

Great Mage 421

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Slei and Reika called Arid's mysterious power [Brilliance]. It was a power that suited the child born from the light, who had innately powerful spiritual energy.

[Communication] was only one part of the power of [Brilliance].

Slei focused more on Communication.

In fact, when it came to Communication, he was as skilled at utilising and understanding it as Arid was.

Reika, on the other hand, used most of her power to change her body.

As a result, her ugly, aging skin regained its supple elasticity and her aging bones became stronger than ever before.

That wasn't all.

Just by covering her body in Brilliance, she became so strong that she could be called 'superhuman'.

Reika knew that in such a state, there were very few people who could match her.

This wasn't a bluff or delusion either. It was a conclusion that was based on actual experience.

-The Saint of Salvation, one of the Top Three.

The achievement that was commonly considered to have granted the Saint their spot in the Top Three was the single-handed defeat of five Marquises.

However, that achievement, as well as all of the achievements gained in Australia, had actually been accomplished by Reika, not Arid.

What kind of human could easily defeat five Demon Marquises on their own?

It was only natural that Reika gained confidence as a result of her victory.

Paht!

Light erupted from Reika's body.

In truth, Lukas found that it was nothing special. It seemed that this power could be used in many different ways depending on the desires of the user. But Reika's strengthening of her body could only be considered one-dimensional at best.

Clang!

And naturally, something like that had no hope of breaching Lukas' barrier.

Crunch.

Reika grit her teeth before widening the distance once more, her fist throbbing.

She was well aware of the tricks that Wizards and Sorcerers used. After all, she'd clashed with Wizards from the Wizard's Association many times.

They were all snobbish and unpleasant, their real-life experience was always lacking, and they were usually only ever good at theory. Even if she were to fight dozens of them at one time, she would be able to deal with them easily.

Annoyed, Reika sneered.

"It seems you don't intend to use your Absolute powers. Are you still concerned about keeping the balance of the universe?"

"I'm always concerned."

Lukas waved his hand slightly in response.

At the same time, dozens of spears of ice shot up from the floor. Reika tried to avoid them all in the little time she had to react, but a single spear pierced her ankle.

“Kuk...!”

Reika winced slightly from the pain as she landed on one foot, glaring at the man in front of her. She understood what her opponent was trying to say.

He wasn't using his Absolute power because he was afraid of influencing the balance of this universe. Instead, he simply didn't feel the need to.

Shuk.

The hole in her ankle closed up in an instant. This was also a function of Brilliance. It had a transcendental regenerative ability, able to heal almost any injury in only a matter of moments.

Nevertheless, Reika's expression wasn't good. After all, the Brilliance power that she had was not infinite.

Lukas looked at her for a moment before muttering.

“It seems you're beginning to return to your true form.”

“...!”

Reika quickly raised a hand to her face, immediately feeling the wrinkles that had begun to form on her previously smooth skin.

“Ahhh...!”

“Are you unable to give up your obsession with your appearance even in this situation?”

“...sh-,shut up!”

Screaming, Reika charged forward. She’d managed to keep her cool until then, but the moment Lukas mentioned her appearance, she immediately lost her temper.

“In the end, you used the desperation of others to satisfy your own selfish desires.”

“Ha. Don’t try to act like you’re a noble person.”

Reika’s voice was filled with hate.

“It was simply a deal. They wanted something, and I had the means to make it possible! What’s so wrong about that?”

“That’s why you’re going to die.”

Lukas spoke in a low voice.

“Because I can’t understand it.”

Just as Lukas lifted his hand...

Paht!

A bright flash of light appeared in the middle of him and Reika.

Before the light began to fade, Lukas was able to tell who it was.

He slowly opened his mouth.

“Arid.”

Arid hesitated before nodding and responding.

“...Mr. Soul.”

He had a complicated expression on his face.*

Lukas couldn't help but wonder what he was thinking at that moment. Unfortunately, his spiritual eyes blocked even Lukas' insight.

Nevertheless, he was certain about one thing.

Arid wasn't surprised to see Lukas in a physical form.

"Is this woman your family?"

"...she's my grandmother."

"I see."

Lukas lowered his hand. At that moment, Reika looked at Arid with a happy expression.

"Ohhh... Arid, you saved me."

Her supple facial muscles had become loose, and her skin became covered in wrinkles and age spots.

Nevertheless, Reika smiled brightly.

“Hurry up and get rid of that Demon... You should be able to do that much, right...?”

“Grandmother, you tricked me.”

“Right. I’m sorry... But I did it for everyone’s happiness.”

“It’s not just me. You also tricked everyone from the Church of Eternal Life.”

“Arid... Are you blaming Grandma now?”

Reika lowered her voice as she said this, and Arid bit his lip. Hard enough to draw blood.

Then, he strode towards Reika.

“Grandmother, what the hell...”

Lukas wondered just how Arid would react, but he couldn’t pay attention to their reunion any longer.

Lukas looked up at the ceiling. To be precise, he was looking beyond it.

Even though the sun was about to rise, the sky had turned black. This was a darkness that wouldn’t be seen even in the middle of a starless night.

Then, a black spark streaked across the sky.

“...!”

Boom!

It was as though lightning had struck.

But it wasn't lightning. It was far larger and more powerful than lightning. Moreover, he could feel the malicious energy from there.

The power contained in this single black streak was enough to destroy the entire Korean Branch.

Lukas didn't take too long to react.

He immediately erected a barrier.

A barrier as strong and as large as he could make it. In other words, it covered the entirety of the Korean Branch and the facility underground.

Crack!

Nevertheless, the barrier still cracked, nearly shattering. It had only barely managed to withstand the attack.

Lukas stumbled backward, his insides churning.

“M-, Mr. Soul?”

Arid’s eyes widened at the sudden movement.

Lukas didn’t respond.

‘...that’s not the Five Dukes.’

Even if the two Dukes were to work together, they would not have been able to achieve such destructive power.

Lukas’ heart raced.

He already knew who it was.

He once again looked up at the ceiling, this time using Clairvoyance. His power allowed him to spot the being standing in the sky, hidden behind the clouds.

He'd never met him before, but he knew.

The being clenched their fist and muttered.

[Supremacy Fist.]

If they didn't witness it for themselves, perhaps no one would believe what happened next.

With that soft murmur, half of the Korean Branch disappeared.

* * *

About ten minutes before half of the Korean Branch of the Hunter Association disappeared.

Ugkas froze in place, honestly wondering if he was imagining things or not.

Guguk... guk.

Unbelievably, it was Sipakna's grotesque sounds that brought him back to his senses.

This Demon Duke, who looked like a monster, recovered before Ugkas, who still stood idly.

It bent its body in a strange sign of subservience.

After seeing that, Ugkas quickly fell to one knee.

“I, I greet the King...!”

He paid his respect to none other than the Demon King.

Demon King Kasajin’s reaction was no different from usual. He simply nodded his head calmly.

[Raise your head.]

Ugkas slowly raised his head. It was fortunate that his metal body didn’t have sweat glands. Otherwise, he would have been covered in cold sweat.

He gulped slightly before speaking in a hesitant tone.

“Wh-, why did you come here?”

His heart was pounding so loudly that it was disturbing.

He couldn't help but wonder if the King had come to punish them for failing to capture Kran after so long. Or if he was there because he no longer wanted to wait...

'I have no excuse...'

Of course, Kasajin hadn't mentioned a time span for the mission, but that was still not an excuse.

It was an order that had been given by the King himself.

It should have been completed as quickly as possible, and it could have been.

However, Ugkas had decided to enjoy a bit of slaughter in this land. In other words, he'd taken his time.

'If I had put aside that mindset and focused on the mission...'

Ugkas was confident that he could raze the Korean Peninsula to the ground in three days or less. If he had done that, then it would have been easy to find Kran.

[I didn't come here to blame you, Ugkas.]

"Huh...?"

[There is a being here whom you have no hope of resisting.]

Someone's name flashed through Ugkas' mind at that moment.

The one who had killed Gullard Phisfounder, one of the Five Dukes like him.

Looking into the distance, Kasajin spoke slowly.

[You finish what you came here to do. I will deal with him.]

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Beeee-

A terrible ringing sounded in her ears.

"K-, uh..."

Sedi forced herself to her feet. She felt dizzy and nauseous. In fact, it felt like her bones were vibrating.

"Urk..."

Unable to handle it, she vomited a mouthful of blood. Ironically, she felt a bit better after spitting out the blood.

'Indeed...'

Having such a body was uncomfortable. Forcibly suppressing the nausea, Sedi looked around.

"Hah."

She had just witnessed an unbelievable scene with her own eyes.

It was as if a spear of light shot out from some kind of orbital weapon had pierced the entire base. Not only had the skyscraper that was built above ground been almost completely destroyed, but even the underground facilities which were hundreds of meters below the ground had been completely pulverised.

Of course, the main culprit of this devastating attack was not an orbital weapon, nor were they even in space to begin with.

'Demon King.'

The bastard who had killed her once and caused her to be in such a state was the cause of tragedy.

Pat pat.

Sedi brushed off some dirt that had landed on her head. Then, her eyes turned to where Lukas was.

