

Village Head 421

Chapter 421 The Warriors Are Coming!

Outside the mountains

The Village

Staring at the peculiar contraption before him, which bore a striking resemblance to the small flying devices Orion had crafted to deliver babies and fruits from the sky to the village, the Village Chief turned to the burly, muscular man at his side and asked, hesitantly, "Are you certain this will actually fly?"

Hanan, the warrior from the leftwing stronghold tasked with constructing the flying contraptions for Orion's potential search and rescue, could sense the Village Chief's scepticism about their functionality.

"Chief, don't worry. I've made them exactly according to the design the boy used," Hanan reassured him, eyeing the three large hot air balloons before them.

"I can guarantee they'll fly without a hitch. Our main concern now should be finding someone who knows how to navigate this thing," he added, flashing a somewhat sheepish smile, acknowledging that despite building them, he remained clueless about their operation.

Though he still harboured some doubts, the Village Chief reluctantly nodded in understanding.

Hanan was undeniably one of the village's most skilled craftsmen, and with his gift, the Village Chief could only hope that his assurances held true and that the contraptions would indeed fly, carrying them to their destination.

Originally, they had planned to wait a week for all six of Orion's flying devices to be prepared for the expedition to find Orion and Saria.

However, as the days passed and he considered the situation more rationally, he realized that without Stronghold Leader Drakar to safeguard the village, it would be imprudent to divert a significant portion of their warriors, who were essential for protecting the village from the encroaching Vylkr vines, to search for Orion.

He had, therefore, taken it upon himself to be the voice of reason and discuss this matter with the tree nymphs.

To his astonishment, the tree nymphs suggested that they join the warriors in battling the Vylkr vines. Their proposition initially caught him off guard because anyone familiar with the nature of tree nymphs would know that their bodies were teeming with an extraordinary amount of life force.

This made them prime targets for the Vylkr vines, as the vines were naturally drawn to the tree nymphs. If the tree nymphs were to fight alongside the warriors in repelling the Vylkr vines, it was highly likely that the vines would prioritize them over the warriors.

However, the mere thought of a tree nymph falling victim to a Vylkr vine sent shivers down the Village Chief's spine. Despite his best efforts to dissuade the tree nymphs from this dangerous outcome, they remained resolute. Their determination stemmed from their desire to increase the chances of finding Saria's body and finding Orion's whereabouts.

The Village Chief breathed a sigh of relief.

His only option now was to calm the mounting tension in the village and ensure the safe return of those two.

He turned to the warriors behind him and asked, "Are you all prepared?" His gaze first fell upon Fiona, who had requested to be called Fifi. He then looked at his son, recently returned from an expedition and was eager to join them, before assessing the dozens of warriors who stood alongside them, ensuring they were ready to embark on their mission.

"I am ready," Fifi replied, her voice now carrying an icy, determined edge that contrasted starkly with her previous tone.

She bore the weight of Celeste, Greta, and her other sisters' hopes. They had all pleaded with her, urging her to do everything in her power to find Orion and return him to the village.

To them, Orion's survival still held a glimmer of possibility, even though the odds dwindled with each passing day. Fifi shared their belief and was committed to ensuring Orion's safe return, down to the last limb.

"We're prepared," Seth, the Village Chief's son, replied with a serious expression.

After returning to the village from his expedition, he was shocked by the extent of the changes. He hadn't anticipated that the situation would become so dire, with tree nymphs on the brink of rebellion unless they retrieved the body of one of their own and the entire village in turmoil over the disappearance of a single young man.

'Haaa! This is too much,' Seth mused to himself.

Seth pondered the duration of his absence from the village. Had it been a month? Perhaps a month and a half, or maybe even two.

The exact time frame eluded him because, upon his return, he had promptly volunteered for a secret mission involving flying contraptions of uncertain origin, construction, and history.

His decision to join this mission had been influenced by the dramatic change he observed in his father since their last meeting. Seeing the mixture of relief, satisfaction, and yet deep concern etched across his father's face, Seth felt compelled to carry out his plan: to bring Orion back to the village, by any means necessary, whether alive or dead.

As the future Village Chief, Seth understood that it was his duty to gradually ease the burdens weighing upon his father's shoulders, ultimately preparing himself for the role he would one day inherit.

"Alright then," the Village Chief began, addressing the assembled group. "You can start by loading the basket with your supplies. I truly hope that you will successfully complete this mission and return to the village with some good news." He observed the warriors, their expressions grave and determined, nodding in acknowledgement.

They set to work filling the basket with sacks of kalna fruits that had been gathered in advance for this very purpose. Once they finished, they secured a rope around all three of Orion's skies, ensuring a tight connection, before boarding the flying contraptions one by one.

As instructed, they released the hot stones into the metal-caged pots, allowing the intense heat from the hot stones to pass through the envelope. They held the envelope firmly over it until it was filled with enough hot air to gently lift them off the ground.

Chapter 422 Why Are You Weak?

"Amazing," Seth whispered under his breath, his voice barely audible over the sound of the wind.

Several other warriors, also perched on the Orion skies, marvelled at the sensation of gradually ascending into the sky, carried aloft by the flying contraptions.

Once they had ascended to a certain height in the sky and were still within the sight of the Village Chief and Hanan, Seth seized the moment to bellow loudly into the open air.

"FOR THE SAKE OF THE VILLAGE, I WILL BRING ORION BACK!"

His words echoed in the vastness of the sky as determination welled up inside him. His anger flared at the thought of the turmoil in the village and the person partly responsible.

"AND IF I ENCOUNTER DRAKAR OR EVEN CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HIS SHADOW, I WILL BRING HIS HEAD TO YOU, DEAD OR ALIVE!"

Every warrior on the flying contraption shared these sentiments, excluding Fifi. Unlike the others, she had only one outcome in mind for Rightward Stronghold Leader Drakar – death, so her sisters and the tree nymphs could exact their vengeance by fully dismembering his corpse.

'I will kill him,' Fifi thought once more, her thoughts consumed by a burning desire for vengeance. Her nails dug into her palms as her hands clenched into fists.

"I will find you," she whispered through gritted teeth, her voice a chilling promise, "and then, I will kill you."

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Within the mountains

The Prismerian kingdom

"Go on, what are you waiting for, Clan Mistress Olivia?" Orion asked with a raised brow.

He had expected her to walk toward the previous position and strike the pillar immediately after he was done displaying his strength.

