

## Village Head 1121

Chapter 1121: Mysterious Spatial rift

Two days later,

Orion stood in the air with two children in his hands. Anara, Saria, Dariya and Malaia beside him.

He looked down at the magnificent buildings, small and large, with distinct architectural designs that complemented one another. At the centre stood one towering building stretching high into the sky, surrounded by a sprawling metropolis on the land once occupied by Vylkr vines.

This city was built by the combined efforts of each race from Paradise and a few from the Runaway Cities. Its architecture was both beautiful and complex, reflecting their collaboration.

This was Paradise's first city on the land they had reclaimed from the Vylkr vines.

"Wow! It's so cool!" Grace exclaimed, her large round eyes gazing at the city below. "Isn't it beautiful, Nash?" she added, turning her head to the side to look at the boy in Orion's arms, who looked nearly a year old.

Nash was Ayla's son, the family's firstborn son and fourth child.

Nash stared curiously at the city below, his wide eyes filled with wonder as he babbled in baby talk to Grace as if they shared a language only they could understand.

Orion balanced his responsibilities by making time to care for his children and maintaining a work-life balance as the Supreme Leader of Paradise. Whenever work became too demanding, he delegated tasks to ensure he could spend time with his family.

He knew the dangers of focusing solely on building Paradise without nurturing his family. He had willingly chosen this beautiful life.

"Let's go down for a closer look," Orion said, descending toward the ground.

Anara, Saria, Dariya, and Malaia followed suit.

They strolled around the city, still under construction, their presence attracting numerous gazes, especially from the gods' chosens and warriors from the Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise and Trekking Flamingo Runaway City, who recognized the Supreme Leader and his family.

As those from Paradise bowed to them, others followed, bowing their heads respectfully.

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Twenty minutes later, Orion and the others ascended, returning to Paradise.

CRACCKLEE!! CRACCKLEE!!!

Suddenly, dark swirling clouds gathered above, and violent arcs of lightning streaked through the sky. The earth below began to tremble as powerful tremors shook the region as though strained by an invisible force.

Orion, Anara, Saria, Dariya, and Malaia halted immediately, their expressions turning grim as they processed the sudden turn of events.

Below, the gods' chosens and warriors rose into the sky, while others rushed back to their Runaway Cities for protection.

"What's going on?" Orion muttered, his expression tense as he sensed divine energy suffocating the atmosphere. A spine-chilling tingle ran through his body, making his hair stand on end. Alongside it, he sensed the familiar dense Vylkr energy.

Orion was unsure what was happening. The only explanations he could think of were that another dual Vylkr and divine energy artefact were being formed or Paradise was about to be attacked.

If it were the former, it meant Paradise was about to face another disaster due to the emergence of new Vylkr spawns. If it were the latter, they had miscalculated and were about to be attacked by a

multitude of Vylkr spawns or, worse, those seeking revenge for the unknown woman they had killed.

Regardless of the cause, one thing was clear:

Paradise was in danger!

"We'll return to the manor with Grace and Nash to inform the others about the situation,"

Anara said, sensing the mounting danger along with the others.

She gently took Grace from Orion while Saria took Nash into her arms.

"Take care, Daddy," Grace said anxiously, her worried eyes locked onto Orion.

"I will," Orion responded, planting a kiss on her golden forehead. He did the same for Nash, then briefly kissed his wives on their lips.

Anara, Saria, Malaia, and Dariya nodded at him, their expressions filled with worry and anxiety, before turning and soaring back toward Paradise.

Now alone, Orion scanned his surroundings with a sharp glint in his eyes. He might not be able to go toe-to-toe with divine beings, but he could devise a plan to mitigate the chaos

about to unfold.

**BANGG!! BANNGG!!**

Suddenly, the earth began to groan and crack, chunks of stone levitating off the ground and destroying a significant portion of the city as though gravity had momentarily reversed.

The dreadful phenomenon was unlike anything Orion had ever experienced, deepening his suspicion that they were under attack.

Orion turned, noticing several familiar signatures approaching rapidly.

It was Seth and the former Village Chief Brane!

They quickly arrived beside him.

"What's going on? Are we under attack?" Seth asked, his tone and expression solemn as he surveyed the destruction around them.

"I'm not sure," Orion replied, shaking his head. "Either this is an unknown phenomenon, one that neither the former Patriarch Rylan nor the Runaway Cities possess any knowledge of, or Paradise has attracted another formidable enemy. Whichever it is... it's bad news."

Seth's expression hardened, his eyes narrowing as he intently observed the chaotic surroundings.

Orion shifted his focus to former Village Chief Brane, raising a curious brow.

Noticing Orion's gaze, former Village Chief Brane smiled and said, "You don't need to look so surprised. After the research centre created a Vylkr Fusion Armlet specifically for my wife and me, aiding in my advancement, we decided that instead of staying in the village and handling things comfortably until we die, we would devote ourselves to the front lines to aid in Paradise's growth. It would be a shame if I didn't put this formidable gift to use."

His bright smile showed that he had no regrets and was fully committed to his decision. Even though they could become divine apostles to extend their limited lifespan, they wanted to avoid servitude to another divine being, especially after their experience with Naka.

Since there was no telling when the research centre would successfully replicate the Prismerion Divine Apostle crest, rather than waiting and hoping or entering servitude again, they chose to spend the remainder of their lives aiding in Paradise's expansion. They hoped their efforts might earn them recognition from the Divine Mysteries themselves and allow them to ascend into demi-godhood on their own terms.

The entire plan seemed unrealistic, but it was the only path left to try.

Orion nodded in understanding. He couldn't dictate how they lived as long as it didn't harm Paradise. Nonetheless, he realized where Seth obtained his headstrong personality from. Suddenly, a blinding crack of golden light pierced the air, splitting the atmosphere horizontally as though carved by an invisible blade.

A suffocating pressure filled the air, accompanied by an immense shockwave obliterating a large portion of the city below, forcing Orion, Seth, and Brane towards the ground. The moment passed quickly, but the feeling lingered in their minds, their hearts quickening.

Light distorted and wrapped around the spatial rift, slowly expanding as it rippled outward. The rocks floating in the air plummeted back to the earth, causing more destruction and intensifying the tremors. The swirling thunderclouds above became more violent, with fierce thunder and lightning arcs streaking through the sky.

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This continued for an hour, with the spatial rift expanding to over 150 meters in length. Its height surpassed any structure Orion had ever seen, making it impossible to guess its full

scale.

The Trekking Flamingo and Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway Cities had already been ordered to evacuate as far as possible. Though it might be futile if a divine being targeted them, it was better than staying in place, sealing their fate without making any effort.

Ilse and Aurora had also arrived.

Orion gripped the Crimson Greatsword while Aurora floated beside him. "Do you have any idea what it is?" Orion asked, focusing on Ilse.

"Due to the weakened barriers surrounding it, it appears to be an abandoned pocket dimension. It may have been opened due to the excessive divine energy in the atmosphere and the numerous spatial rifts in the vicinity, but I'm not certain. There's something strange about this pocket dimension that I can't quite understand," Ilse replied, shaking her head.

Ilse bit her lip, surveying the rift, wondering which irresponsible god had left it in such a state.

"Any explanation is fine as long as this isn't an attack on Paradise," Orion said firmly.

He had searched through the memories he'd filtered from spies with his slave seal but found nothing. In other words, even the Runaway Cities were unaware of this phenomenon. "It'll disappear after some time, so you don't need to worry about its presence. No one should remain near it, just in case," Ilse warned, sighing tiredly.

Orion nodded, understanding that it was best not to take any risks.

"Does that mean we're simply going to watch until it's gone?" Former Village Chief Brane asked.

"Do you have another idea?" Ilse asked, fixing her cold gaze on him.

"Forgive me, goddess," Brane quickly corrected himself. "I meant that rather than waiting since you said it's a 'pocket dimension,' why not explore it?"

"Oh," Ilse nodded in understanding. "Well, if you're eager to investigate a pocket dimension of this scale, feel free to do as you please. However, I won't be blamed for any deaths or disasters you encounter," she replied, clarifying that she wouldn't take responsibility for any crises within the dimension. She withdrew her gaze from him.

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She could see the eagerness in his eyes and knew warning him would be futile.

Former Village Chief Brane turned his attention toward Orion.

"This isn't a matter we can decide on hastily. We'll hold a meeting before making a decision," Orion replied, noticing Brane's expectant gaze.

Brane nodded in understanding. He knew the gravity of the situation and that it required careful consideration.

"Can you seal the portal to ensure no one emerges?" Orion asked, shifting his focus back to Ilse.

Turning to the spatial rift, Ilse began channelling her divine energy. She raised her right hand and waved it toward the rift. A beam of light filled with overwhelming power shot from her hand, causing the space around the rift to tremble briefly before stabilizing.

"I've done my best to lock the space around it, but it can easily be broken if someone more powerful than me tries to break it. The best we can hope for is that no one of such power appears," Ilse said, glancing at Orion as she began to recover her strength.

Orion nodded in gratitude.

Ilse acknowledged his thanks with a nod. She also nodded at Aurora and then flew off toward Paradise.

"I'll leave one of my spawns here to watch and report if anything goes wrong," Aurora said.  
"Alright. I'll leave everything to you," Orion nodded.

Suddenly, a headless winged entity materialized out of thin air, hovering before her. Then, it dissolved, disappearing into the ground like it had never been there. In reality, it was merely hiding.

Orion and the others swiftly returned to Paradise.

An announcement was broadcast to all of Paradise's inhabitants, assuring them everything was controlled. The people remained calm, continuing their daily lives as they had grown accustomed to such recurring events.

A similar announcement was made to the Runaway Cities, but unlike Paradise's inhabitants, the tension remained high.

