

Village Head 481

Chapter 481 Divine Blood (3)

Orion shook his head and reassured her, saying, "Don't worry, I'll come after you once I'm done. Just do me a favour and run when you have the chance." He understood Princess Crystalia's concerns because he himself wasn't entirely confident about his plan.

Nevertheless, he had concluded that obtaining that sword was crucial to completing the trial, so he decided to give it a try.

However, if he failed, he wanted them to reach safety first, as he knew he could escape later.

"Alright, I'll do as you say. But if you waste time and don't come back, then I will kill you myself," Princess Crystalia said with a worried expression, her gaze turning fierce as she looked at Orion.

Orion nodded with a wry smile on his lips and replied, "Don't worry, I don't plan on dying."

Princess Crystalia nodded in agreement, and they both turned to watch as the group collected several droplets of divine blood and passed them down one after another.

Meanwhile, Orion kept a close eye on the battle between the white-clothed winged woman and White Flame.

As the great sword was being forged using her blood, the winged woman calmly poured her last remaining power into it and then chose to use her soul to complete the process.

In a matter of minutes, after this unique procedure, the entire sword started radiating an intense crimson light, only to suddenly fade away. One couldn't help but notice not only the blood-red jewel on its hilt but also the improved refinement of the four-meter-long great sword.

Seeing that her last chance to win this battle had arrived, she reached out and seized the floating sword. She then stabbed it into the ground and used it as a prop to rise, her wings unfurling.

She began, "Oh, god that wonneth on earth..."

"...DIEE!!"

In the blink of an eye, even faster than anyone could track her movement, she materialized in front of White Flame, her sword cleaving downward. However, White Flame didn't flinch and instantly summoned a small mountain in front of him, stopping the sword's descent.

Before anyone could react, half of the mountain detached itself and violently crashed down on the winged woman, sending her plummeting to the ground once more.

"BAAMMM!!"

"BOOOMM!!"

The already collapsed high ground shook violently before crumbling once more, causing those outside of it to feel as though an earthquake was shaking the earth beneath their feet.

Then, it abruptly disappeared.

From the exchange that had just occurred, Orion could tell that White Flame had the upper hand in this battle. Furthermore, since White Flame had only recently become a man-made god, it seemed he was testing and comparing his strength against a true god to see how well he fared.

This was evident from the way he remained in his position, patiently waiting for the winged woman to recover and launch another attack.

Nevertheless, considering that the eighty-one participants had successfully collected several droplets of divine blood, securing them within compartments of their armour, Orion turned to Princess Crystalia and said, "Run as fast as you can to the gate with the others and don't stop until you've passed through. I'll catch up with all of you after I'm finished." He locked his gaze intently with hers.

Princess Crystalia nodded in understanding and swiftly responded, "Alright, I'll go." Orion had already informed her of this previously, so she didn't hesitate.

With two compartments in her armour containing portions of divine blood for both her and Orion, she turned her head toward the remaining eighty-one participants.

"ALRIGHT, EVERYONE, PROTECT THE DIVINE BLOOD YOU HAVE AND RUN TOWARDS THE GATE AS FAST AS YOU CAN. DO NOT STOP UNTIL YOU HAVE CROSSED IT!! GO!!"

Her resounding voice filled the air, spurring them into action. Without wasting a second, they all nodded and turned to run, evading and bypassing any opponents they encountered, keeping their focus on reaching the gate.

Just as Princess Crystalia was about to rush forward, she quickly turned back and sealed her lips with Orion's.

Flintor, who had been patiently waiting for the Princess so that he could follow behind, was stunned by her unexpected actions.

Orion, however, allowed the kiss to linger, letting their lips meld until it was abruptly broken off.

"I'll be waiting for you, so you better not die," she said, her eyes welling up with tears before she turned and ran toward the other side before Orion could see her crying.

Orion smiled and shook his head, having already noticed her teary eyes.

However, as the winged woman was about to free herself from beneath the huge rock on top of her, Orion decided to wait for a minute to allow Princess Crystalia and the rest of the participants to escape.

He waited just in time for the winged woman to completely shatter through the massive rock, showcasing her exceptional strength despite her otherwise weakened form.

Holding the four-meter crimson great sword with one hand, she stretched her other hand and summoned dozens of thick, blazing spears of light. With a sudden thrust, she launched them toward White Flame.

She intended to create another barrage, buying herself time to recover. However, something caught her attention from the side.

The winged woman swung her blade, thinking it was a surprise attack from the mysterious god.

Her eyes involuntarily widened as she stopped her attack, realizing it was one of her own children.

Stretching her gaze, the winged woman saw that her children from afar were still driven mad, mercilessly killing each other. She withdrew her focus and fixed it on the figure before her. "Child, art thou not compelled to kill thine own sibling?" she asked, puzzled by how he had broken free from the godly trance, her brows furrowing in confusion.

Orion, seeing that the winged woman was much taller than he had expected, probably about seven or eight feet tall, quickly composed himself and shook his head. "Unlike them, I don't feel anything. Please, goddess, I am confused about what is going on. I don't know what else I am supposed to do," Orion replied.

Chapter 482 Divine Blood (4)

He stared at the dazzling whitish iris of the goddess in front of him, along with her waist-long hair and her two incredibly large pairs of wings.

It would have been an amazing sight if not for her blood-stained hair and wings, which almost matched the colour of the four-meter crimson great sword in her hand.

The winged woman, however, stared at Orion suspiciously and wondered what was so special about him. He was the only one among her creations who seemed unaffected by the overwhelming divine power.

Regardless, she didn't have much time to dwell on it, as there was still a god in front of her that she needed to deal with if she wanted her children to regain their sanity.

"Go, runneth as fast as thou canst, out of this perishing world. Even if I should falter, I shall find solace in knowing that one of my creations hath made it to the other side," the winged woman said calmly. She looked at Orion with a loving expression in her eyes.

Orion, knowing he couldn't leave this place without obtaining the great sword, nodded, but he expressed his concerns, "But... Goddess, how am I supposed to protect myself if I were to leave this

dying world and go to the other side? Judging by the looks of it, the other side doesn't seem to welcome our advances."

He tried to maintain a calm demeanour, doing his best to convey his emotions to secure the great sword and make his way out of this place.

The winged woman heard Orion's words and let out a deep sigh.

How could she not understand what her creation was telling her when there was already a god blocking their way?

