

Chaos' Heir 601

Chapter 601 Slap

Khan entered the room under everyone's shocked gazes. He didn't know what to do with it since he had already dropped his backpack, and the area didn't give him any idea either. After all, the bed was the only item inside it.

'Where do they pee?' Khan wondered, peeking past his shoulder to inspect the corridor. The Thilku were still staring at him in amazement, hiding the walls with their huge figures, so he stepped into the air again to inspect the area.

Khan almost reached the ceiling, and the new location allowed him to see all the runes in the area. Most belonged to rooms, but a couple had a few different lines marking the bathrooms.

The astonished stares continued even after Khan landed, but a whooshing noise suddenly broke the silence. Another door had opened in the corridor, and a tall Thilku stormed out of it.

"[What's this ruckus]?!" The newly arrived Thilku shouted. That hoarse voice tried to hide it, but the golden hair revealed her sex. She was a woman that everyone in the corridor seemed to fear.

'Aren't the rooms soundproof?' Khan wondered, curious about that development.

"[Xai]!" The woman shouted again, glaring at the Thilku who had tried to tease Khan until now.

"[It's you, isn't it]?"

Xai gasped and retreated, only to end up with his back on the wall. The other Thilku also moved away to open a path, and the woman crossed it to reach the target of her glare.

The woman reached Xai and delivered a downward slap that landed at the top of his head. Xai bent forward due to the violence of the impact, and a grunt escaped his mouth before apologies followed.

"[Forgive me, Nao], Xai exclaimed. "[We were just welcoming the human soldier]."

Nao moved her glare to Khan and lifted her huge arm again. Her hand descended toward Khan's head, but the attack failed to reach its target.

Surprise spread and a few gasps highlighted it. Even Nao couldn't escape that feeling when she saw her arm stuck a few centimeters above Khan's head. Khan had grabbed her wrist to block the attack, matching her raw strength and locking her limb in an unbreakable grip.

Khan's reaction had been instinctive. His smiling face had also turned cold. The tension that had weighed on him until now had flared during the attack, but realizing where he was quickly sent his true feelings into hiding.

"[Oh, sorry]!" Khan exclaimed, his cold face breaking into another smile while he let go of Nao's wrist. "[Please, go ahead]."

Khan lowered his arm and head, trying to welcome Nao's attack. The Thilku in the corridor felt surprised again, but that gesture gained a few aliens' silent approvals. One Thilku even smiled until her canines became visible, but all those reactions vanished when Nao glared at the audience.

"[Slackers]," Nao snorted, focusing on Khan again. "[Captain Khan, I assume]."

"[Khan is fine]," Khan announced, lifting his smiling face to look at the tall Thilku. "[I'm a simple soldier here]."

Naoo ignored the comment and glanced at Khan's right arm. Bandages popped out of the sleeve, forcing the alien to question them. "[Can you use that arm]?"

"[Of course]," Khan reassured, lifting his right arm. "[I'm left-handed anyway]."

Naoo didn't let Khan's cheerful behavior affect her. Her hand snapped toward Khan's right arm, grabbing the center of his forearm. Her fingers closed near the injury, causing a wave of pain that could make anyone scream.

Khan was an exception. He could have avoided Naoo's gesture but decided to let himself get caught. He also suppressed his reactions, limiting them to closing his eyes briefly to endure the pain.

Naoo studied Khan even after he reopened his eyes. She didn't tighten her grip but still tried to get a reaction out of him. However, his calm eyes were impossible to pierce. His poker face was too advanced for that alien.

"[Don't get in our way]," Naoo eventually said, releasing Khan's arm. "[This is our planet, not your playground]."

Khan wanted to reply, but Naoo abruptly turned to face the team and give more orders. "[You are on cleaning duty today. Get to it]!"

Naoo didn't wait for the team's response and stormed back into her room, isolating herself. The tension slightly relaxed after her departure, but the Thilku hesitated to break their stances.

Khan lowered his arm and closed and opened his hand while the check-up technique ran through his body. Naoo's grip didn't worsen his injuries, but his forearm still hurt more than before.

A series of groans ran through the corridor, and a few Thilku shot annoyed stares at Khan. It seemed they blamed him for that new task, but no one dared to complain openly for fear of summoning Naoo again.

Khan imitated his new companions, opting for silence while watching the corridor get busy. Many doors and lockers opened as the Thilku retrieved their uniforms or belongings and started dressing up. The process was quick and smooth, showing how used the team was to it.

The lack of additional orders forced Khan to go with the flow. Once everyone was ready, the team left the corridor and hurried into the initial hall. The area was still crowded, but Khan's companions ignored the mess and headed for one of the big runes near the main gate.

The team formed an orderly line as each Thilku interacted with the rune to retrieve tablets that reeked of synthetic mana. Khan pretended not to inspect the process, but glares still flew in his direction, both from his companions and aliens in the hall.

Khan didn't mind that wariness. He knew how odd his role was in that environment, so he retained a humble façade and imitated anything his team did. He didn't join the line but was right behind his companions once they approached the gate.

The security measures were far shorter there. The gate opened, allowing the entire team inside before clearing the way for the other side. Soon, everyone stepped on Cegnore's ground, and the group split to head for the many vehicles behind the trench.

Khan didn't dare to jump on vehicles uninvited. He was ready to fly above them if the situation required it. Still, the team started paying attention to him as everyone occupied their respective rides, and many stares converged on Xai.

Xai had already taken position inside a bike when he noticed the stares, and an annoyed expression followed. He looked conflicted but quickly gave up and looked at Khan.

"[Blue hair]!" Xai called. "[Ride with me]!"

Khan snapped back to reality, smiling as he hurried toward Xai. The Thilku scoffed when Khan sat behind him, but that didn't get in the way of the task.

The entirety of the team had opted for bikes, which turned on at the same time. Engines whooshed as the circular wheels spun, making the vehicles accelerate. Khan couldn't help but worry about the trench ahead, but the Thilku had a simple method to cross it.

Xai and the other Thilku bent forward before forcefully jumping without removing their hands from the steering wheels. The bikes leaped with them, crossing the trench's gap and safely landing on the other side.

Khan smirked at that display of skill and recklessness, but the symphony soon sent worrying feelings that made him peek past Xai's cape. Cracks and holes became common as the bikes put more distance from the trench, and the stench of dried blood eventually filled the area.

The environment worsened as the bikes advanced. Larger and deeper cavities filled the plain, forcing the vehicles to slow down and pay more attention to the road. Half-dried, black puddles also appeared, and some featured gory limbs belonging to creatures Khan had already fought.

The body parts became more common during the ride, and some almost intact corpses also appeared. Dead and maimed wolf-like monsters filled the area, which stretched beyond what Khan could see with his naked eyes.

Khan had already seen a similar scene when riding toward the Thilku building, but what expanded in his eyes was completely different in terms of magnitude. The team had reached an immense battlefield that seemed to have seen hundreds or thousands of fights.

The symphony sent information that Khan struggled to believe. A few holes and cracks were old, but most were new, and counting them created a scary picture in his mind.

'How many packs do they fight every night?' Khan wondered. 'Ten? Twenty? Do they come in waves?'

The immense manpower deployed on Cegnore suddenly made sense. The Thilku needed to have so many soldiers on the planet. They would lose ground otherwise.

The bikes began to stop as the number of corpses lying on the ground became too numerous to advance. Xai was no exception and parked in the middle of that messy battlefield before jumping out of the vehicle.

Khan imitated Xai, and his gaze wandered as soon as he landed on the ground. The symphony allowed him to look past the limits of his eyes, almost giving him a complete idea of the battlefield's size, leaving him stunned and excited.

"[Don't laze around]," Xai snorted when he noticed Khan lost in the scenery. "[You get no privileges here]."

"[What should I do]?" Khan questioned.

"[Grab corpses and create a pile]," Xai explained. "[Once the pile is big enough, make a new one]."

"[Can I use your pile]?" Khan asked, showing his fake cheerfulness again.

Xai didn't fall for the joke. He showed a serious face while looking at Khan and thinking about his next words.

"[Let me make this clear]," Xai announced. "[Your presence here is an insult. The Thilku don't need nor want you]."

That wasn't a joke or part of the previous teases. Xai showed utmost seriousness, and Khan couldn't complain. He was an outsider who had forced his way into an alien environment. The sole fact that the Empire had agreed to his demands hurt those soldiers' pride.

Khan knew that jokes or pretenses wouldn't work there. He couldn't lie his way toward those aliens' respect. He could only do what he did best, and that battlefield seemed ready to give him that chance.

Chapter 602 Offensive

Khan had many questions and doubts. He didn't know his role on the battlefield, his team's arrangements, the chain of command, and more. He was unaware of anything connected to his new location. Still, getting answers wasn't an option.

Even as the team began amassing corpses, Khan continued feeling hesitation and distrust toward him. No glares or specific gestures flew in his direction, but the symphony confirmed that he was an outsider.

Lacking intel wasn't ideal, especially after seeing the size of the Thilku battlefield. However, Khan couldn't get accepted through words. He could only prove himself and cause as few problems as possible.

Khan focused on cleaning the battlefields, imitating his alien companions whenever he doubted his actions. The task wasn't exactly difficult. He only had to amass corpses into piles, and looking at the Thilku told him how big they had to be.

The task wasn't tiring, but Khan didn't enjoy doing it. He couldn't even try to learn new details about the Thilku. The area only had silence, and Khan focused on the symphony while dragging corpses from one place to another.

Hours passed while the team continued to clean the battlefield. At times, trucks arrived to remove the piles of corpses, but that didn't free Khan and the Thilku from their task. Half the morning had to go by before the aliens hopped back on their vehicles and returned to the building.

The return to the building didn't change the overall coldness around Khan. Part of his team joined friends in the main hall while others went back to their rooms. A few even remained in the corridor before their habitations, but Khan had no right to join them.

Khan returned to his room since the building couldn't offer him anything yet. It turned out that the habitations had soundproof walls, which told him something about Naoo's character. Still, he put that information in the back of his mind and focused on resting to prepare for the night.

The ostracism toward Khan didn't involve his duties as a soldier. The Thilku ignored him for any social interaction. Yet, when the night began to approach, Naoo's rough voice resounded inside his room.

"[Gather up]!" Naoo said through the room's speakers. "[We leave in two minutes]!"

Khan was still wearing his uniform, so he jumped out of bed and left the room, closing it to wait for his companions. Naoo was the first to come out but only snorted at his presence before reserving the same treatment to all the other Thilku reaching the corridor.

As Khan had predicted, the Thilku didn't carry any firearm. Some wielded big maces, metal spears, or gauntlets with spikes on their knuckles. Others retrieved pieces of armor from their lockers, but nothing that relied too heavily on technology. They wanted a fair fight with the aliens, no matter how bloody it got.