The residents were anxious and fearful, with valid reasons. They grew even more desperate, striving to work harder and prove their loyalty to Paradise in hopes of being allowed to stay within its safe borders-wherever it was-so they could escape the looming disaster.

But for now, they could only hope to survive the current catastrophe.

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The meeting between the Key Leaders concluded with a decision to investigate the abandoned pocket dimension. While Ilse wasn't entirely sure it had been abandoned, her deduction was based solely on the weakened seals around it; the leaders understood they couldn't miss the opportunity to learn more about the state of the world.

They believed the pocket dimension might hold valuable secrets.

However, they needed someone to scout the dimension first. The task was too dangerous for any warriors or gods' chosen, so a different decision was made:

Orion would send a Morphic Puppet to explore the pocket dimension.

This plan was ideal, ensuring no lives would be at risk. Any information the puppet gathered would be instantly transmitted back to Orion.

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Besides the spatial rift,

Orion summoned Morphic Puppet and gave it specific orders to enter the Spatial rift and scour through it until it discovered something.

Suddenly, the puppet transformed into a replica of Orion's attire—a black shirt and trousers adorned with intricate golden patterns and precious stone embellishments. It also wore a black mask similar to Orion's but without the Vylkr vine design. Instead, it was covered in 'star' patterns.

After the transformation, Orion noticed several gazes on him. Clearing his throat, he said, "I told it to pick the best form for the investigation, and it just happened to choose this." Whether they believed him or not didn't matter. He acted as though nothing unusual had occurred.

Ignoring the scene, Ilse focused on Morphic Puppet and cast a divine skill on it. This skill ensured that no matter what transpired inside the pocket dimension, the puppet would be able to teleport



back here, whether by will or if it encountered any danger. Although Orion could resummon Morphic puppet if it became trapped, it was risky, as Morphic Puppet might suffer severe damage due to the spatial rift.

Even though she had informed them that she wouldn't be held accountable for any issues from investigating the pocket dimension, she couldn't help but worry about something going wrong. The thought of losing a valuable artefact like Morphic Puppet was also troublesome.

It was one of the first things that had filled her with dread since her awakening, as she considered Morphic Puppet an asset crucial to Paradise's growth, especially in confrontations with other beings with divine nature.

"I'm done. If it encountered any danger, it would be teleported back here instantaneously," Ilse said.

Ilse focused on the spatial barrier. She waved her hand, and a bright beam emerged from her hand, shooting toward the spatial rift.

Instantly, the space around the rift trembled violently before calming.

She turned toward Orion and nodded, indicating that she had removed the barrier she had previously placed.

Orion nodded in return and shifted his attention to Morphic Puppet.

Morphic Puppet instantly rose into the air and advanced into the spatial rift. Its form rippled through the spatial rift, causing it to tremble violently. The golden hue along the edges of the spatial rift flared brighter and expanded outward.

Orion, Ilse, Aurora, Aerialia, the other Key Leaders, Former Village Chief Brane, and Chieftess Zara focused their attention on Morphic Puppet as the Vylkr artefact disappeared into the spatial rift, which soon returned to its previous state.

A heavy silence descended over the area for several minutes.

Unable to hold back, Ilse asked, "What's going on? Have you discovered anything yet?" Her

tone was a mix of worry and curiosity.

"It's... water," Orion responded, his eyes widening in surprise.

"What?" Ilse asked, confusion evident on her face.

The others present also looked confused.

"It's an ocean. There's nothing but an ocean," Orion quickly corrected himself.

"Are you sure?" Ilse asked, furrowing her brows.

She had witnessed various strange pocket dimensions; even her Golden Palace was an artefact leading to an entirely different world. However, she found it hard to believe that a pocket dimension of such calibre appearing in their location contained only water.

"Can you go deeper?" Ilse asked.

Due to the immense spatial disruption, ordinary artefacts couldn't maintain a stable connection with their wielder through a rift. Since she was unaware of the capabilities of the Vylkr artefact, she wanted to be careful to avoid creating an unnecessary problem.

Regardless, she was relieved that the pocket dimension was truly abandoned; otherwise, Morphic Puppet would have been destroyed due to its unexpected intrusion.

"I can," Orion nodded.

"Do it then. I doubt it's only water; there must be something else within it," Ilse replied.

Orion ordered Morphic Puppet to go deeper.

After twenty minutes, Orion shook his head. "He only sees an ocean."

"Go deeper," Ilse responded once more, biting her lip.

Orion glanced at her and nodded. Although they were interested in investigating the pocket dimension, she anxiously hoped Morphic Puppet would uncover something.

Orion focused on his instinctive connection with Morphic Puppet, commanding it to search deeper. Morphic Puppet covered several hundred miles within a few minutes, so its speed was

not slow.

Additionally, Orion instantaneously received the same visuals it was seeing. After thirty more minutes, Orion spoke, "I can see an island."

"Is that all?" Ilse asked.

Orion nodded silently. The only thing Morphic Puppet could see was a small sandy island in the middle of a vast ocean.

Orion ordered Morphic Puppet to land on the island, hoping they might uncover something there.

Following his orders, Morphic Puppet descended onto the sandy island. After looking around for a few minutes, I could not find anything. Morphic Puppet returned to the edge of the sandy island. Suddenly, it halted, noticing something from a distance away.

Numerous unknown entities rose out of the water and then dove back in.

Morphic Puppet soared into the air and swiftly headed in their direction. It arrived and

observed the surface of the water. However, after several seconds, the water remained still.

""Go in," Orion ordered.

Morphic Puppet dived into the water without hesitation. As soon as it submerged in the ocean, an inky black entity slammed against it with the strength of a two-star warrior.

However, due to the vast difference between their strengths, the figure was immediately repelled backwards.

Morphic puppet swiftly grabbed the figure before it could get far, allowing Orion to look closer at the assaulter.

Orion was stunned, his eyes widening in disbelief.

"What is it? Have you discovered something?" Ilse asked, frowning as she looked at Orion.

Everyone's gaze was fixed on Orion, awaiting his words. Witnessing his expression of shock and disbelief, they realized he might have uncovered something significant. Orion nodded, refocusing his gaze on Ilse. "I've uncovered something..." However, before elaborating, he paused, sensing an enormous entity emerging within their sight line, swiftly heading toward Morphic Puppet.

Gripping the unknown entity in its hands, the Morphic Puppet shot out of the water and soared into the air.

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The enormous entity followed suit behind it.

Orion observed the enormous entity with wide eyes, filled with shock.

The creature was a grotesque, monstrous figure with thick, inky black and pale skin. Its upper body was humanoid, with four arms-two on each side-while its lower body stretched outwards like numerous tentacles resembling vines.

Its fearsome appearance was horrifying as it emerged from the water with razor-sharp jaws wide open, all four arms, each ending in sharp claws, outstretched to capture the Morphic Puppet.

It was enough to terrify any mortal.

However, what truly shook Orion wasn't its grotesque form but the thick, crystal-like locks of hair. He recognized the enormous entity as none other than a Prismion!

The smaller entity in his grasp was also a Prismion with more humanoid features-two legs and two arms-except for its razor-sharp teeth and wide-open jaws, which seemed ready to bite Morphic Puppet holding it.

"What's going on? Tell me what you see," Ilse asked again, her tone filled with urgency and concern. She was anxious and curious about what had caused Orion's expression to morph into such shock.

Orion withdrew from his thoughts, turning toward her and opened his mouth to speak hesitatingly.

Ilse suddenly felt a bold premonition stirring in her heart.

"If you've found something, Orion, please inform us. We're all eager to know what it is," Aurora added.

Aerailia silently nodded in agreement.

The Key Leaders, including Former Village Chief Brane and Chieftess Zara, voiced their thoughts, unable to control their curiosity. They, too, were eager to know what Orion had uncovered within the pocket dimension.

Unable to withhold the information any longer, Orion nodded and explained, "I found something similar to a Vylkr spawn within the ocean."

Ilse furrowed her brows, looking at Orion in bafflement.

Aurora and the remaining Key Leaders were astonished by the revelation but felt a chill crawl down their spines at the mention of a Vylkr spawn.

"And... the Vylkr spawns resemble Prismerions," Orion continued.

Selene and the others felt their minds reel the moment his words landed, their eyes widening in disbelief.

Ilse stood motionless, frozen in shock.

"... What did you say?" Ilse managed to ask, her lips trembling with emotion.

Orion repeated his words, revealing everything he had learned.

Seeing the doubt in Ilse's gaze, Orion turned once more to observe the enormous entity swimming in the vast ocean before ordering the Morphic Puppet to return.

As they had suspected, when Morphic Puppet tried to exit the pocket dimension, the rift was no longer there, confirming that entering wasn't a problem; there was only a problem when it wanted to leave.

Fortunately, they had prepared for such an event. Without delay, Morphic Puppet vanished from its position, teleporting out of the pocket dimension and reappearing before them.

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Unbeknownst to Orion and the others, within the pocket dimension, just below Morphic Puppet stood, a small head peeked out from the water, looking around curiously. Unable to find anything, it wore a frustrated expression before submerging back into the water.

Outside the pocket dimension,

As Morphic Puppet returned, holding the grotesque entity tightly in its grasp, Ilse collapsed, her trembling gaze fixed on the creature with all-too-familiar features.

Aurora narrowed her eyes at the scene unfolding before her.

The Key Leaders and others immediately backed away, thinking they were under attack. They sighed in relief when they realized it was a false alarm, but their expressions turned grim as they observed the familiar features of the entity within Morphic Puppet's grip.

"My... child...", Ilse whispered, her voice cracking with emotion as tears streamed down her face. "...What happened? Who did this to you?"

Unable to bear the sight, the Key Leaders, Former Village Chief Brane and Chieftess Zara turned their heads away, exhaling tiredly with heavy emotions.

Only Selene continued to watch, her eyes drenched with tears as she covered her mouth, silencing her mournful cries.

