She gripped the handle of the greatsword firmly with both hands.

"It appears only one member of the Divine Corps made it this far. You can go on without me. I'll catch up with you later," the dark brown phoenix Vylkr spawn said.

The slender dragon Vylkr spawn nodded in understanding. However, just as she turned to look downward, a bright golden light flashed before her eyes, and in an instant, the three mortals were gone, leaving her in shock.

"They're gone!" the slender dragon Vylkr spawn announced, swiftly turning her head from side to side to pinpoint the signature of a nearby divine being. Her efforts were futile, as she couldn't locate anyone.

The unknown woman's eyes flickered toward where Orion, Seth, and Zogar had been, a frown etching itself on her face.

"My instincts were right about a divine being lying in wait. Search for them. I'll do my best to give you something to find them," the dark brown phoenix Vylkr spawn said, his tone grave. Though he lacked a face, a frown would undoubtedly have formed on it if he had one.

"No one is leaving. Id Create-Mirror Realm," the unknown woman said. In an instant, she, the dark brown phoenix, and the slender dragon Vylkr spawn vanished into thin air. All that remained was the lingering magical aura, indicating their previous presence.

At the Edge of Paradise, within the Primordial Barrier,

Orion, Seth, and Zogar emerged from a rift in space, landing on the ground.

"Are you all okay?" Ilse asked, her eyes scanning them closely to ensure they were unharmed.

It would reflect poorly on her if anything had happened to them under her watch.

"Haa... We're fine. Thank you," Orion replied, nodding as he focused on calming his mind before getting to his feet.

"Thank you, goddess," Seth and Zogar said in unison. They lay on their backs, pressing against the ground as they exhaled deeply, doing their best to regain their composure before standing.

Ilse nodded, exhaling in relief. After scrutinizing them, she couldn't detect anything amiss. "I'll keep an eye on the situation in case they return, so you should get some rest. Don't worry about Aurora-she and the baby are fine. Aerialia is also looking after them and will inform us if anything goes wrong," Ilse reassured them. Though she could sense everything happening within the Golden Palace, she shared this information to ease Orion's concern.

"Take me with you. I want to observe everything," Orion said. He was intrigued by the identity of the unknown woman, whom the Vylkr spawns had referred to as a member of the Divine Corps. The title alone was imposing, and he felt she might hold crucial information about the current state of the world, especially since she was hunting two Vylkr spawns.

It was unlikely that the Vylkr spawns would speak. Keeping them alive might prove more troublesome than killing them, so they were not his priority.

"Are you sure?" Ilse asked, raising an eyebrow. She had sensed the terrifying auras of all three beings, none of whom could be considered weak even among the gods. After facing such formidable entities, she was surprised that Orion still wanted to confront them again.

"Yes," Orion nodded.

Ilse nodded in understanding. She had no issue bringing him along to observe the battle and see who would emerge victorious, especially since they wouldn't be leaving the Primordial

Barrier.

"In that case, we'll follow you to observe as well, Chief," Zogar said.

Seth nodded.

"Fine. You can all watch," Ilse sighed, "but first, wipe that blood off your faces." She waved her hand, and three handkerchiefs materialized in their grasps.

Orion frowned and touched his nose. Noticing blood on his fingertips, he quickly used the handkerchief to clean it off. Seth and Zogar did the same.

Clearly, the Vylkr spawns' probing of their minds had injured them.

Seeing they were done, Ilse waved her hand dismissively. "You can keep those. Follow me." She turned and walked away from the golden castle.

Orion, Seth, and Zogar followed her. They halted a few meters away from the Golden Palace.

"Though they will sense that we are watching them, the Primordial Barrier will make it difficult for them to pinpoint our location," Ilse said, waving her hand. Instantly, a transparent wide screen appeared before them, showing an image identical to the territory below.

They could see the entire Vylkr alloy mine, the Sleeping Fox, Wanderlust Traveling Tortoise, and Trekking Flamingo Runaway City in the distance, all moving away from the direction of

the Vylkr alloy mine.

They had been ordered to get as far as possible from the mine. Though Orion doubted they could escape the reach of the Vylkr spawns if pursued, it was better than having them linger

nearby.

Ilse divided the live screen into four parts, each displaying the whereabouts of the three Runaway Cities, the location where the Vylkr spawns, and the unknown woman's

disappearance.

"What's that?" Orion said, noticing strange movements in the distance, away from the direction of the moving Wanderlust Traveling Tortoise Runaway City. He pointed at it.

Ilse shifted her attention to where he had pointed and zoomed in.

A broken piece of an unknown Runaway City was swiftly heading toward their territory, using the same path as the Wanderlust Traveling Tortoise Runaway City

A Stowaway!

Stowaways were made up of gods' chosens and individuals who had defaulted, abandoned

their Runaway Cities, or fled after theirs was destroyed to avoid being killed. They took refuge in these wrecked or abandoned Runaway Cities. However, because of this, they could only survive by pillaging other Runaway Cities, intercepting their trade routes and engaging in other criminal activities.

No Runaway City wanted to associate with them. Unlike Runaway Cities, the strength of a Stowaway group varied, as no one could be certain who had taken refuge within it. Orion, Seth, and Zogar knew this from the spies' memories. They knew that the Stowaways in this territory were weak and had only survived due to the harsh terrain that deterred most Runaway Cities from passing through. All three Runaway Cities had previously navigated the area unharmed, but now, watching their advance, they couldn't help but frown. "They will reach each other in about a day and a half. Do you want me to send an avatar to warn them?" Ilse asked.

The presence of the Vylkr spawns and the unknown woman had left her on edge, making her trust Orion and Paradise more. She was willing to help the Runaway Cities, considering they were Paradise's investments.

