

Great Mage 271

Season 2 Chapter 31

Lukas seemed to see an illusion of flowers blooming around Min Ha-rin when she saw him.

“Master...!”

He felt that she was exuding joy that was far greater than the last time they’d met. Min Ha-rin ran up to Lukas and smiled like a lost puppy.

“Is everything okay?”

“Huh...? Oh. I can summon two Fireballs at the same time now.”

“That’s a pretty encouraging achievement.”

“Yeah. But besides that, I’d like to ask you something... Ah.”

Min Ha-rin, whose attention had been focused on Lukas the entire time, finally noticed Leo.

“...who’s that behind you?”

“This is Leo Freeman. My new disciple.”

Duk.

Min Ha-rin froze.

“Disciple?”

“Right.”

Lukas nodded and wondered.

It was strange. He was having a strong sense of déjà vu at that moment.

‘Ah...’

It was Nina.

She’d had a similar reaction when he’d said he was taking Min Ha-rin as his disciple. Even their stiff facial expressions were the same.

“Master’s... new... disciple...”

Min Ha-rin spoke each word slowly.

“This is the first time I’m hearing about this...”

“Because this is the first time I mentioned it.”

“...”

There was silence again.

It was at this time that Leo stepped forward and bowed to Min Ha-rin.

“I’m Master’s newest disciple, Leo Freeman. Please take care of me.”

“...”

Min Ha-rin stared at Leo for a moment with a blank expression on her face.

What was going on? This boy had an unbelievable appearance.

Leo appeared haggard because of Lukas' training, but that did nothing to hide the sheer brilliance of his appearance. At least Min Ha-rin had never seen a boy with a face as pretty as Leo's.

She'd never had an inferiority complex when it came to her appearance, but she couldn't help but feel this way now because of a man.

With a complicated expression on her face, Min Ha-rin replied.

"I'm Min Ha-rin. Please take care of me too."

"Please speak comfortably, Senior Sister." (TL: Actually had a bit of trouble with this as I never had to translate it to English. But in essence, he's putting himself beneath her and saying that she doesn't need to be polite to him.)

"...Senior Sister?"

"Yes."

This caused her expression to become even more complicated.

Min Ha-rin turned to look at Lukas as if asking for help, but Lukas simply avoided her gaze as if he was telling her to deal with it on her own.

"Then... Leo."

“Yes.”

“I’ll take care of you.”

“Yep.”

Leo smiled faintly, and the atmosphere in the room seemed to soften.

It was like an invisible bond had been formed between them. And the fence that made them a community was Lukas.

‘...indeed.’

This was probably how Schweiser felt.

It was a different relationship from family and friends, but it was not lighter than them.

Lukas felt that he could finally understand why Schweiser had accepted so many disciples.

‘Come to think of it...’

Lukas couldn't remember when last he'd had such a comfortable feeling.

"Can I ask you one thing?"

"Anything."

"Was Master training you for the past week?"

"Yeah. He's been at my side guiding me the entire way."

"...at your side... the entire way..."

Because he could feel a gaze on him, Lukas looked up and found Min Ha-rin staring at him with a complex gaze.

But he didn't think much of it.

"I'm curious about what you achieved so far. Can you show me?"

"Yeah."

Min Ha-rin nodded.

“Fireball.”

Crackle-

A ball of flame bloomed on the tip of Min Ha-rin’s finger.

Her casting speed was admirable. She was already comparable to a 2 star Wizard.

Then, another ball of flame bloomed on another finger.

“...”

Lukas looked at this fireball.

It appeared unstable and flickered as though the flames would go out at any time. Then, the flames did go out with a ‘huk’ sound.

“You failed to maintain it. That’s a phenomenon that occurs when your mind is distracted during casting. Focus a bit more. You won’t be able to play your part if you’re like this.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know because I trained on my own for a week. I didn’t have anyone to explain it to me.”

Lukas' expression became strange when Min Ha-rin bowed her head.

"...I see."

"..."

A sudden, tense silence filled the room.

After a while, Lukas opened his mouth.

"Are you perhaps..."

"Huh?"

"...no. It's nothing."

Lukas was about to ask if she was upset.

But his sharp and accurate intuition, which had been honed after living for such a long time that humans couldn't even imagine, was telling him.

To just stay still for now.

* * *

“President. We received a call from the Chinese Branch.”

Nina frowned.

She could already predict what they wanted, but she still asked him anyway.

“What did they say?”

“It seems they are asking for Lee Jong-hak’s return.”

“Ha.”

Nina burst out into a laugh that was a mix of cynicism and helplessness.

Naturally, Lee Jong-hak didn’t listen to Nina’s orders. This wasn’t a situation where she was pressuring him and forcibly keeping him in the European Branch.

Lee Jong-hak was performing missions in Europe of his own volition.

And Beijing, China, in other words, the East Asia Branch, should also have known this fact.

Nevertheless, there was one reason why they were sending their requests to Nina.

Because they didn't have the power to force Lee Jong-hak to return, either.

'It's easier to use me.'

Crunch.

Nina grit her teeth.

Europe and Asia didn't have a balanced relationship.

This wasn't just about the headquarters in Russia. The entire European Branch, which was now in a precarious position, was receiving great support from them.

From manpower to food, information, and other important material resources. If any of these were cut off, the effects would be devastating.

'They wouldn't publicly cut off their support.'

But it was still possible for them to delay the shipment of goods or subtly reduce the amount they sent by using all kinds of excuses.

The pressure from that alone would give Europe a hard blow.

“Did you tell them that Lee Jong-hak refused?”

“I’ve said it numerous times... but they don’t believe me.”

“They’re only pretending to not believe. After all, they’re not stupid. Hmm. They know, but they’re still pushing us.”

“That means...”

“They’re trying to get something from us.”

Nina frowned.

Then what does the Asia Branch want?

There was nothing for them to gain by squeezing Europe. Or at least that’s what Nina thought.

The number and quality of their hunters were all superior to the ones on this side. And they didn't lack resources or have a special crisis.

"...can you excuse me for a moment?"

Ludwig pointed to his ear. He'd probably received another report.

When Nina nodded, he turned slightly to the side and lowered his head.

"It's me. Right. I just reported it... What?"

Ludwig looked shocked.

He glanced at Nina for a moment before speaking.

"...wait a bit. I'll report it now and contact you after. Right."

Ludwig fell silent after saying that. It seemed that he was trying to organise his thoughts.

"What is it?"

“They made a request to connect a portal.”

“A portal?”

“Yes, they want to meet Lee Jong-hak directly and persuade him.”

Nina pressed her fingers to her temples for a moment.

In truth, she didn't have to agonise over it for very long. Their request wasn't troublesome at all.

The two sides would meet and directly have a discussion.

For Nina, this was something she should welcome.

She wouldn't have to suffer like a shrimp in a battle between whales anymore.

“Where is Lee Jong-hak now?”

“In Germany.”

“Hoo.”

Nina nodded.

“Contact the German Branch and connect the portal.”

Season 2 Chapter 32

The Palace of Versailles is a world-class feat of architecture that can be found in the city of Versailles, France.

This palace, which was a symbol of absolute monarchy and a representative work of baroque architecture, remained in relatively good condition when compared to the other ruined buildings in the city.

There was only one reason for that.

Because that was where the Demon King lived. And from the moment he occupied it, it had become the Demon King's Palace.

It was a place where only high-ranking noble Demons were even allowed to enter.

It was a place where there were rarely any gatherings, but today was different. A much thicker aura of demonic energy was swirling around the palace than normal.

The beings who were gathered in this place were those who stood at the peak of countless Demons.

The Five Dukes.

“It’s been a long time since a Duke died.”

“That makes three. The humans are pretty impressive. But who died?”

“Sandro.”

“Ah.”

A deep voice was heard after.

The Vampire Duke, Gullard, sighed.

Rose and Ugkas didn’t seem to understand the severity of the situation yet.

On the other hand, Azazel, the most powerful of the Five Dukes and practically the representative of the Demon King, was different. He opened his mouth and spoke with a serious tone.

“This case is different from Ludmill or Goubal’s deaths. He wasn’t slain by the humans’ numerical superiority.”

“Then...?”

“I would say that it was closer to an assassination.”

Laughter sounded out.

It was Rose. Her raid hair fluttered around her despite the lack of wind, giving off the impression of a sea of blood.

“You’re saying a Duke was assassinated? Not only that, but it was Sandro who could control shadows? Haha. That would be impossible for even the Three Great Demon Hunters. In fact, I don’t even think Sandro is dead. I think he just doesn’t want to see us right now.”

“Watch your mouth, Rose. This is the King’s summons. There is no way that Sandro would ignore such an order.”

“...”

Rose closed her mouth.

This was because she silently accepted that her previous statement was wrong. Nevertheless, she still wasn’t convinced.

“Sandro had a lot of slaves. Some of them shared their lives with him.”

“So?”

“All of those slaves are dead.”

“..”

Rose had no choice but to become serious at that.

“And the slaves who were supposed to be put on display by the Chester Company escaped. Among them was Lee Jong-hak.”

Even the Five Dukes knew who Lee Jong-hak was.

“Where is Lee Jong-hak now?”

“Recently, it has been reported that he’s been active around Europe.”

Suddenly, Ugkas, who had been silent up until that point, finally spoke.

“Then let’s conquer Europe.”

This Demon, who had the bizarre appearance of a steel statue, spoke in a strange voice that sounded like clanging metal.

“There isn’t a lot of land left there anyway. If we really made up our mind, it would take less than a month to completely capture Europe.”

“Only the Demon King can determine a conquest for territory, Ugkas.”

“...”

The rest of the Dukes froze slightly at Azazel’s words.

“Where is the King now?”

“He has gone into training.”

“Mm.”

Again?

All of the Dukes had this thought, but none of them expressed it.

The Demon King.

He was the only being in the entire world for whom all Demons would lay down their lives without hesitation, and he had their utmost loyalty. But even the five in this room, who could be said to be the closest to him, couldn't tell what he was thinking sometimes.

It was the same at that moment.

The Demon King rarely appeared in public. This was because he thought it was better to increase his demonic energy than waste time sitting on the throne.

Even Azazel couldn't understand the Demon King's obsession with training.

To put it gently, even if all the Dukes in this room worked together, they still wouldn't be able to defeat the Demon King. To some extent, he had already transcended the realm of mortals, and he himself had to be aware of that.

Nevertheless, that didn't stop his desire to grow stronger. No. Instead, it seemed he pushed himself even harder as a result.

'...however, even if the King is absent, we can't stay silent after the death of a Duke.'

Black light fluttered within Azazel's eyes.

It was time for a counterattack.

* * *

Lukas was contemplating how he would move forward. But before that, he remembered his fight with Sedi.

