Zompirewolf 681

Chapter 681 Final Gift (2)

Following Kro'Han's attack, Ashton struggled to his feet, his body battered and bruised, yet his determination was unwavering. But as Kro'Han said, determination alone wasn't enough to win against someone like him.

"Is that the best you can do, nephew? I expected more," Kro'Han scoffed as he ascended the surface.

He was confident that Ashton would give up as he had made the difference between their strength clear. But to his surprise, Ashton still got back to his feet, ready to fight.

"I'm not done yet," Ashton said, spitting a mouthful of blood.

"I remember when your father used to be this stubborn," Kro'Han sighed.

Despite his demeanour, Kro'Han didn't want to kill Ashton because he was a Precursor, a bloodline on the verge of extinction. Besides, unlike Jo'Han, he believed in the supremacy of Precursor blood and didn't want to spill it unnecessarily.

But Ashton was not giving him much choice in the matter. They could rule the entire universe by themselves, but his nephew had to make things difficult for him.

In Kro'Han's eyes, the ideals of equality only worked for the weak, not for the strong, who had the power to shape their fate and those around them. Unfortunately, Ashton was brought up in an environment not suited for the strong. Hence, he was weak-minded... just like his father.

"You still have much to learn," Kro'Han commented as he got into position to end their farce. "But don't worry, as a good uncle, I'll teach you everything your father didn't. A lesson of why you shouldn't have gone against me."

With that, Kro'Han charged at Ashton, who couldn't even defend himself. Kro'Han, with his mastery of Precursor abilities far outshining Ashton's, delivered relentless barrages of strikes with calculated precision.

Each blow was a symphony of ruthless, unadulterated strength. With each punch and kick, Kro'Han seemed to take a sadistic delight in dismantling Ashton's defences.

Ashton tried to fight back, but he found himself struggling to keep pace with the sheer magnitude of Kro'Han's might and experience of thousands of years.

"You are powerful, Ashton," Kro'Han said, his voice was cold. "Give up your stubbornness and join me!"

Ashton's response was a defiant middle finger, a gesture of unyielding resistance. He refused to bow to Kro'Han's will, no matter the cost.

Bruised and battered, Ashton was forced into a corner. It wasn't the first time he had felt that way. First, it was Mera. Then it became the emperor Bismarck, and only a few weeks ago, it was his masters.

Whenever Ashton achieved a new strength, someone stronger than him waited to put him in his place, yet every single time, he exceeded his limits, getting stronger with every fight.

That's why he knew it was just another one of those times when he would have to exceed the limits of his strengths and turn the tables on Kro'Han. At least, that's what he thought as Kro'Han's attacks rained on him.

But then, at one point, the attacks stopped. Ashton could barely look up to see the guardians had intervened between them, a scene that surprised both Ashton and Kro'Han.

After all, the guardians were programmed not to attack a Precursor, so it was surprising to see them coming to Ashton's rescue.

"Is'Kai... this is her doing, isn't it?" Kro'Han smiled bitterly as he stepped back. "Fine, let's do something she wouldn't expect me to do-"

However, before he could do anything to the guardians, Ashton unleashed his ultimate trump card, the "Revenge" skill. The damage he had endured throughout their battle surged within him, amplified to a cataclysmic magnitude as he returned the punches Kro'Han had generously delivered him.

"Take this!"

With a triumphant roar, Ashton directed the unleashed energy towards Kro'Han, a blinding torrent of force that engulfed his foe. The ground quaked as Kro'Han collided with the surface, forming a colossal crater.

But Ashton wasn't done yet. He delivered another strike, giving it all he had, creating a second crater even more massive than the first.

Dust and debris filled the air, shrouding the battlefield. Battered and bruised, Ashton struggled to maintain his footing, yet his eyes were fixed on the dust cloud where his uncle had fallen.

As the dust began to settle, Ashton's heart pounded in his chest, his breaths coming in ragged gasps. He watched, hoping that was it.

For a moment, it seemed as though the unthinkable had occurred—that Kro'Han had been defeated! Ashton's final, desperate gambit had succeeded!

But then, a figure emerged from the crater's centre. Kro'Han's once-immaculate attire was now tattered and scorched. But apart from that, he was fairly unaffected.

The wounds inflicted upon him, even by the amplified "Revenge" skill, appeared to be nothing more than superficial scratches.

"It seems," Kro'Han declared, his voice resonating like a distant thunderclap, "that your 'Revenge' has done little more than mildly inconvenience me, Ashton."

Ashton's body trembled, not from fear but from sheer exhaustion. He had given everything and pushed himself to the brink, but it still hadn't been enough.

Kro'Han brushed his fingers across the shallow wound on his cheek, examining the trickle of crimson that stained his fingers. His smile did not waver, and he gazed upon Ashton with amusement.

"It has been ages since I last beheld the sight of the hue of my blood," Kro'Han mused. "You have shown exceptional tenacity, my dear nephew. Your determination is indeed commendable."

Ashton found himself at a loss for words. He had hoped that his final, desperate attack would have been enough to defeat his uncle or at least make him retreat, but neither happened.

"But it seems you have reached the limits of your strength, dear nephew," Kro'Han said, taking a step forward. "So what will you do now? Join me or-"

"You already know the answer," Ashton retorted, even though he knew what would happen following his response.

"So be it," Kro'Han's eyes narrowed, and his amusement faded into a cold, steely expression. "This'll be the end for you."

Chapter 682 Final Gift (3)

Ashton was on his knees. Every part of his body was aching in pain like never before. Despite his willpower and resolve, he made peace with the fact there was nothing more he could do against someone like Kro'Han.

He gave everything he could to the Precursor, but the latter had the solution for everything Ashton threw his way. It was a losing battle which had come to an end.

At that moment, all Ashton hoped was for his people to be safe and wished they would find a solution to deal with the Precursor because he failed.

With that, there wasn't much left for Ashton to do, and he closed his eyes, waiting for the final blow to end it for him. Unfortunately for him, even though he had given up, his body hadn't.

While Ashton waited for Kro'Han's attack, the Seraph's crystal embedded in his hand reacted on its own. At that moment, it felt like his entire body was on fire, which snapped him from his pathetic state.

"What is this sorcery?" Kro'Han mumbled as searing hellfire covered Ashton.

It was amusing to see that all-knowing Precursor being clueless for a moment, allowing Ashton to deal a severe blow to his uncle.

"ARGH!!!"

With an anguished roar, Ashton directed a torrent of blazing flames at Kro'Han's face. The Precursor howled in agony, staggering back as the inferno engulfed him. Flames danced and writhed around Kro'Han, blinding him and consuming his senses.

Now Ashton had two choices: he could either stay and press on his advantage or leave to fight another day. But the choice was as clear as day. He would have to fight and stop the Precursor while he had the advantage.

'It not as if he'd let me escape after all this shit. Besides, if I leave, everyone would be in danger, not just me.'

With his decision made, Ashton acted on it without any delay. He reached into his inventory and took out the Grim Reaper's Scythe. He knew the phasing ability wouldn't be of any use to him. That said, Ashton thought if anything could harm a Precursor, it had to be the power of death.

After all, the Scythe was a weapon his father used, and he must have used it against Kro'Han during their fight. Hence, it made the most sense that Ashton used the same weapon.