"Please do," Orion replied with a nod. It would be best to inform the Wanderlust Traveling Tortoise Runaway City of the ambush in advance.



Ilse focused on Wanderlust Traveling Tortoise Runaway City and gently tapped the live screen. The Runaway City's position rippled like a wave and stabilized as she withdrew her

hand.

"It is done. They will receive your message soon," Ilse said.

"Thank you," Orion replied. He had faith in Commander Sy'ra's ability to handle the

situation. He didn't ask Ilse to lend a hand, as it would be risky if any surviving opponents specifically targeted them because of her involvement.

Ilse nodded silently and refocused on monitoring the Vylkr alloy mine on the live screen.

#### Chapter 1096: A Divine Messenger, Calculated Gamble

Uncertain of how long the battle would last, Orion sat comfortably on the ground, continuing to watch the live screen.

Seth and Zogar followed suit, doing the same.

#### Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway City

Within the Queen's Palace,

Eleanora, Ballesha, Sy'ra, and all former Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway City leaders sat quietly in the meeting hall. They had debated and argued over the reason Paradise had ordered the return of their representatives and instructed them to distance themselves from its territory. Yet, no one could figure out why!

What made matters worse was the strange phenomenon that had appeared out of nowhere, seemingly the catalyst for these sudden orders.

Although they had witnessed several astonishing phenomena within Paradise, they had never been asked to leave. Usually, they were simply told to remain calm. This unusual order made them question whether the phenomenon was natural or signalled the arrival of an enemy of Paradise.

They dared not think about the strength of such an enemy capable of triggering a

phenomenon upon their arrival. Nonetheless, if given the choice, they wouldn't hesitate to

stay.

At this point, they realized that they would much rather remain under Paradise's protection than return to their previous lives. For the first time in a long while, they had experienced what it felt like to live without constant worry about the state of the world.

Paradise made them feel safe and secure!

Suddenly, the room dimmed, and a bright ball of light appeared a short distance from the entrance door.

"What's going on?" Ballesha's voice trembled through the room. As the weakest among them, she was more anxious about a sudden attack, and the current situation only heightened her fears.

"Stand behind me," Eleanora said, pulling her sister close. Her eyes were fixed on the expanding ball of light.

The leaders stood beside one another, preparing to attack if the figure before them proved hostile. Their foreheads were slowly drenched with sweat.

Commander Sy'ra stood at the forefront, her hand gripping her newly enhanced Gearweaver. The figure gradually became clearer until it revealed a beautiful young woman with dark skin and long, golden hair streaked with black and white, flowing downwards in waves.

She wore a golden dress adorned with numerous gems and crystals, and her neck, arms, waist, and ankles glittered with golden and gemstone jewellery. On her feet were golden shoes set with rubies and other precious stones. The woman exuded an otherworldly aura.

A wave of oppressive energy immediately descended upon the meeting hall.

Sy'ra and everyone else instantly collapsed to their knees, unable to raise their heads or move any part of their bodies. A sudden thought flashed through their minds, sending a shiver down their spines.

Is this the enemy Paradise is facing?

However, the woman's following words brought both relief, but the tension remained.

"I've come to deliver a message from the Supreme Leader of Paradise..." Ilse said, her gaze sweeping over the kneeling figures of the former leaders of the Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway City as she relayed her message.

It hadn't taken much effort for her to find them, apart from reading a few memories of the city's inhabitants. Even so, she was astonished by what she had learned about the current state of the world. This made her opinion of Orion and Paradise rise to another level.

After finishing her message, Ilse added, "That's all. Continue along this path, and you'll encounter them. Be sure to prepare for any ambush. That's all I have to deliver to you."

Just as Ilse began condensing into a ball of light once more, Eleanora's voice echoed in the air, "Since you've personally come to deliver such important information, surely you won't leave without telling us your name so we may properly greet you next time." She swiftly stepped forward and bowed before Ilse.

After learning that the woman before them had come to deliver a warning about the Stowaways approaching, she was no longer worried about Paradise sending them away. Instead, she focused on understanding why Paradise had given such an order.

As for dealing with the Stowaways, they encountered them lurking during their journey into this territory. The Stowaways were weak and easy to handle, so she wasn't concerned about them.

"I am Ilse, the goddess of treasures. You may address me as Goddess Ilse in the future," Ilse replied, her form condensing into a ball of light before vanishing from the room.

The meeting hall regained its brightness, but it was so quiet that the only sounds were the former leaders of Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway City's heavy breathing, which echoed

throughout the room as their chests heaved rapidly, their minds reeling from the information they had just received.

A goddess! Paradise had sent a goddess as a messenger to deliver a message to them!!

Eleanora couldn't help but stumble to the ground, her hands pressed against it to keep herself upright.

Suddenly, their thoughts circled back to their earlier concerns. If Paradise could send a goddess and a messenger and was so uncertain about their safety that they had ordered them to leave, didn't that imply their enemies were also on the level of a divine being?

Their breathing grew heavier as the realization sank in.

"Did everyone not hear what she said? Commander Sy'ra, shouldn't you be mobilizing our gods' chosens to capture those Stowaways and present them to Paradise?" Ballesha's voice suddenly rang out, breaking the silence.

"You are right, Princess Ballesha. I'll get started immediately," Sy'ra replied, rising to her feet. She quickly helped Eleanora and bowed toward her and Ballesha before swiftly leaving the meeting hall.

The other leaders rose to their feet one by one. Each turned and bowed to Eleanora and Ballesha before quietly exiting the hall, needing more time to calm their minds after their sudden encounter with a goddess.

"Let's go. I want to personally watch Sy'ra capture the Stowaways so we can properly thank her for granting us this encounter with a goddess," Eleanora said, glancing at Ballesha before turning and exiting the meeting hall.