“Nodiesop is a disgusting guy.”

Sedi spoke after spitting out a mouthful of blood.

It had only been a short fight.

Neither of them fought with their full strength. And for them, their bodies were nothing but a shell. Even if it was damaged, repairing it wasn't a problem.

This was true even if their heads were cut off or their hearts exploded.

Any attack was meaningless unless it was powerful enough to reach their core, their 'essence'.

So this fight was a simple warm-up.

“He's nasty, cruel, and smart.”

“So he's the most annoying type of enemy to have.”

Lukas replied while brushing dust from his body.

Sedi nodded.

“The fortunate thing about this misfortune is that he’s also incredibly rational. So he won’t break the balance of this universe by unleashing his powers as an Absolute. Maybe...”

That would be Lukas’ biggest advantage. But he couldn’t help but worry slightly at her last word.

But the words that Sedi said next were even more significant.

“He said he wants to see your downfall.”

“...downfall?”

“I don’t know what he means. It’s not like we’re close.”

Sedi shook her head.

“It’s been a few weeks since we entered this world. Depending on how you think about it, that’s either short or long. But unlike me, who’s been idle, Nodiesop has probably prepared something already. Soon, he will approach you in some form.”

This meant that Lukas would have to make his own preparations.

He nodded.

“Who is the last Absolute?”

Sedi had said that three Absolutes had entered this world. Aside from her and Nodiesop, there was still one more.

“I don’t know who it is. I only sensed their presence as I was entering the world...”

Sedi frowned.

“I don’t know who it is, what their goal is, or where they are right now. But do you need to care about them right now?”

Unlike her, who had called Lukas by scattering her presence across the continent, and Nodiesop, who was definitely manipulating the scene from the shadows by now, the third Absolute didn’t seem to be doing anything.

“In any case, the one you need to worry about the most right now is Nodiesop.”

-After recalling Sedi’s words, Lukas came back to his senses.

“Hoo...”

Nodiesop.

Sedi said that she didn't know where he was.

However, unlike Sedi, whom he had successfully persuaded, and the third Absolute, who didn't seem to be doing anything, Nodiesop was currently acting in the dark.

'He wants to see me fall.'

The first move.

What was the first move that Nodiesop would show Lukas?

Of course, he couldn't know. And he wouldn't be able to find any clues by agonising over it.

Lukas didn't know anything about Nodiesop. And there was a limit to the amount he could infer from Sedi's piecemeal information.

He couldn't help but feel that it was unfortunate.

If he had met him even once, then he might have been able to guess what method he would use.

'It can't be helped.'

Since that was the case, Lukas did not know what he could do to prevent Nodiesop's actions.

It seemed that he would inevitably have to suffer the first blow.

And perhaps in the near future.

'...it would be nice if he took his time.'

It would be good if Min Ha-rin and Leo were good enough to help him at that time.

However, he had a feeling that things weren't going to be so easy.

* * *

"Thank you. Thank you so much..."

A very old man bowed deeply while tears poured down his cheeks.

“Take refuge in the shelter. Leave this place to us.”

“M-, my grandson is still here. He’s only 7 years old...”

Lee Jong-hak’s expression hardened slightly.

Then he smiled reassuringly at the old man.

“I will save him even if it costs me my life.”

“P-, please, please...”

“Don’t worry, sir.”

Lee Jong-hak sighed after the old man disappeared into the distance with a worried expression on his face.

It wouldn’t be as easy as he made it sound.

This land, Germany, had already lost most of its territory to the Demons.

Lee Jong-hak looked at the fluttering flames. The entire city had been swallowed by fire.

“Don’t tell me you’re going to jump in there.”

It was Drisa who spoke.

Since they had escaped, the two found that they got along with each other, so they started taking missions together. To be precise, Drisa had chosen to follow Lee Jong-hak.

At first, he just wanted the benefits that came from being beside Lee Jong-hak, who was a proven hero, but now, he was different. Drisa truly had a feeling of respect for Lee Jong-hak.

‘If there really is a person who could save this world, it would be this man.’

That was how convinced he was that Lee Jong-hak was an upright and straightforward man. He had only seen him lose his composure once.

‘...mm.’

The blonde man named Lukas. When he remembered him, Drisa couldn’t stop the complex feelings that filled him.

The ‘saviour’ who supported mankind from the shadows. To be honest, he still thought that half of it was a lie. If it wasn’t for Nina’s guarantee, he would have taken Lukas for a fraud.

Lee Jong-hak kept looking at the fire as he responded.

“There are people who haven’t been rescued yet.”

“There are also more Demons.”

“You don’t have to come. I’ll go alone.”

“...how could I do something like that?”

Drisa sighed.

He wouldn’t let him go alone. After all, two was always better than one.

Lee Jong-hak smiled.

Just as they were about to enter the city.

“Reinforcements have arrived!”

One of the hunters who was on the rescue mission with them shouted.

Drisa tilted his head to the side.

“Reinforcements? I don’t think the German Branch has anyone left.”

“They’re not from Germany. They are hunters from the East Asia Branch.”

Lee Jong-hak furrowed his eyebrows at those words. He couldn’t hide the shock on his face.

Those who came were all big names who couldn’t be treated as mere reinforcements.

“Wow. As expected, the European night scene is very hot.”

The young man in the middle spoke in a frivolous tone.

It was someone whom Lee Jong-hak didn’t have a good relationship with.

“Kim Go-hyuk.”

“It’s been a while, Human Dragon. You look pretty good for a guy who almost died.”

When the Heavenly Dragon, Kim Go-hyuk, said those words with a smile, Lee Jong-hak could only smile bitterly.

“I guess it wasn’t my time to die.”

“You’re still so old-fashioned.”

“I didn’t expect you to come here as reinforcements. Did the East Asia headquarters allow it?”

“...ah. That’s because we have an emergency situation. The situation required us to move personally.”

“What are you doing here, then?”

“We’re looking for a person.”

Kim Go-hyuk’s eyes shined slightly.

“And I thought you might know him.”

Season 2 Chapter 33

“We’ll talk about it later. For now, there is work to do.”

“What work?”

“I also have to look for people.”

Lee Jong-hak spoke in a cold voice as he turned to look at the city.

Kim Go-hyuk tilted his head to the side.

“Who?”

“The civilians who are still in this city.”

“So you don’t want to look for them. You want to rescue them. Are you serious? You actually wanna go in there?”

As Kim Go-hyuk spoke, a five-story building was eaten by fire and collapsed.

Even if it was Lee Jong-hak, entering a city that was completely consumed by fire was incredibly dangerous. And assuming that Demons were lurking there, it was no different from suicide.

Lee Jong-hak didn’t respond. But Kim Go-hyuk realised that nothing he said would change his mind.

“You’re still the same.”

He burst into laughter, which seemed to be filled with admiration and something else.

Then, Kim Go-hyuk's expression suddenly changed.

"Lee Jong-hak, do you believe in God?"

"We can talk later. I don't have time now."

"This isn't the same. This is important."

This was said in a serious voice.

Lee Jong-hak had no choice but to stop because he knew of the way Kim Go-hyuk usually acted.

God.

Did he believe in God?

"I don't."

There was no way he would believe that. Anger and hatred were mixed in Lee Jong-hak's voice.

Kim Go-hyuk nodded as if he expected it.

“Right. But you will believe from today.”

“What?”

“I... no. We saw God. Lee Jong-hak, follow him from now on too.”

“What are you...”

It was then.

Kim Go-hyuk suddenly stretched his hands to the sky. That wasn't all. The Hunters from East Asia, who hadn't said a single word before then, also followed his movements.

“Nodiesop! Please save the people in this city!”

“Give your lambs the hand of salvation!”

“Please!”

“...”

Lee Jong-hak's eyes dimmed slightly.

What the hell were they doing?

“Uh... Heavenly Dragon, Kim Go-hyuk... did you go crazy? Or is this some kind of play?”

Drisa asked this while spinning his finger around his ear.

Kim Go-hyuk didn't answer him. The other people also didn't seem to care about his words.

They all should have heard Drisa's voice, but their attitudes remained the same.

At that moment, they were all staring at the sky solemnly.

“...”

Drisa's eyes narrowed.

‘This is weird.’

There was a creepy chill in the air. The hunters' cries grew louder and louder.

Gradually, it felt like a strange feeling was tickling his heart.

"I'll go ahead."

Lee Jong-hak spoke in a contemptuous voice before turning around.

Suddenly, someone stopped him.

"Wa-, wait."

It was Drisa, not Kim Go-hyuk.

He spoke with a stutter.

"Lo-, look at the sky."

Hearing his shocked voice, Lee Jong-hak looked up to the sky. And his mouth fell open.

Giant droplets of water floated in the sky above them.

“Huh?”

It was a scene that went beyond strange.

Lee Jong-hak took a step back, suddenly feeling like the borders between real and unreal had blurred.

This was a phenomenon that far surpassed human understanding. And the fear of the unknown made him tremble slightly.

How was this possible?

“Ohh...!”

“Great God...! Thank you!”

“Look! God’s power!”

Bang!

Suddenly, the balls of water in the sky exploded and heavy rain began to fall down.

Shaaa-

No, it couldn't be called heavy rain. The rainwater was so violent that it could even pierce windows.

Rather than just dousing the flames, the raindrops pierced through the concrete. Not only was the fire extinguished, but the buildings in the city also collapsed.

"What have you done...?!"

Lee Jong-hak grit hit teeth.

With that degree of power, not to mention the humans who were extremely weak, even the Demons in the city would not be able to withstand it.

Ahhh-

"...!"

When he heard the screams, Lee Jong-hak could no longer hold himself back. Just as he drew his sword and prepared to charge into the city.

Kim Go-hyuk blocked him from the front.

"Get out of my way."

“The people are safe. Don’t worry.”

“Do you think I would believe that?”

“Calm down. Listen carefully. Do those sound like human screams?”

Kiiieek-

Lee Jong-hak froze when he realised he was hearing the screams of Demons.

“Relax, do I have to explain this to you?”

“...what kind of spell did you use?”

“Spell? Hahaha!”

Kim Go-hyuk burst into laughter.

“It’s not something stupid like that. Hey, Lee Jong-hak! Haven’t you realised it yet? What you see before you is not something that can be explained by common sense.”

Kim Go-hyuk turned to the city.

All the Demons in the city were dead. He was sure of that.

The rain was the work of a noble god. At the same time, its benevolent touch would also heal the humans.

Kim Go-hyuk spoke in a fanatic voice.

“To put it simply, a miracle is happening here.”

“...miracle?”

What he'd wished and hoped for the most in the past.

Lee Jong-hak stared at the city with a blank gaze.

The flames that had engulfed the city had died down. And people could be seen gathering together among the rubble.