However, she had been quiet and motionless for over a minute now.

Hearing Orion's question, Olivia subtly took a deep breath, shaking her head inwardly.

'What am I thinking?' She thought. There was no way she was letting the young man in front of her think that he was stronger or could compete in strength with any of the Major Clan Heads.

Olivia locked her gaze with his as she released a sigh. "I was just surprised. After all, it seemed so unreal for a young man like you to have such an incredible amount of strength. In fact..." She paused, narrowing her eyes at him as she scrutinized him from head to toe. "I am even beginning to think that you are not as young as you seem," she said, her eyes widening at her own words as she came to such a realization.

Staring at the woman who was coming up with her own irrelevant imagination, Orion shook his head wearily and said, "No, I can boldly say that I am several years younger than you think, if that's what you're probably thinking."

"Oh!" Olivia said, squinting her eyes at Orion. "How many years are you then?" She asked with immense curiosity burning in her eyes. Diverting this conversation to another topic entirely was the only excuse she could use to waste time now until it was time for them to return to the closing banquet.

Orion, however, immediately furrowed his brow with a frown appearing on his face.

"I can consider telling you during our next conversation and exchange it for information that I want. However, I believe that, in order for that to happen, we first need to finish our initial agreement," he said, "So please, Clan Mistress Olivia, strike the pillar with all you have because I would also like to get a glimpse of your strength."

Seeing that her plan wasn't working or having any effect, Olivia nodded her head seriously and forced a thin smile across her lips.

"Humph! Okay, stand back then. I don't want you to get injured or suffocated by my magical energy," Olivia said. She walked towards the pillar and stood in front of it, her mind racing as she tried to think of different ways to avoid the upcoming situation. However, realizing that she couldn't come up with any, she decided to give her all first and figure something out later.

Calming her breathing down, she quickly regained her composure and immediately channelled her magical energy. The air around her grew dense and suffocating as every pore on her skin opened, releasing an immense amount of thick magical energy from her body.

Slowly, the magical energy began to condense into a dark green hue, causing Orion to widen his eyes in surprise.

"...Crystal Sage Rank," Orion muttered under his breath, not wanting to miss a single detail as he locked his gaze onto Clan Mistress Olivia's form.

Her entire aura had transformed as the dark green energy condensed around her, giving her the appearance of a dormant but powerful demon awakening.

With all the magical energy in her body reaching its peak, Olivia thrust her fist forward with full force.

Just as her fist was about to make contact with the pillar, a sharp, invisible glint flashed across Olivia's pupils, and she immediately unleashed one of the Quartzwraith Clan's intermediate specialties.

"Spectral Fury!"

A quick burst of sharp, invisible magical energy shot forth from Olivia's fist, possessing enough power to tear through the defences of another being of the same rank if left unguarded. It collided with the pillar just moments before her fist did.

The result was a resounding explosion!

"BANNGG!!" "BOOOMM!!!"

The impact, while not as awe-inspiring as Orion's own, still packed a powerful punch. The pillar hummed for several moments before it lit up, starting with a light cyan colour that transitioned to a dark cyan, then to a light green, before finally settling on a radiant dark green.

Orion's eyes widened with realization. "You're at the Crystal Sage Rank!" he exclaimed, confirming his suspicions about the Clan Mistress of the Quartzwraith Clan standing before him.

Orion's words naturally drew Olivia's attention, and her disappointment was palpable. She had hoped her immense strength would have at least allowed her to touch the surface of the Crystal King Rank. She turned her head towards Orion, who was regarding her with a contemplative gaze. Her frown deepened, ready to respond to what she perceived as a demeaning remark.

However, Orion's next words caught her off guard, causing her to purse her lips and withhold her retort.

"You're weak! How can you be this weak?" Orion questioned, disbelief lacing his voice.

Chapter 423 The Unofficial Agreement

Listening to Orion's words and witnessing the disbelief in his expression left Olivia momentarily speechless. She grappled with a mix of confusion and irritation.

Why did he consider her weak?

'What does he mean by that?' she thought, her lips beginning to twitch in annoyance. The thought of being at the Crystal Sage Rank being dismissed as easy irked her.

In her mind, achieving such status was an impressive feat, only surpassed by becoming one of the Five Major Clan Heads or entering the royal family.

"Do you think reaching the Crystal Sage Rank is as easy as grabbing a fruit off a tree?" Olivia retorted, her irritation apparent as her lips twitched. She was about to elaborate, "Besides, even the Queen, the most powerful Prismeron in the kingdom, holds only the Crystal King Rank, so that..."

However, she abruptly halted her words, her hands swiftly covering her lips as she processed the unintended implications of her statement.

"The Queen is at the Crystal King Rank," Orion reiterated aloud, his eyes widening at Olivia's revelation.

He immediately began to ponder. If using one of his Vylkr containers could make him as strong, if not stronger, than those at the Crystal Radiant Rank and the Crystal Luminary Rank, then didn't that also imply that utilising his second container simultaneously would grant him the strength to physically compete with those at the Crystal Sage Rank and even the Crystal King Rank?

And all of this without even tapping into his gift. If he did use his gift, Orion believed he could go toe-to-toe with a Crystal Emperor Rank.

As for the potential strength of the Vylkr warrior mode at this level, Orion pushed it to the back of his mind.

Even though he could potentially reach that state again with the help of the Princess of the Garden's lake essence that he had consumed, he didn't want to risk activating the mode until he had fully realized his potential and was certain it wouldn't harm his body in any way.

'Wait,' Orion thought immediately. 'Doesn't that mean...?' His eyes scanned the frowning Clan Mistress Olivia, who had probably realized her mistake in divulging such an important piece of information, evident as she massaged her temples with her fingers.

Orion's thoughts raced to Fifi, Leftward Stronghold Leader Zogar, the Village Chief, even his fellow warrior students, and the rest of the warriors in the village, many of whom were 2-star or 3-star warriors. With their combined might, could they potentially overwhelm the Prismeron Kingdom and erase any trace of their existence from this mountain?

Especially considering that a lot of them, including Fifi, could freely use their Vylkr warrior mode without fear of drawbacks if the two sides were ever to clash?"

He had feared for nothing. A smile immediately graced Orion's face as these thoughts coursed through his mind. There was nothing to be afraid of!

Certainly, he needed to maintain friendly relations with the Prismarian Kingdom, as he and Saria were still here with no means to contact the Village or inform them of their current location, especially considering the myriad of strange and mysterious techniques they possessed.