"[Let's move]!" Naoo shouted once the two minutes were up. She charged ahead, crossing the corridor's exit even if a few Thilku were still wearing their armor. Her action forced them to move and finish the process in the following passage.

The new corridor had gotten busier in the meantime, showing three more teams waiting for their chance to reach the main hall. The presence of so many aliens made the area feel cramped, and Khan had it worse than his companions since the general attention fell on him.

Curious and questioning gazes flew through the corridor. Many searched for answers from Khan's teammates, but they only showed helplessness and snorts. A good chunk of the building wasn't aware that Khan would have entered the battlefield, but his presence there couldn't mean anything else.

The teams began to advance in order. The Thilku followed their respective leaders to enter the main hall. Naoo's group was last, and Khan noticed the peculiar absence of the previous crowd once he left the corridor.

The carpets and tools previously used by the Thilku were still there, amassed near the walls, but the crowd had left, showing how big the hall was. The place could fit an entire battalion, but only two hundred troops gathered there and began dealing with the security measures.

That manpower already surpassed what the Global Army had stationed on Cegnore, but Khan couldn't feel surprised after seeing the Thilku battlefield. He actually believed more soldiers would come out to face the fearsome night.

Humans would take hours deploying so many soldiers due to their lengthy security measures, but the process was quick with the Thilku. Naoo's team reached the gate and retrieved the appointed tablets in a few minutes before heading outside.

The scenery was completely different from what Khan had witnessed during the morning. Cegnore's star shone on the horizon, creating long shadows that stretched through the plain. Hundreds of Thilku filled the area, sending stern vibes into the symphony.

The various teams ignored the vehicles and marched ahead, jumping across the trench or settling inside. Except for Khan, everyone knew their role, but loud orders still echoed and fused with the heavy steps caused by the advancing troops.

Khan followed Xai across the trench and continued to march. Naoo led her team deeper into the plain, and each step forward intensified the overall tension. The Thilku were scared, but no trace of that feeling appeared on their faces.

Those feelings told Khan enough, and the march eventually confirmed his hunch too. Minutes passed until the group reached the areas they had previously cleaned. The place was still a mess of holes, cracks, puddles, and body parts, but Naoo made everyone stop there anyway.

"[Get in position]!" Naoo shouted, and the Thilku began to move. The group spread across the area, covering as much ground as possible. Khan instinctively followed Xai, but a sudden glare forced him to stop.

Khan turned and found Naoo staring at him. She had crossed her arms and worn an angry expression, clearly annoyed that the human had ended into her team.

"[Our job here is to stop as many beasts as possible]," Naoo explained, stomping her foot on the ground and digging a line. "[If they cross this, kill them]."

"[What if they cross me]?" Khan asked.

"[Don't chase them]," Naoo declared, and Khan didn't need anything else to understand that strategy. He could feel multiple teams stationed in the distance behind him. His group simply was the first line of defense.

'So,' Khan thought, aligning himself with the rest of the team and occupying the spot behind Naoo's line, 'The monsters don't care about us.'

That development was surprising but not completely unexpected. Khan had seen the packs ignoring him to charge at the human trench. It was odd that something similar would happen there due to the amount of manpower deployed on the plain, but the Thilku building probably was a bigger threat in the monsters' eyes.

'Should I call them today?' Khan couldn't help but wonder while drawing his knife.

The deal with Lord Exr involved changes to the battlefield. Khan had to become bait, but implementing his plan without testing the size of the fights was unwise. It was better to play by the rules for a few nights before moving to something reckless.

'I'm sure Lord Exr won't mind waiting a few days,' Khan thought. 'Mister Wulfo probably will.'

Khan didn't forget his deal with Winston, but the chance to reach the Thilku trenches had priority over it. The scientist probably didn't like that transfer, but Khan was ready to make him unhappy to pursue his true goals.

Those thoughts continued to swirl in Khan's mind as the afternoon slowly transformed into night. Everything grew still as a faint red halo stretched through the plain and dispersed the darkness. The Thilku building was sending its light, but Khan saw different colors.

According to the symphony, a total of three hundred Thilku had left the building to occupy the trench or the plain past it. Those on the frontlines were all third-level warriors, which filled Khan's senses with countless colors.

Nevertheless, Khan mostly focused on the absence of synthetic mana. Except for the building and trench, the Thilku weren't using any technology. They didn't even rely on goggles that could disperse the lingering darkness in the distance.

Khan also noticed the absence of vehicles on the battlefield. The Thilku were ready to handle the incoming battle with their bare hands, spells, and simple weapons, and no one seemed to resent that arbitrary disadvantage.

The event made Khan curious about Cegnore's backstory. He also grew eager to see more specimens, especially intelligent ones. However, all those feelings vanished when new colors appeared past the red halo.

Khan's shoulders instinctively relaxed, and the same went for his knees. He leaned a bit forward while slightly lifting his knife. Those actions were barely noticeable, but he was in an environment with knowledgeable soldiers.

The team had formed a long line, but a few Thilku could still see Khan. Naoo was also nearby and noticed his slight change in stance. The Empire had updated her about Khan's skills, so she could instantly connect the dots.

Naoo glanced ahead and lifted her arms to wear a battle stance. She couldn't see anything in the darkness, but her stature made her more visible than Khan. Her companions noticed her, and similar reactions unfolded.

Khan knew what was happening around him, but his eyes remained glued to the darkness. The symphony grew messy, trying to shock him with its meanings. Yet, his mind was devoid of thoughts and emotions. He had regressed to a mere weapon.

An earthquake spread through the plain, enlarging cracks and creating new ones. The ground caved in due to the tremors running through it. Thudding noises filled the area, and faint growls began to echo.

Soon, figures became visible at the edge of the red halo. A chaotic mass of odd bodies advanced madly ahead. Fifty wolf-like monsters with levels between the second and third ran through the plain, stepping on each other and shattering the ground under their weight.

From the Thilku's perspective, the incoming monsters resembled an azure wave that destroyed anything in their path. Those Tainted animals were almost glued to each other, going up and down depending on what the ground could support.

Of course, that wasn't the Thilku's first battle. They had already gone through similar fights for many nights, so they prepared their spells, weapons, or arms to deflect the incoming wave.

Naoo growled loudly, launching a battle cry that her companions echoed. The entire team was ready to hold its ground against that monstrous and chaotic threat. Still, a purple-red light suddenly flashed in the distant darkness, making those firm stances falter.

Khan saw the world through different senses. He didn't only notice the sudden flash. He also sensed its source and the effect it had on his teammates.

The Thilku did their best to appear confident, but their mana began to convey fear. They knew what that flash implied but felt hopeless against it.

Calculations happened in Khan's mind while the massive pack of Tainted animals continued to advance. Mana quickly moved toward his legs, generating an incredible sprint that teleported him a few meters to his right. He appeared next to Naoo and grabbed her cape to pull her away.

Naoo was so focused on the incoming pack that the pull made her lose her balance. That allowed Khan to drag her further away, but the gesture earned him her anger.

"[Human, what are you-]!" Naoo shouted, but a purple-red light suddenly filled the area, blinding her and hiding a loud explosion.

Naoo quickly stood up, but her eyes took longer to recover. Yet, when they did, she failed to find Khan. He had left her side, but something else attracted her attention.

A crater that released a thick pile of smoke had appeared in Naoo's previous position, and she could only feel disbelief looking at it. Her gaze immediately returned to her team, searching for Khan, but he was nowhere to be found.

Naoo found Khan only when the incoming pack reclaimed her attention. She felt shocked seeing him halfway through the space that divided the team and the monsters. The Thilku were focusing on holding their ground, but Khan had decided to move on the offensive.

Chapter 603 Army

The tide of monsters appeared impenetrable and unstoppable in the Thilku's eyes, but Khan saw something very different.

The monsters' chaotic, instinctive, and violent behavior had no pattern. They were only caught in a mad charge fueled by their hunger. Yet, their actions left marks on the symphony, changing it and allowing Khan to predict their next move.

From the Thilku's perspective, Khan's advance was crazy, but something in his pace eased their worries. Each of Khan's steps seemed to lack any form of emotion, but confidence still reeked out of them.

Khan kept his eyes on the incoming tide but didn't look at anything specific. Hungry growls and roars reached his ears but never entered his brain. His mind was empty as he casually advanced toward creatures that could rip him apart.

The wolves got so close that Khan could smell their disgusting breath. They were only a few meters from him, and those directly ahead stomped the ground to leap at him.

Nevertheless, the ground had trembled until now, and the symphony partially kept track of its stability. Khan knew what those stomps would cause, so he strolled ahead, unfazed by the monsters' intentions.

The ground couldn't endure the stomps, crumbling and making the monsters fail their jumps. Those creatures lost their balance, falling into holes of their own creation but still stretched their paws forward in an attempt to reach Khan.

Khan tapped the ground, slightly rising into the air to escape the incoming paws. He dived into the tide, occupying the open spot left by the falling wolves before unleashing a spherical version of the Wave spell.

A purple-red sphere shone among the azure tide, piercing through fur, flesh, and organs as it expanded. A few monsters died on the spot, while others suffered injuries that didn't interrupt their mad charge.

The spell didn't change the tide's plans. The monsters continued to advance, reaching the Thilku team. The aliens had paid attention to Khan but didn't forget about the Tainted animals, and attacks unfolded when the two clashed.

The Thilku launched spells, swung their weapons, or relied on their superior physical prowess to deflect and suppress any beast in their range. They didn't seem to care about the possibility of getting infected, but no injuries appeared on their bodies either. Their size and raw power made them far stronger than those creatures.

The monsters far outnumbered the Thilku, but the latter dealt with multiple opponents simultaneously. One alien threw his spear sideways, impaling many beasts. Another stomped the ground, lifting a series of sharp spikes that pierced three wolves.

Similar scenes unfolded, with a few Thilku directly body-slammng the wolves to push them back. Mana flowed alongside their movements, creating what Khan believed to be martial arts. That display of power almost startled him, but warning signals made him turn toward the darkness.

A purple-red light flashed in the distance, and a glowing sphere only Khan could see flew through the darkness. The attack followed a specific trajectory that Khan could predict, so mana flowed toward his legs to generate a sprint.

A Thilku was swinging her huge mace madly. Each attack landed on a monster's head, sending it flying for a few meters. However, the tide had too many beasts, forcing her to retreat to deal with all the new opponents.

The alien was about to deliver a descending attack on a wolf approaching her from below when the ground suddenly grew distant. She found herself in the air, away from the tide, and pulled higher by an unknown force.

The Thilku lifted her head and grew angry seeing Khan pulling her from her cape. That behavior was beyond insulting. A human was actually interfering with her battle. Yet, an explosion resounded under her before she could speak any word.

The alien glanced at the ground only to have dark smoke hindering her view. Khan quickly pulled her out, allowing her to notice what had happened. A crater had formed in her previous position, killing the monster that had tried to attack her.