None of them were wounded.

All of the civilians had survived.

“...”

Lee Jong-hak clenched his fist.

God’s miracle.

The moment he thought of those words, his heart began to beat violently in his chest.

* * *

“Leo.”

Leo turned around when he heard someone call his name.

It was Gerard, who was walking up to him with a bright smile on his face.

“It’s been hard to see your face these days. Have you been busy?”

“A little.”

“I see.”

Gerard came beside Leo. When they stood side by side, he naturally had to look down at him.

For a strong, healthy man like Gerard and a boy who was not fully grown like Leo, the difference in physique between them was obvious.

“You’ve been frequently in and out of the 12th Training Room these days.”

“Right.”

“The person there is supposed to be Lukas, right? I heard he was an important acquaintance of Nina.”

Lukas was now somewhat of a celebrity in the European headquarters.

“...”

Leo remained silent.

This wasn’t because he was afraid to reveal his relationship with Lukas. Instead, it was because he just didn’t want to tell Gerard anything.

Gerard laughed.

“In any case, we have a mission tomorrow, so prepare to leave at dawn. We have a new hunter in our group, so you’ll have to prepare six sets of supplies.”

“I’m not going.”

“...huh?”

Gerard couldn’t help but wonder if he’d heard incorrectly.

“What did you say?”

“I won’t be going on any more missions with you.”

Gerard’s expression changed. He looked down at Leo with a slightly stiff face. Then, he took a deep breath.

It was clear that he was trying to keep his true thoughts from showing.

“What are you talking about so suddenly? Tomorrow is the day of the mission. This is too sudden.”

“I’m not breaking any rules.”

“...”

This was true.

Supporters weren't officially included in hunter groups. For this reason, the rewards they received for completing missions were extremely low. But they had the advantage of being able to withdraw from their group without needing the permission of the leader.

Leo was the same.

He could quit being the supporter of the group just by telling Gerard.

Of course, this would offend Gerard. But that was exactly what Leo wanted.

“It's not like you'd lose any power in battle.”

“No way. It would be hard to find a supporter like you.”

Leo laughed.

That was the crucial part.

“...why are you laughing?”

His strained voice contained obvious displeasure. Gerard’s mask was beginning to crack.

“I intend to stop being a supporter from now on.”

“...does that mean you’re going to stop pretending to be a hunter?”

“Mhm. I will stop pretending and become a real hunter instead.”

Gerard wanted to laugh, but he couldn’t.

Leo’s quiet voice was filled with confidence.

His mouth twisted subconsciously.

“You? That’s impossible.”

“Would you like to test it yourself?”

“What?”

Leo didn't respond. He simply stared at Gerard.

Only then did Gerard realise his true intentions and burst out laughing.

"Ha, haha... do you intend to duel me?"

"Yeah."

"...can't we come to some kind of understanding? We can have a personal match, and I'll let you beat me. How about that?"

"It's fine if you don't want to do it."

When Leo said that and turned around as if he didn't care, Gerard called out impulsively.

"Fine. Let's duel. When will it be?"

Leo turned around at those words.

"As soon as your mission is over."

“That will be about a week from now. Fine.”

Gerard then smiled.

“However, I have a condition. It has to be an official duel in which the fight clauses apply.”

The fight clauses.

In a duel recognised by the association, if one side was crippled or worse, the other side would not be held accountable.

In other words, it could be a fight to the death during which they were allowed to kill each other.

Gerard thought that Leo would back down after hearing this.

“Good.”

However, his reaction was unexpected.

“I look forward to it.”

Leo was smiling softly.

Season 2 Chapter 34

Min Ha-rin had become a 3 star Wizard. She learned to properly utilise most of the 3 star spells, and her mana control and understanding of Magical Science had risen a level.

Now, regardless of what would happen in the future, she would be able to be of some assistance.

Leo's growth was in no way lacking when compared to hers. He had mastered all of the basic forms of the Warrior King Fist, and he had already begun to mix it somewhat with his own martial arts.

“...”

Lukas expected them to be quite talented. Given that they had the power of transformation.

Nevertheless, they both still managed to exceed his expectations.

From the perspective of a master, he should have been pleased, but the first thing that Lukas felt was confusion.

Even if they were supposed to be fast, this was too fast.

To become a 3 star Wizard in a month?

This was something that was impossible even for the greatest geniuses whom Lukas had met in the past.

It was the same for Leo.

Mixing different martial arts was something that even Masters would struggle with. And yet, Leo was now blending the two he knew with ease.

'It's not just Leo and Min Ha-rin.'

The growth capability of the humans in this universe was abnormal.

In Lukas' home world, the study of Magical Science was something that was developed over thousands of years.

During those long years, countless humans worked together to develop it.

It had a history that allowed one to describe it as a culture instead of a field, and over time, the bodies of the humans also adapted to be able to use mana.

But this universe was different.

Although he had secretly transmitted techniques and tricks to them, it had only been a few decades since the existence of mana was discovered.

And yet, there were already several beings who could be called Archmages.

This was not something that could be described with effort, talent, teaching, and luck, nor could it be attributed to the fact that he was assisting them from the shadows.

It was like...

'The universe itself seems to be boosting their growth...'

This thought appeared in his mind, but Lukas shook his head. It was too early to come to a conclusion.

In any case, it was a good thing for him that there was a fast growth rate.

The only concern would be that they might become intoxicated with pride, but that wasn't something that could be associated with Min Ha-rin or Leo.

'And today.'

The duel between Gerard and Leo would take place.

He'd heard that it would be held in the 2nd Duel Room at 10am. Naturally, Lukas would go watch, and Min Ha-rin would too.

'Leo is still weaker than Gerard.'

It was true that Gerard was still a bit better than Leo. But Lukas didn't think that Leo would lose.

Lukas got up from his seat.

He decided to leave the room now in order to not be late. The 2nd Duel Room was located three floors below him. In other words, it was on the 8th floor.

Lukas walked to the elevator.

Ding-

The elevator door opened.

There were many people inside. This fact alone wasn't surprising.

What surprised Lukas was their appearance. These weren't hunters from the European headquarters.

The group consisted of only Asians. Something that was rare to see in Europe.

“ ... ”

One of these people appeared surprised when he saw Lukas. He seemed to hesitate for a second before his expression changed, becoming harsh.

And everything that happened next happened in a flash.

“You... this guy!”

The man swiftly closed the distance and grabbed Lukas’ collar.

* * *

The Duel Rooms, together with the Training Rooms, were some of the most elaborately built rooms in the headquarters.

As the levels of the hunters increased, it became harder for them to find improvement through simple training.

The best way for them to find their flaws and improve were to fight against similar or stronger opponents.

Min Ha-rin nodded while looking at the outer wall of the Duel Room.

‘It’s just as good as our branch.’

If the durability was poor, it would not be able to withstand the destructive power of high-level hunters.

The Duel Room was also large and well-maintained.

The number of Duel Rooms in the headquarters was small, but this wasn't much of a problem since most of the hunters were usually on missions.

Min Ha-rin chose a corner in the stands and took a seat, feeling it was fortunate that she'd come early.

Her gaze swept across the room. There were more people there than she expected.

"Leo and Gerard are having a duel?"

"Leo's win rate against humans is monstrous, but..."

"But his opponent is Gerard, isn't it? He's the man who's most likely to become Sir Nicholas' successor."

"More than that, why are they fighting all of a sudden?"

"I heard that Leo caused the dispute."

"Ha. That ungrateful guy. It seems he forgot that Gerard was the only one willing to accept him after he failed as a hunter."

Min Ha-rin almost shouted at those words.

She knew how Leo had been treated by Gerard.

That bastard! Filled with anger, Min Ha-rin looked down at the duel ground.

Leo and Gerard were faced off against each other. And a strange tension filled the room.

'You must win, Junior Brother.'

Min Ha-rin had learned a lot about this Junior Brother, named Leo, over the past few weeks. And she'd come to accept him.

When she heard about Leo's traumatic past, his current situation, and his goal, she couldn't help but feel some similarity to herself.

Min Ha-rin grew accustomed to Leo because she had two younger siblings of her own. And Leo, who had long yearned for such a relationship, always expressed his feelings without losing his courtesy.

Naturally, this allowed the two disciples to form a close relationship much sooner than Lukas expected.

How could Min Ha-rin have any good feelings for Gerard?

In her eyes, he was a perverted bastard who deserved to be killed hundreds of times for what he'd done to her cute Junior Brother. If she hadn't given up swordsmanship, she might have stood up and fought in his stead.

'Of course, I'd never do that.'

This was Leo's fight.

Min Ha-rin took a deep breath to conceal the anxiety she felt.

Then, she looked at the clock on the wall.

'10 o'clock.'

The duel was about to begin.

Min Ha-rin turned her eyes to the door.

Lukas, who'd said that he'd definitely be there, was nowhere to be seen.

* * *

Lukas looked at the man who was grabbing his collar.

The man seemed to be in his mid-30s, with a small physique and a cold expression on his face.

It wasn't a face he recognised.

"What's going on?"

There was a small uproar.

The Asian hunters seemed shocked at the sudden turn of events.

A man in the middle of the group opened his mouth.

"Otsuru, do you know this person?"

"Yeah. You guys go greet President Nina first. I have something to discuss with this guy."

The man looked at Lukas with a slightly suspicious gaze before nodding.

"...fine, but don't stir up too much of a fuss. This isn't East Asia."

“I know.”

As if they didn't care about it anymore, the hunters all walked past Lukas.

And when the sound of their footsteps grew further and further away before disappearing completely, the expression of the man named Otsuru changed again.

“Please forgive my rudeness.”

He whispered in a soft voice before kneeling on one knee.

Lukas fixed his rumpled clothes.

“You are?”

“This one is called Otsuru.”

It was a name he'd heard before

Banyo Otsuru.

He was one of the best Japanese hunters.

Of course, this was Lukas' first time meeting him in person, but Otsuru seemed to know him.

"I heard about you from the old man."

"Na Jong-cheol?"

"Yes."

When the Bow God, Na Jong-cheol, was mentioned, Lukas had no choice but to change his attitude.

He was one of the transformers whom Lukas had saved while wandering around the world.

That was already decades ago.

Na Jong-cheol was a man who could remain calm in any situation and who had a very upright and straightforward attitude. Due to his excellent bow handling skills and unique charisma, he became the head of the 'Demon Trappers', one of the top three guilds in Korea.

It had already been decades since Lukas had saved him. He was old enough to have witnessed when the Demons first appeared.

He should already have been past seventy by now.

Otsuru raised his head and spoke in a serious voice.

“You are in a very dangerous situation right now.”

“Dangerous?”

“Yes. I’m sure there are people watching us right now...”

His voice faded at the end of his words.

