

Village Head 471

Chapter 471 The Sacred Union

"No, Your Highness, we haven't detected any unusual activity from the Clan Mistress of the Gemheart Clan," the leader of the Runeblade Reavers responded.

Queen Selene nodded in acknowledgement. "Very well, if she doesn't respond or take any actions to indicate her willingness to cooperate by the end of tomorrow, you may proceed with his execution," she instructed.

"I understand your highness."

"Furthermore, ensure that nothing disrupts the events scheduled for tomorrow. Everything must proceed seamlessly, as it concerns the future of the kingdom," Queen Selene added.

"Of course, Your Highness, I will ensure it," the cloaked figure responded. Suddenly, it appeared as if an invisible force was stretching and pulling its form from every direction.

Then, the figure disintegrated within the room, its cloak dispersing as if ripped apart, before completely vanishing into thin air.

.....

"Is this how it's done?" Orion asked, his posture lowered as he knelt on the bed between Merida's widely parted legs.

His gaze was fixed on the beauty before him, as Merida nodded in response. He shifted his attention downward to the shimmering silvery gem nestled just above her crotch.

Inhaling deeply, Orion pressed his bleeding thumb upon her jewel and only withdrew it once the entire surface had been bathed in his blood.

A radiant burst of light erupted from it, casting a fascinating phenomenon. Orion was entranced as he watched his blood flow deep into the gem.

Merida couldn't help but release a soft moan before she squeezed her thighs together, sensually rubbing them against each other.

Gradually, the intense light emanating from the gem diminished until it vanished suddenly, leaving behind only a tiny drop of blood deeply ensconced within the jewel.

Orion couldn't resist the temptation to extend his hand, letting his fingers gently graze the surface of the gem. His touch prompted another alluring moan from Merida, forcing her to bite her lip to stifle her desires.

"Don't touch it; it's still sensitive," Merida softly warned as she gazed at Orion.

"It's my turn," Maya immediately chimed in, her words causing Merida to cast a sidelong glance at her while inwardly releasing a deep sigh. Throughout the day, she had tried to convince her sister to reconsider, but the more she attempted, the more Maya seemed determined to honour her part of the agreement.

In their current situation, Merida realized there was little she could do to change the course of events. Once Orion's blood touched her gem, the marriage was sealed, unless Maya herself decided to intervene. However, it seemed unlikely that Maya would take such a step.

Observing Maya's eager demeanour, Orion nodded. He then shifted to position himself between Maya's legs, crossing over their legs.

With a bloodied thumb, he pressed it against Maya's gem, staining it with his blood.

Maya's gem reacted similarly, emitting a bright light that vanished abruptly, leaving Orion's blood embedded deep within it. A soft, involuntary moan escaped her lips.

Observing the two girls, who now gazed at him with dazed expressions, Orion finally decided to ask, "So, are you finally going to tell me why we have to perform this ritual?"

"It's to bind us to one another and identify as husband and wife, normally," Maya explained.

"Normally, I would have done the same for you if you had a gem, but I don't think there should be any problems as long as either of our gems is stained with our blood."

Orion nodded, understanding that it was similar to traditional marriage vows. Turning his head to look at Merida, he noticed the defeated expression on her face. Inwardly, he gestured for them to make space for him in the centre. He then collapsed face-first, lying down with his back between the two of them. Stretching his arms wide, he hugged them tightly. He watched as they snuggled between his arms and closed their eyes, eventually drifting off to sleep himself, resting his body for the trial at the Garden tomorrow.

.....

As the streets of the Prismerian Kingdom began to fill with more and more people awakening from their sleep, preparing for their daily routines and trade, a significant increase in the number of guards patrolling the area caught the attention of the citizens.

"Hey, aren't those the royal guards?"

"Yes, they are. But what's going on? I can't recall the last time I saw them patrolling the streets in such force. Did something occur?"

"Shhh! Haven't you heard about the recent incident?"

"What incident?"

A flurry of gossip spread like wildfire as the crowd paused to observe the growing presence of royal guards stationed at every street corner. People craned their necks and strained their ears, eager to discern the reason behind this unusual situation.

The volume of the various speculations grew louder and more distinct as a larger crowd assembled to witness the unfolding scene.

"I heard that the descendants of forgotten clans ambushed the royal carriages on their way back to the castle. Not only that, they managed to slay every last royal guard protecting the convoy. The Gemheart Clan seized the opportunity to attack as well, almost claiming the lives of the queen and her family. Thankfully, the royal family's secret warriors intervened and wiped out the attackers," revealed an elderly man who had traversed the battle-scarred road on his journey from the Quaztrwraith clan.

He had overheard fragments of information and, now, with narrowed eyes, he recounted the grim details to the crowd. "It seems the royal family and the Crystalforge Clan are gearing up for war," he concluded, prompting gasps of shock from the gathered onlookers.

War! When was the last time the Prismerian Kingdom witnessed such a thing?

A war between the two major clans – doesn't that imply the other major clans will be involuntarily dragged into this conflict?

Were they about to be caught in the crossfire between the major clans?

As the thoughts of passersby glanced from one conclusion to another and some began questioning the credibility of the news they'd heard, a loud noise suddenly pierced the air, seizing everyone's attention.

Chapter 472 Preparation For War

"THIS IS A DECREE FROM THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE PRISMERIAN KINGDOM, SO EVERYONE, PAY CLOSE ATTENTION!" A royal guard, clad in superior-quality armour that set him apart from the patrolling guards, took a commanding position at the heart of the street. His thunderous proclamation echoed through the area, while several guards encircled him.

"BECAUSE OF THE AUDACIOUS ATTACK BY THE DESCENDANTS OF THE FORGOTTEN CLANS, WHO SOUGHT TO AMBUSH AND ASSASSINATE THE ROYAL FAMILY, ANY INDIVIDUAL FOUND TO BE A DESCENDANT OF THESE FORGOTTEN CLANS, FOLLOWING A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION, WILL FACE PUBLIC EXECUTION. ANYONE DISCOVERED ASSOCIATING WITH THEM WILL MEET THE SAME FATE OR BE INCARCERATED IN THE DUNGEONS FOR LIFE."

"THEREFORE, IF YOU POSSESS ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE DESCENDANTS OF THE FORGOTTEN CLANS, KINDLY SHARE IT WITH THE ROYAL GUARDS TO AVOID IMPLICATION WHEN THEY ARE APPREHENDED. THE ROYAL FAMILY IS COMMITTED TO PURGING THEM FROM THE PRISMERIAN KINGDOM THROUGH ANY MEANS NECESSARY."