Khan didn't waste time. The symphony occupied his mind, depicting the exact state of the battlefield. He knew where the Thilku had to be, so he threw her in that direction.

That drop could make most soldiers lose their balance, but the Thilku were taller, which helped. The alien easily landed on her feet but remained surprised that the ground didn't break under her weight. She believed Khan had something to do with it, but the tide didn't give her a chance to think.

Khan also joined the frontlines, diving toward the spot marked by Naoo. Two wolves were about to cross it, but dust suddenly surrounded them.

A figure crossed the cloud before the dust could settle. Khan stepped forward, and his movement revealed the spot behind him. One of the wolves had lost its head, while the other had its skull crushed.

Another purple-red light flashed in the distance, and Khan sprinted. A big bullet reached the area, trying to kill a Thilku, but Khan intervened, making the attack fail.

The intense fight seemed to last endlessly but only continued for a few short minutes. The monsters had no business in the area and prioritized charging at the trench. The Thilku killed most of them, but a few specimens broke through, continuing ahead.

The Thilku ignored the escaping specimens and returned to their previous positions. The area had changed after the battle. New holes and corpses spread in every direction, but the aliens only focused on the darkness ahead.

Khan began to imitate his companions, but another purple-red light flashed in the distance, forcing him to move. The new bullet aimed at Naoo, who didn't oppose any resistance when Khan pushed her away.

The bullet exploded a few meters on Naoo's left, but she paid the crater no heed. She was more interested in the fact that Khan was still at her side, but he had his reasons for that.

"[I can get it]," Khan stated, staring into the distant darkness.

Naoo also glanced at the darkness, understanding what Khan meant. He wanted to go after the Tainted creature behind the powerful bullets.

"[No]," Naoo refused. "[That's a trap. Hold this line]."

Khan didn't miss how Naoo's voice had grown kinder but limited himself to a glance at her stern face before nodding in approval. He turned, walking toward his previous position to resume his role, and the symphony made him inspect his surroundings in the meantime.

The battlefield wasn't the only thing that had changed. Khan's actions didn't go unnoticed, and many Thilku couldn't help but take a second look at him.

The battle had only lasted a few minutes, but the Thilku already showed some sweat on their wrinkled foreheads. Blood had also tainted their uniforms, together with gore and dirt, which wasn't surprising due to the intensity of the fight.

Instead, Khan was as clean as when he left the building. He didn't sweat, and no blood had fallen on him. Even his knife was spotless.

Moreover, even after flying and fighting, no dirt had reached Khan. Somehow, his shoes were also spotless. It almost seemed he didn't walk like the rest of the Thilku.

Other than standing out, Khan also noticed a vague change in disposition toward him. His presence there was an insult, but the Thilku couldn't deny how he had saved many lives. Disregarding his actions would go against the aliens' pride.

The battlefield didn't help with that conflicting mood. The place didn't allow bonding since the night had just begun. More waves of monsters had to arrive, preventing eventual talks from happening.

Khan made it easy for his companions, fixing his gaze ahead to focus on the night. The Thilku studied him for a bit, but his concentration eventually made them stop. The time for talks would arrive, but not now.

The symphony sent more signals from behind that defensive line. A few battles had started and ended during that break. The few monsters that had crossed Naoo's team had died, extinguishing what remained of the initial tide.

The ground had stopped shaking, creating a peaceful period that stretched for a long time. No attacks arrived in the few hours that followed the first wave, but Khan didn't believe for even a second that the night was over.

Strangely enough, the expected change didn't happen from inside the darkness. Something moved behind Khan, forcing him to turn. Many noticed and imitated his reaction, and figures eventually appeared in the distance.

Multiple teams of Thilku had left their position to advance toward Naoo's group. They weren't exactly moving toward Naoo, but it was clear that they wanted to reach the same defensive line.

Khan's companions weren't surprised about that deployment, only slightly worried. A few looked in Khan's direction, seemingly wanting to update him, but the symphony took care of that in the next seconds.

Multiple auras suddenly appeared in the darkness. Tens of unique colors had reached the symphony at the edge of Khan's senses, warning him about the arrival of a massive army.

'What's that?' Khan gasped, struggling to believe what was reaching his senses.

An army of monsters split into multiple teams advanced slowly across the destroyed plain. Those creatures didn't fall prey to their hunger. Instead, they almost marched in an orderly manner as if they were actual troops.

Khan found the reason for that order in the slightly more powerful figures standing behind each team. Creatures he had already fought and could recognize from their mana signature walked behind the monsters, forcing them to behave.

'Six,' Khan counted, 'No, seven intelligent wolves, with at least twenty Tainted animals each.'

That number would make the entire human settlement run away in fear, but the Thilku were different. During the monsters' slow advance, multiple alien teams reached the frontlines, occupying areas at Naoo's group's sides to cover more ground.

'Two hundred,' Khan counted, 'Against one hundred and fifty.'

The Thilku had matched and surpassed the monsters' numbers, but nothing could ensure their victory. A bloody battle waited ahead.

Chapter 604 War

It was chaos.

The two armies clashed among roars, growls, howls, and battle cries. The azure and scarlet tide fused as the ground shattered under their feet, disappearing into a dense cloud that almost filled the plain.

Plans, tasks, and roles vanished. The plain became the center of a war that required a single winner, and neither side backed away from it. Even the monsters began to focus on the Thilku instead of trying to cross them.

The initial clash destroyed the surface, creating a hole that stretched far past both frontlines. Thilku and monsters fell inside, either focusing on safe landings or trying to use the opportunity to deliver killing blows.

Khan used his speed to take the wolf in front of him by surprise, stabbing his knife into its head. The ground crumbled right afterward, but the symphony had warned him about that development, and he was ready to exploit it.

A good chunk of both armies fell for a few meters, creating a long gorge of fur, bodies, blood, and sweat, but Khan remained above it. The air was the only surface he needed while he let the symphony guide his actions.

The two armies were going at each other with all they had, but only the frontlines had begun to mix. The fall had helped, but the fights remained limited to the central areas of the battlefield.

Many Thilku and wolves were still trying to find openings that could bring them before opponents. Some jumped on top of their companions to get a piece of the action, with the monsters being messier about it.

Khan listened to anything reaching his senses before sprinting ahead. He knew where his power shone brighter, so he crossed the battlefield to reach the areas occupied solely by monsters before diving at them.

The mess and Khan's speed hid his movements, allowing him to stomp on an unaware wolf's head. The creature was as strong as a third-level warrior, so the attack only pushed it downward, slamming it deeper into the monster it had climbed on.

The monster failed to realize what had happened due to the chaos of the battlefield. It couldn't even lift its head due to the force pressing it down, and the chance to remove it never arrived.

The spherical version of the Wave spell expanded from Khan's figure, destroying and pushing away anything in its path. The lack of allies in his surroundings allowed him to attack freely, which was exactly what he did.

The Wave spell cleared Khan's surroundings, leaving only patches of blood and flesh around him. The enemy army noticed him, and angry howls flew in his direction.

The wolves waited for the purple-red mana to vanish before charging ahead. However, Khan had already disappeared, and a bright spear had replaced him.

The spear exploded, releasing a pillar that burned or killed the wolves in its immediate surroundings. As for Khan, he dived into the azure figures, swinging his knife and delivering kicks to open a path and defeat opponents.

When Khan left the pillar's range, a monster appeared in his path. The explosion had blinded the creature, so Khan ducked to his right and kept advancing, swinging his knife in the meantime.

The wolf lost its head while Khan crossed it, but two more monsters appeared before him. Mana flowed toward his legs, flinging him forward to slam his knees on one of the oddly shaped heads.

The monster's skull shattered, and its body bounced back due to the power carried by the impact. Its companion noticed the event and instinctively threw its mouth at the foreign figure standing on its left, but a glowing knife welcomed it.

Khan split the wolf's mouth in half before kicking the air to fly past his latest kill. More monsters had noticed him by then, and two leaped in his direction, but needles appeared in their path.

Pain spread from Khan's right arm when he brought it to his side. The needles exploded, destroying a head and a leg. His aim had been off, but no regret reached his brain.

More and more wolves noticed Khan after the needles' explosions. He was the only human in that mass of fur, and his flight highlighted his figure. Many monsters growled and jumped over their companions to reach him, but he disappeared before any attack could land.

Khan's feet touched the brittle ground without shattering it. Long legs also surrounded him. He had landed among the wolves, but his eyes failed to record clear images since he promptly sprinted again.

The glowing knife flashed in Khan's eyes as he swung it left and right while striding forward. His shoulders slammed on the monsters' legs, which fell at the lightest impact since they weren't attached to the rest of their bodies anymore.

A trail of blood and fur spread behind Khan, but bodies soon covered it. All the wolves maimed by Khan lost their balance and tripped, adding dust to the cloud that had engulfed the battlefield.

Heads eventually peeked into the array of long legs. A wolf bent forward to check what was happening, but a foot slammed on its mouth, breaking its upper part.

The kick pushed the wolf back, slamming it on the monsters behind and making some space in that chaotic environment. Khan ran into it, and the spherical version of the Wave spell expanded from his figure.

The spell cleared Khan's surroundings during its expansion, but a powerful force suddenly slammed into it, partially stopping it. A similar ability had clashed with Khan's technique, but the event didn't bring any surprise.

Khan stood straight in the middle of his spell as he glanced to his left. Six meters separated him from a humanoid wolf who had unleashed a similar version of his attack. The two techniques seemed equally matched as they clashed in the middle of the army, and no one dared to interfere.

Sizzling noises and azure sparks shot from where the two attacks clashed. Raw mana escaped the two spells, but no winner arrived. Khan and the humanoid wolf released their energy freely without ever hinting at stopping.

Khan stared deep into the wolf's calm eyes. Thoughts slowly returned to his brain as his mana began to boil. That mere beast was matching his power. That wasn't something his energy liked to see.

A clicking growl resounded in Khan's mind, and he opened his mouth to shout it. Mana flared out of his body, expanding inside the Wave spell and stretching past its edges. He vented, adding more power to his attack and pushing back the wolf's technique.

The wolf calmly watched its spell retreat, but its eyes suddenly lit up, sending beams at it. The attack destabilized its mana, causing a chain reaction that echoed through Khan's energy, making it explode outward.

Both Wave spells and flares transformed into unstable energy that shot in every direction. Most of it flew toward the sky, but a good chunk dived into the surrounding pack, hitting a couple of monsters and burning their fur.

The humanoid wolf had retracted its beams during the explosion, but its arms promptly shot upward, waving their sharp claws toward the incoming threat.

Khan appeared above the creature, spinning on himself with a stretched leg. He looked about to deliver one of his strongest kicks, but the claws were ready to intercept him.