'There were two attacks. Father blocked the first one.'

His response had been amazing, but Lukas hadn't been able to completely block the Demon King's second attack. Nevertheless, the barrier had greatly reduced the level of destruction the attack caused.

'If it hadn't been for him...'

Sedi's heart shook violently.

If Lukas hadn't blocked the attacks, all of the living beings currently in the base would have crossed over the yellow river without knowing how they died.

"U-, uhh...."

"Kuh..."

The believers around her groaned in pain.

Many of them had died, and those who didn't suffered from severe injuries. Most of them had lost one or several limbs.

Even Sedi felt pain throughout her entire body. That level of shock wasn't something fragile humans could handle.

'I'm in pretty bad condition.'

Perhaps if it had been someone other than Sedi, they would have disappeared without a single trace remaining.

Sedi looked around for Min Ha-rin. She wasn't in good shape either, but at the very least, she didn't seem to be seriously injured.

"Hey."

"...what?"

"It seems like your time to play with these idiots has passed."

Puh.

Min Ha-rin spat out a mouthful of dust before speaking.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"The Five Dukes are here."

“...!”

Min Ha-rin’s eyes widened at those words.

It wasn’t just her. The believers, who were groaning on the ground, were also roused by those words.

“Th-, the Five Dukes are here!”

“It’s time to fight!”

“Cough... Ahhh...!!”

Sedi looked at them in disbelief.

Those who were severely injured and seemed to be on the brink of death were now brimming with energy. Their eyes were filled with joy as though they could no longer feel their pain.

Sedi smacked the staff against the ground.

Bang!

The impact caused the ground beneath her to crack, and pieces of stone were sent flying in every direction. Her action didn't just draw attention to herself, but it also caused the believers, who were slowly rising to their feet, to fall to the ground again.

With an expression of annoyance, Sedi opened her mouth.

"You want to fight? Cut the crap. Do you think it would even be a fight between you and those guys up there?"

"Who the hell do you think-!"

Thud!

An orb of demonic energy shot from the tip of the staff into the stomach of the believer who had just begun to shout. After coughing up a mouthful of blood, that believer collapsed, unconscious. (TL: why does she still have demonic energy?)

"Don't be mistaken. This isn't a request or suggestion. It is a threat. If you try to disobey, I will kill you with my own hands."

"Do you think we are afraid of death?"

When one of the believers asked this with a venomous expression, Sedi shot a bright, yet sadistic, smile at them.

“No. But I happen to know the perfect way to deal with fanatics like you.”

She then pointed her staff at Slei.

Slei was probably the worst off out of everyone who had suffered through this ordeal. Almost half of his left torso had disappeared.

Because he had lost his right arm to Sedi, he had basically lost both arms.

Even if someone were to watch on objectively, the appearance of this old man who was breathing shallowly and looked like he would die at any moment would have been enough to fill them with a sense of sympathy.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the case for Sedi.

“Since he doesn't have any arms, should I cut off his feet instead? Let's start with the left one first.”

“S-, stop!”

“Y-, you demonic bitch!”

“I've heard that many times today.”

Sedi picked her ears as she slowly walked up to Slei, who had already lost consciousness.

In truth, with the extent of his injuries, it was a miracle that he was even alive. And now that she looked closely, she realised that his wounds had already stopped bleeding.

He had stopped without receiving any medical attention. In fact, that wasn't the only thing that disturbed her.

In the cross-sections of his injuries, she could see the flesh and blood vessels wriggling. It was faint, but it seemed that he was beginning to regenerate. Maybe after a few hours, his severed limbs would grow back like a lizard's tail.

This must have been one of the abilities of the power the old man had used before.

'It really is a disgustingly annoying power...'

Sedi snorted before kicking Slei's body over to Min Ha-rin.

Min Ha-rin, who caught him out of reflex, looked down at his body in confusion.

"If you make use of that old fart, you'll be able to keep those idiots under control."

"...do you want me to threaten them as you did?"

“That’s the fastest and most effective way, but it’s up to you.”

After saying that, Sedi looked up.

“Now, get out of here.”

“What about you?”

“I’m going to fight them.”

Maybe because he believed something like this would happen, Lukas had already told her what to do beforehand. Sedi’s role was simply to restrict and delay them.

Min Ha-rin hesitated for a moment before asking.

“...you won’t die, will you?”

“Me? Hmph.”

Sedi snorted before waving her hands.

“The newborn puppy is worried about the tiger? Stop wasting time and go.”

“...”

Min Ha-rin paused for a moment before finally opening her mouth.

“Don’t die.”

“Oh, don’t worry about me. Just take care of yourself.”

“Right.”

Min Ha-rin nodded once before leaving. Sedi only glanced at her for a moment before turning away as if she’d lost interest.

The underground facilities were already a mess, and if they were to make a mistake, they might be buried in debris, but they were all still hunters. It should be possible for them to get to a safe zone.

Sedi’s gaze returned to the sky.

Come to think of it, she was looking up at the sky from several meters beneath the ground. This was due to the Demon King’s attack, which disintegrated a large portion of the building and the ground around it.

This was certainly not something one could see often.

'Three enemies...'

No. Lukas was now approaching the Demon King. It seemed the Absolutes were going to compete amongst themselves.

Sedi let out a bitter laugh.

"Then I guess I'll take care of the other two."

Suddenly, Lukas' words appeared in her mind.

Currently, she was similar to or even slightly weaker than the Five Dukes. Of course, she didn't intend to blindly take his word for it, but at least she didn't foolishly believe that she could easily win the fight.

Sedi was also a transcendent being. She had countless experiences of fighting against enemies with no guarantee of victory even if she were to put her life on the line.

So even if the Five Dukes really were stronger than her, she didn't intend to easily back down.

'Father said to hold on until he can come to help.'

But she knew just what Lukas would have to deal with.

This was natural. After all, she'd already fought and lost to him before.

It was a complete and utter defeat that Sedi had never experienced before in her life.

Could Lukas defeat him?

He was still unable to use his power as he pleased.

But the Demon King was different. He had demonstrated transcendental power during his fight with Sedi.

"Maybe I can go help."

Taht.

As she muttered this slightly pretentious phrase, two Demon Dukes landed in front of her. Sedi carefully looked at them.

The one on the left appeared to be a statue made of iron. Its entire body was made of shiny black metal. Other than that, there was nothing unique about it. Its body was similar to that of an adult human male.

On the other hand, the other Demon Duke had many features that stood out. When one saw it, the only word one would be able to think about to describe it would be 'monster'.

Its body had a shape that was similar to a slug except that it was over five meters long and had no features apart from a large mouth. Every time it inhaled and exhaled, the rows of teeth in its mouth would rotate slightly.

From its appearance, it seemed that it would be able to expand its mouth many times its size if it wanted to.

The Iron Duke, Ugkas, opened his mouth while looking at Sedi in surprise.

“It’s even more ridiculous when seeing it in person. Is this brat really the one with such a powerful aura?”

Originally, Ugkas had intended to pursue and exterminate all of the humans in this city before destroying it. This was because he thought it would be more noticeable and draw Kran out.

However, just as he was about to take action, he sensed a surprising aura.

This aura was almost comparable to his own, and because of this, he grew curious.

At first, he’d thought that it was Kran. After all, he didn’t believe that any human could have an aura so powerful. However, to his surprise, it was instead a little human girl who seemed to have not yet reached adulthood.

Guguk... guk.

Unlike Ugkas, who was puzzled, Sipakna calmly prepared for battle.

'He's getting serious? Could this little girl really be a threat to us?'

Sipakna's instincts were very sharp. If he recognised this little girl as an enemy, then she must certainly have been a great threat.

Ugkas nodded.

Right. He could just test it for himself.

Boom!

Ugkas' body shot towards Sedi like a cannonball.

'As expected, he's someone who fights with his body.'

Swinging the staff slightly, Sedi took a stance. A lot of thoughts flashed through her mind in an instant.

The power of Ugkas' charge was not something she would be able to block easily. The staff was pretty sturdy, but it would not be able to withstand the force of the attack.

'More importantly, I'm still not in good condition.'

Her organs had been badly damaged by the Demon King's previous attack to the point where she spat out blood. So it would be a big gamble to take on such an attack in her current state.

She had no choice but to dodge.

Clack!

"...!"

But at that moment, something sticky wrapped around her ankle.

Sedi, who had been caught off guard, hurriedly looked down.

Gluk...

A slimy tentacle was wrapped around each of her ankles. This was Sipakna's doing.

At some point, it had sneakily pierced two of its hundreds of tentacles into the ground before using them to catch her by surprise.

'Such a rudimentary mistake...!'

Sedi hurriedly swung the staff, severing the tentacles.

But that was all she was able to do.

Because by that time, Ugkas was already in front of her.

She couldn't redirect it, she couldn't block it, and she couldn't dodge.

'Fuck...'

Boom!

A heavy force struck her body.

And Sedi's vision became white.

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Her entire body was filled with pain as if she had been torn to pieces. But naturally, she knew that wasn't true.

Sedi forcibly held on to her remaining consciousness. She knew that if she were to faint now, it would all be over.

