

Great Mage 311

Season 2 Chapter 71

The sun finally set.

Lukas couldn't help but recall how fiercely Joanna had protested in the room.

'We have to take Frey with us! If you don't take him, you'll regret it! Seriously!'

Despite her strong claims, Joanna was still practically dragged away by Lee Jong-hak without getting her way.

They seemed to have left through another exit, but Lukas used the same angel statue that they'd used the last time.

Click—

After the statue opened, Lukas poked his head out of the hole. As expected, there wasn't a single person nearby.

"Hoo."

He took a deep breath.

The air wasn't fresh because the area had been corrupted, but it was still better than the air in the sewer.

Lukas climbed out of the entrance. He could feel Sedi's aura not so far away. And it seemed that she still had no intention of hiding her presence.

He headed towards her.

After a brief walk, he entered a dark back alley. In it, he saw Sedi standing between a dumpster and a pile of corpses.

Her pitch black hair cascaded down her back like an ebony curtain, and she was uniquely beautiful in a distinctly inhuman way.

Lukas couldn't help but think about his old companion as he looked at Sedi, but he soon shook his head slightly.

His gaze turned from Sedi to the corpses lying on the ground.

Before he could even identify to whom they belonged, he heard a cold voice.

"They're Demons. I killed them."

“Why?”

“As I said before, fools who don’t know their place deserve to die.”

“...you came here to meet me, didn’t you?”

“That’s right.”

Sedi looked at Lukas’ face for a moment.

It was only after a few minutes passed when Lukas realised she was hesitating.

“Letip said... that in this universe...”

Suddenly.

Hundreds of bats flew down from the sky. These bats all had ominous, blood-colored fur, wings that were several times larger than their bodies, and, above all, frighteningly long fangs.

These bats circled around while letting out terrifying cries for a moment before they clumped together between Lukas and Sedi.

Their bodies melted and merged together before eventually taking on a form similar to a human.

After the transformation, the figure that now stood between them was a middle-aged man with extremely pale skin. He wore a posh suit, a fedora, and a monocle. But the red horns that pierced through his fedora gave away this man's identity.

Lukas could easily tell who this man was.

The Vampire Duke.

"I felt a strange presence... but it suddenly disappeared. Hmmm."

After muttering to himself, Gullard looked down at the Demon corpses around him.

"Who did this?"

Neither Lukas nor Sedi answered him.

"So you won't answer me. How fun. You'll do everything I tell you after I suck all the blood out of your bod-"

"Hey."

Gullard turned to look at Sedi with a confused expression.

“Are you calling me like that, Girl?”

“Can’t you see the grown-ups are talking right now?”

Annoyance was clear in Sedi’s voice.

“I’m not in a very good mood right now, so get out of here if you don’t want to die.”

Gullard’s expression hardened instantly, and his gaze became cold. At the same time, it felt like the surrounding air had become colder.

A simple change in his mood had created such a profound change in his surroundings. This went to show just how powerful the Vampire Duke was.

Even Lee Jong-hak, who was currently carrying out an operation in another part of the city, would have had difficulty displaying his true ability under this pressure.

It could be said that the Vampire Duke had reached a realm of ‘half-transcendence’ in which his soul was able to interact with the physical world. From the perspective of a Mortal, he was a being that was comparable to an absolute being.

To put it in a way that only Lukas would understand, Gullard was a being that was on par with a Demigod.

Unfortunately for him, his opponent was several levels higher than a Demigod.

A being who stood among the ranks of Absolutes.

Sedi.

“ ... ”

Lukas quietly contemplated while he looked at the two from a short distance away.

The situation continued to devolve rapidly, and there were many things he hadn't figured out yet, but the sight before him seemed to be a good thing for him.

The Vampire Duke used the pseudonym Dragul Phisfounder. There were many things that Lukas wanted to ask him, but it would be extremely difficult to capture him alive with the power he currently had at his disposal.

The moment he met him in person, this speculation became a certainty.

But what if Sedi incapacitated Dragul?

No, he didn't even need that. His goal would be easily achievable as long as she just reduced Dragul's power to a certain extent.

A hot wind blew across the dirty alley.

There was a brief standoff.

But it was Gullard who made the first move.

Flutter-

His body broke apart like fog before once again becoming bats that scattered in every direction.

Lukas narrowed his eyes.

Every single one of these bats was as strong as a low-ranked Demon Noble. As soon as their sharp fangs pierced its flesh, even a creature the size of an elephant would be sucked dry in an instant.

Hundreds, no, thousands of bats rushed forward like a wave that had gone past terrifying and now felt more like a disaster.

But Sedi calmly looked at this impending disaster as she summoned her soul weapon.

Paht.

A scythe that was longer than she was tall gently landed in her small white hand. At the same time, black smoke exploded from beneath her feet.

Boom!

The smoke shot out in all directions, swirling to create a large vortex. Sedi hadn't even swung her scythe yet, but a fierce gale had appeared out of nowhere.

Seeing this, the wave of bats, which had been rushing forward with fierce momentum, trembled subconsciously.

Crack crack!

Splatter!

In an instant, thousands of bats were torn apart like paper planes. Like insects that had been sprayed with insecticide, the bats collapse to the ground one after the other.

And in the downpour of flesh and blood, Sedi muttered in a grim tone.

“Did you think such a paltry trick would work on me?”

Flutter-

As if to answer her question, the bats, who had collapsed in pools of blood on the ground, merged once again.

Gullard stared at Sedi with wide eyes.

“This...”

What the hell just happened?”

Gullard was unable to process the series of events that had just transpired. Or perhaps his brain refused to process it.

One attack, one response, one stalemate.

That alone clearly showed the difference in power between the two sides. This was a conclusion that came from their previous engagement. Their only engagement.

And it seemed that Gullard was the weaker of the two.

“Who the hell... are you...?”

“See for yourself.”

Sedi hugged her scythe in an alluring manner as a sadistic smile slowly spread across her face.

“Feel what kind of being I am with your body. Mortal.”

“...!!”

“Please don’t die.”

Season 2 Chapter 72

The fight, if it could be called that, didn’t last long.

Lukas looked at the terrible sight before him.

Gullard was lying on the ground, covered in blood, and Sedi was stepping on his face with her muddy feet.

Lick~

Sedi licked the blood that covered her fingers.

Her entire body was covered in blood, her own blood. But the injuries on her body were nothing but a scratch when compared to Gullard.

Nevertheless, she felt dirty.

After all, this was only a mortal.

Crunch.

“Kuk...!”

Gullard groaned as she applied more pressure to his face.

He'd been completely overpowered. Nevertheless, there weren't any signs of surrender on his face.

This caused a slight stir in Lukas' heart.

A relationship built upon power. That was the best way to describe the relationships between Demons. There were no other beings who were more loyal to a forced relationship than the Demons.

One of the reasons that these beings were the most disgusting in this universe was because they submitted to the strong and oppressed the weak.

But now, even after being defeated by Sedi, who was clearly stronger than him, Dragul's fighting spirit had not been suppressed. He hadn't given up at all, and it was clear that he was looking for an opportunity to counterattack.

Just like... just like a human.

"Hey, Lukas."

"...!!"

The moment Sedi called Lukas' name, Dragul raised his head. Then, he looked at Lukas in shock.

"Lu... kas?"

Ignoring his reaction, Sedi continued.

"This guy is probably one of the strongest beings in this universe, right?"

"Right."

Her question bothered him a bit, but Lukas still nodded.

In the end, it was probably right.

There was probably no human capable of dealing with Gullard on their own. The fact that there was even a title like the Five Dukes meant that these Demons were much more powerful than their peers.

Of all the beings in this world, Dragul was definitely one of the strongest.

“Hah.”

Sedi’s expression became cold at his answer. She stared down at Dragul, whose face she’d been trampling beneath her foot for a while before lifting her foot away. Then, she kicked him in the stomach.

Dragul rolled across the ground a few times before getting up and staring at Sedi, who simply smiled at his fierce glare.

“I really want to kill you, but I’ve decided to let you off the hook this once. But if you keep giving me attitude, you will die.”

“...who the hell are you people?”

“How strange.”

Sedi tilted her head to the side and muttered in a soft voice.

“You, can’t you feel what kind of ‘level of existence’ I am?”

With Gullard's strength, he should have felt it from the first engagement.

The gap between his opponent and himself.

He could never win.

And yet, this Demon continued to display hostility toward Sedi. Even though he could die if she decided to change her mind.

"...right. That's right."

Gullard spoke in a harsh voice, as if he was chewing the words before saying them.

"I can feel some kind of irresistible aura coming from you. And it's likely that any Demon weaker than me would have no choice but to obey you."

Unless they were too weak to recognise the difference in levels like those whom she had killed before.

Sedi couldn't help but make a puzzled expression.

"Then why?"

“The only being I will ever obey is the Demon King.”

“So you would follow only the Demon King, even if it meant that you would die here?”

“That’s right.”

Lukas was speechless.

There wasn’t even the slightest waver in Dragul’s voice,

This wasn’t fear or brainwashing. It was true obedience that came from the heart. No, it was devotion(1).

He never expected to see this in a Demon.

“ ... ”

Sedi’s expression became strange.

In the entire multiverse, the race known as Demons only had one truly ruler. The Black Horned Demon God.

This was natural. After all, the Black Horned Demon God was the first Demon. An embodiment of the purest hatred. And regardless of where they were born, all demonic beings were bound to him in a similar manner to the way one would be bound to their parents or ancestors. It was an inherent relationship that could not be ignored or rejected.

For example, if Sedi were to encounter a demonic being who was a higher level of existence than she was while exploring the multiverse, she would have no choice but to obey them.

There was only one reason for this.

Because that was what the Black Horned Demon God wanted.

And so was this.

It was the will of the Black Horned Demon God that caused these Demons to invade this universe.

She wasn't certain if he had predicted that the Great Game would begin soon and planned this invasion, but it was clear that these Demons were the Demon God's creation, his children.

