

Titan King 171

Chapter 171 Enchant weapons

"Thundar, the position of Elder of Combat is one you earned through your remarkable battle achievements."

Orion's voice was calm, but his words immediately steadied Thundar's heart.

This was Orion's way of affirming Thundar's worth.

"The role of Elder of Combat comes with immense pressure, demands great courage, and requires exceptional combat ability. You know this better than anyone."

"Do you think there's anyone else in the horde who can take on this responsibility?"

"Or are you suggesting we pass this burden to elders who are still immature and lack the strength to handle it?"

Orion's tone carried a hint of reproach, his words cutting through Thundar's self-doubt.

"Thundar, if you truly want to prove yourself, then wait until you receive the Alpha-level resources and ascend to Alpha-level in one go."

"Show everyone that the Elder of Combat of the Stoneheart Horde is a giant warrior who stands tall and proud!"

Orion's tone softened slightly as he offered Thundar a few words of encouragement.

"Chieftain, I..."

Thundar looked up at Orion, wanting to say something, but the words caught in his throat.

"Enough. We understand the pressure you're under, but pressure or not, there's work to be done. The horde needs you!"

"For the horde, I'm willing to do anything!"

Orion nodded in acknowledgment. After addressing a few more logistical details, the council meeting finally came to an end.

In the days that followed, Blackstone City became a hive of activity. Even the younglings were strictly forbidden from leaving their tents.

One morning, Orion woke to find the sun had not risen.

"Dear Orion, the long night has arrived," Lilith said as she entered the tent with Lysinthia. She had just returned from her rotation and looked slightly fatigued.

Despite her weariness, Lilith personally helped Orion dress, her eyes filled with care and affection.

"How are things outside?"

"Still calm. No signs of dark creatures yet. My sister has already begun deploying the bait."

Orion nodded, preparing to step outside for an inspection.

"Master, I can enchant your weapon!" Lysinthia's soft voice carried a hint of concern as she spoke.

Orion's eyes lit up at the offer. He retrieved his trident, Flame of Will, and handed it to her.

Lysinthia stepped forward, her hands glowing with magical energy. The trident was soon enveloped in a shimmering aura, and a series of magical runes appeared, etched onto its surface like flowing text.

"Master, with my enchantment, your trident now has a mid-level petrification ability."

"However, this ability will only last for three days."

Orion nodded, indicating his understanding.

Just as he turned to leave the tent, Violet's voice rang out.

"Master, I can enchant your weapon too!"

Orion turned to look at Violet, whose stunning face carried a hint of competitive determination. She was clearly unwilling to be outdone.

Without a word, Orion handed the trident to her.

Violet took the weapon, struggling slightly with its weight, and propped it upright before beginning her incantation.

She then retrieved a vial of potion from her robes, applying it to the trident's tip while inscribing a series of intricate runes.

After a long moment, the flames on the trident burned brighter and fiercer.

"Master, the trident's flame ability has been enhanced!"

"My enchantment is permanent—it will last until the weapon is damaged."

Orion nodded again, ignoring Lysinthia's slightly sour expression. Without saying a word, he turned and left the tent.

When it came to matters between women, Orion preferred to let them resolve things on their own.

Outside the tent, Rolan was still practicing his stance training as instructed.

"Rolan, once you're done with your training, clear the snow around the tent!"

"Yes, mentor! I understand!"

Orion brushed the snow off Rolan's small frame before heading toward the southern city wall with his guards.

Back in the chieftain's tent, Lilith turned to Violet, her tone calm but commanding.

"While I'm on rotation, you're responsible for taking care of Orion. That includes not only satisfying his sex desires but also attending to his daily needs—his meals, his clothing, his rest."

"And keep our tent clean and tidy!"

Violet nodded, agreeing to all of Lilith's instructions without hesitation.

Lilith was Orion's wife and had the authority to manage Violet. Violet understood this well and dared not argue.

Moreover, Lilith was an Alpha-level powerhouse, and Violet had no intention of challenging her.

"The dark beast tides are upon us, and dark creatures could attack the city at any moment."

"If that happens, remember: do not leave the tent. Orion's tent is the safest place in Blackstone City."

"Later, come with me to the horde's armory. We'll enchant all of the elders' weapons."

Violet nodded again but hesitated before speaking.

"Mistress, the enchantment potions have been heavily used on the city walls. Our current stock is running low. If we enchant all the elders' weapons, there might not be enough left."

Lilith frowned slightly, thinking for a moment before replying.

"Prioritize the senior elders' weapons. Enchant as many of the others as you can with what remains."

"Understood!"

With that, the atmosphere in the chieftain's tent grew quiet once more.

At the southern city wall, Orion arrived just as Delilah was finishing her patrol. Enjoy new tales from empire

"Everything in order?"

"Chieftain!"

Delilah dismissed the bloodline warriors accompanying her and wrapped her arms around Orion before responding.

"The bait has been deployed along the southern wall, and we've mixed it with a large amount of poison. Whether it works remains to be seen."

"To avoid being attacked on two fronts, no bait has been deployed near the underground fissure."

"We've also split the cannon fodder troops into two squads to rotate shifts at the underground fissure's walls. There shouldn't be any major issues."

Orion nodded and led Delilah toward a nearby watchtower.

Through the tower's window, Orion spotted the abyssal dragon curled up in a corner, snoring softly.

Sensing Orion's presence, the dragon opened its massive eyes and glanced over.

Grrr...

The dragon let out a low growl but quickly closed its eyes again after seeing Orion's gesture for it to remain calm.

"If enemies appear and I can't get here in time, focus on protecting yourself and supporting the abyssal dragon. Holding the line is a victory in itself."

"I understand, my dear," Delilah replied warmly, touched by Orion's concern.

Orion gazed into the endless darkness beyond the wall—a familiar yet alien polar night.

"I'm heading to the underground fissure to check on things."

Orion had no intention of lingering for intimacy. Instead, he left with his guards and a squad of bloodline warriors, making his way toward the underground fissure.

At the underground fissure, Orion found Rendall overseeing the horde members on patrol.

"Orion, you're here!"

Orion nodded and joined Rendall, walking alongside him as they inspected the walls together.

Chapter 172 Dark Butterfly

When Orion returned to the chieftain's tent in the center of Blackstone City, he was greeted by the sight of Lilith, Violet, and Lysinthia enchanting the elders' weapons.

The scene caught Orion by surprise, but it also filled him with satisfaction.

Lilith was establishing her own authority within the horde.

This was a good thing.

Orion took his seat at the head of the table, poured himself a drink, and let the warmth of the alcohol spread through his body.

"You don't have to push yourself so hard," he said, glancing at Lilith, who was leaning against him while watching Violet and Lysinthia work.

"I envy their abilities," Lilith admitted, her tone soft but tinged with admiration.

Orion wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her closer so she could rest against his chest.

"Their abilities are yours as well," he said simply.

Lilith's heart melted at his words, a sweet warmth spreading through her.

From a nearby wooden box, Lilith retrieved a set of bone armor and handed it to Orion.

"I noticed the abyssal dragon wasn't wearing Ghostbone Armor. Did your armor get damaged?"

Orion nodded. Lilith's attention to such small details didn't go unnoticed.

His Ghostbone Armor had been severely damaged—90% of it destroyed—during his confrontation with Lord Ariel's will projection.

Repairing it would require absorbing a significant amount of high-grade bones, and there was no telling how long that would take.

"Then wear this set of bone armor. I had Elder Volthun modify it. Its defensive capabilities are better than standard bone armor."

Orion didn't refuse. He stood up, allowing Lilith to help him don the armor.

In no time, the bone armor fit snugly around him, its design both practical and imposing.

"Mistress, we've run out of enchantment potions!"

Violet approached, her expression tinged with regret.

The enchantment potions had been crafted by Delilah using all the magical plants available in the Stoneheart Horde. The supply had already been limited, and after enchanting the city walls, there was barely any left.

Hearing this, Orion's brow furrowed slightly. It was clear that cultivating magical plants needed to become a top priority.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Before Orion could discuss the matter further with Violet, the urgent sound of Blackstone City's alarm bells echoed through the air.

"You all should rest and recover your strength. You'll need it for your shifts later tonight," Orion instructed before summoning his guards and leaving the tent.

At the southern city wall, the battle had already begun by the time Orion arrived.

"What's the situation?"

Lilith, calm and composed, stood atop the wall, her gaze fixed on the battlefield.

Orion joined her, his tone serious as he sought an update.

"So far, no Alpha-level dark creatures have appeared, but the number of ordinary dark creatures is significantly higher than last year."

"And the variety of dark creatures has increased as well."

"Chieftain, look over there—that's a type of tentacle monster rarely seen before!"

Lilith pointed toward a cluster of grotesque creatures that resembled massive flesh balls covered in writhing tentacles.

Each tentacle monster was roughly 35 feet in diameter, its body a pulsating mass of flesh. Dozens of long, flexible tentacles extended from its form, swaying and striking with alarming precision.

The tentacles deflected spears and arrows launched by the bloodline warriors, rendering their attacks ineffective.

As Orion observed, one of the tentacle monsters approached the wall. Using its tentacles for leverage, it vaulted into the air, attempting to land atop the fortifications.

Orion's sharp eyes caught the movement.

Whoosh!

Without hesitation, he grabbed a nearby spear and hurled it with immense force, skewering the tentacle monster mid-air and killing it instantly.

"We absolutely cannot let them climb the walls. If they breach the defenses, the bloodline warriors inside the horde will suffer heavy casualties."

"Xalathar, take care of those tentacle monsters!"

Xalathar was the name of the abyssal dragon. Orion rarely referred to it by name, but in this instance, he needed the dragon to cooperate with the succubus sisters.

By using its name, Orion ensured that Xalathar would feel respected. If Delilah or Lilith had simply shouted, "Abyssal dragon, attack!" the dragon might have ignored them entirely.

Of course, Orion was an exception. His contract with the abyssal dragon ensured its obedience.

Roar!

The abyssal dragon let out a thunderous roar, its deep, guttural sound reverberating like a bass drum across the battlefield.

With a powerful leap, the dragon charged into the fray.

On the battlefield, Xalathar focused its attacks on the tentacle monsters, significantly easing the pressure on the defenders.

With the tentacle monsters neutralized, the remaining dark creatures—Dark Fiends, Night Stalkers, and Blind Spiders—became easy prey for the horde's warriors.

The battle raged for over two hours before the dark creatures were finally repelled.

"Send all the dark source crystals and dark creature corpses to the underground fissure!" Enjoy exclusive content from empire

"Tell Lorelia that this is the best opportunity for herself. If she misses it, she'll have to gather resources on the battlefield herself next year!"

Leaving these instructions, Orion returned to the chieftain's tent.

Inside the tent, Orion sat with a drink in hand, deep in thought.

This wave of dark creatures was only the beginning. The attacks would likely grow more intense in the coming days.

The sheer number of dark creatures—over 10,000 in this initial wave—was unprecedented for Orion.

It was clear that as the horde grew and its population increased, the dark beast tides would also intensify each year.

This phenomenon defied the natural laws of population dynamics.

It was as if all the races of this world were being deliberately targeted by some mysterious force or faction, triggering the dark beast tides annually.

"Dark beast tides... countless dark creatures... their bizarre appearances... What secrets lie behind all of this?"

For a moment, Orion considered mounting Thunderhawk Rayden and venturing into the darkness to investigate.

But the risks were too great. The thunderhawk's night vision was insufficient, and the sheer number of dark creatures during the beast tides made such an expedition incredibly dangerous.

If he were surrounded by a swarm of flying dark creatures, the consequences would be unimaginable.

"The stronger I become, the more I realize how mysterious and strange this world truly is. And the smaller I feel in comparison."

"I wonder if survivors like Arthas ever feel the same way."

"Ah... weakness is a sin. It limits my vision and prevents me from seeing the bigger picture."

Orion's thoughts wandered far, filled with both trepidation and longing for the unknown.

In the following days, the number of dark creatures assaulting Blackstone City increased dramatically.

To be precise, dark creatures from the entire region seemed to be converging on Blackstone City.

Since Orion had unified the Black Forest, all the tribes and clans had relocated to Blackstone City. Only after winter, when the horde began hunting beasts, would some members temporarily return to their ancestral lands for various reasons.

With no other sources of food, the dark creatures had no choice but to move toward Blackstone City.

At dawn, Orion carefully pried open the small hands of Violet and Lysinthia, which were tightly wrapped around his cock, and slipped out of the bed.

Just as he finished putting on his cloak, a sharp eagle cry pierced the air.

Orion froze for a moment before bolting out of the tent.

"Dace, sound the alarm! We're under attack!"

As he sprinted toward the peak of Moonshadow Valley, Orion shouted orders to his guard, Dace, to ring the alarm bell.

The guards couldn't be blamed for not sounding the alarm earlier—this time, the dark creatures were coming from the sky.

Of course, the thunderhawk's cry had been heard by the members of the Stoneheart Horde, but most of them didn't understand its significance.

Only a few experienced bloodline warriors who had witnessed the thunderhawk and Orion's coordination during the Myriad Races Invasion realized it might signal an attack.

At the underground fissure, Prophet Onyx looked up at the sky, his expression grim.