She bit her lips in a mix of frustration and anger before shaking her head helplessly and responding, "I know not, but as my creation, thou hast already waged countless wars. I do believe that thou hast the capacity to endure, even if thou art alone, so long as thou dost choose thy battles with prudence."

"But...", Orion decided to confront the issue, "if you choose to stay here and die, what will happen to the sword in your hand?"

Orion realized that if the goddess died, the crimson-coloured greatsword in her possession would likely be claimed by White Flame as a trophy and could be used against them.

The winged woman was taken aback by Orion's words. Why hadn't she considered that before?

Now, thinking about it, she realized he was making sense. After all, what would happen if the god currently confronting her decided to use her sword and hunt down her creations after defeating her?

"All right," the winged woman nodded her head in defeat, a deep, helpless sigh escaping her lips.

"Bring thy hands forward, child," she said, scrutinizing Orion as she wondered why she had never noticed such a child among her creations before.

Orion relaxed his racing heart and stretched out both his hands.

Feeling the weight of the four-meter greatsword, Orion almost felt himself stumbling forward. Thankfully, the winged goddess immediately supported the weight of the great sword with her strength, allowing his hands to slide beneath it.

"Child, cut thy hands and let thy blood flow upon this blade," the winged woman said with a small, sweet smile on her lips after noticing that Orion was unable to properly carry the sword.

Orion immediately nodded in understanding and picked up a small rock from the broken rubble. He used it to forcefully cut his palm open, letting his blood pour onto the four-meter crimson-coloured greatsword.

Orion admitted inwardly that it was painful, as it was the first time he had tried to purposefully injure himself.

He bit his lip to stifle any noise.

"That is sufficient," The winged woman said, casting Orion an approving glance as though she was very appreciative of his decisive action.

"What is thy name, child?" she asked.

Given that she had asked for his name, Orion pondered for a moment before responding, "Orion." The fact that she requested his name indicated that she didn't know it beforehand.

If she did, it would have suggested that she recognized him from the beginning, which was clearly not the case.

"I shall no longer be able to safeguard thee once thou departest this perishing world. Hence, I, Aerialia, former goddess of the shining light, do hereby bestow upon thee authority over this blade. I do bless thee – may no foe thou dost smite enfeeble thee. Instead, may they stoke thy strength and endow thee with the valour to continue thy march forward."

As the winged woman, Aerialia, spoke, Orion noticed tears streaming down from her eyes. It was as though she was bidding farewell to a son she would never see again. However, he understood this was a trial orchestrated by Naka, and it was not his place to intervene. Orion remained silent, listening to her words.

"I bind thee and this blade. Mayest thou never bear the same resentment that I have borne whilst wielding this sword. I do bless thee, my child. Run as swiftly as thou canst to the other side and lay claim to the land that doth await thee, for I, thy creator, shall eternally guide and shield thee upon thy journey."

Orion observed as two teardrops fell and landed on the four-meter-long crimson greatsword the moment she finished speaking.

The sword began to radiate an intense crimson light.

Orion closed his eyes, protecting them from the blinding radiance as he sensed the greatsword shrinking. Gradually, he felt the weight of the sword settling in his palms.

"Thou canst open thine eyes, child," the winged woman said.

Orion complied and, when he looked, he saw that the once four-meter-long crimson greatsword was now only about six feet (1.9m) in length.

Just as Orion was about to speak, a thunderous, impatient voice reverberated from above. "Are you done with your preparations, or is this all you have to offer?"

The winged woman immediately directed her gaze upward.

Chapter 483 Escape

"Run as swiftly as thou canst, child. I shall do my utmost to ensure that none obstructs thy progress," the winged woman said, unfurling her large wings as though they had been undamaged by the previous attacks. She slowly ascended towards White Flame.

"RUN, MY CHILD, RUN AS SWIFTLY AS THOU CANST!"

Orion needed no further warning. He immediately turned and sprinted toward the gate.

Suddenly, a deafening explosion emanated from behind him, prompting Orion to glance back as he pushed forward with all his might. He saw that the winged woman had finally lost one of her wings, torn apart by several large, slim pieces of rock.

Additionally, a massive rock spike had impaled her stomach, causing Orion to wince inwardly as he immediately activated his gift.

"CRACCKLLEE!!"

Suddenly, rather than converging directly into his hands, Orion felt his lightning gather and coat his legs.

He realized he had discovered a new way to utilize his gift, enabling him not only to detach his lightning from himself but also to envelop his legs with it.

Amid this revelation, Orion decided to experiment with further possibilities, attempting to cover his entire body with lightning.

However, his actions caused lightning to erupt from his hands, while the accumulation around his legs abruptly ceased.

Nonetheless, this setback did not impede Orion's advance. He promptly channelled his lightning into the six-foot greatsword he held, coating it with a vibrant bluish, stinging aura.

With swift decisiveness, he swung the electrified blade downward at an ogre, cleaving it from neck to waist and effortlessly reducing it to smouldering halves.

He continued his charge, moving on to dissect another opponent in his path.

"CRACCKLLEE!! CRAACKLEE!!"

As Orion controlled the strange energy within his body and directed it toward his legs, his lightning flared out once more, enveloping them in a streaking, bluish glow as he maintained his unwavering charge forward.

"BBOOOMM!!"

"BAAMMM!! BOOOMM!!!"

Explosions echoed in the distance behind Orion. However, he had no luxury of glancing backwards and assessing the ongoing developments of their battle. Instead, with the colossal stone gate looming ahead, Orion accelerated his pace, determined to pass through in time and escape from this place.

However...

"Stop!" A voice, neither loud nor too quiet, suddenly rang within Orion's ears. Before he could grasp what was happening, he crashed to the ground as though his legs had become fused with the earth itself.

"SHIT!!" Orion cursed out loud, as he realized that a heavy, coiling chain had entangled his legs, its weight growing more oppressive by the second.

To make matters worse, the solid, barren ground around him began to shift, turning into a dangerous quicksand that threatened to swallow him whole.

'What kind of cheat ability is this?' Orion vehemently swore within the confines of his mind. He was beginning to understand the godly abilities they faced.

Baduum! Baduum!!

Orion's heart raced with the realization that he could die at any moment from now. He drew in a deep breath and unleashed the Vylkr energy stored within both of his Vylkr containers. As the Vylkr energy surged through him, his veins pulsed and constricted, his muscles tightened to an almost painful extent, and the energy melded, reshaped, and strengthened his body tissues. But...