Ballesha snorted but followed closely behind her. Despite her calm demeanour, her heart was still riddled with shock.

Ballesha suddenly realized that dedicating her life to Paradise might lead to more than just the satisfaction of killing her sister.

....

At the Edge of Paradise, within the Primordial Barrier,

Ilse narrowed her eyes at the live screen, which displayed the previous location of the two Vylkr spawns and the unknown woman, as she noticed a crack in space suddenly appear. It had been eight hours since they entered the mirror realm, and they were finally showing signs of

returning.

Ilse turned her head to the side and saw that Orion, Seth, and Zogar had fallen asleep.

She flicked her finger, causing a gust of wind to turn their bodies over and immediately wake

them from slumber.

"They'll be arriving soon," Ilse said, refocusing on the live screen.

Orion, Seth, and Zogar quickly got to their feet, their eyes fixed on the trembling space within

the live feed.

Orion narrowed his gaze, understanding that the outcome of this battle could determine the fate of Paradise. He hoped the unknown woman would emerge victorious. Suddenly, a wide rift opened in space, and two figures appeared. The first was the slender dragon Vylkr spawn, battered with severe injuries that revealed her inky black internal organs, with a greatsword piercing through her stomach. The other was the unknown woman, missing both legs and her left arm, with only her right arm gripping the handle of the greatsword embedded in the dragon Vylkr spawn.

Noticing that the injuries of the slender dragon Vylkr spawn were slowly healing as Vylkr vines intertwined with her body, Orion frowned. "Can you eliminate the Vylkr spawn and capture the unknown woman?" he asked, shifting his attention to Ilse.

Now that he had the chance to execute his plan, he wasn't willing to let it go to waste.

"Are you sure? I can easily kill both of them in their current state and ensure that Paradise is safe from any threat," Ilse replied, frowning.

Although she found herself growing increasingly curious about the current state of the world, she understood the danger these two posed if left to recover. Killing them seemed like the safest option.

Orion shook his head. "If we eliminate them, they'll just keep coming back to investigate. It's

better to take the risk and learn about her identity. Who knows, she might even lend us a hand in dealing with these Vylkr spawns," he reasoned.

Orion knew that, despite the numerous deaths of Vylkr spawns, this could serve as a warning

to whoever sent them. But he didn't want to risk an invasion of their territory in retaliation. Even worse, if Naka, whom he knew was still alive, were to come here himself, it would be disastrous for their territory.

Ilse furrowed her brows, pondering Orion's words. After a moment, she nodded. "I'll trust

your plan this time," she said thoughtfully, her eyes fixed on Orion.

Orion's heart eased in relief.

Ilse tore open a rift in space with her right hand and immediately walked through it. The rift

healed within seconds.

#### Chapter 1097: Surrender and Be Saved

Orion, Seth, and Zogar refocused their attention on the live screen, observing as a rift in space appeared above the two injured divine entities lying on the ground, and Ilse emerged from it.

On the other side, Ilse's arrival immediately stunned the two battered and severely injured divine beings on the ground.

The unknown woman immediately distanced herself from the slender dragon Vylkr spawn, watching her intently.

The slender dragon Vylkr spawn took the opportunity to remove the greatsword from her stomach and flung it aside.

"Who are you?" the slender dragon Vylkr spawn asked, her wary eyes fixed on the unknown goddess before her. "You're the god who governs over this territory, aren't you?" she added swiftly.

The Vylkr vines slowly assimilated into her body, healing her severe injuries so she wasn't concerned about them. Instead, she focused on the unknown goddess who had appeared at such a critical moment.

She realized her colleague had been right-a divine being was waiting in hiding for the perfect moment to attack them.

However, contrary to her expectations, Ilse didn't introduce herself. Instead, she swung her hand forward, tearing open a rift in the sky. The rift shone with brilliant golden light, indicating Ilse had opened her vault.

A vibrant hum filled the air, and a deadly ray of golden-purple light shot out from the torn space, engulfing the slender dragon Vylkr spawn.

"AHHHH!" The slender dragon Vylkr spawn screamed in pain as her body was vaporized into bits. Her voice faded as the brilliant golden-purple light dimmed. Soon, it vanished, leaving behind an 8-meter-(26ft) wide and 36-meter-(118ft) deep crater where the slender dragon Vylkr spawn had once stood.

Ilse swept her senses over the area, searching for traces of the slender dragon Vylkr spawn's energy signature. Finding none, she sighed in relief.

Her gaze shifted to the greatsword, glinting from within the immense pit, unblemished even after her powerful attack. Its durability rivalled that of a Divine Artifact as it was the only thing that could withstand her attack even while it was at its weakest form.

Ilse then turned her attention to the unknown woman, whose leg and left arm had been ripped off. Despite her injuries, the woman wasn't bleeding, nor did she show any fear in Ilse's presence. Even her internal organs appeared unnatural, making Ilse briefly wonder if she was truly alive.

However, as a goddess who had studied the vast knowledge left behind by her previous self stored in her vault, she was aware of various gods with unnatural bodies. So she wasn't shocked by the scene before her.

"I am Ilse, the goddess of treasures. I'm not here to harm you. If you surrender and come with me, I promise you will be treated fairly and given the chance to recover," Ilse said, her voice resonating through the surroundings.

Though she had agreed to follow Orion's plan to capture the unknown woman, she was unsure how to do so without attacking and subduing her.

Ilse doubted she had the power to restrain her at the moment or prevent her from sacrificing herself to avoid capture. However, if she could get the unknown woman into Paradise, the Primordial Barrier might be able to suppress her.

'Energy signature-Divine. Classification-Goddess. Analyzing... Estimated probability of victory-10%,' the unknown woman thought, her expression deepening into a frown as she heard Ilse's words.