"ALSO, IN LIGHT OF THE GEMHEART CLAN'S ATTEMPT TO SEIZE SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSASSINATE THE ROYAL FAMILY, THEY HAVE BEEN DECLARED TRAITORS. THIS MEANS THEY HAVE NO PLACE WITHIN THE PRISMERIAN KINGDOM

ANY LONGER. THEREFORE, THE CRYSTALFORGE CLAN AND THE ROYAL FAMILY DECLARE WAR ON THE GEMHEART CLAN AND ALL THOSE WHO ALIGN WITH THEM."

"CITIZENS OF THE PRISMERIAN KINGDOM, I IMPORE YOU TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR OUR KINGDOM TODAY. WE MUST UNITE TO PREVENT SUCH ATROCITIES FROM OCCURRING AGAIN. IF, BY ANY UNIMAGINABLE CHANCE, THEY HAD SUCCEEDED IN COMMITTING SUCH A HEINOUS ACT, WHO KNOWS WHAT CALAMITY WOULD HAVE BEFALLEN OUR KINGDOM?"

"FOR THE SAKE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, FOR THE SAKE OF THE PRISMERIAN KINGDOM, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR LIVES AND SAFETY, LET US STAND TOGETHER AND USE OUR FULL STRENGTH TO BRING THE DESCENDANTS OF THE FORGOTTEN CLANS AND THE GEMHEART CLAN TO JUSTICE!"

As the royal guard's thunderous proclamation echoed through the air, it jolted every passerby present. The collective roar of the crowd snapped them out of their daze, and with extraordinary fervour, they rallied behind the cause.

There was a shared resolution to purge the Gemheart Clan and rid the kingdom of the descendants of the forgotten clans once and for all.

.....

Garden

Orion, accompanied by Madam Seraphina, gazed in astonishment at the vast crowd that had gathered for the event.

Hadn't the Queen mentioned that the number of participants for the trial would be limited? If that were the case, then why was the turnout so massive that they had effectively encircled the entire lake?

Madam Seraphina, perceiving Orion's confusion, offered an explanation. "Considering the limited activities available within this mountain, the Crystalforge Clan saw this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness the event where one of the select participants would complete the trial and gain the power necessary to challenge the White Flame."

"They extended an invitation to anyone from the Crystalforge clan who wished to witness this memorable occasion firsthand, which is why we see such a large crowd here today," Madam Seraphina explained, her gaze sweeping across the spectators. "In fact, the turnout is even smaller than our expectations, likely due to the coming war; not everyone could attend given the circumstances."

Orion nodded in understanding. He already knew that the Crystalforge Clan was reserving this event primarily for themselves, so the absence of the other clans didn't come as a surprise.

Gazing at the Divine Lake Essence before him, Orion furrowed his brow and asked, "Do you happen to know where the trial is going to take place?" He had meant to pose this question to Princess Crystalia the previous day, but it had slipped his mind as he focused on making sure she was comfortable and no longer feeling aroused.

However, now, with the crowd gathered around the expansive lake, Orion's scepticism began to grow.

"For safety reasons, the location of the trial is kept a secret. However, I was instructed by the Queen to bring you near the lake," Madam Seraphina explained.

She sighed, clearly defeated by the mystery surrounding the event. Then she added, "But considering that everyone is here, it's not far-fetched to assume the trial has something to do with the Divine Lake."

Orion nodded, contemplating the same idea. Saria's words had been on his mind, making him wonder if her suspicion was somehow connected to the trial. Choosing not to dwell on it, as it was impossible to verify his thoughts, Orion pushed the notion aside and turned his attention to the figures approaching behind him, drawing the attention of the crowd.

Seeing that it was the royal family not only Orion, but everyone's attention was also drawn towards them.

The royal family also spotted him, and Madam Seraphina gave them a nod before they were ushered to a designated spot, encircled by a group of white-robed elders.

As the crowd started to part, all eyes were fixed on a particular figure that had made her entrance.

Recognizing her as the Princess of the Garden, Orion observed her briefly. She acknowledged him with a nod before shifting her attention to the vast assembly of onlookers.

"Welcome, everyone, to this special gathering," the Princess of the Garden spoke.

While her tone remained composed, her voice carried throughout the area, ensuring everyone could hear her clearly. "Though there are many things I would like to share with you today, to save time, I will be brief."

Realizing that the Princess of the Garden was about to disclose important details about the upcoming trial, the attendees perked up, their ears attuned to her words.

Simultaneously, those who were seeing the Princess of the Garden for the first time were captivated by her beauty, momentarily distracted by her impending message.

She continued, "I would first like to inform you all that the trial will be held within the divine lake. If you have reason to believe that you cannot withstand the immense magical pressure within the lake, I strongly recommend you reconsider your participation for your own safety."

As soon as the Princess of the Garden announced that the trial would be conducted within the lake, the entire crowd erupted into a frenzied buzz.

Chapter 473 The Trial that Shook the Hearts of the Prismarion Race

Meanwhile, Orion, whose doubts had just been confirmed, couldn't help but raise a brow at the Princess of the Garden's words.

After spending some time with Anara and witnessing her refill the lake with her ancestral essence, he had a good idea of the Divine lake's origin. He suspected that some others might also be aware of this information.

Although he knew that the Divine Lake Essence couldn't be contaminated, he found it a bit unusual.

However, unlike Orion, whose thoughts were focused on the origin of the Divine Lake, the other participants clenched their teeth with determination as they heeded the Princess of the Garden's warning after she revealed that the trial would occur within the Divine Lake.

As elite warriors of the Crystalforge Clan, many of them had already experienced the daunting effects of entering the Divine Lake. They had used it to fortify their bodies and increase the density of their magical energy under the lake's unnatural, crushing force.

Thus, they took the Princess of the Garden's warning seriously.

In fact, some of them had begun to reconsider their participation in the trial upon learning that it would be held within the Divine Lake.

But, despite these doubts and valid concerns, none of them decided to stand by their initial decision.

As the elite of the elites, representing the very best the Crystalforge Clan had to offer, they knew that retreating now would invite ridicule and shame.

Where could they possibly hide their faces after such a withdrawal?

Meanwhile, the royal family and the elders encircling them found themselves embroiled in a discussion.

Elder Auli pondered aloud, "Do you suppose they might resent us for not disclosing the truth to them earlier?" She gestured toward the eerily composed elite warriors of the Crystalforge Clan in the distance. Despite their apparent composure, she sensed that things were not as they seemed.

Their unusual calmness only served to emphasise their true nervousness, and given their standing, it was an indicative sign that they took the Princess of the Garden's words seriously.

Elder Caz let out a derisive snort in response to Elder Auli's concern. He retorted, "What difference would it have made if we had disclosed it earlier?" With a keen eye, he observed the elite warriors encircling the Divine Lake, and he understood the underlying sentiment in Elder Auli's question.