He couldn't see any dark creatures, which puzzled him.

The thunderhawk's cry had been sharp and urgent—a clear warning. Onyx had seen this behavior during the Myriad Races Invasion.

"Earthshaker, head to the southern gate and ask Elder of Stewardship Delilah if she knows what's happening."

"If Delilah doesn't know, go to the chieftain's tent and wait for Orion. Report back to me once you have any news."

Earthshaker nodded and immediately ran toward the southern city wall.

At the southern city wall, Delilah stood atop a watchtower, her face filled with confusion.

She had also heard the thunderhawk's cry.

From her vantage point, the view was excellent, but even from the watchtower, she couldn't spot any dark creatures.

"Dirtclaw, send someone to the underground fissure to gather information!"

"Also, send someone to the chieftain's tent to wait for Orion. Report back to me as soon as there's any news!"

Dirtclaw bowed deeply and responded, "As you command, master," before hurrying off to carry out her orders.

At the peak of Moonshadow Valley, the thunderhawk swooped down as Orion arrived, allowing him to climb onto its back.

"Rayden, what's going on?"

"Orion, an enemy was here just now—a flying dark creature!"

"An Alpha-level dark creature?"

"Yes, Orion!"

The thunderhawk, Rayden, didn't share the same bond with Orion as the abyssal dragon. Their relationship was based on an equal contract, so Rayden addressed Orion by name.

"Do you know which direction it went?"

"I do!"

"Let's chase it down and see what kind of dark creature it is!"

The thunderhawk flapped its wings rapidly, accelerating as it soared into the sky.

However, just as they left the boundaries of Blackstone City, the thunderhawk suddenly stopped.

"Orion, something's wrong. Our territory is shrouded in a strange mist!"

Orion frowned deeply.

It wasn't that he didn't trust Rayden, but he couldn't see any mist himself.

"Rayden, are you sure there's a mist over our territory?"

"Yes. Can't you see it?"

Orion fell silent. The thunderhawk's vision was undoubtedly different from that of a giant. Just because he couldn't see the mist didn't mean it wasn't there.

"Rayden, use your lightning ability to illuminate the sky!"

"As you wish!"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The thunderhawk didn't hesitate. Lightning surged across its body, and bolts of electricity lit up the sky, illuminating all of Blackstone City.

Orion's eyes widened in shock as he witnessed an incredible sight.

Wherever the lightning passed, something in the sky seemed to ignite, turning the entire heavens into a ghostly blue hue.

As the eerie blue light faded, a shimmering, star-like substance began to fall from the sky. The glowing particles were beautiful, like a cascade of starlight.

"Orion, it's over there!"

Just as Orion was marveling at the strange phenomenon, Rayden's voice broke through his thoughts.

Following Rayden's gaze, Orion spotted a massive butterfly in the distance, fluttering with an eerie, erratic flight pattern as it moved away from Blackstone City.

"Chase it!"

Orion readied a trident as the thunderhawk let out a sharp cry and surged forward in pursuit.

As they closed the distance, Orion studied the massive butterfly.

The creature was entirely black, its enormous wings releasing tendrils of dark mist with every beat. The sight was both mesmerizing and unsettling.

"Orion, the mist over our territory is coming from its wings!"

As they drew closer, Orion could finally make out the butterfly's full appearance.

It was enormous, with a wingspan of at least 60 feet. Its body was supported by three pairs of scythe-like legs, each one sharp and menacing.

Orion didn't know the creature's true name, so he decided to call it the Dark Butterfly for now.

"Get a little closer. It's almost within my extended attack range!"

The thunderhawk flapped its wings harder, increasing its speed.

Whoosh!

Orion hurled his trident with all his might. The weapon tore through the air with a deafening whistle, aimed directly at the Dark Butterfly.

But the expected impact never came.

Just as the trident was about to strike, the Dark Butterfly turned its head and looked directly at Orion.

In the darkness, its eyes glimmered with a mocking light.

Boom!

Suddenly, the Dark Butterfly dissolved into a cloud of black smoke, vanishing without a trace.

The trident continued its trajectory, disappearing into the unknown darkness beyond.

"Damn it! We've been tricked! The dark creatures must be attacking the city while we're away!"

"Rayden, take us back!"

When Orion returned to Blackstone City, the scene he had feared didn't materialize.

The city was calm. Bloodline warriors were rotating shifts on the walls, and Orion could see Onyx, Rendall, Lilith, Thundar, and Delilah gazing up at the sky.

"Rayden, circle the city and use your lightning to illuminate the area again!"

"Understood, Orion!"

Still uneasy, Orion ordered the thunderhawk to release another wave of lightning as they circled Blackstone City.

The members of the horde watched in awe as the sky above the city lit up with dazzling lightning, accompanied by deafening thunder.

But even after completing a full circuit, Orion and Rayden found nothing.

The Dark Butterfly had vanished as if it had never existed.

Chapter 173 Challenges

The thunderhawk's massive figure swooped down, and Orion leapt off its back, landing safely on the ground.

As soon as he landed, Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, Thundar, Lilith, and others rushed to surround him.

"Let's talk inside the tent," Orion said, raising a hand to stop the elders from bombarding him with questions. He gestured for them to follow him.

Inside the chieftain's tent, Orion wasted no time.

"The thunderhawk spotted an enemy in the sky—a flying Alpha-level dark creature."

"It was a massive black butterfly. I've decided to call it the Dark Butterfly."

"..."

"Do any of your tribes' histories contain records of such a creature?"

Orion kept his explanation brief, describing the black butterfly in detail. He also recounted the mysterious mist that had shrouded the horde and the Dark Butterfly's sudden disappearance.

When Orion finished speaking, the tent fell into a heavy silence. The atmosphere grew increasingly somber.

It was clear that none of the elders had ever heard of such a creature.

This was a new type of dark creature—and an Alpha-level one at that.

"Chieftain, it's clear that the blood and life force radiating from the tribes in Blackstone City are like a beacon in the darkness," Prophet Onyx finally said, his voice low and weathered.

"I fear that all the dark creatures in the Black Forest are converging on Blackstone City."

Orion nodded in agreement. He had already suspected as much.

In the past, before the Black Forest was unified, the various tribes had hidden themselves to avoid the dark creatures.

It wasn't until Orion united the Black Forest that the tribes began to band together to face the dark creatures and even take the offensive.

For example, Orion's own giant tribe:

In the past, when faced with dark creatures, the bloodline warriors would defend the stone walls of Moonshadow Valley, while the women and children either hid in caves or stayed confined to their tents, forbidden from stepping outside.

The succubus tribe, on the other hand, would seal themselves inside their stone palaces during the dark beast tides, keeping the doors shut for the entire winter.

As for the obsidian golems, they would disguise themselves as rocks, blending into the terrain to avoid detection by the dark creatures.

All these methods shared a common goal: to conceal their life force and minimize the scent of blood in the air.

But now, Blackstone City had abandoned these old survival tactics.

Such methods were incompatible with the city's development and management.

Transitioning from a tribal civilization to a town-based civilization inevitably meant losing some traditions and strategies.

In return, Blackstone City had gained new ways to survive.

The massive walls surrounding the city and the tens of thousands of enslaved cannon fodder troops were prime examples.

Blackstone City had harnessed the power of collective strength, achieving greater offensive and defensive capabilities with order and unity.

"As our horde grows stronger, I believe the dark creatures we face will only increase in number and grow more powerful individually," Orion said, his tone heavy.

"Take the butterfly we just encountered, or the tentacle monsters we've seen recently—creatures that were rare in the past."

"These are the challenges we must face!"

Orion's words carried a weight that wasn't meant to frighten but to prepare.

The mysterious mist released by the Dark Butterfly and its sudden disappearance were phenomena even Orion couldn't fully comprehend, let alone the others.

"However," Orion continued, his tone shifting slightly, "if we think about it from another perspective, this is also an opportunity for the horde—for all of you."

"The appearance of Alpha-level dark creatures means that if we can kill them, you all know what that means, don't you?"

Without waiting for a response, Orion answered his own question.

"It means more of you will have the chance to ascend to Alpha-level, further strengthening the Stoneheart Horde."

"Thundar can ascend. Earthshaker can ascend. Rockwell can ascend. And so can Desdemona, Vespera, Dirtclaw, Slate, Samson, Ursa..."

"When every member of our council is an Alpha-level powerhouse, how strong will the Stoneheart Horde be?"

This was true motivation.

The presence of Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, and Lilith—four Alpha-level powerhouses—served as living examples, inspiring everyone in the tent.

Orion scanned the room, noting the rising morale among the elders. His heart settled slightly.

"Rendall, Delilah, select some bloodline warriors with exceptional perception and vision from your ranks and form a Sentinel Corps. Their sole purpose will be to monitor the skies above our territory for enemies."

Although Orion had the thunderhawk, it couldn't always be present.

A dedicated Sentinel Corps was essential and needed to be operational immediately.

Both Rendall and Delilah nodded.

Orion thought for a moment before calling out to the guards outside the tent.

"Dace, summon Elan for me!"

"At once!"

Dace's voice rang out as he hurried off to carry out the order.

Elan was the chieftain of the Skytalon Tribe. After submitting to Orion, he had relocated his tribe to Blackstone City.

Orion wanted to include Elan, his son Lorne, and a young man named Tyrus in the Sentinel Corps.

The Skytalon Tribe currently had three hero-level flying beasts: two Wind Eagles and a Blood Vulture.

By integrating them into the Sentinel Corps, Orion could immediately enhance its reconnaissance capabilities.

"Delilah, the Sentinel Corps will be under your management."

"Keep a close eye on the Wind Eagles and the Blood Vulture. Make sure they're properly handled."

Delilah's eyes brightened at Orion's words.

His mention of "handling" the flying beasts was a subtle hint that contracts should be established with their handlers.

The implication was clear: Orion's instructions were directed at Lorne and Tyrus.

With the Sentinel Corps under her control, Delilah would have a powerful tool for gathering intelligence.
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After finalizing the Sentinel Corps, Orion instructed the elders to further strengthen the defenses of the city walls and the underground fissure.

"As for enemies from the sky, I'll have the thunderhawk remain on high alert, and I'll stay vigilant as well."

"If I'm not in the horde, Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, Lilith—you'll be responsible for handling any dark creatures that come from the ground."

Finally, Orion gazed into the darkness outside the tent, his voice distant.

To the elders inside, his words carried a heavy weight, tinged with worry.

"Chieftain, the Spider Queen says she no longer needs ordinary dark source crystals," Rendall reported.

As someone who rotated shifts at the underground fissure, Rendall was well-informed about Lorelia's situation.

"Lorelia is close to Alpha level?"

"Yes, chieftain!"

Orion nodded, meeting Rendall's gaze.

This was good news.

In the midst of such a tense atmosphere, this development was a much-needed morale boost.

Chapter 174 Bone Ballista

For the next three days, dark creatures continued to appear outside Blackstone City in an unrelenting wave.

The battles on the city walls were constant, with no moment of respite.

Orion's immense strength served as a pillar of stability for the horde.

In addition to Orion, the cannon fodder troops and cave spiders formed the backbone of Blackstone City's defenses, ensuring the city's safety.

"Where's Lysinthia?"

Orion took a sip of his drink, enjoying the sensation of Lilith's mouth working on his cock.

Lysinthia usually took great pleasure in pleasuring Orion this way, but her absence today piqued his curiosity.

"She's on the city walls. She's been pushing herself hard lately, trying to improve her own strength and that of her Twilight Viper."

Orion nodded, saying nothing.

Although Lysinthia was one of Orion's women, she also bore the status of a slave. This meant she wasn't entitled to the horde's resources for cultivation.

If Lysinthia wanted to obtain resources for her training, she had to rely on herself and her beast, the Twilight Viper.

Fortunately, the Twilight Viper was formidable. As long as she didn't encounter an Alpha-level dark creature, Lysinthia wasn't in any real danger.

"If you can help her, do so," Orion said after a moment.

For the sake of the horde's rapid development, Orion had allocated all available resources to Lorelia and the cave spiders.

Although Lorelia had reached the peak of hero-level, the spider swarm still needed more dark source crystals to become a true fighting force.

To this end, Orion had directed all the horde's dark source crystals and dark creature corpses to the cave spiders.

Once the stronger members of the cave spider swarm reached critical mass, their collective power would become evident.

Moreover, since the cave spiders were responsible for guarding the underground fissure, Orion had no choice but to prioritize them.

This resource allocation would continue until Lorelia ascended to Alpha-level, at which point the resources could be redirected to other members of the horde.

"What about Violet?"

"She's either sleeping or eating. She hasn't stepped out of the tent at all!"

"And the progress on cultivating magical plants?"

"None so far," Lilith replied, shaking her head.

In truth, most of the preliminary work for cultivating magical plants had already been completed.

However, the process had been delayed when Violet was pulled away to enchant the city walls.

By the time Violet was free again, the horde was already under siege from the dark beast tides. Naturally, Lilith didn't dare send Violet out to work on the magical plants.

Especially after the appearance of the Alpha-level flying dark creature a few days ago, Lilith was even more cautious about letting Violet leave the safety of the tent.

"Starting is always the hardest part," Orion muttered.

Plans often looked perfect on paper, but their execution was always fraught with unexpected challenges.