Suddenly, the greatsword within the immense crater shot out, slicing through the air as it sped toward Ilse.

Ilse reacted immediately, flicking her right wrist to the side, tearing several rifts in space before her. The rifts gleamed with a bright golden light, attempting to pull the greatsword into her vault. However, as though sentient, the greatsword twisted away, evading the rift.

The unknown woman took to the sky, opening a rift in space to escape.

Though the greatsword dodged the first rift, it couldn't evade the second, plunging into it. As it was about to emerge again, Ilse sealed her vault shut and chased after the fleeing woman.



Suddenly, the mechanical halo shot toward Ilse, attacking her with beams of light from its edges.

"What is that thing made of?" Ilse muttered, opening her vault to absorb each beam of light aimed at her. She felt her vault tremble with each strike, making her wary of receiving the attacks head-on.

Seeing the halo charging toward her, Ilse created multiple rifts around it, attempting to corner it. Fortunately, after several attempts to dodge, the halo was finally sucked into her vault, which Ilse sealed immediately.

Without hesitation, Ilse tore another rift in space and leapt through, following the trail of the unknown woman. Her expression paled as she sensed the woman was heading toward one of the Runaway Cities.

Ilse realized the unknown woman might try to use the city's inhabitants as a cover to speed up her escape.

"You're not getting away," Ilse gritted her teeth, quickening her pursuit.

...

Orion watched as Ilse eliminated the slender dragon Vylkr spawn and briefly clashed with the unknown woman. He couldn't help but nod in acknowledgement of her strength. He knew that Ilse was improving slightly, as she could stay awake longer.

Despite that, she had proven she wasn't weak and would only grow stronger over time, which made Orion appreciate the effort he had put into building a stable relationship with her.

The surroundings grew silent as the unknown woman emerged from a torn rift in space above the Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway City.

Orion, Seth, and Zogar frowned in unison. They narrowed their eyes at the live screen, watching as the unknown woman surveyed the Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway City before tearing another rift.

Within seconds, she reappeared above the Sleeping Fox Runaway City.

"What is she planning to do?" Seth asked, his frown deepening.

Fortunately, Ilse caught up in time. She opened her vault, releasing deadly beams of light that struck the unknown woman, severely wounding her and leaving a hole through her lower

waist.

However, the woman evaded capture, plunging downward into the Sleeping Fox Runaway City. Buildings tore apart as she descended, unable to stop her fall. Soon, she vanished within the Sleeping Fox Runaway City.

Orion clenched his fist in frustration, trying to discern the unknown woman's intentions.

Could it be that she planned to use the Sleeping Fox Runaway City as a distraction for her escape?

Even if that were her goal, there was little he could do but wait and observe. After witnessing the recurring attacks from the Vylkr spawns and the battle between Ilse and the unknown woman, Orion felt an increasing urge to grow stronger.

However, he knew he had to continue at his current pace, relying on those stronger than him

to fend off any threats that might endanger them or Paradise.

At that moment, Orion's eyes widened in shock, his fist unclenching as he stared at the

astounding sight before him.

"This..." Orion muttered, trying to speak, but when he turned to Seth and Zogar and saw their astounded expressions, he realized he wasn't imagining things. They, too, were witnessing the shocking sight unfolding on the live screen.

Ilse was surprised and bewildered by the scene unfolding before her. The Sleeping Fox

Runaway City had come to a complete halt. Emerging on its body was a phantom of an enormous fox superimposed on it. The Sleeping Fox Runaway City then focused on Ilse and

roared at her.

Soon, a deep frown emerged on Ilse's face.

What was this?

From all the information she had gathered or had been told, she had never been informed about any connection between the Runaway Cities and the unknown woman.

'No, that's not right,' Ilse thought, shaking her head.

Ilse realized that Orion and Aerialia might also be unaware of this information. She had seen the effort they had put into gaining her trust and understood they had no reason to hide such

crucial information from her.

Soon, the phantom fox over the Sleeping Fox Runaway City began to dissipate, vanishing into thin air. The Runaway City stood still, its bright lights dimming one by one and flickering back on. If not for the numerous pits and the crushed Vylkr vines strewn across the city, it would have seemed like the previous scene had been an illusion.

After hesitating momentarily, Ilse flicked her wrist to open a rift in space and vanished through it, leaving the scene behind. Even if Ilse was tempted to investigate what had just transpired between the unknown woman and the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, she sensed this was uncharted territory that would require Paradise's help before she could fully understand

it.

For the third time since learning about the Vylkr vines, man-made gods, Naka, and the emergence of the Vylkr spawns, Ilse acknowledged that, even as a goddess, she might not

survive in this world without their assistance.

....

A rift appeared beside the live screen, and Ilse emerged from it before the rift instantly

closed. Upon witnessing her return, Orion, Seth, and Zogar-still wearing expressions of shock, astonishment, and disbelief-quickly regained their composure.

Understanding the question they wanted to ask, Ilse nodded and said, "Yes, she escaped into the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, and everything you saw happened."

#### Chapter 1098: The Summoned Warriors

Orion nodded. He placed his mask on his face and sent a message to summon over two hundred four-star warriors and Iris. He turned towards Seth and Zogar and said, "Go and get ready; we'll be heading towards the Sleeping Fox Runaway City soon."

Seth and Zogar nodded, soaring into the sky and returning to their residence to prepare for their attack on the Sleeping Fox Runaway City.

Orion removed his mask and turned to Ilse. "I want to check on Aurora before we leave," he said.

Ilse nodded and took to the sky, heading to the Golden Palace through the front door, with Orion following closely behind.