Nevertheless, even without that, armed with the newfound understanding of his strength and the disparities between them and the Prismarian Kingdom, Orion was confident that he could hold his ground and make a statement if he ever had to defend himself against the royal family or the Crystalforge Clan should they turn against him or break their promises.

"Why are you still smiling?" Olivia asked, a hint of irritation in her voice.

While she was well aware of what he must be thinking after witnessing his display of strength equivalent to that of a Crystal King, she had no intention of vocalizing it.

"Isn't it obvious?" Orion responded, his smile broadening into a mischievous smirk.

"If you're considering some kind of advantage because of your strength, think again. The reality is that you're still at the Crystal Luminary Rank, even if temporarily you have the strength to match someone at the lower tier of the Crystal Sage Rank."

"Unfortunately for you, the Prismarian Kingdom boasts other higher-tiered Crystal Sage Ranks like myself, not to mention the Queen who is at an even higher rank. I'm just letting you know to make you aware of the difference in our ranks and to keep this information a secret for our mutual benefit," Olivia explained, unable to resist giving him this piece of advice.

'Our?' Orion repeated internally, his surprise was evident. He closely examined Olivia's sharp and contemplative expression, a stark contrast to her previous look of shock and defeat.

"What do you mean by 'our'?" Orion asked, raising an eyebrow. He noticed a glint in her eyes as she locked her gaze on him, returning to her previous stoic and serious demeanour as she began to explain.

"We, of course," Olivia replied confidently. "With the Quaztrwraith Clan on your side, you don't have to worry about being double-crossed or betrayed by the Prismarian Kingdom in case things take a turn for the worse."

She harboured doubts that anyone capable of betraying him would escape unscathed; one or two life-threatening injuries seemed likely.

"We can continue to share important information with each other, maintaining an official mutual partnership in secret. This way, if the royal family betrays you or reneges on their word, you can count on the support of the Quartzwraith Clan, willing and prepared to help you obtain whatever compensation you desire. I think it's a fair deal, considering we're offering information and protection in exchange for your knowledge of the outside world," Olivia added, her confidence radiating from her as she contemplated the merits of this plan.

In fact, it was a brilliant plan!

This approach eliminated the need to fret over the royal family or the Crystalforge Clan's clandestine schemes. Moreover, it presented an opportunity to gain valuable insights about the outside world, safeguarding their interests should the Crystalforge Clan decide to hoard information.

However, as for standing up to protect him if things went awry, Olivia couldn't help but inwardly scoff at such notions.

Chapter 424 The Closing Banquet

She knew she couldn't contend with the Royal Family, let alone the Crystalforge Clan or the entire Prismarian Kingdom on his behalf. The circumstances at that time would determine whether they could take such a risk and provide him with protection.

Meanwhile, Orion couldn't help but feel a bit surprised. He was aware that the Quartzwraith Clan had a close relationship with the Royal Family, as Elysia had informed him.

However, as he mulled it over, it began to make more sense. A powerful organization with some political influence would go to great lengths to gain an advantage over its counterparts.

After all, politics often boiled down to gaining more power and maximizing profits at the right moment.

Nonetheless, Orion saw such a deal as somewhat futile. He was certain that any reasonable leader would hesitate to put their organization, let alone their family, at risk for someone they had only just met.

However, this didn't mean he would outright refuse Olivia's offer. He still needed to gather information that he couldn't yet confirm the Royal Family would provide. So, for now, he was willing to see how long their alliance would hold, all while preparing for the eventual day when he and Saria could leave this mountain.

"Alright, I don't see any issue with partnering with the Quartzwraith Clan," Orion said, a hint of scepticism in his tone. "But how can I be sure I can trust you?"

Olivia furrowed her brows, pondering how to address his valid concerns. She knew her words alone wouldn't be sufficient to establish trust. Crafting a proper contract would take time they didn't currently have, as they needed to return to the closing banquet before their absence raised suspicions.

Nevertheless, she still replied, "How about I give you my word?"

Orion remained adamant, saying, "I've already heard many promises today, and I have no desire to add another to the list."

"Then what do you suggest?" Olivia responded with a serious tone, determined not to let this opportunity slip through her fingers.

Orion paused, his expression thoughtful, as though deeply contemplating the matter. Then, his gaze shifted downward, briefly lingering on her visible underwear.

When he raised his head, his eyes locked with hers, and he said, "Give me your panties?" Before Olivia could respond, he added, "From what I gathered from that girl on the stage, it seems that the most effective way to come to an agreement right now, especially for a woman, is if you're willing to give me your panties until we formalize our agreement."

Remembering the words of the Luminaris Clan's eldest heiress, Olivia took a deep breath as she considered her options.

Was her dignity and self-respect worth putting on the line for the sake of the Quartzwraith Clan?

It only took a moment for Olivia to come up with a response to her question.

"Alright," Olivia responded, nodding her head in agreement.

The only thing she had to worry about was running into someone before she made it back to her room to change into a fresh pair of panties so she could return to the closing banquet afterwards.

Bending down slightly, she reached for her waistband and pulled her panties straight down.

"Here you go, you have my trust," she said, extending her arm to hand her panties to Orion.

Although Prismarian culture fascinated Orion to the point where he had restrained his boner throughout the day, even as he spoke to Clan Mistress Olivia, he wasn't particularly interested in her panties. He simply wanted to see if she would follow through with the agreement, and he wanted her to understand that he took it seriously, hoping it would deter her from doing anything to disrupt it.

In reality, he wasn't particularly interested in the Clan Mistress's foreign pussy, so he took only a cursory glance, capturing the image in his mind as he accepted her panties.

Clan Mistress Olivia unabashedly said, "This will suffice for now, I think. The next time we meet, I will make sure to make our agreement official," as she displayed her pink valley to Orion. He greedily took in the view and nodded in agreement.

"Since we are done here, let us head to the closing banquet before they begin to get suspicious," Olivia added, releasing a sigh of relief.

Afterwards, they left the room, with Olivia leading Orion toward the direction of the closing banquet. She was cautious about encountering anyone, but they were fortunate not to run into anyone along the way.

Once they arrived at a safe distance from their destination, Olivia hurriedly returned to her room to change into a fresh pair of panties.

Having thoroughly enjoyed the view, Orion took one last glance down the corridor where Olivia had disappeared before entering the grand hall to join the banquet.