Usually, that would be a guaranteed hit. The humanoid monster had noticed Khan's arrival and had reacted accordingly. Khan was also going too fast to dodge.

However, Khan's spinning motion suddenly slowed down, and he flexed his stretched leg to make his foot land on the longest claw of the monster's right paw. Strangely enough, the wolf didn't feel any pressure on its limb but couldn't lift it any further.

Time slowed down in the humanoid wolf's eyes until it basically stopped. Khan had landed on its claw, and a purple-red flash followed. Only darkness waited for the creature afterward.

Khan landed on the ground behind the humanoid wolf but didn't turn. He straightened his back while the earthquake continued to rage.

Those tremors affected the humanoid wolf, which fell into the space previously cleared by the Wave spells. The impact on the ground made its head roll forward for a few meters. That body part had lost any connection with its neck.

Howls invaded the scene. The death of the humanoid wolf changed the leadership in that chunk of the pack. A frenzy began to affect the monsters, bringing out their instinctive hunger.

Khan was the closest prey, so the monster immediately focused on him. Still, the same instincts behind their hunger warned them about a potential threat. A dense aura surrounded Khan. The air had become an extension of his mind.

That reaction wasn't intentional. An overbearing feeling had invaded Khan after his recent victory. His mana felt that he had proven something by defeating the humanoid wolf, which filled him with urges that stretched into the environment.

Khan was no stranger to that event. He had spent the last period training to enhance those effects. The theory behind the Niqols' spells was manifesting itself on his own as if it was a natural extension of his feelings.

The howls and growls didn't let Khan focus on what was happening to the air. His mood transformed his expression into a glare that he moved across the monsters. He had almost reached the other side of the enemy army but was still surrounded. Still, the wolves hesitated to attack him.

That hesitation was short-lived. The hunger quickly overcame any trace of order those monsters still had, making them leap forward. Khan also emptied his mind, ready to flow through the battlefield again.

Chapter 605 Snickers

Long, confusing, and empty minutes passed until they reached the half-a-hour mark. Khan flowed through the symphony, flying, swinging, and kicking according to what touched his senses until nothing else came his way.

Khan gracefully landed on the ground before inspecting his surroundings. Dust hid his vision, making his eyes itchy and teary, but colors still shone. The symphony had grown calmer, and the earthquake had stopped. No sharp movements unfolded, and auras quieted down at the inevitable realization.

'It's over,' Khan thought, heaving a deep sigh and wiping his knife on his pants.

The dust slowly settled down, revealing the new state of the battlefield. The brown plain was a mess of shallow and deep gorges connected to a big one that ran for hundreds of meters. Furry corpses also occupied every corner of that destroyed environment, and a few scarlet capes lay among them.

Khan was no stranger to that scene. He had long since grown used to the aftermath of large battles, and the Thilku shared his experience. Most aliens stood still, checking how many of them had survived before steeling their minds.

From what Khan could see, the casualties on the Thilku's side weren't significant. The alien army had only lost twenty to thirty soldiers, proving its prowess.

Nevertheless, lives weren't numbers. As much as the Thilku were used to those sceneries and pretended to be fine, some experienced sadness and grief seeing their dead companions. A few even reached their friends' corpses to retrieve their capes.

Khan couldn't join that sad mood. Xai had been clear about the meaning of his presence on the battlefield, so he decided to stay away from any social interaction. He lifted his gaze at the sky, waiting for orders to fly in his direction.

Of course, Khan didn't stay still. Even if the area had transformed, he could understand where his previous position was. Moreover, he could sense Nao, so he walked in her direction without getting too close.

Khan was hard to ignore in that environment. Except for his different stature and uniform, his stance was quite eye-catching. Blood and dust had finally tainted his figure, but his steps were full of power and confidence. He appeared at the peak of his physical capabilities, even if a big battle had just ended.

The lack of briefings forced Khan to follow his previous orders. The night was still above him, so he returned to his appointed position and fixed his eyes on the darkness ahead. He was ready to fight until morning if necessary.

The Thilku couldn't remain impassible before that stance. A few had even caught snippets of Khan's prowess during the messy battle. He wasn't only strong. His drive seemed endless.

Khan felt that growing respect but ignored it, focusing on saving energy. His mana reserves were fine, but his body could benefit from some rest. He wasn't tired yet, but the night risked making him reach his limits if more big battles were to happen.

However, steps eventually resounded, making Khan lower his gaze. His team returned to its previous position, only to cross it and aim for the trench. The scene was confusing, but Naoo approached him to clear his doubts.

"[The monsters don't attack after the big mobilization]," Naoo explained. "[We are going back]."

"[The night is still long]," Khan pointed out.

Naoo didn't like Khan questioning her orders, but her anger was short-lived, leading to a composed reply. "[The frontlines get to rest, so rest]."

Khan was ready to offer his services for the rest of the night, but Naoo added a glare to her reply, forcing him to nod. He sheathed his knife, and the two began to walk toward the trench.

Vehicles ran through the plain while Khan and Naoo reunited with their team. Many Thilku had suffered injuries, which required immediate medical attention to deter eventual mutations, and doctors didn't hesitate to ride toward them.

Khan inspected everything silently, standing slightly behind his team to respect Xai's warning. He would play the part of the outsider as long as the Thilku wanted to, but they seemed to disagree with that behavior.

As insulting as Khan's presence, he still fought at the Thilku's side. He had proven himself worthy of being on the battlefield, and some of his companions were also alive thanks to him.

The Thilku wanted to maintain a cold attitude, but their pride made them consider other options. If they ignored the different species, Khan wasn't too bad. He was actually a valuable asset in the war against the monsters.

Khan didn't try to do anything since deeper thoughts afflicted his mind. He knew the Thilku had it worse than humans, but the recent battle had still surprised him. Cegnore probably had more to offer, making his plan harder to actuate.

'How many monsters would arrive if I called them?' Khan wondered. 'Can the Thilku handle them?'

In theory, Lord Exr had agreed to use Khan as bait. Still, Khan couldn't summon armies randomly, especially after witnessing the tough battles in the Thilku trenches.

A call had turned random leftovers into three packs in the human trench. The consequences could be far worse in Khan's new location, which would put hundreds of lives at risk, including his own.

'I must plan things out with the Thilku,' Khan thought. 'I can't backstab them like this. It's too dangerous.'

Khan looked ahead, glancing at Naoo's figure before lowering his eyes again. The Thilku didn't trust him enough to believe in his plan, let alone coordinate with his warning. Earning their respect and learning more about the area had to come first.

Minutes had to pass before the team returned to the building, meeting fellow Thilku coming back from the frontlines. The groups went through the security measures in an orderly manner, eventually entering the vast main hall.

Doctors and additional teams were already waiting in the hall. The soldiers headed for the main gate to replace their returning companions while the medics attended to the injured, running scanners over them or delivering drugs.

Khan felt surprised when a doctor approached him to check him up, but the scanner didn't reveal anything unusual, clearing him to advance. He could return to his lodgings after that, but Naoo was waiting for the rest of her team, so he imitated her.

The team eventually returned to their corridor, and the soldiers began to remove their dirty clothes or dive into their rooms. Their traditions usually involved feasts now, but Khan didn't dare to point that out.

Naoo stormed into her room without uttering any word, and wariness filled the corridor. Khan was behind that feeling, so he flew to his locker and retrieved his backpack to undress. He wanted to isolate himself as soon as possible, but the Thilku had different intentions.

"[Blue hair]," A Thilku called when she saw Khan approaching the rune before his room with the backpack on his shoulders.

Khan turned and recognized the Thilku. She was the mace-swinging soldier he had lifted in the air. Her call had made the rest of the team focus on him, filling the corridor with conflicting emotions.

"[What]?" Khan asked, too pensive to show his fake politeness.

"[Do you eat]?" The Thilku asked, crossing her arms before her bare chest.

"[Of course I eat]," Khan responded.

"[Do you drink]?" The Thilku continued.

"[More than you]," Khan stated, and scoffs resounded in the corridor.

The Thilku stared deep into Khan's eyes while tension built up, but her mouth eventually broadened into a smirk that revealed her sharp canines. Her reaction made a few of her companions snicker loudly, warming up the corridor's atmosphere.

"[Ah]!" The Thilku exclaimed. "[You talk big for a human]."

"[Apa]," Xai called, looking at the female Thilku before nodding in Khan's direction.

"[Shut it, Xai]," Apa snorted. "[I know]."

Apa exchanged glances with her companions, who replied with nods or by crossing their arms. Khan knew what was happening but still waited for the words to arrive.

"[We are having a feast]," Apa eventually announced. "[Join me]."

"[You are]," Khan said, stopping for a few seconds to make the Thilku eager for his next words, "[Way too shy about this]."

Silence fell in the corridor. The Thilku looked at Khan, shocked that similar words had come out of his mouth. They weren't sure what they meant either, but Khan eventually chuckled, expressing his intentions.

At that point, a few Thilku became unable to contain themselves. They exploded into laughs, and some approached Apa to slam their huge hands on her shoulders. Jokes also flew toward her, teasing her about the situation.

The door of Naoo's room suddenly opened, and all the Thilku stopped laughing and straightened their position. Naoo also came out but ignored her underlings to march toward Khan.

"[Here]," Naoo said, handing a circular device to Khan. "[These are our battle strategies]."

Surprise spread through the corridor, and Khan also experienced that feeling. He looked at Naoo's stern face before inspecting the device. A rune locked its screen, and its lines slowly became meanings in Khan's mind.

"[Can you open it]?" Naoo asked, seemingly angry about that wait.

"[Yes]!" Khan exclaimed, snapping back to reality and moving his fingers over the rune to gain access to the device's data.

Naoo waited until Khan unlocked the device to glare at her underlings and spout a question in her angry tone. "[Did you invite the human]?"

Apa and the Thilku at her sides nodded, and Naoo confirmed those silent replies with the other aliens before shouting again. "[What are you waiting for? Let's feast]!"

Chapter 606 Revelations

Naoo led her team into the main hall before occupying a spot near the corner. Carpets and tables were already there, so the Thilku sat down, and Khan found himself with Apa and Xai at his sides.

The team's attire was unacceptable for the Global Army's customs. Most Thilku were only half-dressed and still dirty from the battlefield's blood, sweat, and dust, which applied to men and women alike.

Khan was no exception. The invitation arrived after he removed the upper part of his uniform and found no reason to put it back. That soldier-like atmosphere was very casual, and he fit perfectly inside it. Khan actually loved it.

The Thilku also lacked body parts that humans might find arousing. Khan had broader tastes, but seeing those exposed chests didn't trigger anything. It was actually hard to differentiate between men and women from that aspect alone since they were so similar.

Khan's team wasn't the only one in the hall. All the Thilku who had returned from the frontlines had reached the area and occupied different spots. Some even brought food and booze from their personal stashes to add to what soldiers delivered to each table.

