

A VIP as Soon as You Log In

Chapter 85 A Man Growing Too Fast (2)

“It’s simple.”

“Actually, with a little memorization and dexterity, it’s easy to get certified. But you can’t call yourself a bartender unless you make your own original drinks! All right, unknown bartender K?”

“It’s Shin Eun-hyuk.” The next day, as promised, Kang Shin-hyuk was in the bartender class Claire had planned after they had completed all of the mole claws. Even though he was still a minor, he was already in the mindset of his mysterious alter ego, who worked as a bartender.

‘Well, it seems okay.’ Claire glanced at him, confirming he at least seemed calm. Yesterday, after rejecting his confession, she was worried he would have been hurt, but fortunately, the shock didn’t seem to be too bad.

‘But to think that was the case...’ Kang Shin-hyuk had expressed his desire for her outright, of course, but he was normally so calm that she had thought it was a joke.

“Sister?”

“Oh, yes.” Suddenly, Kang Shin-hyuk was looking at her with an anxious expression.

“What’s wrong? Is something bothering you?”

“No, no. Why, if there were such a thing, would you solve it?”

“Absolutely. But please wait a little longer for me to get stronger first, it really won’t take long.” It was a voice full of confidence, combining the freshness of youth and the leisure of an adult to give him a subtle charm. Claire spontaneously remembered the boy’s confession from the previous day and the deep eyes facing her, feeling a little thrill go through her spine. If that was a joke, this boy was a shoo-in for Best Actor at the Oscars. She struggled to hide her agitation and flicked Kang Shin-hyuk’s forehead.

“Try it again, but explain what feels natural as you do it.”

“Speaking while I do it? That’s too much after only a little practice.”

“Wow, what’s with that look, huh?”

“If you keep jabbing me, I won’t be able to concentrate!” The two continued the class with an almost flirtatious mood, but soon they could feel a huge flow of energy outside. The two stopped immediately.

“You sense it too?”

“Yeah.” The two whispered quietly. They might have different ideas about each other, but they had the same opinion on how to treat Eunah. Immediately after that, their mother-in-law...no- Shin Eunah, knocked on the door.

“I’m entering.”

“Huh.” As soon as she entered, she made a face as she discovered the cocktail glasses and tools spread out on the table. It was easy to deduce what sort of class was happening here immediately.

“Claire, our junior is still physically underage.” Mentally he wanted to refute that, but he remained silent as Claire responded instead.

“But Shin Eun-hyuk is an adult. He’s not drinking alcohol, so what’s wrong with a little bartending?”

“That’s not important. Moreover, aren’t you confused about our purpose right now?”

“Hah...” Claire let out a sigh, shrugging her shoulders.

“Don’t you want to drink a cocktail that Shin-hyuk made himself?”

“I do.”

“Wouldn’t you like to chat with Shin-hyuk while you sit at a bar table...you’re drinking a cocktail elegantly while he wipes the counter down with a dry towel and a soft smile on his lips?”

“I want that.” Both times, she responded immediately. Claire smiled and shook Shin Eunah’s hand. “Then, it’s okay.”

“Yes, thank you.”

“Hey!” When Shin Eunah said thank you to Claire, Kang Shin-hyuk was unable to stand by any longer. Besides, why was her description so specific?

“Please take care of the bartender training, Claire.”

“Leave it to me. I’ll implement your ideal.”

“Since when did you start nurturing me...”

“From the start.” He was filled with thoughts of blaming Claire as Shin Eunah turned to look at him.

“The moles are looking for you.”

“I guess it worked as I said.” He had a smile on his lips, but Shin Eunah’s expression was subdued.

“You shouldn’t think everyone in the world is as sincere, passionate, and incapable of giving up as you are.”

“It’s like you’re describing a game character... anyway, I know what you meant. Let’s meet them first.” He was determined to go outside. It was already night, which meant the moles could roam freely outside.

“Anvil!”

“Master Anvil!” One of the moles who found him shouted happily, and soon after, more began to pop up. In short order, thousands had appeared and began to bow around him.

“Help us!”

“I know.” He smiled and opened his inventory, laying out the large number of claws he prepared.

“I’ve prepared them for you. Now, can you excavate the land on your own?”

“Oh, oh! After all, Anvil...!”

“The former king certainly thought it through by bringing Master Anvil!”

“...Well?” The moles were enthusiastically moving around him in admiration. However, he felt something strange in their words. His question was quickly resolved as they all bowed to him once more.

“Become our new king!”

“Master Anvil...no, your majesty!”

“Sire!” Kang Shin-hyuk was confused for a moment, taken aback by their declarations.

“Become the second Jijoo King!”

“Please lead us!”

“Tell us what to do, sire!”

“Please stay here!”

“...” Shin Eunah jabbed him from behind, but he had no energy to react to her as he stared blankly at the moles. He bowed his head down.

“If I didn’t expect it in the first place, I would’ve felt betrayed. Still, I wanted to see something wonderful here...is this their limit? Is this the karma of the Jijoo King?” Claire shrugged, speaking quietly from behind him.

“Let’s go make some cocktails. Virgin...ah, non-alcoholic ones.”

“No.”

“Shall we wait a little longer?” Shin Eunah spoke up; her voice was soft and delicate as she tried to be considerate of him. However, waiting here for more time seemed like it wouldn’t change anything, and he didn’t want to go and force the Mole tribe to change.

“No...I think it’s pointless.”

“Eunah? What are you going to do?”

“Well, what should I do?” Shin Eunah furrowed her brow and muttered inaudibly before looking at Kang Shin-hyuk.

“I’ll install an alarm barrier.”

“Ah, good idea Eunah.”

“If it’s praise, I would rather receive it from my junior. No, a lap pillow would be better.”

“You’re really honest about useless things.”

“Master Anvil?!”

“Please don’t abandon us!” The moles tried to stop him as he turned away weakly, but they were unable to. He felt too disillusioned to deal with them now.

-Myu.

Onyx, who had been sleeping quietly in his arms, suddenly escaped and jumped into the middle of the moles. The moles were confused, but Kang Shin-hyuk understood what he was trying to do. Rather, he noticed what he was holding in his mouth.