Using the momentum of the attack, she rolled a few times across the ground before getting back to her feet.

Her sense of balance was in shambles. The sky felt like the ground, and the ground felt like the sky. She wasn't even sure if she was still facing in the right direction.

In this state, there was only one thing she could trust.

Sedi launched herself backward, relying purely on the sixth sense that she had developed through countless battles.

Crash!

Tentacles once again sprang up from the spot where she had just been standing. She had been prepared this time, but the situation was still not good. The tentacles began to surge towards her from every direction, not just from the ground. It was as though hundreds of snakes were rushing at her at the same time.

Sedi spun the staff like a windmill, hitting the tentacles away.

'I can't see the big iron guy...'

His large physique would normally have been impossible to miss, but now, he was hiding behind the hundreds of tentacles.

For a moment, Sedi couldn't help but feel that even another head would not be enough in this situation. It was already quite painful to focus on Sipakna's numerous tentacles, but she also had to be mindful of Ugkas' potential sneak attack.

Spurt!

Then, one of the tentacles shot out purple bodily fluid at her. (TL:...these tentacles are starting to get out of hand...)

Instinctively realising that it would be dangerous to let this fluid touch her, Sedi stomped the ground with her left foot.

Boom!

A large piece of rubble, which rose from the impact of her stomp, managed to serve as a temporary shield. Unfortunately, it didn't last very long.

Tssss!

The fluid seemed to be extremely corrosive as it let off a hissing sound upon contact with the stone. This piece of stone, about 20cm thick, was completely corroded in only a few seconds.

'It'll be over if I let that touch me.'

She also couldn't hit it with her staff. After all, despite its durability, there was no guarantee that the staff would be able to survive contact with the tentacle fluid.

In this situation, losing her weapon would only put her at more of a disadvantage, so she had to be cautious.

'...there's nothing I can do about it. Now isn't the time to think about that.'

After thinking this, Sedi released her demonic energy.

Boom!

Despite her small stature, the demonic energy that exploded from her body spread out like a mist of death, immediately killing anything it came into contact with. Naturally, the tentacles were no exception.

"Demonic energy...?"

Ugkas' face twitched slightly.

Contrary to Sedi's worries, he hadn't been hiding behind Sipakna's tentacles nor was he looking for any openings.

The first charge attack that he'd displayed had been strong enough to destroy multiple buildings in one hit.

And yet, this little girl had managed to survive. Even if a group of Warriors who had trained their bodies for their entire lives were to form a line and defend together, they would not be able to compare to this small, lithe body.

Therefore, it was only natural that Ugkas had raised his vigilance against Sedi by a few levels as a result.

But now, Sedi was releasing demonic energy. The very same demonic energy that they used.

Thud!

Ugkas landed on the ground. The ground where he fell was immediately destroyed, and it felt like the entirety of the half-destroyed underground facility shook heavily.

"Girl, you're using demonic energy, but you don't appear to be a Demon. Are you a Demon... or are you one of those hybrids too?"

"Pfft."

When she heard that, Sedi seemed to forget the situation for a moment as she let out a snicker.

“What’s so funny?”

“Your ignorance is amusing. Am I a Demon? I don’t want to listen to the bullshit of fools who don’t know their own origins.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You don’t deserve to know the answer. You can ask me again when you’re stronger.”

“...”

After saying that, Sedi provocatively waved her hands, but Ugkas maintained his cautious attitude and didn’t move.

‘This guy is no joke.’

It seemed that he also had a lot of combat experience.

Sedi forcibly stopped her fingers from trembling.

Although her organs were still throbbing, so far, she had no problems moving her arms, legs, or head.

In other words, as long as she ignored the pain, she would have no problem moving her limbs.

It was the only thing that could be described as 'fortunate' in this entire situation.

'This reminds me of the old days.'

Her odds of winning were probably less than 10 percent.

And as she thought of that fact, the smile on her lips grew wider.

* * *

He didn't know what happened.

Arid looked around in a daze.

Dust filled the air, and screams of pain could be heard from every direction.

The church building, which had seemed to be filled with a holy aura just a moment ago, was now reminiscent of the place his grandfather described as hell.

“Ah... Uhhh. Ahh...”

Reika stood there, desperately trying to hold up her drooping skin.

Arid simply stared at her, unwilling to get any closer.

“A-, Arid... g- give Grandma [Brilliance]... give me Brilliance.”

“...give you Brilliance? What does Grandmother intend to do with it?”

“What...?”

Reika blinked her eyes, unable to contain the surprise she was feeling at that moment.

This was the first time that Arid, who had always been obedient to her and Sleii, had asked a question like this. Even his voice seemed to carry a strange emotion.

“D-, don’t you feel sorry for Grandma? Are you still asking me that after seeing how I look now?”

“I don’t feel sorry for you. That’s the way Grandmother is supposed to look.”

“Arid...!”

Reika's expression became distorted like a Demon's. A spiteful look flashed in her eyes, and coupled with her wrinkled face, it gave her the appearance of a spiteful witch. If this had been the past, Arid would have certainly covered by now.

But now, it didn't matter.

"How? How could you think of yourself in a situation like this?!"

Paht!

Following Arid's shout, Brilliance erupted from his body.

Reika winced at the sudden burst of intense light.

"A lot of people were injured and even killed in that attack! Can you not hear their cries? If we, no, if I don't help them, they might all die!"

"Th-. they are believers of the Church of Eternal Life... Even if they die, they will not truly die, and we will take care of their souls..."

"That's just a hoax! It's just as Mr. Soul said!"

It was then that Reika understood.

Arid had eavesdropped on the conversation between her and Lukas.

And he had realised.

Just how terrible what they were doing was.

Of course, Arid had always been deceived. Because of his innocence, he had naively listened to Sleil and Reika's lies.

Of... he forcibly covered his eyes to prevent himself from realising.

Because it was his Grandfather. Because it was his Grandmother.

He had always believed in them because they were the ones who raised him.

And this was the result.

In the end, it was Arid's soft-hearted attitude that had caused his grandparents to become like this.

Ignoring Reika, who was staring at him in shock, Arid turned around.

“A-, Arid. Stop. Where are you going?”

“I’m going to save people.”

“You can’t! We have to run away! T-, there are two of the Five Dukes...! Your Brilliance is already exhausted, isn’t it? It’s suicide!”

“No.”

Someone was still fighting.

Arid walked to the hole that pierced through the entire building and looked down.

Like a sandwich that had been cut in half, he could see the cross-sections of the floors beneath him.

And at the very bottom, he saw a young girl fighting against the two Dukes.

...It wasn’t just this girl.

This time, he looked up at the sky.

He was looking in the direction that Lukas had flown off in.

The place where the monster who had destroyed the Korean Branch headquarters in just two attacks was.

Lukas' expression flashed in Arid's mind at that moment.

It seemed that he was prepared to risk his life.

Crunch.

He clenched his fist tightly. Then, he took a deep breath.

Arid finally made up his mind.

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It was really strange.

He should have already killed her by now.

'How long has it been?'

Bang!

Ugkas' fist sank into Sedi's stomach, and it should have been a devastating blow.

But it wasn't. Instead, he felt the force of his attack dissipate just before it reached her.

'Did she absorb the force of my attack?'

Tuk.

His outstretched arm was caught, but Ugkas didn't care. After all, his entire body was made out of metal that was many times harder than steel. So techniques like joint locking would not work against him.

But Sedi didn't intend to lock his joints. She grabbed Ugkas' right arm with both hands. Then, something inconceivable happened.

Ugkas' large body was lifted into the air.

'This...'

He was acutely aware of just how heavy his body was. So how the hell was this little girl able to lift him?

Boom!

Then, as if to mock Ugkas' doubts even further, Sedi slammed him into the ground.

The impact of the fall shattered the ground beneath them, and Ugkas fell down to a new floor.

Crash! Crash! Crash!

One floor, two floors, three floors.

The underground facility had been constructed in preparation for an attack by the Demons, and it was theorised that it would be able to withstand dozens of attacks from air-to-surface missiles before it suffered even a single crack.

Nevertheless, it was only after breaking through the fourth floor that Ugkas finally stopped falling.

"..."

Ugkas slowly rose to his feet.

The pain that rippled through his body for the first time in a very long while was strange and surprising at the same time.

He looked up through the hole he'd made during his descent.

The mysterious little girl was locked in heated combat with Sipakna. With every clash, the wounds on Sedi's body steadily increased. However, instead of faltering, her movements were becoming sharper and sharper.

'It's like the more she fights, the stronger she becomes.'

No. It wasn't something that simple.

Ugkas had met several individuals who became significantly stronger when their lives were on the line.

However, the prowess Sedi was showing wasn't something that could be attributed to desperate 'growth'.

'This is like...'

A powerful being who hadn't fought in a long time slowly loosening her rusty body.

'She's dangerous.'

Ugkas' instincts began to sound an alarm in his head. This was no longer something that could be handled while conserving his strength. He realised that if he didn't kill this girl now, this fight would become many times more troublesome.

Ugkas leapt upward.

Boom!

His body shot upwards like a rocket.

Sedi immediately put her guard up. Even though she continued to fight Sipakna, her focus was now mostly on Ugkas.