Ashton swung the weapon with every ounce of strength left within him, aiming for Kro'Han's head. He hoped for the best, which was to inflict any harm on Kro'Han.

Although he was blinded by the flames, Ko'Han responded with uncanny speed. He managed to evade the Scythe's lethal arc but not entirely unscathed.

The deadly tip of the weapon grazed his face, severing one of his eyes and marking the loss with a trail of blood that followed. Kro'Han roared in pain and fury, staggering backwards, clutching his wounded face and bellowing in agony and rage.

Having landed a critical blow, Ashton stepped back, a fleeting glimmer of hope surging within him. He had inflicted a grievous injury upon Kro'Han, one that might alter the course of their battle.

But Ashton was surprised more than anyone else! Ashe didn't expect the Scythe actually to work against Kro'Han.

However, the happiness was short-lived. Kro'Han, consumed by rage and vengeance, unleashed the full brunt of his aura on Ashton as he lunged at him.

"YOU UNGRATEFUL VERMIN!"

His fingers clawed the air as he reached for Ashton's throat. Ashton swung the Scythe again, but Kro'han knocked the weapon out of his grasp using his aura.

At that moment, Ashton realised his hope was like a flickering flame before a fire died and that it was over for him.

Yet, just as Kro'Han's grasp was about to ensnare Ashton, a series of explosions erupted around them. The concussive blasts sent shockwaves through the air, obscuring vision with dense plumes of smoke while simultaneously impacting Kro'Han's hearing.

The blasts were no accident; they were a tactical manoeuvre orchestrated by none other than his masters.

In the midst of the confusion, Anna and the twins moved with lightning speed. Their instincts were kicked into high gear. They reached Ashton's side in the blinding smoke, finding him on the verge of passing out.

"What... are you... doing here..." Ashton weakly mumbled as soon as he saw them. "It's dangerous..."

"We know genius!" Anna yelled back. "That's why we're pulling you out!"

"Is his pull-out game that bad?" Irina couldn't control her habit of joking at the worst possible times.

"Not the time, Irina!" Verina reprimanded her sister as they dragged Ashton with all their strength. "This stupid armour! Why is it so heavy if it can't even protect you properly!"

"Stop... it-"

"Shut it!" Anna yelled once again, and it was then Ashton's vision cleared up, and he saw her tear-drenched face.

It wasn't surprising she was worried about him. After all, it had to be the worst beating Ashton had ever received. In fact, he was confident that if they hadn't intervened when they did, it would have been the end of him.

That said, even they were no match for Kro'Han, and the smoke wouldn't stop him for long. This meant the girls were in danger as his uncle would soon be upon them.

It was like Berina read Ashton's mind and told him not to worry about them as there were people who were willing to take the fall for his sake.

Ashton was confused for a moment. That was until he turned his attention in front of him. Through his limited vision, he could see the towering figures of his masters—Vulcan and Flintmace, standing resolutely before Kro'Han.

But they weren't alone as they were accompanied by an unexpected figure, the First Seatholder, who had chosen to stand with them. It was a formidable and experienced team... at least, that's what Ashton would have said in any other situation.

However, in front of Kro'Han, they were like ants. No matter how small a snake was, three ants would never be a match for the snake.

Desperation clawed at Ashton's heart as he realised the dire situation. He had witnessed firsthand the formidable power that Kro'Han possessed. His masters, as mighty as they were, might not stand a chance against this Precursor behemoth.

Watching their master die for their sake was something no disciple wished to see, and Ashton was no different. He knew he had to rejoin the fight before it was too late.

"Let me go!" he yelled, struggling to free himself from their grasp, but his body was too bruised and exhausted to free himself.

But his pleas fell on deaf ears. The girls knew what was at stake. Vulcan and Flintmace were willing to sacrifice their lives just so that Ashton could live to fight another day against the Precursor.

Vulcan, who had never asked anything from Anna, had made her promise to him that no matter what, she would bring Ashton to safety and leave. Flintmace even arranged for everything Ashton would need to recover in the Tower.

As for the First, while he had no personal connection to Ashton, he told the girls to ask Ashton to forgive him for his rudeness and gave him his blessings before they commenced the operation to save him.

Ashton's life was more precious to them than their own, and the girls were deadset on not letting Ashton topple his masters' final gift to him.

Having no other way, Ashton called upon the guardians. Hoping they would help him. But to his surprise, instead of aiding his escape, they assisted the girls in guiding him toward the waiting spaceship as quickly as possible.

"What are you doing!?" Ashton yelled at the constructs, to which the guardians replied in unison.

"Your survival is our only priority."

"For fucks sake! They'll die out there! I have to help help them!"

"Sorry... Ash... but I can't let that happen," Anna sniffled, but her face hardened afterwards. "It was their last wish, and I'm not going to deny them that."

Ashton's struggles stopped after hearing that. He watched in anguish as they reached the ship's entrance. His gaze locked onto Vulcan's for a final time, who winked at him with a knowing smile.

At that moment, Ashton was reminded of the oath his master had taken—a commitment to not raise his weapon against any species but the Xyrans. But for the sake of his disciple, Vulcan willingly broke that promise and decided to fight his self-proclaimed god.

That action alone told Ashton how special he was to his master. But what happened next wholly broke Ashton.

"Ashton, being your master has been an honour, but I'm afraid this is where our paths diverge," Vulcan spoke with a heavy heart and a rare smile. "Live, and live well, for your life is the final gift we, your masters, can offer you."

Flintmace smiled in agreement, "Take care of yourself, lad, and don't you dare join us in the afterlife without beating the shit out of this bastard. That's an order, the final one!"

Tears welled up in Ashton's eyes as the spaceship's doors closed, taking him away from the battlefield.

Chapter 683 Noble Sacrifice (1)

"Who would have thought this is how we'll meet our end," Flintmace smiled as Ashton's ship disappeared into the darkness of space. "Especially you, Vulcan. I was hoping you would stay with the boy."

"What would be the point in that?" Vulcan scoffed. "The brat already learned everything I had to teach him. Besides, I have no faith in you and had to stay back to ensure you didn't screw up."

"Oh yeah? What about you? You went from 'I'll kill the Xyrans' to 'I'll team up with them' real quick!" Flintmace joked, trying to make their last moments worth it.

"Look, as much as I'm enjoying your banter, it's time to get serious now." The First spoke as the around them settled.

Amidst the settling smoke and swirling dust, Kro'Han emerged like a harbinger of doom. His aura was going berserk, making it difficult for the trio even to breathe.

But upon seeing his face, Vulcan and the Xyrans felt a tinge of hope. After all, none of them had ever seen a Precursor bleed, let alone an injury. His once god-like form was marred by losing his eye, replaced by a dark, empty socket that seemed to devour the light around them.

But even then, the trio wasn't deluded enough to think they'd be able to win against Kro'Han. If they were lucky, they'd be able to take his second eye away, but that was the extent of their strength.

For a moment, Kro'Han's crimson gaze scanned the battlefield. Undoubtedly looking for his beloved nephew, and sighed when he didn't find him.

He had sought to end Ashton's life and eliminate all uncertainties in his plan. But he was deprived of that joy due to his carelessness. No, it was more like Fate had denied him that satisfaction.

"Hm... it will be too bothersome to find that kid," Kro'Han mumbled. "Thanks to my bastard brother's curse, I can't leave this planet or regenerate lost organs anymore. I should have been- well, well, well, what do we have here?"