Such a terrible existence! Who could have done such a thing? They thought.

If they had any doubts about the origin of the abandoned pocket dimension before, they were confident now. Only one person could be held accountable for such a horrendous sight, and that person was none other than Naka!

Aurora continued to watch the grotesque entity, narrowing her eyes in thought.

Aerialia also intently observed it.

Though silent, their minds raced, each filled with different thoughts.

Orion glanced at Ilse. He guessed she might have already suspected this pocket dimension was somehow related to Naka, which explained her earlier anxious behaviour.

He then refocused on the spatial rift, wondering if more secrets were hidden. If there were any further clues about Naka or whoever was responsible for this, he was eager to uncover them.

"...Release him," Ilse ordered.

Orion nodded, and Morphic Puppet let go of the entity in its grasp.

The entity dropped to the ground, quickly recovering itself. It looked around warily, but just as it was about to move, it froze in place, lifted off the ground by an invisible force.

Ilse had restricted its movement telepathically. With a wave of her hand, she opened a rift in space and walked through it. The rift pulled Orion and everyone else present along with her. Another rift opened within the Golden Palace. Ilse emerged first, the entity hovering behind

her.

Orion and the others reappeared as well, still in the same positions.

"I'm sorry for dragging you all in without warning, but I've already exhausted myself and don't think I can stay awake much longer," Ilse apologized.

Orion nodded, unbothered. He understood it was necessary; they had to make every second count in dealing with the pocket dimension before Ilse lost consciousness.

The others felt the same way.

"I want you to wait for me for a few days so I can join you in exploring the pocket dimension," Ilse said firmly. She could see they were eager to uncover the secrets hidden within it, and she

shared that eagerness.

"No. It's too dangerous for you to come with us," Orion responded, shaking his head firmly.

"Why? Is it because of my emotions? I assure you, I can handle them," Ilse said, her figure trembling as she stared at Orion, her fists clenched.

"It's because Paradise needs you. We don't know what will happen if you leave Paradise to follow us. Even though the time you can remain awake has increased, it's still limited. Besides, we're unsure if a divine being or Vylkr spawn might emerge and wander into the pocket dimension so we



need someone to stay outside to warn us if that happens," Orion explained why she couldn't accompany them.

"Orion is right, Goddess Ilse. Even if we're confident the exploration will go smoothly with you, it's still equally dangerous. It would be best to stay in Paradise until you fully recover," Aurora added, agreeing with Orion.

Ilse frowned. "Are you also planning on joining the exploration?" she asked, picking up on

Aurora's intent.

"I am. That way, I can ensure their safety," Aurora nodded.

Ilse studied Aurora, then shifted her gaze to Aerialia, who wore a solemn expression while

floating beside Orion.

Aerialia nodded, sensing Ilse's gaze.

Ilse exhaled tiredly. "Fine, I'll stay and continue to watch over Paradise," she said, refocusing

on Orion.

Ilse stretched her hand forward, submerging it into a golden glowing rift that appeared before her. When she withdrew it, two golden keys with tiny gemstones on their bows and

beautiful engravings on their bodies were in her hand.

Ilse tossed the keys toward Orion and Aurora.

"With this keys, you can open a rift back to the Golden Palace no matter where you are, as long

as the restrictions on the space aren't powerful enough to prevent it. If they are, you must use its strength to override them. If I had access to a larger portion of my vault, I would have given you something better," Ilse explained, detailing the keys' function.

There were keys that could open a door regardless of any restrictions they encountered, but they were hidden within the Golden Palace. Her former self had placed restrictions on several sections for various reasons, which she could only access when she had enough strength.

Orion and Aurora nodded gratefully.

"Thank you, goddess Ilse," They thanked her for the keys.

"Who are the others you've chosen to join you on the exploration?" Ilse asked. "Stronghold Leader Seth and Iris," Orion replied, glancing at Seth, who stood behind him.

With Morphic Puppet, Aurora, Seth, and Iris's strengths combined, he was confident they would survive any enemy they encountered, as long as it wasn't a divine being. "Cough... Aren't you forgetting two more?" Former Village Chief Brane cleared his throat and spoke up. He stepped forward with Former Village Chieftess Zara beside him. Both wore firm

expressions.

Noticing Orion's frown, Brane continued, "I told you before, Chief, we are not afraid of death. We look forward to it as long as we can gain recognition of the Divine Mysteries." He had decided after learning that Zogar led 40 four-star warriors against a stowaway alliance and two Grade One Runaway Cities.

## Chapter 1124: Preparing For The Exploration

If Paradise was making such grand moves, they needed to participate at the forefront rather than remain comfortable, waiting for their deaths. With such an exploration about transpiring, how could they sit back and merely observe the dangers ahead?

Orion looked at Former Village Chief Brane's resolute expression, then shifted his attention to Former Chieftess Zara, who wore the same determined look, indicating her agreement with her husband's words.

"Okay, you two can join us. We'll do our best to protect you and ensure nothing bad happens," Orion nodded. Even though he respected their decision, he still cared deeply about their safety as his predecessors.

"While we appreciate the protection, Supreme Leader Orion, we are not that weak. I believe we'll manage just fine on our own," Zara replied, clicking her tongue in mild annoyance as she glanced at him.

"Haha! After my wife received her Vylkr Fusion armlet and equipment, her gift leapt by bounds. She can now see the future of an object or event in close proximity without needing to touch it. However, she's concerned that your presence while exploring this pocket dimension might render her gift useless again," Brane said with a hearty laugh.

Orion smiled wearily. Certainly, Former Chieftess Zara's gift would make their exploration much easier by allowing them to avoid disaster before it struck. But with his mere presence still capable of nullifying her abilities despite her enhancement to the level of a one-star warrior, it was understandable why she remained irritated by him.

Zara reached over and pinched her husband painfully on the side of his waist. Even though his skin was soft, it was elastic enough to send a sharp sting through his body.

Brane sealed his lips, falling silent.

"Ahem, the team you've assembled is strong enough for the mission to succeed. However, I don't think taking Seth is advisable. His strength will be restricted by the environment within the pocket dimension. It would be better to bring someone with a more versatile, water-based gift-Fifi. While her strength doesn't compare to Seth's, she'll be able to do more and might even become a key player," Reena said, glancing at Seth before refocusing on Orion.

"True. Although it would be nice to explore alongside my son, his abilities will be limited in that environment, especially since he's only mastered elemental fire and earth-based Divine Arts," Zara added, agreeing with Reena.

Orion thought deeply. He understood the value of bringing warriors with water-related gifts. Still, he focused on ensuring they were strong enough to face the enormous entity he had witnessed through Morphic Puppet's shared vision. That was why he had chosen Seth, whose strength alone was formidable, even without his gift.

Also, he hadn't considered taking Fifi because he didn't want to leave his manor unprotected in his absence. But someone needs to stay and keep watch over the fleeing Runaway Cities.

Orion sighed, concluding. "You're right. Given her versatile water-related gift, it makes more sense to bring Fifi." Orion nodded, then turned to Seth. "Is that alright with you, Seth? Would you be willing to give up your position so that Fifi can come along?" Zogar was out of the question due to his current task.

As the Stronghold Leader of Paradise, Seth held significant authority and strength, so Orion couldn't exclude him from such a critical mission without hearing his opinion first. Who knows, Seth might have a hidden Divine Art that could take their enemies by surprise.

Seth nodded and replied, "Although I'd like to come along, Chief, I'm not confident I'll be able to participate actively in the exploration. But if it's Fifi taking my place, I don't mind. I trust her skills and capabilities. Just make sure my parents don't do anything foolish."

He couldn't control his parents' decisions, but that didn't mean he wanted them to put their lives at risk.

Brane and Zara sighed tiredly at their son's words. It felt like just yesterday they had given him the same warning.

"Okay," Orion replied, nodding with a smile.

"Have you decided who will be joining you on this exploration?" Ilse asked.

"Yes. There will be five of us, including Fifi," Orion answered. "Could you please bring her and Iris here?" he requested.

Ilse nodded and stretched her hand into the air, tearing a rift in space with her finger. She was familiar with Fifi and many of Orion's household members, as they frequently visited her Golden Palace to see Liora and Aurora. As one of her favoured children, Iris was also well-known to her.

As the spatial rift expanded, a ripple formed on its surface, and Fifi suddenly emerged, appearing before them.

She landed in a defensive stance, but upon recognizing her surroundings, she relaxed. However, her body tensed again as she noticed the strange entity suspended in the air.

The rift shifted once more, and moments later, Iris emerged similarly.

Like Fifi, Iris froze in place, her eyes fixed on the entity before her, a mix of confusion and horror crossing her face.

"Can someone explain what's going on? What is 'that'?" Fifi asked with a deep frown of disgust on her face as she pointed toward the suspended entity.

Iris nodded, also eager for an explanation.

"It's like this..." Aurora said, swiftly explaining the situation to them.

Fifi's expression shifted from bewilderment to shock, then horror, before giving way to a determined expression.

Iris also displayed the same expression; her fist clenched, and her expression filled with intense anger.

After about ten minutes, Aurora finished her explanation.

Having understood the gravity of the situation, Fifi regained her composure and nodded firmly. "In that case, I'll be coming along," she said, her tone firm.

"I will also be coming along," Iris said with a nod.

"Since that's settled, I'll give you a few gifts," Ilse announced. Moments later, she reached into her vault and pulled out several items.

Instantly, four beams of light shot from the vault toward Iris, Former Chief Brane, Chieftess Zara, and Fifi.

The light transformed into bronze armour with detailed, beautiful inscriptions covering their torsos, arms, and legs. The armour didn't restrict their movements, allowing them to move as

freely as before.

"What I've given you are high-grade Mythical-ranked artefacts, comparable to divine artefacts. You will naturally understand how to use them to their full potential," Ilse

explained.

