

Great Mage 501

Season 2 Chapter 201

Aram's eyes widened.

This was because he was able to sense the subtle change in the arena's atmosphere.

'...my technique is about to break?'

Crack crack crack!

With a loud noise, the invisible barrier that was covering the entire arena shattered.

Aram couldn't tell what happened.

According to his calculations, the barrier should have persisted for a while longer.

Nevertheless, a glint appeared in Aram's eyes.

Since the omnidirectional annihilation of ki had been broken, it meant that he could use sorcery again.

This was proven by the huge amount of natural ki that came rushing into the arena like a raging river. The arena, which had been like a desert just a moment ago, was slowly being filled once again.

Although the amount of natural ki in the environment was still a bit lacking, Aram knew several techniques that he could make use of.

Paht!

He quickly began to do the required hand seals for the technique.

He had to do something to hinder that monster, Li Hao, even a little.

“...huh?”

But, to his surprise, his technique didn't trigger.

Was it because he was too agitated?

Thinking that this was the case, Aram calmed himself down before doing the hand seals once again.

This time, he made sure to be more precise and certain with his movements.

“...”

Nevertheless, his technique still failed to appear.

A slight look of disbelief spread across Aram’s face.

“Th-, this...”

What the hell was going on?

There was definitely natural ki present in the surroundings.

It was present. But it wasn’t obeying his commands.

This was the first time he’d ever experienced such a phenomenon since he’d started learning sorcery.

“You seem pretty relaxed.”

Suddenly, the voice of the Death God sounded from right beside him.

It was Lee Jong-hak.

He was standing beside Aram, his face covered in blood that didn't appear to be his own.

Only their gazes met, but Aram became so afraid that he accidentally hiccuped.

“A Fighter... cannot afford to lose focus within the arena.”

“U-, uhh...”

The sword in Lee Jong-hak's hand flashed.

And another scream echoed in the arena.

* * *

He could only feel an overwhelming sense of fulfillment at that moment.

His mana, which had been emptied to the last drop, became full in an instant, and even overflowed to the extent that it had to be released through his skin.

Crackle!

The released mana shot into the sky like a beam of light, easily shattering the ki annihilation barrier that had covered the entire arena.

It cracked and fell to the ground like a broken window.

Lukas stood in the middle of the arena, slowly calming his raging mana.

Ssss-

Kangki, who had been quietly watching this scene, finally opened his mouth.

“...refining the heart of an Ancient Dragon. That’s a rumor that most Dragonmen don’t believe. It was only recently that I learned the truth about refiners, but you seem to have believed in it for a while. The fact that you can use an Ancient Dragon’s heart to make an unprecedented elixir.”

“...”

“Tell me. Who did you hear it from?”

“If I were you, I wouldn’t be asking such trivial questions, Kangki.”

“What did you say?”

Lukas' indifferent gaze scanned across Kangki's large body.

His eyes seemed to contain an entirely different glow from before.

"Now I understand, Kangki. That armor of yours."

"Hmph."

Kangki snorted derisively.

"Don't be ridiculous... [The Creed of Kamesh] is one of the greatest feats of engineering in the entire Heavenly Realm. It wasn't just made by the hand of the Hammer of Babylon. It was also made with the help of most of the talents you found in the underground space below. Those are all geniuses that you would be hard-pressed to find equals to even if you were to search the entirety of Combat Island."

"..."

"Do you understand what I'm saying? It was only after countless talented people put their heads together and revised the blueprints hundreds and thousands of times that the Hammer of Babylon finally gave it shape. And even after that, it was modified hundreds and thousands of times before it was finally completed."

A cold glint flickered in his eyes.

"And you're saying that you can see through this armor with just a glance?"

There was nothing wrong with what Kangki said.

It was true that [The Creed of Kamesh] was created after many top-tier talents who all dominated in their respective fields toiled away for several years. And it was true that no matter how much Lukas had changed, he wouldn't be able to see through it with just a single glance.

But that wasn't what Lukas was talking about.

"The Heavenly Realm really is a blessed land."

"What?"

"I've never seen a place this rich with natural ki... and mana, as this place."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"The reason that armor can move so freely is because of the natural ki."

Kangki's expression showed that he didn't understand what Lukas was talking about.

But there was no need for him to understand.

This Creed of Kamesh...

If they had been in Lukas' homeworld, a suit of mechanical armor that large would have needed at least 100,000 ME just to move.

And when considering its other abilities like the breath attack he had launched before or the sudden increase in defense, that number would need to be multiplied several times.

However, The Creed of Kamesh had no power source. In other words, it was like a horseless carriage that was moving on its own.

To put it simply, it would be impossible.

If this weren't the Heavenly Realm.

"Some of the geniuses you trapped must have been Sorcerers. The runes engraved on the scales are techniques carved by them, and they are probably responsible for attracting the natural ki in the surroundings."

"..."

Kangki forced himself to not look down at his body. No runes were visible on his scales.

This was natural.

After all, they had been coated with a special paint so that they couldn't be found easily.

And yet, Lukas was able to recognise them with a single glance.

'Did he see them when my scales got affected by that lava attack?'

Even so, that had been fixed in an instant.

Unlike Kangki, who was growing increasingly anxious, Lukas continued with a flat tone and blank expression.

"You're probably storing the mana you attract within the body. That's why you could still move within the field of the omnidirectional annihilation of ki."

In other words, there was something within that armor that played a role similar to the mana room in a Wizard's body.

Kangki furrowed his eyebrows.

"Fine. I'll admit that you are skilled at analyzing. But so what? Do you think that's the weakness of this armor?"

Weakness.

He would continue trying to find it and he never would.

Because there was no such thing as a weakness in the Creed of Kamesh.

“Didn’t you say that this was the second round? Why are you just running your mouth? Or are you trying to waste my time?”

“I’m not trying to waste your time, Kangki. Instead, the result of this match has already been decided. You lost.”