This was because unlike Sipakna, who used various tricks to injure her bit by bit, every one of Ugkas' attacks was lethal.

"Blade Fist."

An incredibly powerful force was built up in Ugkas' fist before he punched forward.

Sedi couldn't have known that he knew the Warrior King Fist, which also contained various long-ranged attacks.

Nor could she know how unbelievably powerful these attacks were.

The first thing she noticed was the breeze blowing past her ears.

Coooo-

Then, she felt the unusual energy. It was as though it was a sign, a harbinger of destruction.

Unfortunately, the phenomenon it announced came shortly after.

By the time Sedi turned her head to look at Ugkas, the breeze from his fist had already become a strong gale.

Even so, the force didn't stop building.

It became bigger, stronger, more vicious.

And at long last.

Roar!

The gentle breeze had become a typhoon that swept away everything in its path.

'Crazy bastard...'

He was using a skill with such a range? Didn't he know that Sipakna would also get caught in it?

Remembering her other opponent, Sedi suddenly turned to look at the slug-like being. Its response to this was simple. It simply wrapped its hundreds of tentacles around itself like a cocoon.

“Kuk...!”

Right. He could just regenerate any damage he took anyway.

Sedi gnashed her teeth.

The range of the attack was too large for her to dodge it, and it couldn't be blocked because it was a shapeless windstorm.

'I need to save my demonic energy.'

She already didn't have much demonic energy left. Even though she had gradually been using it little by little to deal with this desperate situation, she'd still kept some in reserve in case of any sudden changes. However, in order to defend against this attack, she would have to use most of her Demonic energy.

'Dammit.'

However, she didn't have much of a choice at that moment.

“I'll worry about the consequences later...!”

Sedi immediately unleashed her demonic energy.

In an instant, her vision went black. Such power was already at the limits of her mortal body.

Boom!

Nevertheless, the effect was outstanding.

Sedi's demonic energy brought death to all things.

Because the Absolute domain with which she was most familiar was death.

If she was able to rise to the rank of Ruler in the future, she would surely gain dominion over death.

Her home world, the Planet of Fighters, was also called the Planet of Death.

A barren, bloody land.

'Kill or be killed.'

There was no other way to live.

On that planet, Sedi fought continuously.

Thousands of people, tens of thousands of people.

She had killed at least that many people, and she felt their death every time.

Then, as she slowly began to feel the grim reaper breath down her neck, she began to understand the concept of death to an extent.

That's why she knew just how dangerous it was to deal with this power in her current state.

Death was not a concept that any mortal could handle.

"...that is a tremendous power."

Ugkas muttered these words in a strained voice.

The demonic energy that Sedi released hadn't just offset his Blade Fist but had also struck Ugkas' hard body.

However, this incredible power, which would turn even stone to dust in only a few moments, had little effect on Ugkas.

“You have a metal body... so you are the worst opponent for me.”

Sedi said these words with a wry smile.

But this was a lie.

She'd put her life on the line with her previous attack. Pouring most of her demonic energy from her body had put it in a worse condition than before.

But in the end, even this all-or-nothing shot had failed.

‘I was planning on taking out one of the Five Dukes with that attack.’

Why hadn't she aimed for Sipakna instead? She felt regret, but there was no guarantee that the results would have been different.

After all, this insidious slug had hidden its true colors even better than Ugkas.

“Looks like you've given up.”

“Not yet.”

“There’s no need to pretend. I can see your condition.”

Ugkas shook his head as he continued.

“I heard that there is a Saint here, one of the Top Three... If you had worked together with him, you might have been more troublesome to deal with.”

“Well. I don’t think there is any human who would have been much help in this situation.”

Ugkas didn’t agree with that.

After all, it wasn’t just the Saint.

Somewhere in this land was the man who was the reason they’d gone there in the first place.

Ugkas’ heart felt a bit cold at that moment.

If that man and Sedi had worked together...

It was at that moment.

Boom!

Something shot downwards like a cannonball. Even Sedi was surprised by the speed and destructive power.

This projectile, which shot downwards like lightning, was aimed at Sipakna.

Realising this, Sipakna lifted its tentacles to form a gigantic meat shield.

Crack!

But it didn't work.

The projectile easily penetrated the wall of tentacles like they were made of old wood and sank deeply into Sipakna's body, pinning it to the ground. And it was only then they were able to see what the projectile was.

It was a single sword.

Rooooar~!

Sipakna roared and struggled fiercely while Sedi was surprised by the sudden situation.

“So this is where you were hiding.”

“...”

Ugkas’ expression hardened.

A man with short gray hair smoothly landed on the ground, his cloak billowing around him.

“I’ve been looking for you bastards for a long time.”

The Strongest, Kran, let out a laugh.

Season 2 Chapter 125

The place that Kran had been sent to was Seoul, the city that had been the capital of South Korea in the past.

But when he landed, at first, he thought that he might have been sent to the wrong place. This was because the place he found himself in could only be described as a barren ruin.

It was widely known that Korea had been relatively unaffected by the Demon invasion, and while this city had suffered from a certain amount of damage, there was still a large number living here.

The most important facilities in the city had managed to survive the attack. This meant that as long as they were able to secure food and water, humans could continue living here.

But this place was different. Contrary to what he'd heard, Kran couldn't find the slightest trace of a person.

Of course, he was easily able to find the reason why. The earth in this place had died.

A lethal amount of demonic energy filled the air, and the ground seemed to have been burned. In this place, an ordinary human with a weak body would definitely die before they could even take five breaths.

Of course, this wasn't an issue for Kran, who was a hybrid.

He looked around.

At first, he thought that his 'target' was nearby like Ringo said. But after searching for a day, he came to the conclusion that that wasn't the case.

He had only managed to find a few Demon Beasts and low-grade Demons in the vicinity of Seoul.

For Kran, weak beings like those couldn't even serve as a warm-up.

As he easily disposed of them as though they were garbage, he couldn't help but frown.

'Did Ringo trick me?'

That couldn't be true.

They'd been acquainted for quite a while now.

Although she was still extremely mysterious and he had no way of knowing what she was thinking, she had never done anything to betray his trust.

In fact, even if she might have tricked him to some extent, he still decided to overlook it.

Because Ringo's support was extremely useful to him. In fact, after obtaining her assistance, the efficiency with which he hunted Demons had increased by at least three times.

With that thought in mind, Kran wandered around the area, trying to figure out why Ringo had chosen to send him to Seoul.

A few days passed like that.

Then, finally, after he rescued a group of people from a desperate situation, a hunter spoke to him.

"It would be best if you stayed away from Busan."

"Why?"

“There are rumours that two extremely powerful Demons are on their way there.”

Rumors were often exaggerated, but this one was the truth. Kran was certain of it.

According to the hunter, two Demons suddenly appeared, sweeping away everything in their path like a natural disaster, and it seemed that they were headed towards Busan.

‘That’s my prey.’

Nevertheless, a question still appeared in his mind.

‘Two?’

Ringo always knew exactly how strong Kran was. So the targets she chose were always based on Kran’s level. This was the case every single time without exception.

Kran didn’t believe that this time was any different.

He had recently defeated one of the Five Dukes. Ringo was also aware of this.

In other words, in the worst case scenario, both of these Demons might have been members of the Five Dukes.

“...”

Kran's expression became a bit harsh at that realisation.

No matter how much stronger he had become, it would certainly be hard to deal with two of the Five Dukes at the same time.

'If there was even one other reliable person...'

As he had that thought, his mind couldn't help but shift to the person he'd met in Africa, but he quickly shook his head.

This wasn't the time for such frivolous thoughts.

He knew just how powerful the Demon Dukes were. But he also knew that they never worked together. There had never before been a report of two Dukes attacking the same place together.

At most, it was usually a Duke and a Marquis.

Or even a group of Marquises.

Even that was enough to be described as a disaster by most humans.

With that observation in mind, Kran made his way towards Busan.

When he got there, traces of his targets could be found everywhere.

He'd heard that Busan was where the largest branch of the Hunter Association in the Korean Peninsula was located. So naturally, there would be a large number of civilians under their protection.

But most of these people had already died.

There were no corpses in sight, but Kran was able to smell the thick stench of blood.

It was a bit annoying, but at least it made it easy for him to track them down. After a while, he was finally able to find them.

The sky.

It would soon be time for the sun to rise, but the sky above Busan was completely black. The wind blowing against his cheeks was slow and viscous as if it was filled with demonic energy.

Kran looked at the being who had caused all of this to happen. This being was looking down at a large skyscraper with the black sky behind him.

'Demon.'

If the Devil from the Bible truly existed, he felt that it would look like this.

Kran, who had killed hundreds of Demons, had this thought for the first time.

He had never felt like this before.

Just looking at this being made his instincts alarm like crazy, and his entire body tingled. A mysterious pressure seemed to cling to his skin, causing him to slow down significantly.

They weren't even meeting face to face. He was simply looking at the other from afar, and yet, he could already foresee his defeat and eventually death.

He hadn't felt this way even when facing Gullard, one of the Five Dukes.

And that was why he was able to realise who this brutal being in the sky was.

'Demon King.'