The sudden invitation had made Khan avoid storing his backpack, so he joined that trend, putting a few cans of food on the table. Hands immediately went on them, and Khan soon found Xai and Apa busy opening those containers.

"[How do you open this thing]?" Xai complained, inspecting both sides of the cylindrical can.

Khan opened his mouth to speak, but Apa suddenly launched a battle cry. She had stabbed two fingers in the lid and ripped the can open.

"[The design is odd]," Apa commented, pulling out a chicken wing and throwing it in her mouth.

Cracking noises followed as Apa's teeth broke the meal's flesh and bones. Khan was about to say something but changed his mind and laughed. It didn't take long before Xai imitated Apa, prolonging Khan's reaction and making him raise his voice.

Khan's laugh couldn't cross his table since all his companions were busy shouting and joking, and their voices were far louder. A cheerful mood had fallen on the team, and the other soldiers in the hall shared that happiness.

That celebration reminded Khan of the Niqols. Those aliens also partied after deaths or similar sad events. The Thilku's motivations were different, but Khan still fell into a pensive mood.

That mood was short-lived since Apa and Xai moved bowls and booze to his side of the table, reminding him about his situation. Khan immediately wore a happy mask, and random conversations started.

"[You are stronger than you look]," Apa commented, "[For a human]."

"[You aren't that heavy]," Khan laughed.

"[Ah]!" Apa exclaimed, looking past Khan to glare at Xai. "[I'm heavier than him]!"

"[Not for long]," Xai snorted, lifting the food can over his open mouth to eat the entirety of its content.

'I guess Thilku don't care about their waistline,' Khan thought before continuing the conversation.

"[Do you like human food]?"

"[It's not bad]," Apa replied, also devouring the food can's contents.

"[Thilku's food is better]," Xai added, munching his big bite.

Khan smiled, diving into the bowls and gulping down cups. It felt good to drink after a battle. His mind recalled the traditions he had learned to love, and his mood inevitably became joyous. However, the device at his side reminded him how far he had gotten from Nitis.

'The Global Army would pay a lot for this,' Khan thought, putting the device on the table and unlocking it. The item only had strategies for Cegnore, which didn't involve firearms and technology, but that didn't make it any less precious.

"[Flying sure is useful against those monsters]," Apa stated while Khan was about to lose himself in his studies. "[I'm surprised you landed at all]."

"[I'm surprised you could pay attention to me in that mess]," Khan responded.

"[Don't underestimate the Thilku]," Apa proudly scoffed. "[We have faced nights like this for months. Keeping track of a human is nothing]."

That urge to brag didn't take Khan by surprise anymore, but Xai managed to add something that made his eyebrows arch. "[Though, it's useful to have a shaman on the frontlines]."

Khan had brought his cup to his mouth, but that statement made him avoid drinking to look at the Thilku. Xai didn't put much weight in his words, but Khan's curious gaze confused him, leading to an annoyed snort.

"[What]?" Xai asked, seemingly taking that stare as a challenge.

"[You know I'm a shaman]?" Khan questioned. He had confirmed that the Thilku knew about him, but that level of details still sounded too much for something he had never openly admitted.

"[Naoo told us]," Apa intervened, nodding at Naoo. "[She is friend with Amox's wife]."

Many Thilku at the table heard the conversation and turned toward Naoo, including Khan. Naoo had a bowl in each hand and her mouth full of food, so she limited herself to a snort when so much attention fell on her.

"[We also know your girlfriend is on Neuria]," Xai added, changing the topic to avoid angering Naoo. "[You are investing a lot on the Empire, Captain Khan]."

Khan felt surprised once again. Monica had landed on Neuria mere days ago, but rumors had already reached Cegnore. Moreover, even ordinary soldiers seemed to know about her relationship with Khan.

"[The Empire is an influential ally]," Khan justified his actions, "[And the Thilku are strong]."

Xai snorted to hide his reactions, but his mana agreed. From the alien's biased perspective, Khan's actions made perfect sense.

"[A good tongue is a coward's weapon]," Apa complained, slamming a fist on the table. "[Why aren't you marrying your girlfriend]?"

"[That's]," Khan cleared his throat, taken aback by Apa's seriousness, "[That's personal]."

"[Ah]!" Apa cried, crossing her arms in annoyance. Somehow, she appeared genuinely angry about that situation.

"[Apa, humans have different customs]," Xai intervened. "[They date and waste years being engaged or something]."

"[When did you learn so much about humans]?" Apa questioned, growing angrier.

"[It's written in our basic briefing]," Xai groaned.

"[Cowards]," Apa snorted, glaring at Khan. "[If I were your woman, I would have knocked you out and done the deed myself]."

Amox had warned Khan about Thilku women, and Apa was proving him right. Khan could fight monsters three times his size, but that glare and words triggered an instinctive fear in his brain.

"[Enough with the nonsense]," Naoo suddenly announced, and the entire table went silent as the team focused on her. "[So, Khan, can you keep your promise with Lord Exr]?"

The surprises were never-ending that night. Khan found himself stunned once again. He had been worried the Thilku wouldn't believe his plan, but it seemed Lord Exr had vouched for him.

"[I]," Khan exclaimed, hesitating briefly to choose his words carefully, "[I can probably call more beasts, but I can't control their numbers]."

Joy abandoned the table, replaced by seriousness. Khan's claim was bold and worrying. It implied that he had some control over the Tainted animals. Moreover, the reactions in his surroundings told him that only Naoo had been aware of those details.

"[When]?" Naoo asked without giving anyone the time to think.

"[I need to know more about this trench]," Khan stated, switching to a serious face. "[I stand by my words. The Thilku are strong, but I bet you wish to avoid pointless casualties]."

Naoo let a silent second pass. It almost seemed that Khan's worries had gotten through, but another question quickly came in his direction.

"[When]?" Naoo repeated.

It became clear that the Thilku wouldn't leave any leverage to Khan. They had accepted him into their ranks, but his power belonged to them. They would decide when and how to use it.

"[Any night is fine]," Khan decided to admit. "[I just have to send a message they can understand]."

"[Did you do it tonight]?" Naoo pressed on.

"[No]," Khan promptly replied. "[I wouldn't have put your army at risk like that]."

"[Are you implying that we can be defeated]?" Naoo wondered, showing her angrier side.

"[My goals are mine alone]," Khan firmly declared. "[I won't pay their price with Thilku lives]."

Naoo growled. That threatening gesture would have worked on ordinary humans, but Khan saw her mana, and his stern expression wouldn't have faltered anyway.

"[You can study the trench for another week]," Naoo uttered, slamming her hands on the short table before standing up. "[After that, you have to fulfil your promise]."

Khan and Naoo exchanged a long stare, but he eventually nodded. One week wasn't long, but Khan only cared about open cooperation with the Thilku.

Naoo departed in a hurry after Khan's nod, leaving the table in an awkward atmosphere. Even Khan didn't know how to resume the previous happy conversations after that revelation. Part of him wanted to return to his room to avoid prolonging that discomfort.

"[So]," Xai exclaimed, shattering the awkward silence, "[You can talk to those beasts]."

Khan looked at Xai before running his gaze across the aliens on the table. Ideally, he would keep those secrets for himself, but that would only create distrust.

"[Not really talk]," Khan explained, grabbing his cup. He almost cursed when he noticed the lack of booze, but Apa promptly moved a jug toward him.

Khan nodded at Apa and looked at the team again before coming clean with the best words he could find. "[It's partially shaman arts, and partially this]."

The bare chest allowed everyone to see Khan pointing at his azure scar, making additional explanations pointless. No one at the table was an expert in Nak, but they were famous enough to justify that ability.

"[Will it be dangerous]?" Xai continued.

"[Yes]," Khan revealed, refilling his cup.

"[The weak will die]," Apa sighed, lifting her cup, "[And the strong will thrive]."

The Thilku at the table also lifted their cups, echoing Apa's words. They were making a toast, which Khan joined after noticing they were waiting for him.

The feast grew silent afterward, and Khan pretended to focus on Naoo's device while scouring his thoughts. He knew something was changing inside him. Francis' incident probably marked the beginning of that transformation, and his training in the Niqols' arts enhanced those effects.

'If only I could train a bit longer,' Khan thought, recalling what had happened on the battlefield. For a few seconds, he had abandoned his status as an empty weapon of the symphony to become something far heavier, but the Thilku weren't willing to wait for him to unlock that new power.

Chapter 607 Introspection

The cheerful mood never returned, and Khan was fine with that. Things had changed too quickly during the feast, making him yearn for some time alone with his thoughts. That moment eventually arrived, and comforting reactions preceded it.

Even after the shocking revelations, the Thilku didn't go back to their previous distrust. They couldn't talk as happily as before, but Khan didn't feel ostracized anymore. Xai also opened his locker when they returned to the corridor, showing a different general attitude toward him.

Khan felt mentally drained once he returned to the privacy of his room. He threw himself on the big bed, carrying Naoo's device. He knew he had to study, but his pensive mood had yet to wane.

Khan let go of the device and turned belly up before lifting his right arm. It hurt to close and open his hand. It wasn't too bad, but he remained far from his top condition.

'It might heal in a week,' Khan thought. 'Hopefully, it will heal.'

The plan was now in motion, and Naoo even gave it a time limit. That was the best possible outcome since Khan could coordinate with the Thilku, but worries remained. He had merely gotten a taste of what Cegnore had to offer, and those threats had also been limited to animals.

'The mutated Thilku must come next,' Khan considered, 'And they are part of the reasons the war is still happening.'

Danger lurked everywhere. Each of Khan's steps was bound to cause a mess, and standing still wasn't an option. Failure wasn't either, leaving only one path open.

'It's always about strength, isn't it?' Khan cursed, straightening his back to sit on the bed. A rune shone on the wall to his right, and he reached for it to tinker with its lines.

Khan recognized the rune, but too much had happened that night. His pensive mood was still there, so he only half-focused on the symbol, failing to use it multiple times.

"Come on," Khan complained, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath to calm down. When he reopened them, he reapproached the rune, which activated at his touch.

The rune shrunk while red colors spread through the wall, creating a small mirror. Khan saw his reflection, noticing the dirt and blood lingering on his face. He had gotten so used to his hair that it didn't even stand out anymore, and his focus fell on his eyes to search for answers only he could know.

Khan's thoughts went on to the last battle. He couldn't forget how the air had become an extension of his mind. That was no small matter. He had worked hard to achieve similar results, which were happening instinctively now.

'Is that the next step?' Khan wondered. 'Is it just another weapon?'

Khan's battle style was a mere application of the Niqols' main arts to messy environments. It wasn't even a proper technique. He simply relied on his senses to move where the symphony highlighted favorable windows.

That battle style had many benefits. For starters, Khan was always one step ahead of his enemies. Getting surrounded or falling into traps was also impossible. He became the embodiment of efficiency in that state.

