

Chapter 2421

Losing Control

Han Sen felt a chill. This was no longer funny.

Ning Yue's mental endurance was almost as good as Han Sen's, but Ning Yue had been dramatically affected by the green sword. Han Sen didn't know what to do with the changes that were occurring.

Ning's Yue body, his genes, and even his personality had undergone a shift.

Han Sen couldn't believe that Ning Yue now dressed entirely in pink and his personality had suddenly become so very sensitive. He was very cowardly now, and he had lost all of his decisiveness. He didn't look like Ning Yue anymore.

Han Sen even wondered if Ning Yue's soul had been taken by a woman.

"What is up with this xenogeneic space? Why are there so many weird things going on?" Han Sen frowned, and he subconsciously stepped farther away from the stone. He did not want to end up like Ning Yue.

The excavation of the stone fields continued. It took another seven or eight days for something strange to happen again. Someone managed to dig up a big rock that was leaking blood and had a hand coming out of it. The hand managed to break free and kill a dozen workers. It didn't stop until Night Wind appeared and killed it.

Han Sen's experiments were still going on, too. Four groups had been affected thus far. They had all leveled up once, but only by one level. They didn't level up after that, and no one else had leveled down, either.

Now that Han Sen could confirm the effective radius of the stone, he could mark out a danger zone around the warehouse. But he didn't call the ten teams back in. They still remained in their places, continuing the test.

For now, no one could be sure if the stone might begin acting differently. Either way, the experiment wasn't going to stop.

Han Sen didn't enter the warehouse to look at the rock, but it seemed like the stone was benefitting everyone who got close to it. But after the one anomaly of what happened to Red Cloud, Han Sen wasn't going to risk being careless.

Just like usual, Han Sen called the ten teams over. After questioning them, he planned on going back to his room to eat with Bao'er. But Falling Leaf informed Han Sen that Miss Mirror wanted to see him in her office.

“Miss Mirror has something important enough to call me in now?” From what Han Sen could tell, the digging job was being shoved forward as fast as possible. And they kept encountering problems. Miss Mirror had gone to the stone fields on her own, so if she had come back seeking Han Sen, he surmised something must have happened.

Han Sen went to Miss Mirror’s office as he was instructed to. He knocked and entered. When he saw Miss Mirror, his greeting died on his lips.

“You...” Miss Mirror had ended up like Red Cloud. She didn’t have that scary, mysterious presence anymore. Her lifeforce was weak. She was like a King now, that was certain. She was no longer deified.

“Yes, I have become King class.” Miss Mirror looked calm, but Han Sen could still see the profound sadness behind her eyes.

It looked like downgrading from being a deified being had been quite the gut-punch for Miss Mirror. He respected the strength of her mind, but even a strong person like her would be shaken like this.

Han Sen went silent. Then he looked at Miss Mirror and asked, “What can I do?”

He knew Miss Mirror wouldn’t ask him to come and see her for no reason. There were also limits to what she would tell a fake prince like him.

Miss Mirror’s eyes were steady. “Reinforcements are on the way. It will take them two weeks to arrive, and we are losing control of what is happening here. It has escaped my grasp, and something even worse might soon occur.”

Han Sen’s face looked glum. For a strong woman like Miss Mirror to make such a confession meant that things were really bad. It was almost unimaginable. Things must have been far worse than Han Sen himself expected.

“Why don’t we just stop digging for now and leave this place? We can wait for backup to get here,” Han Sen suggested quietly.

Miss Mirror shook her head. “It is too late. Before I left the stone field, we dug up another statue.”

Han Sen froze.

“A second statue like the one in the warehouse?” He asked, staring at Miss Mirror.

“It was different. This time, it was a genuine statue. It has a thousand eyes and hands, and each eye has four pupils.” When Miss Mirror spoke of it, her breathing quickened. Her emotions were clearly still unstable.

“Because of that statue, you became King class?” Han Sen asked.

Miss Mirror nodded, and then she shook her head. “Within half an hour after digging up the statue, I dropped from being deified. But Night Wind, who was inspecting the statue with me, was fine. The other workers were fine, too. So, I cannot confirm that I fell because of the statue.”

"In that case, we really should move. We should abandon these efforts, stop excavation, and get out of here," Han Sen said.

Miss Mirror shook her head. "I told you, it is too late. Look at my eyes."

"What the hell happened to your eyes?" Han Sen demanded. When he looked closer into Miss Mirror's eyes, what he saw shocked him.

Miss Mirror once had beautiful eyes that looked like phoenixes. Her pupils had been black, but now they were red. And furthermore, the pupils were split in half. The four red pupils were a deeply unsettling sight.

"Are those pupils similar to the statue's?" Han Sen asked.

Miss Mirror nodded. "Everyone who saw the creature, including me and Night Wind, look like this. If we stray too far from the statue, we'll act like addicts who need a fix. The further away from the statue we go, the stronger the feeling grows. Our desire to dig in the stone fields becomes irresistible. You have to keep digging to scratch that itch. The only way to satisfy the urge is to plow. It is the only thing that makes us feel better."

Han Sen's face looked gloomy. Everything about this place was way too scary. Even deifieds were affected without knowing how or why. Han Sen couldn't ensure his own safety in that place.

"What can I do for you?" Han Sen asked again. The situation was beyond everyone's control. He wasn't sure that he could be of any help.

If he could have chosen, he would have left the xenogeneic space. The further away he got, the better.

Miss Mirror started to answer, but suddenly, the office's doors were banged open. Night Wind rushed in.

Han Sen looked at Night Wind's eyes. His pupils had turned red, and he too had a case of the double-trouble pupils.

"What happened?" Miss Mirror asked, looking at Night Wind.

"We unearthed stone doors in the stone field. They're huge, as if they lead to some giant, ancient city," Night Wind explained in a strained voice.

2422 Scarlet Eye

Night Wind's face was tight and worried, and he had also brought a video back with him.

When that video was played, Han Sen understood Night Wind's expression.

The beginning of the video showed a stone path, which must have been the road that had been dug up.

Han Sen didn't know how they chose where to start digging, but it clearly wasn't a random decision. They had somehow figured out exactly where to start digging.

The Hell had controlled large-scale dig sites. When Miss Mirror and her people arrived, they quickly reduced the scale of the operations. Now excavation was being conducted in three locations, and the one in the middle had to have been where they began.

As the video went on, it revealed many complicated stone paths that branched off until the stone road opened up to reveal a large room. There, Han Sen found himself looking at the statue Miss Mirror had mentioned.

It was ten meters tall. It wasn't very big when compared to some of the statues Han Sen had seen before, but it was pitch-black, and it had the same texture as the rocks around it.

The statue featured a man sitting with his legs crossed. His arms were crossed, as well, making an X shape. The eyes of the man were just as Miss Mirror had described. There were two pupils in each, and they were red.

Behind the statue were many arms and hands. They formed together to create the large shape of a torch. Every hand also featured a red eye with two pupils.

Looking at the statue was disconcerting. It was like there was an endless tide of weird eyes were staring out of the screen. Han Sen was only looking at them through the video, but even so, he got goosebumps. A chill passed over Miss Mirror and Night Wind as well.

The video didn't hang around the statue for long. It moved forward, revealing something that was even more surprising.

Beyond the statue, the stone path vanished into a cave. It was a rough hole that looked like it had been dug by bare hand or claws.

The walls of the stone tunnel were smeared here and there with blood. Claws and talons were carved into the surface of the tunnel. As the video progressed, more and more blood was revealed.

The blood slowly took over every surface, turning the black cave red. The sight made Han Sen's stomach crawl.

"That cave couldn't have been dug by hand, right?" Han Sen couldn't help but ask.