Lukas thought about Leo’s fight with Gerard, but he felt that listening to what Otsuru had to say was more important.

“Let’s go to my room.”

He headed to the room with Otsuru, who closed the door carefully before sighing.

“I apologize for my rudeness earlier. I didn’t want your existence to be revealed to Kim Go-hyuk and the others...”

“I’m guessing that something has happened in East Asia.”

“Yes. Most of the hunters there are looking for your whereabouts.”

“Why?”

Otsuru’s voice became solemn as he spoke.

“Because our new President ordered it.”

New president.

Lukas soon realised what this meant.

“...is it Nodiesop?”

Otsuru shivered when he heard the name.

“You know him? Yes. He took control of East Asia. He gathered the hunters with powerful influence together and subdued them in one fell swoop. He showed power against which no one dares to stand.”

“...”

“We don’t know who he is, but one thing is clear. His abilities are completely unheard of.”

Lukas fell silent for a moment before asking.

“What about the hunters who were with you?”

“They are part of a group who came here to look for Master.”

“How did you know my location?”

“We heard it from Lee Jong-hak in Germany.”

Lukas froze at those words.

Then he looked Otsuru in the eyes. Otsuru held his gaze for a moment before lowering his head and continuing.

“They will soon start scouring the entire European headquarters, so we must move quickly. This is our only chance while they talk to Nina.”

“Where are we going to go?”

“I have secured a temporary safehouse.”

“...let me ask you one more thing before that.”

“Yes.”

“What did Na Jong-cheol say about me?”

“He said that you were the Master who supported mankind from the shadows. He also said that a lot of heroes were saved by you.”

Lukas looked at Osturu again.

His head was still bowed.

Season 2 Chapter 35

“Wow, I never thought I’d see coffee mix here.”

Kim Go-hyuk looked at the coffee mix with a hint of emotion in his expression.

Ludwig looked at him with a slightly displeased gleam in his eyes.

The Heavenly Dragon, Kim Go-hyuk, the hero who represented Korea and a hunter who had significant influence across the entirety of East Asia as well as the rest of the world.

This was Ludwig's first time meeting him in person, but he already knew about his appearance as well as his achievements.

In all honesty, he looked forward to it. He thought he would be like Lee Jong-hak.

Although it could be called prejudice, he thought that all Asians were generally polite people.

But this man was disgusting.

And he didn't mean cleanliness.

His vulgar attitude, which reminded him of the gangsters in the city, couldn't help but make him frown.

He didn't suit the noble name Heavenly Dragon at all.

Although Kim Go-hyuk noticed Ludwig's displeased gaze, he opened his coffee mix without a single care in the world.

"This is made in Korea. Did you know?"

His gaze was on Nina.

When Ludwig couldn't resist and was about to say something, Nicholas, who was beside him, spoke up.

"...how about being more polite in front of the President, Kim Go-hyuk."

"Ah, sorry. It's been a long time since I took a business trip abroad. I'll do as you say, Sir Nicholas."

Kim Go-hyuk responded in the same tone, with seemingly no sign of reflection in his voice. It was followed by a 'slurp' sound as he sipped some coffee from his cup.

Nina spoke with a cold voice.

"Why are you here? I already told you Lee Jong-hak's whereabouts."

"Hmm. Well, you did. Thanks to you, we were able to meet him."

Nina looked at those standing beside Kim Go-hyuk.

'Goddess, Sword Saint, Hwarang Leader...'

They were all big names.

Nina's hand shook slightly. There was a bit of sweat on her palms.

'Why do I feel nervous?'

Even if they were from another region, they were all bound by the large net known as the Hunter Association.

They should have considered themselves comrades to an extent, but the moment she looked into Kim Go-hyuk's eyes, that feeling disappeared and she opened her mouth.

"What about Lee Jong-hak?"

"He went back to China."

"...he just left so easily?"

"Of course."

Nina was not convinced.

Lee Jong-hak had long wanted to work in Europe and had shown this passion to Nina. At least, the Lee Jong-hak whom Nina knew would not have returned to China simply because of a request from the President.

“Did Lee Jong-hak have urgent business?”

“Right. Well, it’s not that big of a deal. Just that the President of the East Asia Branch has changed.”

Nina blinked.

“...you mean President Cha Gung-hwan retired?”

Although he was in the same position as Nina, Cha Gung-wan was a man who Nina would willingly give way for, considering his status and experience.

Nina was speechless.

‘It’s naturally around the time for him to retire, considering his age, but...’

But even considering that, it was too sudden.

Furthermore, it wasn’t such a simple thing for the President of an Association Branch to retire. It was usually common for them to make an announcement through the Association headquarters.

“Then, the current President...”

“Ah. There’s no need for you to worry about that. An amazing guy took over.”

“...”

“In any case, he recently took office and he came up with ironclad rules.”

“...ironclad rules?”

“Yes. But before that, there is something I’d like to ask.”

Kim Go-hyuk continued in a relaxed voice.

“Do you know a man named Lukas?”

“I don’t. Who is he?”

Nina’s expression became cold, and then she stared at Kim Go-hyuk.

Kim Go-hyuk looked at Nina with an unknown smile on his lips.

“Kikiki. Your control of your facial expression is pretty good. If I didn’t know in advance, I might have been fooled by you.”

Those words caused a cold atmosphere to descend upon the room.

Ludwig and Nicholas stepped forward at the same time.

“This is the second time, Kim Go-hyuk.”

“Didn’t I warn you about being polite?”

“Can you two little punks shut up?”

“What did you say...?”

Ludwig couldn’t hide his shock at the sudden remark. He never expected that he’d be insulted straight to his face.

Kim Go-hyuk grinned.

“Why do you keep interrupting when adults are talking? Can’t you go sit in the corner? Do you want to die?”

“You... you crazy bastard!”

Crack!

Ludwig hurriedly ducked instead of continuing his swearing.

Something sharp brushed past his hair.

“You’re pretty good at dodging.

Sss....

This crazy guy had actually attacked him!

Rustle!

All of the European hunters, including Nina, rose up from their seats at the same time. They stared at Kim Go-hyuk with cold gazes.

“You’ve crossed the line, Heavenly Dragon Kim Go-hyuk.”

“Crossed the line? You haven’t seen anything yet.”

Kim Go-hyuk took out a dagger like he'd thrown at Ludwig. He threw the dagger casually into the air, as though he didn't care about the tense situation.

"Our new President told us that the Demons appeared in this world because of that man named Lukas."

"What the f**k are you talking about?"

"And that those who side with him are no better than the Demons. So, President Nina, I will give you another chance."

Kim Go-hyuk sneered.

"Give us the man named Lukas. Otherwise, we'll just assume everyone in this European Headquarters is collaborating with the Demons."

* * *

This wasn't a joke.

Ludwig swallowed heavily. Even though he knew it was wrong, he couldn't help but look at Nina.

'President...'

Lukas naturally knew whom this name belonged to. The blonde-haired man who came to the base together with Lee Jong-hak was named Lukas.

It wasn't a unique name.

In fact, the name was quite common in Europe.

Nevertheless, Ludwig was certain that the man, whom they were looking for, was that blonde-haired man.

He didn't know who this man was, but he did know that he was very important to their president, Nina Rednikova.

...That was all Ludwig knew.

Lukas had been staying in the base for about a month, but he hadn't had any contact with any of the other hunters. He'd heard that he'd only interacted with two or three people, including Nina.

And since they'd first met, Ludwig didn't think he'd exchanged more than five words with the man.

'Is it really the right decision to hide this man?'

Of course, he found Kim Go-hyuk's disrespectful attitude infuriating. In fact, he wanted to kill him. After all, he'd almost killed him. He wanted to ignore his ridiculous demands and just attack.

But he couldn't act upon his emotions.

After all, the opponent was one of the Three Dragons, one of the most influential people in the entirety of Asia.

'Dammit.'

This didn't feel real. In the blink of an eye, a ridiculous situation had erupted.

He never would have expected that he might have to fight other human beings. This was something that he could never imagine.

'Is that man named Lukas worth it?'

Was he worth them becoming enemies with the East Asia branch?

Ludwig wanted to ask Nina this question, but he knew that he could not speak lightly at that moment.

"Hmmm."

Kim Go-hyuk hummed as he stared at Nina. He was no longer showing the same aggressiveness as in his initial attack.

It seemed he was waiting for an answer.

It was only then when Ludwig felt like he'd seen the true essence of this man named Kim Go-hyuk. Perhaps his frivolous attitude was only a mask to make everyone lower their guards around him.

Then he realised that he was the only one who had been perfectly fooled by his cheap provocation.

Nina had remained cool-headed to the end, and Nicholas also hadn't made any real moves yet.

"Kim Go-hyuk, do you simply believe everything your new President tells you?"

"Of course."

"What evidence did he give you? Tell me. If you can convince me... I will help you find the man named Lukas."

"Haha."

Kim Go-hyuk burst into laughter.

It was a very stiff, strange laugh, but he himself didn't seem to notice.

With a shrug, he opened his mouth.

"Imagine. That there is a throne in front of you and sitting on it is a tyrant."

"...what?"

Nina's expression became slightly suspicious at the unexpected words.

But Kim Go-hyuk continued without any hesitation.

"Standing around this tyrant are hundreds of knights in brilliant armor. If he only lifts his hand once, your head will be chopped off."

"..."

What was this man talking about all of a sudden?

All of the hunters, including Nina, looked at him with gazes filled with confusion.

"Suddenly, that tyrant pulls out an orange and says, [Doesn't this apple look really good?]"

Kim Go-hyuk seemed to imitate the tyrant's stern voice. But his expression and vocalisation were terrible.

No matter how you looked at it, it seemed like the actions of a third-rate clown, something that you would usually laugh at just because of how ridiculous it was. But the room was deathly quiet.

"So you answer, [My Lord, that isn't an apple but an orange.] Then the tyrant says, [No. This is an apple.]"

"Pfft. Hahaha! Hahaha!"

Kim Go-hyuk suddenly burst into a loud, maniacal laugh. He laughed so hard that he was forced to hold his stomach.

Nina kept looking at him with a stiff expression on her face.

"Then I nodded, [Ah. Yes. It is an apple that looks very delicious.]"

"..."

"You understand, don't you, President Nina? Even if Lukas was a senile old man or a gorgeous young woman, it wouldn't matter. What is important is that Nodiesop told us Lukas was a disaster. So he is a disaster."

“...”

Kim Go-hyuk then continued with a slightly strained voice.

“So how about you quit the bullshit and tell me where Lukas is?”

“...hoo.”

Nina closed her eyes and sighed. Then, she began to deeply consider Kim Go-hyuk’s request.

This wasn’t just her problem.