Fifi and the others nodded in response, already sensing the information about the Mythical artefacts flowing into their minds.

With a bright flash of light, the bronze armour vanished, transforming into small bronze pendants that hung around their necks.

They bowed respectfully to Ilse, thanking her for the gifts.

"If you all perform well in your exploration, I'll allow you to keep the armour and use it as you see fit," Ilse said, nodding in satisfaction.

She was pleased with Paradise's strength. Though it couldn't compare to the power of the Great War era, based on her knowledge of the current world, it was still something she could

work with.

"Tsk! As the goddess of treasures, I expected you to give them divine treasures at the very least," Aerialia remarked, unimpressed by Ilse's generosity.

Only Ilse could hear her words at that moment.

Ilse's brow twitched, but she chose to ignore Aerialia. She then shifted her focus to Orion and

Aurora.

"Unfortunately, there's nothing I can give you that surpasses what you already have. I can only wish you good luck and hope the exploration is successful. I'm eager to understand how my children became like this," Ilse said.

One was a newly ascended goddess, with strength surpassing that of a First-Order demigod, wielding dual divine and a Vylkr energy artefact. The other possessed a divine and Vylkr artefact and a legitimate goddess companion. Ilse couldn't think of anything more to give

them without embarrassing herself.

Orion and Aurora nodded in understanding.

"We promise to do our best, Goddess Ilse," Orion said.

"Remember to keep that key safe," Ilse replied with a nod. "You can all leave and prepare to

head out. Aurora will show you the way. Selene, come with me-it's time I make you my first Divine Apostle." She gestured for Selene to follow her as she turned and soared into the Majestic Kingdom, the suspended entity following behind her.

Selene nodded at Orion and the others before rising into the air and following along with Ilse.

"Wait here, I'll get Liora," Aurora said. She had left one of her spawns to watch over Liora, and before they departed, she needed to place her with the household for proper care, knowing Ilse would soon be unconscious and unable to watch over her.

Aurora quickly soared into the distance, disappearing into the Majestic Kingdom. A few minutes later, she returned with Liora in her arms and led the group out of the Golden Palace.

...

Thirty minutes later, they all stood before the enormous spatial rift, ready to venture into the pocket dimension.

Seth was the only one who had escorted them.

"I'll keep watch until you return," Seth said, nodding at them, his mind replaying his private conversation with Orion. He wouldn't have to worry about their safety if everything went smoothly.

They nodded in response and, one by one, advanced into the spatial rift.

#### Chapter 1125: Defending The Territory

Zogar mulled over his thoughts. He had just received news about the events in Paradise and hadn't anticipated such a situation while he was occupied with his current task.

"Hand her over and surrender yourself, and we'll let you live!" a fierce voice echoed through the air.

Zogar broke away from his thoughts, focusing on the one who had spoken- a slender humanoid man with a single eye dressed in a mix of leather and Vylkr alloy. Surrounding him were individuals with similar features, each with bulging bracelets on their hands and wielding Gearweaver swords and other arrays of Gearweavers.

Next to him stood another humanoid, a man with four-slitted crimson eyes, two thick arms, and retractable claws on the tips of each finger. He wore a claw-like exoskeleton Gearweaver on each hand. Like the first man, several others of the same race surrounded him defensively, armed with their Gearweavers.

Both groups consisted of gods' chosens, numbering in the thousands, painting the rocky plains and surrounding mountains like grains of sand on a beach.



These two groups belonged to the Lurking Alligator and Roaming Silver Dingo Runaway Cities, the factions backing the Drelyal Alliance in their attack on the Trekking Flamingo and Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway Cities.

Behind them stood ten humanoid individuals of varying races, each with distinct features like elongated, curved ears, scaly hair, inhuman lower body parts, or extra appendages. They were accompanied by gods' chosens from similar or different races, numbering in the millions.

Their gazes, filled with complex emotions, were fixed on the unfolding scene.

These were the Iron Blade Stowaway, Ashwind Stowaway, Hallow Bridge Stowaway, Phantom Callers Stowaway, Rust Sword Stowaway, Lost Spear Stowaway, Rogue Beauties Stowaway, Fire Claw Stowaway, Skull Claw Stowaway, and lastly, Spear Tide Stowaway. These groups led the Drelyal Alliance, comprised of 320 Stowaways, each with populations ranging from 10,000 to 50,000. Each oversaw 32 Stowaways.

Unlike Runaway Cities, every inhabitant of the Stowaways was a trained god's chosen, capable of surviving independently. Those who weren't gods' chosens were trained warriors, expected to secure resources by any means necessary.

Thus, it wasn't far-fetched to say that the gods' chosens and warriors present represented the entire populations of their respective Stowaways. Those absent were either injured people, children or expectant mothers.

At this moment, their cautious and hateful gazes were fixed on a lightly dressed man in trousers and a shirt that exposed his chest. He wore an ashen mask adorned with numerous drawings of Vylkr vines, ranging from one to four. Behind him hovered forty men, each wearing black masks.

With such forces gathered together, they could take down any Grade One Runaway City or one on the verge of ascending to Grade Two. However, their plans had been interrupted by a lowly Stowaway from the bottom of the dregs, attempting to tear apart their alliance.

They were surprised by the revelation that the Trekking Flamingo, Sleeping Fox, and Wanderlust Travelling Tortoise Runaway Cities now served under a force called Paradise and had presumably granted the new Stone Fang leader her strength after the previous leader and his mistress were imprisoned. They didn't take it seriously.

They assumed it was a ploy by the Runaway Cities to scare them into dissolving their efforts. After all, they have lived in this territory for hundreds or even thousands of years and had never heard of such a mysterious force called Paradise, which could make two Grade One Runaway Cities and one about to become Grade Two easily pledge their allegiance.

Still, they couldn't help but feel their hearts waver as they stared at the 41 individuals, especially the man at the forefront, who had effortlessly broken through the forces of the Lurking Alligator Runaway City, freed Iyalis, and soon after proclaimed himself as a warrior from Paradise.

Despite being surrounded by their entire force, he hadn't fled but remained in place as though lost in thought.

Given the mysterious figure's strength, they no longer doubted the existence of the force called Paradise and no longer underestimated the remaining 40 individuals hovering behind him. They deduced that these individuals might possess strength similar to his or close enough, and thus, they refrained from making rash decisions.

Some even considered defecting and pledging loyalty to Paradise but hesitated due to the figure's words.

The Lurking Alligator and Roaming Silver Dingo Runaway Cities were the only ones still unwilling to bow their heads.

"Does this mean you won't surrender willingly?" Zogar asked, his tone indifferent.

"Yes, we won't. You've attacked our Runaway City, killed dozens of our treasured gods' chosens, and captured our prisoners. A line has already been drawn, which means that whether we surrender or not, you'll still do what you want to us," the man responded, his teeth clenched in anger.

"True," Zogar replied, "but if you had surrendered willingly, your punishment would've been lighter." He then took the unconscious Iyalis, who had been slumped over his shoulder and tossed her toward the Stone Fang Stowaway inhabitants behind him.

Aric and Mirr quickly caught Iyalis and laid her down gently on the ground.

"Make sure she's alright," Zogar said, glancing at them. The Supreme Leader had explicitly ordered him to ensure Iyalis' safety, as he seemed impressed with her abilities. Zogar had to make sure she wasn't in a vegetative state or severely harmed from the torture she had endured.

Aric and Mirr nodded at Zogar's words and checked her pulse before performing quick treatments with their hands.

Within a minute, Iyalis' eyes fluttered open. She groaned in pain as she attempted to look around.

"Are you okay? Let me help you up," Lolas said, extending his hand to Iyalis with a defeated smile. If his sister hadn't accepted Paradise's conditions, he wasn't sure what would have become of the Stone Fang Stowaway.

Iyalis slapped his hand away, gesturing for Aric and Mirr to help her. They did so gently, without hesitation.

Once she was standing, Iyalis focused on Zogar and nodded. "I'm alright, Stronghold Leader Zogar," she said.

"Good. Don't strain yourself too much until you've received proper treatment. You'll need to speak with the Supreme Leader after this, and he doesn't appreciate when his property is mishandled," Zogar said calmly. Refocusing his gaze, he locked onto the sea of gods' chosens and warriors before them as he rose into the air.

Iyalis nodded firmly, her eyes fixed on Zogar. She was eager to witness the power of one of Paradise's key leaders herself.

"Do you really think you can face us without consequences?" Zogar's voice boomed across the terrain, reaching the ears of every being present and sending chills down their spines.

They couldn't help but marvel at the power of this figure, capable of speaking to such a vast multitude with such clarity.

His following words made every fibre of their being tremble.

"Did you believe you could mock the Supreme Leader's authority, defy his order, and escape judgment? You fools, you have insulted powers beyond your comprehension. Your fate was sealed the moment you raised your weapons against Paradise! Fortunately, Paradise is benevolent!" As Zogar ascended higher, he raised his right hand toward the sky.

His hand transformed as though it were forged from lightning, resembling Orion's lightning form.

The sky darkened as storm clouds gathered, obscuring the once-brilliant rays of light that bathed the battlefield. Fierce streaks of lightning and thunder filled the heavens.

The sky soon became a thunderous drumbeat, signalling the start of a dreadful event.

Lightning streaked down from the sky, and Zogar grasped it firmly like a rope. Zogar's body began to grow, his head transforming into the head of a menacing beast with razor-sharp teeth. His limbs lengthened, claws extending from his fingers. His entire physique expanded to an imposing height of several tens of meters. His skin turned leathery, and his dazzling wings, resembling those of a mighty bird of prey with striking arrays of brown, white, and orange feathers, unfurled from his back.

The lightning manipulation was a gift from Orion, while the draconic transformation came from Village Chief Brane-both of which Zogar had copied before departing to handle this task.

CRACKLE!! CRACKLE!!