Although the Extreme King didn't give much respect to the workers, they only hired people who were at least Marquises. Those people were considered strong within their own races. Their weapons might not have been legendary treasures, but they should have been decent. Even if they didn't bring their own tools, the Extreme King would have provided them with xenogeneic treasures. They wouldn't have had to use their hands to dig that tunnel.

But based on the marks and scratches left behind, the tunnel was obviously the work of claws and hands. It hadn't been dug out with tools.

Miss Mirror and Night Wind looked at the video with perplexed stares. They didn't answer Han Sen's question.

Han Sen knew it was true even without their confirmation, though. He looked at the video for a bit longer, and he soon saw a dead Marquis with the head of a cow. Instead of hands, there was only a twisted mass of gore at the end of the man's arms. Bits of bone protruded through the scraped flesh.

Seeing this scene, Han Sen couldn't stop his imagination from replaying what had happened. The cow-headed man had dug frantically with his hands, injuring its fingers on the hard stone. And yet, it didn't stop. It kept on digging and digging with frenzied energy. Eventually, the man's hands had been ground to nubs. He had bled out and died.

The video didn't stop there, and the gristly sight replayed itself over and over. Han Sen saw more and more dead bodies scattered throughout the cave.

They were all in the same position. They leaned forward, pressing their destroyed hands against the walls. Some had shredded their palms, whereas others were missing entire arms.

Despite having died, they still maintained their digging positions. Their faces looked very passionate as if they were excited about what they were doing, but amidst that passion, there was also the presence of fear. It was a terror that lay deep in their bones.

Han Sen couldn't explain all the emotions he saw etched across those dead faces, but his stomach clenched and a cold sweat beaded across his back.

The eyes of the dead workers were all open, exposing their dual red pupils.

The stone path was no longer really a path. It was like a long grave dug out with blood. So many Dukes and Marquises had died up and down that stone path. And the further the path went, the worse the sights were.

At the end of the video was a stone door. Just as Night Wind said, the double door looked like the entrance to a city. Both sides of the door were crimson, like they'd been made of solidified blood. There were also many semi-circular marks across the door—scrapes left behind by fingernails.

The door was ten meters high, and because they had dug right up to the surface of the door, only rock surrounded the doorframe. It was impossible to see what was beyond those doors.

But what lay before the door gave Han Sen chills.

Many of the workers were stretched out before the door like people trying to escape from the demons of hell. Their dead arms were extended painfully in front of them, trying to reach some non-existent salvation. Their nails were broken and their bones were chipped. The blood on their hands had dyed the door, but none of them had been able to open the door.

The workers had lasted so long, but they had all died before this door. Blood pooled around the bodies before the evil door. The door stood solid and unmoving, like the entrance to hell itself.

Night Wind's face looked terrible. "They are all dead. No one is left alive, and they had all gone insane by the end. They just kept digging and digging. Those rocks are hard, and they are incredibly difficult to dig, even with tools. When they used their fingers to dig, they began bleeding quite quickly. But when the blood touched the stone, it was almost as if the stone softened. They could dig it up, but it still hurt them. They kept digging until they bled out."

Night Wind's voice trembled, even though he was a deity that had witnessed many life and death scenarios. What he had seen would give even him nightmares.

"This place is cursed." Han Sen felt sick. He had the urge to just grab Bao'er and flee.

Although they had the red bird with them, there was something that was simply wrong about this place. Even Miss Mirror, who was a strong deity, had been affected. There was every chance the red bird might not escape whatever power was doing these horrible things.

"Run! We must run! We cannot stay in this horrible place any longer," Han Sen decided. He was going to leave this place, no matter what. He would leave, even if Miss Mirror sought to stop him.

"Your eyes!" Miss Mirror suddenly whispered in dread, looking at Han Sen's eyes. Fear filled her face.

"What happened to my eyes?" Han Sen's heart jumped. He knew this was bad.

With no hesitation, Han Sen waved his hand to cast a water mirror so he could look at himself.

At that moment, Han Sen felt like fear had sunk deep into his bones. His black eyes had turned red, and furthermore, a fissure was running down the center of each pupil. The circular pupils became gourd-shaped, and they were slowly splitting in half.

2423 Contagion

"I've been infected with whatever this is!" Han Sen realized grimly, and a stark chill rolled through his body.

He had no idea how or when he contracted this creepy condition. Until Miss Mirror pointed it out, he hadn't even realized that the strange power had managed to sneak into his body and infect his eyes.

Miss Mirror and Night Wind stared at him in astonishment. Han Sen had never visited the stone path, nor had he looked at the statue with a thousand eyes in person. But now, there was no denying that each of his eyes had two red pupils. That could only mean one thing: the power was contagious.

If it really was contagious, then that meant it was game over for every person in their camp. Even the reinforcements heading their way would be at risk.

Han Sen reacted instantly. He turned around and ran out of the office, then he grabbed the guard outside and peered deeply into the man's eyes.

The guard was about to shake him loose, but Miss Mirror and Night Wind came out to stop him.

“His pupils haven’t changed.” Han Sen looked into the eyes of a few more guards. Their eyes were perfectly normal.

The next second, Han Sen pulled out his phone and called Falling Leaf’s number. It rang twice, and then Falling Leaf picked up the phone. She only answered the voice call, though, so there was no video.

“Falling Leaf, is Bao’er nearby?” Han Sen asked.

“Yes,” Falling Leaf answered.

“Turn on your video chat,” Han Sen said.

“Why?” Falling Leaf asked without turning on the video.

“Just do what he told you to,” Miss Mirror said.

“Okay,” Falling Leaf answered. She turned on her video chat, and her image appeared on Han Sen’s screen.

Falling Leaf’s hair was a bit messy, and her clothing was misbuttoned. Han Sen had no idea what she had been doing with Bao’er all alone.

But that wasn’t important. Han Sen stared at her pupils and noticed they were normal. The colors were still the same, and there was only one pupil in each eye. Han Sen sagged a little in relief.

“Dad!” Bao’er was sitting on the sofa, holding a pair of dice in her hands. Her voice sounded so sweet as she called out to Han Sen.

Bao’er’s eyes looked normal. That made him feel even safer. “Bao’er, stay in the room and play with Falling Leaf. Don’t go anywhere, and wait for me there, okay?”

“Sure, Dad.” Bao’er nodded.

Han Sen turned his attention back to Falling Leaf. “Falling Leaf, keep the door shut and don’t go anywhere. Don’t let anyone in, either, unless it is me.”

Falling Leaf didn’t answer. She looked at Miss Mirror, who was still standing next to Han Sen.

“Do as he says,” Miss Mirror said calmly.

“Sure.” Falling Leaf nodded in agreement.

Han Sen turned off the phone and spoke to Miss Mirror. “Find someone with unchanged eyes. We need to conduct a test.”

Miss Mirror looked at Night Wind. Night Wind vanished without a word. A short time later, Night Wind re-appeared in the office again, pushing two people in front of him. They were two of the workers that Han Sen had positioned within range of the stone statue. One of them was Ning Yue, and the other was the man he had been teamed with.

Because Ning Yue had been farthest from the warehouse, he and his partner were the first people that Night Wind had run into.

“You stay here.” Han Sen pushed Ning Yue out the door of the office and closed it. He pulled the Duke before the computer and restarted the video. He made sure that the Duke watched the entire thing.

Han Sen, Miss Mirror, and Night Wind stared into the Duke’s eyes. After the Duke saw the statue with a thousand eyes and a thousand arms, the man’s pupils soon began to turn red. Seconds later, the color had deepened to a rich scarlet. Then the pupils started to split. In minutes, the Duke had red eyes just like Han Sen.

Han Sen didn’t need to say anything. They all understood what was happening. Merely looking at the videotape containing an image of that statue could infect them with whatever cursed power that structure contained.