He saw him standing there with his fists clenched at his sides.

This gave him a very strange feeling. After all, this stance seemed to be very similar to the opening movements of many martial arts that humans studied.

However, the devastation that he witnessed next was completely out of the realm of what could be accomplished by humans.

Boom!

The Demon King punched forward, and vicious demonic energy poured out of his fist before taking on a distinct shape that was reminiscent of the face of a screaming devil.

The devil's face opened its mouth and seemed to want to devour the entire building.

Boom!

But a bluish barrier quickly appeared and blocked the attack.

This scene caused Kran to be even more surprised than when he saw the Demon King.

'An attack like that could be blocked?'

Unfortunately, that miracle only happened once.

The Demon King punched forward once more, and the barrier shattered like a pane of glass.

The devil face pierced into the building, and two beings, who appeared to be the Dukes he was after, followed after it.

[...]

The Demon King looked down at the scene below for a moment before disappearing into the dark clouds.

Kran clicked his tongue.

He wasn't entirely sure about the current situation, but his body was already moving.

Before long, he found himself standing above the large hole the Demon King had created.

He looked down and was immediately greeted by an incredible sight.

The sight of a young girl going toe-to-toe with two of the Five Dukes.

* * *

Kran glanced at Sedi.

She looked terrible. From the outside, one might think that this little girl was being toyed with by the two Dukes.

But her eyes told an entirely different story. The battle lust blazing in her fiery eyes was so potent that even Kran was surprised.

“Who are you?”

“A hunter.”

This was the word that best described Kran’s identity.

Nevertheless, Sedi frowned slightly when she heard it.

“A hunter?”

“Right. Why? Do you find that hard to believe?”

“No. It’s not that.”

After all, there was no way that he would just barge into their fight and throw his sword at Sipakna’s body if he wasn’t a hunter.

It was just that she hadn't known that there was such a strong human hunter.

'Human...'

Was he human?

Sedi narrowed her eyes slightly.

At that moment, she recalled the power Kran had just displayed as his sword pierced through Sipakna's body in an instant.

This was a level of power and control that humans couldn't even wish to have.

On top of that, Sedi had felt faint traces of demonic energy in his attack.

"And who are you?"

It was natural that Kran would have his suspicions.

After all, this frail little girl had been able to fight against two of the Five Dukes on her own.

Was she a hybrid like him? This thought had circled in his mind, but he didn't think that was the case.

After all, she was covered in wounds. If she were a hybrid, it would have been easy to regenerate injuries like those.

"Sedi."

"...Sedi?"

This was the first time he'd heard that name.

It was the same for Lukas. Where had these strangely powerful people been hiding all this time?

At that moment, Ugkas interrupted their conversation.

"The target came to us on his own."

He cracked his neck as he pondered the current situation.

One of the Top Three, Kran, had now joined the battle. This was something that Ugkas had been worried about, and naturally, it wasn't a good sign.

But he didn't think the situation was too bad.

'That black-haired girl is already close to dying.'

She had already exhausted most of her power, so she wouldn't be much of a threat now. If they had both been in peak condition, then he might have had to risk his life for the first time in a few centuries, but he didn't think that he would lose now.

Season 2 Chapter 126

Part of Ugkas' confidence also came from the fact that Sipakna was already beginning to recover.

Glug glug...

Dozens of his tentacles had already regenerated, and the rest were rapidly recovering.

This was natural.

After all, Sipakna's regenerative abilities were by far the best among all the Dukes. Even Ugkas wasn't sure how severe an injury would have to be to kill it.

Kran stared at Ugkas for a moment before speaking in an angry voice.

"If I was your target, then you should have come to me directly instead of your childish rampage."

“In the end, I was still able to kill two birds with one stone. I killed a lot of humans and found you.”

“It seems like that disgusting mindset will never change.”

After saying that, Kran drew his sword and Sedi tightened her grip on her staff.

Seeing this, Kran turned to her and spoke.

“In your current state, you’ll only get in the way. So you should run.”

Naturally, Sedi would never let such words slide.

With a vehement glare, she snapped back at him.

“Don’t be ridiculous. With your skills, it would be impossible to take the two of them on on your own.”

“You’re really good at talking despite being near death.”

This was their first meeting, and yet, even though they’d only met each other a few minutes before, their relationship was already strained.

If her condition had been better, Sedi would have definitely dealt with this arrogant human first.

But after she had this thought, Sedi sighed.

“That hunk of metal is tough. If you don’t use a lot of strength, your sword won’t even be able to scratch him. He has a lot of fighting experience, and he knows how to remain calm. I don’t know what kind of losers you’ve dealt with so far, but you’d better not treat that guy like a normal Demon.”

“...”

This time, Kran listened to her without retorting. Although her words were still rough, he could tell that she was giving him advice about the upcoming fight.

“The slug is an insidious bastard. Keep your eyes peeled because it will constantly target your openings with its tentacles. You should also be mindful of the fluid that they spit out. It’s extremely corrosive. On top of that, the tentacles regenerate extremely quickly.”

Kran seemed to think about something for a moment before finally opening his mouth.

“You still haven’t mentioned the most important thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Your current condition.”

“...”

Sedi frowned. That left a bad taste in her mouth.

“It’s bad, but I’m not yet at a stage where you’d have to worry.”

“I’ll pretend to believe your bluff.”

“Just focus on yourself.”

At that moment, the temporary ceasefire, which hadn’t lasted that long, finally came to an end.

Sipakna had finished regenerating. As soon as Ugkas realised this, he immediately charged forward and Kran and Sedi took up their stances.

Kran at the front and Sedi at the back.

Clang!

“...!”

Ugkas was shocked for a moment.

His charge, which wouldn't stop even after he'd destroyed dozens of giant buildings, had been blocked.

This was the second time he'd felt this way. It felt like he'd been blocked by a wall so strong that the word 'firm' was an understatement.

"...you weren't lying. If I had tried to conserve my strength, I'd have been ripped apart."

Gold light glimmered within Kran's eyes. His skin became black, and fangs protruded from his lips. Horns also began growing from his forehead.

This was Kran's true appearance. That of a hybrid.

The moment he realised Ugkas was about to charge, he completed his transformation.

Concentrating his strength to the tips of his toes, Kran tried to push Ugkas back, but it was by no means easy.

Instead, it was his body that was slowly being pushed backward.

'He can still push me back when I'm in this form?'

Just as Kran clenched his jaws and tensed his muscles...

Squelch-

Dozens of tentacles shot towards him.

But before these tentacles could hit Kran's defenseless body, Sedi stepped in.

Crack crack crack!

The staff in her hand seemed to bend and wave, but it was simply moving so fast that it had created such an illusion. Sedi destroyed the dozens of tentacles launched by the duke as though they were merely stalks of seaweed.

This sight startled Kran for a moment, but he was able to quickly regain his focus and concentrate the strength of his body once more.

"...hup!"

Then, Ugkas' massive body was pushed away. No, to be precise, it was Ugkas himself who had widened the distance.

It was possible that the last charge was simply to gauge Kran's strength.

The first stalemate of the battle had been reached. Looking away from their enemies for a moment, Sedi and Kran exchanged glances.

It was Sedi who laughed first.

“How are you feeling, brat? That little exchange didn’t scare you, did it?”

“Are you speaking from experience?”

Kran retorted coldly before looking away.

At first glance, it seemed that they were just as obnoxious as before, but inwardly.

‘...if it’s this guy’

‘...I guess I can rely on her.’

They were both thinking the same thing at the same time.

* * *

Within the black sky and clouds, where there wasn’t even the slightest hint of light, it felt as though he was wandering in a dark abyss.

Nevertheless, it wasn't difficult for him to find his target.

Not because of the intense demonic energy that billowed from his body.

But because of the devilish energy that he could sense.

Lukas was looking at his back. But he was looking down.

He wasn't sure what he was looking at.

Nevertheless, he suppressed his curiosity and struggled for a bit before finally opening his mouth.

"The Warrior King Fist has changed a lot from what I remember."

After saying those words, Lukas suddenly had the urge to burst into laughter.

In the past, while he was floating in the Abyss with only the darkness to keep him company, he had dreamed of reuniting with his closest friends.

He knew that his chances of meeting them were extremely slim. After all, he'd spent a ridiculously long time there. But there was no one there who could judge him for his delusions.

The possibility was next to impossible. Nevertheless, he continued to fantasise about what he would do if he was able to meet them again.

Truthfully, he could no longer remember the conclusion of those thoughts. It had been far too long ago.

...Nevertheless, there was one thing of which he could be certain.

At the very least, the things he was about to say next would never have been in that conclusion.

“I’m not talking about the power. Instead, it has become a martial art that can no longer be called the Warrior King Fist. Because the basis has been twisted.”

Lukas held back his sigh.

He had already made up his mind, so he wasn’t about to back down now.

The being currently standing in front of him was an enemy.

“In the past, you created the Warrior King Fist to kill Demigods. It was the martial art of the weak, the martial art created to allow humans to fight against absurdly powerful beings... But what about that attack?”

Lukas’ voice slowly became filled with anger.