... nothing changed.

Despite the abnormal boost in strength, Orion's body continued to sink deeper into the unforgiving quicksand, the chain's oppressive weight on his legs intensifying.

"You're the only one unaffected..."

Orion's heart skipped a beat as he recognized the familiar voice ahead of him.

"Strange, it seems that I would need to take..."

Orion didn't bother to look up or let White Flame finish his sentence. He immediately activated his last resort.

Vylkr warrior mode!

BADUUM! BADUUM!

The Vylkr energy, once suppressed by his strange energy, erupted from every pore of his skin. Inky black strands of energy emerged, surrounding him in a dense, swirling mass.

Due to the two Vylkr containers within him, the Vylkr energy was now four to six times denser and more chaotic than before.

Gradually, his eyes started to cloud over as the Vylkr energy expanded, turning them into a deep shade of tinted black.

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Meanwhile, in the space where Orion and the other eighty-one participants were previously located before entering the trial, Aegis of the Arctic Deity observed the scene reflected in the stream of water that had engulfed Orion and the rest of the participants.

He couldn't help but burst into laughter as his voice echoed through the vacant void, watching Orion climb the collapsed highland, heading straight toward the defeated winged goddess amidst the rubble.

"HAHAHAHAHA! WHAT A BRAVE HUMAN! NAKA... HAHAHAHA! I HOPE YOU'RE WATCHING THIS! HAHAHAHA! AFTER SO MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED, A HUMAN

WOULD BE THE ONE TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THIS MOUNTAIN!" Aegis of the Arctic Deity's voice reverberated, causing the surrounding space to tremble with his laughter.

He settled down, a glint in his eyes and a smile on his face, curious about how the human would manage this feat. He couldn't help but marvel at the way Orion had not only obtained the sword from Aerialia but had also bonded with it. Aegis of the Arctic Deity was almost dumbfounded by Orion's cleverness.

Nonetheless, obtaining the sword had been the easy part; escaping with it was where the true challenge lay.

In fact, Orion and the other participants had essentially passed the trial the moment they obtained the divine blood. All that remained was to absorb it fully by reaching a certain distance, crossing the gate to the other side, and thereby completing the trial. If they failed to do so, they would only be able to absorb the amount of divine blood corresponding to the distance they had traversed.

Both Princess Crystalia and her personal guard had managed to secure a few drops of divine blood. However, their progress was cut short, and they were unable to fully absorb the divine blood, receiving only a fraction of its power.

As such, given what he had witnessed thus far, he naturally wanted to test Orion's limits and the extent of his capabilities.

Chapter 484 Escape (2)

It wasn't an everyday occurrence for him to witness such an extraordinary display.

However, after a while, he considered concluding the observation and was on the verge of summoning them back to the space.

His actions came to a sudden halt as he stared at the churning stream of water before him, his gaze trembling with astonishment.

Soon, his dumbfoundedness transformed into shock as Aegis of the Arctic Deity couldn't believe his eyes when he witnessed the numerous dark, destructive strands of chaotic energy emanating from Orion's body.

The boiling intensity of the stream of water gradually intensified!

"This... this..." Aegis of the Arctic Deity attempted to articulate his thoughts, but no words came to him that could help him make sense of the astounding scene before him.

He blinked several times before finally muttering with wide-open eyes, "Impossible! How is such a thing possible? How can a mere human possess such a chaotic energy?!" Aegis of the Arctic Deity's voice resonated within the chaotic space.

Naturally, he recognized the strands of chaotic energy, as they were undoubtedly the same as the persistent vines that encircled the mountain, infiltrating even through the cracks.

Their overwhelming presence left him powerless, and he realized that he needed to conserve his energy, as it was not limitless.

Nonetheless, as the boiling water's intensity continued to surge, Aegis of the Arctic Deity, who had been alive for more years than he could count, swiftly regained his composure.

He decided to postpone his questions and proceeded to withdraw the bodies of all the participants from the streaming water, bringing them back to the space, and effectively completing the trial.

The first person Aegis of the Arctic Deity chose to retrieve was Orion. However, when Orion was pulled from the water, he appeared unconscious, like the other participants, but his body was still ensconced in several strands of Vylkr energy.

These strands caused the space around them to tremble and vibrate as if attempting to suppress the chaotic energy while simultaneously resisting it.

Aegis of the Arctic Deity's golden eyes narrowed to slits as he observed Orion's unconscious form.

The gnashing of teeth filled the space around them, and Aegis muttered to himself, "Very well, it seems I have no choice." He contemplated sending Orion back to the garden to prevent any inadvertent, irreversible damage to this place and the mountain.

However, he quickly realized that doing so might put the garden in danger as well.

Therefore, the only viable solution was to transport Orion outside of the mountain to ensure he didn't harm or contaminate anything within.

"Boy, if you can hear me, I want you to return to the mountain as soon as you can, as we have much to discuss," Aegis of the Arctic Deity's voice resounded through the space, even though Orion remained unconscious.

With a sweep of his divine power, Aegis watched a small hole open beneath Orion, swiftly pulling him in before sealing shut behind him.

As the space settled and the source of chaos was gone, Aegis of the Arctic Deity turned his attention to the remaining eighty-one participants who had successfully completed the trial.

He proceeded to assist their bodies in merging with the divine blood before they awakened. Turning his gaze back to the stream of water, which now held several globs of divine blood, Aegis of the Arctic Deity peered into the stream.

He examined the numerous strings of white and black threads that had lost their shining lustre and appeared to have fragmented into even smaller threads. Failing to find what he sought, he withdrew his gaze, allowing a brief moment of silence to envelop the space.

The silence was abruptly shattered by a hearty and boisterous peal of laughter.

"HAAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!"

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Outside the mountains

Fifi brought down her great battle axe on the last remaining piece of an encroaching three-star Vylkr vine, her face devoid of emotion. She then shifted her gaze towards Seth.

"Is that all?" Fifi asked, her voice taking on an icy and emotionless tone. Her towering and muscular presence might have sent an ordinary villager fleeing in fear, but she was surrounded by warriors who, like her, had lived on the edge of life and death, battling the Vylkr vines tirelessly. They found Fifi's demeanour less intimidating than outsiders would.

"Yes, we can continue on our way now," Seth replied.

Fifi nodded and made her way towards the rope that dangled from the flying contraption. She began to climb it, eager to resume their search for Orion after the numerous delays.