As Orion entered the banquet hall, he was greeted by tables laden with a colourful array of fruits and drinks. The hall buzzed with the presence of various people who had made their way from the grand amphitheatre.

As he advanced further into the hall, the atmosphere seemed to come alive, with numerous individuals fixing their intense gazes on him and their voices immediately surged.

"He's here! The foreigner who defeated all four of the Major Clan heirs has finally arrived at the closing banquet!"

"Hmm!! He certainly looks quite young."

"After that battle, it's clear he didn't unleash his full strength. I'm curious about just how powerful he truly is!"

As the voices continued to swirl around him, their murmurs a constant presence in his ears, Orion pressed on. He kept on walking forward, even when he had nearly stumbled upon hearing how he had admirably declined Merida's offer of her panties.

He continued his stride until he caught sight of Princess Crystalia engaged in conversation with someone, with Flintor guiding her from behind.

"Finally," Orion muttered wearily to himself, squinting ahead as he recognized the person she was speaking with. "Zephyrion." Closing the distance, Flintor was the first to spot Orion's arrival, and soon, the others began to take notice as well.

Chapter 425 Sowing Seeds for the Future

"You're finally here. Are you fully healed?" Princess Crystalia exclaimed with evident delight, leaning in to inspect Orion as though she were meticulously searching for any lingering injuries from his recent battle.

Orion reassured her, saying, "Don't worry, I wasn't that badly injured. Everything's fine."

Then, Princess Crystalia leaned in closer and whispered urgently into Orion's ear, "I need your help. Just follow my lead, and I promise not to tell Madam Seraphina about her panties." Desperation hung heavily in her voice.

Orion was initially perplexed by her request, but as he turned his attention to Zephyrion nearby, he couldn't help but notice the anger etched across his face.

"Though you didn't appear severely injured during the battle, you certainly took your time recovering," Zephyrion commented, concealing his anger beneath a smile as he observed Orion.

Orion nodded in agreement. "Well, I didn't see any rush, and besides, I had a feeling Princess Crystalia might get lonely if I didn't return promptly," he said, locking eyes with Zephyrion, whose smile began to falter.

Orion couldn't help but notice the intense jealousy and anger painted across Zephyrion's face. It was clear that any attempts at forming an amicable relationship between them would be futile, especially given Zephyrion's overwhelming defeat.

Around Orion, the onlookers were left stunned by his audacity.

'I told you to follow my lead, not take the lead,' Princess Crystalia thought, disbelief simmering within her.

Orion would have gladly followed her lead if she hadn't resorted to threatening him with a pair of panties he had deliberately tried hard to get.

Flintor, on the other hand, could only gape in astonishment as he observed the unusually close proximity between Princess Crystalia and Orion.

Suddenly, he blinked and remembered how often Princess Crystalia had been sneaking out of her room lately, despite the Queen's warnings.

'Why didn't you inform me about this, Princess Crystalia?' he wondered silently.

Zephyrion could feel his blood boiling to the point where he feared that if he remained for another minute, his anger might surpass his ability to restrain himself from smacking Orion in the head, provoking another fight.

However, fully aware that he would be defeated once more, Zephyrion took a deep breath to calm himself before turning his attention to Princess Crystalia.

Her face remained impassive, as though she hadn't registered a word of what Orion had just said.

"Princess Crystalia, perhaps we should find somewhere more private for our conversation," Zephyrion suggested. He hoped that in a quieter setting, he wouldn't be constantly reminded of Orion's presence, and perhaps, they could talk in peace.

Princess Crystalia shook her head with a smile. "No need to worry. I can see that there are many guests eager to speak with the young heir of the Gemheart Clan. Please go ahead, and I'll catch up with you later," she replied.

Zephyrion's heart sank at her response, and he simply nodded before picking up a glass filled with fruit wine and walking away.

Orion, watching the exchange, raised a curious brow. "Hmm, from where I stand, it seems like he's quite interested in you," he remarked to Princess Crystalia.

Princess Crystalia let out a weary sigh before shaking her head and explaining, "He might appear that way, but it's all an act. There's an ongoing feud between the Gemheart Clan and the Royal Family, a rivalry that's common knowledge among the Prismarians. He's obviously trying to get close to me to gain entry into the Crystalforge Clan and assist the Gemheart Clan from within our ranks. Thankfully, my father had warned me about this in advance, or else I might have..." She let her words trail off, sighing once more.

Although she didn't finish her sentence, Orion could easily guess what she intended to say.

'I see,' he thought to himself as he walked over to the table, choosing from the assortment of sliced fruits and fruity wines.

Luckily for him, he was accustomed to eating fruits; otherwise, he might have found this banquet quite frustrating.

"Since it's like that, why don't we try to establish a connection? I'm just a simple foreigner, so you don't need to worry about me plotting to become some kind of informant," Orion suggested.

He picked up a piece of fruit with one hand and carefully selected two glass cups filled with wine—one for himself and one for the Princess.

Princess Crystalia accepted the wine from Orion but couldn't help but feel that something was different about him compared to when she had seen him earlier that day. She couldn't quite put her finger on it, but he appeared less reserved than in their previous meetings.

"So, what do you say?" Orion asked, sipping the fruit wine from the crystal-clear glass.

"From my perspective, it seems like a good idea to expand the Crystalforge bloodline beyond this mountain. Perhaps escaping from this place isn't as far-fetched as it may seem," he added.

His words might have sounded like mere speculation or even nonsense to some, but since the Primerions were trapped here alongside White Flame as part of their punishment, it begged the question of whether the trap applied to him as well, given that he wasn't a Prismeron.

Of course, it wouldn't be that simple unless this was some sort of inescapable prison.

Still, Orion had every reason to remain optimistic since he hadn't attempted an escape yet.

Princess Crystalia chuckled at his words, initially finding them amusing. However, she soon let out a long, contemplative sigh.

"If you keep talking like that, you're going to start giving people some rather unusual ideas," she remarked.

Having witnessed Orion assertively fucking her mother's personal maid just hours after settling into the castle, his words didn't surprise her. However, she found it quite unexpected that he would propose such a thing to her.

Nevertheless, she was well aware that the people in the Prismerian kingdom were growing increasingly desperate to leave this mountain. Thus, it wouldn't be surprising if a few women became intrigued and decided to experiment with Orion's theory after hearing his words.