Orion didn't dwell on it.

He reached out and began undressing Lilith, intending to make love to her.

But before they could begin, the sharp sound of the city's alarm bells rang out.

At the same time, a wave of Alpha-level pressure emanated from outside the city walls, causing Orion to leap to his feet.

"Something's wrong!"

Both Orion and Lilith reacted instantly, rushing toward the southern city wall.

By the time they reached the wall, the Alpha-level pressure had vanished.

The only sounds were the low growls of the abyssal dragon and the chaos of battle as it tore through the dark creatures outside the walls.

"What's going on?"

Orion directed his question at Delilah, who was stationed at the southern gate.

"I'm not sure," Delilah replied.

"The dark creature's aura appeared briefly before disappearing into the darkness beyond."

"But its appearance seems to have triggered an increase in the frequency of attacks from ordinary dark creatures."

Delilah explained everything she had observed, her sharp eyes fixed on Orion, hoping to glean some insight from his expression.

Orion, however, was staring into the distant darkness.

His instincts told him that the dark creature hadn't fled because it sensed his presence.

There was something else at play.

After a moment of silence, Orion spoke.

"I can't figure out why it left, but it's clear that this Alpha-level dark creature is highly intelligent—very different from the mindless dark creatures that only know how to charge and kill."

"To be safe, I'll stay here tonight and keep watch."

Delilah and Lilith exchanged a glance before nodding in agreement.

Orion walked over to a stone chair on the wall, sat down, and closed his eyes, signaling that he didn't want to be disturbed.

In reality, Orion had entered the Survivor's Platform and sent a message to Arthas.

"Old friend, do you have any devices or tools capable of killing large beasts or monsters? Siege weapons would work too."

A few minutes later, Arthas replied.

"You mean something like siege or defensive weapons?"

"Yes," Orion responded succinctly.

"Do you have energy crystals?"

"No."

Orion had no idea what energy crystals were, so his reply was quick and to the point.

"That's going to be tricky. Most of my equipment requires soul energy or undead energy to function. Even the lower-grade stuff needs energy crystals to operate."

Just as Orion was beginning to feel disappointed, Arthas sent another message.

"How about this low-grade junk? Does it interest you?"

Attached to the message was a set of specifications:

[Bone Ballista]

- Type: Triple-shot siege ballista

- Quality: Elite-grade

- Description: The Bone Ballista is an outdated relic from the Necro Realm's old era. Despite its age, it has an effective range of up to 2,000 meters and some anti-air capabilities.

"This thing was discarded ages ago. If you want it, I'll give it to you for free."

"The Bone Ballista can't fire supernatural bolts or magical bolts, so it's not very useful."

"Plus, you probably don't have the materials to make bone bolts, so you'll have to use wooden ones, which will reduce its power significantly."

Orion studied the ballista's specifications.

While it was elite-grade, it was unlikely to be effective against Alpha-level dark creatures.

However, it would undoubtedly be a devastating weapon against ordinary dark creatures.

"How many do you have? I'll take them all. My city is under siege by a massive number of monsters—these will be invaluable!"

Arthas didn't hesitate. He understood the urgency of wartime and preferred to offer aid when it was most needed.

"I'll send you 100 Bone Ballistae."

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Along with the message, Arthas initiated a trade.

Orion immediately accepted.

The trade included not only the 100 Bone Ballistae but also 2,000 bone bolts.

For Arthas, this was likely just clearing out old junk from his inventory.

But for Orion, it was an incredibly generous gift.

In Orion's mind, asking for help in times of need was the true test of friendship.

So, he decided to push his luck further.

"Do you have materials to repair Ghostbone Armor? If you do, send me some!"

Arthas didn't hesitate. He sent over another set of specifications.

[Bone Orb]

- Type: Special Mineral

- Quality: Hero

- Description: These are bone orbs extracted from the spinal columns of the Bone Clan, imbued with mystical properties.

This was the material Arthas sent over to Orion. It was exactly what Orion needed to repair his Ghostbone Armor.

However, just as Orion thought Arthas might generously gift him some, a message arrived:

"Bone orbs are precious. Trade me some crystal cores for them!"

Orion paused for a moment, then quickly relaxed.

He appreciated Arthas's approach to friendship—direct, fair, and without unnecessary sentimentality. It suited Orion's temperament perfectly.

Without hesitation, Orion retrieved all the crystal cores he had collected during the last beast tide and sent them over.

"Take as many as this can buy," he replied.

Moments later, Arthas initiated a trade, sending over 100 bone orbs.

With the bone orbs in hand, Orion immediately began repairing his Ghostbone Armor on the spot.

Necro Realm, Bone Throne.

Arthas sat on his throne, holding a C-grade crystal core in his hand. He bit into it like a piece of candy, savoring it slowly with a satisfied expression.

"Looks like Hulk's enemies aren't weak."

"First he's buying siege weapons, now he's buying repair materials. This guy must be having a rough time."

"But he's interesting. In such a short time, he's already amassed so many crystal cores. His world must be rich in resources."

"This guy is starting to feel like a blind box. I'm getting more and more curious about what surprises he'll bring next!"

"I wonder how much those Bone Ballistae will help him. Honestly, they're pretty trashy."

"..."

Of course, Arthas didn't tell Orion that he had an abundance of bone orbs—so many that he couldn't possibly use them all.

In the Necro Realm, every battle resulted in countless deaths among the Bone Clan warriors, leaving behind an endless supply of bone orbs.

For Arthas, trading with Orion was incredibly profitable.

Blackstone City, Southern City Wall.

Under the astonished gazes of Delilah, Lilith, and the other subordinates, Orion retrieved his heavily damaged Ghostbone Armor.

One by one, he placed the bone orbs onto the armor.

At first, the Ghostbone Armor absorbed the orbs slowly. But after about twenty orbs, the absorption process accelerated, growing faster and faster.

Half an hour later, a fully restored Ghostbone Armor gleamed on Orion's body.

"Dear Orion, is that...?"

Lilith stepped forward, her curiosity evident.

Orion put the armor away and pulled Lilith into his arms.

"This is my repaired Ghostbone Armor. I remembered I had some special bone orbs from a while back. Turns out they worked perfectly for the repairs."

He offered a simple explanation before quickly changing the subject.

Using the excuse of an inspection, Orion made his way to the restricted area in the back of Moonshadow Valley.

There, he retrieved the 100 Bone Ballistae and 2,000 bone bolts that Arthas had sent him.

Orion picked up one of the bone bolts and examined it closely, feeling a twinge of disappointment.

"Except for a few special heroic-grade beasts, bone of this quality is far too rare."

Arthas had been right—Black Forest's resources couldn't support the mass production of bone bolts.

This batch of Bone Ballistae would only provide a temporary solution to the current crisis.

"If we switch to wooden bolts, the power will definitely decrease significantly."

"And as for iron-tipped bolts... that's out of the question."

Iron was a scarce resource in the northern regions.

Even within Orion's army, most soldiers wore leather armor.

Orion sighed, turned, and left the cave.

He planned to have Delilah deploy the Bone Ballistae on the city walls immediately.

Just as Orion was about to leave the cave, inspiration struck him.

"Can these Bone Ballistae be enchanted?"

"If they can, even wooden bolts would have increased power!"

The more Orion thought about it, the more feasible the idea seemed.

He quickly left the restricted area and headed toward his tent in the northern part of Blackstone City.

After some time, Orion lifted the flap of his tent and stepped inside.

From beneath a pile of furs, Saintess Violet peeked out, her face filled with surprise and a hint of confusion.

"Master, aren't you supposed to be on rotation?"

Orion guessed that Violet wasn't wearing anything under the furs, so he slipped in beside her without hesitation.

Violet responded eagerly, helping Orion remove his clothes with practiced ease.

She spread her long, seductive legs, fully exposing her glistening vulva.

Orion, already hard, thrust his cock deep into her, filling her completely.

Given the current circumstances, Orion didn't waste time. He maintained a fast, relentless pace, pounding Violet with unyielding intensity.

After an hour, he came inside her, releasing his cum.

As Violet recovered from her orgasm, she lay atop Orion, her face glowing with satisfaction.

Orion asked her a few questions but received disappointing news.

The enchantment potions were completely used up, and Violet didn't have the ability to enchant the Bone Ballistae.

Orion's plan seemed to have hit a dead end, leaving him frustrated.

"Master, if you're looking for enchantments, what about Medusa?" Violet suggested.

"Her enchantments don't last long and consume a lot of her magic, but it's still an option."

Hearing this, Orion's extinguished hope reignited.

He stood up, ready to leave.

Violet quickly stopped him, carefully dressing him piece by piece.

"Stay in the tent. Don't go outside. It's safe here," Orion said.

"Okay," Violet replied, her heart warmed by his concern.

Orion nodded and left the tent.

In truth, he wasn't lying. The chieftain's tent was the safest place in Blackstone City.

The tent itself was a Mysterious Artifact with protective properties.

More specifically, the flag atop the chieftain's tent was a tribal relic with unique abilities.

Orion had discovered this secret only after becoming chieftain, when the flag was transferred from his sister Clymene's tent to his own.

This was a secret known only to the chieftain—a legacy of the giant tribe.

Since learning about the tribal relic, Orion had come to terms with the two mysterious items in his possession:

The first was the enigmatic tower, and the second was the statue that absorbed faith energy.

Orion believed that as his strength grew, the purpose and use of these items would eventually become clear.

Leaving the tent, Orion hurried toward the southern city wall with his guards.

His plan was simple: have Delilah deploy the Bone Ballistae and let Lysinthia test them on the wall to see if they could be enchanted.

If the enchantments worked, even wooden bolts could gain petrification abilities.

At that point, Orion would have successfully turned trash into treasure!

Chapter 175 Starlight Illusion

Three days passed quickly, and Orion felt a sense of satisfaction with the current situation.

Half a day earlier, Lysinthia had completed the enchantments on all the Bone Ballistae.

Orion had tested them himself, and the results were highly effective.

The reason it took two and a half days to complete the enchantments was due to Lysinthia's limited magical energy, which required her to work in intervals.

"Get some rest. Don't go to the walls anymore—leave Twilight Viper there to assist."

"Maintain the enchantments on the Bone Ballistae, and the horde will reward you accordingly."

Lysinthia knelt before Orion, her lips wrapped around his cock as she performed oral service.

"Master, Lysinthia understands!" she replied, her voice muffled as her mouth was completely filled.

"Alright, take it easy."

Orion pulled Lysinthia into his arms.

Her body was soft and supple, and she naturally leaned against his chest.

Looking at the cold yet occasionally delicate Gorgon in his embrace, Orion found himself growing increasingly fond of her.

Screech!

Just as the atmosphere was about to escalate further, the thunderhawk's piercing cry echoed from the sky, followed by the sharp alarm bells of Blackstone City.

"Stay in the tent. Don't go outside!"

Orion reacted instantly, gently setting Lysinthia down before rushing out of the tent.

Orion let out a sharp whistle, mimicking the thunderhawk's call.

A shadow flashed across the sky, and the thunderhawk swooped down. With a running leap, Orion landed on its back.

"Rayden, is the enemy here again?"

"Yes, it's hiding above our territory!"

The Flame of Will appeared in Orion's hand as he scanned the surrounding darkness, but he couldn't see any sign of the enemy.

"Orion, should I disperse the mist above our territory?"

"Do it!"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The dark sky was suddenly illuminated by flashes of lightning, crackling and roaring as they tore through the air.

The strange phenomenon from a few days ago reappeared—the heavens turned a ghostly blue, and star-like particles drifted down, beautiful yet eerie.

"Orion, it's over there!"

A massive shadow flickered in the distance. As the thunderhawk alerted Orion, it flapped its wings and surged forward in pursuit.

Meanwhile, Blackstone City erupted into chaos as battle broke out.

From the distant darkness of the forest, an endless wave of dark creatures surged toward the city walls.

Dark Fiends, Night Stalkers, Blind Spiders, Tentacle Monsters, Black Slithering Snakes, Underground Worms—both familiar and unfamiliar dark creatures appeared as if summoned, their ferocity crashing against the city like a tidal wave.

Roar!

The terrifying commotion even woke the abyssal dragon from its slumber.

Its massive eyes reflected the endless swarm of dark creatures, and as blood vessels filled its gaze, the dragon let out a deafening roar and charged into the fray.

At the southern gate, Delilah stood atop the city wall, her eyes fixed on the monsters emerging from the distant darkness.

Even though she had fought in the Myriad Races Invasion, her heart couldn't help but tremble at the sight.

"Archers and ballistae, ready!"

Delilah issued her commands, preparing to lead the defense.

Screech!

From the darkness, a monstrous cry echoed, followed by the sound of heavy footsteps.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

A massive Phantom Spider, resembling a Blind Spider but far larger, emerged from the forest and let out a shrill hiss at the abyssal dragon.

"An Alpha-level dark creature!"

Delilah's worst fear had come true.

"Where's Orion?"

Delilah turned to see Lilith suddenly appear beside her.

"He's in the sky. The thunderhawk sounded the alarm—no doubt that butterfly has appeared over our territory again!"

Lilith looked up at the ghostly blue sky but couldn't spot Orion anywhere.