"In fact, divulging that information prematurely might have needlessly burdened them, adding to their stress, which could have been counterproductive to their preparations for the trial."

Elder Cailan chimed in, nodding in agreement. "Indeed, Elder Caz is correct. Sharing such details would have only intensified the pressure on them before the trial. Let us hope they succeed in overcoming the trial and gain the extraordinary power necessary to confront the White Flame."

Elder Hale scoffed at his fellow elders, his gaze momentarily shifting to Princess Crystalia and her personal guard, Flintor. He continued, "You all seem to forget that surviving within the Divine Lake is not a matter of physical strength but of one's soul and will. If it were solely about physical strength, the Princess and her personal guard would not have endured within its depths for so long."

Flintor couldn't help but tense under the intense scrutiny from the council of elders. On the other hand, Princess Crystalia remained composed, her demeanour unfazed by their collective gaze.

The surrounding elders nodded appreciatively, recognizing the Princess's exceptional composure, which matched that of the elite warriors.

However, when their attention shifted to Flintor, who visibly trembled, they couldn't help but feel a sense of disappointment, questioning how he had managed to survive in the Divine Lake and acquire even a fraction of the strange power that could aid in defeating the White Flame.

"Elder Hale has a point," chimed in Elder Amal. "We mustn't forget that sheer physical strength is not the sole factor in this trial. Moreover, there's a possibility that the foreigner may not withstand the lake's challenges, despite his apparent strength."

Elder Amal had been one of the few who had initially opposed Queen Selene's decision to seek the Princess of the Garden's help. However, her reservations weren't rooted in any intention to undermine the Queen or hinder her recovery; rather, her scepticism was based on the origins of the Princess of the Garden. She couldn't fathom why the Princess of the Garden had confined herself within the Garden, avoiding the world outside its confines.

Given these uncertainties, it was only natural for Elder Amal to question the true motives of the Princess of the Garden. In her view, the Princess of the Garden might pose a threat on par with, if not greater than, the other four major clans.

Queen Selene took a deep breath and shook her head with confidence. "While there is a possibility that he might struggle with the challenges of the Divine Lake, I firmly believe he has what it takes to survive." She cast a brief glance at Orion, who stood beside Madam Seraphina on the opposite side of the lake.

Then, she redirected her gaze to the Princess of the Garden, who was preparing to continue her address, waiting for the murmurs in the crowd to subside.

"Regardless of the outcome, let us observe and discover who succeeds in completing this trial, obtaining the power that not only promises victory against the White Flame but also, hopefully, offers a way to escape this mountain," she concluded.

Her words resonated with the elders who encircled them, prompting unanimous nods of agreement. In the current circumstances, that was the extent of their focus.

"Now that you've understood the situation, all the participants can come forward" The Princess of the Garden continued, stretching her left hand toward the vacant area beside her, inviting the participants to step forward.

One by one, individuals from the crowd began to make their way to this designated space, filling it up gradually as their numbers swelled. Onlookers accommodated the expanding group by shifting aside.

Orion, standing on the opposite side and not yet among the participants, observed as some of those who joined the group wore beautifully strange masks that clung to their faces, lending an air of mystery. Others chose not to don masks and instead gazed intently, their attention fixed primarily on the Divine Lake below.

Chapter 474 The Trial that Shook the Hearts of the Prismarion Race (2)

"You better go and join the group quickly," Madam Seraphina advised, shifting her attention from the gathering to Orion.

Orion nodded in understanding, preparing to move toward the group. He noticed that both Princess Crystalia and Flintor were also readying themselves to step forward.

However, just as he was about to leave, he looked at Madam Seraphina and said, "Aren't you forgetting to give me something before I go?"

Madam Seraphina furrowed her brows in confusion, wondering what Orion meant.

'Did I promise him something?' she thought. Perplexed by his comment, she awaited an explanation.

Orion tapped his cheeks and continued, "Aren't you going to give me a good luck kiss?"

Madam Seraphina's eyes widened as she was taken by surprise, but she quickly composed herself under Orion's playful gaze. Knowing that he was still waiting for her, she discreetly glanced around to make sure that no one was watching before she brought her lips down to plant a brief peck on his cheek.

Orion, however, seized the opportunity to give her soft-clothed buttocks a light, reassuring squeeze before turning around and hurrying to join the group.

Madam Seraphina wore a slightly pouting expression as she watched him leave.

As Orion moved forward with a broad smile on his face, he drew the attention of numerous onlookers who pointed and murmured about the foreigner from outside the mountain.

He was aware that they had recognized him, but he paid little mind to their curious glances as he reached the group and took his place. Orion exchanged waves with Princess Crystalia and Flintor, and when he spotted Iris in the distance, he waved to her as well.

Princess Crystalia, however, couldn't help but furrow her brows in confusion at Orion's cheerful demeanour. Apart from his apparent lack of seriousness about the upcoming trial, she was puzzled by why he was eyeing the Divine Lake with an expression that suggested he was eager to take a dive.

'Is he that confident?' Princess Crystalia wondered.

She wasn't concerned about her and Flintor's ability to withstand the dense divine magical energy within the lake, as they had done before. Her curiosity lay in whether Orion could achieve the same feat.

This sentiment wasn't limited to her alone; even the elders, the king, and the queen wore furrowed brows and curious expressions, while others pondered the situation deeply.

However, as the trial was about to commence, they all fell silent and watched intently.

The Princess of the Garden surveyed the group and counted approximately two hundred and fifty participants. She sensed a faint magical aura from less than half of the group, leading her to suspect that the Crystalforge Clan might have hesitated to use their entire elite warrior force due to the ongoing war in the kingdom.

Naturally, she could empathize with their dilemma, but she considered their decision profoundly foolish, especially given that this might be their sole opportunity to leave the mountain.

The Princess of the Garden directed her attention to the participants and stated, "The guardians have decided to accompany each of you into the Divine Lake to monitor your progress and retrieve the bodies of those who are unable to continue after entering the Divine Lake."

Witnessing several of them display surprise followed by relief, the Princess of the Garden narrowed her eyes at them and clarified, "Please do not misunderstand. The guardians are not there to take care of you; instead, they are ensuring that your deceased bodies do not defile the Divine Lake. So, don't worry, if you fail to proceed or, better yet, survive being submerged in the Divine Lake, your bodies will be returned to the surface."

Several sighs of resignation escaped the participants as they nodded in understanding, observing the guardians of the garden flying towards them and hovering nearby. At least they could take solace in the prospect of a proper burial should they fail.