The lightning in his right hand spread across his entire body, enveloping him like armour. The strikes poured over his form, illuminating his fearsome appearance.

"ROOOARRR!!"

The mountains trembled, and a mighty gust of wind spread outward, shaking the multitudes

of individuals below.

The forces on the ground were shaken, their bodies frozen in place, unable to move. The Dreyal Alliance and the Stone Fang Stowaway found the unfolding scene incomprehensible.

This wasn't the power of a mortal!

How were they supposed to win against such a being?

A look of relief crossed the faces of the Stone Fang Stowaway while those on the opposing

side continued to watch Zogar in terror. Some had already dropped their weapons in surrender and attempted to flee, while others were too paralyzed with fear to move.

Iyalis turned her head to the side, hearing a dripping sound. Her expression twisted in disgust

as she saw Lolas, who had wet his pants in fear.

Zogar's voice thundered across the battlefield again.

"I won't kill you! I will only leave you with a memory of your defeat!"

#### Chapter 1126: The Essence Of The Spawn

Orion, Aurora, Fifi, Iris, Former Village Chief Brane, and Chieftess Zara felt their bodies shift as they walked through the spatial rift. Soon, they reappeared above a vast, endless blue

ocean.

Orion remembered where the Morphic Puppet had encountered the Vylkrspawns and could have used his gift to bring them there instantly. However, he chose not to. He wanted to take this opportunity to see if he had missed anything.

"Let's go," Orion said, leading the way.

Aurora stayed beside him, her senses sharp, ready to detect any danger before it could emerge.

The others, clad in their bronze armour, followed closely behind.

As they slowly approached the island's direction, Orion and the others noticed bubbles beginning to form on the water's surface.

Orion nodded at Aurora and the others, signalling them to prepare.

This was the same scene he had witnessed through Morphic Puppet's shared vision before the grotesque Vylkrspawns attacked it.

Soon, a figure surfaced briefly before submerging again as if observing its surroundings.

Orion and the others saw the entity clearly.

It was a Prismerion Vylkrspawn with four arms, two legs, and hardened skin that was a mix of inky black and pale tones!

Iris controlled her emotions, ensuring they wouldn't interfere with the mission.

Suddenly, the Vylkrspawn leapt from the water, hurtling toward them.

However, before it could get any closer, it froze mid-air and exploded, disintegrating into nothingness.

Moments later, two more Vylkrspawns emerged from the water, only to meet the same fate.

Countless bubbles filled the water's surface below, indicating more Vylkrspawns lurking beneath.

Aurora soared forward and summoned her sceptre. She gently tapped the sceptre against an invisible barrier in the air, casting her Divine Skill.

Eternal Chaos Legion!

Boosted by the immense power of her sceptre, the Divine Skill summoned an innumerable horde of headless winged spawns that dived into the ocean.

BANNGG! BANNGG!

Explosions erupted on the water's surface, one after another. The countless bubbles began to subside.

Within minutes, the water grew calm again as the last bubbles vanished.

The headless winged spawns returned, breaking down into Vylkr energy, which Aurora absorbed to replenish her power as if she hadn't cast any Divine Skill. The excess energy was stored within her scepter.

One remaining headless winged spawn hovered in the air, holding a Vylkrspawn in its elongated limbs and tendrils.

"I decided to capture one so we could get a closer look at what they are," Aurora said, glancing at Orion.

They had never been able to examine a Vylkrspawn up close, as their previous encounters had been too chaotic. They couldn't investigate the one in Ilse's grasp either, as it would have been inappropriate.

She figured this was the perfect opportunity to see if they could uncover something worthwhile.

Orion nodded. He had been thinking the same thing and was glad he and Aurora were on the same page. Dissecting the monstrosity of a child in front of its creator would indeed be a bad idea.

"Can you sense anything strange within it?" Orion asked.

"Yes, I can. Although it's not on par with the Vylkr spawns we encountered with Divine Capabilities, it still has the same aura," Aurora replied. "I can sense a huge concentration of Vylkr energy flowing in one place."

The tendrils of the headless winged spawn transformed into a claw that tore open the chest of the restrained Vylkr spawn, exposing a small inky-black organ shaped like a heart, with countless strands of Vylkr energy swirling around it.

Orion looked at the beating heart with a pondering expression.

It was tainted with Vylkr energy. He, too, possessed a heart filled with Vylkr energy that grew stronger by the second, but it had never manifested like this.

Was this the reason the Prismeron had transformed into a Vylkr spawn?

The others observed as well, each lost in thought.

"Its life force seems to be entirely connected to that heart. So, if we remove it..." Aurora said, reaching out to grasp the heart and tear it from the Vylkr spawn's chest. As she held the throbbing heart suspended above her palm, the Vylkr spawn's body destabilised.

In an instant, the Vylkr spawn disintegrated into thin air.

"...It collapses," Aurora said.

Despite the body no longer existing, the heart beat fiercely in her grasp.

"There's something strange about this heart. It feels... alive," Aurora said, furrowing her brows in deep thought.

"What do you mean by 'alive'?" Orion asked, frowning. They still hadn't uncovered the nature of the Vylkr spawns, so they had no idea what to be wary of.



"I can't explain it fully yet, but if I have more time, I might be able to uncover whatever's hidden inside," Aurora replied. She glanced at her spawn and then at the inky-black heart suspended above her palm.

She opened her hand wider and stretched it forward, allowing the small, inky black heart to settle in the centre of her spawn's chest.

"Be careful with it," Orion warned.

Aurora nodded, indicating she had everything under control.

spawn and began to beat heavily.

The inky black heart was absorbed into the headless Suddenly, the headless winged Vylkr spawn's previously unstable form started stabilising. The excessive Vylkr energy radiating from it was sealed, making its form more solid.

The astonishing transformation unfolded before Aurora, Orion, and the others.

"They are merging. It's become independent, drawing on its own immense energy to stabilise its form. Now, I no longer need to feed this spawn with my energy," Aurora explained, her

voice tinged with shock and astonishment.

Orion and the others were stunned by her words.

"Does this mean the heart is responsible for the Vylkr spawns' transformation?" Brane asked, his tone solemn.

"I'm not certain, but it could be one of the factors," Aurora responded, her expression deep in thought. She gently tapped her sceptre in the air, and the spawn disintegrated, vanishing into thin air along with the heart, stored in a separate space.

She could now create her personal pocket space, even though it wasn't as vast as this pocket dimension or Ilse's Golden Palace.

"I've stored it away to study later. We don't want to interrupt our mission now," Aurora said.

Orion wasn't concerned about leaving the strange heart in Aurora's care. He trusted her judgment and abilities.

"Does anyone else find it strange that we haven't encountered any Vylkr vines since we arrived?" Iris asked, her expression solemn. As the only one unable to utilise Vylkr's energy,

she was susceptible to its presence.

Orion nodded and replied, "I noticed that, too. Maybe we must go beneath the ocean to discover why we haven't encountered anything. But let's reach the island first and see if we

can still find that thing."

The others nodded in understanding, and, following Orion's signal, they held each other's hands.

Orion swiftly activated his gift, and they vanished from their position with a powerful streak of lightning.

They reappeared on the sandy island within seconds and released each other's hands. Orion scanned the area where he had previously encountered the enormous Vylkr spawn. He was curious to see if the Vylkr spawn had the same heart as the smaller one they had captured.

Unfortunately, several minutes passed, and they didn't encounter anything unusual. Not even a Vylkr spawn emerged from the water to attack them.

"Let's go down," Orion said, deciding it was time to investigate the vast ocean below.

Fifi nodded and soared to the front of the group.

"I'll lead the way," Fifi said, stepping on the water. It rippled and split apart, forming a protective oval-shaped dome around them.

Without hesitation, they slowly descended into the water.

The water couldn't penetrate the oval-shaped dome around them. As they dove deeper, they could see the remains of Vylkr spawns scattered across the ocean floor.

Forty minutes later, they uncovered several distant noises, like the sounds of an ongoing battle. The ripples from the clash spread through the water, reaching Fifi and the others.

"It seems we're finally making progress," Fifi said, propelling the sphere of water toward the source of the sounds with astonishing speed.

Orion narrowed his gaze forward. Although he hoped for signs of life within the pocket dimension, he couldn't help but remain sceptical.

The worst-case scenario would be that they were wrong, and the noises were just from several groups of Vylkr spawns. The best case would be finally encountering life, regardless of race.

The others shared similar thoughts, eager to discover which race they would encounter within the pocket dimension.

Despite the dense darkness growing as they descended deeper, their vision remained clear,

allowing them to observe their surroundings.

...

Deep beneath the ocean, numerous Vylkr spawns scattered around, attacking multiple individuals. Some Vylkr spawns resembled the Prismerions, while others had a grotesque yet

human-like appearance.

There were also Vylkr spawns resembling tree nymphs and others with humanoid upper bodies and lower bodies with tails resembling fish. Some had more grotesque beastly appearances, others resembling spectre-like beings, and smaller unknown hordes of Vylkr

spawns.

#### Chapter 1127: Targeted For Assassination

There were slightly larger spawns with tendril-like tentacles stretching out from their bodies, each with distinct yet similar forms. Strangely, they observed the raging battle from the sidelines.

Surprisingly, the numerous individuals they were mindlessly attacking bore similar

appearances. However, unlike the mindless formation of the spawns, they were divided into groups- the people with lower bodies resembling fish or other aquatic animals, like elongated tails, octopus-like limbs, sharper fins, and more, and individuals with thick crystal locs, and beastly features formed their own group.

Others with two-toned bodies resembling tree nymphs and those with a frostier appearance formed their own group, while individuals with a more humanoid appearance formed their own.

Each of them wore strange, protruding pauldrons and breast blades covering their chest area. Yet, it didn't hamper their movements in any way.

They appeared accustomed to the armour as they swung their crude metallic weapons. The water did little to restrict their swift, skilful manoeuvres.