“Hahaha.”

Kangki couldn’t help but burst into laughter when he heard that ridiculous statement.

“I think I’ve heard enough of your bullshit. Since it seems you don’t want to come to me, I’ll come to you.”

He increased the output of the armor even more than before. Lukas seemed to have grown stronger after consuming the Ancient Dragon Heart elixir, so he couldn’t afford to hide his strength any longer.

But Kangki didn’t move at a speed nearly invisible to the eye as he did before.

Bang!

“...!?”

Far from it. Instead, he couldn't even take a single step before falling heavily to the ground.

“What?!”

Creak! Creak!

He tried his best to move the armor, but it refused to move no matter what he did.

A look of shock pasted itself on Kangki's face.

Has he ever experienced a situation like this before?

“...”

Lukas just quietly watched him struggle.

The greatest proof to distinguish the difference between a 7-star and an 8-star Wizard was the fact that 8-star Wizards could materialise an embodiment of their mana rooms, which were located inside of them, on the outside.

This ability gave them absolute dominion over all the mana in a specific area around their bodies. For this reason, a single 8-star Wizard could theoretically nullify the powers of dozens of 7-star Wizards.

The interesting part was the fact that the Creed of Kamesh actually had an internal structure similar to that of a Wizard. This was something Lukas realised immediately after returning to 8-stars.

And upon finding that, his next decision was easy to make.

He would simply neutralise Kangki's mana, just like he would neutralise a Wizard.

Whoosh-

Suddenly, green energy shot towards Lukas, forming a ball above his palm.

This wasn't the natural ki, nor was it the mana from inside him.

"This is all the mana that was stored in your armor. It's less than I thought."

"Th-, that's impossible..."

"It's possible for a Wizard."

Lukas shook his hand as he spoke in an indifferent tone.

Clatter-

Then, Kangki's body began to tremble on the ground with a terrible rattling noise.

"S-, stop. L-, let go of me. Wh-, what are you, t-, trying to d-, do?"

Kangki's voice came out in parts, almost like a broken radio, but Lukas didn't pay any attention to it.

Crunch!

And soon after, Kangki's body was ripped open.

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"...Kangki, the powerful Major City Lord of Lirua."

Lukas slowly opened his mouth.

"A Fighter who never neglected his training."

“U-, uh... uhh...”

“That was what I heard.”

He looked down with a cold gaze.

Before him was a skinny old man.

With shifty eyes and a frail body that seemed like it could break apart at any moment.

He had few scales left on his body, instead, he was covered in various scars and wrinkles like an old toy that had been eaten by insects.

This disgusting, decrepit old body, was the true appearance of the man named Kangki.

“My, my armor... my armor... How dare you...”

“If I had a mirror, I’d really like to show you your current appearance.”

Kangki, who was struggling and shouting on the ground, suddenly flinched.

“D-, don’t look at me!”

He didn't have many teeth left, so when he shouted, his voice carried a lisp.

Kangki continued to struggle on the ground.

For Lukas, Kangki's appearance was so disgusting that it made him want to vomit.

"You laughed at those Fighters who risked their lives in the arena, but look at you now. Is this the true appearance of the Major City Lord Kangki who is admired by many?"

"Uh, ahhhh."

"What's the point of living such a life?"

"What do you know-?! You know nothing!"

Kangki shook.

"Th-, there are limits to physical training. Th-, those monsters on Dragon God Island..."

"..."

“No Fighter can defeat those monsters living on Dragon God Island! Not even a Grand Champion! That’s why I decided to choose a different path... With my mechanical armor, [The Creed of Kamesh], I was certain that I would be able to reach a level that would allow me to face those monsters...!”

“That is the power of the armor and those who made it. That is not something that you created yourself. It is not your power.”

If this man was a blacksmith, engineer, alchemist, or even a Sorcerer, then Lukas wouldn’t have felt such a deep disgust towards him.

But Kangki was once a Fighter. He was once a Fighter who had fought continuously with the goal of becoming the Grand Champion.

So he knew all about the struggle.

He knew what Fighters valued the most.

And he knew what made them the most pitiful.

He knew it, but he still chose to insult them.

He strayed away from the path he once walked, he trampled upon his own achievements, and he laughed at those who continued to walk on the straight, yet thorny, path.

That was more than enough reason for him to die.

Crunch.

Lukas walked towards Kangki.

Most of the fights in the arena took the form of 'matches'. While it was true that they could easily become life or death battles, it was also true that these matches didn't have to end in death.

But the fight that was currently taking place in the arena was not a simple match.

It would only be decided when one of the two sides died.

"Huff, huff...!"

Kangki knew that too.

He struggled to breathe.

This was because he was no longer connected to the life support device in the armor. Just inhaling was incredibly painful, it felt like shards of glass were sticking into his lungs.

Nevertheless, he had to say something.

If he didn't, he would really die.

"I-, if you kill me here...! Do you know what the aftermath will be...?!"

"..."

Lukas didn't stop walking.

Seeing this, Kangki continued in a more urgent tone.

"All the major cities have noticed and ignored my manipulation! Do you know what that means? It means that they have tacitly acknowledged my actions-! I-, if you were to kill me-!"

Cough, cough!

Following a painful coughing, Kangki spat out a mouthful of blood.

"It would mean going against all the major cities!"

"..."

Lukas finally came to a stop and responded.

“Ishuta lent Li Hao to me. It took a bit of persuasion, but she didn’t seem particularly reluctant to help me kill you. Do you still think the major cities will get revenge for you?”

Despite Lukas’ words, a faint glimmer appeared in Kangki’s eyes.

He had stopped and responded.

At the very least, this meant that the conditions to have a conversation had been met. This didn’t mean his situation had turned around, but at the least, it was several times better than before.