“When did this guy...”

-Myuuuuuuuuuu!

Onyx cried vigorously as he chewed what he held in his mouth. It was the A-rank claw artifact made for the Jijoo King.

-Myu!

“Ah, this guy!”

“This hedgehog has the relic of the previous king!” Onyx chewed on the artifact with an expression of delight. The moles stood by, astonished, as did the three humans. He finished eating it and let out a cheerful cry as the thorns on his back began to harden and become sharper.

“Is that okay? Somehow, I think there are game companies that might sue him for this new form.”

“It’ll be okay so long as we don’t talk about it.” Onyx cried out once more and swelled his thorns out. They began to spin like drills.

“Oh, they won’t sue, thank god.”

“But, it looks more dangerous?!”

-Myuuuuuu!

“Oh!”

“Unbelievable!” Onyx dug into the ground with his spinning thorns, at a speed on par with the Jijoo King. The moles let out cries of excitement as they watched him disappear into the ground.

“Then he...!”

“Let’s follow! The new king is leading us!”

“Ooh!”

“Claws, grab your claws!” The moles were hurriedly following after Onyx with their own equipment. Claire shook her head as she watched the last one disappear underground.

“...Is this really okay?”

“Maybe? In two months, Onyx will disappear, but...by then, they can also settle down.” If they can’t adapt after all of this, then there was no helping them. He let out a sigh and turned to Shin Eunah.

“Because Onyx is with them...I’ll ask you, senior.”

“I’ll protect them.” They returned to the building they were staying in after Shin Eunah prepared her magic defenses. From then on, it would be up to them. Kang Shin-hyuk was focused on learning how to become a bartender from Claire, and as a bonus, he learned the basics of alchemy. Shin Eunah focused on studying the magic of this world with the help of Claire in her free time.

Kang Shin-hyuk spent some time training his body and martial arts in earnest with the help of the growth amplification potions and would go back and forth

to the workshop to create new weapons. He also spent some time studying the orb and the Godslayer sword when he could. This way, he managed to establish his training and develop a good relationship with his two seniors, as well as begin his activities on the Hero Universe trading board.

A month and a half passed like that before they returned after successfully completing the dimensional quest.

Chapter 86 A Man Growing Too Fast (3)

-As a log-in bonus for today, you've received a buff to status increases! For two days, the growth rate of all stats is increased by 40%!

[Kang Shin-hyuk: A rank]

[Characteristic]

Golden-eyed Dragon (S)

[Physical ability]

Power: A

Agility: A+

Health: A

[Special ability]

Spiritual power: A

Regeneration: B+

[Skills]

Dragon's Fan Dance (S+): A

Wind Mastery (A-): C

Metallurgy: A-

Emotion: A-

[Resistances]

Resist Poison (SS+): A-

Resist Fire (S): A

“Hmm.” After his two months in another world, Kang Shin-hyuk had managed to grow his status once more.

‘It’s almost too strong.’ When he had been over there, it was hard for him to notice his own growth because he was with Shin Eunah, who was outside the category of human, and Claire, who was a high-ranker in the top 500 in the world. However, when he considered it calmly after returning to Earth, his condition was by no means normal, now that all of his stats aside from regeneration had surpassed A-rank. The problem was the time he had taken, however.

‘It’s fast for two months of growth, but as far as everyone else is concerned, just a weekend has passed.’ He tried to think about it for a while before giving up on it. Unless he stopped doing dimensional quests, this would continue to happen in the future. It would be too difficult to try and hide his growth every time.

‘The status growth is incredible, but so was the skill growth.’ His Wind Mastery now made it possible for him to make a swift wind blade or even to use it to strengthen the power of his sword. However, the Resist Fire skill had grown even faster than that. It was a high-level at the start, but it had easily broken through the rank barrier. It made sense, given how close he had been to the forge for most of his time over there. It wasn’t just him who had benefited, however.

“We’ll leave now. Thanks to my juniors, I was able to rest for two months...my ability has also gotten stronger.”

“It was really fun. Don’t forget you have a shift tonight!”

“Yes, yes. Please go.” It was early Monday morning now. Of course, Shin Eunah and Claire were currently in his room because they had stayed in Gromas until the last minute. After spending two months together, Kang Shin-hyuk’s attitude towards them was a bit more hesitant. The strangely embarrassed atmosphere between him and Claire had completely vanished, at least on the surface.

“I still feel sorry...Eunah, should we go eat? You know, Shinyoung’s royal class restaurant has some delicious food.”

“I know.”

“Also, we could go in with Shin-hyuk!”

“Please reconsider.” Bringing outside guests into the restaurant would be one thing, but the whole school would be overturned when they discovered the guests were the Thunder Empress and the Alchemist. Kang Shin-hyuk was genuinely frightened as Claire let out a laugh and tapped his shoulder.

“I like Shin-hyuk because his reactions are always great.”

“Claire, you can’t seduce my junior.”

“Eunah, it seems to be the time you graduate from elementary school when it comes to relationships.” Kang Shin-hyuk saw the two off with a bitter smile.

“I’ll go to the bar tonight.”

“Alright, then please properly finish your work.” Shin Eunah hesitated a bit, but in the end, she and Claire used magic to vanish from the room, leaving behind only a faint scent. It felt odd for Shin-hyuk to see them leave after being stuck together with them for two months.

“...”

-Myu...

Onyx looked up at Kang Shin-hyuk and let out a small cry. The thorns on his back were normal once more, but during his stay, they had been drills for most of the time, so it felt a bit unfamiliar.

“It would’ve been difficult if it weren’t for Claire’s special potion.”

-Myu?

Kang Shin-hyuk decided to check if the little guy’s status was any different.

[Onyx: C+ rank]

[Physical ability]

Power: D+

Agility: B+

Health: C-

[Special ability]

Gold Magic: B

[Skills]

Iron Predation (S+): C

Implementation (SS): C+

Defense Position: C+

Stealth (A): B-

[Loyalty]

Subordinate to Kang Shin-hyuk: Loyalty 74

“All your stats and magic have increased tremendously...” It made sense, as most of what Kang Shin-hyuk did in those two months was metallurgy. Most of his work wasn’t good enough to post on the Hero Universe, so Onyx ended up eating them. There were also the materials Onyx consumed when digging with the moles. Even so, B-rank was absurd. It was a level that surpassed even active superhumans.