Nina owed Lukas her life and more. The grace he’d bestowed upon her was so great that she wouldn’t be able to repay him even if she devoted her entire life to him.

But Nina Rednikova was the President of the European Branch.

On her shoulders, she carried the fate of hundreds of thousands of European hunters.

...If she were to reveal Lukas’ location here and claim that she had nothing to do with him.

Lukas would probably, no, definitely, agree with her choice.

He wouldn't even hold a grudge against her for it.

"..."

Kim Go-hyuk folded his arms and looked at Nina with interest.

Finally, Nina opened her eyes. From the look in her eyes, he could tell that she'd made a decision.

"Have you finished weighing your options?"

"Right."

"So what's your choice?"

Just as the corners of Kim Go-hyuk's lips began curling upwards, Nina spoke.

"I don't know."

Kim Go-hyuk froze for a moment before he began to clap with a ridiculous expression on his face.

“What a selfish woman. With that choice, you’ve basically signed the ticket to send all European hunters to the underworld.”

“Cut the crap. You came here to devour this Russian branch in the first place.”

“Hoh. Why do you say that?”

“Because we have not been able to contact the control room since a while ago.”

Kim Go-hyuk chuckled when Nina pointed at her ear.

“I guess being so old isn’t such a bad thing after all. Old people tend to have such good insight.”

Nina didn’t show it at that moment, but she decided that she would turn Kim Go-hyuk into minced meat the moment she got the opportunity.

“That’s right. We received orders to annihilate this branch. But I never thought you’d figure that out.”

What a disgusting bastard.

He intended to kill them from the beginning, but he still pretended to give them a chance to live.

Nina didn't have a particular reason for hiding Lukas' existence. She just didn't believe Kim Go-hyuk's words.

And it seemed her judgment was correct.

"By the way, I met that man named Lukas before I came to this room."

Kim Go-hyuk pointed to the door.

"We ran into him just after getting off the elevator. He doesn't seem that impressive. But I pretended not to notice him."

"Why...?"

"Why did I just pass by him?"

Kim Go-hyuk predicted Nina's question and interrupted her.

"Naturally, it's because I have something else planned."

Season 2 Chapter 36

Lukas looked down at Otsuru for a while before speaking slowly.

“Na Jong-cheol had always been an inflexible child.”

“...huh? Ah. Yes. I see.”

Otsuru raised his head.

Lukas fell silent for a moment before continuing.

“And Lee Jong-hak hates me.”

Otsuru felt like he couldn't keep up with the conversation. He really wanted to say that there wasn't much time, but he showed superhuman patience as he nodded.

“However, he's not someone who would ignore someone simply because of a momentary emotion. He's a foolishly upright guy, after all.”

“...”

Otsuru's face became filled with frustration.

Lukas looked him in the eyes as he spoke.

“What I’m trying to say is that Lee Jong-hak would never have told you where I was.”

“What are you trying to say...?”

“Enough with the terrible acting, Otsuru. There is something I want to ask you. Is Na Jong-cheol still alive?”

“...”

At that moment, Otsuru’s face became expressionless. The change was so sudden that someone who saw him might have felt they were looking at a different person altogether.

“Hoo.”

Then he took a deep breath and let the air slowly out his mouth.

“I see. It seems there was still some information we should have extracted.”

Now that he no longer had to pretend, Otsuru finally felt like he was wearing his own clothes. He looked at Lukas with an interested look in his eyes.

“Haha. More than that... I can’t believe you said my acting was awkward. This was the first time in my life that I’ve heard those words.”

He was speaking frankly.

Otsuru was well aware that his acting skills were in no way clumsy. His profession often required him to perform espionage or information gathering, and when he performed those tasks, he inevitably had to hide his identity and blend into crowds.

He'd even entered and studied in a women's university without anyone realising.

He was surprised, but Otsuru was still relaxed.

"I know that you're strong. Nodiesop already told us to be careful. So you must be strong enough that even a hunter would be in danger."

"Your attitude is quite proud despite knowing that."

"Kuku."

There was a confident smile on Otsuru's lips.

"The control room is already under our control. By now, the control of the portal should also be in our hands."

Lukas paused at that.

“What about the people there?”

“Their resistance was too much. We couldn’t restrain them. We didn’t have the time.”

“Some of them should have been civilians.”

“So what? Should we not touch them? I guess you wouldn’t know, but everyone in this base is already prepared to die.”

Right. They were all prepared.

Prepared to die at the hands of Demons. Not by their own kind.

This man knew Lukas’ power. He didn’t know how strong he was, but he knew that he was at least stronger than him.

Nevertheless, his attitude remained relaxed. He was confident as though he was protected by some kind of absolute field.

But no matter how hard Lukas pondered, he couldn’t think of a reason for that.

So he decided to check for himself.

Crack!

“...?!”

Otsuru’s neck was sucked to Lukas’ hand. It all happened in a flash.

“This... what...?!”

In the instant it happened, Otsuru reacted. When he felt the unknown power, he used five different evasion techniques that could be used in an instant.

Two of them were absolute survival methods that had saved Otsuru numerous times in the past.

But none of them worked.

By the time he came to his senses, his throat was already being held tightly in Lukas’ hand.

“As... I... expected.”

“Ku-, kuh. No matter what, you wouldn’t kill a human... right?”

“Did Nodiesop tell you that?”

“Of... course.”

“...”

Lukas loosened his grip.

Otsuru, who fell to the ground, looked up at Lukas as he coughed. He looked distressed, but in his eyes was a hint of elation as if he had expected such an outcome.

“You talk like you know me well.”

“Of course! Because he said it himself!”

Nodiesop.

It had only been less than a month since Nodiesop had arrived, and yet, he was already being worshipped fanatically.

Of course, it wasn't like Lukas couldn't understand. The charisma of an Absolute could be likened to a curse or brainwashing.

Otsuru was a famous Titled Hunter and one of the most powerful humans. But that was all.

What one needed to resist the temptation of an Absolute wasn't a strong body but a strong mind.

If someone was able to distinguish right from wrong despite being overwhelmed by fear, then Nodiesop's influence as an Absolute would be limited.

This meant people like Na Jong-cheol. And all of them probably had bad endings.

Most of the East Asian hunters, including Otsuru, would regard everything Nodiesop said as the absolute truth.

Even if they were told that family members were Demons, they would smile as they choked their children to death.

The reason was simple.

"You were rotten from the start."

"What?"

"A man like you didn't need to be instigated by Nodiesop. I guess this is close to your true self. Don't you feel happy now? You can finally show the self you've been hiding all this while."

Therefore, he would be able to kill even those who should be protected.

There were people like this.

Those who caused Lukas to feel deep skepticism.

He knew that humans were a chaotic race. He also knew that good and evil coexisted within every human. Some more than others.

But apart from that fact, it wasn't a good thing for Lukas to dwell on this ugliness.

Gurgle...

If he was exposed to too much malice, then the darkness hidden deep in his heart would begin to surface. It would make him look back on the path that he'd walked so far. It would make him wonder if it was the right path.

Of course, he wouldn't be shaken. His belief wasn't so easily shaken.

However, the situation itself would cause Lukas' mood to drop. His mood would be the exact opposite of when he taught Min Ha-rin and Leo.

"Hahaha! You know me well, too!"

Otsuru laughed without understanding the situation.

Lukas looked at him while thinking.

'What a disgusting creature.'

Squelch.

"...huh?"

Otsuru blinked dumbly as his brain took a while to register the terrible pain that came from his shoulder. It felt like it was on fire.

"Kuk...!"

There was a hole in his shoulder.

When and how?

Otsuru stumbled without understanding anything.

Lukas approached him as he groaned in pain.

“I can’t kill humans? Did Nodiesop say that? Does he think he has the right to determine my actions?”

Curiosity became displeasure, and displeasure became anger.

My head felt like it was on fire.

Dozens of voices rang out in Lukas’ head.

The ego which was the Absolute, the part of him, which had been the most wary since he left the coils of mortality, was constantly whispering to him.

This voice was subtly making suggestions.

Talking about how he should follow the rules, which would mean he would stop suffering from such situations.

He knew how intense that temptation was.

“U-, urk...”

Otsuru, who took a step back, could not maintain his balance and fell on his butt.

Paak!

Lukas kicked him in the chin.

Otsuru fell backwards with a short cry. Then Lukas gently stepped on his injured shoulder.

“Kuaak!”

Even his scream was disgusting.

If Nodiesop’s goal this time was to piss Lukas off, then he’d succeeded. Regardless of whether this fact was good for him or not.

“You guys seem to have misunderstood something. And among them, you misunderstood the most important thing by far.”

“Kuh...! Motherf**ker...! I’m going to kill you...!”

Lukas didn’t respond. Instead, he simply stepped a little harder on Otsuru’s shoulder.

Naturally, there was another loud scream. Otsuru grabbed Lukas’ leg with his other arm, but Lukas didn’t seem to care as he continuously applied pressure.

“Your biggest mistake was that you still thought of yourself as a human.”

Season 2 Chapter 37

Bandages were important. Especially for warriors who used martial arts.

This was because they used them to secure their wrists, something incredibly important to do.

Of course, they weren't as good as wrist guards made of state-of-the-art materials, but they were still better than other wrappings.

Kuk.

Leo carefully bandaged both of his arms, ensuring that they were tight and secure.

Seeing this, Gerard smiled.

“Are you going to fight me with your bare hands? I thought you might have gotten hold of some good equipment, but it seems that wasn't the case.”

“I don't intend to rely on equipment. For a warrior, the body is the greatest weapon.”

“Haha. Is that some kind of eastern philosophy? I’m not sure I can agree with that.”

Gerard drew his sword.

As he held it in front of him, white energy began billowing around the blade of the sword.

Sword Ki. This was a type of power that could only be utilised by First class Swordsmen who were close to reaching the stage of Master.

Leo’s expression hardened slightly.

He could see it for himself. Just how good of a hunter Gerard was.

“You’re right-handed. So in remembrance of the old days, I’ll only cut off your left arm.”

This cruel murmur was said so quietly that only Leo was able to hear him.

From his tone, Leo knew that Gerard was serious.

But it didn’t intimidate or frighten him.

Instead, he was grateful. After all, those words had just given him a hint for how to fight.

Gerard was extremely prideful. After declaring that he would cut off his left arm, it was clear that he would keep his word.

This meant that at a critical moment, he was more likely to aim for Leo's left arm.

Now that he knew this, he would be able to avoid the crisis to an extent.

'I have to avoid head-on confrontations.'

While thinking this, Leo took a stance.

He knew that he had no chance of winning if he used the martial arts or subsidiary techniques he learned.

'Warrior King Fist.'

But there was a chance to win if he used the technique his master had taught him.

Leo took a deep breath.