“Ishuta is different! That girl has always been greedy! I’m sure she tried to rip you off in some way while using the pretext of helping you! For the other Major City Lords, the thing that they care about the most is the value of the title ‘Major City Lord’.”

“The value of the title?”

“That’s right! What do you think the response would be if it was found that a Major City Lord was killed by an outsider who appeared out of nowhere? Their prestige would fall to the ground! Not just mine, but the reputation of all seven of the Major City Lords would be dragged through the mud!”

It sounded like sophistry, but...

It made sense to some extent.

In fact, when Lukas had considered the fact that Kangki would become his enemy, that was one of his biggest concerns.

Kangki quickly continued talking.

“Do you understand now? Killing me would do you more harm than good-”

“Kangki.”

Lukas interrupted him in a quiet tone.

“There is something that the Major City Lords care about more than their prestige.”

Although those words made him feel anxious, Kangki couldn't help but ask.

“What is that?”

“Benefits.”

“What?”

“In the first place, the Major City Lords never got along with each other, and you have the worst reputation among them. Unlike the other major cities which grew steadily over time, Lirua grew explosively in only a few decades.”

A nail that stuck out would surely catch many eyes regardless of where it was.

In Kangki’s case, it was even worse.

As he’d said, all the Major City Lords knew that he’d made his city flourish using despicable means.

“I managed to convince five of the Major City Lords. The other two Major City Lords didn’t agree, but they didn’t seem to have any intention of protesting for your sake.”

“Wh-, what are you talking about...? No. H-, how...”

Suddenly, a thought flashed in Kangki’s mind like a bolt of lightning.

Lukas had disappeared from the city for a long time.

At best, finding the underground space, refining the Ancient Dragon Heart elixir, and going to Babylon to get Li Hao, were all things that could be done within a single week.

However, Lukas hadn’t appeared for several weeks.

“I went to visit five of the Major City Lords. And I collected the debt for giving them the Ancient Dragon’s corpse for free.”

“That...!”

Kangki’s eyes became so wide that it seemed they would tear at the sides.

“D-, did you just say that you gave them the Ancient Dragon’s corpse for free?”

“Well, not exactly. I just decided that in order to completely clear away the darkness in Lirua, I would need to form connections with other powerful people.”

And what connection could be thicker and stronger than the connection called ‘debt’.

Lukas had intentionally made them indebted to him. Hundreds of their subordinates were present, so they couldn’t do anything about it even if they knew what he was doing.

Nevertheless, Lukas thought that the Major City Lords would oppose his plan.

At the very least, he thought that there would be one or two who opposed.

However, it seemed that the relationship between Kangki and the other Major City Lords was even worse than he thought.

“Th-, that’s impossible...”

Kangki stared at Lukas in disbelief for a while before scurrying backward.

“Ah, ahh...”

“Did you prepare any more rat holes? I hope not. And if you have no means left, then...”

Fwoosh.

Fire appeared on Lukas’ outstretched palm.

“You and the Lirua Arena will become ashes tonight.”

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“I’ve heard many rumors that the Fighters in Lirua are much weaker than they are thought to be.”

As he said this Lee Jong-hak ran his fingers through his blood-soaked hair.

“But this makes me feel something beyond disappointment.”

He had killed many people here even though they weren't Demons.

...It made him feel dirty.

Not because he committed murder. This was Combat Island, and taking the life of another was considered relatively common here.

It was hard to understand with the common sense of an 'earthling', but the Fighters here wouldn't be upset even if their opponent was to kill them.

Of course, this death was usually a condition that came at the end of a life or death battle.

If it was an enemy they acknowledged, then they would gracefully accept the sword in their heart, and pray that their opponent's path would be paved with blessings.

They didn't want the person who defeated and killed them to remain on an insignificant level.

That way, if that Fighter managed to one day become a powerful person after overcoming countless tribulations, they could be proud of the fact that they were in that Fighter's memories.

The thing Fighters feared the most was being forgotten. And the thing they longed for the most was for their names to remain as legends even thousands of years later.

In a way, it could be said that they were a race who risked their lives for honor, but Lee Jong-hak actually liked their mindset. This was because it was impossible to foster such a mindset without pride.

Over the past two years, Lee Jong-hak had adapted to living on Combat Island to an extent.

That's why he didn't hesitate to take another's life, and that's why he didn't feel bitter after basically committing murder.

But this was different.

The more he swung his sword, the dirtier he felt, and the more a foreign feeling grew in his heart.

This was probably because the people he was fighting and killing now were those who had already lost their pride as Fighters.

"You..."

Samash, the Champion of Lirua, glared at Lee Jong-hak with wide eyes.

"Have you been hiding your strength?"

"What?"

“Otherwise, how can a man like you not be a Champion...!”

Samash shouted in disbelief.

He knew Lee Jong-hak.

He had appeared in the Babylon Arena like a comet and quickly shot up the rankings to take third place.

He was a strong contender who was almost guaranteed to take part in the Championship.

Samash had heard that he was an outsider, but it wasn't that strange for outsiders to participate in the Championship on Combat Island.

“You are weak. Samash.”

“Cut the crap...! Do you not see this weapon? This armor?”

Samash pointed to his equipment and shouted.

“It's not just our equipment! We also receive systematic training that maximises our physical ability...! The efficiency of our training program is different from those losers who only exhaust themselves in useless fights!”

“The important part of training isn’t just the quantifiable data. Your physical ability might have improved, but I cannot sense any tension from you.”

“Tension...?”

“...”

Lee Jong-hak didn’t feel like saying anything more.

Even if he were to explain it, in his current state, Samash would never be able to understand.

He couldn’t stop himself from letting out a soft sigh.

The loss of tension due to the match-fixing and years of indulgence had caused these Fighters, who were once skilled, to become rusty.

Taht.

Tightening his grip on his sword, Lee Jong-hak rushed in.

Samash reacted hastily, but it was too late.

Crack!

