

Great Mage 261

Season 2 Chapter 21

A few days passed.

In that time, Lukas' life could only be described as monotonous. All he had to do was occasionally give Min Ha-rin books about Magical Science.

He didn't talk to her. To be precise, he deliberately avoided her.

He felt that it was necessary to create an environment allowing her to train on her own for a week.

That was why he spent most of his time alone in his room.

One day, Lukas was meditating in his room when he heard a voice.

[...he's here.]

It was a weak, terrified voice. It sounded like it would disappear at any moment.

Lukas opened his eyes.

In front of him was the mysterious man in black, who was shaking like a leaf in the wind.

[I won't get involved anymore. I'm sorry...]

The man's voice grew faint after saying those words, and he soon disappeared like a puff of smoke.

Lukas got up from his seat.

Then he headed to the elevator.

"We received a thunderstorm warning..."

The security guard at the elevator warned him with an embarrassed expression, but he didn't try to stop him, and Lukas was able to use it.

Rumble-

The elevator shook violently.

Fortunately, it still seemed to work properly, but as the ground drew closer, the sound of heavy rain, which seemed to be pounding the ground, could be heard.

Boom!

Then there was the sound of thunder. The elevator's lights blinked dangerously, but Lukas didn't even flinch. He was simply lost in thought while listening to the pounding rain.

The humans called Demons a disaster, and they weren't wrong. But he didn't think they could've even imagined just what a true disaster was.

It was the extinction of the planet, not the species.

Furthermore, the entire universe could be returned to a state of nothingness.

Lukas saved only those who had the potential to save the world. He hoped that they could create the winds of change. This was because he hoped the humans would overcome their trials on their own.

By the time he'd come to this world, the human population had already been halved, but he didn't make a move until that number fell far below half.

He didn't do anything to the Demons.

If Lukas were to use his power wantonly, then *they* would have a reason to intervene.

He'd saved many worlds.

To be precise, he'd saved many worlds' 'humans'.

It was an act that had become the reason for Lukas' existence. He wandered through countless universes performing the role he set for himself.

He heard cries of gratitude, received intense faith and belief, and earned a lot of trust and affection from the humans he saved.

And.

He received hatred, resentment, and fear from many more races.

'It was as I expected.'

From a cosmic perspective, favouring one species was not the right thing to do.

There were many beings who were born ugly. These beings were designed to torment and make others feel despair.

They weren't good beings, but Lukas sympathised with them. They were poor creatures who were born evil from the start.

Unlike humans, they didn't get the chance to choose whether they wanted to be good or evil.

Nevertheless, there might have been another way. It might have been possible for him to lead them on the right path.

It might have been possible to make them good.

But he didn't.

Instead, Lukas exterminated every enemy of the humans.

At some point, the other Absolutes began calling Lukas [Madman] or [Human] and criticised him heavily. But the fact was that they weren't wrong. He didn't even think about denying it.

However, he didn't stop his actions.

He silently carried on with his work.

Time passed. A really long time.

The winds of time couldn't touch him because he had already transcended time.

Karma gradually accumulated, and his level increased.

Ironically, the more the races who persecuted humans hated Lukas, the stronger he became.

For an Absolute, reverence was the most efficient form of energy. And the more negative and ugly the emotion was, the thicker the concentration.

Lukas became stronger at an unusual rate. This caused him to stand out amongst the Absolutes, and before long, *they* became interested in him.

But that interest soon became displeasure and then hostility.

Lukas was an unforeseen obstacle.

Despite their warnings, he didn't hesitate to pick worlds that could have been regarded as their territory. Then, he ruined many small and large plans of their design. Even going so far as to destroy them completely.

Ding-

He walked out of the elevator.

It seemed that the clothing store was closed because the lights were off and the owner wasn't behind the counter. It was probably due to the heavy rain and the thunderstorm.

Fortunately, the back door was open, so he could still leave the building.

Shaaa-

None of the stores in the city were open. This was because the rains were too severe. While walking through the street, only the sound of the rain could be heard.

Lukas walked up to a bench and sat on it without paying any attention to the raindrops pounding against his skin.

Boom!

Suddenly, an enormous bolt of lightning tore through the sky.

And the world froze.

The raindrops froze in the air, and the lightning bolt remained in the sky as though it had been painted.

Lukas had only experienced this phenomenon once before. This had happened in the past when he had finally defeated his greatest enemy and accomplished his goal before becoming an Absolute.

However, it wasn't God who appeared this time.

He saw the shadow of an enormous being behind the dark clouds in the sky.

This was the existence whom God had mentioned that day.

A being who had been born as a cosmic entity.

A being who stood at the pinnacle of countless Absolutes.

Perhaps the most dangerous being in the entire multiverse.

[Nice to meet you, Madman.]

Lukas was looking at a Ruler.

* * *

His voice sounded like a clap of thunder.

Lukas knew.

It would be impossible for anyone who wasn't at least a transcendent being to even understand that sound. The moment a normal person heard that voice, their body would collapse and their soul would die.

Only those at the rank of Absolute would be able to understand the language in his voice and converse with him.

The freezing of time and space was for that purpose.

Even though he had only sent a thought projection to this place, if he hadn't frozen time and space, the entire planet would have probably collapsed.

This was Lukas' first time seeing a Ruler in person. But even though it was just a thought projection, facing it was still a considerable burden for him.

His entire body shook as though an electric current was running through him.

Nevertheless, his voice was unexpectedly calm.

"I wanted to meet you, too."

[Do you know who I am?]

He spoke in a somewhat cheerful voice, and Lukas responded while looking up at the lightning which lit up the night sky.

"Lightning God." (TL: I changed his name to 'Thunderous Lightning God' which is a bit closer to what I'm assuming the author meant... Author is using a strange blend of Korean-Chinese that is besting me.)

[Uhaha!]

The Thunderous Lightning God burst into laughter.

His laugh sounded more powerful than the thunderstorm that had just been battering the city.

Lukas recalled the Demigod from the past who had the power of lightning.

Indra.

His lightning, which Lukas had felt countless times in his mental world, had been so powerful that it was able to completely burn Lukas' body despite the fact that he was already much stronger than any mortal at the time.

But in the end, he won.

And with Riki's help, he managed to make Indra give in, allowing Lukas to make his power his own.

The Lightning God's power was the same as Indra's.

'The same?'

Could this be called the same?

Lukas denied it.

The Lightning God was stronger than millions of Indra's combined. His tremendous power could be felt even with just his thought projection.

Just like a drop of water and an ocean were the same, they had the same essence.

But everything else was different. No. Even the word 'different' wasn't enough.

Lukas thought for a moment before he could think of a suitable word.

They were on different 'levels'.

[You've been running around the multiverse as you please. It wouldn't be unreasonable to say that almost everyone hates you. I've lived for a very long time, but I don't think I've seen anyone as crazy as you.]

"There were some. Who were the same as me."

[Put your expectation aside. You'll never be able to meet them. They are all dead.]

The Lightning God continued to talk in a cheerful manner.

Lukas wasn't surprised because he had expected something similar. However, he was surprised that this Ruler was such a chatterbox. Just like God.

He couldn't help but wonder if all the beings above the Absolutes were like this.

Hiding his thoughts about the Lightning God, Lukas asked.

"So are you going to kill me too?"

[If it was the Demon King, he probably would've done just that. He's the most angry of us. If you meet him, your soul will disappear without even a speck of dust remaining.]

"..."

[But I'm different. I can tell after seeing you in person. Your head is more twisted than I thought. But that's precisely why I like you.]

"...what are you trying to say?"

[Serve me, Madman.]

Lukas' expression became strange. He didn't answer immediately, but he didn't panic.

He just looked at the giant being beyond the clouds as though he was urging him to explain.

[You must know that every Lord follows a Ruler.]

"Right."

[Do you know why?]

"To shift responsibility."

[Hoh...]

The Lightning God looked down at him with interest.

[That's an interesting way to put it. You're not wrong. No matter how much they grow, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even millions of Absolutes will encounter the same problem. To put it simply, they become distracted.]

There wasn't a need to explain whether this was a dangerous phenomenon or not. The most important thing for Absolutes was a healthy and focused mind.

You could call it willpower.

Believing in themselves and not doubting themselves was the foundation of Absolutes, and it was the source of their power.

[You can still hold on. But that's because you are rather young when compared to most Lords. However, it won't be long before your beliefs begin to crack. Then, every moment will feel like a waking hell. And then you'll do what everyone else does.]

The Lightning God chuckled.

[In other words, you will look for God. Isn't it funny? Beings who are like gods in the eyes of mortals end up seeking out God.]

"I won't do that."

[That might be the case now. But the point is that we are beings who have transcended the concept of time. And we have eternal, interminable work. No matter how you look at it, if you do the same thing for hundreds of millions of years, your beliefs are bound to change. Just like water droplets that have fallen for hundreds of years can pierce through rocks.]

"..."

[But we all know what God is like. I can't speak for those who have completely lost their minds, but at least, I wouldn't want to rely on our neglectful creator.]

God was surprisingly unpopular among the Absolutes.

Lukas knew that too.

“So you mean I should rely on you?”

[I will carry your karma for you. I will let you continue saving humans in my territory. I don't care about conflicts with the other Rulers. Instead, I'll stop them from pressuring you.]

Lukas suddenly let out a laugh.

[Why are you laughing?]

“What are you hiding?”

Lukas' voice sounded.

“You're not just helping me out of pity. As you said, I've only been a Lord for a short amount of time, but I know well what you Rulers are like. You guys don't pay attention to anything unless it affects the multiverse as a whole or unless someone touches your territory. And amongst the Rulers, you are the one with the least attachment to your territory.]

[Kuku...]

The Lightning God chuckled.

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[You just answered your own question. Right. I wouldn't pay attention to something unless it was serious. You became the eye of a storm. Every Absolute in the multiverse is paying attention to you. You were born with a destiny of chaos. Thanks to that, the balance and tranquility which had been maintained for a long time has begun to crack...]

The Lightning God's voice became serious.

[There is a possibility that you might become another Ruler.]

“...!”

Lukas couldn't help but feel shocked.

A Ruler...

Right. He'd forgotten.

Becoming a Ruler had been one of Lukas' secret goals. It was for the sake of saving all of the humans in the Three Thousand Worlds and returning to his homeworld at any time.

His universe, his home.

And those who waited for his return.

However... at some point, the thought of becoming a Ruler had become faint.

He had realised it after becoming a Lord. Just how absurd they were.

He felt that if he thought too deeply about it, he would realise just how impossible his goal was. That was why Lukas deliberately stopped thinking about it.

But now, Lightning God, one of the Rulers, had said it.

He had the potential to become a Ruler.

“How is that right given? Do the four Rulers have a meeting? To decide which Absolute is qualified?”

[Everything has an order. However, it is true that your case is quite unique... Prepare for ‘The Great Game’, Madman.]

“...the Great Game?”

It was the first time he’d heard of it.

But it didn’t seem like the Lightning God intended to tell him more about it.

[I will suggest it again. Come under me. You have nothing to lose. You cannot stand on your own. If you don’t choose a Ruler to serve, you will die. Don’t think that you’ll be able to escape like in the past.]

“...”

[The other Rulers want to kill you. I am the only one willing to help you.]

Thinking that Lukas was still worried, the Lightning God added.

[Have you ever felt calm since becoming an Absolute? After saving one world, a next one awaits, and even if you save that one, there will be another. The screams ringing in your ears would never stop, and

your initial determination would eventually fade away. Your emotions would dry up, and that part of you that can be called a personality would disappear. Then what would happen in the end?]