-I understand.

As Kang Shin-hyuk was contemplating how it could’ve happened, the administrator sent him a message.

-It seems like he experienced the effect of the status amplification buff thanks to your relationship. This is my first time seeing such a thing.

“He received the effect of my potion?”

-Myuuu!

Kang Shin-hyuk patted Onyx and praised him honestly.

“You struggled to take care of those spoiled people for two months.”

-Myuuu.

The Golden Hidden Mole tribe couldn't do anything unless they had a trusted representative. Onyx had been able to lay down the groundwork for them to return back to their lives underground after eating the king's claws (although whether that was his plan from the start was a mystery). They had cried out and tried to keep Onyx when they learned he would be returning to Earth, but fortunately, they had taken the news better than when their king died. They would be able to survive again now that things had stabilized.

-Quest rewards were sent directly to My Room, so please check them later.

“Thank you, administrator.” Kang Shin-hyuk changed into his school uniform and took off, leaving Onyx in the room.

“Oh, Shin-hyuk. Why didn't you come to the restaurant today? The vice-captain was waiting for you...huh?” The moment he entered his classroom, Karen happily waved to him before tilting her head in confusion. He didn't have the time to eat after seeing Shin Eunah and Claire off.

“Shin-hyuk, did you grow taller?”

“Hm?” In fact, he was about 1cm taller, but he couldn't tell her, so he deflected the question.

“Why do you think something has changed?”

“You feel more mature...” Karen's eyes narrowed sharply as she regarded Shin-hyuk.

“Are you ignoring my nervous system enhancing properties?! Obviously, there's been a change!”

“Does that actually have anything to do with your trait?”

“Woman. It was a woman! That’s the only thing that can change a boy so suddenly!”

“...It was a woman.”

“Hah.” Karen burst into laughter at his honest answer. Shin-hyuk was quick to pinch her cheeks in punishment.

“Mercy...mercy...”

“You shouldn’t laugh at a broken heart.”

“No, it’s not because of that...” Karen patted her cheeks and continued.

“Your stock price is breaking through the roof. Your personality is good, and your face is handsome enough...what? You don’t believe me?”

“Not really.”

“It’s true! So, who is it?”

“Do you think I’d tell you?”

“No way...” She shook her head, mumbling in thought for a moment.

“It’s the Empress!”

“Never.” Kang Shin-hyuk asserted in a cold voice, and Karen nodded embarrassed.

“I felt she cared about you...”

“As I said before, it’s a normal relationship between a senior and a junior.”

“Who then? Is it Na-hee? Did you even have any contact with her in the first place?”

“That’s...” Kang Shin-hyuk hesitated at Lee Na-hee’s name appearing, and Karen opened her mouth in surprise.

“You do.”

“We’re in the same club.”

“So it really is her.” Karen’s eyes changed strangely as she said it was meaningless to hide the truth.

“Don’t listen to rumors. And it’s not her.”

“Then who the hell is it? Is it an outsider?”

“Yeah.”

“Ooh...anyway, I’m glad...” Kang Shin-hyuk turned away from her, and Karen puffed her cheeks out.

“I wasn’t laughing, by the way! I just thought it would be better if you dated someone from Shinyoung! Like our vice-captain!”

“I hate the thought of it.”

“You are really ruthless.” He knew that Karen was trying to match him with Eleanor, but for at least now, there was no time for him to like anyone else other than Claire.

“Besides, Eleanor doesn’t have the time to be leisurely meeting with a man.” Kang Shin-hyuk let out a sigh. She was from the British royal family, and she had just been inaugurated as the captain of the Wyvern Knights. She wouldn’t have enough space mentally to entertain the notion of a relationship. However, Karen thought differently.

“I rather think that at a time like this, it would be better to have someone capable and caring like Shin-hyuk.”

“Isn’t that just nonsense?”

“Huh!” Kang Shin-hyuk decided to punish her by continuing to pinch her cheeks.

After school, Kang Shin-hyuk got away from Baek In-ha, who was clinging to him to go to the superhuman shopping mall, he went to his club room.

“A woman, huh?”

“How the hell do you know about it?!”

“I heard from Ellie.” Kang Shin-hyuk soon realized that Ellie was Lee Na-hee’s nickname for Eleanor, which meant that the two were close. No, before that, Karen had told Eleanor about it.

“There’s no one in this world I can trust.”

“I’ve never seen Ellie care about a boy. I was worried about her, especially after you joined...” She was a kind person who was concerned about her friend.

“My mentality’s not that strong, so please go easy on me.”

“I will, I’m sorry. The expression you’re making is too funny, though.” Kang Shin-hyuk put his bag down and sat down, looking at what Lee Na-hee was doing. She was dropping sugar cubes into a cup of black coffee.

“So, who is it?”

“Is it common to ask that even when you know you won’t get an answer?” Kang Shin-hyuk removed his summer jacket and put on a work apron, looking over at Lee Na-hee, who was smiling at him. “Rather than that, work with me.”

“Work? On what? We already submitted to the Artifact Contest.”

“I want to make something regardless of that.” His eyes sparkled.

“Maybe we can make something better.”

Chapter 87 A Man Growing Too Fast (4)

“You can make whatever you want this time.” Like Kang Shin-hyuk, Lee Na-hee threw off her summer jacket and stretched. He felt like she was doing it on purpose, but he still couldn’t ignore the sight. Lee Na-hee ignored his gaze and continued.

“Don’t get me wrong. I heard about it from my grandfather last time. He said that we made the last one according to my will, so you couldn’t show your skills properly. This time, do whatever you want. I’ll match you.”

“Thank you for the suggestion...first, let’s check the materials.” Kang Shin-hyuk produced a lump of metal that had been refined in advance from his inventory. Among the metals obtained from Gromas, it was an A-rank metal with the second highest quality after benadelite called [Lightning Urot].