“An attack that reaches its target even from a vast distance and shows no regard for the hundreds or thousands of innocents that might be caught in its path. Such an attack could only have been created for mass destruction. When did the Warrior King Fist become the art of killing, Kasajin?”

[A long time ago.]

For the first time, the Demon King, Kasajin, responded.

“...hundreds of people died in your attack just now.”

[Right.]

“You must have killed even more humans than that.”

[That’s right.]

He simply nodded his head.

Lukas couldn’t help but sigh.

“So the reason we risked our lives in the past was only worth that much.”

Fwoosh-

Mana began to billow around Lukas' body, and blue light flashed in his eyes.

"There is one last thing I want to ask you."

[Say it.]

"...if I asked you what happened, would you tell me?"

[...]

At those words, Kasajin closed his eyes for a moment.

His expression remained the same, so Lukas had no idea what he was thinking.

Then, he slowly opened his mouth.

[No.]

"..."

Those were the last words.

The Magic Warrior King, Kasajin.

The Great Mage, Lukas.

Two heroes from another world who had stood shoulder to shoulder in the past and fought countless battles together.

So began the fight that only one of them would survive.

Season 2 Chapter 127

It was a terrible defeat.

In fact, it was a miracle that they had even managed to keep their lives.

This fact caused Lukas to bite his lip.

“...dammit.”

What had gone wrong?

The moment he thought this, the reasons began to pour into his head like a stream.

First, he hadn't understood his opponent's powers well enough.

Second, he had been too prideful.

And third, he'd refused to recognise the difference in power between his side and their opponent.

They shouldn't have kept fighting. After the first deadlock, they should have run away without looking back.

But they hadn't.

And there was only one reason for this. Because Lukas didn't make the decision.

The brains of the group should always maintain his cool at all times, but he hadn't.

And because of that, they had suffered a defeat that he would never forget.

'If you think about it, it's natural.'

Humans. No, even bugs and insects have different strengths and weaknesses depending on the individual.

Naturally, this rule also applied to Demigods.

But somehow, Lukas had missed this simple fact.

...Their defeat was all his fault.

“Lukas.”

After hearing the soft voice from behind him, he turned around.

There, he saw a woman illuminated by the moonlight.

“Iris.”

“Kasajin is awake.”

“Really?!”

Lukas hurriedly got to his feet. But Iris shook her head with a solemn expression.

“But the situation isn’t good. To be honest, it’s a miracle that he’s still alive.”

“...can nothing be done even with your and Schweiser’s knowledge?”

“The poison that Demigod used is made up of ingredients that don’t exist in this world.”

That was true. If the poison had been made up of normal ingredients, they wouldn’t have struggled to cure him.

It felt like the Demigod had used liquid death instead of simple poison. No matter how skilled they were, in the face of this poison, it was meaningless. Even a Barrier spell from Lukas, who had reached 9 stars long ago, had only been able to last a few seconds.

...And Kasajin... had been drenched in the poison.

He rushed in front of Lukas and took the attack for him without any hesitation.

Lukas took a deep breath before slowly walking towards the cave.

There, he saw Kasajin lying on a temporary bed made of grass. He was sweating profusely, and panting as though he had trouble breathing.

Iris was right. It was a miracle that he was still alive.

Lukas looked at the bed made of grass. These special detoxification plants that Schweiser had taken from his own storage had already lost their fresh appearance, and looked withered and purple instead.

“I’m not gonna die.”

A tired voice sounded.

It was Kasajin. He had turned his head to look at Lukas.

His voice shook slightly, and his eyes were unfocused.

“Kasajin.”

“This isn’t a bluff. I’m serious. I will choose where I die. This grass sick bed or whatever isn’t worthy enough to become my grave.”

“That’s rude to Schweiser.”

“Kukuku...”

He knew that Kasajin was only pretending to be all right, but he didn’t mention it.

As if to prove my thoughts, Kasajin laughed for only a moment longer before he began to cough heavily.

Wiping the blood on his lips with a handkerchief, Lukas opened his mouth.

“I believe you, so you better not die.”

“That’s natural. Whose body do you think this is? I’m the Punch King, the man who’s gonna beat up all the Demigods.”

He smiled brightly, his white teeth stained with blood.

Lukas looked down at him for a moment before letting out a sigh. Then, a slight smile spread across his lips.

“No matter how I look at it, that title of yours is just too tacky.”

“...then what about Fist King?”

Kasajin shook his head after saying those words.

“That can’t work. I don’t only fight with my fists.”

“Weren’t you just calling yourself the Punch King?”

“That’s why I want to change it.”

After thinking about it for a while, Lukas suddenly opened his mouth.

“How about Warrior King? ...No, Magic Warrior King would be better.”

“What do you mean?”

“Among all the Warriors who can also use mana, you are by far the best.”

Kasajin frowned slightly.

“Hmm. That does sound like a good title.”

“I think it’s way better than Punch King at least.”

“Ah, I guess that’s true. Magic Warrior King... Magic Warrior King Kasajin. It definitely has a nice ring to it.”

Kasajin muttered to himself for a few more moments before closing his eyes. Soon, his breathing slowed down a bit.

It seems he'd fallen asleep again.

Lukas looked down at him before whispering solemnly.

"...this failure was caused by my incompetence. And yet, you still won't blame me."

"Right."

Kasajin responded. However, his eyes were still closed, and his voice was soft, making it seem like he might have just been sleep talking.

Nevertheless, Lukas couldn't help but ask.

"Why?"

"Because I'm worried."

"What?"

“Looking at you makes me worry. No one understands how you feel inside. Everyone just relies on you. Stupid guys like me and the others. Royalty, Nobles, Commoners... everyone is the same.”

“...”

“Even that woman outside, who pretends to not care about anything, is the same... all she can think about is relying on you.”

He was talking about Iris.

Lukas was speechless for a moment. Kasajin’s words were true.

Schweiser, Iris, and even the stoic Lucid were all deeply dependent on Lukas. They always believed that his choices were best.

“But that’s not really our fault either. After all, you’re the one who started this group, who brought us all together. So you have to take responsibility for it. You have to endure. Nevertheless...”

Kasajin’s voice began to fade.

“If you think you can’t handle it anymore, just tell me. I’ll help you.”

Kasajin seemed to truly fall asleep after saying those words.

Looking at his pale face and rapidly rising chest, Lukas felt his throat become tight with emotion.

'You can do it. This is what you were born to do.'

'Lukas, you're an amazing person.'

'If it were for you, I could risk my life.'

The voice of his closest friends rang out in his head at that moment. Filled with infinite amounts of trust, faith, and dependence in the human named 'Lukas Trowman'.

Of course, this didn't mean that he didn't like it.

...However, at the same time, those beliefs felt like unbearable pressure. It felt like something he was unable to carry on his own, like his knees and back would break at any moment.(1)

But he would never show that.

Because he didn't want to betray their faith.

'Right.'

He was just one of many.

Instead of relying on him unilaterally, maybe it would be better for them to support each other.

Season 2 Chapter 128

Kasajin's punch.

He was able to see it coming, but his body was unable to react in time.

Bang!

Lukas' body crashed into the ground, immediately creating a crater similar to one formed when a meteor landed.

Crunch.

Covered in dust, he got back to his feet. For a moment, he couldn't help but feel that it was fortunate no one was there to see him in such a sorry state.

Lukas slowly raised his head and looked towards the sky with a heavy expression.

'This reminds me of the old days.'

It had been so long ago that he could only barely recall those memories. His memories were like an old, worn diary, a wilting rose beside a flowing stream.

He recalled the time when he was still human.

Before he had 'reincarnated' and became 'Frey Blake'.

A time when the weight of the title Great Mage was still heavy and their struggle was at its hardest.

[Nine times out of ten.]

As he said those words in a deep voice, Kasajin slowly descended to the ground.

The sight of the pitch black devilish energy swirling around his body made it impossible to even think that he was human, even if only symbolically.

[If memory serves, that is my win rate in our fights in the past.]

“...”

[As you can see, I'm much stronger than I was back then, Lukas. The 'Magic Warrior King Kasajin' has evolved even further and become the 'Demon King Kasajin'.]

“What are you trying to say?”

[The ‘Great Mage Lukas’ cannot put even a single scratch on my body.]

His cold voice rang out, like a judge declaring a sentence.

[The Lukas that you need to show me now is the Absolute. If you truly intend to fight and even defeat me, then you will have to give your all.]

Lukas hadn’t used any of his Absolute power. Of course, Kasajin already knew the reason for this.

He knew that he was trying to protect this universe. But he didn’t think that was the wisest decision at this moment.

“Lord is dead.”

Lukas finally opened his mouth, speaking slowly.

“I killed him with my own hands. Now, there is only one Demigod left in our world. Hey Kasajin, do you remember what you said that time? About how great it would be if there was even a single good Demigod. We talked about it in the past.”

[...]

“There really was one... 4,000 years later, one appeared. A Demigod who sided with humans and thought the Demigods were wrong.”

[I didn't ask.]

Kasajin spread out his arms.

In the Warrior King Fist, there were dozens of stances that one could take to unleash a host of attacks.

Lukas was confident that he knew most if not all of them, but this was his first time seeing this stance.