“...”

[You would simply become a puppet. With no emotions, no personality, no beliefs. You would become a machine who gets summoned to universes that have lost their balances, and you would leave after perfectly performing your task. I’m sure you know that a majority of Absolutes have become like that.]

“But that won’t happen if I obey you?”

[Exactly. Personality is incredibly important. A strong personality that is second to none is one of the requirements to become a Ruler. That is why you have the potential. An Absolute like you who has a strong personality is very rare.]

He was right.

Lukas understood.

God or the Rulers.

He understood why these beings, who had lived for countless years, talked and acted in ways that appeared similar to mortals at first glance.

Perhaps... they acted in a certain manner on purpose. Or it was possible that they changed their personalities periodically.

Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to maintain their egos.

"I refuse."

Despite Lukas' cold refusal, the Lightning God smiled widely.

[Why?]

"I have no intention of passing my karma onto someone else. This is the path that I chose to walk on. It has nothing to do with you."

This wasn't an emotional decision.

Lukas didn't believe everything the Lightning God had told him, and he knew what kind of mindset the Absolutes who submitted to the Rulers would have.

Serving the Rulers was a choice that was completely incompatible with his beliefs.

The Lightning God simply laughed for a while as if he didn't know what to say.

[You really are a madman.]

Lukas was unable to tell whether he was angry, amused, or something else entirely.

[You killed a Demon.]

Lukas remained silent.

[By this universe's standards, he was a pretty powerful Demon too. Why did you kill him? I was able to pinpoint your location because of that.]

“You can stop talking nonsense. You would have found me regardless of if I had killed a Demon or not. This is proven by the fact that you arrived here before the Demon King.”

[Hehe.]

The Lightning God chuckled.

His insight was pretty good.

The Demons here could also be considered as the Demon King's creations.

Killing them was the same as touching the Demon King's bottom line.

Nevertheless, Lukas had killed a Demon. Not only did he kill a Demon, but he killed a Demon Duke, one of the highest-ranking Demons.

Nevertheless, it was the Lightning God, not the Demon King, who had found Lukas first.

In other words, this Ruler had been actively looking for him.

[You should know that each universe has a certain level of tolerance.]

The huge shadow standing behind the clouds moved. It was as if he was looking around.

[There are creatures born into the world who are weaker than insects. On the other hand, there could be countless beings in a universe who are comparable to Absolutes. I was born in a universe like that.]

The Lightning God unexpectedly mentioned his own creation.

[On average, the higher the level of the beings in the universe, the higher that universe's tolerance. This fact is very important for Absolutes. If a force exceeds the limits of the universe, the balance is broken, and eventually, it will lead to the collapse of that dimension.]

That was the reason why Absolutes, who entered specific universes as saviours, usually didn't use their full power.

It was the same for Lukas.

[This universe's tolerance is below average. The science is a bit advanced, but that's it. Just a few hundred thousand Demons is enough to push it to the brink of extinction.]

The Lightning God clicked his tongue as if to say it was pathetic.

[That's probably why you wanted the humans to grow stronger. The stronger they become, the higher the universe's tolerance would become and, naturally, the more power an Absolute would be able to exert. Kuku... Honestly, I'm surprised you were able to raise the humans' power by this much in only a few decades.]

The Lightning God knew that Lukas had made the best choice.

He could have dealt with the Demons as soon as he entered this universe. Even with limited power, as an Absolute, he would be able to get rid of the Demons with nothing but 9 star spells.

The problem was what came after.

If he killed all of the Demons, perhaps within a day, another Absolute would intervene, and they would inevitably have a battle with Lukas.

If his opponent was another Absolute, then Lukas would be unable to hold back his power. Power that far surpassed this universe's tolerance would inevitably be released, and eventually, the dimension would collapse.

If that were to happen, then humans would no longer be the problem. The entire universe would disappear in vain.

That didn't mean that he could tolerate watching the humans being slaughtered.

That was why Lukas spread his knowledge around the world and facilitated their growth. He also saved those who could promote human development as much as possible, those who could lead them, and those who could create a great wind of change.

In addition to that, he used every other means available to him to make the humans stronger.

It wasn't easy. Because he had to support them behind the scenes.

Nevertheless, Lukas didn't give up, and in time, he received the results that he wanted.

As a result, in only a few decades, it became possible for humans to fight the Demons with their own power. The universe's tolerance also increased greatly.

[However, your plan to raise the humans has come to an end.]

"...you mean..."

[Right.]

Lukas' expression hardened when he heard the Lightning God's next words.

[Let's just say that your time's up. Soon, an Absolute will enter this universe. And I don't think I have to tell you what their goal is.]

Lukas remained silent.

[They're not coming to this universe as saviours. Whether the balance is broken or the universe is collapsing doesn't matter to them. Nevertheless, they still have their consciences as Absolutes, so they will be mindful to an extent, but they won't hesitate to use their full power if necessary.]

They would exert the full power of their body if they felt that it was worth doing.

Absolutes were divided into Assistants, Managers, Lords, and Rulers.

Lukas was an Absolute with the second-highest rank. And even amongst the Lords, he had the power to stand at the very top.

But he didn't want the universe to collapse. This meant that he would be unable to unleash his full strength as a Lord.

Lukas wouldn't be able to use External Force, which was a power unique to Absolutes, or Endtongue, which was his main power.

This meant that he would be fighting with a major handicap.

Lukas' heart became heavy.

It was still too early. If he had a little more time...

[I will block their entry as long as possible.]

“ ... ”

Instead of gratitude, it was natural that he felt suspicion after hearing the sudden declaration.

[Don't you believe me? I'm serious. I'll buy you a year or so. And I'll prevent the intervention of the other Rulers as much as possible.]

Lukas narrowed his eyes.

He couldn't understand what the Lightning God was thinking.

However... He couldn't refuse his unconventional offer.

It didn't matter if he was up to something.

The worst-case scenario for Lukas would be the Absolute arriving before he was ready.

1 year.

Even a single year was precious time for him.

[But I was a little late. So I apologize for that.]

“...what do you mean?”

Lukas looked up at the clouds.

It felt like the Lightning God, whose features he couldn't see, was smiling.

[I mean that I can't kick out any Absolutes who have already entered this universe.]

Lukas' expression hardened.

[I wonder if you can handle it. Please don't die before the Great Game begins, Lukas. Don't let me down...]

The Lightning God's voice gradually faded.

He could feel the giant presence, behind the clouds, leaving...

And space and time started moving once again.

Season 2 Chapter 23

Shaa-

It was raining heavily. The bolt of lightning in the sky spread like a spider web before disappearing.

Lukas realised that the Lightning God's thought projection had completely left the universe.

"...the Great Game."

These words remained stuck in his head. At the same time, he had a premonition that it would be a trial unlike anything he'd ever encountered.

"Hoo."

He took a deep breath and organised his thoughts.

Instead of the 'Great Game' which he knew nothing about, it would have been better to think about the Absolutes who would soon be entering this universe.

Absolutes.

That's what the Lightning God said.

In other words, it wouldn't be only one Absolute who would be entering this universe.

It hadn't been a big problem that he couldn't use Divine Magic Power or Endtongue. At least so far.

The knowledge and experience he had, together with 9 star spells, were enough to allow him to have no threats in this universe.

Although he hadn't met the Demon King, the Dukes, who were considered the strongest Demons after the Demon King, couldn't pose any threat to him.

However, it was completely impossible to face an Absolute with nothing but the power of 9 stars.

'If an Absolute has already entered...'

Then it was important for him to find out where they were.

In order to do that, he needed information.

This meant that he had to obtain the assistance of organisations that could identify major events happening around the world with ease.

Currently, the most favourable force for Lukas was the European Branch. That was because he had the absolute trust of Nina, the Branch President.

However, Europe could not afford to fight against the Demons who were constantly encroaching on their territory.

Although some modicum of intel collection was carried out, it was different from the information Lukas wanted.

He needed first-class operatives who gathered information not only in the human territories but also in the land of the Demons.

He needed eyes and ears.

'I need the power of the Chinese Intelligence Agency.'

China could be called the most controversial country in the world, but such feelings had grown thin following the Demons' invasion.

Now, most of the people were moving under the ideology of 'One of China', and they faithfully played the role of the biggest defense wall for the human front.

Unlike Japan and Korea, where one would have relatively few opportunities to see Demons, the power of the Chinese Branch could be considered among the top three in the entire world because it had always been fighting life-threatening battles on the frontline.

That was why their intelligence went without saying. At this point, most advanced science had been neutralised.

The Chinese Intelligence Agency's ability to obtain information directly from the Demons' territory despite the fact that it was filled with Demons was beyond even the United States'.

But things wouldn't work so easily.

Even if he borrowed Nina's power. No. Instead, there was a high possibility that he would be criticised for such tricks.

China didn't have a very positive opinion of the United States, who lived in the peaceful space they created across the sea. And it was the same for Europe, who had built a close relationship with the United States.

It was then Lukas thought of a man.

He was the second-in-command of the Hunter Association's Chinese Branch, and he was a revered figure throughout Asia. (TL: How did it become 'Chinese Branch' after 'East Asia Branch'?)

The Human Dragon, Lee Jong-hak.

To gain the power of the intelligence agency, his assistance would be indispensable.

* * *

A few days before Lukas had an encounter with the Lightning God.

Europe and Africa were said to be the two regions that had suffered the most devastating damage on earth. It was no exaggeration to say that most of the land on these two continents was occupied by the Demons.

Great Britain, which could have been called one of the three major powers in Europe, was no exception. Among the island nations across the world, Great Britain suffered an unprecedented amount of damage.

This might have been because the Demon King descended upon France, which was the country closest to Great Britain.

The situation of Northern Ireland, which didn't belong to Great Britain, fared relatively better.

Or at least, that was the case not so long ago.

"H-, hoo..."

Katherine panted with a terrified expression.

She wanted to cover her ears from the beastly grunts, screams, and sounds of things being eaten coming from outside the house.

“Big sis?”

Tom, who was now six years old, still didn’t seem to fully understand what was happening. His voice was filled with curiosity about his sister’s unusual expression.

Seeing this little boy, who was much weaker than she was, Katherine gained some courage.

“It’s fine. Everything will be fine. Do you trust big sis?”

“Mhm.”

“Good. As long as we stay...”

Crack!

“Kyah!”

The door was smashed, and a bizarre looking creature entered the house.

Its snout was as long as an anteater's, and its upper body was unusually large. Compared to that, its lower body was so thin that one couldn't help but wonder how it could've supported its own weight.

"Grrr..."

The monster's red eyes shined brightly, and its nose flared. His sense of smell was abnormally strong, so it was no problem for him to find the boy and girl who were hiding in the house thinking that they were safe.

"O-, oh, my God..."

Katherine closed her eyes with a look of despair.

On the other hand, Tom didn't close his eyes.

Instead, he was staring at the sky with a blank expression on his face.

The ceiling of the house had collapsed during the Demon Beasts' rampage, so the night sky was clearly visible.

And in it, a meteor could be seen.

“Pretty.”

Tom muttered this softly. But he noticed that the meteor’s movement was strange. It was as if it was coming right for them.

No, was that really a meteor?

Boom!

“Krk?”

The Demon Beast turned its head. An unidentified object had fallen from the sky and smashed into the ground.

Turning away from the two humans who it didn’t think could escape, the Demon Beast looked at the crater.

Then, someone walked out of the dust cloud.

“...”