“Kuk!”

They only had two exchanges, but Samash felt his sword slip out of his hand following the pain of his wrist breaking.

The lost sword flew high into the sky.

Lee Jong-hak glared at the now defenseless Samash.

“W-, wait!”

Shuk!

His sword rose from beneath Samash’s left armpit until it swept past his ear.

Samash screamed as his blood gushed out.

“Kuack!”

He staggered back a few times, unable to withstand the pain.

However, Lee Jong-hak had no intention of being satisfied after taking one arm.

He fiercely pursued Samash, whose body was full of openings.

Puk.

And pierced his heart with his sword.

“Gurgle!”

Samash coughed up a mouthful of blood and grabbed Lee Jong-hak’s arm with a wronged expression on his face.

“I, I... didn’t do anything wr-...”

But his head lowered before he could finish his sentence.

“...”

Lee Jong-hak withdrew his sword.

Then he shook the blood off of his sword as he let out an uncomfortable sigh.

...As expected.

It didn't feel good at all.

* * *

[You have killed the Tyrant of Lirua, Kangki.]

[The darkness enshrouding the major city, Lirua, has dissipated greatly.]

[Special Achievement!]

[Obtained the title 'Major City Lord Slayer']

[Revealing the title Major City Lord Slayer can lead to the hostility and fear of most Dragonmen. It is advised that the participant doesn't reveal this title until the evil deeds of 'Kangki' have been completely unveiled.]

Lukas ignored the voice as he walked over to Lee Jong-hak.

"Looks like it's all over."

Lee Jong-hak's head was lowered as he polished his sword with smooth, disciplined movements.

"Did you kill all of them?"

"Some of them are still alive."

"...I see."

After looking around the arena for a moment, Lukas turned to Lee Jong-hak again. To be precise, he looked at Lee Jong-hak's arm.

"It seems your right arm was injured badly."

"Ah."

At Lukas' words, Lee Jong-hak looked down at his arm.

The flesh was torn. The wound was much deeper than he thought. So deep in fact, that his bones were visible. Of course, there were many small wounds all over his body, but this one was the most severe.

He must be in terrible pain from having his flesh cut out, but Lee Jong-hak simply nodded with a slight frown on his face.

“I’m fine. Rather than that, Kangki...”

His gaze went behind Lukas. There, a raging fire blazed, and the shape of whatever was being burned was no longer visible.

“He’s been dealt with.”

“I see.”

After being silent for a while, Lee Jong-hak finally opened his mouth again.

“What are you going to do now?”

As he said this, he looked around the Lirua Arena.

“Even if the other Major City Lords successfully suppress any rebellion, the citizens of this land won’t easily accept Kangki’s death.”

That wasn’t all.

It wasn’t just Kangki, but also most of the powerful Fighters who supported the Lirua Arena who had died.

Among them was the Champion, Samash, as well as Usa and Padudu, who ranked second and third.

On Combat Island, where the strength of a city was determined by the number and skills of its Fighters, Lirua had suffered a blow that could not be healed in a short time.

“I will announce the match-fixing and Kangki’s death.”

“Then?”

“Then it will be up to the citizens of Lirua.”

When he heard Lukas’ words, Lee Jong-hak smiled wryly.

“You’re being irresponsible.”

“Because it’s not my responsibility.”

This might have sounded cold at first, but Lukas continued.

“Most of the citizens in this city were not aware of the match-fixing.”

“Huh?”

“I did an investigation before deciding what to do. Although most of them were unaware, at least one in five citizens realised what was happening. And even if they didn’t know exactly what was happening, they should have had some suspicions.”

“...”

“Nevertheless, they didn’t think about investigating it or digging into it. Instead, they pretended that they didn’t notice anything.”

He shook his head.

“I’m not saying that they are wrong for doing that.”

Of course, those who chose to fight back were deserving of praise, but that didn’t mean that they should curse those who chose to bow down in the face of power. Especially because this matter was not directly linked to their survival.

However,

“Nevertheless, they still have to take responsibility. The benefits of being citizens of a major city that they’ve enjoyed so far were all byproducts of lies and deceit.”

Many would probably leave Lirua because they were unable to accept this.

Nevertheless, that was also the fate of this city.

Suddenly, someone staggered to their feet. The momentum of Lee Jong-hak, who had never let down his guard, quickly rose once again, but he soon calmed down.

This was because the person who was slowly stumbling towards them was not an enemy.

“...please wait a moment.”

Lukas turned towards this person.

“Bargan.”

“Yes.”

“Your body has already reached its limit. You need to rest and receive treatment as soon as possible. Otherwise, there will be aftereffects.”

In fact, it was amazing that he was still conscious at that moment. He was probably moving his body through sheer willpower rather than physical strength.

However, Bargan slowly shook his head when he heard Lukas' words.

“Thank you for your concern. However... There is something I would like to tell you before I allow myself to faint.”

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Lukas looked at Bargan for a moment.

“What is it?”

Bargan knelt on both knees and pounded his forehead against the ground.

“...Thank you!”

In that instant, the voice sounded in Lukas’ ears again.

[The loyalty of Wandering Dragonman Warrior, Bargan, has greatly increased because of your overwhelming achievements.]

[Bargan’s loyalty has reached the maximum. His very soul now regards you as his true master.]

[This Dragonman is willing to carry out any order you give him, even if it means risking life and limb.]

[You have perfectly completed the quest related to Bargan.]

[From now on, you can partially view a target's status window regardless of the target's favorability, loyalty, or hostility.]

[Versus Points(VP) have been unlocked!]

[VP can be obtained by accomplishing great achievements, making special discoveries, or completing high-level quests.]

[You have earned 5 VP.]

VP?

Lukas turned back to Bargan.