[This duel will be officiated by Matthew Costa, and it will be stopped if I feel it has ended. Keep in mind that the two duelists must agree to the fight clauses.]

They heard the voice of the referee, Matthew Costa. He was in a room beside the duel ground, which was separated by a glass wall.

Leo and Gerard just nodded because there was no way he would hear their voices unless they shouted loudly.

[Then the duel can begin.]

* * *

The portal management room.

This was a room created for the management and maintenance of the portal and could be found in every branch.

People might think that simply opening and closing the portal was not an important job, but that was not true. If they allowed entry to those who weren't their allies, it could cause their enemies to attack from within the base.

Therefore, the ones who were allowed to work in the portal management room were those who the administration had complete trust in.

“They would never have expected even until the moment they died.”

Du Dangpae couldn't help but have this thought as he looked down at the corpses with a stiff expression.

They were human corpses, not Demons. And they had been killed by none other than him.

'I killed my own kind.'

As soon as he thought this, he couldn't help but feel strange, like animal blood had been spilled all over his spotless white shirt.

Although they were of different nationalities and races, they were still comrades who once fought against the enemy known as Demons. It could not be denied that they were allies.

More importantly, most of the humans here were civilians.

Nevertheless, he had not shown them any mercy.

What did they think as they died?

Du Dangpae had deliberately revealed himself to them just before they died. And he watched as their eyes widened in shock.

These poor people would never have expected to die at the hands of a fellow human.

When he recalled the fear and disbelief in their eyes, a thrill of pleasure once again surged through his body.

Nevertheless, while he enjoyed their reactions, he didn't allow them to raise the alarm. This mass assassination had occurred silently.

After all, with even the control room under their control, the situation in the Russian Headquarters remained as calm as usual.

They would never know that the dozens of people in the control and portal management rooms had all been exterminated.

Du Dangpae manipulated the portal's control panel.

Jing-

When he was done, the portals of the East Asia Branch headquarters and the European Branch headquarters were connected.

Now, when the order was given, the portal would be triggered and hundreds of selected hunters from East Asia would appear in this base.

Woowoong-

Just as he had that thought, he felt a vibration in his ring.

He was wearing one of a pair of couple rings, and if ki was injected into one, the other would vibrate.

The range was short, and it was impossible to communicate outside of the vibrations, but it was good enough for situations like this one.

Before opening the portal, Du Dangpae took a deep breath.

“...hoo.”

If he opened this portal, this base would become a mess. It was impossible to tell just how many people would die.

And it would not be a fight against the Demons but against fellow humans. The defeated side and the victorious side would end up with numerous scars without gaining anything.

There would be countless people who died for nothing.

He could already smell the heavy scent of blood.

He could also feel his heart pounding. But it wasn't anxiety or fear.

With a smile, Du Dangpae opened the portal.

* * *

Lukas now knew the role of those who came to this base.

“Keeeeek!”

Otsuru’s face looked hideous.

Blood vessels stuck out from his face, and he grit his teeth so hard that his gums bled. The voice that came from his throat didn’t sound human.

Half Demon(1) Otsuru.

He didn’t get this title because one of his parents was a Yokai.

Yokai energy.

Yokai energy was something that appeared only in Japan. And without sufficient willpower, one wouldn’t be able to control this power.

Otsuru had probably accepted the yokai energy on his own. Perhaps he obtained the cells of a great yokai and transplanted them into himself, or maybe he ate its heart. (TL: Author didn't explain what 'yokai' is in this sense. Or whether they are related to the 'demons' or not.)

However, as a result of this, Otsuru had failed to truly make the yokai energy his own.

Crack.

"...kuk!"

Lukas stepped on Otsuru's chest, destroying his heart.

Red blood spurted from Otsuru's mouth, quickly forming a puddle on the floor.

His irritation didn't subside.

He felt that if he was pushed further, he wouldn't just end at killing Otsuru or the intruders but every human in this world.

"Hoo..."

He couldn't do that.

Lukas forced himself to calm down.

The images of Min Ha-rin and Leo Freeman came to his mind at that moment.

“ ... ”

His raging emotions calmed down a little.

It was then.

Kiki-ki-

Otsuru got up from the ground.

This was impossible. His life had already ended.

His heart had been destroyed, and there was no living being who could have survived without a heart.

However, his movements were unstable.

There was a strange, creepy feeling as if he was a broken doll that was forcibly being made to rise.

Otsuru's mouth then opened.

"It seems you didn't like my greeting, madman."

His voice came out stiffly. But it wasn't the voice that Lukas paid attention to.

Madman.

There were very few beings in this universe who knew that title. And it was obvious who among them was capable of controlling Otsuru.

"Nodiesop."

"That's right."

He nodded before looking down at himself.

He could tell just by looking at the traces. Otsuru had been killed cleanly. There wasn't even the slightest trace of hesitation in Lukas' actions.

"I'm surprised. I heard that you were an Absolute who loved humans. But you're far less merciful than I expected."

“This universe has the law of reincarnation. Since I didn’t kill his soul, this can’t be considered harsh.”

“I see. So that’s what you were thinking.”

Whether he would kill humans or not. And, if he did, whether he would hesitate.

Those were probably some of the things Nodiesop wanted to find out.

“Nevertheless, I thought you’d be more tolerant considering the fact that you consider yourself the saviour of humanity.”

“Enough of your bullshit, Nodiesop. I’m not in a good mood right now. So tell me why you dared to show your face.”

Nodiesop didn’t seem affected by Lukas’ harsh tone.

“Originally, I wasn’t going to show myself this soon either.”

It was true.

He never intended to reveal himself to Lukas until the right time came. He didn’t even want to give him the slightest hint of his existence.

But the situation has changed.

“A meeting is being held.”

“...what?”

“A four... no, three-party discussion.”

Lukas' brows furrowed at Nodiesop's unexpected words.

“Who are these three parties?”

“You'll naturally find out when you come.”

Shuk.

At that moment, a small rippled appeared in the air, which then split open to reveal a portal.

No. It was a much more sophisticated power than a portal. It was much closer to the space time movement that the Demigods used in the past.

An ability that only transcendent beings would be able to use.

“You want me to go in there?”

“Right.”

Ha. It was so kind of him to open a passage for him.

It was ridiculously beyond suspicious. Lukas almost let out a laugh.

Naturally, he thought it was a trap, but he couldn't help but think that Nodiesop's attitude was a bit strange.

As if he'd read Lukas' thoughts, Nodiesop spoke.

“It doesn't matter if you don't come. No, in all honesty, I'd be happy if you didn't come. But if you miss this opportunity, you will probably regret it.”

“...says who?”

[Me.]

The answer came from behind him.

Lukas could not hide his shock.

The surge in his emotions was so sudden that he could not hide it.

This was natural.

'This voice...'

No. In a sense, it couldn't be said that he'd heard the voice. Instead, it was as though the speaker had imprinted the words directly into his head.

Lukas turned around.

Then, he became speechless.

Standing there was a being with a body that seemed to be made of light. Overall, the shape was that of a human, but they had no features or hair on their body.

Moreover, the body was so perfect that it appeared to have been sculpted by a master who poured his soul into his creation for numerous years.

Lukas looked at this being with a complicated expression on his face. He couldn't remember how long it had been since his emotions had fluctuated so much.

[Long time no see. How long has it been since we last met?]

“...it’s already been too long to count.”

[Huhu.]

God chuckled.

The being who was the one and only creator of the multiverse.

Lukas was surprised.

This was his third time meeting God. Or, to be more precise, after he had become an Absolute and began saving humans in countless worlds, God never appeared before him.

Of course, this wasn’t strange, but Lukas couldn’t help but feel a bit puzzled. He thought they would at least meet again after he’d completed his first mission.

[I told you. I’m always busy.]

God spoke, reading Lukas’ thoughts.

It had been a long time since Lukas had this feeling. With his current strength, even the Rulers were unable to read his mind.

God's small performance proved that it was really him.

He was still a crafty guy.

God laughed for a moment as he read that thought as well.

[But I have been paying attention to your actions. It's been very interesting. Few Absolutes have risen as fast as you.]

"I don't think you came here just to compliment me."

[Of course not. Four Absolutes have entered this universe at this point. I'm here to explain a small advantage that is applicable to you.]

"...advantage?"

[More importantly, Lukas Trowman, I have special advice for you.]

"..."

It wasn't a trap.

He could be certain that God wouldn't join hands with Nodiesop just to deal with him.

And Lukas knew that if he missed this opportunity, he would never be able to know about the small advantage he had or hear the advice.

"How long will it take?"

[Well...]

Could he not tell?

Lukas felt conflicted.

His biggest issue was the current situation in the base. And what was about to happen.

If he went with them, all of the European hunters, including Nina, might be wiped out by the time he returned.

"..."

After thinking for a moment, Lukas opened his mouth.

Season 2 Chapter 38

A small white table floated in a completely black space.

Except for this small table, the only thing that could be seen in this space were the two beings who sat at it, facing each other.

Sedi had her chin in her hands and looked bored.

Then the blue haired man who sat in front of her opened his mouth.

“You don’t look so good.”

“...”

“Is something wrong?”

“Shut up.”

Sedi responded in an annoyed voice, her bright red eyes standing out in the darkness.

“By the way...”

“...by the way?”

The bored expression disappeared from Sedi’s face. That alone caused the atmosphere to become cold.

“I dislike your arrogant attitude. Do you want me to kill you before I kill Lukas?”

“I don’t mind.”

It was a strangely confident response.

Sedi was surprised for a moment before she glared at Nodiesop with narrowed eyes.

“You don’t-”

Just as she was about to say something, the space fluttered briefly before a new being emerged.

It was a pale, blonde-haired man.

This man expressionlessly looked around the table.

Then he made eye contact with Sedi.

“...”

The two's eyes passed each other naturally, as if they were just observing a stranger.

Lukas then looked at Nodiesop.

He must have sensed his gaze, but there was no change to his expression, and he didn't look over.

“Is this everyone? There should be one more.”

There were four Absolutes in this world at the moment.

There were three people at the table. One was still missing.

[Ah. Letip refused. But considering that guy's personality, it's not strange.]

God, who was also sitting at the table, suddenly spoke.

The three Absolutes were startled at the same time. They hadn't realised that God was sitting there until he spoke.

He chuckled.

[Won't you have a seat?]

"..."

Lukas sat at the table while thinking.

Letip.

That should have been the name of the other Absolute who entered.

He'd never heard the name before, but it would be foolish to conclude that he was weak because of that. Because no one dared to count the number of Absolutes in existence.

Lukas decided to remember the name Letip.

'This space.'

This was not the universe in which they had been originally. He could tell that much.

However, it couldn't be viewed as a completely new universe altogether.

This was probably a Personal Space.