It was a breathtakingly beautiful woman. Her hair was so dark that it seemed to absorb the moonlight, and her clothes were pitch black.

Her eyes seemed to shine with a bloody light, and her expression was grim.

What truly stood out, however, was the weapon in her hand.

It was a ridiculously large scythe, which didn't seem to suit her at all.

"Krrr..."

The Demon Beast stared at the woman with a cautious expression.

The hair on its entire body stood up, and its pupils shook. It found it hard to breathe because of the vicious aura surrounding the woman.

"Kyaah!"

Nevertheless, a beast was a beast.

The Demon Beast did not like the feeling of fear it got from the woman, so it charged towards her. Its claws, which could easily tear through stone, flashed in the moonlight.

Chuk-

But the Demon Beast's body suddenly became thousands of pieces of meat, splattered across the ground.

Nevertheless, there wasn't a single drop of blood on the scythe.

"H-, hik..."

Katherine stared at the woman in horror, but the woman left the house while pretending to not notice them.

"Krk!"

"Kaak! Kaak!"

The Demon Beasts who smelled the heavy scent of blood started swarming. There were even some incredibly large ones who made the Demon Beast who had just died look small in comparison.

"Ignorant things."

The woman muttered darkly.

Then the entire city became bathed with blood.

Season 2 Chapter 24

Beijing, China.

This used to be a large metropolitan city that housed more than 20 million people, but now, only about 1 million people remained. And about 5 percent of them were hunters.

This meant that there were more than 50,000 hunters in this city alone.

Cha Gung-hwan, President of the East Asia Branch, was already over 70 years old. Although training in martial arts had slowed down the aging process to an extent, his white hair and wrinkles could not be hidden.

There was usually an ever-present smile on his lips, but today, his expression was hard as if he'd bitten a rock.

"You're here."

"How's the situation?"

"It's been quiet since the first fall."

"Good work."

Cha Gung-hwan briefly commended his subordinates before turning around.

“Hmm...”

An invisible aura seemed to swirl around his body.

There was a crater in the ground as though a small meteor had landed here. The surrounding area also had a horrific appearance as if there had been a disaster.

Most of the skyscrapers in the area had collapsed, and the lower buildings were all buried in the torrents of rock.

This had been an area where civilians stayed.

‘Thousands must have died.’

Cha Gung-hwan’s heart became heavy, but no signs of this were visible on his face. After all, the President and leader of such a large group could not display such weakness.

The Demon Slayers, known as China’s strongest hunter group, were watching him.

“Let’s go.”

At Cha Gung-hwan's words, the Demon Slayers followed him. They descended to the center of the crater.

There was still dust lingering in the air, and the burnt smell had yet to fade.

After a short walk, they found the main culprit of the disaster.

"..."

It was a handsome man with blue hair. He was wearing a fur coat, and as they approached him, they felt a strange pressure.

"Kuk..."

Ten steps.

That was his limit. When he reached ten steps away, Cha Gung-hwan found that he couldn't get any closer.

If he tried to get closer, his airways might get blocked or his heart might explode. It was the same for the Demon Slayers.

The man opened his eyes. His golden eyes gleamed with a light that made them feel like their souls would be sucked out.

Cha Gung-hwan forcibly swallowed his saliva and opened his mouth.

“Who are you?”

In fact, there was no need to ask.

The only reasonable explanation was that he was a Demon.

This man had reportedly fallen from the sky. He'd smashed the protective barrier which surrounded Beijing in an instant, and even then, his momentum had not reduced in the slightest.

It was not something a human could do.

‘Beijing’s protective barrier is among the top three in the entire world. If he smashed it in an instant...’

This meant that he was at least a Demon Duke. However, Cha Gung-hwan found that he couldn’t identify whether the man in front of him was a Demon or not.

He couldn’t feel any demonic energy from this man. In fact, his calm eyes seemed to have a serenity that even a sincere monk would find hard to match.

'The stronger the Demon, the harder it is for them to hide their demon energy.'

If that was the case, then who was this person?

The man looked at him and spoke.

"You are the leader of these people."

"...you! Don't you know who this is?!"

One of the Demon Slayers growled out. His strength and willpower seemed great as the other members beside him were having a hard time even opening their mouths.

But it wasn't a smart move.

"U-, urk...?!"

The Demon Slayer member grabbed his neck, his face becoming pale.

"H-, hey!"

"Why all of a sudden...?"

“K-, kuk...”

Suddenly, water began flowing from the man’s eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. A ghastly amount of water was flowing out of his body. As it flowed, the water became redder and redder until it became as red as blood.

“Kuh... Uk... Kuk...!”

The member of the Demon Slayer’s held his neck tightly, as though he was being choked, before collapsing.

And after twitching a few times, he stopped moving.

“...”

A cold silence fell.

The man opened his mouth again.

“I will give you two options.”

“...options?”

“The first is that you’ll all die.”

“...!”

Cha Gung-hwan’s heart sank.

The man continued in an emotionless voice, seemingly ignorant of their feelings.

“The second is to obey me. If you do that, then your enemy, the Demons... I will destroy them.”

* * *

In the sky without a single dark cloud in sight, the largest lightning bolt in history suddenly struck down.

Boom!

If someone were to see this occurrence, they would only have seen an incredibly bright light that completely filled the horizon. It was several times larger than the largest lightning bolt ever recorded.

If this lightning bolt had struck down in a populated region instead of in the middle of the ocean, it might have multiplied the number of deaths ever caused by lightning bolts by a few times.

A tidal wave as tall as skyscrapers rose up into the air, and dozens of large and small vortices formed.

For a long time, the ocean raged and the waves roared as if they were afraid.

This phenomenon happened for a while before the ocean finally settled down once again like it had never happened.

No one noticed this disturbance, which had suddenly occurred in the South Pacific.

* * *

Lukas didn't get the chance to meet Lee Jong-hak.

He was told that he'd left on a mission just the day before.

It seemed that he had completed his rehabilitation to some extent.

The mission he had chosen was a long-term mission, so it could take up to a few weeks or even a month in some cases.

'He wouldn't come if I called him.'

Despite the fact that he was currently staying in the European Branch, Lee Jong-hak was an Asian hunter. Together with the fact that he held the high position of Vice President, this meant that Nina could not force him to obey her orders.

The only option would be to go to him directly. But Lukas decided against that for now.

There was a disciple whom he had to pay attention to at the moment.

“Magic Missile.”

Woowoong-

A bluish energy projectile formed with a soft hum.

Min Ha-rin looked down at the projectile that she’d created.

Lukas nodded.

“You were successful. That’s your first spell.”

“My first spell...”

A sense of accomplishment filled her heart with those words.

Min Ha-rin clenched her fist as her body shook.

Lukas patted her on the shoulder.

“Congratulations on taking your first step on the path of Magical Science.”

These words brought her back to her senses.

Right. Min Ha-rin was no longer a Swordsman. At that moment, she had been reborn as a newbie Wizard, not a first-rate Swordsman.

It would be a lie to say she didn't feel a bit strange at that revelation. After all, her dedication over the past 10 years had basically been for nothing.

But her heart still beat uncontrollably in her chest.

It was a very thrilling and special experience to manipulate this mysterious power.

“Did you read all the books?”

“Yeah. But I didn’t memorise everything.”

“You don’t need to force yourself to memorise everything. It’s good enough to just read it. Don’t try to cram it all into your head. Instead, read them like novels. That way, even if you don’t remember the exact wording, you’ll still be able to remember the concept.”

Lukas chuckled as he said that.

Min Ha-rin lowered her head a little, and she couldn’t help but think that that smile was very attractive.

Her Master was a strange person. Especially when it came to teaching magic.

She could never tell what he was thinking, and his words were always short. He was beyond blunt. He was like a person without emotions or a monk who had truly separated himself from the world.

But when teaching magic, he was like a young boy who was doing the thing he liked the most.

When the usually blunt image and this not-so-bad image overlapped, Min Ha-rin seemed to feel a fluttering in her heart.

“Did you have any difficulty?”

Moreover, her tone when she spoke to him seemed to be getting softer and softer. Maybe that was why Nina sometimes shot a resentful gaze at her.

She finally understood.

'It's not that.'

Min Ha-rin let out a breath as if to get rid of her clustered thoughts before replying.

"No. It's just... fun."

"Which part?"

"Everything."

She enjoyed increasing her mana while meditating, reading books and learning about Magical Science, and using magic directly.

That's why she was slightly nervous.

"Should I be enjoying it like this?"

There was a saying that it was easier to learn something you enjoyed.

Min Ha-rin knew this.

But she was still nervous.

As a human who was living in this apocalyptic era, she instinctively rejected the thought of training with such a light heart.

Lukas also understood what Min Ha-rin was thinking.

That's why he spoke in a slightly mischievous tone.

"When the time comes, you'll desperately wish for that feeling."

"Huh?"

"Your talent is obviously excellent, but someday, you will inevitably hit a wall. At that time, you will naturally have a different mindset."

"..."

"There's no need to worry about that now. First of all, you should try to reach 3 stars. Then, you'll be able to do your part."

“When will I know that I’ve reached 3 stars?”

“Hmm... Right.”

Lukas raised his index finger and a ball of flames appeared on it.

“You should at least be able to create a Fireball this size.”

Fwoosh-

As he said that, more balls appeared above his finger.

“At least three of them.”

Season 2 Chapter 25

Min Ha-rin frowned slightly.

“...I’ll have to increase my mana capacity first.”

“Right. Also... Do you still have the Soul Crystal?”

Min Ha-rin nodded. She knew that he was talking about Sandro's Soul Crystal.

"Yeah. Do you need it?"

"No. Make sure you don't lose it. When you reach 5 stars, you'll be able to use the crystal to train."

Min Ha-rin's expression became a bit stiff before she asked carefully.

"...are you talking about absorbing the energy in the Soul Crystal?"

This was a very controversial topic among hunters.

The souls in the Soul Crystals were constantly eroded by demonic energy, which caused them to become large sources of pure energy.

This meant that they were a great resource for not only the Demons but also the hunters as well.

Swordsmen or Warriors could use it to increase their ki while Wizards and other mana users could use it to increase their mana. Or if their ki or mana ran out, they could use Soul Crystals to replenish.

Soul Crystals were high-quality elixirs that were created by using the suffering and despair of numerous victims.

Because of this, there were many voices saying that increasing one's power at the cost of others' souls was inhumane. Religious forces, in particular, were strongly opposed to the practice.

It was one of the rare times when Catholicism and Buddhism were in agreement about something.

Min Ha-rin did not criticise others for the practice because of her own morals, but she was still reluctant to sacrifice souls for her own gain.

Lukas shook his head.

"Of course not. I guess you haven't heard of it. There is a way to save the souls in a Soul Crystal."

"There's a way to do that?"

"Right."

"Then why..."

Why didn't he teach it to other humans?

Min Ha-rin wanted to ask this question, but she closed her mouth instead. The image of Lee Jong-hak flashed in her mind.

There might have been a reason why he chose not to tell them.

But Lukas shook his head with a bitter expression.

“...I already taught them how to do it.”

“Huh?”

Min Ha-rin stared at him with wide eyes.

“However, my teaching didn’t spread. Most of the humans I taught chose to remain silent about the method.”

“Why...?”

“Because it is clear to everyone that the energy stored in Soul Crystals is incredibly efficient. They lied to the world and said that there was no way to save the souls in a Soul Crystal in order to prevent the humanitarian backlash.”

“That...”

Min Ha-rin bit her lip.

She never would have imagined that such a dreadful thing had been happening.

But Lukas simply looked at her and said.