"Forget about Orion. We need to focus on the monster in front of us!"

Delilah's gaze shifted to the Phantom Spider, which was now locked in combat with the abyssal dragon. She hesitated, unsure how to assist.

"That butterfly must be a decoy," Lilith said.

"It lured Orion and the thunderhawk away so this spider could attack the city freely."

Boom!

Before Lilith could finish her sentence, the ground in the southern plaza of Blackstone City suddenly erupted. Stone slabs flew into the air as a massive Dark Armored Beetle burst forth from the earth.

Behind it, a swarm of Night Stalkers poured out of the hole it had created.

There was no doubt—this was another Alpha-level dark creature.

"Damn it!"

"Dirtclaw, head to the underground fissure and inform Rendall and Onyx. Tell them to come help immediately!"

Delilah's voice trembled slightly as she issued the order.

Including the Dark Butterfly in the sky, there were now three Alpha-level dark creatures surrounding Blackstone City.

"Elan, lead the Sentinel Corps and clear out the dark creatures that have breached the city!"

"At once!"

After issuing her commands, Delilah turned to Lilith.

"I'll take the lead. You provide support. We need to hold this monster off until Rendall and Onyx arrive!"

Lilith nodded silently, drawing her weapon.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

The two succubi, identical in appearance and figure, transformed into shadows as they charged toward the Dark Armored Beetle.

The beetle had a pair of 55-foot-long whip-like antennae.

Wherever the antennae lashed, Stoneheart Horde's bloodline warriors were obliterated.

Even more terrifying were its massive pincers, which snapped open and shut with deadly precision.

Despite having ascended to Alpha-level, Delilah had no idea how to deal with such a monstrous creature.

The difference in physical strength and size between them was simply too great.

"Ah... ah..."

Standing at a distance, Lilith began to sing a strange melody—her unique illusion ability, Mind Confusion.

Under the influence of the illusion, the Dark Armored Beetle continued its rampage but failed to land a single blow on Delilah.

The situation remained at a stalemate, with chaos erupting both inside and outside the city.

Fortunately, Delilah had made arrangements before joining the battle.

The bloodline warriors on the walls continued to fire arrows, spears, and ballista bolts, barely holding back the tide of dark creatures.

During this time, the Bone Ballistae gifted by Arthas played a critical role.

Even after the bone bolts were depleted, the sharpened wooden bolts proved highly effective.

Especially when the monsters approached the walls, the Bone Ballistae unleashed devastating, almost shredding levels of destruction.

Boom!

Thunderhawk Rayden unleashed a chain of lightning, striking the massive butterfly in front of them.

The butterfly dissolved into a cloud of black smoke, which quickly dispersed into the air, leaving nothing behind.

"Orion, this thing is strange—it's disappeared again!"

Orion frowned deeply, glancing down at Blackstone City.

The city was in chaos. Blood and fire illuminated the night, the sounds of roars and war horns blending into a cacophony of battle.

The connection Orion shared with the abyssal dragon allowed him to sense its growing frustration and rage. For some reason, this filled Orion with a heavy sense of unease.

"Rayden, descend! We're going to help the abyssal dragon!"

Thunderhawk Rayden obeyed, lowering its altitude and diving toward the southern city wall of Blackstone City.

As they approached, Orion retrieved a throwing trident and hurled it toward the Phantom Spider below.

Through his connection with the abyssal dragon, Orion knew it was trapped in an illusion.

The Phantom Spider lurked nearby, weaving webs in an attempt to bind the dragon.

The trident streaked through the air, descending at incredible speed, giving the Phantom Spider little time to react.

It raised two of its legs in an attempt to block the incoming attack.

Boom!

The trident shattered the spider's legs, but the creature narrowly avoided a fatal blow.

The explosion from the trident's impact shattered the illusion it had created, freeing the abyssal dragon.

With a low, guttural roar, the dragon charged at the Phantom Spider, its rage palpable.

Orion prepared to strike again, but Rayden's voice interrupted him.

"Orion, the butterfly has reappeared—it's creating more mist!"

"What?"

Orion looked up toward Blackstone City and saw the Dark Butterfly fluttering gracefully in the air, its wings releasing a thick, dark mist.

"Damn it... is it trying to create a massive illusion?"

Orion's eyes widened as he realized the butterfly's intent.

"Rayden, chase it down! We can't let it escape this time!"

Whoosh!

As Orion spoke, he hurled another trident toward the Dark Butterfly.

This time, the butterfly didn't vanish. Instead, it dodged the attack with a graceful, undulating motion.

Seeing this, Orion's eyes lit up.

"This is its true form!"

Thunderhawk Rayden let out a sharp cry and accelerated in pursuit.

"You're too late."

A soft, motherly voice echoed in Orion's ears, tinged with smug satisfaction.

"My Starlight Illusion has already begun. Your horde will soon be consumed!"

Orion turned his gaze toward the butterfly, which had now turned to face him. Its massive black compound eyes locked onto him, radiating an unsettling intelligence.

"Who are you? Where do you come from?"

Orion didn't attack immediately. Instead, he allowed Rayden to close the distance, hoping to extract some information about the dark creatures and the dark beast tides.

Unfortunately, the Dark Butterfly didn't answer. Instead, it turned and fled into the distance.

"Orion, what should we do?"

"Chase it!"

Orion glanced down at Blackstone City.

The city was still in chaos, but with the succubus twins, Rendall, and Onyx—four Alpha-level powerhouses—defending it, Orion chose to trust them.

Roar!

Back on the ground, the abyssal dragon found itself in trouble once again.

The Phantom Spider had woven another illusion, trapping the dragon while continuing to spin its webs around it.

This time, however, the abyssal dragon didn't thrash about in frustration.

Instead, it began to release waves of Abyssal Energy, shrouding the area in impenetrable darkness.

This wasn't ordinary darkness—it was a domain.

The Mist Domain was one of the abyssal dragon's hidden abilities, a trump card Orion had kept secret.

When the dragon had ascended to Alpha-level, it had gained the Abyssal Flame Bomb from the Abyssal Essence it devoured.

But what no one else knew—was that the dragon had also unlocked the Mist Domain, an Alpha-level skill.

The Mist Domain enveloped the area, robbing all enemies of their sight, hearing, and smell, leaving them to rely solely on instinct.

Orion had intended to save this ability for a critical moment, but the Phantom Spider had forced the Abyssal Dragon to reveal it.

Now, both the abyssal dragon and the phantom spider were trapped in the domain, relying on their senses to attack each other.

The real victims of this clash weren't the dragon or the spider, but the nearby dark creatures caught in the crossfire.

Blackstone City, fifteen minutes earlier.

Delilah had been circling the Dark Armored Beetle, launching a series of attacks with Lilith's support.

However, her strikes barely scratched the beetle's thick, armored shell.

Fortunately, Onyx and Rendall, stationed near the underground fissure, had arrived in time to pull Delilah out of the fight.

"What a massive beetle!" Rendall exclaimed, hefting his spiked club as he charged forward.

Onyx followed close behind, wielding his stone axe.

Rendall, being more agile, dodged the beetle's whip-like antennae and slammed his club into its shell, leaving a shallow dent.

The beetle roared in pain, swinging its massive pincers at Rendall in an attempt to cleave him in two.

Clang!

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Onyx intercepted the attack, his stone axe colliding with the beetle's pincers in a clash of raw power.

"This thing is tough. Its strength is incredible—be careful!" Onyx warned.

Dodging another strike from the beetle's antennae, Rendall shouted, "Prophet, let's flank it—one in front, one behind!"

"Understood!"

The two elders coordinated their attacks, engaging the Dark Armored Beetle in a fierce battle.

"Stay here and support Rendall and Onyx. I'm heading to the walls to take command—we need to stabilize the situation!"

"Got it!"

Lilith nodded, agreeing to Delilah's plan.

However, less than five minutes after Delilah left, countless specks of starlight began to fall from the sky.

Wherever the starlight touched, the bloodline warriors of Blackstone City fell into illusions.

"This isn't right—this is a large-scale illusion!"

By the time Lilith realized what was happening, ten seconds had already passed.

In those ten seconds, the cannon fodder troops and bloodline warriors had suffered heavy casualties.

Taking advantage of the chaos, a swarm of Tentacle Monsters scaled the city walls, breaching Blackstone City's defenses.

Chapter 176 Requiem of Souls

Boom!

Prophet Onyx and Rendall, both affected by the illusion, were struck by the Dark Armored Beetle, each sustaining minor injuries.

"Close your eyes and listen to my voice!"

"This is a dream, a mirage, an endless falsehood!"

"Who still resists in the abyss?"

"..."

This was the "Requiem of Souls", a song passed down through the succubus tribe.

Leading the chant was Lilith.

Her voice was as delicate as wind chimes, as gentle as a spring breeze.

Yet, this soft and melodious song resonated like the roar of the heavens, like the sigh of the mind, echoing in the hearts of every Stoneheart Horde bloodline warrior.

The first to awaken from the illusion were the succubi. Hearing the familiar song, they joined in, their voices rising in harmony.

Gradually, the sound grew louder, richer, and more powerful.

One by one, the horde members trapped in the illusion began to regain their senses.

"Charge! Kill the enemy!"

Once freed from the illusion, the warriors launched a fierce counterattack.

The tentacle monsters that had climbed onto the walls were quickly overwhelmed, one by one falling to the horde's retaliation.

When Delilah arrived on the wall, the pace of the slaughter accelerated even further.

Her presence alone steadied the bloodline warriors, calming their previously shaken morale.

"Earthshaker, Rockwell, take your squads and clear the tentacle monsters off the walls!"

"Desdemona, Vespera, organize the archers, spear throwers, and ballista operators. Execute three-stage volleys—don't let the bolts stop! Keep these damned dark creatures suppressed!"

"Dirtclaw, drive the cannon fodder troops to guard every bastion!"

"..."

The arrival of Elder of Stewardship Delilah brought order to the chaos.

Her commands gave the bloodline warriors a clear structure, and their attacks became more coordinated.

Although some warriors' strikes were still a bit disorganized, the improvement was evident.

The dark creatures that had breached the walls were now being forcefully pushed back.

"Dirtclaw, where's the burning oil I told you to prepare?"

"Master, it's ready!"

"Pour it out! Burn every dark creature at the base of the walls!"

Dirtclaw shouted his acknowledgment and quickly directed his gnolls to retrieve the burning oil from the inner storerooms of the wall.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

The burning oil ignited instantly, and flames roared to life, spreading along the base of the wall.

The tide of dark creatures was once again suppressed, their advance halted by the raging inferno.

The sight of the burning oil brought a sense of relief to the bloodline warriors defending the walls.

Blackstone City's eastern side, underground fissure wall.

Here, Lorelia, Thundar, Samson, and Ursa had been stationed to defend the area.

Watching the flames rise from the southern gate and hearing the roars of Alpha-level powerhouses, they felt a mix of anxiety and adrenaline.

"Elder Thundar, are we just going to sit here and wait?"

"Yeah, the southern gate is clearly in trouble!"

"Shouldn't we go and help?"

The ones speaking were Samson and Ursa, who were growing restless as the horde faced an overwhelming assault.

"That's not a wise decision," Thundar replied sternly.

"Rendall and Onyx ordered us to hold this position. If we all leave and this place falls, who will take responsibility?"

Samson and Ursa wanted to argue further, but they were interrupted by Lorelia.

"If you're worried about the others, you should be more concerned about yourselves!"

"Look over there—dark creatures are already circling around to attack us!"

"Prepare for battle!"

As Lorelia spoke, she let out a series of sharp, chittering sounds.

In response, a swarm of cave spiders emerged from the underground fissure, taking up defensive positions along the wall.

Meanwhile, Thundar, Samson, and Ursa charged forward, rallying the bloodline warriors to prepare for the incoming assault.

Chaos. Absolute chaos.

From the moment the battle began, Blackstone City had been on the defensive.

It was clear that the overwhelming number of dark creatures had been concealed by the combined illusions of the Phantom Spider and the Dark Butterfly.

The Dark Butterfly's repeated appearances weren't just distractions for Orion and the thunderhawk—it had been meticulously laying the groundwork for a massive illusion.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Above the clouds, Thunderhawk Rayden unleashed another chain of lightning, striking the Dark Butterfly.

This time, the lightning didn't pass through harmlessly. Instead, it tore holes in the butterfly's massive wings.

Though the damage wasn't catastrophic, it was enough to slow the creature's flight.

Orion's sharp senses picked up on the change. The butterfly's balance was no longer as steady, and its erratic flight patterns had become less precise.

Seizing the opportunity, Orion retrieved another throwing trident and hurled it with all his might.

Whoosh!

The trident tore through the air, embedding itself deep in the Dark Butterfly's abdomen.

"Huh?"

Orion frowned.

The trident didn't explode as expected. Instead, it simply caused the butterfly to bleed black ichor.

"There's something strange about that membrane on its body," Orion muttered, his expression growing colder.

With its wings damaged and its abdomen pierced, the Dark Butterfly was clearly on the brink of death.

"You're chasing me while your horde is being devoured by dark creatures!"

The soft, motherly voice echoed again, this time tinged with urgency and fear.

Orion didn't respond.