In due course, all 250 participants had a guardian assigned to them, who floated closely to monitor their actions. With everything prepared, the Princess of the Garden's gaze briefly settled on Orion, who appeared to be having trouble with the guardian accompanying him.

She shook her head and muttered under her breath, "Forget it."

Then, she refocused her attention on the assembled participants and declared, "You may begin!"

As the Princess of the Garden's words ended, the participants, one by one, submerged into the Divine Lake, creating a distinct resounding splash as about two hundred and fifty individuals dived into its waters, each accompanied by their guardian.

After a few minutes, all the participants had submerged themselves within the Divine Lake, leaving the spectators in silence, their collective breaths held, eagerly anticipating which one among them would obtain the strange power to defeat the White Flame.

"Five feet!"

"Ten feet!"

"Twenty feet!"

The voice of the Princess of the Garden rang out, and the spectators quickly understood that she was announcing the depths reached by the participants within the Divine Lake.

"Twenty-two feet!"

Just as the Princess of the Garden was about to continue, around ten convulsing bodies were catapulted from the Divine Lake to the position where the participants had originally gathered. Their bodies trembled involuntarily, veins expanded to the point of looking as though they might rupture, and their faces turned deathly pale, as if they were on the brink of death.

The spectators, who were well aware of the trial's difficult nature, were forcefully reminded of its ruthlessness.

Even Queen Selene couldn't help but clutch the corner of her gown tightly, her knuckles white as she witnessed more and more participants being expelled from the lake, left to grapple with a desperate fight for their lives.

"Twenty-five feet!" The Princess of the Garden's cold, uncaring voice resounded through the air once more.

By this point, roughly twenty bodies had already been expelled from the Divine Lake, marking their premature failure in the trial.

The Princess of the Garden merely glanced at them briefly before resuming her announcements.

"Twenty-nine feet!"

Chapter 475 The Trial that Shook the Hearts of the Prismerion Race (3)

"Thirty-eight feet!"

"Forty feet!"

....

Meanwhile, within the Divine Lake, approximately two hundred and thirty individuals were still descending towards the lake's depths.

Orion relished in the sensation of his body being revitalized as the Divine Lake enveloped his skin, leaving him feeling invigorated.

As he had anticipated, submerging himself in the Divine Lake felt much like immersing in the ancestral essence of the tree nymph, with the only difference being that his body experienced a gentle, soothing massage as numerous subtle vibrations emanated from both outside and within him.

Stretching his arms wide as he continued to comfortably hold his breath, Orion turned his head to glance at the extremely elderly pixie who had accompanied him into the Divine Lake.

He couldn't help but wonder how the old man would rescue him if something were to go awry before he began to ponder about reconciling with the resentful pixies after the trial. He then shifted his attention to the other participants following behind him.

Observing that there were still a few hundred individuals lagging far behind, appearing on the verge of collapse as they painstakingly progressed through the Divine lake, Orion cast his gaze to the side. He noticed two more participants being hauled out of the Divine Lake by the Guardians just as their bodies teetered on the brink of succumbing to the Divine Lake's intense pressure.

Turning his gaze away, Orion fixed his eyes on the few individuals ahead of him who were swiftly swimming towards his position.

As expected, the foremost figure was Princess Crystalia, with Flintor following closely behind.

Upon scanning the area further, he spotted Iris, who was swimming alongside the rest of the group, making their way to this depth despite the challenge.

Simultaneously, as Orion observed them in their descent into the Divine Lake, they were also observing him, their eyes widening as they watched him glide through the lake, seemingly impervious to the crushing pressure they were all experiencing.

In fact, some began to entertain the fleeting idea that Orion might possess an artefact or technique to endure the Divine Lake's unnatural pressure.

However, this idea was swiftly dismissed as they remembered his identity, focusing once more on their descent into the Divine lake's depths.

'Is he waiting for us?' Princess Crystalia pondered, her brow furrowing.

Her curiosity heightened as Orion came to a halt and turned to face them while floating within the intense pressure of the Divine Lake. Realizing this trial allowed multiple participants, she understood that Orion was patiently waiting for them to catch up.

Thinking about it, even though she felt relieved that Orion was considerate enough to check on their progress, a trace of annoyance lingered in Princess Crystalia's heart as she witnessed the vast difference in their performance.

Suppressing the intense frustration within her, she cast a brief, meaningful glance backwards at Flintor before redirecting her focus downward and accelerating her movements.

Flintor was surprised by the Princess's sudden burst of speed as he tried to understand her unspoken intentions. Nevertheless, he clenched his teeth, pushed through the mounting pressure, and staved off the intruding headache before matching her accelerated pace.

Watching the Princess and her personal guard suddenly accelerate their descent, those behind them gritted their teeth in frustration. They immediately increased their swimming pace in an attempt to catch up.

Even Iris, who was at the rear and struggling against the urge to vomit blood due to the violent turmoil within her body, clenched her teeth and propelled herself downward with perseverance.

Observing over a hundred participants intensify their speed alongside Princess Crystalia and Flintor, Orion couldn't help but raise his brows in surprise.

He was somewhat impressed by their determination, evident in their bulging veins and flushed expressions, as they pushed themselves to their limits.

Regardless, there was nothing he could do but continue swimming downward until they reached the trial, whatever it might be.

Meanwhile, while Orion enjoyed his time within the Divine Lake, casually descending further and further, approximately one hundred and twenty-nine individuals had already been brought out of the pool.

The Princess of the Garden's voice continued to resound loudly in the air.

"Two hundred and twenty-five feet!"

"Three hundred feet!"

After an hour had passed and more depths were announced, the Princess of the Garden focused her attention downward.

She narrowed her eyes as though she was unable to see through the Divine Lake in front of her and examined the lake's bottom. She uttered, "Five hundred feet!" before sealing her lips, signifying to the onlookers that the participants had now reached the bottom of the Divine Lake and were about to commence the real trial.

Everyone understood the meaning, and they held their breath even tighter as their bodies tensed exponentially in anticipation of the trial's outcome. Even Queen Selene clenched her fist until it began to bleed.

No matter what, this trial had to be completed so they could finally escape this mountain.

...

Beneath the Divine Lake...

As Orion's feet touched the lake's bottom, he cast a brief glance at the pixie who had barely managed to keep up. He couldn't help but snort inwardly at the pixie's performance and then shifted his focus to Princess Crystalia, who had also just reached the lake's bottom.

Their gazes met, and without the need for words, they slowly began to survey their surroundings.

Their eyes briefly flitted over numerous plants and fruits at the bottom of the Divine Lake, searching for anything odd or strange that might be related to the trial.

Then Orion's attention was drawn to something peculiar. He spotted a huge hole in the distance and immediately gestured to Princess Crystalia, pointing her in the direction of the hole.