And yet, this being did not obey Sedi. There was only hatred and hostility in his gaze.

What was the reason?

Was it the presence of the Demon King who made them submit to him?

Was it an unexpected change caused by a random probability?

Or perhaps... it had a connection to the upcoming Great Game.

Sedi wasn't sure. And she also had the feeling that she wouldn't be able to think of the answer regardless of how hard she tried.

"Ha."

She snorted.

Deep thinking had never been her specialty. And she wasn't interested in it.

In any case, she understood one thing.

'Capable of killing me?'

It was nonsense.

Look at Gullard. He was one of the strongest beings in this universe, and yet, he was barely able to scratch her.

If Sedi had fought with her full strength instead of being so careful, the stupid fight would have been even more ridiculous.

It wouldn't have even been a fight.

'Letip was wrong.'

There was no threat to her life in this world. It simply didn't exist.

She turned her head to look at Lukas. He seemed to be using some kind of magic to hide his rough appearance, but it wasn't difficult for her to see his true self beneath it.

"My business is over."

"...what?"

"I said my business with you is over."

Her pride had been bruised.

Sedi clicked her tongue.

She should never have taken that bastard Letip's words seriously. She couldn't believe that she'd become apprehensive and worriedly sought out this man.

It was the first time that she'd thought about relying on someone other than the Demon God she followed.

That fact made her feel even more humiliated.

She didn't want to stay there any longer. Just looking at Lukas' face made her feel extremely uncomfortable.

"I'm leaving. Don't forget our promise. You can't kill this guy."

After saying those words, Sedi turned around and left without hesitation. It seemed that she was planning to directly return to Northern Ireland.

"..."

After she left, silence fell upon the alley.

Lukas looked at the still panting Gullard, and Gullard looked right back at him.

"...are you the same as that woman?"

“...”

When he didn't receive an answer, a strange light shone in Gullard's eyes.

“I'd felt a strange presence. It was strange, but at the same time, it felt familiar... That's why I came here. I thought that I wouldn't know what it was unless I checked for myself.”

He was probably talking about Sedi.

She and Gullard were both beings created by the Demon God, so it was not strange that he'd find her aura familiar.

But Gullard's next words proved that Lukas' speculation might not have been correct.

“At first, I thought it was that woman. And even after fighting her, I didn't think I was wrong.”

The fact that he spoke in past tense made Lukas feel strange.

It was as though he was saying that the familiar feeling didn't just come from Sedi alone.

Gullard stared deeply at Lukas.

Then, he said something that even Lukas had trouble responding to.

“But after she left, I finally realised. The familiar presence that I felt wasn’t from that woman. It was from you.”

Season 2 Chapter 73

“This is the double’s patrol route.”

Lee Jong-hak pulled out a map of Zinga and pointed at a red line that was drawn on it. Then, he pointed at a spot on the map.

“And this is where we are right now. As you can see, there are a lot of abandoned buildings in this area, and there aren’t any people here.”

“It’s really eerie.”

Joanna looked around while saying this.

When she’d first entered Zinga, she saw many people walking along the various streets. But this place was desolate. It looked like it had been left unattended for decades.

“As I said earlier, there is a high chance that this is a trap.”

Despite his chilling words, Lee Jong-hak's voice was calm.

This was quite strange.

His words should have brought some amount of tension, but his tone was calm, so those listening to him were also able to remain calm.

Moreover, everyone knew that he was right.

This was a trap.

It had already been about four days since Lee Jong-hak had killed Keegan and the other hunters.

It was likely that the Demons in the city had thoroughly searched the entire city in search of Lee Jong-hak but had been unable to find a single trace.

Nevertheless, they must have realised one thing.

That Lee Jong-hak was in the city for the Vampire Duke.

Therefore, they decided to have the Vampire Duke double patrol the city, making sure to visit abandoned and deserted locations. These locations were definitely the best for anyone who intended to launch an attack.

Since the Vampire Duke had locked down the city, they knew that Lee Jong-hak and the Gray Sun were still here.

Nevertheless, they still allowed the double to patrol the city and head to such places where there was a high likelihood of being attacked. This meant that it was a trap.

Despite realising this, Lee Jong-hak and Elijah didn't back down.

One of the reasons for this was Joanna's cooperation. After all, she was a 7 star Wizard, someone the Gray Sun had never been able to work with. With her there, they would be able to cope with the situation even if something unexpected happened.

"They're here."

Before long, a middle-aged man wearing an impressive suit and fedora appeared. On both sides of him were men with very large physiques who appeared to be bodyguards.

A fire lit within Lee Jong-hak's eyes.

They had already run simulations of this operation countless times before making their move. It would be Lee Jong-hak who made the first move.

He estimated the distance to the double. He was still tens of meters away. It was not yet in Lee Jong-hak's range.

So first of all, he had to wait. Wait for them to come a bit closer.

“...”

The first sense of strangeness came from his palms. Lee Jong-hak suddenly realised that his hand, which was gripping his sword, was covered in sweat.

Then, he felt a bead of cold sweat drip from his chin.

It was pressure.

A ridiculous pressure was pressing down on his entire body.

And this terrifying pressure came from none other than the ‘double’.

‘What’s... going on...?’

Just looking at him made it hard for him to breathe. And with every step closer that he took, his heart thumped heavily in his chest like it was about to explode.

Lee Jong-hak had faced Duke-level Demons before. After all, he’d been defeated at the hands of a Duke in Shanghai not so long ago.

The fear and pressure that he felt now was comparable to then.

No. In fact.

'...it's stronger than back then.'

It wasn't just Lee Jong-hak who was shocked. The other hunters around him were also shaking and panting.

"Huff...Huff..."

"What's going on? What the hell...."

Lee Jong-hak couldn't help but gulp slightly as he looked at the double in front of him.

Double... A double?

This man walking towards them.

'Is he really a double?'

* * *

“Huff... Huff...”

The 67th floor of the North America Headquarters, Pilsky Tower.

Min Ha-rin, who was drenched in sweat, panted heavily. She didn't even have the energy to brush the hair that was sticking to her face away.

While swaying as though she would collapse at any moment, she stared at the man standing in front of her.

American Hunter Vincent J. Heider.

The personal tutor whom Neil Prand had assigned to Min Ha-rin and one of the few Magic Swordsmen in the region.

Of course, being a Magic Swordsman didn't mean that he could use both magic and swordsmanship at the same time. After all, the danjeon and mana room were incompatible. One could only have one or the other.

Instead, Vincent could be classified as a 'Wizard who trained his body'.

In truth, when they first met, Min Ha-rin had been very skeptical about his skills. There was only one reason for this. When he was introducing him, Neil's attitude had been quite lackluster.

Shortly after Lukas left, Neil came to visit her. And after asking her a few trivial questions, he brought Vincent to her without any real consideration.

And all he said was a short sentence.

“Take care of this woman.”

Vincent had simply glanced at Min Ha-rin and nodded without any complaints.

“Understood.”

“I already have a Master.”

Displeased, Min Ha-rin had said these words in a cold voice. What she wanted was just the renowned North American curriculum. She didn't need someone to teach or guide her.

Vincent had responded in a blunt voice.

“I don't consider you my disciple either. I don't want to teach you. You simply have to fight me.”

“Huh?”

“What and how much you get from our spars will depend entirely on your own capabilities.”

The sparring had begun that very afternoon, and it widened Min Ha-rin’s knowledge exponentially.

A being who used both magic and their own body.

A versatile profession with the perfect balance.

It was a very exhausting fighting style, but Vincent was able to perfectly bring out his full capabilities.

Showing 100% of your power was something that was easier said than done. Especially if you were focused on two areas at the same time instead of one.

With that in mind, the concentration that Vincent displayed in battle was amazing.

‘Maybe I should walk on a similar path.’

It was just a vague thought at the moment, but it still appeared in her mind.

“That’ll be all for today.”

Vincent looked down at his watch before speaking.

Their spars usually lasted from 30 minutes to an hour. This might have been short, but for Min Ha-rin, it felt even longer than the remaining 23 hours. It was a hellish time in which she felt intense pain that made her want to constantly give up.

But she wouldn't just quit because of the pain she felt every time they fought.

Just as Min Ha-rin was going over the day's spar in her head, the door to the hall opened and a man walked in.

It was a man with short, blonde hair, a large, muscular body, and a cold aura.

This was none other than Neil Prand, President of the Hunter Association.

When she first met this powerful man, Min Ha-rin couldn't help but feel a bit intimidated, but after meeting him numerous times in a row, most of the initial surprise and intimidation faded.

'It's still pretty uncomfortable, though.'

Neil looked at Vincent and Min Ha-rin with his distinctive cold stare.

"It seems your spar has ended. Both of you, follow me."

“...now?”

Min Ha-rin couldn't help but look down at her body, which was covered in sweat, but Neil nodded coldly.

“Right. It's especially important for you.”

“...”

Since he said it like that, it meant that she probably didn't have a choice.

Discarding her plan to take a shower before eating and resting, Min Ha-rin rose from her seat.

After they all climbed onto the elevator, Neil pressed the button for the 180th floor. When this happened, Vincent's expression briefly became strange. His eyes turned to glance at Min Ha-rin for a moment, but that was all. In the end, he kept his mouth closed.

Ding-

The elevator opened, and Min Ha-rin was immediately made speechless.

What was revealed was a large, dark room that was filled with countless monitors. Each of the monitors was different, and so were the things displayed on them.

“...!”

Min Ha-rin couldn't hide her surprise.

The screens vividly displayed images of numerous cities. Not just those in North America but even those that were thousands of kilometers away.

Among them was Min Ha-rin's hometown, Busan.

'I thought most of humanity's science and technology was lost...'

She couldn't believe such high-tech equipment still existed.

Min Ha-rin gulped subconsciously.

She could hardly imagine how much power, technology, and information North America probably had.

“The floors from the 180th floor and up are called the Royal Floors. They are normally places to which only executives in North America are given access.”