She recognized the importance of dealing with the three-star Vylkr vines they encountered, which would relieve the burden on the other warriors protecting the village. Still, despite understanding the significance of their task, frustration crept in. They had been at this for three days.

Three whole days!

Their primary goal was to locate Orion and Saria, yet with each passing day, Fifi's confidence in Orion's survival waned.

She had reached a point where uncertainty clouded her thoughts, and she contemplated going off on her own to search for Orion if only she had her own flying contraption to cover more ground quickly.

Just as she was about to board the large basket, a loud shout echoed from below.

"Everyone, stop!" Seth's voice commanded attention, and he had picked up on something in the distance.

"Tchh! It's another three-star Vylkr vine," he muttered to himself.

While his tone was low, the warriors present possessed keen ears, and they all sighed wearily, fully aware of what was about to come next.

Regardless, Fifi chose to entrust this task to her fellow warriors as she boarded the basket to rest and regain her strength. While glancing in the direction Seth had been staring, calculating the number of three-star Vylkr vines they'd be contending with and estimating the waiting time, Fifi's focus was immediately drawn to just two three-star Vylkr vines in the distance.

However, her attention swiftly shifted to another direction, piqued by something new catching her eye.

Chapter 485 Fifi

She squinted her eyes to peer beyond the dry husks of several dead trees obstructing her view. However, it remained challenging to get a clear understanding of what lay ahead of her.

Suddenly, the two three-star Vylkr vines in the distance altered their course, veering toward the direction she had been scanning earlier.

This perplexed Fifi because she knew that Vylkr vines were typically drawn to any nearby signs of life, and they were currently the only living beings in the vicinity. There was no apparent reason for this sudden chan...

Fifi's eyes widened in shock as if she had just had an epiphany.

"It can't be," she muttered.

However, down below, Seth, who had also been keeping an eye on the two three-star Vylkr vines, couldn't help but frown once he noticed their change in direction. This made him doubt what was happening.

"Hey, can any of you tell me what's going on up there...?" Seth was about to ask. However, before he could finish his sentence, Fifi leapt down from one of Orion's skies and landed in front of him.

Her legs cracked the ground upon impact, tearing it apart, and she immediately took off again with a resounding "Boom!" Heading straight toward the direction of the three-star Vylkr vines, her great battle axe in hand.

Seth and the other warriors stood rooted, dumbfounded, as they watched Fifi charge directly at the two three-star Vylkr vines.

Without wasting any time, Seth turned to the three warriors already inside the three large flying contraptions. "Guard the Orion's Sky!" he commanded.

Then, he addressed the remaining nine warriors. "Everyone else, follow her," Seth said through gritted teeth, jumping into the sky after Fifi, his machete tightly gripped in his hand.

He wondered what had come over her. Could it be that she had finally lost hope in finding Orion and decided to take away her life?

The more Seth thought about it, the more he considered that possibility. There was no way Fifi could take on two three-star Vylkr vines by herself when she had to give it her all just to defeat one three-star Vylkr vine.

Just thinking about this, Seth quickened his pace, realizing there was no way he could properly explain her death to his father without getting into trouble, especially considering that Fifi was still one of the village's most valuable warriors.

Seeing her stop just a few meters away from the two three-star Vylkr vines, Seth narrowed his eyes at her figure, which had come to a halt on top of a tree branch, his face displaying a deep frown.

He then turned his head to gesture to the other warriors behind him to spread out, allowing them to attack from different directions in case things took a turn for the worse.

Meanwhile, Fifi stared at the wide, empty space just below the foot of the mountain with wide, trembling, and shocked eyes, where a familiar figure lay unconscious, oblivious to the fact that he had attracted the attention of all the Vylkr vines around him.

"Orion," Fifi muttered as though she was calling out to him. Although she was a little surprised to see him alone and in Vylkr warrior mode, it was enough to let her know that despite being unconscious, Orion was still alive; he hadn't died.

He was alive!

Orion was still alive!

Fifi tightened her grip on her axe and leapt down from the tree, her body racing straight towards Orion's unconscious figure. She hastily cut down the Vylkr vines in her path, screaming, "ORRIOON!!"

"ORRIOON!!"

"ORIOONN!!"

Each scream was a turbulent mix of pain and cries of joy, resonating throughout the vicinity.

It was so intense that even the Warriors and Seth, who had been following her closely, halted their steps in disbelief and watched the scene unfold.

"He's alive," Seth murmured to himself, startled by the sight.

He scanned the area, searching for the other two people who were supposed to be with Orion: Stronghold Leader Drakar and the tree nymph, Saria. Returning his gaze to the young man he assumed was Orion, Seth squinted at the dark, inky wisps of thread enveloping him.

After a few seconds, his eyes widened in surprise. "Impossible!" he muttered, taken aback.

Having researched Orion's pasts and accomplishments, Seth knew that Orion was far from reaching his full star potential. Therefore, there was no logical explanation for Orion to be able to use the Vylkr warrior mode at this stage in his development.

However, as Seth observed the various strands of visible Vylkr energy slowly emanating from Orion and enveloping his entire body, he couldn't help but wonder about what had transpired during their absence.

Still, he realized this was not the moment to dwell on such matters.

"WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? COVER HER!" Seth roared, signalling to three warriors beside him to join him in approaching the unconscious Orion.

Meanwhile, the remaining six warriors were ordered to engage the two three-star Vylkr vines that were closing in on their position.

Without a moment's hesitation, the warriors sprang into action, carrying out their orders promptly.

Nevertheless, Fifi had finally reached Orion's location. With a powerful swing of her great battle axe, she struck down one of the two-star Vylkr vines before she swiftly descended and leapt onto the large rock where Orion lay unconscious, landing safely by his side.

"...O ...Orion..."

She released her axe, sank to her knees, and gently pulled him close, cradling his head against her chest in an affectionate embrace.

"...you are alive... sniff..." Her voice quivered as tears flowed from her eyes, and she clung to Orion. "...I missed you... I so very much missed you..." Fifi whispered into Orion's ear, her lips brushing closely, trying to convey her overwhelming emotions without the need for words.

Pulling Orion backwards, Fifi decided to thoroughly inspect his condition, temporarily setting her emotions aside as she sensed that something was wrong.

"Orion, can you hear me?" Fifi's voice quivered with emotion.