Her eyes widened with surprise, followed by an expression of relief that spread across her face.

Since they had no prior information about the trial, Princess Crystalia had expected that it would take at least an hour, if not more, to locate the trial or anything related to it.

Chapter 476 The Trial that Shook the Hearts of the Prismarion Race (4)

However, to her surprise, they found something within just a few minutes of searching the bottom of the Divine Lake.

Without wasting any time, they both made their way toward the hole. Recognizing that it would still take some time for the others to reach the lake's bottom, they arrived at the edge of the hole and gazed down, their breaths catching at the depth it seemed to reach.

Despite his strength, Orion decided that taking unnecessary risks wasn't necessary.

They both agreed it would be best to wait for the others to arrive, ensuring that they faced whatever challenge lay ahead together.

"Huh!" Orion thought in surprise as he stared at the large hole before him. He could feel a powerful suction force originating from the bottom of the pit. Realizing the danger as the suction force intensified, Orion's eyes widened, and he immediately tried to swim forward while pulling Princess Crystalia, who had also detected the mysterious suction.

However, it was too late. The mysterious suction force rapidly grew stronger, holding them in place momentarily before it surged even more, forcefully dragging them backwards.

Flintor, who had just reached the bottom of the Divine Lake, was alarmed by what he witnessed.

'PRINCESS!' he screamed in his mind as he saw both Orion and Princess Crystalia being drawn into the pit.

Gritting his teeth, he surged forward, realizing that the mysterious suction force was still intensifying.

As he entered the zone of suction, he chose not to resist and was immediately pulled in.

The rest of the participants, having observed their princess and the foreigner being sucked into the enormous hole, hurriedly swam towards its location, and, one by one, they were also drawn into the gaping void.

The pixies, on the other hand, remained in place, observing with reverence, seemingly unaffected by the mysterious suction force.

.....

Within a dark, narrow cave, a water stream emerged from the cave's ceiling, appearing as dense as the Divine Lake but distinctly unique.

It had several threads of white and black light that seemed to float within it.

The stream of water expanded, and both Orion and Princess Crystalia tumbled out of it, landing flat on the ground.

Orion winced uncomfortably as he hadn't anticipated the rough landing. He quickly freed Princess Crystalia from his embrace before slowly sitting up.

"Are you okay?" Princess Crystalia asked with concern in her voice, as Orion had shielded her from the impact since the moment they were drawn into the deep hole.

"Don't worry about it, I'm okay," Orion reassured her. Unexpected as it was, an impact like that wouldn't harm him.

"Where are we?" he asked, surveying the enclosed cave.

The jagged, rough rocks surrounded them, and the cave was illuminated solely by the mysterious threads of black and white light suspended within the water.

"I don't know," Princess Crystalia admitted, shaking her head with concern.

She gazed around the cave, hoping for some clue or familiarity. If only she could remember how she had received the mysterious blessing of the guardians, then perhaps she'd have a better idea of what to do.

Just as she was about to speak again, the water above them expanded once more, and almost instantly, a figure dropped down with a resounding "thud."

Seeing that it was Flintor, they allowed him to rest and recover. However, when they noticed the water expanding again, they immediately pulled him out of harm's way and watched as several figures dropped into the water one by one.

Initially, it wasn't a problem, but as more and more entered the cave, Orion quickly realized they were running out of space.

Orion's mind raced as he pondered what to do, and he decided to explore the surroundings to see if he could find a solution.

However, at that very moment, an ancient voice slowly echoed from the air above them.

"Hmm! Considering that this is your final opportunity to escape this mountain, I must admit that I expected more of you to arrive. But I shouldn't have expected much from such a treacherous race."

Orion and everyone else in the enclosed cave froze in their tracks, their eyes darting around as they tried to locate the source of the voice.

"Who's there? Show yourself!" Orion demanded, his voice echoing loudly through the cave as he scanned the area for any sign of the speaker.

"Hold on, let me clear the walls and make enough space," the ancient voice resonated again.

A slight tremor passed through all of them, and then the rocky and jagged walls vanished, replaced by a vast, expansive rocky plain that seemed to stretch on endlessly.

As they tried to comprehend the sudden transformation, a pair of mysterious eyes materialized in the sky above. These eyes, while human-like in shape, held a mesmerizing, golden hue that captivated their attention.

The ancient, dignified voice echoed once more.

"Treacherous race, do not be afraid, I am merely a wisp of a residual soul left behind by the Aegis of the Arctic Deity that watches over this mountain and trial ground," the ancient voice, with its dignified tone, suddenly paused. Its large eyes narrowed as it fixed its gaze upon them.

While its eyes seemed to be scrutinizing all of them, Orion couldn't shake the feeling that the eyes were locked directly onto him.

Suddenly, it felt as though a violent flood of seemingly endless magical energy had been unleashed from the heavens. Before this overwhelming aura, every person was forced to their knees, unable to bear the immense pressure bearing down on them.

In this challenging moment, Orion stood as the sole individual capable of withstanding such immense magical pressure.

"You! You don't resemble a Prismeron," the dignified voice resounded again. "Who are you? Why are you here?"

Orion felt an intense scrutiny as if his very being were being probed under the piercing gaze.

Despite the immense magical pressure pressing upon him, he refrained from making any sudden moves or activating his gift, sensing an ominous warning within.

Chapter 477 The Trial that Shook the Hearts of the Prismeron Race (5)

Regaining his composure, Orion surveyed the scene around him and observed that everyone present was now kneeling, their eyes reflecting fear and their bodies quivering under the immense magical pressure.

He returned his gaze to the massive, narrowed eyes peering down at him from above.

"You're correct," Orion affirmed with a nod. He drew in a deep breath before continuing, "I am not a Prismeron. I am a human."

As Orion's words reached their conclusion, the intense magical energy that had descended from the heavens abruptly dissipated.

"Human! You're a human? What brings a human to this place?" The ancient dignified voice echoed once more, but this time, it held a tone of astonishment and bewilderment.

"Yes, I am," Orion responded with a firm nod. "I came here for the trial, to obtain the power that can help us defeat the White Flame."

Orion glanced around and felt a sense of relief as the intense magical pressure had dissipated, and everyone was gradually rising to their feet. As he observed the colossal eye identifying itself as the

'Aegis of the Arctic Deity' contemplating his response, he couldn't help but reflect on Saria's strange behaviour when she mentioned a bizarre energy beneath the garden.

It turned out that the untamed and bizarre energy Saria had sensed, which had prompted her unusual behaviour, was associated with a god.

First, the White Flame, a man-made god; and now, he had encountered another god calling itself the Aegis of the Arctic Deity!