[Wandering Dragonman Fighter Bargan]

[Level: 60]

[Titles: Headsmasher Bargan, The One Who Does Not Compromise]

[Occupation: Fighter]

[Race: Dragonman]

[Skills: Swordsmanship(Lv.8), Malice(Lv.7), Survival Skills(Lv.7), Untamed Sword(Lv.5)]

[Loyalty: 100(MAX)]

[Difficulty: Clear]

[Feelings towards Participant: Trust more than that of family, Admiration as if seeing a hero of legend, Loyalty to the point of giving up his soul]

The difficulty level had disappeared, and instead, it was replaced by the word 'Clear'.

In addition, his level and skill levels had increased from the last time he'd viewed the window, and his feelings had become more detailed.

Lukas looked down at him and said.

"You can thank me later. For now, I think there is something else that you want to tell me."

“...yes.”

Bargan’s voice was hoarse as he spoke.

“I think it is too early to announce Kangki’s death.”

“Why?”

Even though he was visibly shaking from fatigue, Bargan’s voice remained calm.

“He was skilled at capturing the hearts of the people. That is part of the reason why he frequently appeared in the arena to host exhibition matches or to be the referee.”

Lukas nodded at that.

Kangki didn’t focus on just governing the city or dealing with internal matters like the other Major City Lords.

Instead, he often appeared in the arena during the most crowded events, imprinting his face into the minds of his citizens and giving them the showmanship that they were extremely enthusiastic about.

Thanks to that, the level of anticipation and admiration the citizens had towards Kangki far surpassed that of the Champion, Samash.

“You can make use of the influence Kangki had while he was alive.”

“How?”

“...fortunately, very few people know who Kangki really is.”

As he said this, Bargan turned to look at Kangki.

No, he turned to look at the [Creed of Kamesh].

* * *

An arena located in the major city [Kisura], located in the northern part of Combat Island.

At that moment, this super-sized arena, which was much larger than the one in Lirua which had grown explosively in a short time, was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

This wasn't because it was empty.

Far from it in fact. Every seat in the arena was filled, and there were even some spectators who were standing.

And yet, no one made a single sound.

Even Hankur, the Major City Lord, was the same.

No one could believe the scene that had just unfolded before their eyes.

...Shivar, the proud Champion of Kisura, who was ranked second on the Championship ranking list that had been created after dozens of arena experts debated for weeks,

Had lost... Had died.

It wasn't even a close match.

From the start, he didn't even have a chance.

As soon as the fight began, his head was blown off. Shivar hadn't even realised how he'd died.

What's more, his opponent wasn't even a famous Fighter with a reputation similar to his own. Instead, he was just a raw rookie who had entered the arena only a few weeks before.

Of course, even if he had achieved a monstrous win rate and showed off skills that allowed him to have a match with Shivar...

"I can't believe it even though I saw it with my own eyes."

Hankur muttered softly before letting out a sigh that was a mixture of dejection and excitement.

It was certainly painful that Shikar had died.

But more than that, he was glad that the man who'd defeated him so easily was also a part of the Kisura Arena.

They were on completely different levels.

Just where had such a monster come from?

'...an outsider.'

On Combat Island, there was a strong tendency to look down on outsiders, and Hankur was no different.

But at that moment, Hankur's prejudice against outsiders had completely disappeared.

“Kran', huh...?”

Hankur let out a laugh.

“Grand Champion Kran...”

Hankur was sure that this title would soon spread across the entire island.

* * *

The next day.

There was an incident that completely overturned the major city, Lirua.

Newspapers sold all over the city, including the large Paigwam Square, all had a special article that covered both sides of the first page.

[Upheaval in the Lirua Arena!]

[A massive rearrangement of the ranked Fighters, including the Champion!]

Naturally, when they saw this, the Dragonmen's first reaction was confusion.

"What's going on?"

"Is this some kind of joke?"

Although they said this, their eyes continued to scan the article. However, the more they read, the more confused they became.

To briefly summarise what it said, according to the article, hidden tests had been held over the past month or so, and in the process, the ranking in the arena, including that of the Champion, Samash, had been rearranged.

In addition, it was written that the matches were all fair and were carried out with the consent of both sides.

"What is this bullshit!?"

"Samash, Usa, and Padudu were all changed?"

Naturally, it was hard for people to understand.

They knew how strong the Fighters at the top of the rankings in the arena were. They had the firm belief that even if they were to compete in other arenas, they wouldn't be lacking, but would instead be at an advantage.

This belief in their Fighters was something the citizens in most cities had. Nevertheless, that wasn't the reason for their dissatisfaction.

Their dissatisfaction came from the fact that they were not able to see the tests with their own eyes. Even if there were hundreds of test matches, there was no reason for them to be completely hidden.

But most of all, they would not be convinced by a new Champion without seeing him defeat the current Champion.

That was when they saw the name of the new Champion.

[The New Champion of the Lirua Arena!]

[Dragon Hunter Lukas crushes Samash with overwhelming momentum!]

"Lukas? What Lukas?"

"Are they talking about that coward from before?"

"How could that bastard become the Champion!?"

A Fighter who had never won a match and had even disappeared after setting an unprecedented record of 12 straight losses.

No, it was too embarrassing to call Lukas, that outsider, a Fighter.

Naturally, the people's complaints reached the sky. Most of them spat out curses and some even went so far as to say that they wouldn't go close to the arena until they got their rankers back.

...About a month before the Championship.

The City of Lirua was heating up, and not in a good way.

Season 2 Chapter 205

Kangki's office.

Well, although it was called an office, there weren't any tables or chairs, or even documents or writing utensils. Instead, the only thing that filled this large space was a huge stone throne.

The Sorcerer Aram, one of Kangki's three henchmen, looked towards this large throne with a distraught expression.

“P- please let me take a break, senior.”

In just a few days, Aram’s face had become thin and pale, looking like someone who had one foot in the grave. There were large bags under his once exuberant eyes, and his glossy blue scales were now dry and cracked.