That was probably why Vincent showed signs of discomfort. From his perspective, Min Ha-rin was an outsider.

It wasn't just Vincent either.

While they moved around busily, many people looked at Min Ha-rin with curious or suspicious gazes. But they didn't say anything because Neil was standing beside her.

After a short while, Neil led her to a monitor.

Click-

Only ominous sounds were being output from the monitor. Neil looked at this noisy monitor for a moment before speaking.

"When was the last time you saw Leo Freeman?"

"Huh?"

Min Ha-rin tilted her head to the side at the sudden question. Moreover, the question was a bit strange.

But Neil's gaze remained locked onto the screen. Vincent twitched slightly behind them as if to indicate that she should answer.

"...maybe about a week or so ago? He left around that time."

Leo Freeman wasn't in Manhattan at the moment.

At Neil's judgement, her junior brother had left the city.

She didn't know where exactly he went, but he had most likely gone to Canada.

There was only one reason for that.

Unlike Min Ha-rin, he hadn't been able to get a good tutor who was staying in the North America Headquarters.

But why was Neil bringing up Leo's name now?

"Have you ever heard of the Five Dukes?"

"I have."

Dukes were called inescapable catastrophes and natural disasters by humans.

And among them, there was a group who was particularly strong.

It had been less than five years since the Hunter Association had learned of its existence.

Of course, this information was still confidential for ordinary hunters and civilians, but Min Ha-rin, who had once been a Titled Hunter, knew about them.

“I see. Then I’ll just say it bluntly. Leo Freeman is missing. And it’s likely that he is either captured or dead.”

“...huh?”

“To be precise, most of the hunters from the Canada branch are in the same situation.”

“What are you talking about...?”

“...you will better understand after seeing it for yourself.”

At that moment, an image finally appeared on the monitor that had only been giving off strange sounds.

And when she saw what it displayed, Min Ha-rin’s eyes widened.

Season 2 Chapter 74

Their eyes met.

In that instant, Lee Jong-hak got goosebumps all over his body.

The distance between them was 20 meters. At this distance, Lee Jong-hak was confident in avoiding any attacks even if he was shot at with a machine gun.

However, the double's attack was completely unexpected.

A tongue.

A bright red tongue shot out of the double's mouth.

It was a bizarre attack that might have seemed ridiculous at first, but it was too fast.

Even Lee Jong-hak was unable to respond to the attack before it reached them, and the results were catastrophic.

Puk!

"K-, uk..."

Camilla looked down at her chest with wide eyes. The blood red tongue had pierced through her heart.

"Gurk!"

After vomiting a mouthful of blood, she reached out a trembling hand to Joffrey.

“Jo-, frey...”

“Camilla!”

Joffrey let out a thunderous shout, drew his machete, and cleaved down upon the tongue.

Clang!

But the sound he heard was similar to when two metal objects struck each other.

Joffrey looked down at the tongue in astonishment.

There wasn't even the slightest scratch on this thin, red tongue.

“Th-, this doesn't make sense...”

His wrist throbbed painfully. It felt like he'd struck a hard metal rod, not a tongue.

Joffrey couldn't help but shudder inwardly.

He felt like this tongue had the strength to cut an entire house in half...

Spit.

The tongue then slithered back to where it came from.

Slurp.

The double then licked his lips with the tongue that should have been too long to fit in his mouth.

“Wh-, what the hell...”

Joanna couldn't help but step back with a pale face.

A tongue? Killing people with nothing but a tongue? Was it only because Camilla wasn't skilled enough to avoid it?

'I, I couldn't even react.'

A moment ago, if the tongue had aimed for her instead of Camilla...

It would be Joanna's body that was cooling down at that moment.

'It's different.'

This was a being who was fundamentally 'different'.

Her body felt like it was suppressed by an irrational fear that she'd never experienced with any Demon before.

At that moment, she could only think of one word, 'death'.

"Ca-, Camilla!"

Joffrey still hadn't come back to his senses. He held Camilla's bloody body with despair etched on his face.

Lee Jong-hak shouted.

"You have to get your act together!"

"W-, we need to treat Camilla first! Jo-, Joanna! Is there anything you can do?"

"I, I'm a Wizard..."

“Dammit! Let’s stop the blood first! If it’s like this, she’ll...!”

“She’s already dead!”

Joffrey shivered uncontrollably at Lee Jong-hak’s words.

“Don’t turn a blind eye to the truth and try to deceive yourself! She died instantly! Her heart has been destroyed!”

“A-, ahh...”

Joffrey slowly lowered his head and muttered.

“It was... It was too simple... She died for nothing... ”

“...it is something that we were all prepared for.”

There is something that every hunter had to do before stepping onto the battlefield.

And that was to prepare themselves to accept the deaths of their comrades.

They didn't have to be prepared for their own deaths since they usually wouldn't realise it anyway. But the death of a comrade was impossible to ignore.

The death of someone with whom you had laughed and talked to about life and the future, and to whom you had gradually grown closer, was something that would engrave itself in your mind.

It was something that could shatter even the firmest of wills, and it broke minds.

Lee Jong-hak bit his lip.

Nevertheless, how many people could get used to the deaths of their comrades?

'No, you should never get used to it.'

The moment they got used to it was the moment their minds broke completely.

Then, they would be no different from puppets dancing on the battlefield.

He could see the double looking at them calmly. His hands were resting relaxedly at his sides, and there was even a soft smile on his lips.

,

'...double?'

No.

This guy was no double.

"Are you the real Vampire Duke?"

"Hahaha..."

The Vampire Duke, Gullard, laughed happily. He didn't answer the question. Instead, he looked at Lee Jong-hak with unbridled interest.

"Lee Jong-hak. Do you know how happy I was when I learned that you'd come to this city? It felt as though a large fish had finally swam into my carefully woven net."

'Well, just when I thought I'd gotten my hands on you, you slipped away.'

Gullard added this part inwardly as he continued to observe Lee Jong-hak.

"Did you want to meet me?"

"Of course."

“Why?”

“There are some things I’d like to ask you. That’s the only reason you’re still alive.”

“...”

Lee Jong-hak kept his eyes trained on Gullard as he sent a sound transmission to both Joanna and Joffrey, who were standing beside him.

[I’ll make an opening somehow. So when you get the chance, don’t hesitate to run away.]

An opening? Against that monster?”

It wasn’t possible.

Joanna didn’t even dare to look at Gullard. Just being near him made her tremble with fear and feel like she would collapse to the ground.

Joffrey was the same. He’d only been able to act in such a way because of the anger that came with Camilla’s death. But under the overwhelming pressure that Gullard released, anger soon became terror.

For them, even Lee Jong-hak, who was still able to speak to such a being, was also a monster.

“The Chester Company had organised an event in Italy not so long ago. It was quite large. and many nobles participated in it. From what I heard, some pretty good products were supposed to be put on display.”

“...”

“You were one of those products, Human Dragon, Lee Jong-hak. However, you escaped... together with a group of slaves. And somehow, in that mess, Duke Sandro went missing.”

Gullard’s mouth twisted into a sneer.

“No. Sandro didn’t go missing. Sandro didn’t respond to the King’s summons, so it’s better to assume that he died. Do you understand what that means? A Duke died. And he disappeared without a trace, as though he’d simply evaporated.”

Lee Jong-hak couldn’t help but clench his fist at those words. The image of a blonde man flashed in his mind.

Gullard chuckled happily when he saw this.

“The expression on your face shows that you must have an idea of what happened. That’s good. I won’t kill you just yet, so—”

It was then.

Gullard's expression became hard, and he stopped talking for a moment. With a fierce expression on his face, he jerked his head in another direction, and he seemed to be looking into the distance.

"What... is this..."

'An opportunity!'

An opening that might have been the first and the last.

Lee Jong-hak shot towards Gullard.

* * *

Lukas disappeared from the sight of 'Gullard', who was looking his way.

Just a moment ago, he'd been looking down at the dirty alley where 'Gullard' was.

...'Gullard' was fighting against Lee Jong-hak and the others in the distance.

And the 'Gullard' who had been defeated by Sedi fled after saying those questionable words to Lukas.

'I see.'

He now understood why the 'double' existed.

And it should have been the same reason why the 'Gullard' on this side had been defeated by Sedi so easily.

The Demon titled the Vampire Duke. He had managed to see his essence to an extent.

He couldn't deal with the Vampire Duke at that moment. At best, he would only be able to stall him. And in that time, it was likely that not just Camilla but Lee Jong-hak, Joffrey and Joanna would also die.

He needed more power.

Nevertheless, he now knew how to deal with Gullard.

Fwoosh.

For a moment, Lukas' eyes became white and his vision stretched to the middle of the desert, about a thousand kilometers away from Zinga.

After all, it was best to leave the Demon hunting to the professionals.

Season 2 Chapter 75

Joanna stared at Lee Jong-hak's back.

He'd shot down towards Gullard with explosive speed. The force of his charge was so powerful that it felt like he could use his sword to cut through even steel like it was tofu.

She couldn't help but feel that having this man on their side was more reliable than having a thousand hunters.

Or at least that would have been the case if they were in a different situation.

Now, Joanna couldn't help but think that Lee Jong-hak was in a very precarious situation.

He'd just spoken confidently, saying that he would give them a chance to run away.

And not long afterwards, Gullard revealed an 'opening'.

Joanna had noticed it too. Nevertheless, she failed to respond to it as quickly as Lee Jong-hak did.

This was because she was unsure. There was a chance that Gullard had revealed this opening on purpose.

However... what if it really was the first and last chance?

'I don't know.'

Her brain wasn't working properly. If Joanna had been in Lee Jong-hak's position, she definitely would've missed the opportunity.

But Lee Jong-hak didn't hesitate. As soon as he saw the opening, he immediately drew his sword and swiftly closed the distance to his opponent.

In a way, it was no different from a moth leaping into flames.

"Kuk!"

She felt Joffrey's presence fade. He'd turned and began running away without any hesitation. He'd obediently listened to Lee Jong-hak's words.