Even though he had braced himself for the unexpected, encountering another god so soon was still an unusual surprise.

"Are you sure about this, human?" the ancient voice asked once more. "This is not your trial, and you have no reason to sacrifice yourself for this treacherous race. They are the ones who have brought this punishment upon themselves; thus, they should bear the responsibility for finding their own freedom." The voice carried a tone of warning, yet Orion sensed no malevolence.

In fact, it felt as though the voice was trying to impart a piece of valuable advice.

Nonetheless, Orion had made his decision, and having come this far, he saw no reason to change it.

"Yes, I'm sure about it," Orion responded without hesitation.

He took a deep breath before continuing, "Besides, I won't be able to leave this mountain without finding a way to deal with the White Flame."

"Are you certain, human? If you wish to leave, then I, the Aegis of the Arctic Deity, can make it happen."

Orion was immediately stunned. He looked around and saw that not only he, but everyone around him, was genuinely bewildered, including Princess Crystalia, who appeared as though her jaw was about to drop to the ground.

"Then... Then you can..." Princess Crystalia began, her voice trembling, but the ancient voice promptly interrupted.

"Silence, treacherous race! This proposal does not apply to you!" The ancient voice thundered from above, its gaze now fixed on Princess Crystalia.

Her lips were sealed shut, and she took a step backwards, shivering in fear.

The pair of golden eyes suddenly narrowed, focusing on Princess Crystalia and Flintor, who stood beside her.

Aegis of the Arctic Deity snorted loudly before returning its attention to Orion. "What is your choice, human? Are you willing to leave and gain your freedom, or will you remain here and help this treacherous race attain theirs?"

The ancient voice resounded from above, awaiting Orion's answer with patience.

Orion briefly glanced around, realizing that he had become the centre of everyone's attention.

He observed Princess Crystalia trembling, as though she wanted to say something to him but was too frightened to speak. Flintor appeared tense, and he noticed Iris clenching her fists from a distance, accompanied by the strained expressions of those surrounding him.

A heavy sigh escaped Orion's lips as he focused his gaze on the large pair of golden eyes.

He spoke, "I've already made my choice. I'm willing to stay here and help them gain their freedom. So, please, Aegis of the Arctic Deity, commence the trial, and let us begin."

The moment Orion's words left his mouth, a heavy silence hung among the participants, only to be shattered by a resounding rumble from above.

"Hahaha, very good," the ancient voice began to laugh. "As expected from a human. Even in front of a god, you still stand tall," the laughter gradually subsided. "Regardless, since you have decided to undertake this trial, I have no reason to stop you. However, before we begin, I must warn you that this trial not only tests one's strength but also their will, determination, and heart."

"Although the trial's difficulty remains constant regardless of the number of participants, if you fail to complete it this time, apart from the Prismerions losing their chance to ever leave this mountain, the other consequence is...

"...Death."

"Death," Orion muttered abruptly.

"Yes. Although they don't remember anything, as the rules dictate that their memories related to the trial have been sealed, you can thank the two treacherous beings beside you for trying twice and failing to complete."

Princess Crystalia bit her lip in frustration, finally understanding why she and Flintor hadn't remembered anything.

It turned out that they had completely wasted the only two chances her race had to leave this mountain.

She felt...

"Don't worry, we will get it right this time and complete the trial," Orion said, his words reaching Princess Crystalia's ears and soothing her troubled heart.

He briefly glanced at her before his eyes moved to encompass everyone present.

"IS EVERYONE READY TO COMPLETE THIS TRIAL?" Orion shouted loudly, ensuring that his voice resonated across all hundred and twenty-one participants.

"I'm ready," Flintor declared, capturing Orion's attention with his firm and unwavering gaze.

"I'm ready!" Iris's voice rang out from a distance. She activated the power of the Crystalforge clan and forged a forty-five-inch-meter crystalline greatsword within her grasp, driving it into the rocky surface of the ground.

Orion locked eyes with Iris briefly before another voice, from a different direction, echoed through the chamber.

"I'M READY!" It was followed by another and another, until every participant joined in, screaming at the top of their lungs, "I'M READY!" Their voices filled the space with unwavering determination.

Chapter 478 The Trial that Shook the Hearts of the Prismarion Race (6)

"Aegis of the Arctic Deity..." Orion said, his gaze fixed intently on the pair of golden-coloured eyes. "Can we proceed with the trial now?"

"Hahaha, very well," the ancient voice responded. In an instant, the black and white threads within the stream of water above them glowed intensely before the water abruptly collapsed, submerging them within it.

Orion felt his hand being tightly gripped and immediately looked down to see Princess Crystalia holding onto his hand.

They were all submerged in the water as the mysterious strings of white and black threads began to revolve around them, growing even brighter.

They had to snap their eyes shut to avoid being blinded by the intense light.

.....

Orion suddenly felt a gentle breeze ruffle his hair, prompting his eyes to snap open. Before him stood a colossal stone gate, 40 feet tall and 86 feet wide, adorned with a transparent ripple that allowed one to see through to the other side. What lay beyond and around was a dry and barren land, littered with the bones and ash of long-forgotten skeletons.

At a distance, he could make out the plains and highlands, obstructed by towering swarms of blinding light, some of them rivaling mountains in size.

A surge of awe and dread welled up within Orion's heart as he gazed upwards at the sky. His body stiffened as he took in the astounding sight before him.

Baduum! Orion felt his heart skip a beat as he beheld the sight of several winged figures, each clad in strange armour, their attention riveted to the colossal square stone door.

He gradually shifted his gaze to the oddly preserved, gigantic severed head with a protruding horn at its centre. Its wide eyes were open as it hung in the sky, surrounded by mutilated bodies. Its gaze seemed to capture the moments before its death.

However, he barely had time to process the gruesome scene before he sensed a firm tug on his hand. Turning his head to the side, he gazed at the figure holding his arm, and his eyes widened in astonishment.

"Orion, you look different," Princess Crystalia remarked, her disbelief mirrored in her expression.

Orion cast a perplexed gaze at his transformed self. Just as he was about to comment on his altered appearance, a familiar ancient voice thundered within their ears.

"Listen closely, you treacherous race! To defeat a god, one must possess the powers of a god. In Naka's boundless mercy and benevolence, you have been given not only a chance for redemption but also the opportunity to acquire the power that will provide you with a solid foundation once you secure your freedom from this mountain."

"You are faced with two possible outcomes: survive the trial, obtain a 'Divine blood,' and earn your redemption, or fail, forfeit your last opportunity for salvation, and face death!"