It was a small universe that only special beings among the Absolutes could possess. It wasn't something that could be determined by power or position.

Among the Absolutes, only those who had a special aptitude for creation, or who were given such rights by God, were allowed to own a Personal Space.

Of course, every Ruler had the power of creation.

'The flow of time... is the same.'

He had to check the flow of time because he was no longer in the same universe. If the flow of time was different, then decades might have passed by the time he returned. Personal Spaces were no exception to this rule.

Of course, God wouldn't make such a mistake.

"Then tell me about the advantage."

When Lukas raised his head and said this, Sedi looked at him like he was crazy.

She couldn't believe that he'd talk to God like that.

Naturally, this wasn't to say that no Absolute did, but this was her first time seeing it.

Could he really talk to God like that when he wasn't even a Ruler?

But what amazed her even more was God's attitude.

[Aren't you guys frustrated?]

He didn't seem to care about Lukas' attitude.

"What do you mean?"

It was Nodiesop who asked back in a calm voice.

[Exactly that. You must be anxious to fight each other, but all you can do is stare.]

"Ah. Then I'm not frustrated."

He spoke in a relaxed manner.

“It’s a good thing to progress my plan slowly. Plus, my first move seems to have worked quite well.”

After saying that, he turned to look at Lukas.

It was a blatant provocation. Something that was unexpected. After all, he didn’t seem the type for such halfhearted tactics.

Lukas remained silent. There was no reason to respond.

[Nevertheless, you should still pay attention. A lot of things will change after this discussion.]

“....because of the advantage that you mentioned earlier?”

[Including that. Hmm. I’ll only explain it once, so listen carefully.]

God nodded.

[As you know, the allowance of the universe you were staying in is extremely low. Now that so many Absolutes have entered and ki has disappeared, it is in an even worse situation. It’s saturated.]

They knew.

It was like being locked in a room with thin glass walls. These walls would shatter instantly with only the slightest use of force.

Knowing that, the Absolutes had to pay attention to not make any large movements or, in other words, use their power.

What would happen if they broke the glass by mistake?

Then, all the life inside would disappear without knowing how they died.

Every being in the world except the Absolutes would disappear.

“What are you trying to say?”

[What if there was a way to exercise your power without worrying about the universe’s capacity?]

“Huh?”

“What did you say?”

Their voices overlapped. That was how surprised they were.

At that moment, Lukas felt as though God's eyes were on him.

[You should know. A way to the laws of the universe or the world.]

No. He was definitely talking to him.

Lukas muttered softly.

"...illuminium."

[Hmm. It was a long time ago, but I guess you still remember.]

A special metal that the Demigods had used in the past to bypass the restrictions of the laws of the world.

By consuming it, the Demigods were able to temporarily avoid the restrictions for their indiscriminate slaughter.

"Illuminium?"

"Trick the laws...?"

Sedi and Nodiesop seemed to have never heard of such a material.

They must have traveled through countless universes, so why did they not know about it?

[Your home universe was unique. Maybe that's why you became a singularity. Even when you were just a mortal, you encountered situations that most Absolutes could never imagine.]

God answered Lukas' thoughts.

And now that he thought about it, he had never encountered any material that had similar properties in his time as an Absolute.

"Are you saying that something like that exists in this world?"

[It's a bit different from illuminium. It's not tricking the laws of the world; it's simply transferring the burden for using your power to a world that was already destroyed.]

"...a world that was already destroyed?"

[Right.]

God nodded.

[I'm talking about a false world.]

False world.

Or a world that was worse than trash.

That was how the vast majority of Absolutes viewed such worlds.

They were empty worlds that had nothing on them. The existence of such a space was a contradiction in itself, but it was true that false worlds existed.

It was said that even the Rulers did not understand the existence of these worlds and that only God knew the truth about them.

Of course, that wasn't very important at that moment.

'Using our power wouldn't affect the universe.'

This would mean that he could not only use his external force as an absolute but also his own power, Endtongue.

If that was the case...

'I could kill Nodiesop.'

"..."

Nodiesop's expression hardened.

Even if they used their powers to the fullest, the universe wouldn't collapse and the damage would instead be sent to a false world. Frankly speaking, that wasn't an attractive proposition for Nodiesop.

He was also an Absolute, so naturally, he disliked the thought of causing a universe to collapse. But he would still be able to bear it reluctantly.

Especially if he could get rid of the madman in the process.

But Lukas would never make such a choice.

His purpose was to save the humans. He wouldn't do anything that broke his belief.

Lukas wouldn't abandon the humans.

No, he couldn't abandon them.

'The madman is in a dangerous situation.'

He grew stronger at an unusually fast pace, but this caused his foundations to be unstable in many ways. Because he gained power too quickly, he didn't have the time to properly digest it and make it his own.

A tower which was built in a hurry was prone to collapse. And that was exactly what Lukas was like.

He only had to break his center.

In Lukas' case, his belief was protecting humans, and if he caused that belief to crack, he would self-destruct, which was exactly what Nodiesop wanted.

But if he was able to use his full strength, things would be different.

'I don't think I'd lose a head-to-head battle.'

If he fought, he would win.

Every Absolute thought like that. Power and rank were only secondary.

If they weren't so confident in themselves, they would never have become Absolutes in the first place.

That's why the Rulers were so amazing. They were able to cause these noble Absolutes to feel reverence and desire towards them.

'Things would get annoying if Lukas could use his power without restriction.'

This wouldn't affect his victory, but he didn't want to take any risks.

In other words, Nodiesop was desperate to find the 'thing' God was talking about.

It was fine. This advantage would change nothing.

If it didn't go as planned, he didn't mind flipping the table.

Nodiesop's eyes shined darkly.

[...]

Nodiesop didn't notice that God was looking at him.

God smiled cheekily before saying.

[Now, then. I'll give you a hint about 'it'.]

Suddenly, a word appeared in Lukas' mind.

'Hybrid.'

"..."

Is that the hint?

Lukas pondered upon the meaning behind this word as God continued.

[Each of you received a different hint. It could mean the thing directly, refer to it indirectly, or be a related clue. I hope you will rack your brains hard to figure it out.]

"Is that the only hint?"

Lukas couldn't help but ask back in a strange voice,

Hybrid.

That alone was too little to be a clue.

[Right.]

“It’s not enough.”

[Haha. You have the biggest advantage here, Lukas.]

“What?”

God smiled and turned his head. It was clear that he didn’t intend to tell him any more.

Lukas also couldn’t afford to reveal his advantage, whatever it might have been. He decided to think about God’s words later.

Season 2 Chapter 39

Hearing that the meeting was over, Nodiesop was the first one to rise to his feet. He bowed to God and left without saying anything more.

Sedi was the same. However, just before she left, she made eye contact with Lukas once again.

When Lukas was about to follow them, God spoke.

[Wait.]

When Lukas narrowed his eyes, God simply shrugged.

[Relax, I'm trying to give you some advice. Why are you making that face?]

"Then tell me quickly. I don't have time."

God laughed at that.

[Hey, Lukas, don't you ever think of your home universe? It's been a while since you left. It wouldn't be strange if you felt homesick or something like that. There are always some sentimental guys like that. Well, most of them get used to it after a few thousand years.]

Lukas knew the way God talked. He would always speak in a roundabout manner without getting to the point easily.

He knew that, but... Lukas wasn't in a very relaxed situation at the moment.

"Get to the point."

[Answer my question first. It's related to what I want to tell you.]

His tone was soft, but Lukas could tell that he definitely wouldn't speak if he didn't give him an answer.

In the end, Lukas would be at a disadvantage as more time passed. Therefore, holding back a sigh, he answered the question.

"My homeworld is always in my heart. There are people waiting there for me, and I promised them that I'd return."

If it was possible, he would have loved to return to his homeworld at that very moment.

But he knew that it was impossible. At least for now.

Therefore, while he engraved it in his heart, he tried not to think about it. He forcefully dulled the feelings he had and buried them deep within his heart.

But God had rudely dug them up.

"Is that answer enough?"

[It's enough.]

"Then what's your advice?"

[There might be someone you know in this universe.]

“What?”

Lukas frowned.

‘This universe’ that God mentioned wasn’t the personal space. Instead, he was referring to the universe he had just come from, where Min Ha-rin and Leo were. The universe where the Great Game would soon take place.

He knew that. He knew, but he didn’t understand.

God smiled.

[My hint was a bit vague. So I’ll make up for it with this...]

The words he said next were definitely the most shocking things that Lukas had heard in nearly tens of thousands of years.

[In this universe is a being from your homeworld.]

* * *

The fight was supposed to end quickly. Or, at least, that's what Gerard thought.

He didn't look down on Leo Freeman. He fully acknowledged his combat capabilities when facing other humans. In the first place, he wouldn't have even looked at him twice if he thought he was trash.

Leo was Gerard's stress outlet. And this outlet naturally needed to have a certain standard. That's why, to some extent, he acknowledged Leo's strength.

Nevertheless, he had never been worried about this confrontation. Because he believed that his strength was beyond Leo's.

'However...'

Gerard grit his teeth and swung his sword again.

Woosh.

Just like with his previous attacks, Leo avoided this one as well. The tip of the sword only barely touched the lobe of his ear. Some blood spilled out, but it was a minor injury.

'What the hell is this martial art?'

The attack just then had been light. Nevertheless, considering the average range of a sword, it wouldn't have been strange if his entire right ear was sliced off.

But it wasn't. It wasn't even really cut by the sword. A small wound only appeared on the spot where the sword grazed his ear.

How many times had this happened by now?

Meanwhile, Leo once again widened the distance between them.

He had many large and small injuries on his body, but anyone could tell that none of them were serious.

"Huff, huff..."

Gerard panted. His eyes became cold.

At some point, his initial goal of cutting off his left arm had disappeared. Now, his sword was just filled with bloodthirst.

'I was wrong.'

He didn't think that Leo would avoid head-on confrontations so thoroughly. It had to be a strategy that he'd prepared from the start.

But now that he thought about it, Leo knew his combat style. He'd seen him hunt Demons dozens of times, so this was natural.

On the other hand, Gerard didn't know much about Leo. They had fought several times, but he had easily won all of those fights.

He never had the time to observe Leo's fighting style.

Gerard knew that he wouldn't be so tired if he hadn't fought with the thought of easily cutting off one of Leo's arms.

No, that wasn't all.

Leo had also provoked Gerard from the start. He didn't use facial expressions or words. Instead, he ticked him with his actions and tactics.

But there were other problems as well.

Crunch!

Gerard grit his teeth as he quickly narrowed the distance between them once again. This time, he stabbed forward. It was fast. The force behind his charge made it impossible to ignore this lightning fast attack.

Woosh!

Leo ducked, avoiding the attack. There wasn't even a moment of hesitation.