"Only a day has passed inside, but she seems to be improving. We'll likely need to wait several more weeks or months for her full recovery," Ilse said as they entered the room. She doubted Aurora would wake up in just a few days after the phenomenon triggered by her delivery.

Orion nodded at Ilse's words.

Aerialia turned, noticing their entrance.

Orion smiled warmly at Liora, who was sleeping peacefully in a cradle beautifully adorned with precious stones and jewels. He then shifted his gaze to Aurora, still suspended in the air and

wrapped in a cocoon of Vylkr and divine energy. Unlike before, the two energies were no longer separated but attempting to intertwine, like opposing sea waves clashing against each other.

"How long has she been like this?" Orion asked, observing the scene with a frown.

"Things changed to this a few hours after you left. But since Aurora doesn't seem in danger, I decided to wait for your return," Aerialia responded, shaking her head. "Do you know what's happening to her?" she asked, turning her attention to Ilse.

'I just got here; how am I supposed to know?' Ilse's lips twitched slightly at the thought, but she quickly composed herself.

"Unfortunately, I also have no idea about what's happening. The only thing I'm certain of is that Aurora is no longer in danger. All we can do now is wait until she awakens," Ilse responded.

Upon hearing Ilse words, Orion and Aerialia exhaled tiredly in response.

"Tell me everything that happened out there," Aerialia asked, turning her focus back to Orion.

Before he could answer, Ilse interjected, "Why don't I show you instead?"

Aerialia's eyes shifted toward Ilse, and she nodded.

With a flick of Ilse's wrist, a transparent screen appeared before them. This time, it wasn't a live feed but a replay of everything that had transpired—from the moment the three divine entities—the two Vylkr spawns and the unknown woman—were pulled into the mirror realm to Ilse's pursuit of the unknown woman.

Aerialia watched the events unfold, her eyes widening in shock and confusion. Though her mind was filled with countless questions, she knew neither Orion nor Ilse had answers about what had just occurred. As such, she kept her thoughts to herself and swallowed her words.

The replay lasted several minutes before Ilse made the screen vanish.

"Have you visited the Sleeping Fox Runaway City to assess the situation?" Aerialia asked, her gaze shifting between Orion and Ilse.

Orion shook his head and responded, "Not yet. I've summoned some of our strongest warriors to prepare before we head there. We could encounter something we least expect, so it's best not to rush recklessly," Orion replied, shaking his head. He had even called a divine apostle to join them, but despite assembling three of their strongest, he still wasn't sure they were ready to confront whatever lay within the Sleeping Fox Runaway City.

"As for the inhabitants, if we can't locate the unknown woman and free the Runaway City from her grasp, we may need to move some of them to the Trekking Flamingo Runaway City. It's not something I want to do, but if the situation becomes dire, we'll have no other choice," Orion added, clenching his fists.

"Alright. I trust you'll make the right decision no matter the situation. Just be careful. I don't want my daughter to wake up after everything she's been through only to find out her husband is in danger," Aerialia responded, trying to lighten the mood.

Orion smiled and nodded, appreciating her attempt to ease the tension and calm his mind.

They used the moment to discuss their next steps and strategize before the warriors arrived.

...

At the Centre of Paradise, the Rightward Stronghold Main Base,

Seth soared over the Rightward Stronghold and landed in front of his mansion. It was a simple, two-story building, recently renovated from his simple hut. His parents were impressed by the comfort of the new Village Chief's residence and had insisted on similar improvements for him, believing it would ease the stress of his duties as Stronghold Leader. Although Seth preferred a minimalist lifestyle, spending most of his time outdoors to train and grow stronger, he saw no reason to refuse their request and allowed the renovations to proceed.

Seth pushed open the door and walked inside. Immediately, a slender woman who appeared to be in her mid-twenties greeted him. The woman was dressed in the Village's traditional attire a piece of cloth tied around her waist and a linen tube top with a thin layer of clothing underneath. Due to the influence of the Prismeron race, bras and panties had become popular, but only those wealthy enough could afford them.

"Welcome back, Mr Seth. Are you preparing to rest, or will you be heading out again?" the woman asked, bowing respectfully. Her name was Sadie, and she was responsible for maintaining Seth's mansion. She also handled his personal needs, and desires to ensure he felt unburdened while resting.

Sadie handled her duties dutifully to ensure she kept this position because her salary was several times more than she had previously earned. The possibility of bearing the child of one of the strongest warriors, Paradise, who will possess a great chance to become a warrior, was

also enticing.

"I'll be heading out again. Fetch my armour, weapon, and accessories quickly," Seth replied, closing the door behind him. He walked toward the main room and sat down to clear his mind from everything he had witnessed.

Sadie nodded quickly. "Okay, I'll be back soon." She swiftly exited through the door and returned ten minutes later carrying a box. She placed it on the table in front of Seth and

opened it.

Seth nodded and stood up, removing his current attire, a pair of crimson trousers and a black shirt.

"Where's Zarelia? What's she doing?" Seth asked, wondering why she hadn't come to see him yet. While the revelation of Paradise's existence might leave her in disbelief for some time, he knew Zarelia well enough to believe she would recover swiftly.

Sadie smiled. "She was waiting for you in the main room, but she became too disturbed by the phenomenon and worried about the state of the Trekking Flamingo Runaway City. She asked me to take her to her room to rest. The last time I checked, she had forced herself to sleep."

Seth nodded. "Alright. Keep an eye on her and inform me of anything she does while I'm

gone."

"Mr. Seth, have you taken an interest in her?" Sadie asked curiously. Considering this was the first woman he had brought into his newly constructed mansion, she was curious about her

role.

"Yes, but it's complicated. I'll explain later, and you can tell me what you think," Seth

nodded.