“Do you think they’re wrong?”

“Of course I do! The souls in the crystals can be saved, but they are using them like fuel...”

“There was a time when two Demon Counts suddenly appeared in Shaanxi Province, China.”

“Huh?”

“It was a sudden attack, and the humans were not prepared for it. At the time, a Wizard from Shaanxi used hundreds of Soul Crystals to form a large, powerful barrier, which allowed the humans to successfully survive the attack without any casualties.”

“...!”

Min Ha-rin froze, but Lukas continued.

“If the Demons hadn’t been stopped, then at least tens of thousands of people would have been killed or imprisoned by them, but thanks to the Wizard’s quick response, the damage was minimal. Would you

go tell that Wizard that he had thrown away the souls of countless humans and deserved to be hated instead of praised?”

“...”

Min Ha-rin didn't know what to say.

Lukas looked into her eyes.

“In conclusion, thanks to the Soul Crystals, many lives were saved and the Wizard became the hero of Shaanxi.”

Min Ha-rin was certain. If she had been one of those who had been saved by that man, she would have thanked him.

However...

She couldn't help but feel conflicted.

“Then what the hell is the answer? I want to know what you think.”

“My perspective would not help you. The same goes for my conclusion.”

Lukas spoke bitterly.

“Ha-rin, I don’t know why, but I’m actually curious about your thoughts.”

“..”

“You wouldn’t hesitate to cut your own heart out, but you couldn’t stand to see someone else receive even a single scratch. That’s your most humane part.”

Min Ha-rin realised that Lukas was talking about her siblings. She spoke in a weak voice.

“That’s because they are my family. They’re all I have.”

“Not all blood relatives have such a relationship. Don’t you know that there are mothers who sell their own newborn babies? Moreover, you sacrificed yourself for Allida.”

“Excessive humility isn’t good. You made a noble choice. That is something deserving of praise.”

Min Ha-rin was honestly not confident.

Even Lukas wasn’t sure if his conclusion was the right one, so she doubted if she would be able to find the right answer.

However, when she met Lukas' gaze, she naturally opened her mouth.

"When I come to a conclusion, you will be the first person I tell."

Lukas smiled.

"I'll take your word for it."

As he said that, Lukas put his hand on Min Ha-rin's head.

* * *

"Master, Gerard has returned."

Lukas raised his head at Nina's words.

"Gerard?"

"Yes. The one I told you about last time..."

"Ah."

Lukas nodded.

She was talking about the child she'd asked him to consider taking as a disciple.

"He should be heading to my office now to make his report... If it's fine with you, can you take a look at him now?"

"Did you tell him about me?"

"No. I didn't say anything."

Nina was considerate.

Lukas nodded, and a short moment after they entered the office, they heard a knock on the door.

"Come in."

With Nina's permission, the door opened and a group of people walked into the office.

There were a total of five people, three men, and two women. They were not clean, so it seemed they had come to make their report before washing up.

A young man standing in the middle of the group smiled and bowed.

“President, Gerard and the four others are here to report our return.”

Gerard.

Lukas was able to recognise the fact that he was a Swordsman at a glance because of his outfit, physique, and aura. In fact, he was a fairly strong Swordsman.

While he couldn't be compared to Lee Jong-hak, he was comparable to Min Ha-rin when she had still been a Swordsman.

In other words, this meant that he was comparable to a Titled Hunter.

Nina nodded.

“Good job. Was the mission difficult?”

“No. It was very rewarding.”

“Have a cup of tea.”

“I'm honoured.”

Despite just returning home from a long mission, he sat on the sofa in front of Lukas without showing any tiredness.

When his eyes met with Lukas, who was sitting there, he smiled slightly and lowered his head.

He was a polite young man. Thinking this, Lukas also bowed his head to him.

Soon, Nina also came to the sofa and took a seat.

“How was your mission?”

“It was difficult more because of the Demon Beasts than the nobles. There were twice as many as reported. Fortunately, the local hunters helped us, so we were able to get through it without taking much damage.”

“That’s good.”

It was then.

“One of them is injured.”

Lukas spoke.

Gerard and the rest turned to look at Lukas when he said those words.

“Huh?”

The one he was pointing to was the man on the far left.

In all honesty, it would have been more appropriate to call him a boy than a man.

The boy was slim, and at first glance, one might even mistake him for a pretty girl. He had soft blonde hair, light blue eyes, white skin, gentle features, and an emotionless expression that didn't seem to suit his bright appearance.

“It's just a few scratches. I'm fine.”

He answered in a calm tone, one unbecoming of his age.

Lukas looked at him for a moment before speaking.

“Your right arm has been corroded by demonic energy. It seems you only did simple first aid, but if it's not treated properly, you'll probably have to amputate your arm. In the worst case scenario, you could even lose your life.”

Gerard was shocked by those words.

“Oh, my God. Leo, is he telling the truth?”

“...yeah.”

“This is my failure as the team leader. I’m sorry I didn’t notice it before.”

“It’s fine.”

“If it hurts, you should’ve said it hurts.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t think it was that bad.”

When the boy named Leo said that, Nina nodded.

“Leo, go wait in your room. I will send a priest to heal you immediately.”

“Understood.”

“The rest of you should go back as well. You can finish your report later. Take a good rest today.”

“Thank you for your kindness.”

After bowing one last time, the group got up and left the room.

Silence fell upon the room for a moment, then Nina asked carefully.

“What do you think?”

Lukas replied after a moment of silence.

“He has a good aptitude.”

“Ah. You must have liked him. Gerard is an upright and sincere child. I’m also satisfied with his strength...”

“I wasn’t talking about the child named Gerard.”

“Huh?”

Lukas sipped his coffee instead of responding.

It didn’t take long for Nina to realise who Lukas was talking about. This was because he asked to view his file.

Leo Freeman.

This boy who always had a calm expression on his face was the one that Lukas noticed.

He was British, 18 years old, and had no family.

He'd been a hunter for 3 years, and his current job was...

"Supporter?"

"Yes."

"What is that?"

"Basically, his job is to provide assistance. He fills in the blanks in case of an emergency, or he helps to ease the burden of a particular role. But that's only for emergency situations. Usually, he would be in charge of reconnaissance or carrying the equipment."

In other words, he was in charge of the chores.

Lukas grasped the essence of the Supporter role in an instant.

His eyes quickly skimmed over Leo's file.

"He has some background in martial arts. It seems he was quite outstanding as well, but he quit not long after starting. Then he learned swordsmanship, magic, and sorcery, but he didn't do those for long either..."

"That's right. His aptitude as a hunter is below average, but his win rate in battles is terrifying. I believe it's about 90 percent."

"..."

"It is said that he is particularly driven when it comes to fighting Demons. It also seems that he chose to be a supporter because he was not acknowledged by someone..."

Nina looked at Lukas who seemed to be lost in thought.

To be honest, she didn't understand his interest in Leo.

Naturally, she also knew about Leo.

Once a month, she would stay up for an entire night going through the file of every hunter.

In a way, Leo could be called outstanding. He had a monstrous win percentage. In simulated battles against other humans, his win percentage was over 90 percent.

This meant that over the course of 10 battles, he would win 9 times.

And this win rate wasn't because he fought opponents weaker than him. According to the data, most of Leo's opponents were stronger than him.

Nevertheless, it was stated clearly in the file that his aptitude as a hunter was abysmal.

Lukas should have read that too. That was why she was curious as to why Lukas was interested in Leo.

'What does Master see in Leo?'

Nina held in her doubts as she continued to look at Lukas from the side.

After a while, Lukas placed the file onto the table and said.

"I need to see him in person."

"Huh?"

Nina couldn't help but tilt her head to the side.

Season 2 Chapter 26

Lukas went to Leo's room where he was waiting.

Knock knock.

"Yeah."

The door opened following the gentle call, revealing Leo.

His face was a bit dark, showing how tired he was after returning home from the mission.

His expression changed to one of suspicion when he saw Lukas.

"You were the one in the office..."

"You can call me Lukas. I'll be in charge of your treatment this time."

"...ah. So you're a priest."

Leo nodded as if that made sense.

After all, it was natural for a priest to be able to tell that he was injured with nothing but a glance.

Lukas dressed in a very free manner, and he didn't have the religious zeal that one usually felt from priests, but Leo didn't pay much attention to that.

"...well. Something like that."

Pretending to be a priest could be troublesome, so Lukas decided to gloss over it roughly.

"Come in. I just got back, so it's a bit messy."

The room wasn't very spacious. In fact, it was quite narrow. It had a structure similar to a Gositel(1).

It was furnished with a bed, a desk, and a chair.

Contrary to what Leo said, the room wasn't messy at all. In fact, it was quite clean except for a little dust. This showed that the organisation kept it in order while he was away.

'It's like an ascetic's room.'

The books on the shelves and the simple training props in the corner seemed to emphasise that feeling even more.

“Sit on the bed.”

“Okay.”

Lukas grabbed the only chair in the room and sat across from Leo.

“Stretch out your arm.”

Leo held out his arm as he was told.

When he saw his arm, Lukas frowned. His injury was much worse than he expected.

A large, grotesque black spot stretched from Leo’s elbow to his wrist. It was a bizarre sight.

“You must be in a lot of pain...”

“I’m confident in my tolerance.”

“That’s not something to brag about.”

Leo flinched slightly when he heard Lukas’ harsh tone. He bowed his head and murmured.

“...I’m sorry.”

Lukas sighed as if he didn’t want to hear it, and he started treating him.

Basically, the most reliable and efficient way to deal with an injury like this was to cleanse the demonic energy that was embedded in the flesh.

There would have been almost no aftereffects if one were to use holy energy to burn the demonic energy away.

But Lukas couldn’t use holy energy. Therefore, he simply sucked the demonic energy into his body.

Juk- Juk-

If a real priest were to see this healing process, his jaw might have dropped in shock. This was no different from curing poison by putting it in your own body.

“ ... ”

Leo looked down at his arm curiously.

Although he wasn’t completely sure how purification worked, he had a vague feeling that this was different from the usual process.

As he took the demonic energy out, Lukas spoke.

“How did you get this injury?”

“It was an attack from a Demon’s whip. The range was too wide, and the attack was too fast for me to respond. It was Baron Doldor, the target of our mission.”

Barons weren’t very high-ranked Demons, but they were threats nonetheless.

It was a target that most hunters would be unable to defeat on their own.

“Couldn’t you have avoided it?”

“Huh?”

“You train your body extensively. You probably don’t miss a single day.”

Leo’s eyes widened.

“How did you know that?”

“I can tell just by looking at your physique. There is hardly any fat on your body. At least you don’t have a body that suits the term ‘couldn’t respond’.”

“Thank you.”

Lukas looked down at Leo’s slightly bowed head and said.

“Is it a mental problem?”

Leo remained silent for a while before he finally opened his mouth.

“...are you British?”

It was a random question. However, it is something the Lukas had encountered quite often since coming to this world.

As he slowly shook his head, he heard a soft voice.

“My family was exterminated by the Demons. I was the only survivor, and since then, I’ve despised the Demons.”

While it was hard to bear, situations like that were quite common in this era. In this day and age, there were very few people who hadn’t lost their families to the Demons.

Nevertheless, Leo seemed to summarise his ordeal as though he was only a third party who watched on from the side.

“I wanted to be a hunter. Fortunately, my talent wasn’t poor. I was even told that I had an exceptional talent for martial arts. I felt that I was lucky. After all, the faster I grew strong, the sooner I’d be able to kill the Demons.”

He trained for 3 years.