Joanna was about to join him before she paused.

'Really?'

Was this really the best option?

Leave everything to Lee Jong-hak and run away?

...No. Technically speaking, it wasn't running away. This could be considered a strategic retreat.

She could guess what Joffrey was thinking. It was possible that he intended to reach all of the Gray Sun members in the city and ask for reinforcements. Maybe Elijah Kipatosh would also come to help.

But would their presence change the situation?

Would the Vampire Duke be put at a disadvantage if the dozens of Gray Sun members, including Elijah, joined the battle?

Joanna shook her head inwardly. She was certain that it was absolutely impossible.

'Shit.'

Joanna bit her lip as she finally realised.

There was no 'best answer' for the current situation. The moment during which it was possible to find the best answer had already elapsed. To put it simply, the 'best answer' would have been to not partake in this operation in the first place.

"Kuaack!"

At that moment, she heard a scream from behind. It was Joffrey's voice.

Joanna turned around in a hurry.

Joffrey lay on the ground, his body crushed by two large men.

'Those are...'

The men who had been standing on either side of Gullard. No, they were Demons.

She'd obviously seen them walking beside Gullard before the confrontation began, so why were they so far away now?

'It has to be...!'

It was because of Gullard's presence. Despite being the size of a normal human, it felt like he was so large that he filled the entire street. And because of this, she hadn't noticed when they had disappeared.

Joanna's back was instantly covered with cold sweat.

It was clear that these two Demons had been monitoring the area. They must have been tasked with finding any other hunters that might be hiding or killing anyone who tried to run away.

She got goosebumps.

If she'd tried to flee with Joffrey, she would have died similarly.

Clang!

In the meantime, it seemed Lee Jong-hak had begun to fight. He was squeezing all the energy out of his body to the point where it seemed he even wanted to use his soul as fuel.

Even Joanna, who didn't know anything about swordsmanship, could tell how desperately he was fighting.

Nevertheless, Gullard simply smiled as he avoided all of the attacks with ghost-like movements. It didn't seem like he had any intention of attacking.

Maybe he intended to capture him.

The stronger the Demon, the more obsessed they were with enslaving strong humans.

Joanna looked back once again.

The Demons just stood where they were with their arms crossed, showing no signs of approaching her.

Right. So they really were only ordered to kill any escapees.

Crunch.

Joanna grit her teeth.

'They're looking down on me...'

If she were her old self, she might be trembling in fear at that moment. But now, the emotion that Joanna felt most was humiliation.

Because.

She had been chosen by the God of Magic.

Ignoring her was no different from ignoring him.

"I'll do it even if I die."

Even if she lost her life, she would wipe away that disgusting smile.

It was possible that she would die. And it scared her greatly.

But after reaching this point, she couldn't help but throw away the thought of surviving.

Since she was going to die anyway, she might as well do it on her own terms.

'...I wonder what he's doing right now...'

When she thought about that aloof, gray-haired man, she couldn't stop herself from smiling slightly.

They were just beginning to grow closer, but it was a pity. It seemed that their journey together was about to come to an end.

Nevertheless, she couldn't help but feel relieved.

That man didn't come here, so it meant that at least one of them would survive.

'I'll use a spell he deciphered for me.'

It was a spell that was written in her notebook. The magic formula had been discovered a long time ago, but no one had been able to decipher it.

It was a spell that had never appeared in this world.

Naturally, this also meant that she'd never practiced it. It could be considered fortunate that she'd even managed to force herself to remember the formula.

'Still.'

She had no choice but to attempt it.

Recalling the formula, Joanna began to cast the spell.

"The vine coiled in the darkness."

Her loud voice rang out.

Casting spells was a type of self-hypnosis, so there was no fixed chant. Instead, it depended on the mind of the caster.

The important thing was to have the ability to properly decipher the formula and how to direct your mana.

"Wriggling like the tongue of a serpent."

That was why bluffing was a major part of Joanna's chant. For her, chanting spells was also a type of performance.

“Trap my enemies in thorns sharper than poisonous fangs.”

Her mana was raging.

This spell wasn't for offensive purposes. It wasn't for defense either.

It was a spell that limited the opponent's movements. It was a trapping or binding spell.

Joanna finally revealed the name of the spell she was casting.

“Restrain, Medusa!”

* * *

About a decade ago, there was a topic that was the most frequently mentioned in conversations between hunters.

No, it was a topic that interested everyone involved in Demon hunting.

‘Who is the strongest hunter?’

It was a discussion that usually began as a light conversation, but it often ended with a conversation of fists.

Numerous names were listed, and new ones were added every day.

Cha Gung-hwan, who was retired but led the Asian hunters with outstanding skills.

The Three Dragons of East Asia who had just started making a name for themselves.

Neil Prand, the President of the Hunter Association and the Wizard's Association.

Oceania's Champion, Captain.

Nina Rednikova, who raged as the Head of the Iron Blood Division in Europe...

There were dozens of people who were well-known outside of their own countries. But if those who were relatively less well-known or who weren't famous at all were included, then the list would be so long that it would take days to read.

Nevertheless, they weren't able to reach an answer. In the first place, it was a topic that was difficult to determine in the first place.

Due to the nature of hunters, they rarely fought against their fellow humans or compared their strengths. Sometimes, duels of life-and-death battles were held, but they were extremely rare, and there were cases where people died.

In addition, because of the different characteristics of each profession, fighting in a limited space would not allow for fair competition.

It was at that time when a columnist from Brooklyn, Jack Brewbaker, approached the issue in a one directional manner.

He discussed the role of a hunter.

Their essence was hunting, and their enemies were the Demons, not their fellow human beings.

So why not compare their performances instead?

Ignoring status, honour, rumors, and even their true strength. Only looking at their hunting performances.

The results from this approach came much sooner than anyone would have expected.

It turned out that there wasn't much of a difference in the hunting performances of the various top-class hunters.

And for a long time, the seat of 'Strongest Hunter' remained empty.

Unless all of the top class hunters came together and fought to the death, the strongest hunter would never be revealed.

That was the conclusion that was reached.

—Then, a few years later, the Top Three appeared.

Three hunters whose unbelievable achievements and unparalleled feats that no other hunter could compare to.

Among them was Kran, who was given the title ‘Strongest’.

But the sources from each group never considered him to be the ‘Strongest Hunter’.

After all, his performance was still comparable to the Black Witch’s and the Saint of Salvation’s.

Some people said that Kran’s achievements were exaggerated because he only worked alone.

But those voices had disappeared not long ago.

Because Kran had accomplished a feat that should have been impossible for humans.

Season 2 Chapter 76

Shortly after Lukas, who had flown to the desert, landed, the first thing that greeted him was a dagger.

Clang!

It was an attack that had probably been aimed at his eye. Luckily, the dagger bounced off the barrier that constantly surrounded him.

The man who threw the dagger jumped lightly and caught the dagger that had been sent flying through the air. Then, he drew a sword that hung at his waist and swung in a lightning-fast motion.

“...!”

Lukas couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.

This attack was also blocked by the barrier, but the weight of this attack was very different from that of the dagger he threw.

‘This...’

It couldn't handle it.

The moment he had this thought, his barrier shattered like a piece of glass. The man twirled the dagger in his hand before swinging it.

Woosh.

Lukas avoided the attack by a hair's breadth. He'd aimed for his carotid artery without hesitation. He didn't show any restraint in his attacks.

Immediately after missing his attack, the man kicked upwards. This time, he was aiming for his chin.

Lukas blocked the attack with his palms.

Paak!

Even though he blocked the attack perfectly, heavy shock still flowed through his hands. Unable to overcome it, Lukas' body was sent flying into the air.

If he had been hit in the chin where the man was aiming, Lukas' head would have been ripped from his body and sent flying like a soccer ball.

While Lukas was sent flying, the man drew another weapon. Upon seeing this weapon, Lukas was surprised for the first time.

It was a gun. But it wasn't a small-sized gun like a pistol. Lukas didn't know a lot about guns, but he realised that the gun this man was holding was a shotgun that had incredibly lethal power.

Boom!

Has it been modified? The sound that came from the gun was closer to an explosion than the sound of a shotgun.

Lukas dodged the bullets in the air. If he hadn't been good at using the flight spell, his body would have already become a sieve.

Even the best Wizards, like Joanna, would have died at least five times in that short exchange. This showed how lethal, varied, and strange this man's attacks were.

More importantly, Lukas didn't believe he was even using his full strength yet.

"..."

The man narrowed his eyes slightly. This was because Lukas, who had avoided all of the bullets with strange movements in the air, suddenly disappeared.

Snap-

At the same time, an invisible force broke his shotgun in half.

Clicking his tongue, the man threw the gun to the side. Then, he slowly turned around. Lukas was standing behind him.

"I've never seen a Demon who could use magic."

This man, one of the Top Three, Kran, finally opened his mouth and spoke with a blunt tone.

He only spoke after his barrage of attacks.

'Besides...'

Lukas' expression became strange as he looked at Kran.

Now that he could see him up close, he realised that this was a much more bizarre and chaotic being than he expected.

"Do I look like a Demon?"

Kran didn't answer immediately. Instead, he looked down at his sword. The blade's edge had been completely destroyed. This was the consequence of smashing Lukas' barrier.

This sword was a magic sword that was once used by a Baron, and it was at least five times stronger than steel. And yet, it had become like this just from hitting a barrier.

"As I said, I've never seen a Demon who could use magic."

"Then..."

“However, that doesn’t mean that it’s not possible. After all, you feel different from any Wizard I’ve ever encountered before.”

Lukas shook his head.

“I’m not a Demon.”

“Then you must be something that’s even more suspicious than a Demon.”

His cold voice contained clear hostility.

Lukas couldn’t help but sigh. He didn’t have the time to convince Kran or explain the situation right now.

“You’re heading to Zinga right now. To kill the Vampire Duke, right?”

“And if I am?”

“I will help you get there right away.”

“Who are you?”