Sadie suppressed her curiosity and helped Seth finish putting on his armour. She then escorted

him to the front door.

"Be back soon, Mr Seth," Sadie said with a respectful bow.

"I will," Seth replied before soaring into the air and disappearing into the distance.

....

Ilse sensed several figures standing outside her Golden Palace. "They're here," she said,

shifting her gaze to Orion.

"I'll be back soon," Orion said, nodding at Aerialia before turning to Ilse. "Let's go."

Ilse nodded and led the way out of the bedroom, through the brightly lit front door, and out

of the Golden Palace.



Outside, Zogar and Seth stood shoulder to shoulder. Zogar was dressed in rogue armour forged from mixed grey fabric and Vylkr alloys, with his Devourer Gear hoisted behind his

back.

While Seth wore full armour made of Vylkr alloys with crimson engravings of visible runes, his Devourer Gear was hanging by his waist.

Behind them stood Iris, fully armoured with her helmet on, followed by 250 warriors-204 four-star warriors and 46 with gifts or practised an art or technique related to the earth attribute. Each was dressed in varying warrior garments.

Though every warrior who had previously been stuck at the third star and retired was now a

four-star warrior, Orion couldn't summon all their forces to investigate the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, especially when facing such an uncertain, powerful enemy.

Orion nodded at them, then focused on Ilse and said, "Replay it for them from the moment of

the pursuit." Ilse nodded, flicked her wrist, and a wide transparent screen appeared in the sky.

The warriors watched the scene unfolding on the screen above until the unknown woman

dove into the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, and a phantom fox appeared over it with an astonished expression.

## Chapter 1099: Rallying The Hearts

Although they hadn't seen what transpired inside the city, anyone with common sense could tell that the unknown woman was responsible for everything that had happened.

They knew the Supreme Leader had summoned them to face an extremely powerful enemy, but seeing how this enemy had managed to hold back Goddess Ilse while in a severely battered state-one that would have left any of them dead-they couldn't help but feel anxious about making it back to Paradise alive.

After all, wouldn't they fail their mission and be defeated if she used that same phantom beast to attack them?

As their worries intensified, Orion cleared his throat and spoke, "Warriors of Paradise, I didn't show you this to instil fear but to prepare you for what we will face. This is not just a battle- it's a challenge that will test who we truly are. The world may tremble at the mere mention of the divine, but remember this: we are not the world. We are Paradise. If the divine stands against us, we will kill them-without mercy, without hesitation. Not out of hatred but to protect our own. Because no force, in this world or beyond, will take what we've built."

Orion's voice rang with authority, his presence commanding as the Supreme Leader of Paradise.

His voice rose with greater intensity, "And if the divine stands with us, we will welcome them as allies, as brothers, as sisters, and protect them as our own. So, if we clash with the divine, let them see the fire in your eyes! Let them witness the strength and unity of Paradise! Let them feel the weight of our conviction!"

Hearing the Supreme Leader's words, the warriors felt their hearts race, their worries and fears dissipating, replaced by a surge of courage and resolve.

"For Paradise!" one warrior roared, his voice tearing through the air and resonating in the ears of all present.

"For Paradise!" more voices followed in unison, the ground beneath them trembling as celestial energy burst from their bodies with each declaration.

"For Paradise!" At the forefront, Zogar raised his Devourer Gear in its activated form to the sky, joining the declaration. Iris did the same with her sword.

Seth nodded, smiling, his eyes fixed on Orion with respect.

Beside Orion, Ilse's eyes flickered curiously as she scrutinized his form. She had wondered how he would convince their warriors to stand against a divine being, and now, she couldn't help but be amazed that he had lifted their morale so high.

They believed they could kill a divine, even after the grim replay they had just witnessed.

Ilse suddenly shook her head.

It was their foundation!

From what she had learned, while other races survived through the aid of their Runaway Cities, moving between territories and trading with one another, Paradise had merely been a village. A village situated like a magnet within an encirclement of Vylkr vines, where survival depended solely on the skills and capabilities of its warriors.

They did whatever they could to defeat enemies who couldn't be reasoned with, carrying the hopes and expectations of their fellow villagers. And now, they had survived to this point, conquered other Runaway Cities that had tried to attack them, endured countless phenomena, and even had a divine being fighting on their side-her, along with Aerialia, who was prepared to support them. Aurora's ascendance to divinity was still a mystery to her, as was the unknown nature of her daughter.

With all this, it was doubtful that warriors would kneel when faced with the threat of another divinity. As the conclusions came together, Ilse couldn't help but smile wryly. She had severely underestimated the inhabitants of Paradise, a realization that filled her with a mix of surprise and admiration.

"Can you open the rift for us to pass through?" Orion asked, turning to Ilse. He froze, stunned by the smile on her face.

Ilse swiftly recomposed herself, pretending she hadn't just been caught smiling, and nodded. With a wave of her hand, she tore a rift in space. The rift expanded until it was about ten meters (33ft) in width and twenty meters (66ft) in height and stopped.

"You are not all strong enough to pass through this rift on your own, so I'll assist you," Ilse said, her voice reaching everyone. Fortunately, she could handle a number this large. "You've heard the goddess Ilse. Now charge forward, warriors!" Orion commanded.

"FOR PARADISE!" the warriors bellowed in unison, their war cries reverberating as they boldly stepped into the expansive rift.

At that moment, no fear remained in their hearts-only the drive to conquer and defend Paradise.

As all two hundred and fifty men walked through the portal, including Seth, Zogar, and Iris, Orion followed, with Ilse by his side.

Orion reemerged high above the clouds alongside Ilse. Below him was the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, still immobile, with Vylkr vines encroaching from all sides, attempting to devour it and everything within. Fortunately, the gods' chosens of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City had already descended, destroying the Vykr vines and preventing them from advancing.