Chapter 486 Elara's Decision

She found it strange that he was in the Vylkr warrior mode while unconscious in a strange tulga. Moreover, Orion hadn't reached his full potential yet, so it was highly unlikely that he could activate the Vylkr warrior mode without facing severe consequences.

Suddenly, she felt someone land behind her and turned to see Seth intently examining Orion's condition with a puzzled expression in his eyes.

"Whatever condition he's in right now, I'm certain it's far from normal. The sooner we get him back to the village for the healers to assess his condition, the better our chances of waking him up and finding out what's wrong," Seth stated.

His gaze alternated between the teary-eyed Fifi and the unconscious Orion. Like Fifi, Seth also noticed the strange tulga on Orion's body, prompting him to furrow his brow and ponder once more about the whereabouts of Stronghold Leader Drakar, and Saria, who was supposed to be with Orion.

Nevertheless, he chose to set aside his questions for later and focus on returning to the village to determine their next course of action.

Hearing Seth's words, Fifi swiftly nodded in agreement, seeing no reason to argue about his judgment this time. She gently lifted Orion and cradled him in her arms, rising to her feet and leaping into the sky, towards the direction of the flying contraption which awaited their return.

Taking a moment to survey the surroundings, Seth swung his machete at a one-star Vylkr vine that had managed to crawl up onto the rocky platform.

However, he soon gave up on the inspection, realizing that he couldn't pinpoint anything abnormal about the mountains around him, despite the unsettling feeling it gave him.

Seth turned to address the warriors, saying, "EVERYONE, HEAD BACK TO THE ORION'S SKIES! WE'RE RETURNING TO THE VILLAGE!" With those words, he swiftly launched into the sky, following in Fifi's path, his mind filled with deep contemplation.

As for the other warriors, they collectively heaved sighs of relief and quickly distanced themselves from the lone remaining three-star Vylkr vine. In no time, they too took to the skies, their destination set for their village.

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Within the mountains

Gemheart clan

Elara paced restlessly within her bedroom, her face twisted into a deep frown. As the day neared its end, the news from the elite division, who had been monitoring the cities, weighed heavily on her mind.

The Crystalforge Clan had begun executing descendants of the forgotten clans they'd managed to capture in a public display after their shocking announcement earlier in the day.

They had openly declared war, threatening to eradicate the entire bloodline of the Gemheart Clan from the Prismarian kingdom and targeting anyone or anything connected to them.

War in a time like this? When they had a precious opportunity to escape this dreadful mountain within their reach?

Did this not amount to the Crystalforge Clan's attempt to eradicate the Gemheart Clan's lineage, ensuring that none of them or their descendants would live to witness the day Naka finally forgave their sins and allowed them to leave this mountain?

Elara paused, taking a deep breath in an attempt to calm her racing thoughts. She stood still, gathering her composure.

After several minutes, she began to focus on her younger brother's unstable situation. Although she was relieved he had survived, and with just a missing arm after his risky mission to assassinate the queen, she was now faced with a heavy decision that could determine his fate.

Elara's thoughts swirled around her, leaving her feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about which path to take as time ticked away.

With a deep breath, Elara made her decision, resolving to act. She smoothed the deep frown from her face. As things stood, despite their victory in sealing Queen Selene's magical energy, the foreigner who had aligned with the Crystalforge Clan and effortlessly defeated several of their top elite warriors posed a significant threat.

Elara knew that her clan, the Gemheart Clan, was ill-equipped to confront him if he decided to join the war against them.

Considering their previous encounter had been far from amicable, she no longer hesitated and headed towards the palace, deciding to free her brother and explore any possible means to save her clan.

Elara impatiently pulled the bedroom door open and stepped out, but her path was immediately obstructed by two crossed swords held by Gemheart Clan guards.

Her deep frown expressed her dissatisfaction with the interruption.

"What is the meaning of this?" Elara's icy tone cut through the air, causing a shiver to run down the spines of the two guards standing before her.

"I'm sorry, Clan Mistress, but on the orders of Clan Leader Garnet, you are not allowed to leave your room or the Clan Manor. The Clan Head has imposed this restriction for your safety due to the impending war with the Crystalforge Clan," the guard explained, her voice resolute, her gaze fixed forward, away from the door.

"Please, Clan Mistress, let us carry out our orders. If you require anything, just inform us, and we will have the servants provide it for you."

Each word that left the guard's mouth made Elara's body quiver with tension. "How dare you?" she seethed, her voice a torrent of anger.

"GARNET, HOW DARE YOU?" Her scream echoed through the halls, sending a shiver down the spines of the two guards stationed before her.

Elara locked her intense gaze onto the guards and ordered, "Get out of my way, now!"

She anticipated that they would hastily step aside, intimidated by her fury. To her astonishment, however, the guards remained firmly in their positions and shook their heads.

"We apologize, Clan Mistress, but we're doing this for your own safety," the other guard explained.

It was only then that Elara noticed additional guards stationed in the hallways outside her room.

Realizing that leaving in this manner would inevitably draw attention from the entire clan manor, she swiftly closed the door and redirected her thoughts to finding an alternative route to reach the palace.

After a few minutes of contemplation, her gaze was inevitably drawn to the wide window in her bedroom.

"Tch!" she clicked her tongue in frustration before stepping determinedly toward it.

Chapter 487 Aftermath

"Are you sure this is going to work, husband?" Meala asked, her gaze filled with concern as she looked at Owen.

Owen nodded in response, his expression resolute. "Yes, I'm sure of it. Don't worry," he reassured her.

After learning that their daughters had escaped to fulfill the promises they had made to the foreigner, he had devised a plan to ensure their safety and that of their clan.

However, his wife remained troubled by the decision he had made, fearing it was a precarious choice that could determine the fate of both their clan and their children.

If there were any other viable options, he would gladly have chosen them. But, as it stood, there were no alternatives.

Damn it!

If it weren't for that foolish Garnet, he wouldn't have been forced into this agonizing decision between his children and his clan.

Now, he had no option but to align with the individual who had dared to attempt the assassination of the Queen and her royal family.

Meala gazed at her husband's thoughtful expression before exhaling deeply. "Okay, if you're certain this plan will work, then I'll do my best to support it with everything I have," she said, taking another deep breath before exhaling.

While her husband had always managed the clan's affairs, often proving to be more capable than she was, to the point that she rarely interfered with his plans and sought his opinions on various matters, she resolved to contribute her utmost to ensure the plan's success.