“I am...”

Lukas closed his half-opened mouth. He didn't know what he could say to assuage his suspicions.

...It was possible that Kran wouldn't trust him, regardless of what he said. In the first place, if he was a man who was easy to communicate within the first place, he would have had a better relationship with the other forces.

“...”

He tried to think of an answer, but he kept drawing blanks.

There was nothing he could do.

Lukas decided to make an uncharacteristic decision.

“Just go first.”

“What?”

Paht.

Shortly after those words, a bright light erupted under Kran.

There was no hostility in the eruption of mana. It was too fast, and it appeared without warning. That's why it was too late by the time Kran noticed.

Just before being swallowed by the light, Kran glared fiercely at Lukas and opened his mouth.

"You crazy bas-"

Paht.

Kran disappeared before he could finish his curse.

Using the Long Distance Warp spell, Lukas had sent him directly to Zinga. Without any warning or explanation.

It was a bit of a low move, but to put it simply, he'd decided to 'act first and think about it later'.

* * *

It was a simple punch without any tricks.

Lee Jong-hak blocked it with his sword. Even if an elephant were to charge at him, his body was strong enough to stop it without moving back a single step.

But the force behind the fist was like a natural disaster.

Clang!

Unable to disperse the force properly, Lee Jong-hak was sent sliding backward. He could have been proud of the fact that he hadn't fallen to the ground or that his stance hadn't been broken.

Ignoring the pain in his knees, Lee Jong-hak kicked off from the ground once again. Like a cannonball, his body shot towards Gullard.

He'd learned them.

One by one, he'd learned the various sword methods that he had access to.

The Plum Blossom Sword Method, Demon Slaying Sword Method, Nine Palaces Sword Method, Tempest Sword Method, Taiqing Sword Method, Seventy Two Waves Sword Method, Thirty Six Worlds Sword Method. (TL: My brain... it hurts T~T)

He learned not only the famous sword methods but also any sword method that he thought would be useful. And he didn't stop there. Instead, he practiced every single one of them constantly until the memory of their moves was embedded into his body. He swung his sword until his palms were torn and bloody.

He slept for no more than three hours a day and even skipped meals, putting his very life on the line to swing his sword.

And after familiarising himself with each one, he made them his own.

Of course, they were all different, just like different herbivores ate different plants. Each sword method was something that had been refined over hundreds of years by masters who controlled the continent in the past.

‘Those sword methods are already complete.’

Taking them apart and putting them back together was something that would be impossible even for a genius.

So Lee Jong-hak simply reinterpreted them instead of trying to put them all together. He found that there were rules common in each sword method despite them having different paths. And by linking these common rules, he would be able to create something even greater.

Of course, Lee Jong-hak wasn't the first one to discover this.

In fact, it was something that the warriors of the past must have known as well.

Nevertheless, there had never been anyone who attempted to do it.

This was because warriors of the past took great pride in their roots.

They could never incorporate martial arts that were fundamentally different from the martial arts that they were taught. It would be an insult to the martial arts their ancestors had used their lives to refine.

Now? That was no longer the case.

Times had changed.

There was now something more important than one's pride in their roots and the martial art that they'd honed.

Survival.

Lee Jong-hak agonised over how to refine the various sword methods until his hair became white.

He thought of the origin of martial arts. Basically, martial arts were created to be used against people.

For example, if the opponent was a four-legged animal, it might not be possible to deal with them even if one had an excellent sword technique.

Muscle density, organ position, skeletal structure, size, and habits were all completely different depending on the creature.

And Lee Jong-hak's enemies were such horrible creatures that even the most ferocious animals looked cute in comparison.

Demons.

Beings that were naturally stronger than humans. Beings so ferocious that the word 'voracious' was still not enough to describe them.

They were his targets. And in order to hunt them, he needed to find the ultimate shortcut.

There was no way to defeat them in a head-on confrontation, so he would need to use tools and sly, cowardly methods to restrict his opponent's strength while maximising his own.

He refined the sword methods to form a hunting method.

That was how his sword method was born.

Lee Jong-hak called this sword method the Evil Vanquishing Sword Method. (TL: author-nim... no more technique names please... they're so hard T~T)

After the creation of the Evil Vanquishing Sword Method, he gained the title Human Dragon and became a hero in East Asia.

His success story continued. His Evil Vanquishing Sword Method continued to display overwhelming power even when used against Demon Nobles. And he couldn't help but feel that his efforts had been rewarded.

That was until his first battle against a Duke in Shanghai.

Clang!

The Evil Vanquishing Sword Method, the creation of which he was so proud, was blocked.

Using nothing more than a combination of the Imperial Sword Method and Thirty Six Worlds Sword Method.

'The Evil Vanquishing Sword Method...'

Had it reached the limit of a manmade sword method? Had all the efforts he'd made so far been meaningless? Had he only been chasing an unattainable illusion?

'There is a limit to a human's power.'

Nodiesop's voice rang out in his head.

The divine authority that he'd shown and his offers were extremely alluring. So it was understandable why most Asian hunters chose to follow him.

'...however.'

Lee Jong-hak bit his lip.

He couldn't help but wonder if there really was no price for such a sweet fruit.

There was no logical explanation for why he felt this way. However, the life that Lee Jong-hak had experienced up to that point spoke strongly.

There was nothing in this world that could be obtained for free.

“...”

Although Lee Jong-hak was visibly struggling, Gullard was also displeased with the current situation.

This was because he'd had enough of their fight.

He was tired of playing with the humans.

This was usually a form of entertainment for the Demons. Especially when the opponent was someone who was considered special among the humans. These people were usually tougher than other toys, so it was more fun to play with them.

But it didn't take long for this little game to become boring.

From that point, he'd been trying to end it.

But it was hard for him to do so. Because of the woman at the back.

'A Wizard.'

This had to be the case. After all, he could feel the mana fluctuations.

Gullard had some knowledge of magic. This was unlike the other Demons, who looked down on human techniques as crude practices that didn't need to be cared about.

This was why he could tell that the spell this girl used to freeze his body was extraordinary.

In short, if it wasn't for her interference, he would have already captured Lee Jong-hak alive.

"It can't be helped."

Gullard turned to look at the Demons who were standing behind Joanna.

The two Demons who had slaughtered Joffrey.

Most humans thought that they were his subordinates. That was intentional because this way, no one would be able to realise their true nature.

He didn't order them. He didn't need to make any hand gestures. With just a thought, they would be able to do what he wanted.

The two Demons quickly narrowed the distance to Joanna.

She was probably on high alert, but that didn't matter. After all, she was just a Wizard.

"Ah...!"

Just as Joanna turned around, someone fell from the sky.

Crack!

It was a young man who wore a thick cloak that was meant to protect him from the desert winds.

Season 2 Chapter 77

Gullard saw everything clearly.

When the man suddenly appeared in the sky, shock was clear on his face. In an instant, he seemed to observe his surroundings, and upon realising he was in the air, he looked to see where he would land.

The man's next actions were astonishing. While still in the air, he spun his body around and drew two swords, which he then used to pierce the throats of the two Demons at the same time as he landed.

"Gurk...!"

"Kek!"

Pulling his swords out of the throats of the choking Demons, the man then kicked the Demon on the left in the head.

Paak!

The Demon's head was immediately ripped off and rolled across the street. Blood spurted up from the severed neck. The force of the eruption was so strong that some of the blood even managed to land on Joanna's face despite her being a short distance away from them.

Even though she was being covered in red blood, Joanna couldn't help but feel that she was dreaming at that moment.

What the hell was going on?

"Roar!"

The other Demon lunged forward with explosive ferocity, but the man didn't seem shocked or surprised by this. Instead, he also rushed forward, narrowing the distance between them.

Then, in an incredible display of martial arts, he unleashed a brutal uppercut, aimed at the Demon's already injured throat.

This caused the Demon to scream and flinch.

When he saw this, the man narrowed his eyes slightly. He glanced down at his fist for a moment before reaching down to his waist and drawing a pistol that was holstered there.

Bang!

Just one shot.

The bullet hit the Demon's forehead. Normally, it was impossible to pierce a Demon's flesh and bones with a bullet shot from a pistol. It was like stabbing a rock with a toothpick.

Crack!

Nevertheless, this bullet pierced through the Demon's forehead and destroyed its brain before escaping through the back of its head.

The man spun the gun on his finger for a moment before returning it to its holster at his waist. It was a move that would have made even the gunslingers of the west jealous.

“...”

Silence filled the area.

Everyone was surprised by the man's sudden appearance followed by his actions.

The man looked around once more before turning to Joanna who wasn't too far away from him.

“Hey.”

“Ye-, yes?”

“Is this Zinga City?”

“Th-, that's right.”

A look of disbelief flashed in the man's eyes.

“I should have been at least 1000 kilometers away...”

As he murmured, his tone and expression reminded her of a beast whose pride had been wounded.

Joanna couldn't help but gulp slightly.

At first, she had been too surprised to notice, but she knew this man.

She had to have. She'd seen his pictures countless times before going there. In fact, she even had a picture of him in her bag.

After all, this man was the reason she'd come to Africa in the first place.

"The Strongest, Kran..."

Kran turned around without responding to her.

He was looking at the spot where Gullard and Lee Jong-hak were standing.

"It seems a troublesome guy has appeared."

Gullard turned to look at Lee Jong-hak as he muttered.

"It would be really annoying if you two were to work together."

“...?!”

Bang!

At that moment, a huge shadow struck Lee Jong-hak in the side. The attack was so fast and unexpected that Lee Jong-hak was unable to react in time and was sent flying with a shower of blood.

His body only stopped after he'd completely destroyed two buildings.

“Guruk!”

Lee Jong-hak coughed up a mouthful of blood as he finally saw what the large shadow that hit him was.

It was a giant bat-like wing that had sprouted from Gullard's shoulder.

“You guys are fighting a Duke?”

When Kran said those words in a slightly mocking tone, Joanna couldn't help but become a bit flustered.

“Th-, that...”