Orion ordered fifty warriors to assist the effort while the remaining forces surrounded the Runaway city from above. He placed Zogar in charge of them before descending toward the Runaway City with Seth, Ilse, and Iris at his side.

As the warriors descended from the sky to the foot of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, the gods' chosens and several inhabitants were taken aback by their sudden arrival; their attention was immediately drawn to the sky.

Within the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, Vargoth widened his eyes in surprise at the arrival of the Paradise Warriors. Upon noticing the Supreme Leader's presence among them, Vargoth quickly turned to a captain of a nearby unit, and said, "Summon Mr Lakul immediately! The Supreme Leader of Paradise is here!"

The captain, a fox-kin man with three tails, swiftly nodded and leapt into the air, heading toward the Royal Den.

Orion and the others stopped before the large hole created by the unknown woman within the Sleeping Fox Runaway City. They hovered beside it, neither entering nor setting foot on the ground. Despite the absence of any signs of an ambush, they remained on high alert.

As the minutes ticked by, their vigilance only heightened. They awaited Lakul's arrival; fortunately, it didn't take long. Orion and the others turned to meet him.

"Supreme Leader, you're here!" Lakul exclaimed, his voice filled with relief. He then collapsed before them, prostrating on the ground. "Supreme Leader, please help us! We've been attacked by an unknown enemy who has taken control of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City. We need Paradise's intervention!"

Behind him stood three more individuals whom Orion recognized as former Sleeping Fox Runaway City leaders. They, too, prostrated themselves silently, their expressions filled with fear and unwillingness to accept their dire circumstances.

"I want you to tell me in detail everything that has transpired," Orion asked, frowning. The situation was as anticipated, but he needed to know how the Sleeping Fox Runaway City had handled the attack and how many had been killed to better understand how to proceed. "It's terrible. We've lost 300 inhabitants due to the enemy's sudden descent, and the Forge palace has fallen into their control. We can no longer access it. We are currently counting 20,000 people, including gods' chosen and more, who are unconscious from the sudden appearance of the beast-like phantom. Fortunately, none of our gods' chosen have been killed."

"Still, they are all overwhelmed by the sudden onslaught of Vylkr vines attacking us from all sides," Lakul said, explaining the details of the oppressive force that had rendered tens of thousands of inhabitants of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City unconscious.

This included the Master of the Forge palace and workers, who were found unconscious and seriously injured outside the Forge palace as if they had been forcibly thrown out. The Forge palace had been sealed and was no longer under their control, leaving them unable to command the Sleeping Fox Runaway City and stranded.

"We need Paradise's intervention to help us reclaim control of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City! Please, Supreme Leader, help us! The Sleeping Fox Runaway City is our home, and we cannot stand to watch it fall into the hands of an unknown enemy!" Lakul pleaded, his voice breaking as he wept.

At first, they had been taken aback by the appearance of another phenomenon, especially when Paradise had recalled their representatives and commanded them to flee the territory. They thought a great disaster was about to descend upon the area, one so severe that even Paradise could not handle or protect them from it, leaving them to their fate.

At that moment, Lakul suddenly realized why Paradise had ordered them to leave. It wasn't because they were afraid or uncertain of victory-after all, Paradise had shown up moments after the enemy struck. No, they didn't want them getting in the way, as the enemy could take control of a Runaway City. Paradise had acted out of concern for their protection. Lakul couldn't help but feel ashamed of his previous assumptions. He had misjudged Paradise's intentions and displayed it openly.

## Chapter 1100: Breaking Minds, Opening The Gate

He realized they were just one of the many forces under Paradise's rule, and if they were considered worthless or a burden, they would be left to fend for themselves without hesitation.

Lakul had no choice but to reveal his deepest emotions, hoping Paradise would pity them and aid them in their desperate hour of need.

The other three previous leaders felt the same way.

"You don't have to worry. I came here as quickly as possible to handle the situation," Orion replied. "The Sleeping Fox Runaway City is now under Paradise's protection, so there is no way I will abandon it to such a fate."

"Thank you, Supreme Leader!" Lakul responded, his tone filled with emotion and excitement. He didn't doubt the Supreme Leader's words for a moment because there had never been a time when he failed to fulfil them.

The three former leaders behind him exhaled in relief and said in unison, "Thank you, Supreme Leader!"

Orion nodded. "However, before we continue, I would like to introduce them to you," he said, gesturing toward Ilse and Iris.

Lakul nodded and swiftly rose to his feet along with the others. He focused on Ilse and Iris with a mixture of curiosity and reverence. Even without the Supreme Leader pointing directly at them, he could sense the extraordinary aura they both exuded.

The woman's beauty, adorned with various jewels, was enough to make the gazes of both men and women linger. But he didn't dare stare for fear of being disrespectful and incurring her wrath. Though he couldn't see through the armoured woman, he was certain she possessed a similar beauty.

During his time as leader of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City, Lakul had engaged with women from various races, even those as high-ranking as other Runaway City leaders, so he had a refined taste. Nonetheless, judging by their aura and presence beside the Supreme Leader and a key Leader, he surmised they held high positions of authority within Paradise.

"This is Ilse, the goddess of treasures, one of the divine beings residing in Paradise and our strongest ally," Orion said, introducing Ilse.

Lakul and the others behind him widened their eyes in shock. A cold wind blew against their skin, causing them to freeze and shiver as though they were encased in ice. Then, they staggered forward, falling to their knees and prostrating before her.

A real goddess was before them! The revelation was so overwhelming that it took them a moment to comprehend it fully.

Though they wouldn't have been surprised if someone had told them a divine being lived in Paradise, they had never been sure. So, seeing a goddess in person caused their soul to nearly leave their body.