And on the day he turned 15, Leo participated in a subjugation mission.

“It was only then when I realised I had a major flaw.”

Lukas knew what that flaw was. After all, he’d already seen it in his file.

“Whenever I practice, my body is firm. But when I face Demons, I become so tense that I can’t even move a finger. That’s why I haven’t been able to become a proper hunter yet.”

“...”

“I don’t know if you believe me or not, but that’s why I was unable to avoid the whip.”

He had no reason to hide it.

Most of the hunters in the European Branch knew about Leo's flaw.

That was because he had been in most hunter groups before.

"I heard that you're a Supporter."

"Yeah."

"Normally, Supporters would be standing at the back during a battle against a noble."

Lukas' question had a deep meaning.

Why was a Supporter within the range of a noble?

"I told you, didn't I? The whip's range was long."

Even Lukas couldn't help but sigh when he received that answer.

"I don't know why you're lying to me."

"Why do you think I'm lying?"

“There are a lot of bruises on your body.”

Leo was silent.

“I saw the mission record. The noble’s weapon was a whip while the rest of the enemies were all Demon Beasts. If you had been injured by them, you would have scratches or bite marks.”

“...”

“Those are injuries that could only be inflicted by other humans.”

They were bruises that occurred when someone was kicked or punched.

Lukas realised that besides the wound on his arm, which had been caused by the whip, the rest of his injuries were like that.

Of course, it was possible that he had been punched or kicked by Demon Beasts, but if that had been the case, he would not have suffered such minor injuries.

More importantly, he could feel deep malice in Leo’s wounds.

They were deliberately caused by a malicious person who wanted to cause as much pain as possible without killing him.

“They made you the shield.”

That’s why he got the wound on his arm.

There was no need to say who they were.

Leo looked down at his arm for a while.

“Please keep it a secret.”

“Why?”

“They are the only group who will accept a guy like me. I really want to help defeat the Demons. I beg you.”

As he said this, Leo bowed deeply.

This meant that he was willing to continue living his current life.

“It doesn’t matter if they beat me up. I can take it.”

By then, the treatment was completed.

Lukas stood to his feet and said.

“You’re pathetic.”

Leo blinked in surprise.

His voice was filled with contempt, which was completely different from the slightly caring attitude he had been showing so far.

“The pain isn’t a problem? You can take it? Does saying that make you feel like you’re making a great sacrifice?”

The sarcastic voice caused Leo’s expression to stiffen.

A mocking smile hung from Lukas’ lips.

“You’re really good at wrapping the fact that ‘you don’t have the courage to fight’ into a nice little box. But don’t get it twisted. You’re nothing but a loser who is unable to overcome his own flaws.”

“...what do you want me to do?”

Leo’s voice was filled with helplessness.

"I've done everything I could to cure the trauma. I've tried psychotherapy and taken medicine. I thought that experiencing a shock while facing a Demon would help, so I didn't hesitate to bite my own tongue. And yet..."

And yet his body still wouldn't move.

He could not even move a single finger.

When he faced a Demon, his entire body would become covered in cold sweat, his vision would blur, and his entire body would go numb.

"So you're saying that what you're doing now is the answer? Are you pretending to gain comfort in the fact that you can hunt Demons while satisfying the lowly desires of that group?"

"...what do you know?"

"I know of a better way."

Lukas muttered in a low voice.

"Of course, it won't be easy. In fact, it will be dozens of times harder than everything you've done up to this point. Perhaps living like you are now would be a better choice in comparison. But if you don't like the way things are now, if you have even the slightest bit of dissatisfaction... Come to the 12th Training Room. I will wait there until tomorrow morning."

After saying those words, he left the room without turning around.

Leo looked at his back with gleaming eyes.

He could dismiss everything he'd just heard as bullshit from a person he'd only just met who knew nothing about him. After all, he'd already been insulted countless times.

He'd put up with it every time. In fact, at this point, it wasn't even hard to do.

He knew how to ignore the criticism and contempt of others.

But he didn't know why Lukas' words shook his heart so much.

"...shit."

No. Leo knew why.

He bit his lip hard.

* * *

“Magic Missile.”

Woowoong-

Three bluish projectiles appeared at the same time.

‘Great.’

Min Ha-rin clenched her fist.

It was now possible for her to cast three Magic Missiles at the same time.

“Hoo.”

But the moment she lost her focus, the Magic Missiles disappeared.

Min Ha-rin took a few sips of cold water and wiped her mouth before looking at the door.

‘...he hasn’t been around lately.’

Her Master, in other words, Lukas, had been showing his face less and less over the past few days.

Originally, he would come to give her advice two or three times a day, and sometimes he even stayed the entire day, but lately, he would not show up for two or three days.

'I'm not stuck on anything right now, but...'

In all honesty, Lukas' presence wasn't absolutely necessary.

The increase of her mana capacity, which was what Min Ha-rin was currently working on, was nothing but simple repetition, and there was nothing she didn't understand when she occasionally read the books.

In the first place, Min Ha-rin was very smart. She couldn't speak for herself, but it was rare for her to find someone smarter than she was.

Despite not having any learning difficulties, she still felt empty inside.

Was it because he wasn't there?

"Mm..."

Min Ha-rin frowned.

No. She couldn't do this.

This kind of dependence was not good, and it didn't suit her.

Min Ha-rin mustered up her determination, but soon after that, her mind went blank again.

She was currently in the European Branch Headquarters, so she had very few acquaintances. Most of the hunters who had escaped with her had either returned to their own branch or gone on missions.

And although Allida was still in the headquarters, she seemed to be very busy due to the fact that she was a Wizard.

Nevertheless, she didn't feel lonely.

This was because learning magic was fun, and she still had Lukas.

Lukas was the first real teacher she'd ever had. She still cared about his identity, but after a few weeks, she'd grown to trust him.

He was reasonable and wise. And upright.

The last one was just her opinion, but she felt that it was the reason that Nina was so respectful to him.

Of course, there were still problems. She didn't know the proper distance to keep.

He was her first Master. And sometimes, she felt like he didn't like her, so she was unsure.

What kind of relationship was a master and student supposed to have? How polite should she be? Would he mind if she played pranks on him?

If they got closer, maybe he might spoil her a bit...

After thinking this, Min Ha-rin couldn't help but fan her face with her hand.

"...ah. Hot."

Her eyes once again turned to the door.

However, the door didn't budge, as though it had no intention of moving in the first place.

Season 2 Chapter 27

The fact that the Demons had killed his entire family wasn't special. Leo also thought so.

But for someone who'd witnessed the tragedy in person, it was a nightmare. The hardest thing to overcome was their sorrow.

"..."

Leo lay on the bed and looked up at the ceiling.

Everything Lukas said was true.

He'd become like this because he was too weak to overcome himself. It was something that he would have avoided thinking about for a long time, so he was unable to control his emotions when he heard someone else say it.

'I thought I'd buried my emotions long ago.'

Ironically, Leo had been living a dead life.

Lukas was right.

He ran away because he didn't have the courage to fight back. He was a loser, who couldn't break past his own flaws, and a fool, who thought that he was sacrificing himself for his goals.

However, the thing that touched his heart the most were the words that he was just comforting himself.

Knock knock.

Then there was a knock on the door.

Leo had already figured out who it was, but he still got up and opened the door.

“Hi.”

It was Gerard.

He smiled and pointed at the room.

“Can I come in?”

Leo stepped away instead of answering.

Gerard didn't hesitate to walk into the room. Then, he closed the door.

“Did you talk?”

At the same time, a cold voice sounded out.

Gerard stood in the room with a cold expression on his face. If there was anyone there except Leo, they might have doubted their eyes and ears at that moment.

But Leo wasn't surprised. He'd long known that this was Gerard's true nature and the nature of his team.

"No."

He denied it.

It was a short question, but he could tell what he was talking about.

Leo had been treated by a completely different priest, or, to be precise, by someone who wasn't one of Gerard's subordinates.

This was because Nina had noticed his injuries.

In other words, there was the risk that the bruises on his body would have been noticed during the process of removing the demonic energy.

Gerard might have seen Lukas enter the room. No. He *must* have seen it.

And as soon as he noticed him leaving, he came to check on Leo.

"Right."

Gerard responded in a dry tone. It seemed that he didn't think Leo would lie to him.

Gerard flopped onto the bed as though he was the owner of the room.

"I like the relationship we have right now, Leo."

Lee didn't respond to his words again, but Gerard continued to talk like he didn't care.

"In a world like this, I feel stressed just by breathing. And it builds up so much that I can no longer hold it in. So at first, I vented my frustrations on small animals and stuff like that. Like cats and dogs. Their screams were really satisfying at first, but I grew bored of it after a while. They were too weak. That's why... I was so happy when you said you wanted to join our group."

A wide smile appeared on Gerard's face.

"You are strong. Although you're weaker than me, you're stronger than most hunters."

He was telling the truth.

Gerard had the talent and strength to rank around the top among hunters his age, and most Titled Hunters had great interest in him.

Nina, the Branch President, was no exception.

Above all, Gerard was older than Leo.

They had fought numerous times, but Leo had never been able to defeat him.

“When you, like a doll, don’t do anything and let me beat you up... Do you know how excited I feel? It’s like you were a toy that God created just for me.”

He didn’t know. He wasn’t even curious.

Leo remained silent.

“Our interests match perfectly. You get the sense of accomplishment of killing Demons while I get pleasure and stress relief. I hope this relationship can last for a long time.”

Gerard laughed at the silent Leo.

“That’s all. Make sure you heal your bruises quickly. As your group leader, I worry about you.”

With that, Gerard left the room.

Leo remained in the same spot.

‘Comforting myself...’

Leo didn't kill Demons.

He was just a member of a group who killed Demons. He had tricked himself into seeing it differently.

He thought that he had a stake because he helped the group slay Demons. But how could he not know that it was just a delusion?

Did his support really help them kill the Demons?

Were there any missions that would not have been successful without him?

What exactly did Leo Freeman really want?

'A loser who couldn't break past his own flaws.'

As soon as he remembered Lukas' words, the bruises on his body began throbbing fiercely.

It was like the senses in his body had only returned at that moment, and the pain was unbearable.

"Kuh..."

Nevertheless, Leo endured the pain.

With a staggering gait, he left his room.

Of course, he didn't go looking for a priest like Gerard said.

* * *

Lukas felt that there was a high chance Leo would come to him.

But he never expected him to show up after just one hour.

"..."

Leo didn't say anything. It seemed that he was waiting for Lukas to speak first.

He was still covered in bruises. Lukas felt that it would have been better if he'd come after being treated.

'No.'

He looked into Leo's eyes and thought. It didn't really matter.

“Have you had a change of heart?”

“...”

“Well. That’s good. Get ready.”

“...ready?”

For what?

Leo didn’t continue to ask.

This was because Lukas removed his coat and took a stance.

It was the first time he’d seen such a stance in his life, but Leo immediately realised what it was.

Lukas had taken a martial arts stance.

“Do you want to fight me? With martial arts?”

Leo’s voice had a tinge of absurdity in it.

Lukas didn't look like a Warrior. Just as he had looked at his physique and figured out his strength, Leo had done the same to Lukas.

He didn't have a trained body.

More importantly, didn't he say that he was a priest?

As soon as he thought that, Lukas' murmur appeared in his mind.

'...well. Something like that.'

...Now that he thought about it, Lukas had never affirmed that he was a priest.

'Still.'

Leo was well aware of his own capabilities when it came to fighting humans. If it was a 1-on-1 battle under equal conditions, he was confident that he wouldn't be pushed around even by the most talented fighters.