“You weren't really fighting him with just the two of you, were you?”

“There were more of us, but they died.”

“But that would still only be four, wouldn't it? You're pretty brave.”

“We got caught. We didn't plan on fighting him.”

“Didn't you guys know that there was one of the Five Dukes in this city?”

“That...”

Kran snorted.

“No one in that little association of yours can defeat the Five Dukes. Otherwise, that bastard Neil would have already broadcasted the news.”

“...you know the Association President?”

Kran didn't answer her question. Instead, he looked at Gullard for a moment before opening his mouth again.

“You guys are pretty lucky.”

“Huh?”

“He doesn’t even have half of his strength right now. I’m not sure if it’s because he wanted to play with you or if he had some other goal.”

“...!”

Joanna almost collapsed at those words.

He didn’t even have half of his strength? This being who had been playing with the Human Dragon Lee Jong-hak and whom she could only restrain for a few seconds with her spell?

Joanna took a deep breath and pulled herself together. Ever since Kran had appeared, she’d shown nothing but a pathetic appearance.

She couldn’t let herself show any more of it.

“How do you know that?”

In response to her question, which was asked in a much calmer tone, Kran pointed to the corpses of the Demons he’d just killed.

“Those guys are Gullard.”

“Huh?”

“He has the ability to divide himself. He can use this power as many times as he likes, but the power in his body decreases every time he splits.”

“Ah...!”

If that was the case, then it was highly likely that the Gullard double that they were after was actually an alter ego of Gullard himself.

“Hahaha.”

Gullard burst into laughter, but his eyes remained cold. He stared at Kran with a fierce glare.

“You seem to know a lot about my power. Whom did you hear it from?”

“That coward in Egypt.”

Gullard could no longer smile when he heard those words. Like his eyes, his expression became as cold as ice.

He'd also heard the reports that the Duke he'd stationed in Egypt was dead.

“And now, it seems you have come to kill me without any fear. If you hadn’t come to me, I would have had to scour the entire continent to find you. So thanks for saving me the trouble.”

“I am a hunter.”

Although he said these words in a soft tone, Kran’s voice sounded like the roars of a beast.

“I wouldn’t have come all the way here if I wasn’t confident in my hunt. You will die here today.”

“Kuku. Right. Should I say, ‘As expected of the Top Three’ ...”

Fwoosh!

Gullard’s bat-like wings spread out. When they were fully extended, they were larger than many of the buildings on the street.

“Return.”

Ohhhh-

At that moment, all of Gullard’s alter ego’s from across the city flew to him. Gullard’s alter egos all took the shape of large bats, and almost all of them had something dangling from their feet.

'Corpses.'

They were still far away, but it was immediately clear whom those corpses belonged to.

They were members of the Gray Sun.

Flutter...

Gullard accepted the alter egos one after the other. Like clay, the alter egos stuck to his body before being absorbed. And with everyone that he absorbed, the pressure that he released steadily grew stronger.

Before long, Joanna's face became pale.

"Urk..."

She'd just gotten her act together, but it seemed that her composure was about to break again.

Biting her lip, Joanna forced herself to remain calm.

Gullard must have known the location of the Gray Sun members from the start. Nevertheless, he hadn't made his move before he was certain that he would catch every single one of them.

“Kuk...”

She bit her lip even harder.

Lee Jong-hak forced himself to stand up.

Multiple ribs had been broken, and the pain was so intense that he found it hard to breathe, but he couldn't remain on the ground at that moment.

Paht.

Finally, the last alter ego was absorbed into Gullard's body. Demonic energy erupted from his body like an explosion. The enormous pressure that this energy unleashed made it hard for them to breathe.

“...”

However, Gullard's expression was a bit strange. He looked as though something outside of his expectations had occurred.

“What is it?”

When Kran asked this in a curious voice, Gullard looked up at him.

“Is this not your true power?”

“...”

Of course, it wasn't.

One of his alter egos hadn't returned. It was an alter ego that had 30% of his power.

'...Elijah Kipatosh.'

The Big Boss of the Gray Sun.

The alter ego who had 30% had naturally gone to kill him. He never thought that it wouldn't be enough. Rather, it could even be called overkill. After all, 30% of Gullard's power was comparable to most ordinary Dukes.

Suddenly.

Someone appeared in the sky.

“Huh...?”

When Joanna saw him, she couldn't help but stare blankly for a few moments.

"Frey?!"

Season 2 Chapter 78

Now, he had the power.

Lukas had this thought as he looked down from the air at the people who were standing below him.

The Strongest, Kran, The Human Dragon, Lee Jong-hak, and The Archmage, Joanna.

And

Paht!

A large number of people poured out of a building on the side of the street. There were dozens of them.

All of them looked like they had barely managed to walk off of a battlefield alive, and the large man at the front of the group was someone whom Joanna was familiar with.

"Elijah Kipatosh...?"

“Mm.”

Elijah looked around with a solemn expression. His eyes then settled on the corpses of Camilla and Joffrey.

“We lost some of our precious people.”

“...at least you are safe.”

“Right. We might not look so good, but at least we’re alive.”

Elijah let out a deep sigh as he said those words. Originally, his troops numbered more than two hundred, but now, only a few dozen, including Elijah himself, were still alive.

Looking at the survivors who stood around him, he spoke in a bitter tone.

“He knew the locations of most of our hideouts. The Vampire Duke’s alter egos appeared at around the same time and launched a series of attacks. The damage we suffered was devastating.”

“Ah...”

Joanna sighed for a moment before nodding slightly.

“Nevertheless... since you managed to come here, you must have been able to defeat the alter ego.”

“We received help just in the nick of time.”

“Help? From whom?”

Taht.

It was at that moment when Lukas landed on the ground.

While keeping his eyes on Gullard, he spoke in his normal, calm tone.

“I’ll be taking charge of this battle.”

Joanna couldn’t help but make a face when she heard this unexpected declaration.

“What the hell are you talking about? Now isn’t the time to be messing...”

“We should listen to him.”

“Elijah?”

Joanna turned around in surprise, but Elijah's expression was as serious as usual. From the firm look on his face, she could tell that he wasn't joking. He was genuinely willing to devote his full power to Lukas.

Elijah looked at the silent Lukas for a moment before speaking.

"Joanna Goldberg, you're on a mission with this man, but you don't know anything about him?"

"What do you mean?"

"He is the one who helped us."

"Huh?"

Seeing Joanna's blank stare, Elijah shook his head slightly before speaking.

"He is the one who saved us from Gullard's attack. Without his help, we wouldn't be here right now."

"...!!"

Joanna stared at Lukas in shock, but his gaze was focused on someone else. Someone who was staring at him with a heated gaze as well.

Kran.

“Hmph.”

Kran snorted with a displeased expression, but he didn't draw his sword and attack like he had during their first meeting.

At that moment, Gullard was Kran's greatest enemy.

“...”

Gullard couldn't help but stare at Lukas.

He'd just received the 'memory' of this man after merging with his alter ego.

He'd suddenly felt a strange aura in Zinga, so he'd sent an alter ego over to investigate it. There, he'd seen two people standing in a dirty alleyway.

Among them was a woman...

As he recalled the 'fight', Gullard couldn't help but shudder inwardly.

What if he hadn't sent an alter ego there and had gone there himself?

Would he have been able to defeat her?

'No.'

That much was easy to see. He would have lost even if he'd gone there in person.

It might have been much more of a fight, but the outcome wouldn't have been very different.

And this man was someone who could talk to that unknown woman as an equal.

'Lukas.'

That was the name that woman had called this man by.

'Lukas... Lukas [Trowman].'

No. It couldn't be.

Gullard shook his head.

This man was not a Demon. So he couldn't have set foot in the Demon World. That much was clear.

'Then why?'

Why did it feel like he had mana from a foreign world, like Azazel.

'...he probably wouldn't tell me the answer.'

That much was obvious.

Gullard couldn't help but think that this man had something he wanted to know as well.

'How fun.'

Gullard smiled widely, revealing his sharp fangs.

This was simple. The winning side would hear what they wanted.

And Gullard didn't think that he'd lose. Even if 'he himself' was weaker than Lukas, Africa was his territory, and this city was his home.

Woosh-

Gullard spread his wings before flying up into the sky. His large black wings seemed to cover the night sky.

“I’ll make you regret ever setting foot in this place.’

Lukas looked up at the sky before slowly opening his mouth.

“He intends to one-sidedly attack from the air. He’s chosen a pretty annoying tactic.”

He would be out of reach of most long range attacks.

Elijah frowned slightly at Lukas’ words.

“Then what should we do?”

“First-”

Suddenly.

Taaht!

Kran stomped on the ground before taking a big leap into the sky. He kicked the ground so hard that the earth shook for a moment.

Kran's body, which shot into the air like a bullet, quickly hit Gullard.

Everyone in the area couldn't help but stare at this scene with their mouths agape. It was a display of physical ability that far surpassed human limits.

"H-, he jumped all the way there?"

"Is he really human...?"

Lukas clicked his tongue inwardly. As expected, Kran wasn't willing to work with him.

"I'll have to assist Kran. While I do that, you guys will have to take care of them."

"Them?"

It was at that moment when they noticed strange shadows appearing on the street.

Elijah frowned.

“Demons.”

Right.

Gullard wasn't the only Demon in this city.

* * *

Bang!

He twisted his shoulder to avoid the bullet. It wasn't a normal bullet that he would usually ignore.

Gullard couldn't help but glare at them while a thought ran through his head.

The Top Three were undoubtedly the most threatening and annoying beings to deal with among the humans.

Apart from that, he couldn't help but rethink the thought that those high-ranking Demon Nobles who died at their hands were fools. After all, he'd always thought that no matter how strong they were, they would never exceed human limits.

'This guy is different.'

He was a man who seemed to be created for the purpose of 'hunting demons'.

He used almost ten different weapons, and the number of hidden weapons that he used was innumerable.

'He's not someone who learned martial arts systematically.'