As Kro'Han was about to retreat, he saw the trio standing before him from the corner of his eyes: Flintmace and the First Seatholder, both Xyrans who had accompanied Ashton. A twisted smile curved Kro'Han's lips as he spoke, his voice dripping with mockery.

"Ah, the Xyrans, always meddling where they don't belong. It would be best if you had left with my dear nephew. Why did you bother staying back?"

"Well, considering we've already cleared out your entire gang, I figured you might be feeling a tad lonesome," Flintmace casually shrugged. "Being the kind-hearted soul that I am, I thought, 'Why not keep you company?'"

"What about you, dwarf," Kro'Han asked Vulcan. "I can smell the stench of servitude still clings to you. If so, stand down, and I might let you resume your duties to me as a servant like the rest of your kind were."

Upon hearing Kro'Han's words, Vulcan would only laugh at his face. Maybe Kro'Han wasn't expecting that, as his smile turned sour upon hearing Vulcan's reply.

"Deluded in your old age, aren't you? I don't remember pledging allegiance to a warmongering bastard like you."

Vulcan responded, brandishing his middle finger before the Precursor, who was confused about why everyone kept showing him their finger. But he didn't bother with the unknown.

"Your people always had a sharp tongue," Kro'Han said as his smile turned nasty. "And that's the reason got them all sent to hell."

Kro'Han chuckled when he saw the look of confusion on Vulcan's face. From what Vulcan remembered, it was the Xyrans who had killed the Dwarves, and that's why it didn't make sense why Kro'Han took responsibility for such a thing.

"Ah, so you didn't know?" Kro'Han acted surprised. "Then there's no point in talking about how your people begged for mercy as my soldiers killed them."

But it was Kro'Han who was in for a surprise when, instead of getting enraged like dwarves usually did, Vulcan began laughing.

"It's a shame what you've become," he said. "With someone like you being a precursor, it's unsurprising that they ended themselves. Believe me, if you were a dwarf, all of us would hammer our heads till we were dead."

Kro'Han's smile faded, replaced by a cold, deadly seriousness. "If you wish for death so badly, then I shall gladly deliver you to the door of hell."

With that, there was no need for words anymore, and the trio simultaneously attacked Kro'Han, hoping to overpower the rogue Precursor.

Vulcan swung his mighty hammer, its sheer weight enough to shatter mountains. Flintmace unleashed his blade, aiming for Kro'Han's head, while the First charged forward, wielding his dual axes with uncanny precision.

Kro'Han watched their movements with amusement, his arms crossed casually over his chest. With a flick of his wrist, he redirected Vulcan's hammer strike away from his head, causing it to collide with the ground, sending shockwaves through the earth.

Flintmace's attacks struck nothing but air as Kro'Han effortlessly sidestepped each blow and flicked him in the head, sending him flying across the land.

The First's axe, aimed at Kro'Han's legs, was caught in the Precursor's hand. The Xyran struggled to pull it free, but Kro'Han's grip was unbreakable.

With a slight flex of his fingers, Kro'Han disarmed Vulcan, sending the axe clattering to the ground. But that wasn't the end.

With a swift kick, Kro'Han sent the First sprawling backwards. The Xyran crashed into a rock formation, sending rubble flying around him.

The trio landed with bone-rattling thuds, struggling to rise but unable to conceal their shock and humiliation. They knew they had no chance against Kro'Han, but this was beyond their imagination. Meanwhile, Kro'Han's laughter, cold and mocking, filled the air.

"Did you truly believe you could challenge me?" Kro'Han taunted, his voice dripping with disdain. "You're nothing but ants before a god."

"Don't underestimate us, Kro'Han!" Flintmace growled, his massive fists clenched.

"Really? That's what you have to say to me after what I did?" Kro'Han shook his head. "I can hardly fathom that my brother sacrificed our species for yours. Such feeble beings... but it matters little. Once I'm finished with my nephew, the Xyrans will be next in line."

Chapter 684 Noble Sacrifice (2)

With a burst of energy, the trio launched another assault. This time, they didn't hold back, and it was as if their attacks were a force of nature itself.

Despite that, Kro'Han evaded their strikes effortlessly, ducking under Flintmace's swings, sidestepping the First's lightning-fast jabs, and parrying Vulcan's desperate blows with ease.

"Annoying pests like you should stay down!" Kro'Han roared before grabbing the First.

Then, with a flicker of movement too fast for the eye to follow, Kro'Han's palm struck the First's chest, sending a shockwave through the Xyran's body.

The First was flung backwards, crashing into a rocky outcrop with bone-rattling force. His insides had turned upside down in a complete mess in just one attack.

Watching his former comrade disposed of in such a manner, Flintmace couldn't hold back. He roared in anger, charging at Kro'Han with all his might.

But Kro'Han, his patience wearing thin, decided to end the charade right then and there. He extended his hand, and an invisible force slammed into Flintmace, halting the Xyran in his tracks. Flintmace struggled against the unseen restraint, his face contorted with effort, but it was futile.

With a flick of his hand, Kro'Han sent Flintmace hurtling through the air, crashing into the ground with a deafening thud. The earth quaked beneath the impact, and dust and debris filled the air.

But it wasn't enough for Kro'Han as he unleashed a barrage of his aura-backed fists, pummeling Flintmace to an inch of his life. He would have ended him had it not been for Vulcan's interference.

Vulcan, the last one standing, couldn't let Kro'han kill his comrades so easily and tossed a potent healing potion towards the First before charging at Kro'Han and throwing him off Flintmace's face.

Kro'Han was stunned as no dwarf had ever been strong enough to physically hit him, let alone fling him away.

"Oi, Xyran, drink this and get up!" Vulcan smacked Flintmace to wake him up and poured the last bottle of healing potion into his mouth.

While the Xyran's healed, Vulcan was left with dread and helplessness. He had seen the overwhelming might of Kro'Han, and he knew there was no hope of victory. But he couldn't give up, not while his comrades lay wounded and defeated.

"It seems you have grown stronger with time, Dwarf." Kro'Han turned his gaze to Vulcan, his eyes devoid of mercy. "You were a servant of the Precursors. You know what we are capable of. Surrender now, and I might spare your life."

Vulcan's hand tightened around the hilt of his warhammer, his knuckles white as he made his decision.

"I'll never surrender to the likes of you."

With that, he charged at Kro'Han, his battle cry ringing through the air. But it was a futile gesture. Kro'Han merely raised a hand, and Vulcan froze in his tracks, suspended in mid-air as if held by invisible chains.

Kro'Han's laughter echoed through the battlefield. "Stubborn to the end, aren't you?"

With a flick of his wrist, Kro'Han sent Vulcan hurtling away, his form disappearing into the distance. The dwarf's indomitable spirit, however, remained unbroken as he got up, bruised but not defeated.

Kro'Han stood amidst the aftermath of the battle; his victory was assured, yet the fools kept attacking him. Even though their attempts were nothing more than a futile display of resistance.

The Precursor looked down at his fallen foes, his expression one of cold satisfaction and said, "Still not giving up, huh? My dearest nephew managed to find some decent friends after all."

Kro'Han towered over the First, Flintmace, and Vulcan, his malevolent eyes gleaming with superiority. He had already demonstrated his might by effortlessly swatting them aside like insignificant insects.