Han Sen opened the door and let Ning Yue inside the room. His eyes were still fine, and there were no new changes there. He was able to confirm that when Han Sen asked.

“No matter how you see that statue, you will be infected by its power.” Han Sen frowned. He used a few of his powers to explore his own eyes and figure out why they had changed, but there was nothing he could learn. As far as Han Sen could stretch his senses, the eyes felt normal. They didn’t seem to be under the influence of any foreign power.

Even the Dongxuan Area couldn’t determine what had happened to his eyes. It was like his eyes were the same as usual.

But Han Sen could feel the same urges that Miss Mirror had described. He had a sudden impulse to head for the stone field. It was like an old smoker who hadn’t smoked all day; he desperately wanted to go out and buy a pack.

Luckily, Han Sen had a stable mind. He was able to resist the impulse. If his mind had been weak, he would have run into the fields already.

The Duke screamed. His eyes turned red, and he started to gasp. He made an unnatural, swallowing sound, then turned to rush out of the office.

Night Wind grabbed the Duke and pinned him to the ground. He used a substance chain to keep him locked in place.

The Duke fought like mad as he tried to shake the substance chain loose. His entire body shook like a junkie in need of a fix. His tears and snot began to drip onto the floor.

“What do we do?” Han Sen asked, looking at Miss Mirror and Night Wind.

Things were going bad very quickly, and this wasn’t something they could run away from. Complaining about the situation would be useless. They had to figure out a way to get free of this mess.

“Maybe our answers lie beyond those stone doors. We might have to go there to find a solution to our current problems,” Night Wind said.

“Have you tried destroying the statue with a thousand eyes and a thousand hands?” Han Sen asked.

“I have tried to break it, but I was unsuccessful. That statue is harder than the average black rock. Our powers cannot damage it,” Night Wind said.

“It looks like the stone door is the only way for us to proceed, then. The urges are getting stronger, and even with our powerful wills, we won’t last forever. We can’t wait for the reinforcements to get here. Let’s head to the doors while we still have control of ourselves.” When Miss Mirror made the decision, she didn’t sound hesitant. Her voice was firm and controlled.

“Sure. Let’s go to that stone door and take a look.” Han Sen nodded. He wanted to see the thousand hands and thousand eyes statue, too.

They didn’t have any evidence that the infection could spread person to person if the video wasn’t involved, but at this point, who knew how the infection might be transmitted? If Bao’er and Ning Yue caught whatever this was, that would be bad.

Plus, Ning Yue was already infected with something. It had become hard to tell if he was a man or a woman, and his personality had changed radically as well. The Ning Yue that Han Sen had known was gone.

Now that Miss Mirror had made her decision, she immediately took action. Han Sen, Night Wind, and that Duke followed her to the stone fields.

Red Cloud had fallen to King class, so they left her behind at the camp. She hadn’t seen the statue yet, so for the moment, her eyes remained normal. Instead of coming with them and putting herself at risk, Miss Mirror instructed her to take charge of the camp while they were gone.

2424 Du God City

The stone path was exactly the same as the video depicted. It was unremarkable in the beginning, and Han Sen and the others reached the statue with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes.

But Han Sen could clearly feel that the closer he got to the statue, the stronger the strange impulses became.

When Han Sen laid his own eyes on the disturbing statue, the feeling was strong enough to make even him shake.

As the countless eyes seemed to examine him, Han Sen felt as if a ghost was actually staring at him. The feeling was a hundred times greater than what he felt when he had watched the video. It felt like an endless stream of ghosts was going to come right out of the hands to devour him.

Han Sen activated his Purple-Eye Butterfly, hoping to view the secrets behind the statue.

The purple pupil claimed Han Sen's eye, becoming four spinning petals. Han Sen took a deep breath and turned his gaze on the statue.

At that moment, Han Sen felt like he was seeing a demon from hell itself. Before he got a good look at it, pain lanced through his right eye. A wet feeling slicked over his palms, as if his hands were covered in blood.

Han Sen's face changed. He forced himself to continue looking at the statue, but then he realized that the sight was about to blind him. He jerked his gaze away, not daring to turn back toward the statue with his Purple-Eye Butterfly still activated.

"Are you okay?" Miss Mirror and Night Wind looked at Han Sen.

"I used a trick of the eyes to look at the statue, but it almost blinded me." Han Sen lowered his hands, which he had used to cover his face. His eyes were red and dripping with bloody tears.

Luckily, Han Sen's blood was crystallized. Otherwise, he would have lost so much blood that he would have died.

"Stop looking. And don't use your eye skill to examine it again. If my guess is correct, this statue is related to some sort of eye god. Its powers are directly linked to vision. If you use an eye skill to look at it, that's like asking for death," Night Wind said.

Han Sen nodded and remained silent. He followed Miss Mirror down the path.

After moving around the statue, they came to the stone cave that had been smeared with blood. It looked just as it had in the video, with more blood and gore appearing the farther they walked. Eventually, they found the door at the end of the cavern.

The Duke that was bound by substance chains screamed again. He tried his hardest to rush to the stone door. If Night Wind hadn't held the Duke back, he would have smashed into the door hard enough to burst open his own skull.

The stone door was shut tight, and they had no idea what lay beyond it. Han Sen didn't dare to use his Purple-Eye Butterfly again, though, so he had to inspect it with his own eyesight.

The urge to go to the stone door had grown stronger, but luckily, the three of them had strong wills. They wouldn't lose control of themselves like the Duke.

But the urges grew stronger as time went by, and it was only a matter of time until their wills snapped. It would take a god to hold back these impulses forever.

The stone door had no lock or handle. It was shut tightly, almost seamlessly, and that was that. Countless Dukes had tried to dig into it to no avail. The door had been impervious to their physical attacks.

Night Wind and Miss Mirror swapped glances, and then Night Wind started to gather up power. They wanted to follow their original plan of forcing the stone door open.

Han Sen stood next to Miss Mirror. His right eye was still red and swollen, and occasional sharp jabs of pain still radiated from it.

Night Wind moved his substance chain, which hovered over the ground like a black sheet. Answering his call, it slipped into his hand and manifested as a black sword.

When Han Sen saw the sword that Night Wind was holding, he noted that it gave him the same feeling as looking at an empty night sky. The powers it contained were unpredictable.

Night Wind's eyes froze. The black sword in his hand struck the middle of the stone door, and the swirling darkness slammed against the door's surface like a dark horizon touching the ground. He struck the door repeatedly with the full force of his substance chain, but every time the darkness came in contact with the door, the darkness shattered like a crashing wave. All the while, the stone door refused to budge. Night Wind's power could incinerate an entire planet, but the door seemed unaffected.

The rocks around were all broken by the dark blade, revealing the edges of the doorframe, but the door did not open. They could, however, now glimpse what surrounded the door beyond the doorframe. The door was set into a city tower.

The city tower was built with black bricks. The bricks looked a lot like the black stone that was everywhere in the tunnel, but they were much harder. Even Night Wind's chain power could only leave scrapes across them. The scrapes he left behind looked like cat scratches.

As the power of Night Wind's sword tore away more of the black rock surrounding the door, Han Sen saw three words engraved above the door. Han Sen recognized those three words. They were written in the common language of the universe.

"Du God City,"

"Du God City! This is Du God City?!" Night Wind screamed. Even Miss Mirror looked dumbfounded.

"What is Du God City?" Han Sen asked Night Wind. He had never heard of this place before.

Night Wind's emotions had risen until he was almost hysterical. He lost all the composure a deified individual should have carried, but he didn't seem to notice. His eyes blazed as he stared at the three words above the door. "The legends say that the Ancient God had a powerful city in ancient times. That place was called Du God City. Because the people of the Ancient God were born deified, they couldn't level up further. Those who went to Du God City, however, often had the opportunity to rise above the deified level."