Although they were fighting against the spawns, they were also battling each other. Taking advantage of the chaos caused by the spawns to inflict severe harm on their opponents, they turned the grim situation into a four-way battle.

Multiple tainted fell one by one under the relentless attacks from the three groups. At the same time, several individuals from each group were also killed-beheaded, their breastplates pulled off or broken through, leaving huge holes in their hearts, or worse, devoured by the rampaging spawns.

Several others, injured, took the opportunity to retreat. Among them was a man with bulky muscles and an immense, long fishtail crackling with electricity. He wore a similarly large breastplate, pauldron, and scaly metallic armour covering his lower body. Adorning his head was a metallic crown encrusted with pale rubies and gemstones.

He exuded a regal aura, indicating a high-ranking position within his group.

However, at this moment, the lower part of his breastplate, near his waist, had been blown to bits, revealing crushed internal organs, which had nearly created a hole on the opposite side. His lower armour was battered and broken through, revealing mangled scales and bloody, exposed flesh. He was being supported by another man with similarly distinct tail-like features, protected by his group amidst the four-way battle.

Still, his regal aura didn't falter. He simply looked at the unfolding situation before him and clenched his teeth. "If I had known they were willing to sabotage the negotiation for their own gain and even attempt to assassinate me, I would never have trusted them and come here."

A pang of regret hit him as he glanced over the battlefield before refocusing on the two individuals doing their best to protect him from the relentless attacks.

Both were his commanders-one was a woman with an octopus-like lower body, and the other was a man with thick crystalline hair locs.

He carried them along with over a dozen warriors to show his sincerity and ensure the negotiation went smoothly, but now he regretted his decision.

"My King, I'm not sure I can hold them back any longer. We need to retreat!" the man shouted, his voice filled with worry and tiredness.

Suddenly, the woman was injured as a tree nymph plunged a spear through her breastplate, tearing a hole in it. Fortunately, she was fast enough to dodge the entire trajectory of the attack, sustaining only a torn muscle in the lower side of her waist.

Regardless, after suffering such an injury, her actions became sluggish as she defended against the tree nymph. As time passed, it became clear the tree nymph possessed immense skill, far superior to the woman's, and the gap in strength only widened as more injuries were inflicted upon her.

"Arghh!" The woman coughed out a mouthful of blood.

"Brilyn" The man beside her, noticing the situation, swiftly dispatched the spawn near him before rushing to help her.

The man quickly repelled the tree nymph, grabbed the woman, and placed her with the other injured behind the lines, standing alone at the front to hold off the attackers.

Observing this, the king gritted his teeth and ordered, "Everyone, prepare to retreat!" However, just as he was about to finish, he paused, noticing a figure emerging from the human side. He turned his head and spotted a particular tree nymph coming forward from the group of tree nymphs and ice nymphs.

Knight Darian!

Knight Mayril!

The king's eyes shrank to the size of pinpricks as he identified the two individuals.

They were both formidable knights from the two domains, possessing abilities even more incredible than a commander's.

Their presence alone could turn the tide of the battle.

"I should have known," the king muttered angrily, realizing he had failed to see the hidden collaboration between the forces.

Though the battle was a four-way conflict, only his group had the fewest remaining fighters. In contrast, the other two groups had the most, with the injured retreating from the battlefield and being shielded from the relentless tainted attacks.

The king shifted his attention to the enormous tainted in the distance. The creature would only attack if all the other spawns in the area were eliminated. He immediately understood the plan of both forces as they emerged to the front.

"They're planning to use us as bait, then take advantage of the chaos to escape!" The king said, "EVERYONE, RETREAT IMMEDIATELY!" he commanded loudly.

Several others in the group understood the gravity of the situation and did their best to flee. But how could it be so easy when surrounded and attacked by relentless assaults coming from three different groups?

Knight Darian stretched his hand forward, and an unbelievable sight emerged. A vibrant, inky-black flame appeared and wrapped around his arms. The fire stirred, boiling the water

surrounding him.

Surprisingly, they weren't quenched, nor was their intensity diminished.

But that wasn't all. An astonishing sight followed as the knight moved his hands in a repeated gesture, causing the flames to grow and burn more intensely until they formed an immense underwater whirlpool.

The water churned and boiled fiercely, as though the vibrant, inky-black flames had completely adapted to burning deep within the ocean.

Soon, everyone, including the tainted, noticed the danger and shifted their attack toward him. However, before they could move, Knight Mayril opened her mouth and screamed.

A thunderous sound wave exploded forward, repelling the tainted and the opposing group, which had fish-like lower bodies. The sound disoriented and forced the tainted to remain in

their positions.

Some of the weaker warriors of the opposing group, including the tainted, were unable to withstand the sound and exploded on the spot.

Meanwhile, others bled from all five orifices.

Grabbing the opportunity, Knight Darian launched the whirlpool of inky-black flames

forward. The tainted disintegrated on contact, while others were sucked into the vortex and

destroyed until nothing was left.

"Now's our chance, let's go!" Knight Darian shouted. He nodded to the other group in the distance, then turned and surged forward.

The rest of the group followed closely behind him.

The other group also quickly departed.

Watching the scene as the whirlpool of inky-black flames sped toward the spawns and the opposing group, the king gritted his teeth. "You think I'll go and let you leave so easily?" he

growled.

He opened his mouth as if preparing to scream like the tree nymph, but instead of a mind-wrenching sonic wave capable of making anyone who heard it explode or bleed, a calm,

melodious sound rippled across the ocean.

"Faster!" Knight Darian ordered, his face paling as he urged his group to swim faster.

They followed suit. They knew that if they didn't escape soon, things would become far worse



than they had planned.

Who would have thought that the king of the Tidal Depths wouldn't wait for his reinforcements but would choose to end his life along with theirs?

Suddenly, they noticed an enormous tainted resembling a Prismerion, with tendril-like tentacles and four arms overshadowing them. Its size was comparable to that of a whale. If Orion had been present, he would have recognized it as the Vylkr spawn that had attacked

Morphic puppet.

Its large eyes peered down at them like prey before it descended, swimming in their direction with its massive, razor-sharp jaws wide open, its four arms outstretched.

"Scatter!" Knight Darian shouted.

They didn't have enough force to face such a powerful, tainted creature. To their horror, another tainted creature of similar size, its body covered in wooden-like armour, emerged from the ocean depths, blocking their path.

Knight Darian turned to look at the other group in the distance and saw that they were also blocked by an enormous tainted creature. He was confident handling one of them but facing two at once pushed against his limits.

At that moment, Knight Darian spotted a swarm of tainted rapidly heading in their direction.

He clenched his teeth in frustration. Without a doubt, this location was about to be overrun by the tainted.

Swooshh!!

Knight Darian dodged the tainted's attack, stretched out his hand, and immediately summoned vibrant, inky-black flames that churned the water around them.

Just as he was about to strike to buy more time for his group to escape the area, an incomprehensible scene unfolded.

The incoming horde of tainted attacked the enormous tainted, along with the slightly smaller ones attacking them.

#### Chapter 1128: The Group Emerges

Knight Darian and the others, watching this scene, were left with their mouths wide open in shock and disbelief.

Tainted were fighting against tainted!

They were completely ignoring their presence.

'Wait a minute,' Knight Darain thought, noticing something strange about the hordes of tainted.

The tainted looked strange. Rather than a grotesque appearance, it was a winged, headless humanoid with inky black body parts that seemed roughly merged. Unlike the others, they didn't have the pale, mixed skin tones typical of tainted.

The other groups also noticed the arrival of the tainted hordes. Initially, they were similarly shocked and afraid and attempted to flee. However, as the unbelievable scene unfolded, with the new tainteds attacking those surrounding them, they halted in their positions.

These tainted all possessed wings and had a more symmetrical, less grotesque body structure. They were still bizarre to look at, but not in the disgustingly strange way the others were.

From a distance, the king, now battered and bruised from the whirlpool of scorching inky- black flames, snapped out of his thoughts and seized the opportunity to flee. Despite the situation's strangeness, the tainted hordes were still tainted, so wouldn't they attack them next if they remained in the area?

He ordered, "RETREAT AS FAST AS YOU CAN!" Looking around, he realized he was in better condition than others despite being terribly poisoned and injured. He shifted his attention to his commanders.

Fortunately, they had managed to survive the deadly fiery whirlpool from protecting him. They were still conscious and able to move.

One commander supported his unconscious fellow, who had sustained severe injuries. After checking her condition, he confirmed she was alive and needed immediate treatment to recover.

The king led the way forward. The remaining soldiers, who had narrowly escaped death, began retreating from the battlefield.

Moments later, the other groups realized the same and decided to flee as well.

As expected, the hordes of tainted soon chased after them. However, rather than attacking, they blocked their path.

Knight Darain frowned, observing the inexplicable scene. As he searched for another escape route, his eyes caught sight of something in the distance.

"What's that...?" Knight Darain said breathlessly.

The bizarre tainteds were clearing the area, making way for what appeared to be a group of strange individuals heading toward them.

The sudden change was so dramatic that the others also took notice. They immediately assumed a defensive stance, their faces showing worry, fear, and uncertainty.

As Fifi controlled the sphere of water forward, the others took in their surroundings. Upon arriving, they noticed an ongoing battle between three groups and numerous Vylkr spawns, all of which shared strange features linked to the various sides. They realized it wasn't just the Prismerions-they had also encountered other races.

Regardless, Orion and the others were relieved to have encountered living races within the pocket dimension, although they seemed to be in conflict and danger.

Orion even spotted the enormous Vylkr spawn that had attacked the Morphic Puppet previously.

They decided to take this chance to help and make their presence less threatening by assisting.

From within the sphere of water, Aurora cast her divine skill.

Eternal Chaos Legion!