However, Khan was also empty when he fought like that. He eliminated his thoughts and inclinations, turning himself into a mere weapon ruled by his surroundings.

Many would praise that battle style, even going as far as calling it harmonious, and Khan would agree. He probably looked very shaman-like while fighting. Yet, he also recognized that something was missing.

'It lacks personality,' Khan thought, keeping his eyes on his reflection.

Flowing was in line with his senses and the mana's nature, but Khan also had to consider his element. His current battle style didn't express it at all, and the Niqols' arts seemed able to fix that.

Moreover, that battle style had formed on Ecoruta, one of the lowest points in Khan's life. He only wanted to lose himself back then, and relying on those feelings wasn't healthy, especially after changing so deeply.

'But,' Khan wondered, interrupting his considerations, 'Expressing what?'

Khan hoped to find the answer to that question in his reflection but ended up seeing all kinds of things. He was no simple character. Actually, his personality had so many conflicting aspects it was surprising he didn't develop a dissociative disorder.

Years had passed since Nitis. Khan didn't only move on. He also accumulated experience that put him far above ordinary soldiers.

That experience wasn't limited to battles. Khan's political figure had evolved in ways descendants found hard to believe. His education put him among the elites, and his relationship pushed his fame even higher.

'I know what I need to be,' Khan sighed, 'But what do I want to be?'

Jenna's teachings crossed Khan's mind as his eyes remained lost in his reflection. He could still see that ignorant and slightly naïve kid from the Slums, but other aspects were slowly eating him away, turning him into someone he struggled to recognize.

'What do I want?' Khan wondered.

Except for the Nak, Khan had a decent idea of his goals. He wanted to be with Monica and was ready to climb the political ladder for her. Yet, that journey could come in different ways and shape him into someone he might hate.

'Kindest and most domineering,' Khan thought about Monica's words.

As much as Khan cared about love, he knew he couldn't shape his life around that. He would probably try, but Monica wouldn't let him. He had to be himself and happy first, which brought his attention back to his reflection.

Khan saw the Tainted kid, still attached to the façade and lying skills he had developed in hostile environments. He spotted his desperation, a feeling powerful enough to rule every aspect of his life.

Khan saw the lover, the human who had learned forms of affection stretching past his species' limits. The bottomlessness of that feeling still raged inside him, giving birth to aspects that would scare most people away.

Khan saw his dark sides and the lengths he was willing to go to for his love. He could commit awful crimes for it and not lose any sleep over them. He had actually done his fair share of them already.

Khan saw the monster, the alien immersed in a river of corpses and blood. He had perfected the art of killing and turned it into his greatest asset. He was what every rumor described him to be and more, and his limits weren't even in sight.

In the end, Khan saw the Nak, the creature of his nightmares, the clicking cry that ran through his mind and mana. He felt his element's unreasonable and uncompromising urges and his desire to set them free.

Khan had a pessimistic view of himself but didn't ignore his good side. Most of his intentions were good. He cared more than any of his peers. He loved harder and was more loyal, even if not to the Global Army or his species.

'That's the problem, isn't it?' Khan thought. 'The more I care, the farther I'm willing to go.'

Khan didn't blame himself for that mindset. He stopped torturing himself after Jenna convinced him to pursue his happiness. He was also on the right path, and his power had to evolve accordingly.

Expressing all of that was simply impossible. Khan acknowledged the issue but still wanted to solve it. His drive began to leak out of his figure, affecting the synthetic mana in his surroundings. That energy almost screamed at the arrival of his influence, but nothing happened yet.

'It's too dangerous,' Khan commented, even if his influence continued to spread. 'It's not something that can be controlled. It's not something that should be controlled.'

The symphony transformed, gaining the iconic properties of the chaos element as it shattered and reformed. The air seemed to shake as the synthetic mana bent under Khan's will, and its density increased when he added tinges of his energy.

'Why would I even try to control it?' Khan wondered, adding more mana to the room. 'I should let loose. I deserve to be myself fully.'

The symphony thickened, growing brighter in Khan's vision, but he kept staring at his reflection. He couldn't help but like feeling his self-restraint gradually backing away. That was what his deepest instincts wanted, and his mana reflected that.

The air shook, and a faint clicking growl reached Khan's ears. Ordinary humans wouldn't see or hear anything, but a heavy tension existed in the room. Power was building up for unclear purposes.

'Why does this feel so good?' Khan cursed, a smirk broadening on his reflection. 'Why should I even bother hiding this?'

Khan's reasonable side knew the answer to those questions, but his mind was somewhere else. The mirror began to embody all the limits he had placed on himself, and blinking started a chain reaction.

The mana suddenly screamed, and cracking noises followed. The metal wall broke, creating a spiderweb of fissures with Khan's reflection as its center. The damage spread for a few meters, almost reaching the floor and ceiling.

Chapter 608 Deployment

Hiding the damaged wall was easy since Khan often was the first to leave his room. A few Thilku spotted the cracks but paid them no heed due to the unique role Khan had to play in that environment.

However, a worrying pattern started after the first night. Khan appeared distracted during social gatherings, meetings, and feasts. He seemed conflicted about something but also unapproachable.

Naoo or the other Thilku would have normally mentioned something, but Khan's performance on the battlefield never disappointed. He was the sharpest, fastest, and deadliest soldier on the field, granting him freedoms other aliens couldn't claim.

The battlefield itself didn't present anything new in those days. The great mobilization witnessed during the first night was the worst the Thilku trenches usually experienced, and Khan had to face it a few more times.

Instead, the other nights featured a mixture of various tides interrupted by long, peaceful breaks. The Thilku had it far harsher than the humans, but nothing Khan didn't see before. He quickly got used to that routine, only for the impending deadline to arrive.

On the eve of the weekend, a voice resounded inside Khan's room, bringing him out of his meditative state. A soft gale ran through the area when he opened his eyes and looked toward the speakers. Naoo was summoning him, marking the arrival of the fated day.

It was still early afternoon, leaving many hours before the night due to Cegnore's long days. Khan had already slept, eaten, and trained, and jumping out of bed brought his attention to his right arm.

Khan closed and opened his hand multiple times to check its flexibility. It still slightly itched when he moved his fingers too quickly, but the worst had passed in the previous week. He had basically healed, and looking at the cracking wall filled him with an unstoppable urge.

A thudding noise resounded in the room as Khan's knuckles slammed on the metal. The wall held strong even with the cracks that ran through it. The structure was resilient, and the same went for his arm. It was almost back to its full power, and that was enough.

Khan left the room while ripping off the bandages that had bound his arm in the last period. The two red scars were still there, but he quickly hid them with his sleeve before lifting his gaze. Naoo was already in the corridor, and her mana shook when their eyes met.

As much as Naoo tried to hide it, she had also noticed Khan's distracted mood. She had actually been one of the first to worry about it due to her position as team leader, but Khan's performance had reassured her every night.

Moreover, Naoo saw something else on top of that distracted mood. Khan's mind was often elsewhere, but pressure descended around him whenever he focused. It had happened now, too, triggering an instinctive fear that angered her.

"[You are late]," Naoo snorted, suppressing her temporary anger and turning toward the corridor's exit. Khan silently followed her, and the two dived deeper into the building, into areas he had never visited.

The corridor opened into a circular hall that resembled a control room. Consoles and big screens filled every corner of it, and Thilku stood before them. Khan and Naoo's arrival attracted their attention, but neither bothered to address it.

Naoo turned to her right, approaching a door that opened at her touch. A small rectangular room unfolded, featuring a long interactive desk and a few familiar figures. Khan recognized all of them, but one surprised him.

The Thilku at the table were some of the army's team leaders. Khan had seen them on the battlefield and had also confirmed their strength. Yet, the figure standing on the other side of the room claimed the entirety of his attention. After all, he was a fourth-level warrior.

"We meet again," The Thilku on the other side of the room announced in a perfect human accent. "Do you remember me, Captain Khan?"

Khan didn't interact much with the Thilku but didn't forget him either. The alien was the team leader of the Thilku delegation that visited the Harbor. He had also been present during the [Hunt], seemingly working as Lord Exr's advisor. His position couldn't be low.

"[Of course]," Khan replied in the Thilku language, performing a traditional bow. "[I'm ashamed that I didn't catch your name]."

"[Onp]," The Thilku replied, switching to his hoarse accent. "[Your Thilku improved greatly. I'm glad]."

"[Thank you]," Khan exclaimed, straightening his back.

Once the pleasantries ended, the atmosphere changed. Onp abandoned his politeness and tapped the desk, bringing out holograms that depicted the Thilku trenches. Dots also appeared to mark the usual arrangements of each team, which wasn't anything new for Khan.

Naoo stepped forward, and Khan followed her until they reached the desk. The red holograms shone on everyone's face, and their purpose was clear. Khan had to call the monsters that night, which required new arrangements.

"[We let you study the battlefield for a week]," Onp announced, fixing his scarlet eyes on Khan.
"[We expect results now]."

"[I will call the beasts tonight]," Khan confirmed, keeping his gaze on the holograms, "[But I advise a greater mobilization]."

"[Lord Exr didn't give you any authority]," Onp stated as snorts resounded around the table. "[The Empire is in charge here]."

Khan expected a similar answer but couldn't be bothered to go through that mandatory foreplay. He almost couldn't believe he had to argue to save lives, especially since the Thilku had already agreed to cooperate.

"[The beasts went from two to almost one hundred in the human trench]," Khan declared. "[That's the power of my voice]."

Khan didn't add requests or pleas. He didn't ask for anything. He simply stated what had happened in the human territory.

The explanation made most team leaders falter. Even if Khan couldn't replicate the same significant effects in the Thilku trenches, precautions were necessary. They risked losing the entire building otherwise.

Naoo and Onp didn't let the explanation worry them but focused on something else. Khan had sounded empty, almost lifeless. He didn't seem to care about the meeting or threat, but his figure continued to radiate pressure. The two Thilku simply couldn't understand why.

It didn't help that both Thilku had seen Khan in action. They knew how driven he was, so his lack of vitality conflicted with his usual mood. He didn't look trustworthy in the slightest, but it was too late to cancel the plan.

"[Lord Exr trusts you]," Onp eventually announced, "[And you have proven yourself to our species multiple times already. I will believe your voice]."

Onp tapped the desk again, dispersing the holograms. Khan couldn't help but lift his gaze but found pure sternness in Onp's face. He expected a plan, but the alien didn't disclose anything.

"[Leave, Captain Khan]," Onp ordered. "[Naoo will update you once we are done]."

'I see,' Khan thought, lowering his head in respect before heading for the exit. He was about to leave when Naoo added another order.

"[Wait outside]," Naoo said. Khan stopped for a second at that order but eventually left.