She also silently prayed to Naka, hoping that everything would unfold as planned.

Hearing his wife's response and seeing her calm down, Owen also breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank you," he muttered. "For now, help me take care of the inner clan's affairs while I focus on preparing for the war."

"Alright."

.....

Quartzwraith Clan manor

"So you're telling me that the queen refused to see you," Olivia said as she attended to the paperwork on her desk.

"Yes, Clan Mistress. It appears that they have already discovered that the other five major clans are aware of the queen's predicament. They've chosen to keep her current condition a secret, concealing whether the Crystalforge Clan is capable of removing the artefact or not," a figure, bowing and kneeling beside her, explained.

Olivia continued to focus on the paperwork in front of her, not bothering to look at the figure.

Olivia nodded thoughtfully, "I think so too," she replied. "But I also believe they are trying to manipulate the decisions of the smaller clans and the smaller factions. They want to prevent them from siding with the Gemheart Clan during the war. With the foreigner already allied with the Crystalforge Clan and the queen's current uncertain condition, it's possible that she has already recovered, and they now have two formidable individuals on their side."

"This would make the upcoming war a less daunting task. So, it's understandable why they made an early announcement of war and sent those letters."

"That... But wouldn't that also solidify the Crystalforge Clan's position and give them even more control over the kingdom?" the figure asked, though he quickly regained his composure. His years as an elite warrior had trained him to adapt swiftly.

Olivia nodded. "Yes, it will. But given our current capabilities and position, that's not an issue. Sometimes, it takes a stroke of luck to seize the Crystalforge Clan's power for ourselves."

"For now, our best course of action is to capitalize on any opportunities that come our way, ensuring our survival until such an opportunity presents itself," Olivia replied.

"I believe I have gained a better understanding of the current situation," the figure said, bowing even lower from his kneeling position. "Thank you, clan mistress."

"No problem. It's good that you've learned a few things," Olivia replied. "You can go and alert the other members of the Elite Division to prepare for the upcoming war. Emphasize that their primary task is to protect the clan and ensure that no one enters or exits without their knowledge. Is that clear?"

"Yes, clan mistress, I understand."

"Very well. After handling this paperwork, I'd like to rest, so you may take your leave."

"Of course, clan mistress, I will make sure to alert you if anything important comes up," the figure said, then immediately vanished without a trace of his presence.

As the figure disappeared from the room, Olivia's shoulders slumped in exhaustion.

She couldn't help but reflect on the past decisions and indecisions. If only she had been decisive enough to openly announce her cooperation with Orion, she might now be in a position similar to the Crystalforge Clan, with a powerful ally like the foreigner, capable of shaping the future of the Prismerian kingdom.

She sighed and leaned back in her chair, closing her eyes.

Although restlessness crept through her body, Olivia made a conscious effort to relax, fully aware that overthinking the kingdom's current situation would only lead to a bothersome headache.

.....

Meanwhile, across the Prismerian Kingdom, myriad preparations were underway for the impending war. In the midst of it all, a collective awareness lingered, for this conflict, like those that had come before it, would shape the future of the Prismerian Kingdom.

And so, they all...

...Readied themselves.

.....

Outside the mountains

The Farm

Orion slowly stirred from his slumber, a throbbing sensation at the back of his head gradually gaining intensity.

As he blinked away the haze of sleep, he was about to voice his confusion but furrowed his brow in bewilderment as he took in his surroundings.

"Please don't tell me I was knocked out so hard that I'm stuck in some bizarre dream," Orion muttered to himself, his palm rising to his face in an attempt to clear away the fog in his mind.

With a few gentle presses against his cheeks, he tried to shake off the surreal feeling.

However, after several minutes of repeating the process with identical results, a sudden realization struck him.

"How?" Orion muttered, his eyes widening in an instant, a profound shock and disbelief etched across his face as he gazed upon the exterior of a wide wooden hut.

Chapter 488 Aftermath (2)

Straightening up abruptly, he scanned his surroundings carefully. Orion's head swivelled from side to side as he observed every detail around him, briefly fixating on an unconscious, unfamiliar figure wearing a familiar tulga lying nearby.

After a while, he began to grapple with the reality that he had returned to the village.

'How? How did I return to the village? Where's Aegis of the Arctic Deity? What happened to the trial? What about Crystalia and the other participants? Did they make it?' Orion's mind raced with questions, trying to fathom the various reasons for his return to the village.

'Maybe they managed to free themselves from the mountain?' he considered, but the more he contemplated it, the less plausible it seemed.

It was highly unlikely that they had settled the war, regrouped, defeated White Flame, and escaped the mountain in such a short span of time.

Unless..." he pondered, the realization slowly dawning on him, "unless I've been unconscious for an extremely long time!"

"Shit!" Orion cursed inwardly, but even his hushed exclamation managed to slightly disturb the unknown woman sleeping on a nearby mat.

Realizing he needed to clear his head and get some fresh air, Orion rose from the mat and decided to stretch his stiff body.

He twisted from side to side, remembering a simple exercise from his former world that made his bones crack and pop. Stopping when he felt more relaxed, he began to walk forward, but his foot caught on a loose wooden floorboard, and he tumbled to the ground.

Orion stumbled over the wooden floorboard and collapsed to the ground. Frowning, he picked himself up, realizing he was now in his tulga. His legs felt unnaturally weak.

He turned his head as he heard a sudden sound, noticing the woman who remained undisturbed by the commotion.

Refocusing on his legs, he made a slow and steady attempt to stand. Gradually, he regained his sense of balance and began to walk gently and steadily.

Finally reaching the door, he took a deep breath, stretched his arms, and pulled it open.

Suddenly, a fresh wave of breeze collided with his bare chest, causing his body to shiver slightly as he exited the hut and closed the door.

He used his arm to shield himself from the sun's rays, which threatened to blind him.

Gradually, things began to clear up as Orion surveyed his surroundings. It was evident that he was in Overseer Anara's part of the farm. He observed the wide grassy field, with tall and assorted trees providing cover in the distance, along with the two large huts behind him. The view extended to a crystal-clear lake, likely the Ancestral Lake, further in the distance.

Orion took a deep, relaxing breath, choosing to savour the moment before he returned inside to wake the unknown woman and unravel the mystery of his situation.

However, a rhythmic thudding noise abruptly pierced his ears. He shifted his attention towards the source of the sound, and it became clear that the noise emanated from the side of the hut.