“What is that? Isn’t it an unconfirmed material?”

“It’s alright. I was lucky enough to get it inside the gate we practiced in.”

“That sounds like a lie.” Lee Na-hee clearly didn’t believe him, but she shrugged and let it go.

“We only have to make something good out of it.”

“Yes, but not for the contest.”

“Then, just purely because you want to make something with me?”

“That’s right.” Lee Na-hee wondered if he was trying to get over his heartbreak after being rejected.

“It may be because of that, but... I’ll trust you.”

“I’m sorry, senior, but are you going to keep talking about it?”

“Oh, it’s fun.” Lee Na-hee clapped her hands and then placed a roll of paper on the table. She stretched it out and motioned for Kang Shin-hyuk to come over.

“So? What’s that magic metal’s characteristics? I can’t read it with my abilities yet.”

“It’s simple, it just has an electric attribute.”

“The metal itself has that property?”

“Yes.” Metal with attributes was one of the highest quality materials for weapons. A weapon made out of it would become an elemental weapon even if forged by an amateur, and thus it had a high probability of becoming an artifact. Of course, it was usually very expensive, given its rarity. Lightning Urot was a metal that wasn’t originally present in Gromas. Rather, it was created through the changes in the world made after Shin Eunah accepted the

benadelite and used her lightning to stop Jormungand. There wasn't much created in that process, but he had mined what he could find.

"Hey, hey..." Lee Na-hee's expression changed as she looked at the metal. She had been willing to help from the start, but now she was burning with passion.

"Let's make it!"

"You sound so motivated now."

"Ah, you noticed?" She didn't have any intention of hiding her greed.

"But this time, I want to make something."

"You really know how to get someone interested...!"

"I won't be disappointed."

"You want to do even more?!" Kang Shin-hyuk nodded. Lee Na-hee considered his words for a moment before clapping her hands.

"Okay, I'll cooperate with your production activities in the future, so make me a weapon with the same materials before I graduate. How about it?"

"Sounds good." He had already confirmed her abilities the last time they worked together. There were better enchanters than her, undoubtedly, but she was the only one who could spend this much time with him in the club and who went to the same school as him. If it meant continuing their partnership in the future, such a condition was easy enough to agree to.

"Then, the negotiations are concluded. You are the first to be able to indulge me. Isn't it an honor?"

"It's an honor...?" Kang Shin-hyuk shook his head with a sigh.

"So, what are you going to make?"

"Oh, yeah. I've been thinking about a lot of things, but I wanted to experiment." He took the pen offered by Lee Na-hee and drew a line in the center of the blank paper. He could practically see the question mark floating over his partner's head.

“What is it?”

“A thread. Of course, I’m not intending on making just a metal thread...”

“It’s fine if you make it, but...are you telling me to draw a magic circle on a thin thread?” Kang Shin-hyuk smiled and gave her the thumbs up. She looked like she wanted to break his thumb off.

“It doesn’t matter if we fail, I want to make it. Will you help?” Lee Na-hee wanted to quit, but his eyes remained serious. She let out a sigh and made up her mind, finally nodding.

“...Yes. So, what kind of thread do you want to make?”

“I don’t want anything complicated, for now...” The two started working on the blueprint together. Lee Manwoo arrived at the club a bit later, noticed them working, and quietly walked away.

‘Maybe there is hope for our granddaughter.’ The old man’s plan for his ambitious granddaughter was underway, unaware of the conflict it would place her in with the Empress and the Alchemist.

Shinyoung’s practical training became even more difficult. Assignments began to steadily increase in their writing classes as the students realized that the previous week really was their last break.

“How does Kang Shin-hyuk run so fast...!”

“He’s the Rookie King.”

“Why are both Kang Shin-hyuk and Baek In-ha in my class...! Hey, slow down!” Kang Shin-hyuk was moving particularly quick in the day’s training, as his status was already far beyond the level of a first-year. He had no struggles from the practical writing portion, either.

“Wow...Shin-hyuk, help...!”

“Ask in Korean.”

“Mr. Kang, I am completely unsure of these assignments...!” Needless to say, Baek was at the top in the physical practice but was lagging behind in writing.

“Let’s go play during the exam.”

“It was an act. You’ve been preparing for the election, haven’t you?” The student council election would be held at the end of the final exam, and he was planning on taking part in it.

“Hmm...okay, I’ll help you.”

“I love you!”

“If you say that again, you can kiss your royal class future goodbye.”

“Sorry, Mr. Kang, I was wrong.” If Baek became the vice president of the student council, Shin-hyuk’s school life would become a little easier. With such a goal, he decided to help out a little bit with Baek’s work. Of course, that didn’t mean he could help him with the actual tests.

“Guys, they say there’s a fight for 3rd class today.”

“It’s a way to relieve the stress of studying for exams against your classmates.”

“If you lose, your score will be reduced.”

“It’s the worst.” The subject of the third class of the day was [Non-Skill Training 2]. That was the class Kang Shin-hyuk had defeated Do Woojin in before.

“Are you my partner today as well?”

“Won’t you stick with me?” Baek In-ha lowered his voice and smiled at Kang Shin-hyuk.

“I know you’re stronger. Isn’t it worth testing with me now?”

“Well...” He knew Baek’s words weren’t wrong. If it was before Gromas, it would’ve been impossible, but now his status was above the average A-rank. Assuming their results from before hadn’t changed, Baek was still one step ahead of him in agility, but Kang Shin-hyuk was a step ahead in strength.

There was a big difference between A and S rank, but it might be doable. He could also boost his own agility with his spiritual power...which meant all that remained was magic power.

"I thought it would arrive someday, but not so quickly. How the hell did you grow so fast?"

"Well, maybe you can tell if you stick with me." A friendly tension arose between the two. At that moment, the bell sounded, indicating that five minutes of class time remained, and the two stood up as one.

"Shall we go?"

"Yeah."

"Hey, I think they're going to fight today."

"Oh!" The students in the class stood up as they saw the two burning with passion. The students followed after them, hoping to see the big match between them. However, their expectations were not to be fulfilled.