He retrieved another trident, his gaze fixed on the Dark Butterfly.

"If you return now, you might still save your people!"

The butterfly's words were a desperate attempt to bargain, using the lives of Blackstone City's defenders as leverage to escape.

Orion sneered.

Without hesitation, he hurled the trident like a spear.

Whoosh!

The Dark Butterfly shifted its body, using its wings to block the trident aimed at its abdomen.

The impact tore through its wings, further crippling its flight.

"Rayden!"

This was the moment Orion had been waiting for—the perfect opportunity to strike.

Thunderhawk Rayden reacted instantly, unleashing a bolt of lightning that struck the Dark Butterfly dead-on.

The butterfly let out a piercing wail, eerily reminiscent of a woman's scream, before plummeting toward the ground.

The sound startled Orion for a moment, but he quickly refocused.

This was a dark creature, and he had no intention of showing mercy.

Retrieving another trident, Orion hurled it toward the falling butterfly.

Boom!

A violent explosion erupted in the darkness.

Thunderhawk Rayden circled twice before diving toward the ground.

Orion, holding the Flame of Will, leapt from Rayden's back and approached the fallen Dark Butterfly.

Looking at the lifeless corpse of the Dark Butterfly before him, Orion drew the curved blade from his waist and sliced open its head. Inside, he found a pure and radiant dark source crystal.

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After securing the crystal, Orion turned to leave but hesitated. Something felt off, a nagging sense of unease that he couldn't shake.

Acting on instinct, he turned back and drove his trident into the Dark Butterfly's corpse.

The Flame of Will, enhanced by Violet's enchantment, burned brighter than ever, its flames easily igniting the remains of the butterfly.

Whoosh!

A burst of fire erupted from the corpse, forcing Orion to take a few cautious steps back.

It was those few steps that saved his life.

Pop!

A strange sound echoed from within the butterfly's body, and a sinister, beautiful face emerged from the flames, lunging toward the spot where Orion had just been standing.

Had he not stepped back, the eerie face would have entered his body.

Fortunately, that didn't happen.

The strange face writhed in the flames, letting out a piercing, agonized scream.

"Cursed giant! I will remember your scent, and I will return!"

Moments later, the face stopped screaming and spoke in a soft, motherly voice, tinged with malice.

Its distorted features stared at Orion through the flames, eerie and chilling.

Orion opened his mouth to question it, but before he could speak, the face dissolved into a wisp of fire and vanished completely.

"No wonder it was so strange—it was a will projection!"

The realization dawned on Orion. The butterfly had been controlled by the will projection of a Legendary-level dark creature.

"So... I've been marked by an unknown Legendary-level dark creature?"

The thought sent a shiver down Orion's spine.

But instead of fear, a surge of excitement coursed through him, filling him with a reckless sense of ambition.

Hunting a Legendary-level being—what a wild, exhilarating idea!

Shaking off his thoughts, Orion collected the Survivor's Chest left behind by the butterfly and called out to the thunderhawk circling above.

"Rayden, let's head back!"

The thunderhawk let out a sharp cry and swooped down.

With a light leap, Orion landed on its back, and they soared toward Blackstone City.

Blackstone City, Inner Wall.

Boom!

Prophet Onyx's stone axe clashed with the pincers of the Dark Armored Beetle, sending sparks flying.

Behind the beetle, Rendall dodged its whip-like antennae and swung his spiked club with all his might, smashing into the beetle's shell.

After a prolonged battle, even the formidable Dark Armored Beetle was nearing its end.

Its back was a mangled mess, shattered by Rendall's relentless strikes.

For heavily armored creatures like this, most weapons would struggle to penetrate their defenses. But Rendall's spiked club was the perfect tool for the job, designed to crush through such armor.

With Lilith providing support, her Mind Confusion illusions disrupted the beetle's movements and judgment, giving Onyx and Rendall the upper hand.

It was only a matter of time before the Alpha-level Dark Armored Beetle fell to their combined efforts.

From above, Orion observed the battle as he returned to Blackstone City.

Victory was within reach, and seeing this, Orion shifted his focus to the fight between the Phantom Spider and the abyssal dragon outside the city walls.

The succubi's song, with its ability to dispel illusions, had been instrumental in breaking the Phantom Spider's hold.

Under Lilith's lead, Delilah had organized a group of succubi to sing continuously, ensuring the illusions were kept at bay.

Now free from the spider's illusions, the abyssal dragon lurked within its Mist Domain, relentlessly hunting the Phantom Spider.

The Phantom Spider, however, had spun a vast network of webs earlier, using them to evade the dragon's jaws time and again.

For now, Orion had no intention of intervening. The battlefield was relatively stable, and these fights were valuable opportunities for growth.

For Onyx, Rendall, Lilith, and even the Abyssal Dragon, this was a chance to hone their skills.

Lilith, in particular, had only recently ascended to Alpha-level and needed this kind of experience.

Orion's role was to monitor the battlefield and respond to any unexpected developments.

Circling above on the thunderhawk, he was the ultimate safeguard for Blackstone City.

It was important for the horde to know that someone was watching over them, ready to step in if needed.

To reinforce this sense of security, Orion directed the thunderhawk to lower its altitude, letting out a piercing cry.

The thunderhawk's shadow darted across the battlefield, heading toward the densest clusters of dark creatures.

With each pass, it unleashed bolts of chain lightning, tearing through the enemy ranks.

The bloodline warriors on the walls felt the pressure ease as the thunderhawk began clearing the dark creatures.

"Lightning... it's the thunderhawk!"

"The chieftain is back!"

"Kill these dark creatures! Victory is near!"

"Glory to the chieftain!"

"Glory to Orion!"

Hearing the cheers from the walls, Delilah looked up at the thunderhawk darting across the battlefield and let out a sigh of relief.

The thunderhawk's presence meant Orion had returned.

And if Orion was back, it meant the enemy had either been defeated or had fled.

Either way, it was good news.

The battle didn't end with Orion's return, but it shifted into a phase of suppression and counterattack.

Within the Mist Domain, the abyssal dragon clamped its jaws around one of the Phantom Spider's legs, tearing it off and swallowing it whole.

Its massive eyes, bloodshot and filled with killing intent, glared at the spider as it charged again.

The Phantom Spider let out a desperate roar.

With its webs destroyed and four of its legs severed, it was trapped in a hopeless struggle.

In a final act of defiance, the Phantom Spider lunged at the abyssal dragon like a massive facehugger, attempting to grapple it in a last-ditch effort.

But the abyssal dragon was more than just a creature of brute strength. Its sharp claws and powerful tail were equally deadly.

Wham!

With a single swipe of its tail, the dragon sent the Phantom Spider flying.

The ground shook as the dragon approached its fallen prey, tearing into it with savage ferocity.

Minutes later, the Phantom Spider lay motionless, its life extinguished.

From atop the thunderhawk, Orion watched the scene unfold.

Satisfied, he signaled the abyssal dragon to stop devouring the spider's corpse.

Chapter 177 When we've grown stronger, the answers will come to us naturally

As the thunderhawk swooped down, Orion leapt to the ground, landing beside the abyssal dragon.

"Well done!"

He reached out and patted the dragon's massive head as it nudged him affectionately. Then, drawing the curved blade from his waist, Orion began searching through the Phantom Spider's corpse.

After three minutes of rummaging, he found a dark source crystal embedded in the upper half of the spider's body.

That wasn't all. As he dug deeper, he uncovered a Survivor's Chest buried beneath the remains.

"This big guy is all yours now," Orion said, tucking the chest away and gesturing toward the spider's corpse, signaling the abyssal dragon to enjoy its spoils.

The dragon let out a low growl of satisfaction before tearing into the carcass with its massive jaws.

Moments later, after devouring the choicest parts of the Phantom Spider, the abyssal dragon roared triumphantly and charged off into the distance, seeking more prey.

Orion, meanwhile, climbed back onto the thunderhawk's back.

This time, he directed the thunderhawk toward the eastern region, where the underground fissure was also under siege by dark creatures.

Fortunately, Lorelia was stationed there. The countless cave spiders under her command held the front lines, minimizing the losses among the horde's bloodline warriors.

"Master, you've arrived!"

When Orion landed on the wall, Lorelia was in the midst of drawing her bow, her expression cold and fierce.

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Orion stood beside her, trident in hand, his face calm as he surveyed the swarm of dark creatures surging toward the wall.

"Can you hold them off?"

"Rest assured, Master. As long as no big ones show up here, and with the help of the other tribes, these dark creatures are nothing more than food for my children."

Orion nodded, his gaze fixed on the darkness beyond. He issued a direct order to Lorelia.

"Exterminate the dark creatures here as quickly as possible. Once this battle is over, lead your children through the hidden tunnels to assist the southern gate."

"It's time to show the entire horde the strength of the cave spiders. Prove to everyone that you're worth the resources I've invested in you."

Lorelia froze for a moment, her eyes gradually lighting up. She turned to Orion, her excitement barely contained, and suddenly lunged toward him.

"I knew it! Master truly cares for little Lorelia!"

Orion raised a hand, pressing it against her face to stop her from clinging to him.

"There's an Alpha-level Phantom Spider corpse outside the southern gate. Have your children collect it."

Lorelia's eyes sparkled with excitement, and she could barely contain her eagerness to retrieve the valuable remains.

"Don't worry, Master. Lorelia will not disappoint you!"

Orion nodded, then leapt onto the thunderhawk as it swooped down to pick him up.

During the brief time Orion had spent on the wall, the thunderhawk had already suppressed a wave of dark creatures in the area, easing the pressure on the cave spiders.

As Orion and the thunderhawk ascended into the sky, Lorelia let out a series of sharp, chittering sounds.

Moments later, even more cave spiders emerged from the underground fissure.

It was clear that Lorelia hadn't summoned all her forces earlier.

Orion's visit had reminded her that if she wanted access to Alpha-level resources, she needed to demonstrate her value to the horde by contributing to its defense.

This battle was her opportunity to prove herself.

Chitter! Chitter!

The cave spiders surged forward, not only holding the line but launching a counterattack against the dark creatures.

From above, Orion observed the battlefield. The fighting in Blackstone City had largely subsided, and he could no longer sense the presence of the Dark Armored Beetle.

There was only one explanation: the beetle had been slain by Onyx, Rendall, and Lilith working together.

Shifting his gaze outward, Orion spotted the abyssal dragon rampaging through the dark creatures outside the city.

"It's finally over," he muttered.

Although countless dark creatures still surrounded the city, Orion was confident that victory was within reach.

However, he knew better than to let his guard down in the final moments of a battle.

Riding the thunderhawk, Orion continued to patrol the battlefield, both to reassure his people and to watch for any potential threats from the sky.

Two hours later, the battle in the underground fissure region came to an end.

Lorelia led her cave spiders through the hidden tunnels, flanking the dark creatures and cutting off their reinforcements.

With this maneuver, the pressure on the southern gate gradually eased, and the fighting there eventually subsided.

"The dark creatures outside the city are still gathering. Once our warriors have rested, send them to support the cave spiders," Orion said, standing atop the city wall as he surveyed the battlefield.

Hearing this, Delilah, Lilith, Onyx, and Rendall gathered around him, finally understanding why the dark creatures' attacks had weakened.

Delilah, ever the strategist, quickly formulated a plan.

"Earthshaker, Desdemona, Vespera, Rockwell, Dirtclaw—take your squads and split into three groups. Advance from the left, center, and right to support the cave spiders."

The elders nodded and left to carry out her orders.

Moments later, a large force of bloodline warriors marched out of Blackstone City to assist the cave spiders.

"Are you two alright?" Orion asked, turning to Onyx and Rendall after receiving confirmation from the thunderhawk that the situation was stable.

"We're fine. Just a few minor injuries—nothing a few days of rest won't fix," Rendall replied.

"Nothing serious," Onyx added with a shake of his head.

In truth, the two of them, along with Lilith, had found the battle against the Dark Armored Beetle relatively manageable after the initial chaos.

Once they adapted to the beetle's combat rhythm, the fight became much easier.

"Orion, this is what the Dark Armored Beetle left behind," Rendall said, pulling a wooden box from his Bagbird's Pouches and handing it to Orion.

Without opening it, Orion already knew it contained an Alpha-level dark source crystal.

He accepted the box with a nod, offering no words of thanks.

There was no need. This was simply how things worked: the horde provided for its strongest warriors, and in return, they protected the horde. It was a straightforward exchange.

"I'm worried. I'll go check on them!"

Rendall's gaze lingered on the darkness beyond the battlefield, his concern evident. He was particularly anxious about his daughter, who had been the first to lead a charge in pursuit of glory.

"I'll go too!"

Prophet Onyx stepped forward. Many obsidian golems were among the warriors outside, and he wanted to ensure their safety.

Orion nodded. He had no reason to object. With two Alpha-level elders watching over the warriors, the losses would undoubtedly be minimized.

After Onyx and Rendall left, Orion turned to Lilith. Seeing that she was unharmed, a faint smile appeared on his lips.

"Dear chieftain, was the butterfly killed?"

When Orion and the thunderhawk had been lured away earlier, both Delilah and Lilith had been deeply worried about him. Now that Orion had returned and the butterfly was nowhere to be seen, Delilah's curiosity got the better of her.