This sight would draw some pity from anyone who saw it, but Kangki...

No, Bargan, who was wearing Kangki’s disguise, responded coldly.

“Don’t make a fuss out of nothing. I think I’ve given you more than enough time to rest.”

“C-, can you call it enough rest when I’m able to sleep about three hours a day?”

“That’s because you enjoyed enough rest in the past. Think of this as payment for your crimes.”

“Uh... uhh...”

Aram’s head dropped slightly, a dissatisfied expression on his face.

Bargan’s eyebrows furrowed for a while, but soon, his face relaxed and he spoke in a calm voice.

“You’re right. You do need to rest more.”

“That’s right.”

“Then I’ll personally tell the Lord for you.”

“...”

Shocked, Aram quickly began to shake his head.

“N-, no! It’s fine!”

“No. Now that I think about it, we have been overworking you quite a bit. Don’t worry. You should know what kind of personality the Lord has.”

Bargan smiled coldly and added.

“Because it’s proven by the fact that your head is still attached.”

Aram’s body shook like a tree in a hurricane. Then, he quickly stood to his feet and said.

“N-, now that I think about it, I haven’t finished organising the proceeds from the arena for this week. And I also have to pay close attention to the match schedule... We need to organise matches that are as interesting as possible. But that will be hard since most of the top-ranked Fighters are gone.”

“...”

“Please pretend I didn’t say anything. I’ll be taking my leave!”

After saying that, Aram practically ran out of the office without waiting for a response.

Click.

It was only after the door closed and he could no longer hear Aram’s footsteps in the hallway that Bargan leaned comfortably against the stone throne.

“Hooo....”

Sitting on this throne and receiving hundreds of reports a day without being able to move...

Was much more mentally exhausting than he thought.

‘No.’

To be precise, it was more that it didn't suit Bargan's personality and ability.

He thought that it would be better for him to run around in the arena all day than to sit in this office.

Nevertheless, he couldn't entrust this role to anyone else.

This was because there was no one else he could trust in the current Lirua.

'...there is only one.'

Lukas.

Bargan was certain that his lord would be able to handle things much more easily and flexibly than he could. But he didn't even think about asking him to do so.

Lukas had said that the citizens of Lirua should take responsibility for their actions.

Bargan couldn't help but agree with that statement. In fact, when he first heard that the citizens of Lirua knew about the match-fixing in the arena but still chose to turn a blind eye to it, he felt betrayed.

Nevertheless, Bargan decided that it would be better to conceal Kangki's misdeeds and death for now.

Kangki's influence and prestige were in no way lesser than that of the other Major City Lords. And for the time being, it was necessary to make use of that prestige to block the 'threat' of other cities.

The major cities were fine.

Lukas had been able to personally negotiate with most of the Major City Lords. They already knew about Kangki's death, and if they had a conscience, then they wouldn't try to swallow Lirua. For now at least.

The real danger came from those cities that were too small to be called major cities but were also too large to really be called medium cities. The lords of these cities were constantly looking for opportunities to expand their territory.

If Lirua's weakness was exposed, then they would immediately set their greedy eyes upon it. In the end, the entirety of Lirua would be devoured like a weakened wildebeest set upon by a pack of hyenas.

That's why he chose to use Kangki's armor in order to keep his death hidden.

This was an idea Bargan came up with, so naturally, Bargan had to take responsibility for it.

This was also why he asked Lukas to spare Aram.

In this situation, what was needed the most wasn't the strength of the Fighter, but business acumen and insight.

Of course, it was pure luck that he'd managed to survive before that since Lee Jong-hak hadn't been merciful with his sword.

To tell the truth, Bargan had yet to forgive Aram for what he'd done.

He'd personally destroyed several groups and individuals who might have had rebellious thoughts against the arena like the Fangs of Kamesh. This meant that his hands were stained with blood and sin.

Nevertheless, his talents were useful in this situation, and Bargan had no choice but to admit it.

It was only a small exaggeration to say that without Aram, Lirua's system as a city would have collapsed by now.

'It's still a bit shaky though.'

Most of the stars who had supported the Lirua Arena were no longer around, and because of this, the profits of the arena fell sharply to less than half of before the incident.

This was a fatal blow that caused one emergency after another.

In order to recover their losses, it was necessary to have someone competent at the helm, and Aram was a perfect fit for this role.

Tuk tuk.

Then he heard a knock on the door.

Bargan could feel a headache slowly brewing. Although he had studied management, negotiation, and politics in his own time, those were not things that could be learned in a short time.

Nevertheless, it couldn't be helped.

Bargan imitated Kangki's voice and spoke in a low tone.

"Come in."

Click.

The door opened and one of Kangki's men entered. He was a low-level minion who hadn't even realised Bargan had become 'Kangki'.

This was proven by the fact that he entered the room with a terrified expression on his face and quickly knelt to the floor.

"I greet the City Lord."

"That's enough. Why are you here?"

Bargan spoke in a cold voice, but this wasn't targeted at the minion. This was simply the tone he found that was most similar to Kangki's regular voice. But because he didn't want to risk exposing himself, he only said a few words at a time.

The minion trembled and said.

"Y-, you have a visitor, my Lord."

"...did you forget that I said that I wouldn't be seeing any guests for the time being?"

This was also one of the special measures taken by Bargan until he had completely become 'Kangki'. He still needed time to understand Kangki's connections more thoroughly.

The minion's expression was wrought with fear.

"O-, of course not. But this is a guest that cannot be refused..."

"A guest that cannot be refused?"

"Yes, sir."

The minion gulped a mouthful of saliva.

“It is a messenger from Dragon God Island.”

Chapter 206

After the series of commotions in Lirua subsided a bit, Lukas found himself standing before a familiar blacksmith.

To be precise, it was a Dragonman with bright blue hair who was said to be one of if not the best blacksmith in the entirety of the Heavenly Realm.