As the ancient dignified voice faded, Orion felt it resound in his ears once more. "Although I commend your bravery, human, the treacherous race you've chosen to support is not deserving of your aid. I am willing to grant you another chance for your own freedom, should you have changed your mind."

A wry smile crept onto Orion's lips as he remained silent.

"Very well, I shall be watching, human. Should you fail, may your demise be swift," came the Aegis of the Arctic Deity's response before it abruptly vanished.

Shaking off the distracting thoughts that were seeping into his mind, Orion turned his gaze to Crystalia's transformed body.

She still possessed her fair complexion, but her appearance had dramatically altered. Her height seemed to have increased slightly, and she was now adorned in radiant full-plated armour.

Her silken-coloured hair locs not only gleamed more brilliantly but appeared smooth, flowing, and extended almost halfway down her back. Orion couldn't help but notice the two smooth, lengthy feathery wings emerging from her back.

However, one of these wings was noticeably shorter than the other, resembling the winged figures in the vicinity.

Suddenly, a booming voice reverberated through the air, assaulting their ears. They turned to witness another white-haired winged figure hurtling towards them, who then enveloped them both in a tight embrace.

"Flintor, is that you?" Princess Crystalia asked, regarding the tall, white-haired figure who embraced her with suspicion.

"Yes, it's me, Princess," Flintor replied as he released them. He was nearly on the brink of a breakdown, struggling to comprehend the inexplicable transformation they had all undergone.

Nevertheless, he gestured toward the other one hundred and twenty-one individuals who had participated in the trial but now appeared utterly transformed.

Observing that every single one of them had undergone a profound change in appearance, Orion swiftly grasped the gravity of their situation.

A world strewn with lifeless forms, both on the ground and in the heavens.

An unfamiliar race.

A stone gate.

Survival!

Orion took a deep breath to calm himself before a trumpet blared from the sky above, producing a deafening sound that surprisingly didn't harm or discomfort him.

As the trumpet's echoes subsided, the ground beneath them began to tremble and vibrate. This unexpected phenomenon not only drew Orion's attention but also fascinated the others who were experiencing the outside world beyond the mountain for the first time.

Orion's eyes widened as he beheld what was approaching.

"EVERYONE, FLY UP INTO THE SKY IMMEDIATELY!" he roared at the top of his lungs, and with a firm grip on Princess Crystalia, he shot up into the sky.

The rest quickly followed suit, propelled by their thoughts alone, despite having never experienced flight before.

As they ascended, they gazed down and witnessed numerous thick, green figures of various sizes racing wildly toward the massive stone gate.

However, just as they were on the verge of entering the imposing square gate, they abruptly halted in their tracks.

"What is happening?" Princess Crystalia asked, observing the green figures, which numbered more than a thousand, if not more, coming to a sudden stop before the huge stone gate.

Orion didn't immediately respond.

He could feel his heart rate quicken as the ripples on the colossal stone gate intensified, and a figure stepped out, revealing itself.

Baduum! Baduum! Baduum!!

Orion's heart pounded in his chest as he saw the familiar figure step out of the gate.

White Flame!

"Who's that?" Princess Crystalia asked, her eyes fixed on the mysterious figure who had just emerged from the gate.

"We need to go," Orion urged as he turned to address the other participants beside him. "EVERYONE, WE NEED TO GO!" Orion shouted, rallying them, before turning around and taking flight away from the massive stone gate, with Flintor closely following.

They couldn't afford to die now!

Aegis of the Arctic Deity had already made it clear that death equalled certain failure.

As for how Princess Crystalia and Flintor had failed the trial on their first and second attempts, after seeing the man in his hospital attire, Orion didn't need an explanation of their past failures.

However, the other one hundred and twenty-one participants gazed at him, puzzled and bewildered, not yet grasping the situation.

Meanwhile, recognizing that Orion likely understood what was happening, given his reaction, Iris shouted urgently, "WHAT ARE YOU STILL WAITING FOR? WE NEED TO GO NOW!" She swiftly turned and started to follow Orion and the others.

The rest of the group quickly realized that something was amiss and hurried to follow Orion and the others.

At the front of the group, Orion clenched his teeth and pushed himself to fly at top speed, determined to put as much distance as possible between them and White Flame.

Suddenly, another rumble reverberated from the ground below, and he glanced downward to witness a chaotic scene: the green figures, which turned out to be goblins, orcs, and other related subspecies, were engaged in a full-blown battle. It was a war zone down there.

"FALL!!"

A booming voice echoed in their ears, and in an instant, Orion realized he was plummeting from the sky along with the other participants and every other winged creature.

"EVERYONE, BRACE YOURSELVES!" Orion shouted loudly, alerting those nearby to prepare for the impending impact.

He held Princess Crystalia close as they descended toward the ground.

"BAANNGG!"

"BAMM!!"

The jarring impact sent a shockwave through Orion's spine. His body collided with the ground, contorting his wings and inflicting excruciating pain that forced a mouthful of blood from his lips.

"Ahh!" Orion moaned briefly in pain before quickly regaining his composure.

"...Orion, are you okay?" Princess Crystalia asked, her eyes filled with worry.

"Cough! Cough! I'm okay, don't worry," Orion assured her as he sat upright and scanned their surroundings.

Fortunately, Flintor had also survived, albeit with his wings twisted at an odd angle, similar to Orion. Unfortunately, when he looked at the other participants, he saw that some of them had met a grim fate, landing on a pile of bones that had pierced through their bodies, while the rest were in the same condition as he was.

Although Princess Crystalia could see that Orion's current condition was far from okay, she knew there was little they could do at the moment.

She bit her lip and helped him to stand up.

As Orion looked around, he noticed the other participants slowly getting back on their feet, apparently realizing that things were about to take a turn for the worse.

Just then, a piercing, majestic voice echoed across the desolate landscape.

"WHO DARES?!"

The towering colossal swords, gleaming with an otherworldly light, vibrated and hummed violently, as if responding to the commanding voice.

Orion's eyes were immediately drawn to the parting clouds, and the blinding, shimmering figure descending from them.

She seemed untouched by the mysterious force that had sent them plummeting to the ground.

As the intense light dissipated, a bloodied figure of a winged woman emerged. Her wings were significantly larger than any he had seen before, and she was adorned in flowing garments that left her arms and chest covered but revealed her stomach. Her attire extended into a long skirt that reached just above her ankles.

"WHO ART THOU?" the majestic voice thundered again in anger. "WHAT GIVETH THEE THE RIGHT TO BLOCK MY CHILDREN'S PASSAGE?!"

"YOU ARE NOT WELCOME ON EARTH!! HALT YOUR ADVANCES WHILE YOU CAN, OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!!" echoed through the battlefield, and Orion recognized it as White Flame's voice, having heard it in a private conversation before.