"All this time, everyone thought it was just a legend. No one could confirm that Du God City actually existed. If this is the real Du God City of the Ancient God, then that explains why so many weird things have happened to us. And perhaps there is a chance for us to become stronger here."

Night Wind looked at the door very excitedly. He seemed to have forgotten the danger that they were in. Han Sen couldn't blame Night Wind for his elation, though. Even when Sacred had been in power, not many elites had been able to reach the last step.

Even the horrendously powerful Ancient Water God hadn't been able to rise above his deified status. Instead, he ended up as blood rain that moisturized the world.

For the vast majority of deified elites, going through the geno hall to become a god spirit had a practically microscopic chance of success.

If Du God City was a method in which one could become a god spirit, that would be tempting for any deified.

Deified elites were still just people, and they could get sick and die. They were not immortal; even Sacred Leader had been searching for the key to immortality. It was natural for deified elites to want this.

"If Du God City can turn people into god spirits, then Ancient God wouldn't be one of the three most powerful races," Han Sen said with a frown.

Miss Mirror looked at the three words and said, "Du God City is just a legend. This city has the words Du God City written on it, but there's no proof that it's actually the city of our legends. If it was the real Du God City, why would it be buried here? We need to think about this. We need to be careful."

2425 Broken City

"We can't get into the city. Talking about it is useless," Han Sen said, looking at the undamaged city door.

Night Wind's power was strong, and it far exceeded Han Sen's capabilities. Han Sen didn't stand a chance of opening Du God City's door if Night Wind had failed, and Miss Mirror had fallen to King class. They really didn't seem to have any options.

Night Wind's heart jumped. His sword of darkness slashed again, but this time, he wasn't targeting the door itself. He turned his attention to the rocks all around, planning to dig out the entire tower that the door was set into.

Han Sen and Miss Mirror stepped back and watched. Since the door was impassable, they couldn't think of any alternatives. Night Wind's plan was a desperate, last-ditch effort, not a well thought out strategy.

The dark substance chains kept whipping into the black rocks, and the rocks were shattered and swept away. More and more sections of the tower were revealed.

Han Sen didn't know how many floors the tower had once possessed, and that was because the tower had actually been cut in half. It looked like the whole building had been slashed by an enormous sword. The stone pillars in the front were all chopped off. The pillars fell smoothly from tall to short, as if it had been a very tidy cut.

The stone pillars were thicker than a water tank. There were multiple lines of pillars, and each line contained a dozen of them. The three of them stared up at the broken tower with wide eyes.

Night Wind wasn't one of the top deified in the universe, but he wasn't weak by any measurement. Attacks backed by his full deified power were only able to leave small scratches on the city's bricks. Cutting a single brick would be far beyond his abilities.

With that in mind, it was difficult to imagine the sort of power that would have been required to cut clean through this entire tower. Even thinking about it was frightening.

In the beginning, Han Sen wasn't very hopeful that they would be able to enter Du God City from above. Surely such a large and powerful city would have some sort of bai sema or restrictive power in place. This wasn't the sort of place that you could just climb over a wall to get into.

But now, the tower was broken, and the restrictive properties of the place must have long been abandoned. That meant gaining access would be easier than Han Sen had imagined.

The upper half of the city tower was missing. Night Wind slashed the rocks in various directions, but he couldn't find the other half of the tower.

The bottom half of the tower was filled with rubble, and so Night Wind swung his dark substance chain. He moved the stones out of the way, clearing a path so the three of them could enter the tower.

There was little to see in the half of the tower that remained. A statue had once stood in the tower, but the upper half had been sliced through and taken away with the top half of the tower. The part of the statue that remained appeared to be sitting, and its legs were crossed. The three of them couldn't tell what sort of statue it might have been originally.

The shattered remnants of stone beasts lay scattered around the statue. They had fallen, breaking across the floor. Judging by where they now lay, it was clear that they had once stood guard on either side of the statue.

"It looks like a pretty savage battle was once fought here, but if that is true, how come we haven't found the corpses of the creatures that must have died here?" Han Sen asked with a confused tone of voice.

"Maybe we have. We've dug up a few severed arms, remember? Those limbs were ridiculously dangerous. Even once they had been amputated, the arms still managed to kill many of our workers. That certainly shows how scary the people involved in this battle must have been. Even their limbs possess indestructible power," Night Wind said.

Miss Mirror frowned. She looked toward Du God City and said, "If this is really Du God City, then this must be the sacred place for the Ancient God. Even the Extreme King have believed that Du God City was just a legend, not a real place that actually existed. The Ancient God have protected this city very seriously. If other creatures wished to attack Du God City, then the Ancient God surely would have fought back. But I've never heard any stories of the Ancient God having a battle on this scale."

After pausing, Miss Mirror said, "Based on what we're seeing, this is a ruin of a god spirit's battleground, probably from the very first era. How did the Ancient God claim it? The Ancient God might have the word 'god' in their title, but they are not actually gods."

"Maybe we're making assumptions about what happened here. This might not be the ruins of a god spirit's battleground," Night Wind said.

"Even if this isn't, a fight like this must have shocked the entire universe. There is no way no one knows about this." Miss Mirror shook her head.

Han Sen thought and said, "Maybe Du God City really did exist, and it was just a forbidden place that was sacred to the Ancient God. But this city was already destroyed in the very first era. Maybe that is why no one has actually seen Du God City; maybe the Ancient God themselves don't even know where to find it."

"That is possible. The Ancient God and the Very High are always so secretive and mysterious. Those two races already existed back in the Sacred era, and they were already very powerful. But they were suppressed by Sacred back then. They weren't as famous as they are right now." Miss Mirror nodded in thought.

"If Du God City already existed in the era of the gods, and it was destroyed at some point afterward, does that mean there are secrets here that are associated with what it takes to become a god?" Night Wind sounded very excited.

Han Sen shook his head. "Maybe not. For Du God City to be destroyed like this, it probably means that the Ancient God failed. Maybe the secret inside Du God City was already stolen? This might just be an empty city now."

Night Wind understood this line of reasoning, but he still held hopes of plundering Du God City. He said, "No way. There must be something inside this city. Otherwise, why are other powers trying to fight their way into the city?"

"It's hard to say," Han Sen said quietly.

In truth, Han Sen also thought that there was something inside Du God City. But that item could be something very different from the secret to becoming a god. Perhaps some frightening people had survived the grand battle and were now deliberately luring people inside.

Han Sen had a bad feeling about this place. They had found a stone that could turn a deified into a King, and a statue that had a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. Whatever was inside this creepy place, it wouldn't be very nice.

"Let's head inside for now," Miss Mirror told Night Wind. Night Wind went back to breaking up and hauling out the rubble.

The whole of Du God City was buried under an avalanche of stone. Even the structures and streets were all buried by rock. If Night Wind and the others wanted to proceed, they would have to move the stones.

Luckily, all the rocks in the city had already been reduced to shattered rubble. There weren't big chunks like what they had found outside the door. Because of that, they didn't need tools to break up the rocks into smaller chunks. They just had to haul out the shattered stones.

With Night Wind's powers, moving mountains wouldn't have been difficult, so hauling away some rubble was really easy. He didn't dare use his power to remove all the rubble, though. He was afraid of breaking something valuable buried under the stone. Also, on the chance that something was still alive and sleeping within the city, he didn't want to wake it up.

After the experiences that they'd had in recent days, even a deified elite like Night Wind would treat Du God City with an appropriate level of respect. He wouldn't attempt anything stupid.

Night Wind guided his dark substance chains, sliding aside rocks that were a dozen meters wide. After going past the tower, they found themselves in a plaza. Night Wind kept digging, removing one hundred meters of stone before coming to a stop. He stared at the place he had just dug up.