Standing in a control room wasn't ideal, but Khan had received precise orders, so he ignored the glares flying in his direction while waiting next to the room's door. He even closed his eyes to meditate, but his thoughts didn't calm down. His internal conflict was still there.

Half an hour had to pass before the door opened. The various team leaders left the room, and Onp followed suit. The latter glanced at Khan, seemingly wanting to say something, but eventually departed to handle his tasks.

In a different situation, Khan would have used that chance to deepen his relationship with the Thilku. Onp seemed important, and the two had some history. The alien was the perfect target for Khan's political goals, but his mood opposed those thoughts.

Naoo was the last to leave the room, and Khan opened his eyes at her arrival. She also stormed out of the circular area, forcing Khan to hurry behind her. That fast-paced march ended when the two returned to their team's quarters, where she stopped to glare at him.

"[Get ready]," Naoo ordered. "[We are going out]."

"[The night won't be here for many hours]," Khan pointed out.

"[That might contain the number of beasts]," Naoo explained. "[Hurry, we must be the first to leave]."

Naoo didn't wait for Khan's reply and slammed a hand on one of the runes in the corridor. A hoarse cry followed, and multiple doors quickly opened. The entire team left their quarters, wearing confused expressions that Naoo didn't hesitate to disperse.

"[The fight is upon us]!" Naoo shouted. "[I want everyone ready in three]!"

The confusion flared, but no one dared to question Naoo. Even Khan abandoned his doubts to prepare. He was already fully dressed with his knife at his side, so a short trip to the bathroom got him ready.

Naoo led the team outside after three minutes, and chaos fell into everyone's vision. Every door in the corridor was open, and Thilku came out of them. That pattern stretched into the following hall, where more troops were gathering. Almost two hundred of them had appeared, and more were arriving.

The Thilku moved aside when they noticed Naoo. Her group could approach the gate directly, and the outside world soon shone on their faces.

The dim light of Cegnore's afternoon didn't make Naoo stop. She hurried to the other side of the trench and marched ahead, leading her team toward the familiar frontlines. Still, she stopped a hundred meters before them at that time, and orders followed.

"[Form a line]!" Naoo shouted. "[Stick close. We need to leave space for the others]."

"[Naoo, what is happening]?" Xai couldn't help but ask while complying with those orders.

"[Save your breath]," Naoo snorted. "[You'll need it]."

"[How many]?" Khan asked, knowing what that new arrangement implied.

"[Ah]!" Naoo cursed. "[I thought the soldiers' job was to fight, not ask questions]."

Everyone knew Naoo's character. Even Khan had gotten used to it and had learned how to counter it. Once the team was ready, Naoo found a series of eyes on her figure. All her teammates were looking at her, waiting for explanations.

"[Bunch of slackers]," Naoo complained, fixing her gaze ahead. "[Everyone is coming today]."

"[Everyone]?" Apa whispered, and answers arrived before anyone could echo her doubts.

Mechanical noises filled the area as figures appeared in the distance, coming from territories under the Empire's domain. Multiple vehicles were riding toward Naoo's team, and that wasn't the end of it.

Multiple teams left the building behind the trench and advanced toward the front. Khan initially counted a few hundred of them, but their number continued to increase. That growth skyrocketed once the vehicles stopped and released more troops, eventually touching the one-thousand mark.

More vehicles and teams appeared after the event, and they all gathered around Naoo's group. The Thilku were deploying a massive army and condensing it on the frontlines as if they knew the attack would arrive there.

Khan couldn't remain distracted when so many troops occupied his surroundings. He lost count after they crossed the two-thousand mark but knew their number continued to increase. The Thilku had deployed the entirety of their force there, and everyone soon focused on Khan.

Chapter 609 Numbers

Khan had given up on estimating how many Thilku Cegnore had, but the Empire was solving his doubts now. Admittedly, he didn't know if that was the entirety of the alien force, but something told him that it had to come quite close to that.

Thousands of tall, burly figures stood on a relatively small patch of ground, threatening its stability with their weight. A sea of scarlet capes had covered the brown surface, creating a force that could challenge entire cities.

To Khan's surprise, the majority of those soldiers were third-level warriors. Some of the Empire's best troops had occupied the battlefield and were ready to give their everything. Onp wasn't there for reasons the Thilku had yet to explain completely, but that didn't make the army any less imposing.

That massive deployment also shocked many Thilku, but Khan's thoughts couldn't linger on that emotion. Countless figures pointed their feet on the ground and lifted their heads to catch sight of him. Everyone was there because of Khan, so they wanted to study him at least.

The humans' shorter size helped in that situation. Khan wasn't only at the utmost front. His companions also partially hid his figure, making it impossible for the over three thousand troops to spot him. Still, everyone knew he was there, and Naoo soon gave the inevitable order.

"[Do your thing]," Naoo ordered, using a far calmer and softer tone than her usual harsh and annoyed voice. That deployment had gotten to her head, too, but she didn't forget her role.

Naoo's order filled Khan's surroundings with curiosity. Every Thilku who heard her words peeked at him to steal a glance at the famous shaman arts. The weight of expectations fell on Khan, which he found almost ironic considering what his technique actually involved.

'It would be funny if nothing happened,' Khan mocked himself before bringing his right palm to his mouth.

Theoretically, Khan could make the technique more scenic to reassure the alien troops, but his mood didn't allow pretenses that day. A barely noticeable tinge of mana accumulated on his palm, and he blew on it while mimicking past thoughts.

'Come and get me,' Khan thought, watching his mana disperse into the natural energy and creating gales that stretched in the distance.

Khan followed the effects of his request with his eyes, and the Thilku in his surroundings tried to imitate him. Still, they couldn't sense the symphony, so confusion and snorts unfolded when they saw nothing more than empty air.

Many alien eyes darted between Khan and the areas ahead, wondering whether anything had happened at all. A few saw that event as a proper scam, and murmurs spread. Restlessness built up to the point that Naoo herself became worried.

"[Is that it]?" Naoo questioned, half-worried and half-angry.

"[That's it]," Khan confirmed, sighing as he sat on the ground. "[We can only wait for them to answer now]."

Khan displayed the same distracted and uncaring behavior as the previous days, which the unfamiliar Thilku disliked. Sitting in the middle of the battlefield while everyone else was standing appeared beyond insulting, and Khan doubled down on that by closing his eyes and meditating.

Of course, Khan didn't isolate himself from the outside world. He sensed the growing tension. He heard the distrustful and mocking comments flying in his direction or among the army. Khan felt no right to blame the Thilku but also avoided addressing the matter.

The tension and general distrust intensified as the minutes passed. Wild theories began to fly among the army too. Some considered the possibility that Khan was using his shaman arts as an excuse to make the Empire show its hand, and that wasn't the end of it.

Khan had openly revealed his connection with the monsters. That had happened in the privacy of a feast, but the Thilku talked and spread gossip almost faster than humans. The entire army knew about that, giving birth to crazier theories.

According to a few loud soldiers, Khan belonged to the other side. That massive deployment was a trap staged to remove the Thilku from Cegnore. The claim was obviously insane, but the atmosphere was fertile ground for unfounded fears.

Things only worsened as the minutes turned into hours. A less experienced army would have already snapped, and the Thilku were getting there due to the growing tension. Khan was actually lucky to be among serious and collected soldiers, but even they were losing their cool.

It didn't help that the night was slowly approaching. Many hours still separated the army from the sunset, but each passing hour brought it closer. That wasn't the only position the Thilku had to defend, so they worried their deployment could hurt the other trench.

An ordinary soldier with Khan's senses would have gone crazy under that not-so-silent pressure. The weight of expectations would have crushed many experienced warriors or leaders. That was the kind of blunder that could destroy careers, but Khan didn't make mistakes, and the world eventually proved him right.

It was unclear how many hours had passed since the call, but Khan suddenly opened his eyes and jumped to his feet. His abrupt awakening silenced most murmurs and generated new ones, but his senses cut out that noise to focus on the horizon ahead.

The corpses and holes ahead tried to hide the horizon, but Cegnore's star still shone, granting an almost clear view. Most Thilku followed Khan's gaze but found nothing at all. No matter how far they looked, the plain was empty.

That lack of events made most of the army disregard Khan's sudden reaction, rekindling the many murmurs and adding louder voices. Even his companions didn't know what to say to that emptiness, but Khan saw a different scenery.

"[We should get ready]," Khan whispered, keeping his eyes on the horizon, "[Before they do]."

Naoo was about to question Khan's claim but trusted him one last time. She looked at the horizon and crossed her arms, challenging the world to do something. Cegnore initially didn't care about her stance, but something eventually appeared.

It all began with a faint, distant cloud. The phenomenon was so vague and far away that many failed to notice it. Still, it grew closer, eventually becoming impossible to miss.

The distant cloud grew bigger and showed more of its colors. It was yellowish-brown and as tall as a six-story building, but its size was worrying. It expanded left and right until it covered most of the visible horizon.

The event resembled a proper sandstorm, but Cegnore didn't have that type of weather. Moreover, the immense cloud was too slow to be powered by violent winds. Something on the surface was causing it, and its size seemed to match the Thilku army.

The murmurs vanished. The Thilku army went silent, and sternness replaced the previous distrust. A battle was arriving, and the following earthquake told the aliens how tough it would be.

Tremors took control of the ground. The holes past the frontlines expanded, absorbing the corpses lingering on them. The very surface gave in, unable to endure the arrival of the new army, which shattered and reformed into a lower, uneven, and stabler plain.

Naoo didn't follow Khan's suggestion, so he fell silent and drew his knife. He couldn't give orders to the Thilku, so he gave up on the matter altogether. He had tried to save lives, but that time had passed. Now, he had to take them.

The cloud grew closer and closer, eventually sending smoke and dust toward the Thilku army. The event tried to hinder the aliens' vision, but no one dared to cover their eyes. They couldn't in front of that massive and unforeseen development.

The arrival of the dust tried to make a few soldiers lose their cool, but the earthquake stopped, hinting at a similar behavior from the opposing army. The cloud started to disperse, and the sternness intensified once everything became visible.

The enemy army had stopped a few hundred meters from the Thilku, just behind the vast gorge opened by the earthquake. Low growls had also begun to resound in the area, but the aliens couldn't hear them. They were too shocked about their opponents' numbers to care about those details.

A blue sea had appeared in the brown environment. Thousands of Tainted animals between the first and third levels occupied the front, creating a river of fur, saliva, and hunger. Those creatures were arranged into different teams, turning the first two lines into an impenetrable wall.

Except for its sheer size, that sight wasn't anything new for the Thilku. They already fought a few hundred monsters every night, at times simultaneously. There were simply almost four thousand now.

Those numbers weren't a big deal since the Thilku had deployed enough troops to match them. Yet, the specimens past the two lines of monsters created a worrying sight. Twenty humanoid wolves stood behind the various packs, and their paws had already stabbed the ground.