It didn't seem like he'd learned to use mana or divine power either.

And yet, Kran was probably the most difficult opponent Gullard had ever had to face. He always found ways to attack in the most unexpected and annoying places while they were locked in a tense brawl, creating a situation in which Gullard always suffered whenever he tried to launch an attack.

At the same time, his occasional surprise attacks caused Gullard's back to become covered in cold sweat.

His primitive fighting style seemed to be based on instincts and his firsthand experience.

Nevertheless, it was a fighting style that seemed to work perfectly in battles against Demons, battles that required fast reflexes and fast judgements.

'However.'

Kwaak!

Gullard managed to catch his fist for the first time. Then, he increased the strength of his grip, threatening to crush the hand he was holding.

Kran didn't seem to be shocked by the pain of his fist being crushed and instead tried to pierce Gullard's throat with a dagger he held in his left hand. This attack was stopped by Gullard's bright red tongue.

Taht!

Nevertheless, Kran didn't stop attacking. He leaped into the air, twisted his waist to the limit and kicked.

It was like a scene from an action movie. Because he'd managed to jump despite floating in the air.

The secret to this feat was his shoes. His shoes were a type of magic item which helped him move relatively freely in the air.

Nevertheless, Kran's actions would have been impossible without tremendous flexibility and abdominal strength.

Crack!

However, it still wasn't enough.

Gullard's wing hit Kran in the side, and his body was sent flying to the ground like a meteor.

"Hahaha."

Gullard let out a deep laugh before slowly descending. Kran got up from the crater his body had created, using his sword as a cane.

"If you were an ordinary human, that attack would have shattered all the bones in your body."

Then what about Kran?

He had only been slightly injured by the attack.

Gullard's smile grew larger.

"I see why you were able to defeat a Duke. I know what you are now."

"..."

"But I have to ask. Why are you attacking me? Rather than me-"

Boom!

A lightning bolt from the sky penetrated Gullard's body. It was literally an attack that came without warning.

Even Kran, the strongest hunter in the world, couldn't help but be shocked by this attack.

Then, Lukas appeared behind him.

"This is your chance."

"..."

Kran glared at him with clear displeasure, but he still lifted his sword and charged towards Gullard.

"Such... lightning...!"

Gullard exclaimed, white smoke escaping from his mouth.

Fwoosh!

His body once again became thousands of bats that covered the entire street.

This was a smart idea. After all, in their brief skirmish just before, he'd noticed that Kran lacked a way to launch wide-range attacks.

The vampire bats tried to bite Kran with their sharp fangs. But Kran used his weapons to defeat them. He even took out grenades from his pockets and threw them into the group.

But in the end, it still wasn't enough. Modern weapons couldn't do much damage to Gullard. In the end, he would have to shoot him with special anti-demon bullets or cut each one of them with his sword. But there were too many of them.

It was at that moment when Lukas entered the battle once again.

"Eye of the Typhoon."

Woosh!

A powerful gust of wind swept through the area.

Kran tensed his muscles, but the devastating winds did not affect him at all.

Kieeek-

As if they were pulled by an invisible force, the bats began gathering in one place. The intense gale forced the bats to one location as though they had a mind of their own.

Kran couldn't help but turn to Lukas in surprise.

'This guy...'

What kind of sophisticated control was he displaying?

Such a Wizard was definitely more powerful than the head of the Wizard Association who had come to meet him last time.

'Who the hell is this guy?'

While forcibly suppressing his doubts about Lukas, Kran ran towards Gullard.

It was at that moment when Lukas' expression changed for the first time.

"Wait-"

Kieek!

The bats, who had all been pushed together, let out a loud screech before exploding.

Boom!

The sound of the explosion was so powerful that it deafened everyone who heard it for a moment, and the force that followed was even more fearsome. An explosion dozens of times stronger than the grenades Kran had thrown before engulfed one of Zinga's main streets. (TL:...wasn't it an abandoned area?)

Blood from the bats' bodies was sent flying in every direction, carried even further by the wave of explosive force.

Even Lukas, who had been standing a distance away, could not withstand the force and was sent flying into a building.

Kurk-

It seemed his head had been injured in the collision as blood trickled down his forehead.

'I should avoid taking damage with this body.'

Lukas wiped the blood away with an expressionless face.

If Lukas, who had been far away from the explosion, had ended up in such a state...

Fwoosh!

The dust cleared, revealing Kran.

“...dammit.”

It was a strained voice.

Calling Kran’s current condition horrendous was an understatement. The left side of his face had been completely destroyed, to the extent that his skull was visible. His right arm had been completely ripped off by the explosion, and both of his legs were twisted in bizarre ways.

There wasn’t a single part of his body that was uninjured.

Kran stared at Lukas with his remaining eyeball.

“Don’t... look over here.”

Lukas ignored him, his eyes turning to the slowly dissipating dust cloud.

Gullard walked out of the dust without hesitation.

As expected of one of the Five Dukes. He was only slightly injured at that moment.

“Why are you fighting the Demons?”

“...why the hell... are you asking something like that.”

“Because I’m curious. And because you...”

Crunch...

Crunch...

At that moment, Kran’s face began to slowly return to its original ‘form’.

Flesh surged out of the bloodied stump of his torn arm and began twisting and melting together to form a new ‘arm’.

As if they had minds of their own, his twisted legs began to unravel and straighten themselves. His muscles and bones knitted back together.

In less than a minute, Kran was completely healed.

Lukas continued to look at this shocking sight.

“Are not human.”

Season 2 Chapter 79

“Looks like there’s about a dozen or so nobles. The rest are either Demonic Humans or Demon Beast.”

Elijah spoke with a heavy voice.

Ten Demon Nobles. It was fewer than he expected, but that didn’t make it much better. There were only a few dozen fighters on their side.

Everyone gulped subconsciously.

The ground began to shake as monsters larger than houses with teeth larger than fists, forearms, and even larger than an adult’s body began to advance in unison.

With the sole purpose of completely eradicating the group of humans in front of them.

Everyone there was a veteran. Great warriors who had risked their lives countless times before.

Nevertheless, they had never felt the threat of death more than at that very moment.

Anxiety. And fear.

They could not picture a future that didn't involve them dying there.

Seeing this, Elijah prepared to speak once again, but someone beat him to it.

"That's a good number."

Elijah turned around.

There, he saw Lee Jong-hak walking forward with an unsteady gait.

'It's surprising that he's even standing.'

Elijah could tell that Lee Jong-hak was in a serious condition that he needed to receive medical treatment as soon as possible, but Lee Jong-hak did not show any indication of this.

"Do you have any strength left?"

"As you can see."

Lee Jong-hak spoke briefly before taking a deep breath. He forced himself to swallow the blood that had climbed up his throat.

Maybe his condition was worse than Elijah thought. But he couldn't possibly tell him to rest and not overdo it.

Because as soon as Lee Jong-hak made his appearance, the tense expressions of everyone around them eased a little.

That was the power of fame.

A man like the Human Dragon, Lee Jong-hak, could boost the morale of those around him with simply his presence.

Knowing that Lee Jong-hak must have suppressed his desire to collapse and still came forward.

'What an amazing man.'

While he had this thought, Elijah turned to look over at the fight against the Vampire Duke.

The Strongest, Kran and the man Frey were there.

'How strange.'

The Five Dukes.

He knew how monstrous their power was.

A Duke was a being who could sink an entire island without taking a single scratch, and the Five Dukes were a step higher than other Dukes.

And yet, it was only two humans that were holding back this walking disaster.

‘Besides.’

He didn’t know why, but he didn’t think that the two of them would lose easily.

After having this thought, Elijah couldn’t help but let out a bitter laugh as he wondered if he was just trying to make himself feel better.

“Kuaak!”

“Kieek! Kieek!”

By this time, the Demon Beasts had already come close to them. The Demon Nobles were just watching the situation from a short distance away. They probably wanted to test their side’s strength at the expense of the Demonic Humans and Demon Beasts before choosing the safest and surest moment to launch their attacks.

'Disgusting bastards.'

Elijah slowly took off his shirt. It was one of the things he did when he got serious in a fight.

Clothes? He didn't need them.

He was a Warrior who had finely tuned his muscles until they were stronger than armor.

The teeth of the Demon Beasts would only scratch him at most.

Kuuk-

"Today."

Strange steam began to erupt from Elijah's body.

"We're going to have the fiercest fight of our lives."

Even though he spoke in a soft tone, his voice still reached the ears of everyone nearby.

"You should all be prepared to die, but that doesn't mean you should throw your lives away. All of you are the strongest shields on this continent, and I hope you will continue to shine till the very end."

Roar!

The steam exploded.

It was strange to say, but this was an explicable phenomenon.

The steam that had instantaneously surged to the sky had actually been formed by his tense, wriggling muscles.

This cloud which had instantly appeared swirled around in the night sky.

It was a state known as 'Extreme'.

A level that most Warriors might not reach in their entire lives but that every one of them wished for.

Elijah Kipatosh, the Big Boss of the Gray Sun, seemed to be overlooking the entire world at that moment.

He took his stance, clenched his fist, and punched out in front of him.

Krrr...

The sound came slowly.

Then, a miraculous sight followed that simple punch.

Roar!

A wave of air that was released from Elijah's fist rushed towards the horde of Demon Beasts like a tsunami that covered the entire street.

"Kiieek!"

Despite their shrieks, the Demon Beasts only watched this wave approach them with casual curiosity. After all, they were beings that were known for their impressive defenses.

They knew better than anyone just how strong their armor was. Most attacks couldn't even leave a scratch on their bodies, so they expected this attack to be the same.

Crack!

These expectations were brutally smashed.

And 'smashed' was the best word to describe it.

As soon as the wave hit them, the Demon Beasts' bodies were crushed like the walls of a sandcastle. The wave didn't stop at just breaking their armor. Instead, it pierced their skin and tore their muscles before finally crushing their bones.

The Demon Beasts all became piles of flesh whose original appearances were not visible at all.