Bloodied and battered, the trio refused to yield to their powerful adversary. Their determination to protect Ashton was much more potent than their injuries.

As soon as the First's injuries healed up a bit, he launched himself at Kro'Han. With blazing speed, he aimed a ferocious punch at the Precursor's face.

But Kro'Han, his senses honed by centuries of experience, sidestepped effortlessly. He backhanded the First with a brutal force that sent him spiralling through the air, crashing into the rocky terrain with a sickening thud.

But not before the First stuck a grenade onto Kro'Han's back as a massive explosion bruised the Precursor's back, making him stagger. Flintmace didn't waste the opportunity and attacked next.

Flintmace picked up the First's axes and came charging at Kro'Han. He swung them in a dizzying whirlwind, aiming for Kro'Han's legs to bring the enemy down.

Kro'Han, still dazed by the explosion, caught one of the blades mid-swing with his massive hand. But the other found its target, making the mighty fall to his knees.

But the sharp pain managed to pull Kro'Han back to his senses as he twisted the axe from Flintmace's grasp and stabbed Flintmace in the chest with it.

Flintmace stumbled back, blood pouring out of his chest. His eyes remained defiant, even if his body was broken.

"Flintmace! Damn it, you fool! I didn't use my potion on you for you to do something stupid like this!" Vulcan roared as he struck Kro'Han with all his might.

Flames and lightning erupted from his fingertips as he struck the Precursor. But Kro'Han had enough. How dare these mortal brats he helped create challenge his authority?

He raised an imperious hand and created a formidable energy shield that absorbed Vulcan's attacks effortlessly. The Precursor sneered, taunting Vulcan for his futile efforts.

But Vulcan, gritting his teeth, continued to pour all his energy into the attacks, determined to create an opening for his allies to gather themselves.

"An odd idea struck me just now," Kro'Han sneered. "I know my nephew will return to me, and when he does, I'll have a present ready for him. All your severed heads waiting to welcome him!"

"You sure talk a lot... for someone who can't even... kill us in one attack," Flintmace mumbled as the First dragged him to safety. "The Precursors, I remember, could destroy entire planets in a blink of an eye... but look at you... struggle against us... haha!"

"Kill you in one blow? Where's the fun in that?" Kro'Han retorted. "But don't worry, I will show you something you'll remember for the rest of your short lives."

Kro'Han decided to make an example of them to show the futility of their resistance. With terrifying swiftness, the shield around him exploded, pushing all of them backwards.

Next, he charged at them, incapacitating each of them systematically, delivering blows that left them gasping for breath and in agonising pain. Yet, it wasn't enough.

As Kro'Han prepared for the final blow, the trio looked at each other and nodded. They couldn't win this fight, but they could make sure Kro'Han wouldn't forget the day he crossed paths with them. With the last of their strength, they launched a coordinated attack on Kro'Han.

The First gathered and channelled his remaining energy into a blindingly fast strike. He managed to land a punch squarely on Kro'Han's chest, creating a shockwave that sent the Precursor stumbling backwards before grabbing onto him so that he couldn't escape their final attack.

Flintmace, despite his broken body, forced himself to stand and grabbed Kro'Han's leg, attempting to deny his escape. At the same time, Vulcan summoned the last reserves of his elemental power and engulfed Kro'Han and the Xyrans in a searing inferno.

"Do it now, Vulcan!" the First yelled as Kro'Han tried his best to get the leeches off him.

"Stars of the cosmos, unleash your blaze. In this final act, my life I raze," Vulcan chanted as the fire from his hands grew hotter and hotter, "A thousand suns, your heat so dire. Take my soul, become my pyre!"

But it wasn't any ordinary flame as Vulcan had ignited his life force to scorch him with the heat of a thousand suns. It was a secret move his father had taught him before he was forced to use it to help Vulcan escape the Precursor homeworld.

Kro'Han roared in agony as flames consumed him, his colossal frame writhing in pain. He had heard about the suicide attack of the Dwarves but had always believed it to be a hoax and nothing more.

But now that he had seen the attack, he knew he had to get away from there, no matter the cost.

"Damn you, insects!"

In desperation, Kro'Han severed his hand and a leg to escape Vulcan's relentless assault. Watching him run away from the flames, Flintamce scoffed as his body turned to ashes.

The First tried to grab Kro'Han again, but the latter held his head and crushed his skull, which burst open like a watermelon, killing him before the fire could consume him.

As the smoke and flames cleared, Kro'Han, his gaze burning with rage, stood over the fallen bodies of the First, Flintmace, and Vulcan. Flintmace and the First were dead, while Vulcan was on the brink of death.

But they had accomplished their goal. Their sacrifice had inflicted a grievous wound upon the mighty Kro'Han. They thought they'd be lucky to rid one of the Precursor's limbs. Instead, they got rid of two.

"I'll... call it a... victory, won't you, brat?" Vulcan mumbled with a smile as his vision faded. "We... did what we could... Ashton... the rest is on you..."

Chapter 685 The Edge Of Death

As the spaceship ascended through the outer layers of Planet Euphoria's atmosphere, the dire state of Ashton's condition became even more apparent.

What had once been a strong and indomitable form lay weak on a makeshift medical bed within the vessel. Anna was unable to contain her grief. Tears streamed down her face as she clutched his frail hand, her heart heavy with despair.

"I'm here, Ashton. You have to fight this," she whispered between choked sobs, her voice trembling with fear of losing him. "Please, don't leave me."

Beside Anna stood Irina and Verina. They were not only Ashton's closest allies but also Anna's friends. Their usually mischievous expressions were replaced with a shared anguish.

"He is stronger than anyone we have ever seen," Irina said as her gaze remained locked on Ashton's pale face while Verina squeezed Anna's shoulder reassuringly. "He'll make it through! He has to!"

Amid this heartbreaking scene, Laihud worked tirelessly to stabilise Ashton's rapidly deteriorating condition.

His keen eyes scanned the array of medical equipment, his mind racing through the vast knowledge he had acquired over his long life. Yet, despite his expertise, he felt helpless.

The injuries Ashton had sustained during his battle with Kro'Han were much more severe than they looked from the outside. This was the case when he was wearing the armour. Without it, he would have died even before they boarded the ship.

"This transformation into a Precursor has altered his physiology beyond anything I've encountered before," Laihud mumbled. "I can't do much without the risk of inflicting more damage on him... damn it... there has to be something!"

Things took a turn for the worse as Ashton's vitals plummeted. Laihud panicked and called Vimur for help.

"Vimur, turn on autopilot and get here!" Laihud shrieked. "We need to perform CPR right now!"

"Fuck!" Vimur cursed back as he rushed to help Laihud.

Vimur abandoned his pilot seat to join Laihud in their desperate efforts to revive Ashton. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead as he applied pressure during CPR, his powerful hands working with Laihud's expertise.

"Come on, Ashton," Vimur muttered, his usually unwavering voice laced with urgency. "You're not one to give up easily. Don't you dare leave us now!"

However, despite their relentless attempts, Ashton's condition continued its downward spiral.

"FUCK! FUCK! FUCK! We're losing him!" Vimur screamed as Anna broke down entirely.

Anna's sobs filled the cabin, a haunting chorus of despair echoing their helplessness.

But the seconds ticked by mercilessly, each deepening the chasm of despair that threatened to engulf them. It felt as though they were racing against time as they did everything they could to snatch Ashton from the jaws of death.