"It's been burned to ashes," Orion replied without hesitation.

He briefly recounted the events of his pursuit of the Dark Butterfly, including the eerie appearance of the beautiful face.

Hearing this, both Lilith and Delilah frowned deeply.

As succubi, their sharp minds quickly pieced together potential implications from Orion's account.

"Chieftain, do you think the dark beast tides might be..."

Before Delilah could finish, Orion shook his head, cutting her off.

"Don't overthink it. For now, we're not strong enough to delve into such matters."

"Focus on protecting Blackstone City. When we've grown stronger, the answers will come to us naturally."

Orion had his own theories.

But some thoughts and speculations were better left unsaid. Sharing them now would only plunge the more fragile members of the horde into despair.

For most, ignorance was a blessing. Living quietly without knowing too much was the best path forward.

"That's enough for now. I'll be waiting in the chieftain's tent for everyone."

"Once the battle is over, bring the Spider Queen to the council meeting."

Delilah nodded, accepting the task.

Roar! Boom!

Just as Orion turned to descend from the wall, a deafening explosion erupted from the distant darkness, followed by an unfamiliar beast's roar that shook the battlefield.

Another Alpha-level dark creature had appeared!

Without hesitation, Orion summoned the thunderhawk.

"You two stay in the city. Guard Blackstone City and the Underground Fissure!"

Leaping from the wall, Orion landed on the thunderhawk's back as it swooped down to pick him up.

Moments later, he arrived at the battlefield.

The scene was chaotic. A massive crater marred the ground, as if a bomb had detonated.

At the edge of the crater lay Lorelia, severely injured and barely conscious.

In the center of the crater, Onyx and Rendall stood back-to-back, their weapons ready, watching for any sign of the enemy.

But the Alpha-level dark creature Orion was searching for was nowhere to be seen.

Orion jumped off its back and rushed to Lorelia's side.

"What happened?"

"Master, there was a massive creature hiding underground. It looked like a snake... or maybe a earthworm. If the two senior elders hadn't arrived in time, I would've been killed!"

"Can you move?"

"No... I've suffered internal injuries. My body feels terrible..."

Lorelia's voice was weak, her condition clearly dire.

"Summon your children to carry you. I'll escort you back to Blackstone City."

"Understood!"

Soon, a group of cave spiders scuttled over, crawling beneath Lorelia to lift her up and carry her toward the city.

"Onyx, Rendall, stay alert!"

"Don't worry, chieftain. It seems the creature has fled," Prophet Onyx replied, his eyes scanning the surroundings warily.

Orion focused his senses, remaining vigilant as he escorted Lorelia back to Blackstone City.

"Find a shaman immediately and have them treat Lorelia!"

Leaving those instructions behind, Orion handed the situation over to the succubus sisters and turned back toward the battlefield.

Onyx and Rendall were still out there, and Orion couldn't bear the thought of either of them being harmed.

"I was careless," Orion muttered to himself, regret weighing heavily on his mind.

Lorelia should never have been placed on the front lines.

As a queen-class broodmother, her role was to remain hidden, continuously supplying reinforcements to the battlefield. That was her true strength.

"Maybe I was too eager," Orion admitted, blaming himself for Lorelia's injuries.

If he hadn't pushed her to prove herself and earn merit, this might never have happened.

At the same time, Orion's regret was accompanied by a burning desire for vengeance against the dark creature that had attacked Lorelia.

However, when Orion returned to the battlefield, the creature was nowhere to be found.

"That thing was fast—it must've burrowed underground to escape," Rendall speculated.

"I think it fled when the thunderhawk arrived. The moment it heard the eagle's cry, I saw it retreat into the ground," Onyx added.

Orion nodded, leaning toward Onyx's explanation.

Burrowing creatures like this often had natural predators among avian species, making the thunderhawk a likely deterrent.

"Regardless, stay on high alert," Orion instructed.

Through his mental connection, he warned the abyssal dragon, urging it to stay close in case of another ambush.

The dragon, still in a frenzy from the battle, hadn't even noticed Lorelia's earlier plight.

Orion suspected that without his direct command, the abyssal dragon wouldn't have cared about anyone else's survival.

Perhaps it was the overwhelming presence of so many Alpha-level powerhouses, but the mysterious dark creature never reappeared.

By the time the battle ended and the remaining dark creatures were slain, the threat had vanished entirely.

"Earthshaker, Desdemona, Vespera, Rockwell, Dirtclaw—take half an hour to clean up the battlefield. Afterward, return to Blackstone City for the council meeting."

"And you," Orion added, addressing the surviving cave spiders, "drag the dark creatures' corpses back to the underground fissure."

Aside from the Spider Queen, only Orion and Lilith could command the cave spiders.

The spiders let out a series of chittering sounds before scuttling off to collect the corpses, significantly reducing the workload for the council elders.

Half an hour later, in the chieftain's tent.

The elders of the Stoneheart Horde gathered, their expressions varied.

Some bore the relief of survival, others the anticipation of rebuilding and growing stronger, while a few remained calm and composed, their emotions unreadable.

Chapter 178 Three important lessons

"Let us raise our goblets to celebrate overcoming this trial!"

At Orion's toast, the elders within the chieftain's tent lifted their cups, their faces alight with excitement.

Orion drained the skull goblet in his hand, then swept his gaze across the gathered elders of the Stoneheart Horde. Your next read awaits at empire

These pillars of the horde had all emerged from blood and fire. In terms of combat prowess and execution, Orion was more than satisfied with them.

However, when it came to strategic thinking, most of them fell short.

Races like the giants, obsidian golems, and buffalofolk often didn't begin to think critically until they were well into old age. This limitation meant that many of his people had a low ceiling for growth—a concern that had been weighing on Orion's mind.

As the Stoneheart Horde grew stronger, Orion knew that many of the current council members would eventually be replaced.

But until that day came, Orion hoped his encouragement would inspire more of his people to improve themselves.

Retracting his gaze, Orion reached into his cloak and pulled out two wooden boxes.

The sight of the boxes immediately ignited a fire in the hearts of everyone present.

"Lorelia has done an outstanding job defending the bottomless abyss. Not only did she hold the underground fissure against the dark creatures' assault, but she also flanked the enemy, cutting off their reinforcements and easing the pressure on Blackstone City, reducing casualties significantly."

"Furthermore, Lorelia has reached the peak of hero level and has entered the sequence for receiving Alpha-level resources. This is her rightful reward."

With those words, Orion pushed one of the wooden boxes toward Lorelia.

"Thank you, Master! I will protect Blackstone City with all my strength!"

Lorelia accepted the box with both hands, taking the opportunity to make a public declaration of loyalty, earning the admiration of many in the room.

The abilities of the cave spiders had been on full display during the recent battle.

Countless small spiders had fearlessly charged the front lines, significantly reducing the losses among the bloodline warriors and the cannon fodder troops.

And since these spiders could be rapidly hatched, their numbers were, in a sense, limitless.

Anyone with even a shred of foresight could see how vital the cave spiders were to the Stoneheart Horde.

"Once the meeting is over, focus on recovering. Don't delay the hatching of more spiders."

"As you wish, Master!"

Lorelia's smile was simple yet brimming with excitement. The constant twitching of her spider legs betrayed her joy.

Orion nodded and turned his attention to the second wooden box, which he slid toward Thundar.

"Thundar, since the day I unified the giant tribe, you've earned countless merits."

"Many of you here have witnessed or participated in Elder Thundar's achievements firsthand, so I won't list them all."

"Thundar has also reached the peak of hero level and has entered the sequence for receiving Alpha-level resources. Naturally, he deserves his share."

As Orion spoke, he looked at Thundar, whose hands trembled slightly as he accepted the box. It was clear that the elder was deeply moved.

However, as the Elder of Combat and one of the four senior elders, Thundar knew he couldn't lose his composure in front of everyone.

Suppressing his excitement, Thundar stood, holding the box tightly, and looked at Orion.

"Thundar is willing to shed his last drop of blood for the horde, to serve with all his heart, and to fight for the chieftain across all lands!"

Thundar's voice was filled with emotion.

He had known that Lorelia would be prioritized for Alpha-level resources, as Orion had discussed this with him beforehand.

Still, Thundar had secretly hoped the horde would acquire more than one dark source crystal.

To his surprise, that hope had become reality, and he had been allocated a share of the resources.

Orion reached out to steady Thundar, signaling for him to sit down.

Once again, Orion scanned the room, noting the envy and longing etched on the faces of the other elders.

He spoke in a calm, measured tone.

"So far, all those who have entered the sequence for Alpha-level resources have received their share."

"Elders, I look forward to seeing who among you will be next to join this sequence."

This was a blatant temptation.

Hearing Orion's words, the elders couldn't help but feel that entering the sequence was a guaranteed path to receiving Alpha-level resources.

Hiss... Hiss...

The sound of sharp intakes of breath filled the tent, accompanied by the audible gulping of saliva.

After giving the elders a moment to collect themselves, Orion spoke again, his tone steady.

"Thanks to everyone's efforts, we successfully repelled the dark creatures' invasion."

"This time, we've also gained a great harvest, collecting countless dark source crystals."

"In no more than three days, Elder of Stewardship Delilah will have the data fully compiled. At that time, the dark source crystals will be distributed."

Orion paused, his words hanging in the air.

Once again, the sound of heavy breathing filled the tent.

The horde had slain an enormous number of dark creatures during the battle, and the resulting dark source crystals would undoubtedly be plentiful.

Many elders, especially those who had already reached hero level, saw this as their chance to enter the sequence for Alpha-level resources.

"Elders, the dark beast tides have not yet receded. The battle could resume at any moment. My only request is that you remain vigilant and steadfast in your duties."

"These are the days for us to grow stronger. Don't let this opportunity slip away!"

At a time like this, no amount of motivational speech could compare to the promise of dark source crystals.

Orion kept his words brief, using the moment of celebration to remind everyone to stay alert.

Following this, Delilah took charge of the meeting, working with Thundar and the eight council elders to meticulously tally the battle's losses and gains.

When the council meeting finally ended and the elders dispersed, the Stoneheart Horde felt noticeably more stable.

Inside the chieftain's tent, only the Alpha-level powerhouses remained.

Orion sat at the head of the table, surrounded by Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, and Lilith.

After exchanging glances with the others, Orion began to speak.

He recounted in detail his encounter with the Dark Butterfly and the eerie beautiful face, including its ominous warning that it would return.

By the time Orion finished, the atmosphere in the tent had grown heavy.

Everyone's expressions were grim, their thoughts weighed down by the implications of what they had just heard.

"Chieftain, are you suggesting that the dark creatures attacking Blackstone City were orchestrated by a powerful entity?"

"Does this mean that future attacks by large-scale dark creatures could be organized, disciplined, and strategic?"

Prophet Onyx's questions sent a chill through the room.

If even one of these possibilities were true, it was enough to make anyone's blood run cold.

Orion remained silent for a long time before finally voicing his thoughts.

"Have you ever wondered?"

"Why do the dark beast tides descend upon us every year?"

"How do these dark creatures even come into existence?"

"And where is their lair?"

Orion's string of questions caused Rendall, Onyx, Delilah, and Lilith to furrow their brows.

These weren't new questions. They had crossed their minds before, and their ancestors had pondered them as well.

Some of the most visionary chieftains in history had even attempted to migrate their tribes, hoping to find a haven untouched by the dark beast tides.

But they had all failed.

In this world, there was no place that could escape the tides.

"I don't know where the dark beast tides come from, and I can't figure it out," Orion admitted.

"But one thing is clear: the stronger we grow, the more dark creatures come to attack us, and the more powerful they become."

"Doesn't that feel... deliberate? As if we're being targeted?"

"Or perhaps, all the living races of this world are being targeted."

Despite the grim implications, Orion didn't view the dark beast tides with despair.

In fact, he saw them as an opportunity—a chance to grow stronger and to elevate both himself and the horde.

For the past two years, Orion had been acquiring Alpha-level dark source crystals, yet he hadn't consumed a single one.

He knew that if he used them, his stats would quickly reach their peak.

But instead, Orion had chosen to allocate all the crystals to nurturing talent within the horde.

He understood that relying on himself alone wouldn't allow the horde to rise, nor would it help him achieve his ultimate goals.

If he could build a powerful faction to support him, Orion believed he could ascend to even greater heights.

Given the circumstances that he currently had no way to find his parents and no method to resurrect his sister, Orion had resolved to create his own powerful faction and use it to uncover the truths of the world.

His thoughts wandered briefly before he snapped back to the present. Swallowing hard, he continued.

"Why the dark beast tides descend doesn't matter."

"Where the dark creatures' lair is doesn't matter either—not for now."

"What matters is that we focus on the here and now: killing more dark creatures, acquiring more Alpha-level resources, and making ourselves and the horde stronger."

These words were directed at the senior elders.

Orion's tone grew heavier as he spoke.

"This dark creature assault has taught us three important lessons."

"First, most Alpha-level dark creatures are intelligent. In future battles, we must remain vigilant and avoid being outsmarted."

"Second, large-scale dark creature assaults are often orchestrated by a powerful entity behind the scenes."

"For example, the will projection controlling the Dark Butterfly repeatedly lured away the thunderhawk, the greatest threat to their forces, to make the siege easier."