"Today, I will be seeking the help of the Magic Department seniors to test your abilities to cope with more diverse situations." Gong Joonpyo, the teacher in charge, said so, but the students wondered what the hell he was talking about. There were magicians in school uniforms wearing black ties nearby.

"You will battle with your 3rd-year seniors and train in responding to magic. Thank you, 3rd years, for helping your juniors despite the final exams."

"Oh, yes...yes...?" The teacher then led the students in clapping. Something didn't feel quite right about the training.

"Shin-hyuk." Baek jabbed him in the back.

"The Magic Crown is staring at you."

"The Magic Crown?" Kang Shin-hyuk looked up, noticing a handsome blonde man staring at him.

"Are you the one who's been flirting with my fiancée?" It was Nathan Bodin, the top student in the Magic Department. Kang Shin-hyuk strode forward, facing the man staring him down and feeling a sense of déjà vu.

“...Who’s your fiancée?”

“Lee Na-hee, 2nd year in K class.”

“I think you’re misunderstanding...of course, you won’t believe me either way.”
Kang Shin-hyuk responded with a hesitant smile.

“Come on.” Nathan’s voice was dripping with arrogance.

“I’ll teach you some proper manners.”

Chapter 88 A Man Growing Too Fast (5)

The Magic Crown, a 3rd year senior and one of Shinyoung’s strongest students, was provoking Kang Shin-hyuk. Although the 3rd years seemed to have known this would happen in advance and were acting like it was normal, all of the 1st year C class students felt odd about the scene before them.

“Why is he doing that?”

“What is Kang Shin-hyuk doing?”

“His fiancée?” In the past, it was neatly ignored when people would go against Kang Shin-hyuk, but now it was different. It was the result of his new social life and the power of his allies. As the 1st-years began to gossip and look at them strangely, Nathan coughed as he realized his behavior was strange.

“We’ll start the duel. Come on.” Without any further explanation, he entered the battlefield and beckoned for Kang Shin-hyuk to join him. It was absurd, but it was clear the teacher was going to play along with it, at least for now.

“Baek, do you have any advice?”

“Yeah.” Baek had been sizing Nathan Bodin up from the second he locked onto Kang Shin-hyuk. He nodded, satisfied with Kang Shin-hyuk’s resolve.

“The most irritating thing is that kids trait [Magic Interference]. It allows him to interfere with magic outside of the body, but it can also disperse and neutralize his opponent’s internal magic.”

“You were hit by that?”

“If only I had a plus to my magic rank...” Dispensing the target’s magical power. It was a terrifying ability, although it probably wasn’t effective against opponents who had stronger magical power than him, which was how he took out Baek. It wasn’t a joke when he said if he only had a +, he would’ve been able to win; he had magical power on par with the best 3rd-year magician.

“But you don’t have magic power. The first thing you need to watch out for is gravity magic, which is probably born from his trait. It’s tricky to avoid, as it crushes anything within a certain range instantly. I had no choice but to avoid it by watching the flow of magic.”

“So, it’s avoidable.”

“The second is a tremendous magic fire born purely from his sheer power. It is designed to be used on a large scale, so you don’t need to worry about it in a duel.”

“That would be dangerous.”

“Will you not come out? I understand you’re scared, but it’s class time now. Try to understand the heart of your senior who deliberately set aside time for you.” At that, Gong Joonpyo began to rush Shin-hyuk. Kang Shin-hyuk grabbed a wooden training sword, readying himself mentally. It was a normal duel, so neither of them would be wearing artifacts. That would prove favorable for him.

“I was preparing my mind to face the Magic Crown.” Kang Shin-hyuk retorted at his teacher, who had brought the 3rd year to bully the 1st year. A barrier was activated to prevent them from being hurt.

“I expected you to run away, but I’m glad I won’t need to chase you down.”

“That is fortunate. I don’t want to make a hobby out of being stalked.”

“There’s nothing about you that seems like a Rookie King. Just a bit of martial art skills, but no pedigree or patron...such trash dare touches my fiancée.”

“Does that fiancée know that you call her that?” The question was born of pure curiosity, but Nathan Bodin was struck speechless. Kang Shin-hyuk let out a regretful sigh. It would be more constructive to spend your time finding a different way to approach her instead of trampling on a man she knew.

“If you had a good relationship with Lee Na-hee, you would’ve heard there’s nothing going on between us. Don’t you think you’re being a nuisance to her by calling her your fiancée?”

“Uh...anyway, she will be mine someday! What’s wrong with setting the title a bit in advance?!”

“Wow...” Why were the boys in this school like this when it came to love? No matter how strong they were as superhumans, they weren’t adults yet. That was why they had to be in school, although it seemed to be useless when you looked at this guy.

‘The Knight Crown was better than this. He was wrong in the way he expressed himself, but he didn’t want to cause any harm.’ Of course, he had also been a nuisance to Kang Shin-hyuk and Eleanor. On the other hand, however, this guy treated Lee Na-hee like she was his fiancée from the start and was bothering Kang Shin-hyuk, who just happened to be in the same club.

“Then the duel will start now.”

“Ha!” Nathan created countless arrows in the air without any preparation as soon as the duel started. Even Yuta Mitsui, whom he fought in the rookie matches, couldn’t hold a candle to him. The power in each one of them was enough to eradicate a D-rank monster instantly. No wonder he was the peak of the Magic Department.

‘But...’ The duel was advantageous to Shin-hyuk from the start. Now that he had refined his technique of dispersing magic through that divine sword dance, he held a powerful card against wizards that wasn’t subject to interference. That only left one avenue for Nathan to defeat him – gravity magic. He had to be careful of that.

‘My reflexes and speed won’t be enough. If so...’ His eyes flashed golden as he watched the hundreds of magic arrows fly toward him with enough force to smash the battlefield. He rushed forward in a straight line, brandishing the wooden sword.

“Ha.” Nathan Bodin mocked him with a laugh, watching him recklessly charge. No doubt, he was comparing Shin-hyuk with Baek at that moment. Baek had rushed him the exact same way, avoiding all of the magic arrows and even a

direct hit from his gravity magic. Of course, Kang Shin-hyuk wasn't as fast as Baek. He could see that in an instant.