Just as Orion was about to resume speaking, he abruptly noticed that Flintor and Princess Crystalia were both fixedly gazing at something or someone behind him.

Furrowing his brows, Orion turned around to see what had captured their attention.

Chapter 426 Queen Selene's Request

Suddenly, he spotted the Queen standing behind him, her eyes narrowed and fixed directly on him. "My daughter is right, Mr. Orion. Why do you want to start giving people the idea that having children with a foreigner will secure their way out of this mountain?" she questioned, her brow raised. "I don't know where you got this idea, but you need to be cautious with your words. I'm not certain the royal family can protect you if rumours of this start spreading among the Prismerian people."

However, unlike before, Orion didn't appear cautiously subdued.

Instead, he stared directly at Queen Selene, their gazes locking, and replied, "Don't worry about me. If push comes to shove, I'm very confident I can protect myself."

He gulped down the fruit wine, no longer bothering to sip it slowly, and then placed the glass cup back on the table.

Instantly, Queen Selene also seemed to have noticed a change in Orion. Unlike before, the young man in front of her appeared much less tense than he had been during their previous interactions.

Of course, he still maintained a cautious composure, which she could easily discern, but compared to before, she sensed something different about him.

'Maybe he's finally becoming more comfortable after letting off some steam,' Queen Selene thought.

She speculated that after defeating the other Clan heirs, Orion must have released some of his pent-up stress. She also couldn't help but wonder if her husband's speech about revoking the other Clan Heirs' promises if they failed to uphold their promises had played a role in making him more at ease around them. 'Good, good... Bringing him to this banquet was not a bad idea, after all.'

Queen Selene withdrew her gaze from Orion and directed it toward her daughter and her personal guard.

"Excuse us for now; I would like to speak with our guests alone," she said.

Without the need for further discussion, Princess Crystalia and Flintor immediately nodded in understanding and walked away. She swiftly joined a group of people her age who appeared to be from some of the minor clans, and they warmly welcomed her into their circle.

Meanwhile, Zephyrion, who had been lurking in the crowd, couldn't help but grimace at the scene. While it was true that he had initially approached Princess Crystalia with ulterior motives, he couldn't deny that he had developed genuine feelings for the free-spirited woman over the years.

Therefore, when he heard Orion casually suggest that they should have babies together as a means to test if they could escape the mountain, even though he had briefly considered the idea before dismissing it, he couldn't contain his anger, which surged beyond its limits upon hearing such words.

Yes, it was anger, but at least anger showed that he cared for her.

Nevertheless, after witnessing the Queen approaching the trio, Zephyrion also turned and left, blending into the crowd. He didn't want to eavesdrop or linger any longer, as there was a higher chance of him getting caught by Queen Selene.

"Anyway, how are your injuries?" Queen Selene asked.

"I wasn't seriously injured, so I think I'm fine," Orion responded.

Though he couldn't help but wonder why the Queen had suddenly approached him, he thought it must have something to do with the previous fight.

Queen Selene nodded in understanding. "Have you thought about your wishes? Have you considered what to ask from them?" She asked.

"Not yet," Orion responded.

A glint passed through Queen Selene's eyes. She cleared her throat and suddenly said, "Since you haven't yet thought about anything, the royal family would be extremely pleased if you could assist us with just a few of them." Noting his surprised expression, she continued, "Although I would have preferred to wait until we return to the castle and speak with you in private, the sooner we discuss it, the better."

Orion furrowed his brows at the Queen's words. Although he hadn't planned to ask for anything too outrageous, since he was still in enemy territory, that didn't mean he couldn't make his life much more enjoyable while he was here.

Having beautiful companions from each clan and a more comfortable place to call home were requests he was confident the Major Clans would readily grant. Considering his modest requests, he was sure that they would be grateful he didn't ask for more, and it would be foolish for them to renege on their promises.

As for the wealth, he was curious about the specifics of their barter system and looked forward to finding out.

What? Did you think he would ask for something extravagant?

Even genies have limits, so it would be unwise to assume that a trapped race fighting for their survival wouldn't!

Also, after observing Maya's transformative staff and Merida's impressive sword, Orion had indeed considered requesting a few weapons for himself.

However, he wasn't sure if the promises made would be enough to satisfy his desires. When it came to the idea of giving them to the royal family, Orion wasn't naive enough to miss the subtle implications of Queen Selene's choice of words.

Queen Selene scrutinized Orion as he delved deep into contemplation. After a few moments, Orion looked at her and replied, "I don't believe I can provide you with an answer at this moment, Queen Selene. How about we discuss it once we return to the castle?"

Queen Selene gazed at Orion, a perplexed and dumbfounded expression crossing her features. She couldn't discern whether he was joking with his response.

She had assumed he would readily assist the royal family given his current circumstances, but it appeared she had made a mistake.

'Hmm, he does seem unusually confident,' Queen Selene mused, furrowing her brows slightly. She considered whether his newfound confidence was a result of the promises made by the young clan heirs.

Regrettably, if he believed that those promises alone were sufficient to bolster his position in the Prismerian kingdom, he was gravely mistaken.

"Alright, I'll await your decision once we return to the castle. Enjoy the remainder of the banquet, Mr Orion,"? Queen Selene remarked, taking a glass of fruity wine in her grasp before turning on her heel and departing.

Chapter 427 Merida's Decision

After Queen Selene's departure, Orion's encounters grew sparse, limited to occasional run-ins with Conrad and the various Clan Heirs who had seemingly made a swift recovery in time for the closing banquet. He hadn't spotted Maya or Merida, or he would have certainly engaged with them.

Deciding to enjoy the remaining moments of the banquet, Orion immersed himself in the festivities until its conclusion. The King and Queen delivered their speeches, and as the event came to an end, Orion joined the royal family in exiting the grand hall, as a special guest of the royal family.

As they proceeded toward the exit, where their carriage awaited, Orion was suddenly hailed from behind by a familiar voice.

"Wait a minute!"

Orion spun around, his curiosity piqued as he observed Merida sprinting in his direction.

Meanwhile, the royal family had also pivoted to see the commotion. Upon recognizing Merida, Queen Selene quipped, "It seems you have acquired a stalker. We'll be in the carriage waiting for you." With that, she and the rest of the royal family resumed their path, leaving only Princess Crystalia and Flintor casting a few lingering glances behind.

As Merida drew closer, Orion took a few steps toward her, curious to discover the reason for her call.