Countless, formidable, headless, winged spawns surged forward, eliminating the Vylkr spawns one by one.

Witnessing the various groups use the opportunity to escape, she quickly utilized her spawns to block their paths, preventing them from fleeing. Then, she commanded her other spawns to clear a path forward for them.

Fifi controlled the water sphere, revealing their presence.

"As expected, they don't seem too welcoming," Brane said, narrowing his eyes at the three groups as they assumed a defensive formation when they became aware of them.

"That makes things easier for us. It would have been more suspicious if they were welcoming," Orion replied.

Brane nodded, watching the groups intently.

He wasn't the only one who observed the groups closely. Zara and Fifi studied the humans and nymphs, noting their strange appearances, especially the tiny luminescent gills on both sides of their necks.

This would have made them doubt their race's identity if they weren't also human. The tree nymphs looked far fiercer than those they were familiar with in Paradise, and there were other individuals with icy features beside them.

Meanwhile, Iris focused on the other races with varying lower body parts, beastly humanoids and the Prismarion side. Her gaze was fixed on a bulky individual with a crown on his head, who looked at them tremblingly.

She also noticed the charred Prismarion beside him, who carried a severely injured half-tailed woman in his arms. He trembled under her gaze, his eyes dropping when their gazes met.

Orion and Aurora swept their eyes across the groups, taking in everyone's appearances, contrasting sharply with those in Paradise. They wore pondering expressions.

The groups had been pushed back to the extent that they were now close to one another. Those who had chosen to fight for their lives and went through the horde of winged spawns realized their formidable strength just before they were pushed back.

Meanwhile, those attempting to sacrifice themselves were suppressed. Fortunately, Aurora maintained total control over her spawns, so they were not hurt.

Soon, they reached the centre of each group.

"Should I heal them?" Aurora asked, glancing at Orion.

"Not yet," Orion replied.

While he knew that Aurora could restore them to total health, he was against the idea of immediately healing multiple groups of varying races who had just fought against each other. After all, If someone were to enter Paradise while at war with multiple opponents and halt the battle to heal the injured and their enemies, the outcome would be complicated. Not only would the newcomers be cautious, uncertain, and curious about his abilities, but they would also be irritated.

This could lead to malice and create a barrier that would make communication much more difficult.

It was better to speak with them in such a vulnerable state, understand the ongoing situation within the pocket dimension, and then heal them slowly.

This way, even if they remained cautious, they would have already gained a foothold in their hearts.

Aurora nodded, understanding Orion's intentions.

Orion stepped forward, leaving the water sphere barrier and entering the water.

Although he possessed the strength to withstand the water pressure and remain underwater for as long as he wanted, moving as though he was on land with only a barely noticeable reduction in some of his techniques-especially those that counteracted with water-he found the experience mentally uncomfortable.

He would instead remain within Fifi's water sphere. However, to make the group before him lower their guards even slightly, he stepped forward, distancing himself somewhat from the others.

Aurora followed beside him.

Forming a thin protective layer around himself, using Celestial energy to move more freely,

Orion spoke, "I and my companions were passing by when we heard the sounds of battle and decided to investigate what was happening. Fortunately, we arrived just in time, before the situation worsened."

He noticed their sceptical expressions, which showed they didn't believe his words. It was understandable, considering their current location. However, Orion remained undeterred, especially since it was all he had to work with.

After all, he couldn't tell them, 'We came from outside this pocket dimension to see if we might uncover anything about a psychopathic god who is probably the reason for the mess you are facing.'

Despite their strength, it was better to be cautious since they didn't know if the groups knew or worshipped Naka as they once did.

Instead, Orion continued, "I would like to speak with the leaders of each group." His expression was serious.

The tension within the water grew heavy. Despite receiving no response, Orion maintained a calm expression and made no movements.

The silence stretched.

Sensing their hesitation, Orion said, "There is no reason to be afraid. We are not here to fight or take sides. If we wanted to attack, we would have done so already and wouldn't need to reveal ourselves before every single one of you was eliminated."

He pointed toward the headless winged spawns, circling them protectively and attacking and shielding them from any Vylkr spawns in the surroundings.

"But instead, we stepped in to assist, especially since some of you appear to be fellow members of our race."

This time, after Orion finished speaking, a man with a bulky stature, adorned in a battered and bloody breastplate and pauldrons that looked no different from those of the others present, emerged from the mermen and Prismerion side. He had blond hair, and a crown adorned with pale jewels and precious stones sat atop his head.

Orion had seen children from the Crystalforge clan and even ordinary Prismerions create better jewels than these, so he wasn't impressed.

At the same time, a man with black hair, wearing sturdy armour that appeared to be made of Vylkr alloy and wearing a similar protruding breastplate, swam forward from the human side.

#### Chapter 1129: Shrewd Masks

A woman with bright yellow skin on her upper body and light red skin on her lower body, dressed in a similar protruding bracelet and covered in thick wooden armour, held a crudely made sword in her grasp as she swam forward from the nymph group.

They all halted a small distance from Orion, scrutinizing him closely despite being unable to see through his mask. Their eyes lingered on Aurora; it was easy to understand that they sensed the godly aura around her and were entranced by her beauty.

However, they immediately withdrew their gazes and looked away, fear, doubt, and confusion evident in their eyes.

The others behind them also wore masks, making it difficult to determine their race.

Orion toggled on the mask's function to glance at the three individuals' energy levels. This was one of Seraphina's new improvements to the mask. Although he appreciated viewing the energy levels of those around him, having the words float in front of the person he spoke to was a little annoying, so he was pleased with the improvements.

The bulky half-tailed man's energy level was 1550 BEM, indicating his formidable strength. The human man's energy level was 1200 BEM, showing he was also a strong warrior.

The tree nymph's energy level was 1195 BEM, placing her slightly on par with the human man's strength. This indicated that their strength was comparable to that of three-star warriors. As for those around them...

[ Energy Level - 401 BEM]

[ Energy Level - 350 BEM]

[ Energy Level - 549 BEM ]



[ Energy Level - 700 BEM ]

...

Only the Prismion at the forefront, and a few others had slightly above 1000 BEM energy levels. Despite that, they were still weaker than the two beside them.

They weren't wearing Devourer bracelets or anything similar on their wrists, making Orion wonder if they could also create Vylkr containers like them.

The only clue he could come up with was the protruding breastplates and pauldrons they wore. Orion couldn't help but wonder how they fought in them.

Nonetheless, he found their energy levels reasonable, as Vylkr energy was highly lethal and could only be controlled by a few. Only unique individuals like him, Tala, Seth, and the others could become four-star warriors, with the rest needing some assistance, like the Vylkr Fusion Armlet, to go further.

The gods' chosens were an entirely different case. They utilized diluted Vylkr energy, compensating for the loss of quality with quantity. As such, their progress was much slower and required more resources, along with the Vylkr Compatibility Test, which determined their limits.

Orion understood why so many chose to defect to higher-grade Runaway Cities and why those who remained were much more loyal to their Runaway City and wouldn't easily betray them.

As Orion concluded his thoughts, he toggled off the energy-level display.

The others behind Orion, waiting for the environment to calm down, did the same.

"I am King Izak, ruler of the Tidal Depths Kingdom," King Izak introduced himself. "Although I am thankful for the aid you've given us, I can't help but be suspicious of your identities. I have information about this entire ocean, from east to west, and I know that strangers don't just pass through here. It would be different if the others recognized you since you mentioned that you're from the same race, but they don't."

"Of course, I am still ignorant of many things, such as the Harbingers' abodes and the tainted," he said, pointing at the headless spawn swimming around them defensively.

He continued, "So I hope you can tell us who you are to dispel the suspicions in our hearts." His tone and expression were calm, but inwardly, he remained fearful of their response.

What if the other party chose to attack him for asking such questions?

What if they genuinely had vile intentions but wore masks to hide them?

Upon hearing Izak's words, Orion raised a brow in surprise. "What are the Harbingers' Abodes and the Tainted?" he asked curiously.

He had a vague idea about what Izak meant by the 'Tainted' from his gesture, but none regarding the Harbingers' Abodes. It seemed like the two were connected somehow, but he needed proper clarification to understand what Izak was talking about fully.

As soon as Orion finished speaking, Izak's expression and that of the group behind him morphed into shock before heavy frowns appeared on their faces.

'Impossible! They don't know about the Harbingers and the Tainted?' Izak thought, internally stunned by the revelation.

Clearly, one of them was controlling the bizarre, headless, winged tainted, protecting them from the hordes of other tainted. Yet, they seemed unfamiliar with what the tainted and the Harbingers were.

'Could it be...?' A spine-chilling thought crept into Izak's mind.

Suddenly, the man who had swum over from the human side spoke up. "I am Knight Darian, a warrior from the Bastion of Ashen Hope territory," he said, bowing to Orion and the others.

"It appears that you are travellers from a distant land. If you don't mind, why don't you accompany us to our territory, where you can rest and have a proper conversation with our leaders? I'm certain they will be glad to answer all your questions."

He gestured toward the headless, winged creatures surrounding them. "Although I cannot accurately gauge your strength, based on the chaos here, it will become troublesome if we linger. It's best to leave right away."

Knight Darian then pointed toward Orion and the others. "Also, I apologize for the king's disrespectful words. He has allowed his authority to go to his head and doesn't see anyone as his equal, so he demanded an explanation from our saviours without offering them rest first." "If you wish to punish him to appease your anger, please take it out solely on him. I'm sure the residents of the Tidal Depths would be thrilled to see the end of his tyranny."

'How shrewd!' Orion thought after hearing Knight Darian's words.

While Izak had thanked them for their aid and spoken directly as a leader, seeking to uncover their identities to protect his kingdom and authority, Knight Darian had cleverly invited them to his territory to talk with his leaders. He had also thrown Izak under the bus, persuading them against him by subtly appealing to their sense of morality, mentioning the king's oppression to test their character.