“Ha!” Kang Shin-hyuk’s sword cut through all of the magic arrows in front of him as he rushed for Nathan. Even the arrows nearby that weren’t directly in the way of the sword were extinguished. Dozens more aimed for his back, but Shin-hyuk was prepared for that and dealt with it easily. That was what Nathan had been waiting for.

‘Nowhere to run!’ Nathan Bodin fired off more arrows as he activated the magic he was chanting. It was highly destructive magic that turned the floor into rocky thorns that pierced upward. It took a while to activate, but it did immense damage once it connected. However, the build-up for it was quite noticeable, and as an extension, if you had a good eye, you could avoid it. Therefore, it was common practice to use it after restraining the target. Otherwise, you could purposely force your opponent to move by activating it.

‘You can’t escape in the air!’ The moment Shin-hyuk floated into the air, Nathan activated his gravity magic. Shin-hyuk would get stuck in it, forcibly driven to the rocky thorns below. True to his title, the Magic Crown was chanting two high-ranking magic spells simultaneously to activate at different moments. It was a tremendous ability, but unfortunately, he had no chance to show it off.

“Kh!” This was because Kang Shin-hyuk broke through the thorns rising up from the arena and ran towards him. It was so fast that Nathan couldn’t grasp what had happened. Even though he knew Shin-hyuk had the ability to disperse magic, he couldn’t imagine he would be able to break through top-level magic.

“Crazy, he broke through!”

“The ground spikes of the Magic Crown!”

“It’s too fast. I can’t see his sword...!”

Of course, it wasn’t that simple for Kang Shin-hyuk. If it weren’t for his B+ rank regeneration, he wouldn’t have tried it. He imbued all his spiritual power into his wooden sword, backed by his trait to raise its performance beyond the limit. He backed that up with his muscles powered by his regeneration.

'I can't keep this up...but it's okay!' Kang Shin-hyuk hit the floor, reducing the distance between him and Nathan to less than one meter. Nathan's gravitational magic was incredible, but the range was limited to the area specified, so it was hard to readjust at the moment. Nathan tried to disperse Kang Shin-hyuk's power with his trait [Magic Interference] but soon realized that Shin-hyuk had no magic power.

"Huh?! Kahak!" As Nathan missed his chance to counterattack, Kang Shin-hyuk's wooden sword fell with enough force to split his skull. Of course, Nathan had the magic barrier to protect his body, but he was still hit in the head with a great force.

"Kh!" The Magic Crown crumpled with a groan, and Kang Shin-hyuk followed up his sword strike with a swift kick that propelled Nathan out of the arena. It wasn't intentional, but rather he moved instinctively in case he was pretending to be defeated. That appeared not to be the case, however, as he slid outside of the arena.

"...Huh?"

"Yes?" The duel had taken less than a minute. Everyone watching questioned their eyes. He had defeated the Magic Crown, one of the most talented students in Shinyoung, the head of the Magic Department. However, now he was passed out on the ground.

"No, what kind of...!" Gong Joonpyo muttered in thought. He had a similar expression on his face when he watched Do Woojin lose in the previous fight. Kang Shin-hyuk didn't notice any of it, however, as he watched the fainted Nathan Bodin.

'What was that? It was clear what he was trying to do...and the movement of his magic was so clear I just moved instinctively.' Kang Shin-hyuk had yet to realize his own growth, as he had been comparing himself to two high-rankers in Gromas for the past two months.

-Your spiritual power increased to the A+ rank. You've learned about the potential abilities hidden in your soul.

Of course, that wasn't the only reason he was able to read his opponent's movements so easily...but he had no way to know that.

Chapter 89 A Man Growing Too Fast (6)

The rumors that Kang Shin-hyuk had demolished the Magic Crown in a duel quickly spread through the school. It spread so badly that if Kang Shin-hyuk had been in Nathan Bodin's position, he would've dropped out. Of course, Shin-hyuk's popularity was ascending with enough speed to pierce the sky. It had done wonders to boost the entire Knight Department as well, putting them above the Magic Department. Douglas Payne, the Knight Crown, who had a favorable opinion of him after the advice he had received, even sent him a message saying well done. However, he had no memory of telling Douglas his email address.

There was one other person who was elated at the fact that Kang Shin-hyuk defeated the Magic Crown.

"Whoahahahahahaha!"

"It's the first time I've seen someone laugh so intensely, senior." Lee Na-hee was doubled over the desk in the club room, laughing hard enough to start crying. The image he had of her so far was completely destroyed.

"I, Nathan Bodin, was defeated by being clubbed in the head with a wooden sword! Hahaha!"

"What should I do...?" Seeing Lee Na-hee laugh so hard confirmed that she wasn't, in fact, Nathan's fiancée. As soon as he brought that up, her smile vanished from her face without a trace.

"Listen. Who would like such a guy?"

"He did accuse me..."

"Are all men like that? Clinging so annoyingly and pretending to be my boyfriend. A fiancée? What? I told him not to talk to me, and he was doing that behind my back?"

"I'm guessing that he was mistaken that he could have everything he wanted because of his power. But to be sure, guys like that aren't common." Lee Na-hee shrugged in response with a strange expression.

"I'm originally from an all-girl middle school. It's only after entering Shinyoung have I gotten any experience with guys."

“Oh.”

“You know Jihwa Girls’ Middle School in Seoul? I’m from there.”

“...Jihwa Girls’ Middle School? Isn’t that a private middle school?” From what he knew, it was a private school that allowed only exceptional students born to exceptional families. Most of their graduates ended up in places like Shinyoung. There were similar private schools for men, but Kang Shin-hyuk had no experience with them being an orphan.

“...Are you actually a rich daughter?” No, if you thought about it, wasn’t that natural for the granddaughter of the Great Chief? Still, it must mean that both her parents must be incredible superhumans as well.

“Well...something like that.” However, Lee Na-hee, who had been speaking energetically, suddenly closed her mouth at his question. Watching her face distort, he realized it would be best not to ask any questions about her family.

“But anyway, there was no problem with that senior.”