Merida took a deep, steadying breath as she regained her composure. She inclined her head respectfully toward Orion and said, "I'm glad I made it in time before you left."

Orion nodded and observed her in her new dress, which still exuded the same allure as the previous one. "So, what's on your mind? As you can see, it wouldn't be wise to keep the royal family waiting," he remarked, getting straight to the point.

Merida nodded in understanding and didn't beat around the bush. She explained her reason for seeking him out, "I wanted to inform you that I'll be heading to the castle first thing tomorrow to fulfil the promises I made, considering that I..." She trailed off, her thoughts drifting to her painful defeat.

With a sigh and a rueful smile, she continued, "...Considering I lost the fight."

Despite her initial distress at having lost to someone who appeared no older than herself, and the further blow to her pride that he had bested both her and the Prismaflow twins simultaneously in a crushing defeat, Merida had come to a stark realization.

It wasn't just that they were weaker compared to him; in comparison, he had showcased himself as the true monster.

Therefore, instead of wallowing in shame for losing to a young foreigner from beyond the mountain, Merida felt a renewed determination to face him.

With this resolve, she hastily departed from the room that the Quartzwraith Clan had arranged for her recovery. Merida hurriedly made her way to catch up with Orion upon hearing that the banquet had concluded.

Orion was a bit surprised by the swiftness of her decision. He had anticipated that they would make their way to the castle a few days later, once the commotion had died down.

After all, while the general Prismerian population might remain oblivious to the events in the grand amphitheatre, it was unlikely that those who had been present wouldn't share their experiences among themselves.

However, seeing that Merida still wanted to speak, Orion waited for her to finish.

"I..." Merida began, her voice trembling with uncertainty. She paused, as if struggling to find the right words. Orion watched her with curiosity, wondering what she was about to say.

Then, unexpectedly, she lowered her head and bowed before him.

"Please," she begged, her voice earnest, "I am certain that my sister will want to join me in fulfilling the promises we made due to her competitive nature. However, I would greatly appreciate it if you could decline her request to become your wife." Merida didn't mind having a competitive sister; it often drove her to achieve more. But in this particular situation, she feared that her sister might act irrationally and try to outdo her upon learning that she was going to the castle to fulfil the agreement with Orion.

"I also hope that you would allow me to take her place according to our agreement," Merida said. She had hesitated to bring up this proposal before, feeling irritated by it, but now it seemed like her only option.

Orion furrowed his brow slightly at her request, but he quickly grasped her intention. "That means you're willing to take her place," he clarified.

"Yes," Merida nodded firmly, straightening her posture. "And, as I mentioned earlier, you don't need to worry about me failing to uphold this agreement. Unlike my sister, I have a say in my own decisions. Furthermore, if my clan had any doubts about it before, I'm certain they won't now, not after the King's statement. It's either this or the risk of our clan's heirs losing the opportunity to obtain the throne."

The only question remained whether the man in front of her would accept...

"Alright," Orion interrupted her thoughts, nodding his head in agreement.

He had sensed Merida's willingness to fulfil the agreement, even if it was due to circumstances. Furthermore, he saw her as sensible and caring, especially considering she was putting herself ahead of her sister. Orion had little doubt that she would fit well among the women in his village.

Merida's eyes widened in surprise as she swallowed nervously, asking, "Are you sure?" just to confirm that she had heard him correctly.

"Of course, I am," Orion affirmed. "Since you appear more than willing to be my wife, unlike your sister, and considering she seems like more trouble than she's worth, I see no reason to back out of the agreement we made."

While she nearly twitched her eyes in annoyance at his words, Merida managed to convey her gratitude.

"Thank you," she said. "I will be sure to come to the castle tomorrow so that we can discuss further how the marriage will take place." She bowed her head in relief and happiness.

Chapter 428 The Matchmaker

"One more thing," Orion added, causing Merida to cautiously raise her head, her curiosity piqued. She awaited his next words with a sense of anticipation.

"I need something that will guarantee you'll keep your promise and not break it," he continued.

Merida's eyes sparkled with realization. She released a deep sigh and nodded in understanding.

Slowly, she reached for the waistband of her panties, attempting to pull them down.

However, before she could complete the action, Orion immediately caught her hand, holding it firmly in his grasp. Merida raised her head, a puzzled expression on her face, as she looked at him.

"Not that," Orion sighed. Since she was going to become his wife soon, he had no use for her panties when he could have the real thing.

He cleared his throat slightly and raised his other hand to gently touch the side of her lips.

"Where I come from, when two people promise to get married in the future, they seal the pact with a kiss to become each other's spouses," Orion explained.

He watched as Merida's eyes lit up, and she immediately nodded in understanding. Before Orion could take the lead, Merida boldly stepped forward and pressed her lips against his.

Orion's eyes widened immediately at the sudden and unexpected kiss before he slowly embraced the soft touch of her lips. Sensing that she might pull away too soon, Orion, unwilling to end the kiss prematurely, wrapped his hand around her waist and drew her closer to his chest.

"Hhhmm!" Merida initially tried to break free, noticing that other guests were slowly making their way out of the grand hall.

However, realizing she couldn't resist Orion's strength, she decided to go along with it.

She parted her lips and began to gently respond to his kisses. Although she was a bit inexperienced, she allowed Orion to take the lead, following his actions with growing enthusiasm.

Orion, however, seized the opportunity to slide his hands under the little dress at her hip level and grasped a handful of her petite perky ass.

The sensation of touching the fabric of her panties, along with the softness of her charming buttocks, tempted him to explore further. But Orion was aware that time was limited, so after indulging in the feeling for a moment, he retracted his hands, releasing Merida from his embrace. She slowly pulled back her head and took deep, rapid breaths.

Seeing her bewildered expression, Orion, whose skills were honed to perfection through his interactions with his wives, could easily discern what was going on in her mind.

He leaned in gently towards her ear and whispered, "Don't worry. Tomorrow, I'll make you my wife, and you'll get to enjoy this experience to the fullest."

Meanwhile, Merida couldn't help but stare at Orion, utterly dumbfounded, as various thoughts raced through her mind.

'Are men supposed to be this assertive?' Merida wondered as Orion withdrew his lips from her ear. His actions had taken her by surprise because of his overwhelming dominance.

'Are people from outside the mountain really so different from us?' Merida pondered once more.

She began to reevaluate her previous thoughts about Orion to ensure she truly understood the kind of man she would be marrying.