The wave of air released from Elijah's fist destroyed everything in its path and continued forwards without losing momentum as if it contained an unknown destructive energy.

"Kiieek!!"

"Kuk! Kok! Kok!"

The Demon Beasts, who had confidently stood in place at first to take the attack, cried out as they scattered in every direction. The Demonic Humans, who were much smarter than the Demon Beasts, had cleverly hidden behind them like the Demon Nobles.

If anyone saw this scene, it was clear that their jaw would drop open at that moment.

Just one human.

With a single punch, he'd managed to slow the advance of hundreds of Demon Beasts.

“ ... ”

The expressions of the Demons at the back hardened considerably.

This was natural. After all, what was this place?

This was the home of the Vampire Duke, Gullard. Naturally, the Demon Beasts who protected this place were the most elite soldiers who had been created through special biological experiments and breeding. Even an experienced hunter would have trouble defeating even a single Demon Beast in this place.

And yet, one-third of the entire group had been killed in that attack. The remaining Demon Beasts had all suffered from large and small injuries, so they were the only ones who had escaped from the attack unscathed.

‘...this will be tough.’

Elijah suppressed the throbbing pain in his right arm. It felt like thousands of small razors were tearing apart his muscles.

He wasn’t yet at the age to retire, but it was clear that his body was much weaker than it was when he was in his prime.

‘Stop shaking.’

He could not show it.

Suppress it. He had to suppress it for now.

He could cry about it later. It wouldn't matter if he screamed and rolled around on the ground because of the pain.

However, he couldn't do it right now. In this situation where everyone's eyes were trained on him, he couldn't show any weakness, even if he would die.

'God, please let me endure this for a bit longer.'

It was possible that they would achieve the greatest victory in history today.

He wasn't afraid to give up his life for that.

"Wa... Waaaah!!"

"Big Boss! Big Boss!"

The voices chanting his name rang out in his ears like drums.

There were only a few dozen of them, but their voices rang out with unprecedented momentum.

It was a strange feeling. But it felt amazing.

When he heard the roars, the pain in his right arm faded as if he'd taken drugs. His brain felt like it was gushing endorphins.

"Let's go, Warriors."

Clenching his fist, Elijah let out a laugh.

"Justice is with us."

Season 2 Chapter 80

Killing intent flashed in Kran's eyes for a moment, but it disappeared faster than it appeared. Then, he turned to look at the Vampire Duke, who was standing in front of the cloud of dust again.

But Lukas realised that this guy had just thought about killing him although it was only for a moment.

Perhaps he'd thought about killing the witness.

It seemed that he'd revealed something he didn't want people to know.

'Nevertheless, the Vampire Duke takes priority.'

His hatred for the Demons. He'd thought that there might be some special reason for it. But it might have had something to do with his peculiar constitution.

"What about you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"From what you say and what he said, you can tell that I'm not human. But you're the same."

Lukas shook his head.

"I only used a few spells."

"Ha. Do you think I don't know anything about magical science? Your control over the spells that you just used surpasses human ability."

As he retorted with a sneer, Kran checked his equipment. Because of the explosion that had just occurred, most of his equipment was either completely unusable or partly destroyed.

He then pulled new equipment from a fist-sized pouch on his waist and re-equipped himself.

Lukas' eyes shined for a moment.

A Subspace Bag.

One of the rare magical items in the world.

Actually, now that he thought about it, this man seemed to be covered in magical items. The cloak that was wrapped around his body had considerable defense, and the shoes on his feet allowed him to move about freely in the air.

Not to mention the weapons in his arsenal. Even Lukas was not completely certain about the components of the bullets he used.

"I've killed hundreds of Demons."

It felt more like he was muttering to himself than to Lukas.

"And those are just the ones I remember. Of course, I don't remember most of their faces, let alone their names. I only remember the fact that I killed them."

He didn't even bother counting the lesser Demons like Demonic Humans and Demon Beasts or the other wild beasts because the number was too large.

Lukas listened to him in silence.

“Do you understand what I’m trying to say? I don’t need your help. You’re better off helping those idiots over there.”

He gestured to where the members of the Gray Sun were fighting against the Demons and Demon Beasts.

At the front of the group stood Elijah and Lee Jong-hak. They roared loudly like wounded beasts as they took on wave after wave of Demon Beasts.

Neither of them was in good shape. In particular, Lee Jong-hak looked like he would collapse at any moment.

Just as Lukas was about to answer, Gullard leaped through the dust cloud and into the sky.

Now that his body was revealed, it could be seen that he wasn’t completely unharmed. His entire body was covered in blood.

Looking up at the sky, Kran spoke slowly.

“The Vampire Duke, Gullard Phisfounder. Aside from his transcendent physical ability and other abilities that are common among high-ranking Demon Nobles... His best features are his division ability and his ‘wings’.”

“Wings?”

“The reason why the Five Dukes are called the ‘Five Dukes’ is because they each have a special body part that other Dukes don’t have. In Gullard’s case, it’s his wings.”

Lukas was almost certain that even Neil Prand, President of the Hunter Association, didn’t know this information. According to him, almost everything about the Five Dukes was a mystery except for their names.

Most people didn’t know what powers they had or how much power they had, but they knew their characteristics.

“You, are you saying that you can take him on on your own?”

“Right.”

“It would be difficult.”

“I’ve never had an easy fight.”

Following Kran’s gaze, Lukas looked up at the sky before muttering.

“Did you say division and wings? Perhaps he has other abilities as well.”

“What?”

Gullard looked down at the city from the sky.

He was incredibly frustrated at that moment.

The Strongest, Kran, and Lukas. These two who dared to face him like they were equals and the other humans, who continued to fight fiercely despite only being a few dozen.

He'd never imagined that something like this would happen on the continent of which he was in charge, not to mention his home, Zinga.

What was going on?

Was it because he hadn't destroyed the Gray Sun?

Was it because he'd let Kran do as he pleased in his territory?

Or was this Wizard with considerable power the real problem?

Crunch.

Gullard gritted his teeth.

He couldn't think of a reason why all of this was happening.

There was only one thing that mattered at that moment. The unpleasant garbage was still alive.

How dare they come to his land and do this?!

Gullard took a deep breath to calm himself before speaking.

"...Our King always told us, the Five Dukes, to be modest and to keep our guards up. He told us to constantly improve our strength, no matter how strong we might be. To not be proud of our current power because anything could happen at any moment."

Kran's expression became strange at those words.

Not to be conceited and constantly increase their strength?

That didn't sound like the Demons he knew at all.

Lukas, on the other hand, paid close attention to Gullard's words.

'Something is about to happen...'

Was he simply reacting because of the upcoming Great Game?

Paht!

Gullard spread his wings apart.

Kran tensed up immediately, but the stretching of his wings didn't seem to be an attack.

Instead, strange sounds could be heard from the giant wings.

Kiii— Kiii—

It was a very ominous sound. Something one would never expect to hear from wings.

A sound similar to a cat scratching an old tree with its claws filled the entire street.

Kran, who stared blankly at Gullard at first, slowly began looking around the street, his guard fully raised.

Lukas also felt the sudden movement of hundreds of presences.

And it wasn't long before these presences revealed themselves with clumsy footsteps.

"...they are..."

Kran's expression hardened.

This was the same for the Gray Sun members who were fighting the horde of Demon Beasts.

Now, when the number of enemies had finally been reduced by a considerable amount, they were being reinforced by a large number of humanoid figures.

When he saw them, Elijah couldn't help but speak in a solemn tone.

"...hybrids..."

"Hahaha!"

Gullard laughed in a faux, cheerful voice.

"I must commend you! I didn't plan to make use of them at the start! So you guys should be proud of pushing the Vampire Duke so far!"

"Kut..."

Joanna, who was chanting a spell, choked.

Hybrid.

These beings whose appearances were a mixture of the features of Demons and humans were staring at their group with blank expressions as though they weren't conscious at that moment.

Nevertheless, the demonic energy erupting from their bodies was as fearsome as those released by normal Demon Nobles.

Elijah slowly closed his eyes.

He knew the most about the combat power of hybrids than anyone else there.

'...hundreds of hybrids.'

It wasn't a problem that he had to think too deeply about.

Regardless of how the situation changed, he didn't have any intention of giving up. No matter what happened, and no matter how much despair he felt.

Because of this, this extremely large man was able to remain calm without being shocked and scared like the others.

And in his calm state, he concluded that it was all over.

“Hahaha!”

Gullard’s laughter pierced the night sky.

He could see it. He could feel it. The despair was slowly consuming them. And soon, they might show the ugly expressions that he wanted to see the most.

What would they do then?

Would they abandon the others and try to save themselves? Would they surrender to him and beg for their lives? Would they blame each other and start infighting?

Gullard loved to predict human behaviour in situations like this.

As the King had taught him, he wanted to see their ugliest side.

“Huh?”

At that moment, a man had flown up to Gullard, who was happily waiting to see how the situation would unfold.

“You...”

He hadn't stopped at the same height as Gullard. Instead, he'd stopped slightly higher than him.

How dare this man look down on him?

Gullard's pride was hurt, but he still smiled without showing any of it.

Such childish provocations were proof that this man had lost his composure.

Gullard looked at Lukas and spoke with a calm voice.

“I saw my alter ego's 'memories'. I know you are hiding a considerable amount of power. However... you're not as strong as that mysterious woman.”

“...”

“If you were, you wouldn't have brought Kran to help you.”

Kran had been about a thousand kilometers away from Zinga. He knew that it was Lukas who brought him over. He also knew that the spells he'd used in their previous skirmish were very powerful.

Nevertheless, he didn't think that this man could reverse this situation.

Lukas then looked down and said.

"Those are hybrids."

"That's right. Aren't they amazing?"

Gullard's voice had a hint of pride.

"They are the perfect hybrid. Created by combining the best characteristics of humans and Demons as well as my own DNA."

"Then."

Lukas only paid attention to the most important part of that statement.

"You're saying they're not Demons."