2426 Big Sword

Han Sen and Miss Mirror carefully followed Night Wind's gaze. Nearby, there was a big sword sticking partially out of the rubble.

The sword's handle was one foot wide and two feet tall. They couldn't tell how long the blade was because the blade was plunged deep into the ground of the plaza. Only eighty centimeters of it could be seen.

The sword was fairly rusty, and it was covered by a layer of grey film. A grim expression passed over Han Sen's face as he looked at the weapon. It gave off a powerful, murderous aura.

The handle was shaped like a bamboo branch, and there was no actual handguard protecting it. The handle connected straight to the blade of the sword itself. It was double-edged, and there were strange symbols engraved down the center of the blade. They looked like snakes or vines or something. With so little of the blade visible, it was difficult to tell exactly what they were.

Night Wind sensed something dangerous about this half-buried sword, which was why he had ceased digging. All he did was stare at it.

Han Sen could feel the power simmering from the sword. It was like there were a thousand angry spirits struggling, twisting, and screaming within its blade.

But when he looked closer, he couldn't actually detect anything threatening about the weapon. It was huge, but other than that, it was ordinary and covered in rust.

Night Wind lifted his sword of darkness again and approached the big sword slowly. He was so careful that it looked like he was walking toward some sort of terrifying, deified elite rather than a rusty sword plunged into the earth.

Miss Mirror and Han Sen stood back. They were now King class. If Night Wind couldn't handle this threat, there was nothing they could do to even the odds.

Night Wind had to force himself to take every step. This entire place was just too weird, and there was something ominous about the way the sword was plunged into the ground. It was entirely possible that the sword harbored some mysterious, frightening power, like the two statues they had encountered.

But thankfully, when Night Wind reached the sword, the weapon didn't react to his presence.

Night Wind didn't touch the sword. He used a night substance chain to remove the rocks behind the sword. He dug another path around the sword, and the sword remained in place. Nothing happened.

Miss Mirror frowned and studied the sword. She seemed to be considering their options.

"It looks like the sword isn't going to attack. It might just be a weapon that they left behind." Night Wind looked at the sword, his eyes flashing.

If it really was a weapon from the era of the gods, then perhaps it was some relic that exceeded the strength of a deified weapon.

"My Lady, should I try to pick it up?" Night Wind asked, looking at Miss Mirror. Although Miss Mirror was King class now, Night Wind still really respected her. He wasn't going to speak disrespectfully to her or talk down to her because of her level.

"Whatever power drew us here, it isn't this. Let's not move it. Continue digging a way forward," Miss Mirror said quietly.

Han Sen's greedy personality usually drove him to take every piece of the treasure he could find, but in this place, not even he was willing to be careless. He agreed with what Miss Mirror said. It was best not to touch it for now. This place was cursed, so perhaps something fouler had yet to occur.

But Night Wind disagreed. He thought for a moment and said. "If this is a weapon that was left behind during the battle between gods, perhaps it will help us search this city."

There was some truth in Night Wind's words. If they could free the sword, they might be able to use it as a weapon.

The sword must have been extremely powerful back in the day. If they could control the weapon, perhaps it could sort out many of the issues they had yet to face.

For instance, the sword might be able to break the statue of a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. If they were able to do that, perhaps they could remove the red-eye powers.

If they could use the sword to remove their infection, then it wouldn't be necessary for them to keep exploring the city. Instead, they could merrily wait until their reinforcements arrived.

Miss Mirror was still a little hesitant. Whether they took the sword or not, both options had pros and cons. It was a gamble either way. Winning the bet would have fantastic rewards, but if they lost, it would make their situation even worse.

“Let’s keep on going.” Miss Mirror didn’t allow Night Wind to touch the sword. If there was a gamble, they might be on the losing end. If they did not gamble, they would neither win nor lose.

If the choice had been up to Han Sen, not even he would have tried his luck with that sword. It was far too risky, he believed.

The most important reason he didn’t want anything to do with the sword, though, was because of what had happened with Ning Yue and the little green sword. The green sword had been much smaller, and it had turned Ning Yue into someone who was neither a man nor a woman.

If Han Sen grabbed that big sword, God only knew what might happen. Perhaps it would turn him into a eunuch. That was unthinkable.

Although Ning Yue was really girly, at least he still had a penis.

Night Wind didn’t insist, though. It seemed as if he still acknowledged Miss Mirror’s authority. Even though he held a different opinion, he didn’t go against Miss Mirror’s will.

The three of them proceeded around the sword as Night Wind continued to remove the rubble from a path in front of them. As they went, Night Wind’s excavation revealed many more gouges and deep slices that had been carved into the plaza.

A sword mark was carved meters deep into the hard ground paved with black stone. The black rock was amazingly sturdy, but it had been cut open like tofu. Pieces of the broken stone had flown everywhere, so it was scary to imagine how strong the wielder of that power must have been.

“These sword marks can’t have been made by the person who left behind the big sword, can they? I wonder who used it.” As Han Sen observed the sword marks, he couldn’t stop thinking about the buried sword.

The woman dug up by the Hell had only been deified like Night Wind.

But when Night Wind’s power struck the plaza, it barely left a scratch. Compared to the meters-deep clefts made by some ancient weapon, the difference was staggering. They were not on the same level.

Miss Mirror and Night Wind were thinking along the same line, but they had already decided not to touch the sword. There was no reversing that decision now.

Night Wind was leading them all forward when suddenly, a ding noise sounded. Night Wind’s dark substance chains looked as if they had struck something, and they shattered into darkness.

“What did we find this time?” Han Sen asked, moving to get a better view. The dark substance chains had broken against a stone wall, and despite hitting the wall with considerable force, the chains hadn’t damaged it.

The wall was covered with engravings, but since they could only see a small section of the wall, they couldn’t tell what the engravings represented.

Night Wind moved very fast as he cleared out the rubble around the wall. A short time later, the entire stone wall stood exposed before them.

The wall looked like a floral screen, but it was much bigger than the average floral screen. It was one hundred meters long and three meters high.

Han Sen looked carefully at the carvings on the screen, and when he did, his face changed.

Their eyes were drawn to the center of the screen. At first, they thought it was nothing, but when that section of the wall was viewed from the far left, the image resolved into something very strange.

2427 Six Pictures

There were pictures of the wall, and to Han Sen's surprise, they all looked humanoid.

The figures had hands, legs, and heads, just like humans. Oddly, though, they didn't have faces.

Where there should have been noses, eyes, and mouths, there was empty space instead. They were blank and faceless men.

Han Sen wasn't weirded out by the sight. After all, he had seen many kinds of weird creatures before, so a few carvings of faceless people wasn't enough to shake him up.

The disturbing thing about the pictures was the scenes that they depicted.

The one-hundred-meter screen held six pictures. The first picture showed a broken city tower. In front of that tower stood a few men without faces. One of the faceless men was using a sword to attack the tower.

That picture showed the backs of the faceless men. Their faces weren't visible, but when he thought about it some more and took it all in as a whole, Han Sen's gut clenched and goosebumps flared up across his skin.

"Oh, sh*t! These faceless people in the painting cannot be us, right?" Han Sen stared at the first picture.

He could only see the back of the faceless man who was cutting down the tower, but the scene reminded him strongly of when Night Wind had been clearing rocks from around the city tower.

There were another two faceless men watching, and a fourth man was lying on the floor. That was obviously Han Sen, Miss Mirror, and the Duke they had brought with them.

No matter how Han Sen looked at it, the picture seemed to represent their attempt to enter through the stone door. The people inside the carving were faceless and their figures weren't terribly distinct, which was the only thing keeping Han Sen from fully confirming that his theory was correct.

Han Sen and Miss Mirror looked at each other, then turned their attention to the second picture. The carving still featured four faceless figures with their backs turned. Not far from the figures, a sword was lodged in the ground.