"ART THOU A GOD ON EARTH? ALL RIGHT, I HAVE SLAYED OTHER GODS, AND I SHALL DO SO ONCE MORE!" The majestic voice responded, and in the blink of an eye, several exquisitely crafted weapons materialized, surrounding the woman.

These weapons bore a striking resemblance to the colossal swords looming in the distance.

"YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED?!"

On that day, the Prismerion race beheld the sky for the first time in millennia, and on that same day, they watched as the sky itself quaked.

"BBOOOOMMM!!"

"BAMM!!!"

The sky erupted in blinding flashes of light as both gods collided, while the battle below continued to rage fiercely as both races fought among themselves.

Orion observed the ongoing battle on both sides, frustration gnawing at him. 'Divine blood,' he thought. To defeat White Flame, they needed divine blood.

As for where they were going to find it, Orion didn't need to be told.

He watched as the god and the man-made god clashed head-on in the sky.

After a while, Orion witnessed the bloodied winged woman fall from the sky, crashing onto one of the highlands with a resounding, "BOOM," enveloping the sky in dust and ash.

"We need to go there?" Orion said, turning to face Princess Crystalia. Seeing her wielding a crystalline-carved sword, he immediately realized that their abilities were effective in this place, whatever it was.

As for their strength, it seemed that he would need to find out for himself.

Princess Crystalia frowned a little as she slashed down another goblin that had attempted to attack them.

Then, she nodded with a stern expression on her face.

At this point, she had come to trust Orion to the extent that she didn't doubt whatever he said or did.

Chapter 480 Divine Blood (2)

Thus, she quickly turned her head to the other participants, who had formed a barricade to protect themselves against the mad, entranced battlefield.

She screamed out loudly, "EVERYONE, FOLLOW ME!!" before turning around to follow Orion as he began to make his way through the chaotic battleground.

Quickly activating his gift, Orion felt a surge of strength as a burst of chaotic lightning streaked out of his hands, illuminating his path.

He picked up a long sword from the ground and charged forward, coating it with his lightning as he swung it down on an unsuspecting orc.

He tore off the orc's limbs before beheading it, sending its lifeless charred body to the ground.

Without hesitation, he continued to charge forward. Perhaps it was because they were all in a trance, too focused on cutting down each other. Orion and the survivors manoeuvred through the chaotic battlefield, dodging some opponents and cutting down others to save time.

Finally, they reached the visibly collapsed highland.

"STOP!" Orion roared loudly, halting everyone in their tracks.

Up above, he could see White Flame with his hospital gown now torn from various angles, and a slightly battered body, standing in the air as though he was trying to recover from their previous clash.

Observing the current scene in front of him, he could finally understand once more why Princess Crystalia and Flintor had succeeded in obtaining the Divine blood, possessing a fraction of mysterious divine energy, but had failed to complete the trial.

Orion turned to Princess Crystalia and said, "We need a distraction if we want to approach and collect several drops of her blood."

Princess Crystalia understood what he meant and turned her head to address the group on the ground once more. She spoke with determination, "Listen up, everyone. We are on the verge of completing the trial. However, in order to do so, some of us may not make it back."

She paused, taking a deep breath, before continuing, "Some of you may need to make the ultimate sacrifice so that the Prismerion race can escape this mountain."

Silence fell over the one hundred and twenty-one participants, now reduced to a mere eighty-one before it was suddenly broken by an audible voice that resonated around them.

"What's with the silence?" One of the participants, holding an axe he had picked up during the battle, stepped forward, followed by about ten others. "We, the 8th Elite division, the Shadow Vanguard Legion, are ready to sacrifice ourselves for the Prismerion race."

Princess Crystalia nodded, and as she was about to speak, more of them stepped forward.

"The 9th Elite Division, the Iron Bane Legion, is ready to sacrifice itself for the Prismerion race."

"The 10th Elite Division, the Starfall Legion, is..."

"5th Elite division, the Verdant Legion is..."

"The 4th Elite Division, the Starforged Knights, is..."

And the declarations continued until every participant had come forward with unwavering determination in their eyes.

Orion sighed inwardly as he gazed at the group. No wonder the Queen had entrusted such a vital task to them.

Who wouldn't place their trust in individuals ready to lay down their lives for the cause?

Princess Crystalia turned to Orion and said, "We are ready."

Orion nodded in understanding and began to explain the plan.

Meanwhile, atop the broken highland, which had significantly crumbled and caved in, the winged woman surveyed the chaotic scene below with a wide-eyed and shocked expression. Her creations were mercilessly slaughtering each other, turning on one another in the midst of madness.

Then, she shifted her gaze upward, focusing once more on the one responsible for this turmoil.

"Why?" she began to speak, her voice crackling and weak. "Why art thou causing mine children to kill each other?"

"Who art thou?" She said as she began to weakly rise up from the rubble around her. "What giveth thee the right to stop our passage? Have I not felled enough gods?"

She looked at her scattered blood, which had spilt from her wounded body, and began to control it.

Her blood obeyed, listening to her command. "Art thou not also god. How canst thou not comprehend the agony of beholding thine children kill each other, after all the sacrifices thou hast made?" Soon, they began to converge around her and take shape.

"Oh, thou god that wonneth on earth, I curse thee, for thou hast rendered all my sacrifices in vain," Slowly, the shape began to solidify, taking the form of an enormous four-meter (13 feet) crimson-coloured greatsword. "Oh, thou god that wonneth on this earth, since thou feelest not the pain, I will make thee feel it by consuming thee in mine own suffering."

Meanwhile, at a distance, Orion watched as some of the participants climbed the highland to retrieve the spilt divine blood from the collapsed high ground.

He couldn't help but be left speechless by the scene, feeling his heart racing faster as he gazed at the four-meter-long crimson-coloured sword.

'Divine blood,' Orion thought, his eyes widening with realization.

Now he understood. Of course, now he realized what Aegis of the Arctic Deity meant, or more so, his underlying intentions, when he said that obtaining divine blood would not only grant them an opportunity to leave this mountain but also provide them with a solid foundation once they gain their freedom.

Having understood what they needed to do next, Orion turned to Princess Crystalia, holding her shoulders firmly as he gazed deeply into her eyes. He said, "When I give the signal, do whatever you can to run towards the gate."

Although he didn't know how they were supposed to exit the trial after obtaining the divine blood or if it would end automatically, he wanted to ensure their safety. Running towards the colossal stone gate seemed to be the safest course of action.

Princess Crystalia, however, couldn't help but stare at Orion with wide eyes, wondering about his intentions. "What are you planning to do? We're supposed to leave together after we've finished collecting the divine blood for everyone."