During this turmoil, the Guardians stepped forward. Their metallic forms moved forward, surrounding Ashton, as they seemed to communicate silently with one another.

"Please move aside," one of the guardians cautioned Laihud and Vimur. "We shall follow the protocol and help our master."

Vimur was against it, but Laihud dragged him back. After all, they had done they could to help Ashton, and yet they failed. Besides, the guardians were machines created by the precursors, so it was highly probable that they knew more about Precursor anatomy than they did.

The Guardians worked as a synchronised team, their actions precise and coordinated. One of them connected to a medical panel, its appendages deftly attaching to Ashton's head while one removed his armour.

Another monitored vital signs with a speed and accuracy that defied mortal capability. A third Guardian, its robotic eyes scanning Ashton's body, transmitted data to a central interface.

The remaining two guardians created various tools and equipment they would need out of their own bodies. Once everything was in place, they got to work.

Together, they initiated a series of medical procedures beyond conventional technology's capabilities. They administered medications, virtually adjusted the levels of oxygen and nutrients in Ashton's bloodstream, and even triggered nanobots to repair damaged tissues.

"How is this even possible?" Laihud mumbled as he scanned the readings.

"What's happening?" Irina, who was as clueless as everyone, asked laihud to explain.

"The guardians, they aren't just healing Ashton, but they are making him better," Laihud stammered. "I don't know how to explain it, but it's like they are taking apart a puzzle and reassembling it while keeping it untouched."

"What are you even saying?" Vimur scratched his head. "How can someone rearrange a puzzle without taking it apart?"

"I... think they are working on something like a clone before copy-pasting the results over Ashton," Laihud replied, shaking his head. "I know it's confusing, but that's the best way I can explain what's happening to you."

While Laihua talked, the automatons worked without any breaks or mistakes. It was a symphony of advanced medical interventions orchestrated by beings that operated on a plane of knowledge far beyond mortal comprehension.

As the Guardians worked, the atmosphere in the cabin shifted from one of despair to one of tense anticipation. Vimur and Laihud observed with hope and worry.

Minutes passed like hours. The silence was broken only by the rhythmic hum of the spaceship's systems and the faint beeping of medical equipment.

Anna's tearful gaze remained fixed on Ashton, her fingers intertwined with his. Irina and Verina, still standing by her side, exchanged worried glances.

Their actions soon yielded results. Ashton's heart stuttered, faltered, and then resumed a feeble rhythm. Ashton's chest rose as he took a shallow, ragged breath. It was a fragile sign of life, a flicker of hope in the darkness.

Anna gasped, her tearful eyes widening in astonishment. "He's breathing! He's breathing!"

The Twins shared a relieved smile as they hugged Anna, who was crying like she never had. Vimur and Laihud exchanged a knowing look before sighing in relief.

The Guardians, their task complete, withdrew with the same eerie efficiency with which they had helped Ashton. Their role was that of silent guardians, and they faded back into the shadows, leaving the mortals to grapple with the emotional aftermath of Ashton's brush with death.

However, Ashton wasn't entirely out of danger yet. The guardians had only managed to save him and stabilise his condition. But he still required help. Thankfully, Laihud knew where they could get all the help they needed.

"Vimur, head towards Kernel Tower," Laihud mumbled. "That's the only place we can deal with the rest of Ashton's injuries."

Chapter 686 Two Is Better Than One (1)

The spaceship eased into its designated docking bay within the towering structure of the Kernel Tower. It was the only place with appropriate technology to heal Ashton. At least that's what Flintmace had told them.

As the vessel came to a rest, its thrumming engines settling into a gentle hum, the doors to the bay hissed open, revealing a team of medical staff that had been assembled to receive the wounded.

They were a dedicated and skilled group, their white coats pristine, their faces etched with calm, completely contrasting with those inside the ship.

Mazton, the Vice President of the Kernel Tower, led the medical team. Before confronting Kro'Han, Flintmace had called Mazton and told him to be prepared to receive Ashton as he would need all their attention.

"I hope we're not too late," Mazton whispered under his breath.

His sharp eyes scanned the interior of the spaceship as he awaited the arrival of its occupants. One by one, the team disembarked from the spacecraft, their faces etched with exhaustion, relief, and grief.

Anna, the tears from her earlier breakdown still staining her cheeks, exited with Irina and Verina by her side. Vimur and Laihud followed, their expressions heavy with the burden of recent events and then came the guardians.

Mazton's gaze, however, sought out two figures that were conspicuously absent. Fearing the worst, he approached Vimur, his voice filled with concern.

"Where are Flintmace and Vulcan?" he inquired, his brows furrowing with worry.

Vimur's response was a solemn shake of his head. No words were needed to convey the weight of the news. Flintmace and Vulcan were no longer among the living.

It was a loss that struck deep into the heart of the Kernel Tower, for they had been revered figures, symbols of strength and wisdom.

"No... how- I- FUCK!" Mazton cursed loudly.

Mazton's expression fell, his usually composed demeanour slipping for a moment as he absorbed the shocking revelation. Mazton found himself at a loss for words.

It was inconceivable that two of the most influential individuals in their realm had fallen. He had known Flintmace for years and had witnessed his unwavering dedication to the Kernel Tower and unparalleled prowess in the face of danger.

While Mazton hadn't known Vulcan for long, he often heard from Flintmace about his strength and how Flintmace would lose to Vulcan in a fight. Their loss was immeasurable, and the void they left behind was vast.

"Flintmace and Vulcan…" he murmured as if the words themselves were difficult to accept. "I can't believe it. How did it happen?"

"We encountered a Precursor, sir. There was no other choice but to engage him so we can get Ashton to safety." Laihud stepped up and offered to explain.

Vimur continued, "Unfortunately, the precursor's strength was beyond anything we've ever faced, and it's highly likely they didn't make it."

Mazton nodded slowly, his thoughts racing as he tried to make sense of the tragic turn of events. If anyone could have withstood the might of a Precursor, it would have been Flintmace and Vulcan, who had fought them before.

"If that's the case, it explains the extent of Ashton's injuries," Mazton shook his head, still having a tough time believing that Flintmace and Vulcan were gone.

That aside, the news was a bit shocking. First, a Precursor was alive; that alone was enough for the entire galaxy to panic. But the fact that even 3 S-grade beings couldn't stop the damned god was unprecedented.

Mazton took a moment to compose himself, turning his attention to the task at hand—the critical condition of Ashton. The young man lay on a stretcher, his injuries severe and his condition deteriorating with every passing moment.

Medical staff were around him, tending to him while slowly moving towards the medical ward reserved for the Tower Master.

"We must focus on saving Ashton," Mazton declared, his voice unwavering. "He is the future of the Kernel Tower."

Anna, her grief still fresh, nodded in agreement. "Yes, please, you have to save him."

Mazton offered a reassuring smile to Anna, though his heart ached for the losses she had suffered.

"We will do everything in our power," he assured her. "Ashton was appointed as the next Tower Master by Flintmace himself. We cannot let his sacrifice be in vain."

"We've initiated treatment," one of the doctors informed Mazton, her voice calm and professional. "But his condition is critical. The transformation into a Precursor has altered his physiology significantly."