Han Sen didn't think that this picture required much interpretation. It was clearly depicting the moment that they had discovered the gigantic, rusty sword that had been stabbed into the ground.

But the third picture, without a doubt, was them standing in front of the screen. Three faceless men were examining the drawing on the screen. Only one faceless man was lying on the ground, and it really did look just like them.

"Hum! Who's playing this trick? Come on out!" Night Wind shouted. His sword of darkness slashed repeatedly at the screen.

Obviously, unless the person who created the pictures on the screen was a prophet, there was no way those carvings could have been drawn before their arrival.

The only possibility was that someone had imbued that screen with some sort of power, and when they arrived there, it generated the scenes that were visible across the carving.

Night Wind's dark substance chains struck the screen and shattered again, leaving no trace of their attack on the screen's surface. The screen was as hard as a deified treasure.

"Don't waste your energy. Let's look at the rest of the picture for now," Miss Mirror said.

Night Wind's attacks were useless. He lowered his hands and joined them in examining the carvings.

Han Sen understood what Miss Mirror meant. The third picture represented their current situation in front of the screen, but there were another three pictures. If the carvings were already carved prior to their arrival, then those three pictures might predict what would happen next.

If the pictures failed to predict what was to happen or if their predictions weren't accurate, it would prove that someone had been playing a trick on them. That would mean that the screen held no prophetic power, and they didn't have to be afraid of its contents.

Han Sen looked at the fourth picture. The fourth picture still featured four faceless men, but they were now facing a tree. And this time, they didn't all have their backs turned.

A faceless man lay on the floor, and two of the others had their backs turned, but the last faceless man was showing his faceless face.

One of the faceless men with their backs turned clutched a sword. The sword was pierced through the faceless man that was facing the front of the picture. Blood ran down the blade.

"Is this predicting that we will kill each other?" Han Sen wondered.

Night Wind looked at the fourth picture and frowned. Miss Mirror had no reaction, and she merely moved on to look at the fifth carving.

The fifth picture didn't contain four faceless men. There were only three. One of them was lying on the ground, and the other two were in the process of strangling each other. From the picture, it seemed as if the faceless man on top was succeeding in suffocating the man below.

"That is rubbish!" Night River grunted.

This was a prediction that they would kill each other. Night Wind really thought someone had to be doing playing tricks on them, attempting to give them a scare.

Again, Miss Mirror showed no reaction. She moved on to look at the final, sixth picture.

The sixth picture was even weirder. There were only two faceless men left. One of them was on the ground, and the other knelt with their hands folded as if in prayer.

In front of the praying man, there was a statue with one thousand hands and one thousand eyes. It looked just like the statue they had seen before upon the stone path.

"Something must still be alive here. It's changing the pictures to mess with us," Night Wind growled, giving the pictures a look of disdain.

Han Sen knew why Night Wind was having such a strong reaction. He wasn't trying to point out how ridiculous the pictures were; he was just trying to prove his loyalty.

Those four faceless men had no faces, and they couldn't be identified by their body shapes, either. It was impossible to tell who was who.

But the faceless man who held a sword had clearly attacked the others, and the Duke they had brought with them was clearly the man lying on the ground in all the pictures.

Only one of the figures in the pictures used a sword. Night Wind also used a sword, and he was good at sword skills. The faceless man who held the sword had to be him, and that was why he was dying to prove his loyalty to Miss Mirror.

If what happened in the pictures came true, no matter who Night Wind attacked, things would go very badly for him.

He didn't know that Han Sen was a fake Prince Sixteen. Killing Prince Sixteen or Miss Mirror, who was the King's right-hand and sister, would have consequences that he didn't even want to consider.

Deified beings were very strong, but compared to the combined might of the Extreme King, a sole deified criminal was nothing.

"It doesn't matter if the person doing this is a god or a ghost. If he cannot come out, then that means he is scared of us. Night Wind, let's keep going," Miss Mirror said smoothly. Her pretty face was still serene. She didn't seem to care about the contents of the carving one bit.

Han Sen wasn't very concerned about it, either. Just like Miss Mirror said, even if someone alive was actively altering the carvings, that person wasn't daring to attack them outright. Their unseen enemy had to be scared of something, and that made them feel a little safer.

2428 Sleeping Place

Night Wind obeyed the command and deployed his substance chains to clear the rubble behind the screen. The three of them hauled their junkie Duke along with them, moving around the screen and proceeding forward.

Blood came from every orifice of the Duke's body. He wasn't dead yet, but his prospects weren't looking good. That was especially true of his eyes; they had turned entirely red, and even the whites of his eyes had been consumed by the new color.

Night Wind focused his attention on clearing the road ahead. After he cleared the path for some distance in front of them, he suddenly stopped. He looked at Miss Mirror and said, "Miss Mirror, should we change the direction of our travel?"

"Why?" Miss Mirror asked Night Wind.

Han Sen was curious about this, too. He had no clue why Night Wind had made this suggestion.

Night Wind sighed and said, "The third picture predicts that we will reach a tree. But comparing the height of the figures to the height of the tree in the picture, it suggests that the tree is very large. It would be a hundred meters tall, at least. Moving a tree like that out of our path could be difficult."

Han Sen understood Night Wind's rationale now. The fourth picture seemed to indicate that they'd encounter a tree, and that tree couldn't be moved. If they changed course ahead of time to avoid the tree, though, the prediction would be incorrect. If they avoided the tree successfully, that would suggest that it really had been someone messing with them.

"Let's switch directions, then." Miss Mirror nodded.

With Miss Mirror's approval, Night Wind changed direction and resumed digging.

If someone was trying to trick them, it would be easy for that person to guess their course since they were digging in the direction that the power was drawing them. The source of that power was their destination, after all. The mysterious trickster might have seen them, known where they would go, and then carved the pictures accordingly.

If someone was rattled by those pictures, they would probably find some sense of security in following the road they had already intended to travel. And if they encountered that tree, they would be terrified. The trickster's plans would come together rather neatly in that case.

Night Wind made this suggestion to keep that from happening. If the trickster tried to move the tree to intercept them, he was bound to leave behind some evidence of what he had done. The trickster's plan would fail.

Night Wind moved quickly, digging at a very fast pace. After ten minutes, they had followed Night Wind down a trench that was a few hundred meters long.

But Night Wind suddenly came to a standstill. The rigidity in his back made it obvious that he had frozen midstep, not just stopped for a breather. He stood there, staring ahead as if he had seen a ghost. He didn't even lower his raised arms.

"What happened?" Han Sen followed Night Wind's gaze. He saw that Night Wind had cleared half of the rocks, and a small object was now peeking out of the rubble.

When Han Sen saw what it was, his face paled as well. A twig was rising from the rocks, and several green leaves had sprouted from it. It looked like it belonged to a willow tree.

"How?" Han Sen asked uncomfortably. He peered more closely at the twigs and leaves, and they looked like the ones in the picture.

Night Wind silently used his dark substance chains to remove all the nearby rocks. More twigs appeared as the rubble was tossed away. A few minutes later, a mass of twigs and branches was showing—the whole tree had been unearthed.

It was exactly the same as it appeared in the picture. It was a hundred meters tall, and it looked like a willow tree. The flexible branches hung low, and the tree was covered with countless green leaves.

The three of them stared glumly up at the tree. They had changed course in a way that should have been unpredictable, but they had found the tree anyway. It was way too weird.

Han Sen inspected the roots of the tree. It was nestled in a flowerbed made of stone, and rich soil covered its roots.

"It doesn't look as if someone moved it here," Miss Mirror said while looking at the flower bed.

"Maybe there are many trees like this. If that is the case, then we were bound to encounter at least one of them. This plaza is probably walled with trees. We would have found one no matter where we chose to dig," Han Sen said after a moment of thought.