When Lukas first arrived, this female Dragonman, Nekdu, didn't seem to be very busy. In fact, she wasn't even wearing work clothes. Instead, she was dressed neatly as though she had been waiting for Lukas to arrive.

Nekdu looked at Lukas with her aqua blue eyes and said.

“You took longer than I expected.”

“The clean-up was a bit long.”

“Right.”

Nekdu stood up from her seat and continued.

“Let’s go someplace quieter.”

Nodding, Lukas followed her.

They headed to the second floor of the smithy. That was where the rooms the blacksmiths lived in were. Nekdu’s goal was a door at the end of the hallway. (TL: Going to her room already? OwO)

Click.

When she opened the door, a cloud of dust flew out. It seemed that this room had not been used for a long time. The entire room was covered in dust, but Nekdu didn’t seem to care as she stuck her butt on a chair —the original color of which was indiscernible due to the layer of dust— without any signs of discomfort.

“It seems that you really went wild.”

“...”

“I know everything. I heard about it from the craftsmen that you saved from Kangki’s little dungeon.”

It seemed she had her sources of information.

Lukas simply nodded.

“What about Kangki?”

“Dead.”

“...I see.”

There was no change to Nekdu’s expression.

However,

[Unlocked hidden title ‘Major City Lord Slayer’.]

[The Lava Blacksmith, Nekdu, is surprised by the participant’s great achievement.]

[Nekdu’s favourability has increased.]

[Lave Blacksmith Nekdu]

[Level: 64]

[Title: Fire Hammer of Babylon, Blessed by the God of Blacksmiths, Descendant of Iron and Fire]

[Occupation: Blacksmith]

[Race: Dragonman]

[Favourability: 45]

[Difficulty: B]

He saw more information than he had previously.

This allowed him to notice two things.

First was her level. Lukas realised that Nekdu's level was much higher than he'd initially expected. At level 64, she was even higher than Bargan.

Next was favourability.

He figured that this was probably similar to the loyalty stat that Bargan and Ashstar had.

"This means that someone else is using the [Creed of Kamesh] now."

“Right.”

After thinking for a while, Nekdu looked at Lukas before bowing her head.

“First off, I think I should thank you.”

“Were you also trapped here by Kangki?”

“It’s not that. To put it bluntly, he used collateral.”

“Collateral?”

“Right.”

Nekdu nodded.

“Did you learn of my identity from Kangki?”

“He called you the Hammer of Babylon.”

“Right.”

“Then the person in Babylon now is...”

“My disciple.”

Lukas tilted his head slightly at those words.

“I know the Major City Lord of Babylon. She seems to me like a thorough person. At the very least, I don’t believe she wouldn’t be able to tell that a famous craftsman in her city was a fake.”

“The nickname ‘Fire Hammer’ is something that is given to the best blacksmith in Babylon. In my case, I left the city around 100 years ago, so in truth, I can no longer go by the title ‘Fire Hammer of Babylon’.”

Lukas nodded.

So that’s how it was.

“Besides, this generation of Fire Hammer isn’t bad at all. They aren’t much worse than I am.”

Nekdu’s words still implied that she was better. This was probably a remark that came from her pride as a craftsman.

After saying that, however, Nekdu let out a long sigh.

“Anyway, I wandered around for a while in order to polish my skills. My biggest mistake was coming to Lirua about 25 years ago, because I managed to catch the eye of that bastard, Kangki. At that time, Kangki was kidnapping various craftsmen around the world, and among them were several of my acquaintances and disciples. He forced me to help him make a few things by threatening to kill them.”

“Is the Creed of Kamesh one of those things?”

“Right. Compared to the others, that one took a bit of effort.”

“...”

From her tone, it didn't seem that Nekdu considered the Creed of Kamesh to be one of her masterpieces.

Judging from the techniques used in the [Staff of the Distant Night Sky], it seemed that Nekdu was more comfortable making weapons.

Nevertheless, she was so talented that there weren't any problems when she made the armor.

“In any case, I owe you one, so tell me if you ever want me to make something for you in the future. I'll do my best and make three things for you.”

Three items were made by the Hammer of Babylon, Nedku.

It seemed that his gains this time would be much greater than he'd imagined.

"Thank you."

"Don't worry about it. What else did you come to me for?"

Lukas' expression changed slightly and he immediately brought up the main point for his visit.

"Have you ever been to Dragon God Island?"

"...why that?"

"I have a question about the 'Sculpture of the Dragon God' that is placed there."

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

"Sculpting is not my field."

"I thought so. Nevertheless, I couldn't help but feel that a blacksmith like you would know more about it than others."

This was evidenced by the fact that Nekdu knew refiners capable of refining an Ancient Dragon's heart. But most of all, it was proven by her reaction when he first mentioned 'Dragon God Island'.

"That..."

Just as Nekdu stopped hesitating and opened her mouth,

Click!

The door opened and someone entered the room.

It was one of the blacksmiths that Lukas had met before, Rytol.

Nekdu frowned.

"What is it? Can't you see I'm talking right now?"

"...I'm sorry. But this matter is urgent, so there's nothing I could do about it."

As he said that, Rytol turned away from Nekdu, and instead looked at Lukas. Seeing this, Nekdu looked back and forth between Rytol and Lukas for a moment before opening her mouth.

“It seems like you have something to do. Why don’t you go deal with that first? In any case, I need some time to think.”

“Sure.”

Lukas nodded and got to his feet. Then, he followed Rytol to the first floor where he saw an unexpected face.

“Bargan?”

Lukas knew that he had been fairly busy these past few days. He hadn’t even had the chance to meet him properly. Instead, he could only send his subordinates over to give reports on his behalf.

At that moment, Bargan’s expression was much more serious than usual.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, my Lord.”

“It’s no problem. What’s the matter?”

“...an envoy from Dragon God Island came.”

“From Dragon God Island?”