This realization had struck Orion after the Alpha-level earthworm fled.

The Dark Butterfly's primary goal hadn't been to lure him away—it had been to remove the thunderhawk from the battlefield.

The thunderhawk wasn't just a counter to the Dark Butterfly; it was also a major threat to most ground-based dark creatures.

"Finally, have you noticed? This time, the dark creatures didn't just come from the ground—they came from the sky, the earth, and the underground."

"The sky is manageable, thanks to the thunderhawk patrolling our territory."

"But what about the underground? How do we defend against creatures like the Dark Armored Beetle?"

"How do we detect such threats in advance?"

The atmosphere in the chieftain's tent grew increasingly heavy.

"I've already instructed Lorelia to have her spiders fill in the tunnels created by the Dark Armored Beetle."

"But the question remains: how do we defend against future underground attacks?"

Orion laid the problem bare. He didn't have a solution, and his frustration was evident in his tone.

Rendall stroked his beard so vigorously it was nearly raw, but no ideas came to him.

Delilah and Lilith wore matching expressions of concern, unable to think of a viable solution.

Eventually, all eyes turned to Prophet Onyx.

Onyx stood with his arms crossed, his gaze fixed on the ground as he pondered.

"Chieftain, I do have an idea, but it can't be implemented immediately," he said after a long pause, his tone uncertain.

"Prophet, speak your mind," Orion said, his eyes filled with anticipation.

Onyx took a moment to organize his thoughts before speaking.

"Chieftain, none of the races within our horde are equipped to defend against underground dark creatures."

"Even though we have the Twilight Viper, it isn't a true subterranean creature. It needs to dig tunnels in advance to move underground."

"Moreover, the Twilight Viper's strength is still lacking."

Orion nodded. He had already considered the Twilight Viper as a potential solution and had even thought about helping it ascend to Alpha-level.

But Alpha-level resources were far too scarce.

Onyx's observations were accurate, and Orion's expression remained calm, though the weight of the situation was evident.

"However," Onyx continued, "I do have a method that might work, though it's far from perfect."

Orion, Rendall, Delilah, and Lilith all leaned in, their eyes fixed on Onyx.

"Chieftain, the stone we used to build the city walls—there's still plenty of it outside the city."

"Once winter passes, we could gather more of it and lay a layer of stone beneath the city, reinforcing the ground."

"If the Garland Tribe could enchant the stone flooring, the effect would be even better."

"At the very least, this would allow us to detect underground movements in advance, giving us time to prepare."

Orion listened carefully and nodded.

While not a perfect solution, Onyx's idea offered both defensive benefits and the added bonus of beautifying Blackstone City.

"If Prophet Onyx's plan works, we could intentionally leave certain areas unpaved and set traps there to lure underground dark creatures," Lilith suggested, building on Onyx's idea.

"Unfortunately, this would be a massive undertaking and would take time to complete," she added.

Orion didn't respond immediately.

His thumb tapped rhythmically against the table as he silently weighed the feasibility of the plan.

Chapter 179 Prove yourself to me and to yourself

After a moment of thought, Orion finally spoke.

"Let's dig a tunnel—a direct path to the black marble quarry!"

"It's not far, and we can have the cave spiders do the digging, with the obsidian golems guiding them. This tunnel can also serve as another hidden route for the cave spiders."

"And if any dark creatures show up to interfere, we'll kill them and turn them into snacks for the little spiders!"

Orion's voice was firm and decisive. He had made up his mind to implement Prophet Onyx's suggestion: reinforcing Blackstone City with a thick layer of stone slabs to bolster its defenses.

"Chieftain, shouldn't we think this through a bit more?" Rendall asked, not out of opposition but to explore whether there might be a better solution.

Orion shook his head resolutely.

"Laying stone slabs across Blackstone City isn't just about defending against underground enemies—it's about protecting our people."

"Think about it. What would've happened if that Dark Armored Beetle had broken into the residential district yesterday?"

The question made Rendall's brow twitch.

If such a scenario had occurred, the casualties among the city's inhabitants—regardless of their race—would have been catastrophic.

"Prophet, I'm entrusting the tunnel project to you!"

"Delilah, you'll oversee the stone-laying operation. Aside from the bloodline warriors guarding the walls, you're free to mobilize anyone in the horde."

Both Onyx and Delilah nodded, accepting their assignments.

"We just need to hold on for a few more days. Once little Lorelia and Thundar break through to Alpha-level, we won't be so short on manpower anymore!"

At the mention of Lorelia and Thundar, the senior elders in the tent couldn't help but feel a surge of anticipation.

Especially for Lorelia—if she successfully ascended, the Stoneheart Horde would truly begin to thrive.

After another half hour of discussion, Orion had sorted through all the pressing matters, his thoughts now crystal clear.

With that, the council meeting came to an end.

"Let's head back," Orion said, turning to Lilith, who stood behind him.

Lilith nodded, slipping her arm through his as they left the chieftain's tent and headed toward the northern section of the camp.

Before they even reached the tent, Orion heard the rhythmic sounds of training—grunts and the swish of a trident cutting through the air.

It was Rolan, practicing outside Orion's tent.

"Rolan, didn't your mother tell you that during wartime, you're supposed to stay inside the tent?"

Hearing Orion's voice, Rolan stopped mid-swing, excitement lighting up his face as he ran toward his mentor.

"Mentor, Mother said the battle is over, and the state of emergency has been lifted."

"Besides, it's morning—my training time. You told me I couldn't skip a single day of practice!"

Orion couldn't help but feel a small wave of warmth at the young giant's dedication.

"Alright, then. Keep at it. But when you're done, make sure to clear the snow outside the tent!"

"Yes, Mentor!"

Shaking his head with a wry smile, Orion left the diligent youngling to his training and stepped into the tent.

Inside, he was greeted by the sight of a table laden with steaming, delicious food.

"Master, you're back!"

"I've prepared some food for you all—come and try it!"

As she spoke, Violet stepped forward and helped Orion remove his heavy cloak.

Orion glanced at her. She was dressed neatly, but her face betrayed a hint of worry. Clearly, she had been anxious about his safety, and now that he was back, she finally seemed at ease.

Orion's gaze shifted to Lilith and Lysinthia, who were already seated at the table.

"Let's eat together."

"Alright!"

It was a warm, quiet morning.

After returning from battle, Orion, Lilith, and Lysinthia shared a hearty meal, their hearts filled with a rare sense of comfort.

Of course, Orion didn't forget about Rolan, who was still training outside. He brought a plate of food out to him.

Back inside the tent, Orion leaned back, holding Violet by the waist as he asked a question that had been on his mind.

"Is Blackstone City's environment suitable for cultivating magical plants?"

"There's too little sunlight here," Violet replied, resting her beautiful face against Orion's cock without a hint of shyness, even with Lilith and Lysinthia present.

"This place is only suitable for magical plants that can grow in the dark—those attuned to water and earth elements will thrive here."

"Master, Blood Mushroom fits these conditions perfectly. It would grow well here!"

Violet's words addressed a concern shared by Orion, Lilith, and Lysinthia, putting their minds at ease.

Seeming to remember something, Orion reached into his leather armor and pulled out a Thornflower, a mid-tier magical plant he had traded for with Aerin.

"What about this? Can it be cultivated?"

The Thornflower wasn't particularly useful to Orion, but that didn't mean the Stoneheart Horde couldn't benefit from it.

"What rich natural energy!"

"Master, this mid-tier magical plant is already close to high-tier. I'm not sure if it can be cultivated, but we can certainly try!"

Orion nodded, leaving the Thornflower with Violet as a clear sign for her to experiment with it.

"From now on, you don't have to call me 'Master.' Just use my name," Orion said, patting Violet's slender waist.

His words brought an abrupt silence to the tent.

Lilith, of course, heard him, but she pretended not to, curling up against Orion and feigning sleep.

Lysinthia, lying on the other side of him, felt her heart race at his words.

"Lysinthia, the same goes for you. Don't call me 'Master.' It feels strange."

Orion reached out with his other arm, pulling Lysinthia closer. He felt her body tremble slightly at his touch.

"Alright."

"Yes... alright."

Violet and Lysinthia's responses reflected their different personalities, but Orion didn't dwell on it.

Though they both bore the status of slaves, Orion had no intention of foolishly removing their slave contracts.

Still, as his women, he wanted them to live with a bit more dignity and freedom.

Of course, one could also interpret this as a hunter wanting his prey to remain healthy.

The following days were peaceful in Blackstone City.

It was as if the dark creatures outside the city had been completely wiped out, leaving no trace behind.

As Elder of Stewardship Delilah finished tallying the spoils of war, a large number of dark source crystals were distributed among the horde.

The entire Stoneheart Horde entered a period of rapid growth.

Through the spoils taken from the cannon fodder troops, the giants, succubi, buffalofolk, and obsidian golems of Blackstone City were thoroughly enriched.

The battle had elevated many bloodline warriors to heroic level, significantly boosting the horde's overall strength.

Even the cannon fodder troops saw some gains, with several of their members ascending to heroic level overnight.

However, their rewards paled in comparison to those of the horde's core members.

What surprised Orion most was the unexpected rise of a new figure. Read new chapters at [empire](#)

The first elder to reach the heroic peak and enter the sequence for Alpha-level resources wasn't Earthshaker, Desdemona, or Rockwell—it was Dirtclaw.

The long night of the Black Forest wasn't the kind of darkness where one couldn't see their hand in front of their face. Instead, it was a hazy, murky blackness that obscured everything, making it difficult to see clearly.

Under the flickering light of the bonfires, this darkness seemed even more eerie and unpredictable.

Orion stood atop the city wall, staring into the ominous shadows of the distant forest, a faint sense of unease gnawing at him.

It was a contradictory feeling. When waves of dark creatures surged toward Blackstone City, Orion was filled with worry.

But now that the horde had weathered the storm and grown stronger, he found himself hoping for more dark creatures to appear, to satisfy the horde's hunger for dark source crystals.

"Have the bait traps been set?"

Standing beside him, also gazing into the darkness, was Delilah.

"Not only have they been set, but we've added an extra ten percent to the usual amount," she replied.

Delilah stood half a step behind Orion, her eyes studying her chieftain. She couldn't help but feel that Orion was becoming more and more enigmatic.

There was a sense of urgency about him, as if he were racing toward some unseen goal. Delilah knew that Orion had an older sister, and she speculated that one of his urgent goals was to revive her.

"It's strange," Delilah continued. "We haven't seen any large groups of dark creatures in days. Even the scattered ones are rare."

"Could it be that the last attack drew all the nearby dark creatures to us?"

Neither Orion nor Delilah had a definitive answer to this question.

"Keep an eye on things. Stay vigilant," Orion said, pulling his gaze away from the darkness.

He turned and began walking along the wall, heading toward the underground fissure in the eastern sector.

After some time, Orion arrived and met with Rendall, who was stationed there.

"Elder, where's Lorelia?"

Rendall sighed, his tone tinged with regret.

"She's still in the underground fissure. She hasn't come out."

Orion glanced toward the fissure, his bloodline power surging as he projected his voice downward.

"What's the matter? Are you too ashamed to show yourself, or are you afraid to face me?"

Though Orion's tone was low and steady, there was no trace of blame in his words.

After a long pause, Lorelia finally emerged from the fissure, her delicate face downcast.

"Master, little Lorelia has failed you!"

Her aura was noticeably stronger than before, but she had not yet reached Alpha-level.

In other words, Lorelia's attempt to ascend had failed.

From the moment she was born, Lorelia had always felt favored by Orion.

This failure to ascend left her feeling unworthy of facing him.

It also made her reluctant to meet the other elders of the horde. Ever since she began absorbing large amounts of the horde's resources and dark source crystals, Lorelia had carried a sense of superiority.

She had believed that her noble bloodline and immense potential justified the resources she received.

But this failure was a heavy blow to her pride, leaving her disheartened and shaken.

Orion looked at the Spider Queen, his gaze both transparent and profound.

In truth, Lorelia's failure to ascend was something Orion had anticipated.

Seeing her pitiful expression, Orion wanted to offer her some words of comfort.

But before he could speak, a sudden surge of Alpha-level pressure erupted from the depths of Moonshadow Valley, startling all the bloodline warriors stationed there.

Orion turned his gaze toward the ridge below, a faint smile spreading across his face.

"Is it Thundar?" Rendall asked, his tone uncertain but hopeful.

"Yes, it's Thundar of the giant tribe!"

"Hahaha! This is excellent news. The horde has gained another powerhouse!" Rendall exclaimed, his excitement evident.

Orion nodded in agreement, then turned to the guards Dace and Otho to issue orders.

"Dace, spread the word: Thundar has ascended to Alpha-level. Keep the bonfires burning, and let there be no shortage of food and drink. We'll celebrate for three days!"

"Otho, inform the council members. We'll hold a meeting in half an hour to honor Thundar's ascension!"

At some point, it had become a tradition for the horde to celebrate for three days whenever someone ascended to Alpha-level.

Dace and Otho quickly ran off to carry out their tasks.

With everything arranged, Orion turned back to Lorelia, whose eyes were brimming with tears.

"Master, Lorelia is so useless. I feel like I've let you down!"