Mazton nodded, acknowledging the gravity of the situation. He had seen the remarkable transformations that had occurred within the Kernel Tower's walls, but Ashton's case was unique, a confluence of extraordinary circumstances that had reshaped his very being.

The doctor continued, "Thankfully, Lord Flintmace had shared knowledge about Precursor anatomy with some of us. Therefore, we can operate on Ashton. Let's get going, people! Chop! Chop!"

With that, the medical staff redoubled their efforts, working tirelessly to improve Ashton's fragile condition. Intravenous fluids were administered, and monitors tracked his vital signs. They worked with an urgency that acknowledged the preciousness of every passing second.

"We've already lost one Tower Master," Mazton said, his voice loud and clear. "We can't allow another one to die in vain. Ensure you do everything possible to get him back on his feet!"

"Yes, sir!"

The medical staff exchanged glances. They knew the significance of their task, the urgency of saving the life of the Tower Master-to-be.

With Mazton's encouragement and the resources of the Kernel Tower at their disposal, they assured everyone that they would leave no stone unturned in their efforts to ensure Ashton's survival.

As everyone headed to the medical bay, Mazton glanced back at the spaceship, where his senior had journeyed for the final time.

In their memory, Mazton vowed to honour their legacy as their saviour and ensure that no one else had to make a sacrifice like they did until he was alive.

"He will survive," Mazton mumbled. "And together, we will avenge you. That's my promise to you, Flintmace."

Chapter 687 Two Is Better Than One (2)

Ashton's consciousness emerged from the depths of a turbulent dream, but he was still in a daze, like a ship navigating through a foggy sea.

As he opened his eyes, he noticed the darkness around him and was lost for a moment, not knowing where he was. He tried to move, but his body felt heavy and unresponsive.

Since he couldn't move his body, it seemed his eyes were the only part of his body under his control. But even then, the world was a blur, colours and shapes swirling messily.

'Fuck... I can't remember the last time my body felt like this,' Ashton thought to himself and tried communicating with Astaroth. 'Oi! Just heal me already, you lazy fuck!'

Having said his piece, he waited for a response, but none came. It annoyed him, but what else could he have done?

His senses gradually sharpened, and he became aware of the soft hum of medical equipment surrounding him. With great effort, he turned his head slightly, his vision clearing just enough to discern the room's contours.

It was then his gaze settled on a chair beside his bed, and there, bathed in the gentle glow of dimmed lights, sat Anna.

She was asleep, her chest rising and falling in a rhythmic pattern. Her hand was clasped around his, their fingers entwined. Ashton's heart ached when he saw her tear-stained face.

'This girl... she must have been by my side throughout the day... wait a minute, how long have I been out for? Meh, I can think about all that later. But first...'

He tried to call out to her, to let her know he was awake, but his parched throat refused to cooperate. All that escaped his lips was a faint, raspy whisper.

But the gesture was enough to reach Anna as she stirred awake. It was as if an unspoken connection had informed her about Ashton's condition.

Her eyelids fluttered open, revealing eyes brimming with tears that glistened like dewdrops in the soft light.

"Ashton," she breathed, her voice trembling with emotion.

Tears, once again, streamed down her face, tracing the contours of her cheeks as she leaned closer, her eyes locked onto his.

"You're awake. Thank the stars, you're awake."

Ashton's heart swelled with warmth and relief as he gave her a smile. Anna's presence was like a balm to his weary soul. He tried to speak, to convey his gratitude, but his voice remained stubbornly silent.

"It's alright," Anna whispered, her fingers brushing against his cheek. "Don't strain yourself. You're still recovering."

As she spoke, she reached for a glass of water on the nearby table and held it to his lips, allowing him to take small sips. The cool liquid soothed his parched throat, providing a measure of relief.

Ashton's gaze lingered on Anna's face, the concern etched in her features. He couldn't help but wonder how she had known he was awake. It was almost as if she had sensed his return to consciousness.

"I thought I lost you," Anna confessed once Ashton was properly awake, her voice barely more than a whisper. "When we dragged you out of Euphoria, you were... you were so close to... I couldn't bear it."

Upon hearing her words, the pieces of his memory began to fall into place, like fragments of a shattered mirror slowly reassembling.

Ashton remembered the fierce battle against Kro'Han, his uncle who had brought him to the brink of death. The searing pain of his attacks and the overwhelming power all flooded back into his consciousness.

"Argh-"

As he tried to remember more about the fight, a sharp, throbbing ache in the back of his head prompted him to reach up and touch the source of the discomfort.

His fingers brushed against a bandage, and he winced at the tender sensation. Then, he recalled the moment when he almost gave up on living and couldn't believe he actually did that.

A profound sense of loss washed over him as he realised the consequences of that fateful battle. But then he remembered about his masters jumping in the fray to save him.

He turned his gaze back to Anna, his voice hoarse and broken as he forced out a question that had been gnawing at his soul.

"Vulcan... Flintmace... Are they... are they safe?"

Anna's eyes flickered with a mix of emotions, and she hesitated for a moment before answering.

"Doctor! Right, I have to call her for help-"

Anna was trying to dodge the question, and Ashton knew it and grabbed her hand before she could leave. It was something he needed to know more than anything else.

"Anna... what happened to them..." Ashton mustered the strength to ask her, even though, in the back of his mind, he already knew the answer.

Anna took a deep breath before replying.

"The sensors we installed in their bodies... they aren't responding anymore, and we lost contact with them after... as we left Euphoria. They are gone..."

She struggled to maintain her composure as she spoke the words that weighed heavily on her heart. "Ashton, I'm so sorry."

Ashton's world crumbled around him. The news struck him like a physical blow, a pain that pierced deep into his chest. Vulcan and Flintmace, his mentors... were gone.

The thought of their fate, the possibility that they had sacrificed their lives for his sake, was a burden he couldn't bear.

"No," he whispered, his voice filled with anguish. "No, it's my fault. If I hadn't-"

Anna's arms enveloped him in a tight, comforting embrace, cutting off his self-blame.

"Don't," she urged, her voice gentle but firm. "It wasn't your fault. You did everything you could to protect us, to protect everyone. And like you, Vulcan and Flintmace... they made their own choice to protect you... their disciple."

Ashton clung to her, seeking solace in her presence. The tears he had held back began to flow freely, mingling with Anna's as they shared their grief. In that moment, they found strength in each other, a connection that transcended words.

Chapter 688 Two Is Better Than One (3)

A week later...

The morning sun cast a golden hue over the sprawling grounds of the Kernel Tower, where a sombre assembly had gathered. Given the circumstances, the Tower had been shifted next to Earth, considering it was the safest place in the galaxy.

It was a day of mourning, a day to bid farewell to two towering figures whose absence was felt like a void in the hearts of all those present.

Clad in a simple black suit, Ashton stood before a mirror, his eyes reflecting the galaxy's weight. Beside him stood Anna like a pillar of support. Her eyes weren't red and puffed from the tears anymore.

Irina and Verina stood nearby, their faces etched with sorrow, much like the rest of the Ghosts. Vimur, Laihud, Leon, Otiga, everyone was present there.

Even Ava had joined them as Ashton had visited Earth a day before and informed them about the passing of Vulcan and Flintmace.

Despite all his regenerative abilities, it took Ashton a week before he could walk freely without any support. Before that, he had been unconscious for a month straight.

So, in a way, it had been a while since their one-sided beating against Kro'Han.