But that wasn't all. The Goddess's introduction replayed in their minds, making them realize she wasn't the only divine being in Paradise-there were others. While other Runaway Cities boasted about the strength of their gods' chosen and resources, Paradise had many divine beings whose existence was kept hidden until now.

"... Goddess, please forgive us for giving you such a disgraceful welcome. Due to our current situation, we were unable to prepare properly. Please do not take anger on us. I promise we will do better next time!" Lakul pleaded loudly.

He dared not show even a hint of complacency, only reverence. If the Supreme Leader was a man to whom he should bow and obey without question, then goddess Ilse was someone he had to treat with even greater deference. However, it didn't escape his notice that she didn't oppose the Supreme Leader's authority, or she would have intervened when he revealed her identity. This left Lakul unsure how to treat them both.

Thud!

Thud!

Suddenly, the three former leaders behind him collapsed to the ground. Lakul glanced back at them before sighing internally.

It was impressive that they had remained standing with him for a few seconds after that mind-shattering introduction. As for him, the only reason he was still conscious was through sheer willpower alone.

Lakul glanced down at his bloodied, clenched fist and couldn't help but smile wryly.

"Will they be okay?" Orion asked, his voice tinged with concern as he looked at the

unconscious individuals on the floor-a sloth demon man and woman and a Nimvire man.

Lakul swiftly nodded and replied, "They will. They need a little rest to process the information they've just learned."

Ilse internally snorted, paying them no heed.

Orion nodded in understanding, slightly amused. He contemplated whether to proceed with introducing Ilse before deciding to do so.

"This is Iris, one of Paradise's Divine Apostles," Orion introduced.

At that moment, Lakul grew numb from the torrent of information flooding his mind. He no longer uttered a word but stared at Iris, mouth agape. Despite the revelation being lesser than a goddess's, it was no less shocking.

For the Supreme Leader to bring these two to the Sleeping Fox Runaway City and introduce them meant that the enemy who had seized control of their Runaway City was equivalent to a Divine Being. It was the only reasonable conclusion he could draw at the moment.

"Are you okay?" Orion asked, his eyes fixed on Lakul.

It would be a shame if he, too, collapsed after all. However, he received no response. Lakul remained in place, absentminded and unblinking.

Orion sighed tiredly. He summoned a tiny bolt of lightning and sent it toward them.



Crackle!!

The moment the lightning touched them, their bodies trembled lightly, rousing Lakul from his shocked state and the three leaders behind him from their unconsciousness.

Lakul looked around, then at Orion and those beside him. Realizing he wasn't dreaming, he coughed dryly, clearing his throat, and said, "I'm sorry for displaying such rude behaviour. I promise it won't happen again."

The three former leaders, who had also awakened and were still on their knees, nodded in agreement, their heads bowed in shame.

"It's fine. Take us to the Forge Palace," Orion said. He wanted to attempt breaking into it.

"Follow me," Lakul said, nodding swiftly in response. He got up from the floor and led the way forward.

Within thirty minutes, they arrived at the Forge Palace.

Orion looked at the gigantic, magically reinforced gates forged from Vylkr alloys. The surroundings outside were spacious, making it easy to spot anyone tens of meters away. Orion walked toward the door and placed his hand on it. However, he was instantly repelled backwards by an invisible force. A deep frown formed on Orion's face. He hadn't expected the repelling force to be so strong.

Orion turned to Ilse. "Why don't you give it a try?" he said.

Ilse nodded and stepped forward. Arriving before the gigantic metallic door, she placed her hand on it and channelled her divine energy into it, attempting to break through and force it open. Though she felt the same repelling force that had pushed Orion back, it was too weak to

harm her.

Suddenly, the sounds of shifting gears resonated in the air. Glowing runes and sigils emerged on the door's surface, revealing a complex array of locks that slowly parted. Ilse continued to channel more divine energy to break through its defences, causing the ground beneath to

tremble.

Orion exhaled in relief as Ilse continued to open the gigantic door.

Lakul and the three former leaders behind him watched in amazement. They understood they were witnessing a fraction of the power of a god within Paradise.

A bright light shone from within as the door widened, revealing a chaotic room thrown into

disarray.

Ilse's eyes widened in surprise. She immediately waved her wrist, tearing a rift in space. The rift glowed with a golden light, indicating that Ilse had opened her vault. A vibrant hum emanated, and a beam of golden-purple light shot out, clashing with the incoming vibrant

white light.

**BANG!! BOOM!!**

The sudden clash astonished Orion and everyone else. They hadn't anticipated the sudden attack, but fortunately, Ilse had reacted quickly.

Sensing the strength of the white beam of light increasing, Ilse increased the intensity of her

attack.

"STOP! STOP!! YOU'RE GOING TO DESTROY THE FORGE PALACE!" Lakul screamed at the top of his lungs, prostrating himself beside Ilse.

He feared that the Forge Palace would be destroyed by goddess Ilse, which would spell the

end of the Sleeping Fox Runaway City.

"Ilse, stop," Orion said.

Immediately, Ilse removed her hand from the door and reduced the intensity of her attack. She stepped back, observing as the door began to close now that she was no longer trying to break through it. Eventually, it sealed shut.

Soon, Ilse's vault returned to normal, emanating only a bright golden radiance. Ilse exhaled tiredly, glanced at the prostrating Lakul, and turned around to return to her previous position. "How was it?" Orion asked, wanting to hear about Ilse's firsthand experience.

Ilse looked at Orion and shook her head. "Breaking through the gate is easy. However, the problem lies with the unknown woman inside. Although I'm unsure how it's possible, I believe if we don't act soon, she'll recover her full strength." She had come to this conclusion based on the sudden attack during her attempt.