“Don’t lie. I hear you smacked him in the head then kicked him.” In the end, they had to mobilize Shinyoung’s world-class treatment facilities for the Magic Crown, but he was so hurt he couldn’t attend school for three days. However, it was officially done in a duel, and the 3rd year was taken down without any handicaps by a 1st-year.

“Actually, I could’ve fit in eighteen more combos in the meantime.”

“How’d you win so easily? Your opponent was the Magic Crown.”

“Would you believe me if I was honest?”

“Yes, though I might not understand it.” Lee Na-hee looked at him silently. As he caught her gaze, she tilted her head in concern.

“You’re in good condition, with good abilities and excellent metallurgy. Now you’re even handsome.”

“That’s just flattery.”

“No, it was just my sincere judgment. You’ll become very annoying in the future. All the women will run up to try and catch you.”

“Like how the Magic Crown bothered you?” She nodded frowning.

“This school...it’s like a paradise for beasts in human skin. They’re supposed to be building their strength to fight monsters, but all of them are immersed in useless things.” Kang Shin-hyuk didn’t disagree with her, having thought similarly to the school. In Shinyoung, power was revealed physically, and as the students were young, they couldn’t skillfully hide their desires.

“The same goes for popular voting. Why does that even matter for a school that raises superhumans? Because of that last year, Nathan Bodin began to chase me in earnest, and this year...”

“Senior, please calm down.” It was clear that she wasn’t happy about winning the top vote for the past two years in a row.

“He won’t be able to do so in the future.”

“I’m glad then...anyway, I apologize for the trouble.” Lee Na-hee brushed off her clothes and bowed her head to Kang Shin-hyuk. He decided to ask her something that was worrying him.

“Do you know why Nathan Bodin came at me this time?” He gave her a brief rundown on what he had said to him, as Lee Na-hee seemed to be genuinely sorrowful about it. His eyes narrowed as she confessed what had happened.

“Well, I jokingly told my classmates that I had a junior who pampered me...”

“I see!” At least 50% of it was her fault! Because she had said it so provocatively, Nathan had come to hate him!

“No, I was just talking to my class friends! Besides, you can pamper me as much as you want...”

“Reflect on it.”

“Yes, I will reflect on my actions. Sorry...” Lee Na-hee had no choice but to back down against Kang Shin-hyuk, who had access to materials she wanted.

Time passed quickly as Shinyoung’s trials continued. At the same time, election activities were beginning to take place. Baek, who was participating in

that as well as preparing for exams, was looking more and more exhausted each day.

“No matter how I look at it, you seem to be the worst off. Are there any problems with the election itself?”

“I just need to back the president, so I don’t need to bother with all the public stuff...”

“That’s not what I meant.” The most important position in the election was the president. The rest of the executives were determined by the president.

“Cheer up. Tell me if there’s anything I can do to help.”

“Please introduce me to a woman.”

“Do that by yourself.” Baek In-ha stretched his arms out with a resentful expression to grab onto Kang Shin-hyuk and shake him.

“You! I’m also close with the Empress! You’re also hanging out with Algiers, and Lee Na-hee alone in the club?! Are you kidding? Switch with me! SWITCH WITH ME!”

“Because of that, Baek, you’re not popular...” Kang Shin-hyuk stared at Baek, who was shaking him with a sad expression. Baek looked embarrassed at his serious mood and backed off.

“No, I wasn’t really angry...Shin-hyuk?”

“I’m not angry, I just had an idea.” Kang Shin-hyuk recalled his conversation with Lee Na-hee the day before, about the popularity vote.

‘What about Baek...?’ Baek was a handsome man, with considerable ability. But now his popularity had hit rock bottom, as every time he opened his mouth, it would drop. Was that what he had intended from the start? Did he reduce people’s opinion of him so he could move around easier?

‘It’s something he would do.’ Kang Shin-hyuk looked at Baek with astonishment he couldn’t hide. It would be great if that were his plan from the start. He would have to re-evaluate him.

“You...”

“No, I won’t tell you to introduce a girl to me now!” Baek drew close to Shin-hyuk, lowering his voice.

“So...” It might’ve been the first time he heard Baek being sincere.

“After the exams, let’s go hunting for a sister of my own, eh? Ouch!”

“...” Without a word, Kang Shin-hyuk reached out and slapped Baek.

A week later, the final exams began.

Kang Shin-hyuk passed his writing classes with ease. All that was left for him was the official battle that awaited him in the practical exam.

Chapter 90 A Man Growing Too Fast (7)

-The duel is over. First-year C Class student Kang Shin-hyuk is victorious and has earned additional points.

Kang Shin-hyuk hefted his wooden training sword as the broadcast sounded out in the second gymnasium. On the other side of him was a student from the Magic Department, who collapsed on the ground. He soon stood up and left with tears in his eyes.

“He could’ve said we fought hard.”

-That’s a funny joke, member.

“Yeah.” The Knight Department had won both the Rookie of the Year and the Two Crowns during the sports competition, causing the Magic Department to suffer great shame. That had ignited a competitive spirit in them for the final exams. They came out swinging against the Knight Department, with enough force that some of the students in the Knight Department couldn’t even demonstrate their abilities.

“But what should I say...no, it sounds too cocky, so I’ll stay quiet.”

-It was a clumsy attempt.

Kang Shin-hyuk nodded at the administrator’s words, in complete agreement. Because of the Hero Universe, Kang Shin-hyuk had a wealth of experience

now that his peers lacked. Now he could easily deal with enemies that had lost their cool, no matter how vehemently they attacked him.

“Not that I’m really any different, but I’m acting all proud.”

-2,000HP bonus for shy members!

“I’ll accept it for now, but I will continue to devote myself to growing stronger...”

-3,000HP bonus!

Sooner or later, it seemed like these bonuses would exceed 10,000 HP. He was beginning to grow concerned for the balance of the Hero Universe. Kang Shin-hyuk returned his wooden sword and left the battlefield. Since all five of his battles had ended in victory, his ranking would increase. He felt like he might even receive some additional points.

‘I think this will make up for my grade during midterms.’ Now that he had acquired the title of Rookie King and entered the Royal Class, it wasn’t actually something he needed to worry about. But he was the type to give it his all no matter what. Besides, it could only help him in the future if he continued to build his position.