This admirable feat caused Gerard's expression to crumple even further.

It wasn't an illusion, after all. Leo was getting faster.

"Puh!"

He spat out a mouthful of blood.

The fact that he'd shown such a frivolous attitude despite the presence of the people in the audience showed that Gerard's self-control had disappeared.

At first, he thought that he'd simply slowed down. Since he was already tired, this was a natural judgement. In fact, the constant attacks had truly worn him out.

But that wasn't it.

Leo was growing faster quicker than he became slower.

'How?'

Leo certainly had more stamina than he did, but the difference shouldn't have been that large. All of his injuries might only have been minor, but the constant dodging should have sucked away his concentration and stamina like a swarm of leeches.

In addition, Leo had been on the defensive since the start of the fight.

Those defending would naturally consume less stamina than the attackers. As long as they didn't get severely hurt, the attacking side would definitely consume more power.

However, those who focused on defense would naturally lose focus faster. It was much harder to withstand the pressure of continuous attacks than most expected.

Especially if it was a life and death battle against a superior opponent.

Anxiety and a sense of crisis would inevitably rise. They would increase their breathing and heart rate, exhaust their concentration, and sap their stamina.

But at that moment, it was Gerard, not Leo, who was growing tired.

'If it continues like this.'

He might lose.

The moment he realised that, Gerard closed his eyes.

“...hooo.”

He calmed his mind and organised his thoughts.

And finally, after stabilising his breathing, he opened his mouth.

“I know what you’re thinking.”

“...”

“After my attack just now, I revealed an opening. It wasn’t fatal, but it would have been enough for you to deliver a fair amount of damage.”

The opening hadn’t been intentional, nor was it a trap. It was just an inevitable opening that appeared after his attack.

And Gerard would have been injured if he chose to make use of it.

“However, you didn’t attack.”

He’d thought about the reason.

And he could only think of one conclusion.

“You intend to finish the fight with one blow.”

A single blow.

Leo was intentionally holding himself back in order to land a blow that would decide the outcome of the fight.

At that moment, his mind should have been as dry as a desert. It might have even been worse than he imagined. And for Leo, that opening must have been like a sip of water.

That opening must have been extremely tempting to him as it was the first true opening Gerard had displayed.

Nevertheless, he endured it. He starved himself to the limit.

He was waiting for that one opening that he could use to win.

In a way, it was pretty terrifying.

A hungry wolf was more dangerous than a full tiger.

Leo had compressed his desperation into extreme concentration.

Gerard gulped slightly.

Realising this fact didn't mean that he could reverse the situation. Instead, it only made the pressure greater.

'...from what I can see...'

The fight was already over.

Gerard turned to look at the stands.

At the start of the duel, there had been numerous people cheering for him and jeering at Leo, but as the fight progressed, they gradually became quieter. And now, they were completely silent.

He didn't know it, but Min Ha-rin was the only one whose eyes were sparkling.

When such an atmosphere formed, Gerard knew that he had as good as lost.

So he took a stance. His aura rose as he held his sword with both hands.

At first, he didn't intend to kill Leo. At most, he would cut off an arm or even just a tendon.

But he'd changed his mind.

'I'm prepared to kill you.'

Not 'I'm going to kill you' but 'I'm prepared to kill you'. The words were similar, but the meanings were different.

The latter meant that Gerard was prepared to risk his life for his goal.

If Leo died, then disciplinary actions would definitely follow, even if they'd both agreed to the fight clauses. The image that he'd worked so hard to construct would also be severely damaged.

But that didn't matter.

'This resolution is a tribute to you, Leo Freeman.'

Cut off an arm? Cut a tendon?

He was no longer an enemy who could be confronted with such a halfhearted resolve.

He was a man who he had to use all of his might and determination to kill.

At that moment, the image of the Supporter Leo Freeman disappeared from Gerard's mind.

Season 2 Chapter 40

Leo immediately noticed when Gerard's aura changed.

"Hoo."

He let out a small breath.

Contrary to his appearance, he was exhausted at that moment.

He had conserved his stamina, but he had used up a lot of his mental strength.

'Rock Shield.'

It was one of the four forms he'd learned from Lukas. It was a technique that raised his defense to the extreme by surrounding the entire body with ki.

It was a self-defense technique that only first class experts could use.

The self-defense technique would only be complete when the entire body was covered without any gaps. And naturally, this meant that the ki consumption of this technique was severe.

However, if the technique was only used to cover parts of the body, the defensive capabilities would still be amazing while the energy consumption would be reduced significantly.

By utilising this technique, Leo was able to avoid any major injuries while making Gerard greatly consume his stamina.

‘Gerard intends to finish it with a single blow.’

In other words, if Leo could dodge or block this attack, it would be his victory.

Ssss-

Ki raged around Gerard’s entire body.

Then, he charged forward.

Like the last time, he intended to stab.

His charge was neither fast nor slow. In fact, it could have been said that he was moving at an easily avoidable speed.

However, as he faced this blade, Leo's expression became stiffer and stiffer.

Kung!

He felt pressured.

It was as though a thousand pounds of iron was resting upon his shoulders.

Leo grit his teeth.

The ki coming from Gerard's body was binding him.

'Force Bind?'

This was a technique that could only be used by Swordsmen who were on the verge of reaching the Master rank.

Leo knew Gerard was a genius, but he never would have imagined that he was able to use Force Bind.

This was probably Gerard's last hidden card, and it was likely that not even the members of Gerard's team knew he was capable of this.

“Kuk!”

Malice erupted in Leo’s eyes.

The option to avoid it had disappeared. So he would have no choice but to block it.

However, Gerard’s attack contained a terrifying murderous intent.

Gerard really intended to kill him. If he faltered, he would die.

‘He’s aiming for my heart.’

The reason for not aiming at his skull was simple. He could avoid by simply forcefully twisting his head to the side.

Perhaps Gerard thought so as well. His force bind wasn’t perfect. This was proven by the fact that Leo could still move his head and arms.

It was just his torso and feet that were frozen.

‘If I use all of my ki and use Rock Shield...’

...No.

That wouldn't work.

To block this attack, he would have to use all of his ki. And if he were to try to launch his attack in such a condition, he wouldn't be able to do much damage.

This meant that he only had one option.

“...!”

Gerard was surprised.

Leo was definitely preparing to block his attack. Then, at the last moment, he suddenly stretched out his fist.

This sudden offensive was not a planned move. It was a reckless and foolish decision.

No matter how tired Gerard was, he had put all of his remaining ki into this sword attack. The Sword Ki around his sword was clearer than ever.

It would be a confrontation between a sword and a fist.

'You fool...!'

Clang!

The area around them was suddenly filled with bright light. When the sword and fist clashed, it created a flash that blinded the spectators for a moment.

Bang!

The clash didn't last very long. And in the end, Leo was the one who was pushed back.

His face was pale.

“...”

The two made eye contact for a moment.

Crack-

Then, a cracking sound was heard from the sword. At the same time, Gerard dropped his sword to the ground.

Clang!

When the sword landed on the ground, it shattered and the pieces scattered.

Gerard could no longer hold his sword because of the pain in his wrist. It was either broken or sprained.

Holding back the pain, he glared at Leo.

Leo was swaying as though he would collapse at any moment. It was clear that he'd put all his energy into that last attack.

“...”

If he went to punch Leo at that moment, he would definitely have fallen. After all, his right wrist was damaged, but his left hand was still fine.

Leo was clearly past his limit.

But Gerard didn't move.

'I lost.'

A Swordsman's sword had broken. Nothing more needed to be said.

If the opponent was a Demon, then it would have been a different story, but Leo was a human. And although the fight clauses had been applied, this also counted as a conclusion.

Gerard opened his mouth.

"...I'm stronger than you."

"Right."

"My strength, speed, experience, and ki are all superior to yours."

"That's right."

Leo agreed with him in a cool voice before spitting out a mouthful of blood.

This was natural.

Unlike Gerard, who had absorbed most of the shock with his sword, he had withstood it with his body.

Gerard continued looking at Leo's whole face, which had become pale.

"But you have more patience than I do. And that martial art... It's not the martial art you used before. Is it a new martial art?"

"Right."

"What's the name?"

"Warrior King Fist."

Leo answered his question before continuing after feeling that his explanation was a bit lacking.

"I was told that the stronger the opponent is, the more the true value of the martial art is displayed."

"...that is truly a unique martial art."

After saying these honest feelings, Gerard lifted his hand.

Then he turned his head to the referee.

"I lost."

[Leo Freeman wins.]

The referee declared the result of the duel with a surprised voice.

'...ah.'

A brief smile flashed across Leo's otherwise emotionless face. After hearing those words, his body relaxed and his vision darkened.

Slowly, Leo's body fell to the ground.

* * *

The atmosphere in the stands was frozen.

"What the hell...?"

"Gerard lost?"

"Unbelievable."

Most of them didn't doubt that Gerard would win with ease. But as the fight progressed, this thought slowly changed.

Nevertheless, they still didn't think he would lose...

"But Gerard is the one standing at the end."

"Right, Leo passed out."

"...but Gerard admitted defeat."

Most of the hunters were agitated. They all looked down at the duel ground with confusion.

'Well done, Junior Brother!'

Only Min Ha-rin clenched her fists and cheered for Leo's victory.

What was so good about remaining standing?

As a former Swordsman, she understood perfectly. The moment Gerard's sword broke, it meant that he had lost this duel and Leo had won.

Nevertheless, Gerard's attitude at the end was a bit surprising.

'I can't let this continue.'

It seemed that she was the only one who cared about Leo.

Just as Min Ha-rin got up from her seat to go get him, the door opened and a group of people entered the room.

"Huh...?"

Confusion filled Min Ha-rin's eyes.

These were people that she was familiar with, which made it even stranger.

They weren't supposed to be here.

"What's going on? There's a lot of people here too."

"I see."

These people all seemed to be hunters, and they were all fully equipped. What was stranger was the fact that they had never seen any of their faces before.

At least not in this branch.

Realising this, one of the hunters spoke.

“Who are you guys?”

“Huh? I guess they haven’t realized yet.”

The man at the front of the group looked around before nodding.

“Aha, this is the duel room. Maybe they didn’t hear the noise outside because of the sound barrier.”

Then they wouldn’t have known what’s going on.

After thinking this, the man laughed.

“We asked you who you were.”

The attitude of the hunters in the room grew cold. One of them stepped forward as he spoke.

The man at the front then smiled playfully.

“The President of the European Branch.”

“What?”

“Quit your bullshit.”

Saying such words couldn't even be considered a joke.

Instead, those words ignited the atmosphere in the room. Some of the hunters even rose to their feet.

Taking their angry gazes calmly, the man, Kim Go-hyuk, added.

“The man who killed-”