At least he didn't think he could lose to a skinny man like this.

Taht.

Suddenly, Lukas kicked off from the ground.

There was no need for him to panic because it was a telegraphed attack. But Leo's gaze changed when he saw the speed of the charge.

It was much faster than he expected.

Leo hurriedly drew upon his ki.

'The right.'

He leaned back and avoided Lukas' fist.

Swoosh-

The tip of his chin was stung by the wind generated by the punch.

"...!"

After a brief moment of surprise, Leo's expression became serious.

It wasn't just speed. Lukas' fist also contained a lot of destructive power.

He didn't know where he was hiding such strength in his skinny body, but Leo knew that if he didn't take this seriously, he might suffer an unexpected blow.

'A Monk?'

Among all the classes, their close-combat capabilities were said to be the best. Only those who had undergone strict internal screening and difficult trials could become Monks, so it could be considered an elite class.

It wouldn't be strange for a Monk to be good in both healing and fighting.

'However...'

Bluish energy rose up like a haze around Lukas' body.

It wasn't ki. Nor was it holy power.

As far as Leo knew, there was only one bluish energy.

'Mana.'

Martial arts using mana?

He'd never heard of it before.

This was natural. While Lukas had spread numerous abilities around this world, he had not spread Magical Martial Arts.

There were several reasons for this, but the main reason was that this world already had its own martial arts system.

In particular, Lukas was impressed by the ancient Chinese martial arts.

They had learned to use martial arts based on their ki, and their system was so established that they didn't need the martial arts from another world.

Unlike the lack of knowledge of magic, the various martial arts styles and techniques were firmly embedded in this world. There was no need to spread martial arts.

But for Leo, who obviously didn't know that, Lukas' movements were a mystery.

'I'll think about it later.'

Leo's gaze sharpened.

His waist, which had been nearly bent in half, became straight in an instant. He used nothing more than his flexibility to correct his stance.

His entire body throbbed because of his bruises and tiredness, but he endured it.

And naturally, he launched a counterattack.

Leo's fists shot forward quickly.

Papapa.

He unleashed a series of quick, powerful attacks in an instant.

Lukas dodged all of the attacks before he grabbed Leo's fist after the last punch.

Taht!

But at that moment, Leo leapt off the floor and kicked towards Lukas' stomach as though he'd expected this.

Unable to withstand the shock, Lukas' body slid backwards.

His eyes shined.

'His reactions are good.'

He made no unnecessary movements, and his balance was solid.

Above all, he was extremely calm. That calmness would become this child's greatest weapon.

But only if he could maintain it under any circumstances.

Unlike Lukas, who had a soft smile on his lips, Leo's expression was stiff.

'It's like kicking a lump of iron.'

If it wasn't for his ki, he might have broken his toe. Nevertheless, that didn't stop him from taking advantage of the situation.

Taht!

Leo quickly closed the distance and continued his attacks.

He mainly used his fists, and every attack was aimed at a vital spot. Because the connection and flow between his attacks was smooth and clear, it would be hard to retake the initiative after it was lost.

'I have the flow.'

Although he thought this, Leo couldn't hide his nervousness.

He'd launched over a dozen attacks, but let alone a decisive blow, he could not even inflict a scratch.

Lukas avoided most of his attacks, and for the ones that he blocked, it made Leo feel like he was hitting a wall instead of a person.

By then, Lukas had finished judging Leo.

'He should be a Second Class Warrior.'

This was extremely impressive considering his age. Even with the flaw in his mind, he was looking forward to how far Leo could go when he was given an environment in which he could focus.

"Huk..."

Lukas sucked in a breath.

Just as Leo started to feel uncomfortable.

Kwak!

“...!”

Leo’s vision flipped, and he found himself lying on the floor.

It was a good thing that the training room had padded flooring, or he might have gotten a concussion.

Leo stared blankly at the ceiling for a moment before realising that the fight had been decided in an instant.

‘Was he testing me?’

This fact was hard for him to accept.

As he stared blankly at the ceiling, he heard Lukas’ voice.

“First of all, we’ll start with breaking your delusion.”

“...delusion? You mean me?”

“Right. You have the delusion that Demons are the most fearsome beings in the world.”

Lukas looked down at Leo as he spoke.

“My old friend once tried to make someone, who was similar to you, his disciple. He wasn’t able to finalise the relationship, but, at least, he managed to fix their mental trauma.”

Leo didn’t think that that could apply to him, but he was curious.

“How did they overcome it?”

“They didn’t overcome it.”

“Huh?”

“They simply learned that there were things even more frightening than what they were afraid of. That’s all.”

Lukas chuckled.

“Stand up, Leo Freeman, catch your breath, and take your stance. Your last break for today has ended.”

At that moment, Leo felt that something was wrong.

“From today on, you will learn that Demons aren’t the thing you need to fear.”

Season 2 Chapter 28

“That’ll be all for today.”

When Lukas said those words, Leo collapsed like a puppet whose strings had been cut.

“Huk...! Huk...!”

His entire body shook heavily like tree leaves in a strong breeze. His lungs felt like they would have climbed up his throat just so that they could fill themselves with the air they desperately desired.

How much did he sweat? His throat was parched.

He was so exhausted that his body felt like a dried carcass in a desert. If his sweat were to dry at this moment, he was half sure that salt flakes would fall like when sea water evaporated.

Leo had never neglected even a day of training in his life. He always tried his best when training, and if he felt that there was something lacking, he wouldn’t hesitate to push his body even further.

But today’s training with Lukas was different.

It wasn't just his body. Lukas persistently and brutally attacked his mind as well.

"Move! Use your head! Don't stop thinking!"

"Fool! Is that the only thing you could've thought of after squeezing your brain? Do you really think that's the best choice?"

"Why didn't you reach your arm out? You shrank away from something as simple as a shake of a hand."

Lukas didn't miss even the smallest mistakes. And Leo couldn't refute him because nothing he said was wrong.

Leo grit his teeth and constantly look for better moves, but he was always met with harsh criticism.

He had felt that he didn't have a weak will in front of anything but the Demons, but after listening to that constant abuse for an entire night, his brain felt like a wet rag.

But... it was still worth it.

The most terrible part was what came at the end.

"Focus from now on. If you can't endure it and pass out... I'll kill you."

With those words, Lukas' aura changed.

Kung—

“...!!”

The invisible pressure that Lukas exuded seemed to penetrate his entire body. Not just his skin and muscles, even his internal organs could feel it.

Even breathing became painful.

His entire body shook.

Fear similar to when he faced a Demon filled his body. No. It might have even been greater.

‘Die. I’m going to die. He will tear me to pieces and kill me...’

The only thought resounding in his head was his inevitable death.

Lukas didn't move.

He just stood in place and released his aura.

But that alone was enough to make Leo panic.

Clatter.

The shaking got worse. He felt like his brain was slowly melting. It was like lava was flowing around his skull.

His thoughts had already gone blank. He didn't even know if he was still standing.

How long had it been? How much longer did he have to endure this torture?

'Hu-, huk...'

He couldn't breathe.

He'd reached the limit.

Leo's face gradually began to turn white.

— He would really... die...

Just as Leo's eyes were about to roll back into his skull.

Shuk.

The pressure disappeared.

Leo's body collapsed to the ground and became what it was now.

"Huk, huk..."

His breathing still hadn't calmed, but Lukas spoke briefly.

"Today is just a taste."

"..."

"I will increase the intensity tomorrow. And the next day. And the next."

Fear blossomed on Leo's face.

When he saw this boy looking up at him with an expression of fear, Lukas felt a thread of sympathy in his heart, but his voice was still cold.

“If you don’t return by midnight, I’ll take it that you’ve given up.”

Then, he left the room.

He didn’t give any comfort or encouragement. What Leo Freeman needed was not warmth.

He was a wildflower. The harsher the winds blew, the more barren the ground was, the more violent his environment, the more beautifully he would bloom.

‘And.’

Lukas’ gaze sank.

He had to go to a very important place now.

* * *

There was an unprecedented scene in the Chinese Branch of the Hunter Association’s Headquarters in Beijing, China.

Most of the association’s heroes who represented East Asia had gathered in the conference room, which could seat hundreds of people.

In terms of influence, the people in this room were completely mind-blowing.

The Great Shaolin Master, Warrior Nun(1), and Sword Saint of Mount Hua.

Hwarang(2) Leader, Heaven and Earth Fighter, and Bow God.

Ying Yang Warrior, Beastman, The Black Armor General, etc...

(TL: I decided to translate the names since you wouldn't really understand if I just romanised them, that's why some of them sound strange.)

They were all representatives of the different regions, and they were heroes who received explosive support from the hunters and the public.

And there were two exceptionally young and extremely powerful beings among these heroes.

Heavenly Dragon, Kim Go-hyuk, and the Earthly Dragon, Kano Aya.

Two of the Three Dragons who protected East Asia were attending the meeting.

The Heavenly Dragon, Kim Go-hyuk, looked around and grinned.

“Hey. This is quite the sight. What’s going on? Are we picking the East Asia team for an All-Star Game?”

“If we really were called here for such a stupid thing, I’ll punch someone. I pushed aside my busy schedule to come here. I had to cross a sea.”

While Aya grumbled, Kim Go-hyuk looked around before tilting his head to the side.

“I don’t see Lee Jong-hak. I heard he’s still alive, so why didn’t he come? There’s no way he wasn’t called as well.”

Without him, it felt like something was missing.

In fact, that was simply the impact that Lee Jong-hak had on those around him.

“It’s said that he’s currently on a mission in Europe. He’s always wanted to be on the frontlines, and now, he can do it under the guise of repaying his debts. So he’s like a fish in water.”

“Oho, that guy’s a real hero. No wonder he easily took first place in the East Asia Popularity vote.”

“What the hell is that?”

“Haven’t you seen the questionnaire? For your information, you’re 4th place. I’m 12th, so I think I need to improve my look.”

“I don’t think that’s why your ranking is so low.”

Kim Go-hyuk simply chuckled when Aya spoke in a sarcastic voice.

Then the door opened and an old man appeared. The chatter in the room disappeared in an instant.

At first, they couldn’t recognize him because his appearance was very different from the last time they saw him.

The Great Shaolin Master couldn’t help but mutter in a soft voice.

“President Cha Gung-hwan?”

Only then did these people realise that this old man was Cha Gung-hwan, President of the Chinese Branch.

‘What’s going on?’

Aya frowned.

It had only been a few months since she last saw him, but he’d aged so much it was like a few years had passed instead.

Gone was the impression of a strong middle-aged man. Instead, he only looked like an old man who was about to cross over to the other side at any moment.

It wouldn't be a lie to say that everyone's attention was focused on Cha Gung-hwan, whose expression was abnormally tense.

"Thank you for putting aside your busy schedules to come here today. Not everyone could make it, but I think we have roughly everyone we need."

"This is the second time the President has called for an emergency meeting. What the hell happened?"

When the Nun asked this question in a blunt tone, Cha Gung-hwan responded with a slightly shadowed face.

"He will tell you the details."

"...!!"

At that moment, most of the heroes seated in the room leapt from their seats.

"What the hell?!"

"Since when...?"

Cha Gung-hwan pointed to a place that should've been empty, but when they looked, a man was sitting there.

It was a man with blue hair and an emotionless expression.

He looked at those who'd gotten up before saying.

“Sit.”

Thud—

“Huk!”

“Kuk...”

Those who had jumped to their feet were forced to sit down, as though pressed by an invisible force.