As she spoke, Lorelia began retreating toward the underground fissure, as if planning to hide there for the rest of her life.

"Take this," Orion said, pulling out the last wooden box he had been keeping.

Inside was the dark source crystal dropped by the Dark Butterfly.

Previously, Orion had given Lorelia the dark source crystal from the Phantom Spider, thinking that since they were both spiders, it might help her ascend.

But it seemed that a single Alpha-level dark source crystal wasn't enough for a broodmother like Lorelia to succeed.

"This is the last Alpha-level dark source crystal in the horde. I was planning to give it to Dirtclaw, but now it's yours."

"Take it. Prove yourself to me—and to yourself."

Lorelia's small hands clutched the wooden box tightly, her entire spider body trembling.

"Little Lorelia knew it! Master would never abandon me!"

She moved as if to throw herself into Orion's arms, but he stopped her just in time.

"Focus on your training. You're excused from the council meeting this time."

"Yes, my great master!"

Lorelia suddenly straightened up and gave a mock salute, raising the longbow from her back high above her head with a comically serious expression.

"Stop fooling around and get to work!" Orion said, shooing her back into the underground fissure.

"Orion, you..." Rendall finally spoke after remaining silent for so long.

"That dark source crystal was meant for Lorelia from the start," Orion explained.

"Lorelia is the broodmother of the cave spiders. I suspect that because of her need to lay eggs, her body can absorb far more energy than normal."

"So it's no surprise that a single Alpha-level dark source crystal wasn't enough for her to ascend."

"That's also why I didn't bring this crystal up during the last council meeting."

Rendall blinked in surprise before nodding in understanding.

"Right now, pushing Lorelia to Alpha-level is more important than anyone else in the horde reaching that level."

Chapter 180 The more of your children we have, the more resources we'll be able to plunder

"Orion, you're absolutely right!"

Rendall nodded, fully agreeing with Orion's reasoning.

He also approved of Orion's decision to reserve a dark source crystal for Lorelia.

"Last year, when we headed south to participate in the Myriad Races Invasion, I instructed Lilith to focus on nurturing Lorelia."

"When I returned and saw how few dark source crystals were left in our reserves, I knew then that Lorelia's attempt to ascend would require an unimaginable amount of resources."

"Rendall, you've seen it yourself. We've spent an enormous number of dark source crystals to raise Lorelia from the early stages of hero level to its peak."

As they walked, Orion shared his observations and research on the Spider Queen with Rendall.

Half an hour later, in the chieftain's tent.

The council members had gathered.

With Orion presiding, the four senior elders sat in their places.

This was a monumental achievement and a cause for celebration in the Black Forest.

Thundar, the newest Alpha-level powerhouse, sat beside Prophet Onyx.

Perhaps influenced by Onyx's calm demeanor, Thundar also appeared composed, though a hint of pride shone in his eyes.

The other council elders couldn't help but glance at Thundar, their gazes filled with a mix of admiration and envy.

After all, Thundar had ascended to Alpha-level right before their eyes.

For Orion and the senior elders, this was nothing new.

But for the other council members, who dreamed of advancing further, it was a profound and tangible reminder of what was possible.

It was as if Thundar's ascension was telling them: You can do it too.

If they could enter the Alpha-level resource sequence, they too could ascend.

At that moment, many of the elders' eyes turned red with longing.

Orion scanned the room, and what he saw was a pack of hungry wolves—warriors eager to fight the dark creatures for their chance at glory.

"Everyone, let us raise our goblets to celebrate Giant Thundar's successful ascension to Alpha-level!"

"For the prosperity and strength of the Stoneheart Horde, cheers!"

Orion raised his goblet, inviting everyone to toast Thundar and the horde.

At Orion's gesture, Thundar stood and returned the gesture, offering a few words of gratitude in his usual straightforward manner.

"Elders, thank you for your congratulations!"

"I believe that under the leadership of our great chieftain, the Stoneheart Horde will grow stronger and produce even more Alpha-level powerhouses. Our future is bright!"

"I've heard that Elder Dirtclaw has already entered the Alpha-level resource sequence, and I look forward to seeing his progress!"

"At the same time, I will do my utmost to hunt more dark creatures for the benefit of us all!"

The meeting ended on a high note, with the horde's morale soaring.

The days pass by swiftly, time flies.

The dark creatures attacking Blackstone City didn't disappear entirely, but their numbers were small and scattered.

These minor skirmishes weren't even enough to satisfy the bloodline warriors, let alone pose a real threat.

One day, after a long night, Orion lay in bed, having just conquered Lilith, Violet, and Lysinthia in succession.

As his arm wrapped around Lysinthia's slender waist, he spoke.

"Good job. You've already reached the late stages of hero level!"

Lysinthia didn't respond with words. Instead, she lay on Orion's chest, panting softly, letting out a faint hum through her nose.

Moments ago, Orion had been pounding her with his massive cock, and she had pushed herself to the limit to please him, nearly exhausting her strength.

"Dear Orion, your maid is quite diligent," Lilith teased from the side.

"Her Twilight Viper has already reached the peak of hero level!"

"What? The Twilight Viper is at the hero peak already? That fast?"

Lilith's words caught Orion by surprise.

The Twilight Viper, as a beast, was naturally stronger than most creatures of the same level.

Unfortunately, Orion didn't have any Alpha-level dark source crystals on hand to help it ascend further.

"Since the start of the dark beast tides, the Twilight Viper has been hunting dark creatures outside the city," Lilith explained.

"That little thing is clever—it's been staying close to the abyssal dragon, ensuring its safety."

"Not only has the Twilight Viper reached the hero peak, but it's also earned plenty of dark source crystals for your maid."

"At this rate, your maid will soon reach the hero peak herself and qualify to attempt an Alpha-level breakthrough!"

Orion playfully slapped Lysinthia's firm buttocks with his cock, a private gesture of encouragement between lovers.

"What about you, Violet? What's your current strength?"

Hearing about Lysinthia's progress made Orion curious about Violet's abilities.

Violet's aura was at hero level, but her demeanor was always soft and gentle, more like a priestess than a warrior.

Her secret techniques not only concealed her appearance but also masked her true power, leaving Orion with only a vague sense of her capabilities.

Seeing Orion's interest, Violet dispelled her concealment magic, revealing her stunningly beautiful face.

"Respected Orion, I'm at mid-tier hero level, but my studies focus on enchantments and magical formations."

"The Garland Tribe isn't skilled in combat. We're a peaceful people."

Violet made an effort to highlight her unique abilities and contributions.

"I know, I know... You're a peaceful tribe. You don't fight. You're all about support and logistics," Lilith interjected, her tone tinged with jealousy.

Violet hesitated, wanting to defend herself, but before she could speak, a sharp hissing sound echoed from the direction of the underground fissure, startling everyone.

At the same time, a wave of unfamiliar Alpha-level pressure swept through Moonshadow Valley.

Orion and Lilith immediately got up, quickly dressing before rushing out of the tent toward the fissure.

In Blackstone City, three figures approached from different directions: Delilah, Onyx, and Thundar.

"Chieftain, what's happening?" Thundar asked, his massive greatsword strapped to his back, his expression one of eager anticipation.

"Where's Rendall?" Orion asked instead of answering.

"He's stationed at the underground fissure," Delilah replied, explaining the rotation schedule for the night's Alpha-level defenders.

"Let's go. We'll check it out together," Orion said.

He didn't think it was an enemy attack—Rendall hadn't sounded the alarm.

If it wasn't an attack, there was only one other possibility.

Realizing this, Orion's eyes lit up, and his pace quickened.

"Master, Lorelia has made you proud—she's successfully ascended!"

Before Orion and the others could reach the underground fissure, Lorelia, sensing Orion's arrival, joyfully crawled out to greet him.

Following behind her was Rendall, his face beaming with satisfaction.

The appearance of the Alpha-level Spider Queen Lorelia immediately caught the attention of Onyx, Delilah, and Thundar.

They all understood the significance of having an Alpha-level Spider Queen in the Stoneheart Horde.

With Lorelia's ascension, the spiders she hatched would see a significant boost in strength.

Some of her offspring would even reach hero level, a dream come true for the horde.

"Good, very good!"

Orion laughed heartily, his joy evident.

"This is excellent. Now I can entrust you with the task of guarding the bottomless abyss without worry!"

"Lorelia, the horde will continue to provide you with resources. I want you to expand your brood without limit."

"Don't worry about whether the Stoneheart Horde can support them. The more of your children we have, the more resources we'll be able to plunder!"

Perhaps due to his excitement, Orion spoke his thoughts without reservation.

Hearing this, Lilith and the four senior elders all smiled.

From this moment on, unless a Legendary-level powerhouse appeared, the Stoneheart Horde would no longer fear any faction in the surrounding regions.

Lorelia and her spiders would become the foundation of Orion's confidence in facing the northern invaders.

Even the icefield monsters from the far north no longer seemed as daunting. Continue reading at empire

"Spread the word: Lorelia has ascended to Alpha-level and is now the Stoneheart Warden. We'll celebrate for three days!"

After issuing the order, Orion reached out to stroke Lorelia's face as she leaned in close.

Strangely, after her ascension, Lorelia's body hadn't grown larger. Instead, it had become smaller and more refined.

"Lorelia, your body..."

Lorelia rubbed her face against Orion's palm, closing her eyes in contentment.

"Master, you noticed, didn't you? Lorelia has become more... elegant!"

The word "elegant" coming from Lorelia's mouth felt oddly out of place to Orion.

"Elegant?"

"Yes! Lorelia has become elegant!"

As she spoke, Lorelia spun her spider body in two playful circles, showing off her new form to everyone.

"Master, you may not know this, but we cave spiders have a choice in how we ascend."

"If I had chosen to grow larger, my body would have become tougher but also more cumbersome. I would've had to fight on the front lines, tearing enemies apart with my fangs."

"But by choosing to refine my body, I've become more agile and smarter. Now I can continue using the bow and arrows you gave me to snipe enemies from afar!"

To emphasize her point, Lorelia removed the elegant bow from her back and mimed drawing and firing an arrow.

The sight was both adorable and amusing—a childlike Spider Queen showing off her skills.

"This..."

Hearing Lorelia's explanation, Orion felt as though his horizons had been broadened.

It was as if he had grasped a faint inspiration, though he couldn't quite put it into words.

If what Lorelia said was true, and cave spiders had different evolutionary paths, could other races have similar choices?

And if so, could these choices be made consciously?

It was a profound question, one that Orion's current knowledge and experience couldn't fully answer.

Exchanging a glance with the four senior elders, Orion decided not to convene a council meeting for Lorelia's ascension.

The celebration for Thundar had been necessary because his ascension had been witnessed by everyone, and as the Elder of Combat, it was important to establish his authority through a formal council meeting.

Instead, Orion assigned Lorelia two tasks:

1. Guarding the walls near the underground fissure.
2. Sending her spiders to explore the bottomless abyss.

The latter task was particularly critical.

The bottomless abyss was like a ticking time bomb, and Orion had long wanted to neutralize it.

Previously, Lorelia had sent her spiders to explore the abyss, but their low strength and stamina meant most never returned.

To prevent further losses, Orion had ordered Lorelia to halt the exploration.

Now that Lorelia had ascended to Alpha-level, it was time to resume the mission.

"Don't worry, Master. Lorelia will complete the tasks you've given me!"

Orion nodded and gently nudged the lively Lorelia toward Lilith.

"Mistress, Lorelia has missed you so much!"

Lorelia and Lilith shared a deep bond.

Lilith had raised Lorelia from a young age, essentially acting as her mother.

With the situation resolved and no enemy attack to worry about, everyone was in high spirits.

"Elder, your injuries haven't fully healed. Go back and rest. Lorelia can handle things here," Orion said, addressing Rendall.

Truthfully, both Rendall and Onyx had been overworked recently.

With Orion excluded from the rotation schedule, the entire Stoneheart Horde relied on Onyx, Rendall, Delilah, and Lilith to patrol in shifts.

After the last major battle, both Onyx and Rendall had sustained injuries.

Although the shamans had assisted with their recovery, some internal wounds required time to heal.

"Alright!"

"Elder Rendall, leave this to me. I'll have my children patrol the walls!" Lorelia chimed in enthusiastically.

"Not only that, I'll send my children to explore the darkness beyond the city!"

Lorelia's final statement made Orion's eyes light up.

In truth, passively defending Blackstone City wasn't Orion's ideal strategy.

Taking the initiative was the mark of a true powerhouse.

"Lorelia, if you discover anything out there, report to me immediately."

"As you wish, dear Master!" Lorelia replied with a bright smile, looking for all the world like a child with eight legs.

With a smile on his face, Orion gestured for the four senior elders to accompany him back to the chieftain's tent.

The development of the cave spiders had reached a satisfactory stage.

With the dark beast tides soon to recede, it was time to start planning for the northern invaders.

As for Lilith, she stayed behind at the underground fissure to continue bonding with Lorelia.

Orion also assigned her the task of advising Lorelia on spider deployment and tactical applications.

The cave spiders relied on overwhelming numbers, but Orion didn't want Lorelia to limit herself to mindless swarming tactics.

If the cave spiders were to become a true force to be reckoned with, they needed strategy, not just numbers.