"Right," Night Wind replied seriously, and he moved his substance chains to dig elsewhere. He wanted to see if another tree could be found in a different direction.

"Stop digging! There will not be another one of these trees." Miss Mirror waved her hands to stop him.

Night Wind wasn't going to question Miss Mirror, but he did look at her with confusion. He was waiting for her to explain that declaration.

Miss Mirror looked at the tree and said, "I think this is a requiem tree."

"A requiem tree!" When Night Wind heard that, he paled slightly. He looked at the tree with an expression of disbelief.

Han Sen looked at Miss Mirror and Night Wind with confusion. He had never heard of a "requiem tree" before.

Miss Mirror knew what Han Sen was wondering, and before he had a chance to ask, she explained, "When I visited the Ancient God, I saw a requiem tree once. The Ancient God say that these requiem trees are where their people go for their final slumber. The legends say that the Ancient God need to be buried next to them so that their souls can find eternal rest."

"If you've seen a tree like this amongst the Ancient God, and now there is another one here, it doesn't sound like these things are terribly rare. Why would you say that there won't be another one of these trees around here somewhere?" Han Sen asked, his brow furrowed. He was obviously missing something.

"I don't know how many requiem trees there are in the universe, but the one I saw before was only two feet tall," Miss Mirror said. "The master of that requiem tree said they only grow to a height of about three feet, anyway. Then, they stop growing. If an Ancient God dies and is buried beneath the requiem tree, it will absorb the Ancient God's body. The tree will then grow one more foot, no more and no less. Do the math. If this tree has grown so high, how many Ancient God bodies were here? Do you think there will be multiple trees that have reached this height?"

"This is really a requiem tree?" Han Sen stared up at the tree, suddenly seeing its prodigious height in a whole new light.

Ancient Water God's body had moisturized a few systems, bringing life to many planets and even making primitive races level up.

If Miss Mirror was speaking the truth, then that requiem tree must have absorbed a few hundred Ancient God bodies, at the least. It must have taken in an unbelievable amount of energy. It was hard to imagine how strong the tree must be. But Han Sen couldn't feel the appalling life force that should have been radiating from the tree. To him, it was little more than an ordinary plant.

"It is easy to determine whether or not it is a genuine requiem tree. If it is a requiem tree, the tree will have a requiem tree hole that holds Ancient God powers." Miss Mirror walked around the tree, and it wasn't long before she came to a stop. She stared at one specific location on the trunk.

Han Sen and Night Wind walked over to Miss Mirror. They followed Miss Mirror's gaze and found her looking at a tree hole that was the size of a man's fist. The interior of the hole was jet black, and Han Sen's eyesight wasn't good enough to pierce the gloom and see if anything was inside.

"That is it! This is a requiem tree hole. I can't tell if a requiem tree egg is there, though," Miss Mirror murmured to herself as she looked at the tree hole.

2429 Requiem Tree Egg

“Trees make babies? Is this requiem tree a xenogeneic?” Han Sen asked in confusion.

Miss Mirror shook her head. “I don’t know if the requiem tree is a xenogeneic, but it doesn’t produce babies. The tree egg is essentially a collection of the tree’s resin. The more energy a requiem tree takes in, the more resin it can produce. That resin gathers inside the tree hole to become an orb. It looks something like an ant egg. They are called tree eggs.”

“I was told a story of a man who managed to get a requiem tree egg that was around the size of a fingernail. He was only a low-tier King, but he used the requiem tree egg’s power to advance all the way to deified. Ever since then, requiem tree eggs have become the most sought after treasure in the entire universe. But the ability of requiem tree eggs to help a King class being rise to deified is only of secondary importance. People are more interested in them because they can be used to help deified individuals ascend.” Miss Mirror paused and went on to say, “But considering the battle that happened here, I’m afraid the requiem tree egg inside the tree hole has already been taken away.”

“Maybe it’s still here. Let me see,” Night Wind said. Then he launched himself into the air and flew up to the tree hole. He hovered right in front of it, putting his eyes right near the tree hole to peer inside.

“This tree hole is strange. I’m looking right into it, but I cannot see anything inside,” Night Wind said to Miss Mirror.

“Requiem trees are resting trees for the Ancient God. They have unusual powers, so not even deified elites can see what is inside the tree hole. Luckily, requiem tree holes aren’t dangerous. Just put your hand inside,” Miss Mirror said.

Night Wind hesitated, but he did as he was instructed. Just in case, he shrouded his hand in night power that would defend against anything evil that might have taken up residence inside the tree hole. Then he placed his hand into the hole.

She said the tree hole wasn’t dangerous, but who knew if some toxic bug had decided to make its home there or something. This entire city felt cursed, and so by Night Wind’s reasoning, bizarre toxic bugs weren’t out of the question.

Seeing Night Wind place his hand in the hole, Han Sen felt nervous on his behalf. If there was something weird inside the tree hole, and it pulled Night Wind inside, that would actually be kind of scary.

But after Night Wind plunged his hand into the hole, a grin crossed his face. He shouted, “There is something in here! It is circular, and it feels like a stone. I don’t know if it is a requiem tree egg, however.”

“Touch it with your hand. If it is a requiem tree egg, your hand will smell like resin,” Miss Mirror said.

Night Wind touched the item and then pulled his hand out of the hole to sniff it.

He didn’t actually need to bring it up to his nose. Even at the bottom of the tree, Han Sen and Miss Mirror could smell that pleasant, grassy fragrance. Just the smell alone was enough to make Han Sen feel like his body was waking up after a long winter. He felt so relaxed, it was like his cells were coming alive.

“Not bad! That is the smell of a requiem tree egg. I can barely believe that the requiem tree egg is still there. Pull it out!” Miss Mirror said.

Night Wind immediately reached into the hole again to pull the tree egg out. But when he tried to draw his arms back out, they stopped abruptly. He couldn’t seem to get the egg out.

“The egg is too big! I can’t get it to fit through the hole,” Night Wind said. He pulled out his sword of darkness to slash the tree hole in an attempt to widen it.

But when the sword of darkness hit the bark of the tree, it only left a small white scratch mark behind. There wasn’t the faintest semblance of a firm dent.

“Trying to cut it is useless! The requiem tree is the resting place of many members of the Ancient God. Even a tiny requiem tree is impervious to most powers and gear, and this tree is enormous,” Miss Mirror said.

“Can he not crack the egg into pieces and bring them out like that?” Han Sen said.

“The egg will be harder than the requiem tree itself. How is he supposed to break it?” Miss Mirror rolled her eyes at Han Sen. Then she turned to Night Wind again. “How big is the tree egg?”

“Very big...” Night Wind said, his voice strangely distracted.

“How big is very big? Big like a brain?” Han Sen asked with a laugh.

A fingernail-sized requiem tree egg turned a King into a deified. If there was a brain-sized requiem tree egg, it would probably start a war that would consume the entire universe.

“If your brain is one meter across, then yes, it is sized like your brain,” Night Wind said quietly. Han Sen noticed that the man’s eyes were very wide.

“What? That large?” Han Sen asked hoarsely. His eyes almost popped out of his skull. He could scarcely believe how big that was.

“Are you sure that is a requiem tree egg and not something else?” Miss Mirror asked with shock. Not even she could believe it.

No one had ever heard of such a giant requiem tree egg before. Even small eggs were considered priceless relics among deified elites, but this...

The thought of a one-meter long requiem tree egg was enough to make people's blood boil and their hearts leap in their chests. The power of something like that was beyond imagining.

"I don't know. You should confirm it yourself, Miss Mirror." Night Wind came down from the tree hole. He still looked somewhat shell-shocked as he spoke to Miss Mirror.

It was weird to see such an expression on Night Wind's face. But when seeing a requiem egg such as that, even a deified was bound to have difficulty managing their excitement.