Orion leaned in once more and kissed Merida on the cheek, pulling her out of her daze.

He whispered, "See you tomorrow," then turned and headed towards the royal carriage waiting for his departure.

Meanwhile, onlookers who had paused to witness their intimate interaction couldn't help but whisper to each other in surprise about the scene they had just witnessed.

Hearing their murmurs, Orion realized that, unlike in his village, a kiss held a similar significance, if not exactly the same, as it did in his former world.

He had already confirmed this when he kissed Elysia and expertly turned the tables when she attempted to take him forcefully. Now, seeing the same reaction from Merida only solidified this idea in his mind.

Soon, he arrived at the carriage, where the coachman professionally opened the door for him and closed it securely after he had entered. Orion settled himself comfortably in a seat opposite the king and queen.

"So, what did the Luminaris clan's eldest heiress want to talk to you about?" Queen Selene asked, her curiosity evident.

"It was about the agreement," Orion responded, his tone earnest.

"Oh! Did she want you to annul it in exchange for something else, or perhaps threaten you?" Queen Selene asked, her eyes narrowing as she awaited Orion's response.

"No," Orion shook his head in response. "She did none of that. She wanted me to keep to our initial agreement, which was that if I won, then I would leave her sister and only take her as a wife," he explained.

Queen Selene nodded in understanding. "And what was your response? Did you agree to it? Remember, you can still have the second heiress of the Luminaris Clan become your wife if you wish to because you are not breaking any agreement since you also won against her," Queen Selene pointed out.

While Orion was taken aback by the woman's unexpected matchmaking efforts involving another clan's heir, he quickly discerned her ulterior motive. This appeared to be her opportunity to eliminate one of the clan heirs and expand the reach of the Crystalforge Clan.

"I believe it would be more complicated if I insisted on marrying Maya Luminous. So, I've decided to stay with Merida and further develop our relationship in the future," Orion responded.

While King Brylon idly listened to the conversation between Orion and his wife, his thoughts wandered to the various affairs he would have to handle upon returning to the castle. On the other hand, Queen Selene's lips pursed slightly upon hearing Orion's response.

Just a few hours ago, she had thought that he wanted to marry both heiresses of the Luminaris clan, but it seemed that this was not the case.

Nevertheless, she nodded quietly in understanding to avoid making her intentions too obvious.

Chapter 429 The Descendants of the Forgotten Clans

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Observing the Queen's silence, Orion patiently awaited the carriage's arrival at the castle, eager to check on Saria and ensure her well-being.

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The Luminaris Clan

"Clan Leader Garnet, receiving your letter yesterday was quite unexpected, and I must admit, I didn't anticipate you'd be so eager to speak with me during this banquet," Owen Luminous, the Clan Head of the Luminaris Clan, remarked.

He exchanged a smile with his wife, Clan Mistress Meala Luminous, as they settled into their opulent crystal chairs, their gaze fixed on Garnet seated across from them.

"After witnessing the events of today's banquet, I surmised that a quick conversation with you, Clan Leader Owen, would be wise," Garnet replied, a knowing smile gracing his lips.

As Garnet spoke those words, Clan Head Owen and Clan Mistress Meala's expressions turned notably solemn.

Meala cast her gaze toward the empty space beside Garnet, a curious expression on her face. Her eyes then returned to him as she asked, "And where is Clan Mistress Elara? I find it hard to believe she would miss such an important discussion."

Having known Elara for years and understanding her assertive nature when it came to managing clan affairs, Meala couldn't fathom her absence from such a critical meeting.

Garnet cleared his throat and offered a bright smile. "Clan Mistress Elara has decided to embrace a more carefree lifestyle lately. She's entrusted me with the Clan's affairs, so there's no need to worry; she's perfectly fine," Garnet replied.

Lately, he had been striving to prove himself and demonstrate to his wife that he could capably handle the clan's crucial matters.

His success had been evident, and he recalled how she had wished him good luck and cautioned him to be cautious when he'd mentioned his impending visit to the Luminaris clan immediately before the banquet had concluded.

Clan Mistress Meala nodded thoughtfully as she reclined in the exquisitely designed chair. She couldn't help but consider the possibility of leading a carefree life akin to Elara's. After all, her husband had proven himself more than capable of handling the clan's crucial affairs, if not even more so than her.

With these thoughts in her mind, she cast a glance at her husband, who was about to speak.

"Alright, Garnet. So, what's this important matter that prompted you to pull us away from the banquet?" Owen inquired.

Garnet didn't waste any time getting to the point. A serious expression settled upon his face as he spoke, "The descendants of the forgotten clans are planning to ambush the royal carriages on their way back to the castle."

The news left Clan Head Owen and Clan Mistress Meala wide-eyed with shock.

"This... Thi..." Owen stammered, temporarily lost for words. He quickly regained his composure and fixed a serious gaze on Garnet.

"How many?" he asked solemnly.

The severity of the attack on the royal carriages depended entirely on the number of descendants of the forgotten clans involved. If it were just a dozen, it might be seen as a group of disgruntled Prismarians venting their anger at the royal family.

However, if their numbers swelled to five dozen, it would be viewed as an attempted assassination. In such a case, the descendants would be apprehended and brought back to the castle for questioning.

Anyone capable of rallying these descendants, who had lost their stable foundations but still possessed a rich background, couldn't be an ordinary individual. Owen was certain that the royal family would delve deep into this matter to uncover the mastermind, and that could lead to future complications.

Garnet casually reached for a glass filled with tangy, freshly squeezed fruit juice. He took a light sip before calmly stating, "Two hundred."

Hisss!!

Clan Leader Owen and Clan Mistress Meala sucked in sharp breaths, their eyes widening in shock.

"Don't tell me that you are responsible for this?" This time, it was Meala who spoke, her voice carrying a tone of disbelief. Forget labelling this as an assassination attempt; this could very well be the beginning of a full-scale rebellion.

"Do you have any idea, Garnet, how incredibly risky this is?" Owen's voice crackled with anger.

He leaned forward, his eyes locked onto Garnet's. "If the Queen discovers your involvement, even the protection of the Gemheart Clan won't shield you from the consequences of this atrocity. The Luminaris Clan also won't be able to save you," he warned, interrupting his wife before she could continue speaking.

"Of course, I am aware of that," Garnet responded, fixing his gaze intently on Owen and Meala.