Curious to identify the origin of this disturbance, Orion's feet came to an abrupt stop, and he stood there transfixed, his gaze firmly locked on the source of the noise.

Right before him stood a woman, her waist-length black hair cascading around her. She was clad in a well-worn tulga, looking as if it hadn't met water in quite some time.

Her gaze, though weary, was intense, as if sleep had been a rare visitor. She was diligently pounding a pestle against a mortar as if grinding something within.

With a sudden halt to her efforts, she shifted her attention to a colourful pile of plants, most of which he had never seen before. Stretching out her arms, she grabbed a handful and added it to the mortar before resuming her vigorous pounding.

She paused once more, wiping the sweat from her forehead with both arms and then returned to her task with a determined expression.

Orion tried to speak, but to his surprise, he found himself strangely devoid of the strength to utter a word. He slowly advanced toward the woman, the persistent pounding of the mortar and pestle enveloping his senses.

The sound felt like it was piercing his ears, each pounding force resonating in his chest, stirring a myriad of emotions. He reached the woman's side, but she remained utterly absorbed in her task, seemingly oblivious to his presence.

Orion attempted to speak, yet once more, he was rendered mute, his voice imprisoned in his throat. The woman almost let go of the pestle, but her determination won, and she firmly clutched it, resuming her vigorous pounding.

Bowing down slowly, Orion extended his arm and grasped her arm, his voice finally breaking through. "That's enough, Greta. It's enough."

Frozen in disbelief, Greta, who had been diligently grinding herbs for Orion's treatment, could only stare in shock at his arm, which had suddenly clasped her trembling hands.

Slowly, she turned her head to the side, her gaze travelling upwards to meet the familiar individual whose eyes were locked onto her, causing her heart to skip a beat.

"Orion," Greta exclaimed, her eyes fixed on the well-known figure, brimming with emotion. "Orion, is that really you? Orion..." Without finishing her sentence, she swiftly reached out and touched his face, as if trying to confirm his identity.

Orion nodded in response, slowly extending his hand to clasp her trembling one.

Gazing deeply into her eyes, he offered a warm smile and softly said, "It's okay. You don't need to say a word. Just rest, you've already done more than enough."

Greta slowly nodded in response. Even though she had yearned for this moment, thinking it was nothing more than a dream, she closed her eyes and peacefully nestled against his chest.

Meanwhile, Orion gently wrapped his arm around her and used his free hand to caress her hair.

He had no idea how hard she had been working, but he had no intention of waking her up to ask about such a trivial matter.

Chapter 489 Orion's Recovery

After patiently waiting for Greta to fall asleep, Orion gently lifted her up and carried her back into the hut to ensure she could rest more comfortably.

Perhaps it was the creak of the door or the weight of his footsteps, but the moment Orion entered the room, the unknown woman abruptly opened her eyes. They widened at first, fixed on Orion as he walked in with a sleeping Greta.

Then, she sprang to her feet, eager for a closer look.

"You... You're awake," Lola stammered, making an effort to confirm that she wasn't just imagining things.

Orion nodded in response and signalled to the woman to unfurl a third mat that had been folded nearby. This would provide a more comfortable resting place for Greta until she woke up.

Then, he turned his attention to the middle-aged woman standing by his side.

"I'm sorry, but I don't recognize who you are," he admitted truthfully. "Can I ask for your name?"

The unknown woman examined Orion from head to toe before responding. She shook her head. "There's no need to apologize. We've never crossed paths, so, understandably, you don't recognize me. My name is Lola; I'm the Village Healer's assistant," she replied with a warm smile as she met Orion's gaze.

Realizing that Lola was Aunt Greta's assistant, Orion nodded in acknowledgement.

"Alright, can you get me something to eat, Lola? I'm feeling a bit hungry," he said, hearing a slight rumble in his stomach.

Lola instantly understood and nodded. "Please rest a bit longer, Mr. Orion, while I go prepare some fruits for you to eat. I'll also need to report your recovery to the Village Chief and the others."

Orion nodded in agreement. "Alright," he replied.

Since he had been kidnapped alongside Saria by Stronghold Leader Drakar, it was clear that they would all be concerned and eagerly waiting for his recovery to find out what had taken place during their disappearance.

With this in mind, Orion asked, "Am I the only one who was rescued?"

Upon hearing Orion's sudden question, Lola let out a deep breath and nodded. "Yes, you were the only one rescued and brought back to the village. Everyone has been anxiously waiting for you to wake up so you can tell us what happened after you were abducted by Stronghold Leader Drakar, and whether Saria is still alive."

Orion frowned inwardly at her words.

'So it seems I was somehow expelled from the mountain after completing the trial. But why?' Orion thought.

He remembered that Aegis of the Arctic Deity had offered him a chance to leave the mountain, which he had declined, choosing to stay. Therefore, he couldn't help but wonder if Aegis of the Divine Deity had taken the opportunity to send him out of the mountain shortly after he completed the trial.

Furrowing his brows, Orion couldn't quite pinpoint the reason why Aegis of the Arctic Deity would take such an action, unless he also held some grudge against the Prismerions.

Given his control over the mountain, which made it challenging for the Prismerions to navigate, Orion couldn't deny that Aegis of the Divine Deity might have removed him to prevent him from assisting the Prismerions in gaining their freedom.

'That bastard,' Orion thought.

If the other individual weren't a god, and essentially just a wisp of a god's soul, he might have contemplated how well his lightning could burn him to a crisp.

Nevertheless, Orion chose to set this issue aside for now and focus his attention on the current matter at hand.

"How long have I been unconscious?" Orion asked.

"You were brought back to the Village two days ago, but the warriors found you unconscious a day before that, so we're not exactly sure how long you've been out," Lola replied, shaking her head with a deep sigh.

Orion remained silent. His face grew stiff as he realized that the war might have already occurred.

The idea of the Crystalforge Clan winning the war didn't seem plausible to him, considering the Queen's current condition and the fact that many of the Crystalforge Clan's elite warriors who had participated in the trial had died.

It was fair to say that the current Crystalforge Clan appeared as an empty shell when compared to the other five major clans.

Just the thought of what might happen to Merida, Maya, and the others was enough to trigger a sudden headache at the back of Orion's mind.

He took a deep breath and refocused his attention on Lola.

"Alright, I understand," he responded, watching as Lola nodded.