A requiem tree egg could strengthen deifieds. A requiem tree egg the size of a plum could increase a deified's level by quite a bit. If a deified refined a tree egg of this magnitude, they could easily become a god spirit.

Miss Mirror flew up to the tree hole. She put her hand in and began feeling around the tree hole. Seconds later, her jaw hung slack in wonder.

"It really is a requiem tree egg. I cannot believe that such a large egg exists." Miss Mirror finally said after ten minutes of fiddling. Her expression said that she wasn't entirely sure how she should feel.

"It really is a requiem tree egg," Han Sen and Night Wind said together.

"Yes, and it is also circular. It is somewhere between a meter and two meters across." Miss Mirror couldn't help but sigh. "It is a shame that the tree hole is only the size of a fist. If it was a small requiem tree egg, we could take it out. Now we know that there is a tree egg inside and that it is something that would change the universe as we know it. However, we don't have a way to remove it."

"Wait! Maybe there's a way to get it out." Night Wind suddenly sounded exhilarated.

"What? You have a way to expand the tree hole?" Han Sen looked at Night Wind. Miss Mirror looked at him as well, a single eyebrow raised.

Instead of answering, Night Wind used his finger to point at the tree excitedly, and spoke, "Look over there."

Han Sen and Miss Mirror followed his finger. A deep scar ran across one side of the tree. It was a three-foot-long gash, and it was three fingers deep, at least.

"That is a sword mark." Han Sen's eyes brightened.

The sword mark was old, and even though the tree had healed, there was a scar. But based on the angle of the scar, it looked as if it had been delivered by the big sword they had found earlier.

2430 Taking the Sword

"If we can grab that sword, maybe we can use it to widen the tree hole and retrieve the requiem tree egg," Night Wind said, his eyes bright with anticipation.

“That might actually work. Maybe someone or something wants us to go back and retrieve that sword,” Han Sen said.

The entire scenario seemed a little too convenient, though. They had chosen to leave the sword behind on the road, despite what the pictures on the screen seemed to indicate. Now, they had been presented with a tantalizing prize that would force them to return and retrieve the sword after all. They seemed to be drifting slowly closer to the reality that the screen had predicted.

“I am willing to give it a try. I will go find the sword again and bring it back,” Night Wind said to Miss Mirror.

“Go, but be careful,” Miss Mirror said, her voice distracted and distant.

“Yes, I will get it done.” Night Wind bowed, turned around, and walked away.

After taking a few steps, Night Wind stopped. He looked at the Duke. He thought for a moment and then said to Miss Mirror, “My Lady, this guy isn’t going to make it. Why don’t I put him out of his misery now?”

Han Sen knew what the man meant. Night Wind was obviously still scared about the prophetic pictures they had seen on the screen. If he got rid of the Duke, however, there’d be one less faceless man. That would mean the prophecy could be proven wrong, and it was nothing more than an illusion.

Miss Mirror nodded. Night Wind picked up the Duke and left.

“Is it wise to let him go?” Han Sen asked, looking at Miss Mirror.

Han Sen thought that Miss Mirror and Night Wind knew more than they were saying, but Miss Mirror hadn’t tried to stop Night Wind from leaving. That confused Han Sen.

Miss Mirror didn’t move, and her voice was chilly. “You think he would stay if I forbade him from going?”

“You mean, Night Wind will betray us for the requiem tree egg?” Han Sen now understood what Miss Mirror was getting at. If she stopped Night Wind from getting the sword, and Night Wind wanted the requiem tree egg badly enough, what happened in the picture might actually come to pass.

“I don’t know for certain if Night Wind will betray us, but when something as valuable as this egg lies in the balance, loyalties can be tested. The requiem tree egg is a treasure that is far too tempting, and there would be few consequences for breaking the rules right now. I have to be careful.” Miss Mirror ended with a sigh.

“From what you know of Night Wind, if he really brings back the sword and claims the requiem tree egg, do you think he’d go the extra mile and do... something else?” Han Sen asked.

"I honestly don't know." Miss Mirror shook her head, and then she said, "So, we just need to be prepared. I hope that Night Wind doesn't decide to betray us, but if he does, we need a contingency in place that can keep us breathing. I'm no longer what I once was, remember. I am only King class. If we fight, I cannot hope to beat Night Wind. Our only chance of surviving is if you and I work together."

"Even if you and I work together, fighting a deified elite won't be easy." Han Sen shook his head.

Miss Mirror brushed her fingers across her bangs, smiled, and said, "Even if ten ordinary Kings allied together, their collective power might not be enough to defeat Night Wind. But you and I are different. If we work together, even if we cannot beat him, we should be able to keep ourselves alive."

"I am with you, of course, my Lady." Han Sen smiled.

"Although I have become King class, I still have the mind of a deified. And I understand Night Wind's power. I know all about Night Wind. I will just need you to do as I say. If he really tries to do something rash, we'll hold him back long enough that we can escape." Miss Mirror said.

"I will listen to you, my Lady," Han Sen answered quickly, but he had a different plan in mind.

Things had become complicated. The three of them each had their own plan. Although they all had individual goals, they knew that surviving in such a place would be difficult. But none of them could resist the temptation of the requiem tree egg.

Although Miss Mirror hadn't said anything about it, she obviously had her own thoughts about the requiem tree egg. She just hadn't been obvious about it like Night Wind.

Both of them went silent. Han Sen thought it wasn't a good idea to let the uncomfortable silence grow, so he started talking. "Do you think Night Wind can safely retrieve that big sword?"

"I don't know." Miss Mirror paused. "It definitely seems like something is orchestrating this situation, trying to drive us to fight for the requiem tree egg. Since this entity obviously seems to require the big sword, common sense should tell you that the sword is dangerous. But Night Wind went to retrieve it anyway, and he isn't stupid. Since he insisted on going, he might have an ulterior motive. Maybe..."

Miss Mirror didn't finish her thought, but the look on her face suggested that she was worried.

Han Sen picked up where Miss Mirror had left off, and he said, "Maybe he isn't concerned about the future that the screen seemed to foretell?"

Miss Mirror didn't respond. It was like a silent agreement.

Han Sen went on to say, "If the prophecy is false, then Night Wind is fine with that. If the prophecy is true, then the person wielding the sword should be fine anyway. After all, whoever takes the sword in the prophecy will be the one who claims the egg and survives. The odds for survival are swinging wildly in Night Wind's favor, with how things currently stand. You and I cannot take him down if things go badly."

Miss Mirror nodded. She agreed.

“But there is one thing I don’t understand. How can Night Wind be sure that nothing will kill him when he grabs the sword?” Han Sen asked Miss Mirror.

Han Sen wasn’t familiar with Night Wind, so he couldn’t guess the answer with any confidence.

“Do not underestimate any deified being. Night Wind isn’t the most powerful deified, but the simple fact that he reached the deified level still means a lot. Do not be misled by his apparent loyalty and service to me. It can put you on a slippery slope to a painful demise,” Miss Mirror said, her voice hard.

Han Sen shrugged. He did not say anything more. He looked back along the path behind them, hoping to see something.

Night Wind should have already returned with the sword by now. If some sort of trap had been laid on or around the sword, he should have already triggered it.

But the ruined city was still deathly quiet. There wasn’t a single sound. They had no way of knowing if Night Wind had removed the sword or not yet.

While Han Sen was thinking, a shadow appeared far down the path. It looked like Night Wind’s.

Indeed, when the figure drew closer, Han Sen could see that it was Night Wind returning. He had a big sword slung over his shoulder, which looked just like the one they had seen before.

But contrary to their expectations, the sword was only one meter long. The tip was flat as if it had been snapped off. The sword was broken.

That surprised Miss Mirror and Han Sen both, and they swapped curious glances with each other.