His legs were spread apart, and his arms were outstretched, as if he was taunting Lukas to attack him.

The stance appeared so defenseless that it didn't seem like something one would take during a fight.

Kasajin then added in a nonchalant manner.

[I'm not even a little curious.]

Crackle.

Dark energy began to converge on his palms in an ominous manner before slowly taking shape.

It was devilish energy.

This was a type of external force that could only be used by Absolutes who were greatly favored by the Black Horned Demon God.

It was a symbol that proved an Absolute's authority in any universe, time, and space.

Rumble!

Lukas could feel the universe begin to cry out, and naturally, the source of its torment was Kasajin. The space around him began to twist and bend.

Crack crack!

Then, cracks began to form.

The dimension was beginning to collapse as power far beyond what the universe was capable of withstanding was forcefully exerted.

“Kasajin—!”

Just as Lukas roared angrily.

Boom!

Kasajin punched forward, causing an enormous explosion of sound to rip through the area, as though hundreds of lightning bolts had struck the same place at the same time.

The roar rippled out in every direction, so powerful that even the word 'explosion' did not do it any justice.

The devilish energy from Kasajin's hands began to take shape, and soon, it transformed into the face of a screaming ghost.

This was the same technique that had been used to destroy the Korea Branch Headquarters.

Looking at this ghost face that was slowly approaching him, Lukas grit his teeth.

—The external force of an Absolute was like a blade.

A blade that could render any armor useless.

The only thing that could be used against this blade was a blade of similar power.

Paht!

An explosion of blue light erupted from Lukas' body.

The bright light soon covered the sky, and it seemed that it was about to destroy the black clouds. But that wasn't the case. After being pushed back for a moment, the black clouds began to violently clash with the bright blue light.

[Your Absolute Field cannot withstand my devilish energy.]

Crash!

He was right.

The absolute space that Lukas had just created cracked before shattering like a pane of glass.

Boom!

Subsequently, the face of the screaming ghost crashed into Lukas' chest. The force of the blow sent him flying hundreds of meters, and it seemed that if he didn't do anything, he would fly out of the city.

Crack!

In an instant, dozens of walls of ice appeared behind him in a row. Of course, they weren't an attack. Instead, every time his body crashed through an ice wall, he lost a bit of momentum.

Two walls.

He barely managed to stop himself, leaving only two of the dozens of ice walls remaining.

“Gurk...”

Nevertheless, his condition wasn't good. His stomach burned as though he had swallowed molten lava. And above all, his entire body was filled with an intense stabbing pain. It felt like he was being gnawed on by tens of thousands of insects.

[Is this your answer, Lukas?]

The Demon King looked down at Lukas as he muttered these words.

The devilish energy that he'd just unleashed was many times stronger than what he'd used to attack the Korea Headquarters.

It was not something that could be blocked with just the power of the Great Mage.

A moment ago, Lukas had used his external force. And yet, the space around him was still stable.

Kasajin sighed, showing emotion for the first time.

[To bear the burden of this space on your own. I'm sure this method would prevent this dimension from imploding. But I doubt any Absolute would have ever thought of such a thing, regardless of how simple it is.]

Kasajin could tell.

Just what the results of Lukas' method would be.

[After all, it's only a temporary measure. It's like wielding a hiltless sword with your bare hands. And as a result...]

Lukas' skin shook slightly before it began to crack like porcelain.

[Your life force will slowly be depleted.]

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Clang!

He blocked the fist of Ugkas, who was charging forward like a wild beast, with his sword.

There were no weak points on his metal body.

His body was like an absolute barrier with durability similar to that of a reinforced iron wall, but at the same time, it could play the role of a spear that could pierce through any obstacle.

Of course, this was natural.

If his body could be broken or damaged by normal weapons or attacks, he would have been defeated long ago.

‘At least his joints are relatively weak.’

It was difficult to pinpoint those spots during their chaotic melee, but at least this meant that he wasn’t invincible.

Nevertheless, the current situation was not good.

In fact, it would be safe to call it the worst.

Clang!

Ugkas’ fist and Kran’s sword clashed heavily once again. The blade creaked, and sparks flew in every direction.

Crack.

This sword, too, had been unable to survive more than 10 clashes before it broke.

Nevertheless, Kran didn't feel any remorse for the weapons he lost. He simply threw away the broken sword in his hand before taking out another.

'I brought a lot, but I'm starting to run low.'

When he was preparing, he'd thought he'd brought too many, but now, he regretted not packing a few more weapons.

Clang!

Clang

The fight continued.

Kran and Ugkas appeared to be locked in a toe-to-toe battle.

Or, at least, that would have been the case if they were the only ones there.

Guluk guk.

Sipakna.

With an appearance that perfectly suited the title 'Monstrous Duke(1)' constantly launching attacks at Kran with his tentacles and Sedi desperately blocking them.

Kran was so focused that he couldn't afford to look away for even a second.

Nevertheless, he could tell that Sedi was nearing the limits of her stamina. After all, her breathing was so loud and harsh that he could hear it even without consciously trying to.

Suddenly.

"Ah!"

Juk!

Following Sedi's cry, a tentacle grabbed Kran's wrist,

This caused him to freeze for a moment, and naturally, Ugkas would not miss such an opportunity.

His thick fingers were instantly imbued with demonic energy, causing them to become even sharper than famed swords.

Warrior King Fist. Finger Sword.

Shuk.

Blood splattered, and Kran's left arm was cut off in an instant.

The movement was so fast that it was almost impossible to see, but if his wrist hadn't been restrained, he would have been able to avoid it by a narrow margin.

Sedi realised this fact too as her expression hardened considerably.

Suppressing the excruciating pain, Kran turned back to look at her.

"Retreat for now!"

"What? Where?"

"Anywhere!"

After saying that, Kran flew off first, seemingly not caring if she followed him or not. Sedi grit her teeth before destroying the tentacles nearest to her and going after him.

Fortunately, Kran helped to an extent.

“Do you think you can leave—?!”

Ugkas roared before charging after them.

But Kran and Sedi were already aware of his limited mobility. As long as they were mindful of his explosive charges, it wouldn't be difficult for them to outrun Ugkas.

As expected, not long after they devoted themselves to running away, they completely disappeared from Ugkas' sight.

Of course, this was only a temporary retreat.

After all, Kran had absolutely no intention of letting those two Dukes go.

“Hoo...”

After entering a dilapidated building, Kran collapsed against the wall.

He then touched the stump of his severed arm while Sedi looked at him with a complicated expression.

“...you... that arm...”

“It’ll grow back. It’ll only take some time.”

“...”

“You shouldn’t be able to fight them in your current state. So we’ll take a break while my arm regenerates.”

Krrr...

The sound of buildings collapsing could be heard in the distance. It was clear that Ugkas was wantonly destroying the buildings in the area.

“Sorry.”

Sedi clenched her small fists before speaking in a small voice.

“Why are you apologising?”

“You got hurt because of me.”

“I expected something like this to happen.”

Kran simply dismissed her apology before concentrating on regenerating his injury. If it was an ordinary injury, it would have only taken a few minutes to heal, but the surface of the wound was stained with Ugkas' demonic energy. In this state, there was no way for him to forcibly regenerate his arm. Even if it would take much longer, he had to disperse the demonic energy first.

"Ah. Fine."

Sedi pouted slightly before taking a seat of her own.

Kran glanced at her for a moment, but he didn't say anything. He never thought of blaming her. Because he knew just how tired she was.

'This is a difficult situation.'

Nevertheless, it was going according to his expectations.

Kran had used a large number of soul crystals that he'd obtained in Africa to become even stronger than he was before. The true capacity of his demonic energy had increased by at least thirty percent.

Nevertheless, despite his increase in power, he was still only able to fight toe-to-toe with Ugkas.

The Five Dukes turned out to be much stronger than he'd originally thought.

This thought caused him to remember the things that happened in Africa.

'...if it hadn't been for that guy's help, I would have died in my fight with Gullard.'

After thinking this, a question appeared in his mind.

Then why did Ringo send him to fight Gullard on his own?

Up until that point, she had never designated a target who was too much for Kran to handle.

Africa and Korea.

If he hadn't met Lukas and Sedi respectively, then Kran would probably have died without a proper fight.

'Did she know that there would be people to help me?'

...Unfortunately, he would never be able to think of an answer on his own.

Kran decided to put his questions aside for now and instead focused on the current situation.

A battle against two of the Five Dukes.

It was possible that this fight would become more disadvantageous the more time passed.

That was why he'd put all of his energy into the first battle, hoping to end things quickly.

'And yet, Ugkas was able to perfectly block all of my attacks.'

He hadn't expected his body to be so goddamn hard.

Krrr...

Once again, they heard the sound of a building collapsing.

They couldn't stay there for long. So far, the Dukes were still focused on them, but Kran didn't know if they would soon change their minds and slaughter the innocent civilians.

After all, there were still many people in Busan.

"If we go back and fight now, we will have to settle it as soon as possible."

"You're right. But the problem is that we can't do that. We don't have the firepower to break through the tin can's defenses."

Sedi bit her lip after saying those words, the feeling of helplessness making her shudder.

She never would have imagined that there would be a time when she became a burden for a human.