But how could Orion, who barely knew the situation within the pocket dimension and was focused on gathering information, intervene in their conflict?

Nevertheless, Orion realized that he might as well use the opportunity to show that they were not only good-natured individuals but also possessed a certain level of shrewdness.

'That treacherous guy,' Izak swore in his mind, clenching his teeth in frustration.

He had taken the lead, thinking the other groups would support him since they were suspicious of these strangers' mysterious identities. But now, the treacherous human beside him had taken that lead.

Izak could only hope they wouldn't fall for Darian's words.

As Orion contemplated his subsequent response, the tree nymph from the last group spoke up. "I am Knight Mayril of the Bastion of the Wailing Gnarled. I advise you, travellers, not to take their words to heart. One is impulsive, and the other has no good intentions."

"It would be much safer if you came with us to our territory. The Bastion of the Wailing Gnarled is more hidden and far safer from the tainted than any other territory. I will make sure you are given proper comfort to rest from your long journey, and our leaders will gladly answer all your questions."

Sure enough, even the tree nymph wore many masks to hide her motives!

Orion observed the unfolding scene with a raised brow.

It was entirely different from their encounters in the Runaway Cities. While the leaders and gods' chosens there were willing to lay down their lives if it would make a difference, the inhabitants of this pocket dimension seemed eager to invite strangers with mysterious identities and unknown intentions to their territory.

It only took a moment for Orion to understand why-it was survival. Their desperation was apparent. Despite their injuries, they didn't hesitate to reveal their intentions. They had been in constant dread and were willing to take any risk.

Fortunately, Orion was pleased with their response, which aligned with his plan.

"First of all, I will remove my mask to clear away any suspicions you may have," Orion said, removing his mask and revealing his human features.

A look of surprise crossed the faces of Izak, Knight Darian, and Mayril as they saw Orion's face.

"I won't force my companions to do the same. It's their choice whether they want to remove their masks," Orion added, gesturing to Fifi and the others behind him. Understanding that the man before them was telling the truth about his race being similar to one of them, they all shook their heads.

"There's no need for the rest of your companions to remove their masks. Your actions alone are enough for me to believe the rest of your words. Please forgive my rudeness," Izak said,

bowing respectfully.

## Chapter 1130: Joining A Force

"As our benefactors, I urge you to take my advice seriously. Do not trust these two. It's only a matter of time before they betray and poison you, just like they did to me." He coughed heavily, spraying thick, red-and-greenish blood that drifted slowly away. "I hope you'll reconsider and come to rest at my Tidal Depths Kingdom."

Orion sent a brief message to the others before shaking his head. "I appreciate your advice, but as I said before, I won't force my companions to follow my decision. They will choose which force they want to join back."

Izak, Knight Darian, and Knight jMayril nodded, their expressions serious.

"Which force do you all want to return with?" Orion asked, turning to the others behind him.

"We will go with them," Brane said, with Zara nodding in agreement. They made the first choice, stepping out of Fifi's water sphere and approaching the forces of the Bastion of the Ashen Hope Territory, halting beside them.

Next, Iris stepped out of the water sphere and approached the Tidal Depths kingdom, stopping beside him.

"I will go with them," Iris announced, glancing at the Prismerions and the other races behind her, who distanced themselves slightly, intimidated by her presence.

Orion nodded at her decision and focused on Fifi, awaiting her choice.

"I will go wherever you go," Fifi responded, her tone firm.

Orion nodded, already expecting her answer. He then turned his attention to Aurora, who stood beside him.

"I'm coming with you to whichever force you choose to join," Aurora sent a message to his mind, sensing Orion's gaze through his mask.

Already anticipating her response, Orion shook his head and replied, "We were both given the keys to Goddess Ilse's Golden Palace to use when we want to return or in an emergency, so it wouldn't be proper if the two of us stayed together. We need to improve our survivability and ensure the group's safety."

"Besides, Fifi and I are four-star warriors, and with Morphic Puppet and the Crimson Greatsword, we can flee or survive against a stronger opponent if we encounter one. We are also connected through the Eternal Heart Covenant, so we can sense when we are in danger and each other's location."

Aurora furrowed her brows briefly, then nodded. "Okay, I'll choose a force to join," she said, still concerned for his safety due to their current location but understanding that separating would allow them to complete their tasks more efficiently.

Aurora moved toward the Tidal Depths kingdom forces and nodded at Orion to indicate her decision.

Aurora found this force more interesting than the others, as its races were unfamiliar. Although the humans and nymphs seemed unique compared to those in Paradise, she could always learn about their differences later.

Izak and the others were unaware of Orion and Aurora's conversation and watched them curiously as they exchanged glances.

Only Fifi and the others understood what was really going on.

Observing the beautiful woman whose powerful aura had shaken him, Izak didn't know whether to smile joyfully or cry. He still felt threatened by their power and wondered if he was putting his kingdom at risk. At the same time, he was glad he hadn't lost to the forces of the Bastion of Ashen Hope Territory.

Knight Darian also had mixed thoughts.

At this moment, only Knight Mayril was nervous about the unfolding situation. She could only hope the remaining members would choose to join her force, or she would lose out to Tidal Depths kingdom and Bastion of Ashen Hope Territory.

Her emotions were conflicted-between gaining a potentially powerful ally and bringing a disaster to her territory.

Fifi dispelled the water barrier and appeared beside Orion.

Orion approached the Bastion of the Wailing Gnarled forces with Fifi.

"I'll go with the forces of Bastion of the Wailing Gnarled," Orion said, stopping next to them with Fifi.

With the armour Ilse had given them, combined with Brane's strength, experience, and Zara's abilities, Orion wasn't worried about their safety. Aurora and Iris were very familiar with each other. They should be able to handle themselves, except if they encounter another divine being.

He and Fifi could also care for themselves, and with the keys in their possession, their chances of survival were certain.

Knight Mayril exhaled in relief, but her heart still pounded in fear and anxiety.

The headless, winged spawn surrounding them protectively began to scatter, their

movements catching the group's attention.

They peered through the gaps as many tainteds attempted to attack, but the headless, winged spawn stopped them, devouring the enemies and pushing them back to a safe distance.

Suddenly, some headless, winged spawn formed a protective barrier around each force, shielding them from further assaults by the tainteds.

Witnessing this strange sight, the soldiers in each group couldn't help but exclaim in awe and excitement. Now that the tension had eased, they felt freer to express their emotions.

"Haa... I never thought a day would come when I'd be protected by a Tainted," remarked a man from the forces of Bastion of Ashen Hope Territory.

"It's unbelievable. But aren't these travellers too powerful?" added another in a whisper. "Hey, keep quiet. They're our guests now. But if you want to become Knight Darian's next target for practice, I won't stop your gossip," another man replied.

"Thank goodness we survived today. But it looks like we'll have to wait a while before we can take revenge on those backstabbers," muttered a woman with a half-fish tail from the Tidal Depths forces, her teeth clenched in anger.

"We'll get our revenge, no matter how long it takes," a man said, his tone tinged with anger.

Their eyes burned with fury as they glared at the forces of the Bastion of Ashen Hope and the Bastion of the Wailing Gnarled.

With the unexpected turn of events, they knew they had no choice but to return to their kingdom and recuperate until they could repay the hostility both forces had shown them

several times over.

"Are we sure bringing them to our territory is the right thing to do?" asked a frosty-looking nymph from the Bastion of the Wailing Gnarled forces.

"Tch! Knight Mayril must already have a plan in mind. She's a knight, after all, so she must have thought of something. The only thing we can do is trust her judgment and support whatever she decides," another nymph with mixed wooden and metallic armour responded. "He's a human, so I don't feel good about this either. And we're still unsure about their capabilities, and there's a high chance they were sent by the Harbingers."

A few soldiers from each group whispered their concerns to one another, their voices barely

audible.



Unfortunately, Orion and the others were sensitive enough to pick up on their whispers.

"Each of my spawns will follow and protect you all until you reach your destination, so you don't need to worry about being attacked along the way," Aurora announced, glancing at the

three forces.

The moment she finished speaking, Izak, Knight Darian, Knight Mayril, and everyone from each force stared at her in shock and fear.

"You... you're the one controlling the tainted?" Izak stammered. He had suspected one of them was responsible for the tainteds protecting them, but he never expected it to be the terrifying woman who had chosen to side with his forces.

Aurora focused on Izak and nodded silently. She still found it strange that her spawns were

called tainteds.

Knight Darian and Knight Mayril exchanged glances and breathed a sigh of relief, feeling pity and delight for Izak's situation. They knew he was doomed if he tried anything foolish. Knight Mayril felt a heavy burden lift from her shoulders. Even though she was returning two unknown individuals with unfathomable strength to her territory, the others were doing the same.

At least the one capable of commanding such formidable tainteds wasn't in her forces! The unpleasant scenario was the thought that they all might be capable of commanding such creatures. Still, she wasn't overly concerned since this meant everyone else was in the same

predicament.

"Now that everything is settled, please follow me, kind travellers. The Tidal Depths is quite a distance away from here," Izak said, clearing his throat and shifting his gaze from Aurora.

His perspiration would've formed a small puddle if they hadn't been underwater. Fortunately, he managed to retain some of his dignity. However, just as Izak was about to swim forward, his movements faltered, and his steps became unsteady.

"My king!" the Prismerion commander rushed to Izak and caught him before he collapsed. He looked at his injuries, noticing that several were turning green.

The lethal poison inflicted on him by the Bastion of Ashen Hope and the Bastion of Wailing

Gnarled was becoming fiercer!

Izak's strength faded by the second, and his vision grew hazier. To the others, it seemed as though he would lose consciousness at any moment.

The Prismerion commander quickly held him beside Iris and Aurora, pleading, "Kind travellers, please, save our king." His voice was tinged with desperation.