All those who were gathered there were those who wouldn't be frightened by high-ranking Demon nobles but who would instead draw their swords with great spirit. But now, they had been forced to sit with one word from a man whose identity was still unknown.

There were some who grit their teeth and tried to withstand the pressure, but they didn't last very long. This was because it felt like their bodies would crumble if they resisted any further.

The man then spoke in a cold voice.

“From today on, you’ll obey me.”

“Who are you?”

When the Sword Saint asked this in a forced voice, the man spoke nonchalantly.

“Nodiesop. I don’t want much from you. Obey me, and I will lead your people-”

“You son of a bitch...!”

Nodiesop turned to the man who cut him off.

It was the Black Armor General. He was a man who wore large black armor that didn’t reveal even a bit of skin. He was one of Japan’s greatest heroes, and he was known for his exceptional sword skills.

Cha Gung-hwan hurriedly tried to restrain him with a pale face.

“Black Armor General! Stop!”

"It's you who should stop! President Cha Gung-hwan. Who is this man? Did you just call us here to have him insult us?!"

The Black Armor General spoke in a fiery tone.

"Answer me! Who are you?!"

"I am Nodiesop."

"I was asking about your identity, not your name!"

Nodiesop stared at the Black Armor General.

After a while, a soft smile appeared on his lips.

"My identity? Fine. Since you want to know, I will show you."

"Y-, you can't! Stop! Nodiesop!"

Cha Gung-hwan desperately tried to stop him, but it was too late.

"U-, uk... urk..."

“Wh-, what’s going on?”

‘What are you doing?’”

Pujik, pujik, pujik...

An eerie sound could be heard from within the armor.

They didn’t know what was happening inside it.

Pop!

Suddenly, following a popping sound, the Black Armor General fell to his knees.

Blood trickled from the gaps in the armor.

“H-, he’s dead!”

“Shit...!”

Despite the threat of death, the heroes glared at Nodiesop.

But that was all. As if they had been bound by an invisible force, they still couldn't move their bodies.

“What the hell did you do?”

“Didn't he ask who I was? I just told him.”

Thud—

It was at that moment when the armor, which had still been maintaining a human shape, fell into pieces.

“Mm!”

“Such a thing...”

The Black Armor General within the armor had become a ball of blood. His entire body had exploded like a balloon.

‘He became like this just for asking his identity?’

Aya's expression became hard.

She tried to calm her pounding heart.

In her opinion, Nodiesop was way more powerful than any Demon she had ever encountered. His power completely surpassed human perception.

But it was Cha Gung-hwan's expression that truly caught her attention. He bowed his head beside Nodiesop with a sorrowful look on his face.

'Is this the reason Cha Gung-hwan called us here?'

To make them submit to that man?

"What do you want?"

It was the Great Shaolin Master who spoke in a heavy tone.

Nodiesop responded as though he was waiting for this question.

"I want you to find a man. It would be good if you could bring him to me, but if that's impossible, just telling me his location would suffice."

"A man...? Who are you talking about?"

Nodiesop spoke with a cold expression on his face.

“Lukas Trowman.”

Season 2 Chapter 29

Katherine gulped.

She’d already done it several times, but every time she did it, she felt nervous.

“I brought food.”

“...”

“...I’ll leave it here.”

The woman with pitch-black hair was leaning against a wall with one arm wrapped around the huge scythe.

Looking at Katherine who put down the plate of food and stepped back, she spoke softly.

“I told you that I don’t need it.”

Katherine flinched and trembled. She bowed and shook her head.

“I-, I’m sorry.”

“Go away.”

“Yes...”

But there was a reason why Katherine was so polite to this woman.

Most of Northern Ireland had fallen into the hands of the Demons. That’s what Uncle Freddy, a survivor, had told her. He had a radio, which allowed him to have a basic understanding of the situation around them.

This city might have been the only safe place in Northern Ireland, no, in the entirety of Great Britain.

Katherine knew why.

It was all thanks to this woman. She’d killed all of the Demons and Demon Beasts in the city.

She didn’t know who she was or why she didn’t kill any humans, but Katherine was certain of one thing.

It was only because of her that she and her brother Tom were still alive.

She preferred to be alone.

Katherine knew that.

She didn't like talking to her more than twice a day.

Katherine headed outside. She intended to go to Uncle Freddy to exchange for food and to get some more information.

But Katherine's little plan was broken before it could've even started.

There was someone standing in front of her house.

"Ah..."

It was a man with light blonde hair.

Katherine knew most of the people in the city. But she'd never seen this man before.

However, this man felt strangely familiar.

After a while, Katherine was able to recognise why.

The black-haired woman in the house. He reminded her of her.

When their eyes met, the man smiled faintly as if to reassure Katherine.

“Did I startle you?”

“N-, no...”

“Right. That’s good... I would like to ask you a question.”

“Okay.”

“Can I ask who is in this house?”

The man was pointing to Katherine’s house.

“My younger brother and our benefactor.”

The benefactor who saved the entire city.

That's what the survivors called the black-haired woman. The fact that she was staying in Katherine's house wasn't really something to hide, so she revealed it gently.

"...benefactor."

At those words, the man mumbled like he'd heard something unexpected before saying.

"Can you call her?"

"O-, our benefactor doesn't like to move."

"Tell her Lukas is here. She'll come out right away."

"There's no need."

Katherine trembled.

When she turned around, she found that the woman, who had not taken a single step out of the room after entering it, was standing there.

With a bright smile that didn't match her dark appearance.

"You came sooner than I expected."

“You scattered your aura around so much that I couldn’t help but come.”

There was no need to look closely. External Force surrounded her body, the only power that allowed one to move freely in the multiverse and a power that a transcendent being would have never been able to imitate.

Decades after coming to this world. Lukas was finally meeting a being on the same level as him.

* * *

“...”

Katherine glanced nervously at the room.

It had been quite a while since Lukas and the black-haired woman had gone in there.

Did they know each other? It didn’t seem that way.

However, when the two met, a strange tension seemed to emerge.

‘What are they talking about?’

Although she was curious, she didn't dare to eavesdrop.

Katherine could only sit in a corner, waiting quietly while her anxiety slowly built up.

* * *

The two Absolutes sat with an old wooden table between them.

Technically speaking, Lukas hadn't found the Absolute sitting in front of him. She had deliberately released her aura and led him to her.

As soon as she'd entered this world, she spread her presence across the entire continent. Then she waited.

Because she knew Lukas would come.

It was a smart decision.

After all, Lukas wanted to protect this world at all costs.

This was her summons.

If he hadn't responded, there was no telling what disasters would have followed.

"Sedi."

When Lukas looked at her with a puzzled gaze, she continued.

"My name, but I think you might've known it already."

"...I knew it."

While it was his first time meeting her in person, Lukas had heard about her before.

"You did? Hmm."

Woowoong-

The scythe resonated softly with Sedi's hum.

Lukas' eyes narrowed.

Naturally, this scythe wasn't an ordinary weapon.

Maybe it was a Soul Weapon.

A transcendent weapon that embodied the power of an Absolute.

“I came to make an offer.”

“Kiki.”

While Lukas glanced at the scythe, Sedi shook her head.

“You’re predictable. Just like Nodiesop said.”

“...”

“So, is that all you wanted to say?”

Sedi was indirectly saying that she had no intention of talking.

“You are called [Battle Fanatic].”

“That’s right, Madman.”

Her tone became cold.

“So what? I’m barely holding myself back at the moment, so please don’t say anything stupid, okay? Ah, of course, I really do want to see how strong you truly are, Madman, but...”

Sedi’s voice became lower and lower. Apart from that, a fierce aura seemed to be trying to burst out of her body.

The entire house began to shake.

“The person I serve wants you dead. And that has a lot more priority than my little desires. Plus I really don’t want to stay in this measly universe for very long. The longer I stay here, the more irritated I feel.”

Her reaction was much more hostile than Lukas expected.

Nevertheless, Lukas’ expression remained unchanged. If he had thought that it would have been impossible to negotiate with her, he wouldn’t have done something as crazy as coming directly to her.

The most important thing was what would happen next.

“The Great Game.”

“ ... ”

When she heard those words, Sedi's aura faded a little. Her expression also changed.

"As early as a year and at latest a few years. A Great Game will begin in this universe."

"...bullshit. Even if you are a Lord, there is no way you'd be able to know the exact timing. Only the four Rulers and God could know."

Sedi's expression was strange as she refuted his words.

"What if I told you that I heard it directly from the Lightning God?"

"..."

Those words couldn't be dismissed as bullshit.

Sedi knew that this universe was currently being protected by the Lightning God. As a result, the other Rulers could not easily interfere and other Absolutes were unable to enter.

She too would not have been able to enter if she had been even a step too slow.

Huk.

Her aura disappeared. In other words, Sedi had agreed to sit at the negotiation table.

“...so? What does the Great Game have to do with your offer?”

“Nothing special. When that time comes, we will work together.”

“It seems you know what the Great Game is.”

Of course, he didn't know. It could be said that he didn't know anything but the name.

But Sedi was the same.

Just as she'd said. Only the four Rulers and God knew about the Great Game.

In a sense, the four Rulers were enemies. So they would never help each other.

The balance in the multiverse could have only been attained when the four Rulers maintained their existence as independent concepts.

If these cosmic beings were to work together, the order of the multiverse would be disrupted just by that mere fact.

And if such a thing were to happen, then the aftermath would affect every single universe.

So Lukas bluffed.

“Well.”

“...”

Sedi’s eyes were filled with suspicion.

But that alone was a sign of half success.

‘This universe is currently being guarded by the Lightning God.’

Interference from the other Rulers was impossible. In other words, Sedi couldn’t ask or consult with the Ruler she served about this matter.

She couldn’t think about Lukas’ proposal and make a judgement on her own.

This fact alone was Lukas’ greatest advantage.

He only needed to persuade Sedi, who was in front of him, not the Ruler behind her.

'I just need to buy myself at least half a year.'

He grasped this thread.

If he was able to buy that time, he would have a way to fight against the Absolutes without needing to limit his own power.

Of course, this method came with risks, but it was much better than the alternatives.

"It would be impossible for you to work together with another Absolute. Unless you both serve the same Ruler."

The Rulers usually had such an influence on those who followed them. At least, Lukas had never seen Absolutes who served different Rulers working together.

But Lukas was an exception.

As long as he didn't follow anyone, he could cooperate with any Absolute depending on the circumstances.

It was a rare advantage granted to him by his isolation.

“To get rid of me or to get a Ruler under them. Which outcome do you think your Ruler would prefer?”

Forming an alliance didn't mean that one would definitely become a Ruler. But it was clear that the odds would increase.

“...”

Sedi furrowed her eyebrows as she agonised over Lukas' words. She even let out an audible groan.

Unlike the cold impression, it seemed that she had a simple side.

Then she suddenly raised her head and asked.

“By the way, you...”

“What is it?”

“Do you have the confidence to handle the other two guys who came here?”

Lukas chuckled.

“Thanks.”

“What are you talking about?”

“So three Absolutes entered this universe.”

“...ah.”

Sedi made a face. Then she glared at Lukas with an unfair look in her eyes, but Lukas expertly avoided her gaze.

Among the Absolutes, there was a surprisingly large amount of such simple people.

Their minds were worn away by an eternity of repetitive work.

So while this side of Sedi was unexpected, it wasn't surprising.

“...you mean bastard.”

“...”

Mm.

Lukas was surprised by her accusation for a moment, but he soon collected himself and answered her question.