That said, the doctor informed Ashton that had it not been for the guardians, he was pretty much dead. Ashton took note of it and thanked the Guardians for saving his life, to which the automatons were confused as they had only done their job, and no one had 'thanked' them before.

"Ready?" Anna asked, gently placing her hands on Ashton's shoulder, who nodded, holding her hand in his as they walked outside.

The vast courtyard was adorned with flower wreaths and banners bearing the images of Vulcan and Flintmace, their smiles captured in happier times.

It was a symbolic funeral, for the two revered warriors had not left behind physical remains. All they had were their memories and teachings now, things that would forever be cherished by Ashton and everyone who ever interacted with Vulcan and Flintmace.

As Ashton and Anna walked forward, they saw the crowd waiting for them, from the Orion empire to the Goldwater mercenary group. Everyone with a bit of significance in the galaxy was present there.

But they weren't the only ones there—senators, scientists, warriors, and ordinary citizens. All had come to pay their respects to the fallen heroes and witness the formal induction of Ashton as the new Tower Master of the Kernel Tower.

Besides that, there were media personnel present there, covering the story of how not one but three S-grade beings had perished. After all, no one was informed about the circumstances under which the legendary figures had passed away.

Ashton took a deep breath, trying to steady his emotions. He stepped forward to the podium, his gaze sweeping over the sea of faces before him.

The atmosphere was laced with sorrow, but there was also an undeniable sense of unity and a shared determination to face the challenges ahead.

"Friends and esteemed guests from all around the galaxy," Ashton began, his voice steady but tinged with sadness. "Today, we gather not only to mourn the loss of two extraordinary individuals but also to honour their legacy."

He paused, his eyes resting on the wreaths that adorned the platform. "Vulcan and Flintmace were more than just warriors. They were mentors, friends, and protectors of the entire galaxy. They dedicated their lives to preserving the peace and defending the innocent."

Anna, standing beside Ashton, squeezed his hand in silent support. The twins nodded, their eyes filled with unspoken determination.

"They may be gone from our sight, but their spirit lives on within us," Ashton continued. "Their sacrifices were not in vain. Today, I stand before you as the new Tower Master of the Kernel Tower, carrying the torch of their legacy.

I promise to uphold the values they held dear—to protect the peace Flintmace had struggled to achieve, to seek justice, and to defend the vulnerable."

A mournful breeze rustled the banners bearing Vulcan's and Flintmace's images as if nature herself grieved their loss.

"But our world faces a grave threat—a challenge unlike any we have seen before, A challenge that took the lives of my masters," Ashton's voice grew stronger as he addressed the gathering.

"An ancient being of unimaginable power, Kro'Han, a Precursor, has emerged from the shadows, and he vows to bring destruction to our galaxy and beyond."

Murmurs of concern and disbelief rippled through the crowd. While no one knew about Kro'Han, everyone was well aware of the Precursors, as they all had grown up listening to the ancient tales of their immense power and malevolence.

"Vulcan, Flintmace, and the First Seatholder of Euphoria gave their lives so that I could stand before you today and sound the alarm," Ashton's gaze remained resolute. "We must prepare, for the coming days will be dark and fraught with danger."

A journalist raised a trembling hand, her voice a mixture of worry and curiosity. "But how can we hope to stand against a being like Kro'Han? If he is a Precursor, do we even have a chance against him?"

"Kro'Han indeed possesses formidable power, who almost killed me," Ashton nodded, acknowledging the gravity of the question. "But we cannot lose hope. We must remember that unity is our strength. Together, we can achieve the impossible. And, I must confess, there is more to this story."

The crowd leaned in, their collective attention fixed on Ashton.

"Today, I'll reveal a secret only the ones closest to me knew about... that I, too, am a Precursor," Ashton revealed, his voice unwavering.

Silence fell upon the courtyard as Ashton said those words. However, the silence didn't last for long as the journalists jumped to ask him more questions. But instead of answering them, he continued saying what he wanted to.

"While I may not possess the same level of strength as Kro'Han, I believe that with time, preparation, and the support of each of you, we can challenge him."

While he was in the middle of his speech, Otiga interrupted the ceremony and whispered something to Ashton. Entire fleets of warships were headed their way. But they were no ordinary ships. They belonged to the Xyrans!

Chapter 689 Two Is Better Than One (5)

"Warships? How many?" Ashton inquired.

"At least 450," Otiga replied, her voice slightly shaken. "Since Flintmace is gone, they might have come to take the Tower down, as the mercenaries have been causing a lot of trouble for them."

"No, that's not it, but they came at a great time," Ashton mumbled before turning his attention back to the crowd. "I have just been informed that a Xyran fleet of more than four hundred ships is heading our way."

Many people panicked upon hearing the news, but the mercenaries and the soldiers from the Orion empire were ready to fight. However, Ashton didn't want them to.

It was the memorial service of his masters, and those space tyrants thought it was a great time to attack them. If that was their intention, then they were doomed because the pent-up anger within Ashton was about to burst, and the Xyrans would be the perfect outlet for his rage.

That said, it was an excellent opportunity to prove his strength in front of the galaxy. Soloing the army everyone feared... it had a nice ring to it.

With that thought in mind, he kissed Anna goodbye and left with the guardians. Without wasting any time, he headed towards the nearest airlock.

Even the mighty precursors had difficulty surviving in the vacuum of space. It was one of the primary reasons they created armour so they could travel throughout the cosmos without any worries.

The armour Ashton was given by Is'kai was damaged in his fight with Kro'Han, but while he was knocked out, the Guardians patched it up, and the armour was good to go.

Besides, the Xyran wouldn't expect an assault from just one man and wouldn't even know what hit them until it was too late. One little hole in their ship and the space would do Ashton's work for him.

Once ready, he opened the airlock and jumped out of the Tower. Everyone's eyes were focused on him as Ashton and his guardians stood between Earth and the Xyrans.

The Earth, a distant blue orb in the inky darkness, seemed to watch over them, a silent reminder of the stakes involved.

Ashton took a deep breath. His body was encased in the sleek, black Precursor armour. As Ashton stepped outside into the space, the armour began to hum and covered Ashton from the head to the toe.

The Xyran fleet loomed in the distance, an ominous presence in the void. Their ships, sleek and deadly, formed a formidable armada that blotted out the stars. Over four hundred of them, bristling with advanced weaponry and shields, their intentions unknown.

'Unknown, my ass,' Ashton scoffed. 'No one who comes in peace brandishes their weapons like that.'

Regardless, Ashton decided to be courteous and give them one chance to stop and talk. He signalled Otiga, who broadcasted on open channels asking the Xyrans to halt and state their purpose of visit.

Silence greeted their words, broken only by the faint hum of Ashton's armour's systems. The Xyran ships continued their relentless advance, closing the gap between themselves and Earth.

"Looks like they won't be responding," Otiga sighed as she ended her attempts to communicate with them.

"Of course they didn't," Ashton laughed. "Well, we did our part. Now, whatever happens next is on them..."

Before he could finish his sentence, the Xyran ships reached the point of no return. They continued their approach with grim determination. Clearly, their intentions were not peaceful, which was precisely what Ashton was hoping for.

Without hesitation, Ashton unleashed his accumulated aura, a torrent of energy that lashed out like a cosmic whip. The brilliant, blue-white light streaked through the void, colliding with the approaching ships.