"I was well aware of the risks when I gathered the two hundred descendants of the forgotten clans, so you don't have to worry. In fact, to ensure that everything goes smoothly, two specially trained undercover divisions of the Gemheart clan have been dispatched to assist in the ambush and guarantee its success," he added.

Every clan had their own secretly trained warriors, who, though not necessarily stronger than the Clan Heads of their respective clans, were still formidable.

These specially trained elite divisions played a crucial role in determining the overall strength of each Major Clan. Without them, the clans would be like grand buildings with barren interiors.

As such, when Owen heard that Garnet had also dispatched two elite divisions from the Garnet Clan, he became dumbfounded almost immediately and couldn't help but scrutinize Garnet once more.

Nevertheless, Owen shook his head in confusion and asked, "I don't get it, why are you in such a rush?" His gaze remained fixed on Garnet. "If we wait until we receive news from the Crystalforge Clan that we can all find our way out of here with that young man's help..."

"Because we don't have enough time," Garnet interrupted. "The garden is dying, which means the fruit we eat and the gems we use to grow our strength are diminishing day by day. We are still trapped in this mountain with nowhere to go, and we have a bloodthirsty god looming over us like a plague, a curse that has haunted us for generations."

Chapter 430 The Descendants of the Forgotten Clans (2)

"Now, with the sudden arrival of a foreigner from outside the mountain, we can't afford to wait idly and pray to Naka, a god who has forsaken us...."

"Clan Leader Garnet..." Owen attempted to interject, but Garnet promptly interrupted and continued.

"Clan Leader Owen, I'm merely suggesting that for the survival of our clans and the potential escape from this mountain, it might not be wise to entrust the control of the bridge in and out of this mountain solely to the Crystalforge clan," Garnet explained, his tone calming.

He had spoken with such energy that his words and emotions had nearly blended together.

"Furthermore, in case our escape plan doesn't work, the next logical step to resolve this crisis is to reduce our numbers. But since the Crystalforge clan insists on endless mining to provide homes for a population that's already facing its demise, I believe that if the ambush goes as planned, we might find a resolution to sixty per cent of our problems."

Observing Garnet's unwavering confidence in the success of the ambush, Owen felt a twinge of curiosity about the individuals Garnet had dispatched for this operation.

However, Owen understood the importance of not delving into the affairs and strengths of another clan, so he turned to his wife instead.

As he looked at her, he noticed the bewilderment mirrored in her expression.

Realizing she might be as puzzled as he was, Owen decided not to press her for her thoughts on the matter. He redirected his attention back to Garnet.

Owen raised a valid concern. "And what if you fail? What's your plan if the King or Queen traces this back to the Gemheart Clan? Given the existing tension between our clan and the Crystalforge Clan, it wouldn't be wise for the Luminaris Clan to suddenly get entangled in such an issue," he pointed out.

After all, among the five Major Clans, only the Prismaflow Clan and the Crystalforge Clan posed significant obstacles to their claim to the throne this time. It wouldn't make sense for them to jump into the fray instead of observing from a distance to see how events unfold.

Garnet, however, remained confident. "Don't worry, I won't fail," he reassured Owen.

Meala, concerned about the plan's repercussions, chimed in with a question of her own. "Does Clan Mistress Elara know about this plan?" She fixed her gaze on Garnet, awaiting his response.

"She knows, but not everything," Garnet replied to Meala, addressing her concerns. "As I mentioned earlier, my wife has chosen to entrust the clan's affairs to me and live a carefree life. She's well aware of my capabilities and trusts me completely, so there's no need to worry."

He then turned his attention back to Owen and continued, "While it's unfortunate that we can't dive right into planning our next steps, I thought it best to inform you about this in advance, given the close relationship between our clans. Rest assured, once everything is settled, I'll send you a letter to discuss how we can continue our association with the Luminaris Clan."

"If you'll excuse me, Clan Leader Owen and Clan Mistress Meala, I must take my leave. I need to ensure I arrive on time to gather information about how everything unfolds."

With that, Garnet stood up from his seat, as though preparing to leave.

Owen and Meala promptly stood up and escorted Garnet to the exit. A servant was summoned to lead him to his awaiting carriage. After he had departed, the couple settled back into their seats, reflecting on their conversation.

They couldn't help but ponder the imaginable uproar that lay ahead. Fortunately, they had received this information in advance, giving them some time to brace themselves for what might come.

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After a few minutes of waiting idly in the carriage, Orion decided to seize the opportunity to inquire about the kingdom. He had been cautious about every move he made, but after his conversation with Clan Mistress Olivia, he made an effort to be more transparent in his intentions.

Orion cleared his throat to get their attention. "Ahem," he began, "I've been meaning to ask something."

Queen Selene raised an eyebrow and replied, "Go on, what is it you want to ask?"

Orion nodded and continued, "I was wondering if the Prismerian Kingdom has tried any other methods to escape from this mountain, aside from praying and seeking forgiveness from Naka."

Queen Selene initially frowned at his question but then nodded her head, responding, "Apart from futile attempts to dig through the mountains or break down its inner walls to reach the outside, which proved endless and impossible, we also made several efforts to defeat the White Flame."

"Unfortunately, these attempts led to the near-extinction of the Prismerions, an event now known as the 'Three Great Slaughters', a memory that every Prismerion in the kingdom wishes to forget." She sighed with emotion as she spoke.

Continuing, she said, "Our last option is to continue searching for a way out through the upper section of the mountain. However, this mountain seems to react to our intentions, making it difficult to escape. At the moment, your presence and our prayers to Naka are our only hopes for escaping this mountain."

She concluded her statement with a hopeful smile, anticipating that Orion's question might lead to further information sharing about the outside world.

Orion nodded in understanding and appeared to take a few moments to absorb Queen Selene's words.

Then, he refocused his gaze on her and asked abruptly, "Your Highness, I really want to know what the Prismerions did to warrant such punishment from Naka."

Queen Selene's and King Brylon's eyes widened momentarily, surprised by Orion's sudden and direct question. Nevertheless, given that they hadn't hidden the fact of their punishment by Naka from him, they expected such a question to arise sooner or later.

After a brief silence, King Brylon let out a long, weary sigh and shifted his attention elsewhere, seeing that his wife intended to answer the question herself.

As Queen Selene began to respond, a loud explosion echoed outside the carriage, accompanied by a resounding "BAAANNGGG!!"