-Is that the end of the exams?

“Yeah, I’m free.” The next semester would be busy with gate practice and events like school festivals and exchange meetings, so he planned on relaxing a bit. The only thing left was the student council election, then a month and a half of summer vacation awaited him.

‘I don’t know if Baek is doing well.’ After the exam, Baek had said he was heading off to a hunting trip. Kang Shin-hyuk felt a bit alienated from him, but he had his own secrets to keep from him so he couldn’t judge.

‘When we’re both free, we should go play somewhere.’ Kang Shin-hyuk headed straight to the Blackwood Training Center once the teachers dismissed him. Eleanor had asked him to talk to her, but he was too busy with exams to find time sooner. He was hoping to battle her again, so there was no reason for him to refuse.

“Hello, Shin-hyuk.”

“Hello, senior.” Eleanor had arrived just before him and was already drinking tea with a pleased expression. He didn’t see Karen anywhere; she probably hadn’t finished her own exams yet.

“Congratulations on your victory.”

“It just concluded.”

“Huh...the updates are in real-time.” Eleanor let out a short laugh at Kang Shin-hyuk, tilting his head. He looked at his stick; a hologram popped out from it with a page listing names.

“Is this the 1st year ranking?”

“It was updated after the matches. You’re sixth.” Eleanor idly thought out loud that maybe in the next exam, he would contend with the top five students. Yuta Mitsu’s name was up there, who was his opponent in the final match.

“Karen’s not there.”

“She’s still fighting. Oh, now they’re concluded. She’s in seventh, so I’ll have to congratulate her.” Karen was seventh now. Even if she had entered the royal class using her connections, she still had the skills appropriate for that position.

“Do Woojin...if he wins against his opponent...”

“He’s in fourth place.”

“I guess he won.” Do Woojin was ranked fourth. He had a high ranking from the start, so he had been matched against other high-rankers.

“I’m envious.”

“Hah.”

“Why are you laughing?” Eleanor burst into laughter at Kang Shin-hyuk’s idle thoughts. As he looked back at her with a puzzled expression, she stared back at him.

“You’re paying attention to the freshman rankings at your level.”

“That’s, but...” In fact, the only other freshman who could properly fight Kang Shin-hyuk was Baek In-ha. No, even if you expanded that to the whole school, there were only a few students who could.

“Always keep your vision wide.” Eleanor spoke quietly as she met his eyes. They were filled with a resolve that made her seem bigger than she was.

“It’s a waste of time to compare yourself to the students at this school. You can look further beyond and move.”

“Are you doing that too?” She laughed quietly. He didn’t think he needed to ask. Her abilities had been at the top of the school long before she became the captain.

“Thank you for the advice, senior Eleanor.” Kang Shin-hyuk finally nodded.

“Well, I have a suggestion...”

“Yeah?” It was then she suddenly avoided his gaze and drew in a long breath.

“Would you like to accompany me on vacation? Dungeon exploration, that is.”

“Dungeon? Did you get permission?”

“The school has given the Wyvern Knights some discretion for their training...we can make a reservation right away.”

“What about the others?”

“It would be nice if they joined, but they are weaker than us. We will be alone.” What about the Knight Crown? He was stronger than anyone else in the school, but he knew it would be rude to ask. It wasn’t like he liked him either.

“Uh...no, wait. Just us?”

“It is a great opportunity...personally, I want to fight together with you.”

“You’re speaking quite blatantly again.” Kang Shin-hyuk had been the one who told her she should gather her forces inside the school. She had even asked him if he could be on her side. He had thought he had refused firmly at the time, but now...it was the chance at a dungeon with Eleanor. He planned to work with Shin Eunah over the vacation, but she couldn’t always be there.

Moreover, exploring dungeons with other types of fighters would be a valuable experience for him.

“It’s a good opportunity, so I’d appreciate it.”

“Good.” Eleanor squeezed her small fists, letting out a quiet shout.

“But isn’t it a problem if we enter the dungeon alone?”

“Believe.”

“Well, it’s not a problem of believing...”

“Believe.” Kang Shin-hyuk was pushed by her firm voice and eventually nodded along.

-Fox...

He also decided to pretend like he didn’t see the administrator’s message appearing right in front of his eyes.

“Oh.” It was afternoon now. Lee Na-hee was listening to Kang Shin-hyuk as she chewed on sugar cubes.

“That’s our Ellie.”

“I think you might be misunderstanding.” Lee Na-hee had a close relationship with Eleanor, but she might’ve not grasped her true identity. If she had, she would have realized the reason Eleanor had offered for him to join in the dungeon exploration. However, Lee Na-hee pushed on as if she wasn’t interested in what he was thinking.

“Dating, at night, all alone in the dungeon? She’s practically begging you.”

“Senior, hasn’t your personality changed a lot?” In the first place, did she always have such an uncle-like personality? Lee Na-hee clicked her tongue and threateningly gestured at him.

“It’s because I was uncomfortable back then. Things have improved a little now.”

“That’s not helping it.” With a sigh, Kang Shin-hyuk hung up his jacket.

“I’m not talking about that kind of stuff.”

“Junior, you should be careful with her. Don’t rush in just because she wants you to.”

“I know, don’t worry.” Kang Shin-hyuk responded politely as he opened the door to the club.

“Let’s finish it today.”

“Okay. Oh, before that.”

“Hm?”

“The artifact contest.” Lee Na-hee put her stick in front of his face. A message with the date of the contest was displayed on it.

“This Friday? That soon?!”

“Yup. They’ll announce the grand prize then too.”

“You’re acting like it’s natural.”

“Of course. But it’s a waste we couldn’t submit what we’re working on now.”

“We don’t even know if it’ll turn out good.”

“A waste, a waste…” She grumbled as they entered the workshop. In front of them were tens of meters of a long, translucent metallic thread. A very small magic circle was engraved across it, so thin that it was difficult to see with the naked eye. Imbued inside of it was a sharply refined magical power and a warm spiritual power.

Only one step remained until the completion of Kang Shin-hyuk’s new armament.