The Thilku knew what that position meant, and Naoos connected the dots. She suddenly realized that Khan wanted the army to charge ahead to prevent the humanoid wolves from getting into a firing position. Still, it was too late now.

All things considered, the situation wasn't too bad. A bloody battle was waiting for both armies, but the Thilku were no strangers to them. The fight would merely be bigger.

Nevertheless, the monsters' army hid something else behind its lines of monsters and humanoid wolves. A four-meter-tall figure towered above those creatures, and the presence of dark-red shades revealed its species. An oddly huge Thilku was commanding the enemy army, putting fire in every alien's heart.

Khan was no exception. Spotting the Thilku dispersed his apparent distraction and overloaded his senses. He had finally found something that went beyond humanoid wolves, and the seemingly stable mutations in the alien filled him with hope.

The two armies didn't utter any sound. The silence that usually preceded a battle fell on the area, but that break was short-lived. The mutated Thilku suddenly lifted its right arm, shouting a cry that triggered thousands of howls.

The joint cries from the enemy army almost created a sound attack that reached the Thilku, but more worrying events followed. The humanoid wolves accumulated mana, and bullets soon shot out of their mouths.

Khan didn't dare to move without official orders, but they didn't take long to arrive. As soon as the huge purple-red bullets appeared in the sky, Naoos and the other team leaders launched hoarse cries, making the entire army charge ahead.

The bullets descended quickly, landing among the army and killing multiple Thilku on the spot. The humanoid wolves even fired again, sending more attacks into the sky.

The Thilku army had to the gorge to cross, but the monsters didn't leave it be. The Tainted animals also advanced, forcing the aliens to stop in that massive hole and exposing them to the falling bullets. Countless casualties happened on both sides, but one figure remained outside that chaos.

Khan didn't even consider entering the gorge. He also ignored any idea that involved the humanoid wolves. His target was clear, and he was the only soldier who could aim for it right away.

Khan flew at full speed through the sky, crossing the gorge and the hordes of monsters jumping into it. He was so fast that the humanoid wolves didn't even try to target him, and more mana flowed toward his legs when he dived in a straight line toward the mutated Thilku.

The descent was so fast that Khan's skin hurt under the friction force with the air. He was going beyond his limits from his first attack, and his knife glowed while pointing at the mutated Thilku's right shoulder. He wanted to sever that limb in one move, but his hopes immediately shattered.

Khan struggled to believe his eyes. Even his senses failed to keep up with that. His assault had been flawless but had failed nonetheless.

The mutated Thilku had taken Khan by surprise by jumping past him, dodging his attack, and grabbing his left ankle. He had fallen prey to the alien in a single move.

Khan looked at the mutated Thilku, and the latter imitated him. Still, disappointment filled the alien's expression, and surprising words came out of its mouth. "[A weak host]."

Khan realized that the alien had spoken the Thilku language before his senses fell into chaos. The alien flung him downward, slamming him on the ground and making his insides scream in pain.

Chapter 610 Cry

Squirming and cracking noises invaded Khan's mind as dirt covered his face, entering his mouth, nostrils, and eyes. A metallic taste joined it, and Khan almost missed it due to the mayhem created by his senses.

Buzzing noises soon replaced everything. The impact with the ground had sent Khan's senses in disarray, but he recovered quickly. He found himself in a hole of his own creation, a few meters under the surface, and his surroundings eventually became clear.

To Khan's surprise, the mutated Thilku didn't move after the attack. The alien had landed only to point its gaze at him. It was waiting for Khan for no apparent reason.

That scene enraged Khan, overloading his mind with surprisingly swift thoughts. He forcefully slammed his feet on the ground, flinging himself upward and lifting a lot of dust. He instantly appeared above the surface while his brain summarized the recent events.

'How did it take me by surprise?' Khan wondered. 'Why didn't it continue attacking me? Why did it say that?'

Those questions had resounded in Khan's mind while leaving the hole, and answers had arrived by the time he stopped above the surface. His senses had recovered by then, and looking at the Thilku added details that expanded those explanations.

The mutated alien was almost twice as big as the average Thilku. It was taller and had broader muscles that its shirtless state left exposed. It was a third-level warrior, but its grip had conveyed power that seemed to belong to a superior realm.

The reason behind that power was obvious. Khan didn't even need to question it. The Thilku had blue strands coming out of its nape, and its eyes shared that color. Scarce patches of azure hair also grew from its shoulders. That specimen had gone through the same transformation as Khan.

Everything else became clearer after confirming that detail. The Thilku had gone through a qualitative change, justifying its quick reactions, movements, and strength.

Khan believed himself to be faster, but the Thilku probably surpassed him during close combat. It had been the same with Amox, except for the fact that the mutated specimen didn't need techniques or spells to achieve those results.

Confirming those details left a single doubt in Khan's mind. He couldn't understand the mutated Thilku's intentions, but its words continued to echo through his thoughts, suppressing the pain coming from his body.

"[I'm no host]," Khan said, almost growling due to his annoyance.

The mutated Thilku smiled, showing its sharp canines, before releasing a calm, hoarse laugh. "[We all are]."

Khan's mana screamed in anger. A clicking growl invaded his mind, threatening to make him lose control of his body. He wanted to throw everything he had at the mutated Thilku, but his reasonable sides triumphed.

The huge battle was still raging past Khan and the mutated Thilku. Screams and howls filled the area as the two massive armies clashed with each other inside the vast gorge. The humanoid wolves also kept firing deadly bullets that often hit their enemies.

Nevertheless, Khan and the mutated Thilku ignored all that to focus on each other. They appeared unaffected by the chaos unfolding mere meters from them. Their eyes never faltered, and their intentions were clear.

Khan sprinted forward, flying through the air to approach the Thilku frontally. His knife glowed as he disregarded ideas of self-restraint. He wanted to capture the alien alive, but holding back wasn't an option against such a strong opponent.

The Thilku remained still until Khan got too close. Its right arm snapped upward at that point, and its hand opened with perfect timing. A huge palm suddenly filled Khan's vision, and his head risked falling right into it, but he had predicted a similar outcome.

Khan was using his top speed, but the situation pushed his power toward new heights. Answers about the Nak felt extremely close, and the Thilku had also insulted him. His body and mind wanted him to be stronger, facilitating an abrupt turn that made him slip past the huge palm.

The Thilku's odd size worked against it. Khan was far smaller in comparison, so crossing the open palm put him before a considerable amount of flesh. The Thilku's torso was so huge that Khan only needed to swing his knife to inflict a long injury.

However, as soon as Khan began to lift his knife, he felt the stretched arm descending toward him. That huge limb resembled a falling mountain in his senses due to the power it carried, forcing him to change direction.

Khan slipped past the descending arm, ending up a few meters above the mutated Thilku. His offensive never stopped, and his palms had already touched to create a glowing spear, which he didn't hesitate to throw at his opponent.

The Thilku could react to Khan's speed, so the spear couldn't surprise it. Yet, Khan had tinkered with the spell's stability, detonating it mid-air to catch the alien in its explosion.

A pillar expanded in every direction, filling the area with its raging mana. Still, a massive force suddenly appeared in the symphony, forcing Khan to perform an evasive maneuver.

A deafening clicking cry invaded the area as Khan moved away, and the scene that fell into his vision shocked him. The Thilku was screaming at the scorching pillar, spitting a conical version of the Wave spell that pushed that dangerous mana away.

Khan instinctively reached for his nape. The Thilku was using the same cry that resounded in his mind, and his core reacted to it. Khan knew that he shared more than hair and eyes with the Thilku. He was seeing a different version of himself fighting against his spell.

Acknowledging those similarities angered Khan even more. He had accepted his connection with the Nak, and that part of his power came from them. Still, he didn't have to like that, especially when the Thilku had dared to call him weak.

Khan did his best not to lose his cool. He knew too much about battles to allow himself to go wild. He couldn't risk being reckless against such a strong opponent, and the symphony guided his following actions.

While the Thilku was busy roaring at the pillar, Khan lifted his right hand, and a thread of mana appeared between his forefinger and thumb. He quickly pulled it, and a bullet shot forward when he released it.

The bullet landed on the Thilku's right shoulder, digging a hole that exposed its fuming flesh. The injury wasn't too deep, and the alien didn't falter either, but its voice grew louder, dispersing what remained of the pillar.

Khan flew around the Thilku, accumulating mana in the thread before releasing another bullet. He aimed that second attack at the alien's right knee, but a huge palm got in the way.

The symphony told Khan about the state of the alien's palm. Mana had flowed into it, protecting it from eventual damage. The Thilku had used something weaker but similar to the [Blood Shield], which was enough to protect it when paired with its strong flesh.

That impressive defense didn't demoralize Khan. He didn't even stop after seeing the Thilku reacting and stopping his attack. He continued to fly around it, sending bullets whenever his spell was ready.

Khan was faster than the Thilku, but the latter used both hands to intercept every bullet flying in its direction. That offensive appeared ineffective, but Khan pressed on, going faster and faster with each new attack.

That increase in speed was shocking. It didn't make sense for Khan to improve without training, but an explanation existed. Khan's body wasn't getting any stronger. The natural mana was to blame for his superior performance since the symphony began to help his every move.

Khan wasn't doing that on purpose. He had never stopped sending requests to rely on Maban's technique, but that was his usual fighting style. However, his influence slowly affected the symphony, giving him more power.

Khan was aware of those changes, but his entire focus was on his opponent. He wasn't sure why his mana was so hung up on that past comment, but his emotions weren't exactly easy to control.

The incessant assault lasted an entire minute, featuring more than seven bullets, before the Thilku finally decided to react. After blocking another attack, the alien pointed a finger at Khan and released a piercing beam.

Khan had already flown past his previous position and fired another bullet. However, the Thilku's hand was fast, and the beam shooting out of it pierced the incoming attack before threatening to reach Khan.

Another evasive maneuver unfolded. Khan dived toward the ground before accelerating to his side. The beam followed him and shrunk the distance that separated it from his head. The attack would hit Khan at that pace, so he changed direction, flying directly at the Thilku.

The mutated Thilku instantly pointed its finger at Khan's head, bringing the beam there. The attack touched the center of his forehead, but dark blood vessels popped out, preventing it from reaching his skull.

The [Blood Shield] threatened to shatter, but Khan was fast enough to reach the Thilku before that. He basically teleported before the alien's head, and his knees violently slammed into it.

Khan's knees hurt since his body wasn't ready to handle that momentum, but his actions never slowed down. The knife glowed in his hand, and he lowered it to slash at the already injured shoulder.

A deep injury opened on the Thilku's shoulder, but that body part was too big for Khan's knife. He could only cut through half of it before a warning reached his senses. He pushed himself away, but a clicking cry filled his ears, and his surroundings turned purple-red.