

Dome

Ryun looked into the distance, seeing the dome through the curtain of Essence in front of him. He did not see inside of it, the surface of the dome was not see-through to his eyes. His sense did not penetrate inside either, but he could distinguish everything around them. They were in an open field, a plain of gentle hills and a river a bit farther away in the distance. It was dry land for the most part, hard dirt, with just a few shrubberies or pieces of grass here and there.

He wanted to know what was inside, so he turned to Erdania and whispered.

“What is it like?” He asked.

She leaned in close then answered. “I can see creatures moving about inside, tiny from this far up, the drones presumably. The center is dominated by a structure made of brown earth, uneven sticking out of the ground. There a few smaller ones all around it, but the center one is almost touching the top of the Dome.”

Ryun was impressed, the Dome reached high, almost as tall as a mountain. They had been informed of all the information that observing the Dome from outside could be gleaned, of course. He knew already what was inside. The tall structure was a mound, like a termite hive of Earth. The monsters inside were insect-like, related to Skreen in some ways perhaps, or at least similar, seeing as they came from their mythology. A swarm that destroyed everything in its path.

“There are some flyers too,” Erdania continued. “We can’t know how many are inside though.”

They knew that the Dome extended deep into the ground, only half of it was above ground. They had to assume that there was a lot more monsters beneath the ground inside their hive. What they expected was a swarm type threat, a lot of weaker monsters, with the name Blighted

Horde, they also expected something disease or poison related. Which was why their plan was simple: overwhelming might from the start.

He looked around then spoke. “Everyone ready?”

The people around him nodded, they were already prepared. Erdania dropped from the airship to the ground, as they started to move closer and get higher. Hitor’s fleet was spread out around the territory, ready to kill anything that got past them, but they were establishing their own smaller perimeter around the dome too. Erdania was the first line of it, as she couldn’t exactly do as much the rest of them on the same scale.

As she hit the ground he felt her grow as she used her Evolved Form and then started to tear pieces of the ground out, creating massive boulders to use as ammunition.

“I’ll start,” Tali said and Ryun nodded. A moment later she spread her wings and started to fly higher and higher, he felt her power spread around her as she prepared the sky.

That left Ryun and Selia with Nayra and Karya on the ship of the combatants. Lesamitrius stood back with the ship’s crew, ready to take the craft wherever they needed. Ryun glanced at Nayra, and she nodded. She would stay on the ship, waiting for the death on the field to rise enough. She had gotten a lot stronger since the war, advanced her Class again. She planned to advance one last time after this Dome, to finally reach tier 9 in Class.

Ryun, Selia, and Karya stepped off the airship. Karya’s wings of fire spread and carried her forward as Selia floated on a dark green and black platform and Ryun walked on air, pulsing Oblivion with his feet.

They waited directly above the Dome for the airship to rise higher and out of range. Then Ryun glanced at Karya.

“Whenever you are ready,” he said.

The woman smiled and then flew down toward the Dome. She landed on top of the Dome, and laid her hand on the surface. A moment later, the Dome ripple and a notification pinged in Ryun's interface.

Warning! The 2nd, Dome of Reckoning - Dome of the Blighted Horde has been opened! The Blighted Horde wakes. Defeat the Horde Mothers and their armies in order to stop their blighted onslaught.

Fight, prevail, prove that you are worthy.

Defeating the Blighted Horde will bring new opportunities and rewards for those brave enough.

In the moment when the Dome vanished, the sound of loud buzzing filled the air. A moment following that one, came the rush of crackling avalanche that swallowed all other sounds.

—Red Dawn—

His vision filled with a falling lake of fire, distantly he felt her activating more and more of her powers, everything that she had. Fire filled everything as it fell on the Dome, it consumed everything, it burned everything in its way. It unraveled all Essence in its path, burning it through. Ryun grimaced as his skill sent him sensations that were too painful to comprehend, akin to what happened to him in Ethereal. He forced his skill to focus on a singular Essence, on Selia standing next to him, and the sensations abated.

Karya wasn't done, the fire fell on top of the Dome's mounds, the monsters that had been outside had been burned to ash in an instant. The

fire burned on top of it all, like a curtain draped over it all. It had to be burning through the caves and opening in the mound, cooking everything inside as well, as far as it could penetrate.

His eyes saw the ground that was scorched and turned to glass, but not the mound itself, the destruction around the Dome was increasing as the blast of flames spread, as Karya continued to throw down everything that she had at it. But it still stood, it made Ryun think that it was resistant perhaps, though the monsters obviously weren't.

Boulders the size of houses started hitting the mounds, thrown by Erdania in the distance. He saw them impact and detonate with more power than boulders could possibly have. Worldstone and Gravity surged, implosions destroyed chunks of the mounds, widening the already present holes. But not dealing the kind of damage that Ryun expected.

The mound shook, and then buzzing returned. A moment later, they spilled out, a never ending stream of monsters that passed through the fires still maintained by Karya, they burned, but did not seem to care. It didn't take Ryun long to realize that they most were sacrificing themselves to let the rest come out. The flying monsters filled the air and like clouds started climbing up toward Karya.

They were shaped like flying termites, at least on the surface. Their heads had no mandibles, but stingers, and their rear ends had something akin to scorpion tails bent downward. They were barely the size of a large dog.

Karya's burst into flames, incinerating anything near her, and sent waves of flames toward the clouds of monsters.

Then the sky cracked, and air surged down as Tali started her dive. It fell along with her, it passed by them in a roar of wind and a falling wall of Essence. It hit and carried Karya's flames forward, fanning them, Ryun felt the temperature rise as the clouds of monsters turned to cinders. Then Tali manipulated the sky, the air and the wind, and rammed Karya's flames into the mounds, through the holes in their sides.

Ryun remained high in the air, watching and waiting.

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The projection black-out was accelerating, and Zha Miya didn't know why. She turned from scene to scene, trying to figure out what was the cause. The Runesmith was in the glade, spirit parts all around him, crafting horrors. The Dome's battle was underway, and she saw the attackers pause, waiting to see if the fire would be sufficient. They did not yet know the nature of the Blighted Horde, so they wasted time. It wouldn't matter in the end, they were too strong.

But there was nothing there that could cause the projections to go so much of course that they were no longer reliable. She turned back to Ra'azel, looked at the projections of his future. It was not hard to see what it held. He would go, he would fight. She couldn't see that fight clearly, the Way of Time interfered too much, but clarity was not the same as not seeing. She knew what would happen after.

Unless there was something in there that would have consequences that would only become apparent later.

She forced herself to stop, not being able to know exactly was always the point. It was only coming earlier than expected. Like so many other things were. She calmed, and continued to watch, looking for more clues as to what the future held.