Some ships tried evading the incoming attack, but most failed. The resulting explosion was cataclysmic.

Flagships were torn apart, their shields useless against the sheer force of Ashton's power—debris scattered in all directions, creating a deadly minefield that further threatened the remaining Xyran ships.

The automatons, following their master's lead, opened fire with their powerful precursor weapons. Bolts of energy streaked through space, seeking out their targets with unerring accuracy.

The flagships that had managed to evade Ashton's initial assault found themselves under a relentless barrage of firepower.

Explosions blossomed among the Xyran fleet, a symphony of destruction reverberating through space. The once-imposing armada was reduced to chaos, and panic rippled through the ranks of the Xyrans.

Still, some ships managed to survive, their nimble manoeuvres and advanced technology allowing them to dodge the worst of the onslaught. Ashton knew that this battle was far from over.

The surviving Xyran ships regrouped, forming a defensive formation as they faced the lone figure that had decimated their forces.

"Final warning," Ashton roared over the radio signals. "Stand down, and we can find a peaceful solution, or don't, and I'll end you all right here."

Having said his piece, Ashton prepared for another attack in case the mighty Xyrans wanted another taste of his powers. Just when he was about to unleash another attack, he noticed something was off.

The way the ships behaved, it almost looked like they wanted to be blown away.

"Diversion..." Ashton mumbled as he turned around to see hundreds of portals opened up in the opposite direction behind the Earth, and out of it came the actual army of Xyrans.

The planet Ashton wanted to protect was now shielding the enemies from him. After all, if he tried attacking the second fleet, he would risk destroying the Earth, forcing Ashton's hands in the matter.

"We've been played!" Ashton informed Otiga as he headed back inside the Tower. "Tell Tarik to get the orbital cannons charged and ready!"

"I'm on it!" Otiga replied before disconnecting the call.

He had to get back to Earth quicker than the Xyrans, and the portal was the only way to do so. But he couldn't open a portal in space, or the vacuum would destroy everything.

"Take care of the remaining ships," Ashton instructed the Guardians and rushed inside the Tower before quickly summoning the portal to the Eastern Palace.

Chapter 690 Two Is Better Than One (6)

The sky above New Lycania was ablaze with chaos. Ships from beyond Earth's atmosphere descended in a relentless swarm, covering the night sky, their laser attacks and missiles streaking through the heavens.

Earth's orbital guns, stationed across New Lycania, fired back valiantly, their bright blasts flashing against the darkness of space. Tarik spared no expense in defending the city he had grown to love.

But the invaders were relentless, their advanced technology proving a formidable challenge for Earth's defenders. The orbital guns, powerful as they were, struggled to keep up with the sheer number and speed of the Xyran ships.

That's when the Giholo and other species stationed in the city took matters into their own hands. They boarded their ships and the vessels created by Tarik and rushed to protect the city.

Innumerable portals across New Lycania were lit up. Mera, Nora and Ricochet worked tirelessly to get everyone to safety. At the same time, armies from Nirvana and various vampire kingdoms rushed out of the portals.

Ashton's eyes widened as he took in the dire situation. The fate of Earth hung in the balance, and they were under siege from an overwhelming force, and no amount of ground force would be helpful against the Xyran onslaught.

He knew that the orbital guns and the brave Giholo soldiers aboard their assault ships and aircraft were doing their best, but the Xyrans were formidable adversaries.

To make matters worse, drop pods rained from the sky, deploying Xyran soldiers onto Earth's surface. The battle was no longer confined to the skies; it had come to Earth's doorstep.

Ashton knew that he needed to act swiftly. He released a command to all his summons and the undead army, a collective force at his disposal that numbered in the thousands, including the skeletons doing his bidding.

"Destroy the Xyrans. Protect Earth at all costs."

With his commands echoing in their ears, the summoned creatures and undead legions sprung into action, charging towards the Xyran soldiers with an otherworldly intensity.

Once done, he did something he hadn't done before. He also summoned Beelzebub, or Guilt, as Ashton had renamed him, along with the former King Bismarck, now a lich. Even Aegis joined the fight and turned into a drakonian.

Summoning Beelzebub served little purpose in actual combat. However, Ashton intended to wage a psychological war on them instead. Seeing their mighty general become nothing more than a puppet would mess with their morale.

While Bismarck would serve as a factory of endless undead soldiers. As long as he was on the battlefield, Ashton wouldn't need to worry about raising more undead to protect the city, and he could focus on the ships stationed above.

"Guilt, take Ember and go chat with your friends," Ashton said without emotion. "I'm sure you have missed your people. Oh, and try to kill as many of them as possible, got it?"

Guilt grunted loudly, clearly enraged by Ashton's order, which he was bound to follow. He rushed towards the Shadow Drakonian, mounted on its back and flew into the dark sky.

Ashton's gaze then shifted towards Aegis, waiting for him. With a determined leap, he mounted the Aegis' back, his grip firm on the scales.

Ever since Vulcan died, Aegis had gotten quieter but was fired up for the fight and wasted no time expressing how he felt about the Xyrans. With a powerful beat of his wings, they soared into the fray.

The enemy ships, caught in a relentless crossfire, attempted evasive manoeuvres as they came under attack from Earth's defences and Ashton's summoned horde. Fireballs and energy bolts erupted in a chaotic display of warfare everywhere.

"They planned it all since the beginning," Ashton mumbled as the guardians rushed towards the Earth along with the rest of the Tower to aid in the fight.

"They knew about my Precursor abilities, and having fought the Precursors before, those bastards sent empty ships first, knowing I would exhaust myself after using Precursor's aura repeatedly."

He had overused the Precursor's aura before, and using it further might have dire consequences on his body. That's when they showed up from the other side and attacked Earth.

However, they forgot about one thing. Ashton had something equally strong as his aura... Seraph's crystal. It was supposed to be a Precursor artefact; however, it belonged to a Xyran, and now it would lead to their annihilation.

The crystal hummed to life in his palm with a surge of energy. Flames of brilliant blue and white ignited from the artefact, growing in intensity.

Ashton unleashed the torrent of fire with a sweep of his hand, the flames cascading outwards in a roaring maelstrom. The fire grew stronger as they covered more distance.

The storm seared through the Xyran ships and soldiers with unyielding ferocity. Hell, Ashton even melted some of the drop pods before they were launched.

In the wake of his fiery onslaught, Xyran ships erupted into blazing infernos, their sleek exteriors melting away under the intense heat. The Xyran soldiers who dared to approach were consumed by the relentless firestorm.

Ashton's power raged like wildfire, a blazing force of nature that fought back against the Xyran incursion. The flames were like the sun, turning the night sky into day.

The Xyrans, once poised to conquer Earth, now found themselves caught in a relentless storm of fire and fury. They struggled to regroup, and Ashton's overwhelming power diminished their numerical advantage.

But as everything seemed under control, Ashton was hit by a devastating force. While he managed to spurt his wings and balance himself, Aegis wasn't that lucky and got knocked down, which enraged Ashton even more.

He rushed towards the mothership, threatening to feed it to the fire in his fists. But then he was hit with another similar attack. It felt like he was fighting against gravity.

Ashton was even more surprised to see how well their attacks worked against him when a feminine voice came from the ship.

"You are not the first Precursor we have fought," she said. "But let me assure you, none of the ones we fought met a peaceful end. So... stand down while you can."