"Please rest a bit, Mr. Orion. I'll be back soon," Lola said, before quickly leaving the hut and closing the door.

Orion took the opportunity to follow her advice, sitting down to rest and gather his thoughts.

His attention soon shifted to his sleeping Aunt Greta, who appeared to be experiencing the sweetest dream of her life, giggling and blushing repeatedly with a beautiful smile on her face.

Slowly, a smile settled on his face as he gazed at her weary expression, unable to ignore how his mother, Reena, Fifi, Grandma Ingrid, and the rest had coped with his absence.

If they were in a condition similar to Greta's, then he would have to find a way to make it up to them one way or another.

....

As Orion concluded his explanation, he observed the unknown middle-aged man sitting beside the Village Chief, the Village Chieftess, Stronghold Leader Zogar, and surprisingly Anara.

They all sat in front of him, processing his explanation with sceptical raised brows.

"Are you certain that this is the entirety of what transpired since you were abducted by Stronghold Leader Drakar?" Stronghold Leader Zogar asked, his voice laced with scepticism.

Although he had no reason to doubt Orion's words, given that Seth and the warriors sent to rescue them had all confirmed finding Orion near a mountain.

But believing in a group of unknown individuals living within it, surviving on a garden similar to their farm, alongside a vengeful god intending to kill them, all imprisoned by Naka, was an account that not only he found difficult to believe but was sure that anyone in his position would also be sceptical about.

"Yes, I assure you, Stronghold Leader Zogar, that everything I've recounted is real and true," Orion replied, nodding his head at Stronghold Leader Zogar.

After sharing his account with everyone present, omitting certain private details, Orion realized that had he not witnessed it himself, he would have been as sceptical as Stronghold Leader Zogar.

Nevertheless, considering the reputation he had diligently built within the village, Orion knew that whether they found his words sceptical or not, they would undoubtedly still trust him.

Proving it to them by allowing them to witness it for themselves and confirm it wasn't a challenge Orion couldn't handle.

Right now, his primary concern was finding a way back to the mountain as quickly as possible, with as many warriors as he could gather in case the situation had taken a turn for the worst.

Of course, it wasn't that Orion doubted his ability to handle the situation in the Prismerian Kingdom alone.

However, no matter how strong he was, he couldn't be in multiple places simultaneously. Therefore, having capable hands to assist him in managing the situation all at once would be more effective.

Stronghold Leader Zogar shook his head in response to Orion's words, observing his sincere expression.

"Don't misunderstand, it's not that I don't trust you or believe you're lying. But believing such a thing is genuinely difficult for me unless I've seen it with my own eyes," he explained, exhaling deeply.

"Stronghold Leader Zogar is absolutely right. If any other warrior had brought us this story, we might have assumed they'd lost their mind and were merely fabricating stories," Village Chieftess Zara said, nodding in agreement with Orion's words.

"Furthermore, considering that this race faced punishment from Naka as retaliation, wouldn't it be a potentially disastrous idea for us to meddle in this situation and risk angering Naka by assisting a race that had betrayed him?"

Orion furrowed his brows at the Village Chieftess's question, then shook his head and responded, "Naka is a benevolent god, so I don't believe he would punish us for wanting to help a race that was once his children. Besides, after completing the trial, they have earned their right to salvation. I think Naka would be more furious if we refused to assist them in their time of need and might even curse us if we turned a blind eye."

Orion chose to keep the details of the trial a secret for now, much like he had done with the story of the Prismerions' betrayal. Delving into it was a separate topic that Orion believed they weren't yet ready to handle. He decided to take things one step at a time.

The Village Chieftess carefully considered Orion's words, her expression serious.

After a few seconds of contemplation, she redirected her attention to Orion and nodded, exhaling deeply. "I suppose you're right," she said. "Given that they have already attained their salvation and are Naka's children, it would be only reasonable for us to lend a helping hand in their time of need."

After she finished speaking, she turned to the Village Chief, who appeared lost in his thoughts.

"Ahem!" Village Chieftess Zara called out to him, snapping him out of his daze. "What's your opinion, Chief?"

Village Chief Brane released a deep sigh, mirroring the sentiments of the others. It wasn't just the Prismerion race trapped in a mountain that he found hard to believe, but also the fact that Orion had faced a god himself.

A god!

A being on par with Naka, a being who likely had the opportunity to witness Naka's power, given the account of his failed rebellion and subsequent punishment, was the entity that Orion had confronted and survived.

How could he not find it utterly ridiculous?

Like the others, the only reason he even began to take it seriously and not dismiss it as a fabrication was because it was Orion who relayed the story. Moreover, considering how his son had described

finding Orion unconscious near the mountains, they had brought him back to the Village in his Vylkr warrior mode, despite not having reached his full potential.

This indicated that something extraordinary had happened to put him in that condition. Brane, therefore, was inclined to believe Orion's words, and he quickly made his decision.

"As long as Saria is still alive, both Leftward Stronghold Leader Zogar and I would be more than willing to dispatch a group of warriors to assist you in retrieving her. However, ever since Rightward Stronghold Leader Drakar's disappearance, our warriors have been under immense strain, dealing with the Vylkr vines encroaching on our borders and protecting the village."

"The burden has been so great that we've had to increase their compensation, even offering considerable rewards to those who risked their lives to bring you back to the village," the Village Chief's tone briefly turned icy when he mentioned Stronghold Leader Drakar, but he quickly regained composure and continued, "Therefore, I must convene with other key figures to discuss the current situation and determine how to address this issue before reaching a final decision."

"In the meantime, you can leave the matter in our hands and visit your family. They are undoubtedly anxious to hear about your condition and would be overjoyed to learn of your recovery."

Orion nodded in response, saying, "Alright, Chief, I understand."

He observed the group as they exchanged silent glances, almost like they were engaged in a nonverbal conversation.

Their collective gaze then settled on Overseer Anara, who had been sitting quietly throughout the meeting.

Village Chieftess Zara cleared her throat and addressed Overseer Anara, breaking the silence, "Overseer Anara, do you have any information you would like to share now that Orion is here?"

Anara shifted her attention away from Orion, her face adorned with a warm smile. "If it's okay, Village Chieftess, I would prefer to speak privately with Orion first," she replied, briefly glancing at the others.

With a collective sigh of disappointment, Village Chieftess Zara and the others nodded in understanding. They rose from their seats, one by one, and began to exit the wooden hut.