Kran didn't notice Sedi's inner turmoil as he suddenly spoke.

"I have a way."

"..."

Sedi narrowed her eyes.

Why hadn't he used it before?

This thought popped into her mind. Nevertheless, she didn't say what she was thinking.

Kran was a seasoned fighter. His instantaneous judgment and combat sense were all at a high level.

If he hadn't used it yet, then there was certainly a good reason for that.

"It takes about five to ten seconds of concentration before I can use it. It also doesn't have a long range, so I'll have to be close to him."

“Ten seconds...”

Sedi frowned slightly at those words.

...Naturally, this meant that she would need to buy him ten seconds against two of the Five Dukes. Unfortunately, such a task sounded no better than suicide in her current condition.

Regardless of whether Kran was aware of that fact or not, he nodded his head slightly before continuing,

“It would be hard. So I was thinking about using a different strategy.”

“What is it?”

“That...”

Kran then detailed the plan he had just envisioned.

As he continued speaking, Sedi’s expression gradually began to change before finally settling on a strange combination of confusion and disbelief.

“...are you serious?”

“This isn’t the time for jokes.”

Boom!

As if to hasten Sedi's answer, the sound of a building being destroyed came from a short distance away.

In the first place, she didn't really have much of a choice. Ruffling her already disheveled hair, Sedi finally replied.

"Dammit. I guess I don't have a choice. But don't blame me if you die."

"I definitely won't die."

At that moment, Kran looked down at his left hand. The regeneration was complete. Kran smiled for a moment before slightly shaking his arm, which was covered in a sticky liquid.

"Until I've killed every single Demon."

"..."

Sedi frowned slightly before turning her head away.

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Ugkas' rage didn't last very long.

This was because he realised Kran hadn't run away completely but was instead hiding and waiting for another opportunity to strike.

"How interesting."

Did he intend to hunt two of the Five Dukes?

Suddenly, Ugkas' lips twisted into a sneer.

This was because Kran had stepped out of the ruins of a building and was slowly walking towards him at a calm pace.

"What are you up to now?"

He asked this question while tilting his head to the side.

"It would have been better for you to hide and wait for an opportunity. Haven't you already realised that you can't face me head-on?"

"..."

“Or... did you come to buy time for that little girl to run away? That would be an incredibly foolish decision. After all, you are the one we were after from the start...”

“The Five Dukes do talk a lot. Gullard was the same.”

Ugkas’ eyes narrowed slightly at those words.

Kran turned to look at Sipakna, who was slithering behind Ugkas, before saying.

“What’s wrong, Iron Duke? Are you not confident that you can defeat me on your own?”

“That’s such a disappointing attempt at provocation.”

Ugkas shook his head slowly.

It was only then when he had a vague sense of what Kran was thinking.

“You’ll fight on your own, so only one of us should fight you... Is that what you’re trying to say?”

“And if it is?”

“Kukuku.”

Ugkas chuckled.

“Naturally, I don’t think I could lose to you even if I were to fight you on my own. And it would even be a fun battle. However...”

Demonic energy erupted from his metal body as a sharp glint appeared in his eyes.

“My personal feelings will never take precedence over the Demon King’s orders. Sipakna.”

Paht!

As Sipakna slithered forward with its tentacles waving slightly, Ugkas once again took the opening stance of the Warrior King Fist.

Kran looked at these two Dukes in front of him, feeling an intense pressure that was incomparable to what he’d felt before. It felt like his entire body was being weighed down.

‘That brat is stronger than I thought.’

Sedi.

After releasing most of her demonic energy, she had become so weak that even standing was an issue, and yet, she had still been able to assist him.

But Kran realised that if he had been fighting these two Dukes from the start, he would have been overpowered in an instant, even if he used all of his power.

'...subdue.'

In truth, Ugkas had a similar thought at that moment. However, there was a reason why Kran was not easy to deal with.

Kasajin had ordered that Kran was not to be killed. And the King's orders were not something that could be ignored.

This meant that Ugkas had to subdue this hybrid as unscathed as possible.

Juk!

A large number of tentacles shot towards Kran. The momentum of this attack was much stronger than before. Perhaps Sipakna was also annoyed.

Click-

Kran took an item out of his pocket.

This was something that would never be used by Demons, but Ugkas was still able to identify what it was.

A grenade.

Kran pulled the pin of the grenade with his teeth before throwing it at the approaching tentacles.

“Be careful.”

Ugkas reminded Sipakna. After all, there was no way that he would throw a normal grenade at a Duke.

Sipakna must have had a similar thought as it withdrew its tentacles in an instant.

Boom!

But it was only after this when they realised their predictions had been wrong.

The item that Kran had thrown was just an ordinary grenade. It was a modern weapon with considerable lethality and firepower, but it was by no means strong enough to harm a high-ranking Demon.

Naturally, this meant that they didn't even leave so much as a scratch on Sipakna's tentacles.

But that didn't matter as Kran was able to achieve his intentions.

Taht!

He kicked off from the ground and quickly closed the distance between them. Seeing this, Ugkas raised his defenses and prepared to take Kran's attack, but Kran went right past him.

'Is he aiming for Sipakna?'

Was it because he couldn't get through his metal skin?

Ugkas suppressed a condescending chuckle that threatened to escape at this thought.

Because Kran's wishes would still not come through.

Shung.

Kran drew a new weapon. This time, he brought out a Kukri, a short sword with a curved blade.

Slash!

The Kukri seemed to become a blur, and in an instant, dozens of tentacles fell to the ground almost at the same time.

Nevertheless, Kran's momentum didn't decrease in the slightest.

He continued to narrow the distance to Sipakna with explosive speed.

Spurt!

Suddenly, several of the tentacles that were surrounding him spat out their corrosive acid at the same time.

However, Kran still refused to stop. Instead, he simply lifted an arm to block the incoming liquid.

"What?"

Ugkas was shocked by this.

Was he not going to avoid it?

Tsss!

Immediately after coming into contact with the liquid, Kran's left arm began to melt.

* * *

His demonized skin, which was many times stronger than even the best armor, was meaningless in the face of Sipakna's acid.

'Don't tell me he's trying to get himself killed—'

Just as this absurd thought appeared in Ugkas' head...

Swish.

Kran swung the Kukri in his right hand.

And in the next instant, the Kukri cut through its target without any resistance. It was his own left arm.

Shuk.

His left arm was cut off once again. This was a first for Kran, who had been through all kinds of hardships throughout his life. He had never lost arms in such a short period before.

'...and it was my left arm both times.'

Nevertheless, it was just a pointless thought. Especially in such a tense situation.

Shaking off his useless thoughts, Kran suddenly kicked his swiftly melting arm into the air.

The severed left arm soared up into the sky.

Taht.

And it was only then that Sedi, who had been waiting on the rooftop of a nearby building, made her appearance. She shot towards Kran's left arm, which was quickly rising up to meet her, before lifting her staff and swinging it with all her might.

In volleyball terms, it was the perfect set that led to a powerful spike.

Paak!

The target of this severed left arm was none other than the face of a surprised Ugkas.

"K-, kuh!!!"

Ugkas stumbled backwards with a scream, covering his face. It was clear that his face was rapidly melting.

"It worked!"

Sedi couldn't help but cry out in delight.

She couldn't believe that Kran's ridiculous plan had actually worked!

"I told you it was possible."

Kran muttered with a calm voice, but in truth, he had also been unsure of whether his plan would work or not.

He had only remembered hearing before that metals were particularly weak to acid, so he assumed that they could use their opponents' powers against them.

Sedi looked at Kran with an appraising expression.

'This guy is tougher than I thought.'

She truly admired this blunt human.

Regardless of if they could regenerate or not, no one in their right mind would think about putting acid on their hand and cutting it off before throwing it at their enemy.

'This isn't the time to be thinking about this.'

Sedi charged towards Sipakna, shouting.

“I’ll hold this slug back, so go finish that guy off!”

Before she had even begun to shout, Kran had already made his preparations. From his bag, he retrieved a gun.

It was a rusty revolver, and from its design, it appeared to be an old model.

“What the hell is that?”

“My trump card.”

As he answered, Kran loaded the gun with bullets.

Not too quickly or too slowly, just one bullet at a time.

This scene caused Sedi to furrow her brows slightly.

“You... If you mess up this opportunity, we’re both gonna die, you know?”

“I know that already, so just shut up. You’re distracting me.”

“No matter how I look at it, I can’t imagine you piercing that guy’s skin with a gun.”

“You wouldn’t say that if you knew how much effort it took just to make a single bullet.”

Kran would never use this weapon if his opponent wasn’t one of the Five Dukes. It was simply not worth it.

Click.

After filling the chamber with bullets, he muttered.

“Burnout.”

Kooo-

Suddenly, white fog began to flow out of the revolver before taking the blurry shape. After a short moment, dozens of red eyes appeared.

[The... payment...?]

Kran answered in a low voice.

“Blood.”

[Under... stood...]

Crack.

The fog then engulfed Kran’s arm.

“Kuh...”

By the end of the day, he would probably have no arms left.

Kran couldn’t help but have this thought as he glared at Ugkas.