“It would be difficult for me alone. However...”

When he glanced at her, Sedi let out a laugh.

“I don’t intend to help you with that.”

Well. Maybe he was hoping for too much. For Lukas, the fact that she wouldn’t do anything was already good enough.

“...”

Sedi agonised for a moment longer. Then, as if she’d thought of something, her expression brightened.

“I can give you some information.”

“Information?”

“Yeah. But there are conditions.”

“What is it?”

“You can’t kill any more Demons in the future.”

“...”

Lukas looked carefully at Sedi when he heard those words.

Her appearance, the essence of her aura, and her Soul Weapon.

And now, the remark to not kill the Demons.

It was like the image of a Ruler appeared behind Sedi at that moment.

“The Black Horned Demon God. That’s the Ruler you serve.” (TL: As mentioned in the comments, the fact that there is another ‘Demon King’ in the world currently might cause some confusion. So the Ruler is now ‘Demon God’.)

Sedi nodded. It seemed she had no intention of hiding it.

But Lukas asked in confusion.

“The humans here call you benefactor. Didn’t you kill every Demon and Demon Beast in this city?”

“If they can’t recognise the level of their opponent and jump into battle like fools, then they’re worthless.”

It seemed she valued smart subjects. Lukas had identified one of Sedi’s traits.

Perhaps it was for this same reason that she didn’t kill the humans in this city. The humans in this city had unknowingly gained a safe haven that was even better than the United States across the ocean.

“In any case. I don’t care about the humans you raised, but you can’t move personally.”

Her request wasn’t particularly difficult.

Lukas had no intention of revealing his strength for the time being. He wanted to hide his existence as much as possible.

Even this face-to-face meeting with Sedi was a big gamble for Lukas. However, the more they talked, the higher the possibility of negotiation. And he’d just become even more convinced.

When he realised that she was serving the Demon God.

‘This universe has the potential to become one of the Demon God’s realms.’

Of course, Lukas would never tolerate such a situation, but the other side might have different thoughts. The Demons, these creatures who had been created by the Demon God, had already swallowed about half of the land in this world.

He couldn't tell about the Demon God's thoughts, but his subordinate, Sedi, would surely consider this world as a 'universe to protect'.

But the other Absolutes were different.

Lukas wasn't sure what they would do. He could only hope that they were conscious of their identities as Absolutes.

So he wouldn't touch them for the time being. He would try to avoid them as much as possible until they realised what was going on.

"Understood."

Lukas accepted Sedi's offer.

But they both knew that this alliance was as strong as wet paper. But for now, at least, it was beneficial to work together.

"Then our alliance is formed."

Crack!

A large scythe came to a stop in the air right in front of Lukas. He'd released a barrier to stop Sedi's attack.

Even though he'd put quite a bit of mana into the barrier, it still creaked as the scythe pressed against it while unleashing dark energy.

"What are you doing?"

"This is my last condition."

A large smile blossomed on Sedi's face.

"Let's loosen our bodies a little. I'll control my power. I won't use any force beyond what this universe can handle."

Both sides would fight while restraining themselves.

He couldn't refuse it.

He could tell just by looking at Sedi's face.

Lukas sighed.

Season 2 Chapter 30

Lukas returned to the 12th Training Room. As soon as he opened the door and stepped inside, he heard a familiar voice.

“You’re back.”

It was Leo.

There was still time to spare, but it seemed that he had been waiting there for a while already.

Lukas looked at Leo and said.

“What about your injuries?”

“I went to get them treated.”

“What about a break?”

“I rested enough.”

The answers came back smoothly in a clear voice.

Lukas then asked the most important question.

“Are you ready?”

“I am.”

The answer came once again without any wasted words. Leo’s firm resolve could be heard in his voice.

Lukas smiled faintly.

Leo’s willpower was exceptional when one looked at it objectively. The fear he felt when facing Demons was enough to drive normal people crazy. If he really was a coward, then he wouldn’t have dared to confront the Demons at all.

But Leo faced his fear. He faced it and looked for ways to overcome it.

Nevertheless, he became desperate and lost because he couldn’t find a clear solution.

Then, just as he was about to give everything up, he saw hope.

It was impossible to describe the joy Leo had felt at that time. Lukas’s harsh training might have made his body and mind feel like they were about to break, but on the other hand, his mind felt more comfortable than ever.

Leo's face said so.

"From today on, call me Master."

"..."

Leo froze for a moment before bowing his head. His shoulders shook slightly.

"Yes, Master."

Then he raised his head again and spoke, his expression changing.

"...umm."

"What is it?"

"This might be rude to ask, but..."

He looked at Lukas' body and continued.

"Are you okay, Master?"

“...”

Lukas sighed.

To be honest, he wasn't okay.

* * *

A week passed.

During that period, Lukas focused only on Leo's training.

They touched upon numerous fields, but the main focus was martial arts. If the foundation wasn't right, then it would have been meaningless no matter how beautiful the building that was built on it was.

“Huk, huk...”

Today's training had just ended.

Leo panted like he was about to die.

Only a week had passed, but his cheeks had become thin and bruises covered his entire body. His body had become like this even though he received treatment every day.

Although he looked haggard, Lukas was more fond of him now than he was a week ago. That's because his eyes were alive.

"We'll stop here."

"Puha!"

As if he had been waiting for those words, Leo's body collapsed.

Nevertheless, he didn't relax his respectful attitude as he kept his breathing as quiet as possible so he wouldn't disturb his Master.

Lukas had told him that he could just lie down without caring about such courtesy, but Leo seemed strict in this regard.

After a while, Leo, who had calmed his breathing to an extent, opened his mouth.

"The Warrior King Fist that I use seems to feel different from Master's."

Lukas was teaching Leo the Warrior King Fist.

Of course, he didn't ask Leo to forget or disregard the martial arts he'd learned before. It wasn't something that he'd be able to easily forget anyway, and it was better to use martial arts with which he was familiar.

But Lukas hoped that Leo would have been able to combine the two martial arts and eventually mix them completely to create his own martial art.

Of course, such a task would not be easy.

"I modified it to suit your body. Your physique is smaller than the average man's. Was there anything that made you uncomfortable?"

Lukas' voice was slightly worried as he asked this. After becoming an Absolute, he'd gained extensive knowledge in various fields. Martial arts was one of them.

But apart from gaining deep knowledge, Lukas didn't have much confidence in himself.

That's because he had no affection for martial arts. It could be said that he'd just absorbed the knowledge.

This was due to the fact that he'd already devoted his life to Magical Science.

Martial arts wasn't something that one could have dig into and see the end of with a flimsy mindset. It was impossible even for Lukas.

Fortunately, Leo shook his head.

“No. But I heard that it was impossible to modify an established martial art unless you were at least a Master.”

Leo’s eyes were filled with respect and reverence.

His face was still expressionless, but his eyes shined like stars.

“...as expected, Master is a great person.”

“ ... ”

In all honesty, Lukas hadn’t expected Leo to react like this.

He was fully prepared to be somewhat resented by this boy. Unlike Min Ha-rin, he was pushing himself forward without hesitation.

For Leo, this training was closer to torture.

At the same time, he rarely said words of praise, and usually, all he did was give advice that was closer to criticism.

Nevertheless, at some point, Leo began to show him respect. Maybe Lukas' shock therapy was working. Or maybe it was because Leo thought it was.

'He must be curious about me.'

By now, Leo must have realised that Lukas was no ordinary Priest or Monk. Nevertheless, he never mentioned anything about his identity. And he never showed any signs of curiosity.

Since Leo acted in such a way, Lukas didn't bring it up, either. In any case, he would naturally find out on his own someday.

Instead, there was something more important for Leo right now.

"What are you going to do about Gerard? He won't let you go."

Leo's expression became serious at those words.

"I will have to deal with it sooner or later."

"Have you thought of any countermeasures?"

"Yes. I'm going to defeat him in an official duel. And I'll have a qualified person be the judge. If he loses the duel in front of an audience, he will understand."

Lukas nodded before speaking in a firm voice.

“I won’t interfere.”

“Thank you.”

“It won’t be easy for you to win. Even if you follow my training perfectly, it would still take you a month before you’re ready.”

Leo seemed to think about something for a moment before speaking in a firm voice.

“Then I’ll defeat Gerard within two weeks.”

He wasn’t bluffing.

Lukas had learned Leo’s way of thinking a bit. This boy would never say anything that he couldn’t take responsibility for.

‘His talent is definitely enormous, but...’

Leo was also a transformer. (TL: Okay my childishness aside, would you guys prefer ‘transformers’ or ‘revolutionaries’? The first is closer to the true meaning while the latter sounds better from an english perspective.)

This meant that if he was raised properly, he could become someone on the same level as Lee Jong-hak.

Even so, it wouldn't be easy for him to defeat Gerard in a month.

Regardless of his personality, Gerard's ability was comparable to Min Ha-rin's when she was still a Swordsman. After all, Nina wouldn't recommend him so confidently without reason.

But Lukas decided to trust his student.

"...come to think of it."

Recently, he hadn't been paying any attention to Min Ha-rin.

No, he hadn't seen her for the week that he was training Leo.

Of course, at this point, there was nothing for him to guide her on. There was no need for any great enlightenment until she reached at least 3 stars.

What she had to focus on now was increasing her mana and honing her senses. And it was important to increase the number of branches of magic that she could use.

Min Ha-rin was very intelligent. Even if she was confused about something, she had the ability to read through a book and understand the problem on her own.

Nevertheless, since he had a new student, it was about time that they got to know each other.

“Is your body okay?”

“Yes.”

“There’s someone I’d like to introduce you to.”

Leo’s eyes shined when he heard those words.

“Do you have another Disciple, Master?”

“Right.”

“So it’s my Senior Martial Brother.” (TL: Fun fact, the word the author used for ‘senior brother’ is the same as ‘death penalty’)

Lukas tilted his head before revealing the fact that Min Ha-rin was a woman.

“Senior Martial Brother... isn’t that of eastern origin?”

“The origin of the martial art I learned is said to be closely related to Shaolin from China. The format they followed is also the same. Of course, I learned the martial art informally as a child, so I didn’t have a real Master or Senior Martial Brothers...”

Leo began to ramble a bit at the end. Perhaps he had been longing for such a relationship in the past.

‘So he was learning Shaolin martial arts.’

This wasn’t particularly surprising. Europe was an area where swordsmanship, magic, and sorcery were developed instead of martial arts.

Therefore, it was common for European Martial Artists to learn martial arts from the east. Leo was the same.

“Mm...”

Lukas felt troubled.

If Min Ha-rin and Leo were learning the same things, he would have been able to develop a bond between his students, but they were learning different things.

Min Ha-rin was learning magic.

Leo was learning martial arts.

They had the same Master, so they could be said to be from the same school, but there was not much of a difference in their initiation dates, so something like seniority would be hard to establish.

'It was unintentional.'

This was the first time he'd taken on two students at the same time.

Lukas shook his head.

"I'll think about that later. First of all, Ha-rin is older than you, so don't be rude."

"Understood."

He didn't think Leo would be rude in the first place, but he still said it anyway.

Min Ha-rin was in the 11th Training Room, right beside them.

The 11th and 12th Training Rooms had been lent to Lukas due to Nina's consideration.

In any case, most of the hunters were busy carrying out missions, so the training rooms were currently unused.

Click.

He opened the door and saw Min Ha-rin.

She was squatting in a corner, reading a book, and when he looked closely, he noticed that she was wearing glasses.

She looked up when she heard the door open, and her expression changed.

“Ah...!”