“Yes. They said they would like to meet you, my Lord.”

“Me?”

Lukas narrowed his eyes slightly.

It wasn't very surprising that an envoy had come from Dragon God Island. After all, it was the entity that practically ruled over the Heavenly Realm.

If they had found out about the recent purge of the arena, it wouldn't be strange for them to send someone to find the reason.

However, Lukas had kept a tight leash on all the Fighters who had been involved that night. They feared him greatly, so at least for the time being, he was certain that they would never reveal anything even if their lives were put on the line.

Even though he expected leaks to happen eventually, this was way too fast.

More importantly,

Lukas wasn't convinced that the delegate from Dragon God Island wanted to meet him specifically.

“Are you sure that I am the one they asked to meet?”

He thought that they might have used a simple title.

For example, it was possible that they’d seen through Bargan’s impersonation of Kangki, and had asked him to bring his superior.

But, contrary to his beliefs, Bargan shook his head.

“That’s not it. The envoy clearly stated that they would like to meet ‘Lukas Trowman’.”

Lukas couldn’t help but pause when he heard those words.

“...Trowman? Did they really say that?”

“Yes. Ah. Now that I think about it.”

Bargan tilted his head slightly.

“This is my first time hearing your last name, my Lord.”

“ ... ”

That was to be expected.

After all, ever since he'd come to the Heavenly Realm, Lukas had only introduced himself as 'Lukas'.

Even if you counted the widely used title that was associated with his name, 'Dragon Hunter', or the titles commonly used by the spectators of the Lirua Arena like 'coward' and 'runaway', there was never any mention of a surname.

This fact naturally brought a question to mind.

Who was this envoy from Dragon God Island, and how did they know that his surname was 'Trowman'?

Chapter 207

Bargan glanced behind him. Lukas was following him with a hood tightly wrapped around his face. This was to avoid causing a commotion.

Currently, Lukas' reputation in the city was at its worst.

It had already reached its lowest after he had lost 12 fights consecutively, but now it had somehow dropped even lower.

It was for this reason that Bargan had initially not wanted Lukas to take the position as Champion. Of course, this wasn't because he doubted Lukas' strength or because he didn't think he was fit to be the Champion.

Instead, it was because he felt that the timing was not good.

The citizens of Lirua had never seen Lukas' true power. Far from it in fact. They all thought that Lukas was a fraud, a runaway, and a coward.

The citizens of the city were not bighearted or foolish enough to cheer him on just because he was currently sitting in the Champion seat.

Instead, they regarded him as a target to point their growing dissatisfaction at.

"Dammit. I don't even feel like going to the arena anymore."

"Why is that cowardly son of a bitch still holding on to the Champion title? We want to see his skills."

"Since he got the position through cowardly means, he naturally wants to avoid fighting."

"...we should just move to another city. I heard the Babylon Arena is pretty good."

"I doubt there are any houses left."

The square was the center of the city.

Even if you didn't try to actively listen for it, you could easily hear gossip about Lukas while walking by.

For Dragonmen on Combat Island, moving from one city to another wasn't that big of a deal.

They were the type who thirsted after high quality matches in the arena, and people would always flock to cities with large arenas.

Of course, as a result of this, the population of the major cities was always saturated. So even if they wanted to go, they couldn't just pack their things and leave.

Because of that, very few Dragonmen actually chose to leave Lirua, however...

'This is only temporary.'

If the issues in the arena weren't solved urgently, then within a short period of time, Lirua would become an empty city.

And in Bargan's opinion, the easiest way to solve these issues was for Lukas to go forward and show his abilities. (TL: I'm wondering why he hasn't done it yet... perhaps waiting for a big reveal.)

If he were to show the overwhelming power he'd displayed while overpowering Kangki, the citizens would definitely be left speechless.

Nevertheless, he had no intention of forcing the issue.

Bargan knew his position well.

'It's not just about relying on the Lord.'

He had to take responsibility for his own choices.

With that thought in mind, he continued to walk quietly. After a short while, Lukas spoke to him.

"How's the city operation going?"

"Not bad. Aram is a big help."

"Aram..."

Lukas mumbled his name for a moment before continuing in a soft tone.

"It's natural that he'd be like that."

“Huh?”

“Aram is a fox. It might seem like he’s lowering his head to you now, but he will betray you without hesitation if the chance ever presents itself. You’d better be careful not to get hit in the back of the head.”

“Ah. Yes. I will keep that in mind.”

In truth, when it came to Aram, Bargan’s thoughts were the same. But in the current situation, he had no choice but to use him even with the risk.

Seeing that he understood what he was saying, Lukas didn’t say anything else and instead changed the subject.

“How is your body?”

“I’m a lot better now. I’m not sure if you were aware, but there is a life support apparatus in the armor. It has helped me a lot.”

“I see. That’s good.”

“Thank you for your concern.”

Lukas nodded and continued.

“The [Creed of Kamesh] will become a major weapon for you. As long as you use it well, it will be of great assistance. And...”

Lukas was about to say something more, but he closed his mouth. Realising something, Bargan also turned his head to look to the front once again.

Before they knew it, they had already arrived at their destination.

They were now in front of Kangki’s castle, which was so tall it seemed to pierce the sky.

* * *

“This is the room.”

Kangki stood in front of the room that the envoys were staying in before asking again.

“Are you really fine with doing this alone?”

His expression was filled with worry and the reason was simple.

He couldn't figure out the purpose behind the visit of the envoys from Dragon God Island.

Although it was unlikely and he didn't dare to think about it, there was still a possibility that Lukas was in danger.

Nevertheless, Lukas' expression didn't change at all because of this.

"It's fine. Just wait outside. They said they didn't want a third party joining in."

"...that's true, but..."

After hesitating for a while, Bargan sighed and he had no choice but to say,

"If anything happens, give me a signal. I will join you immediately."

"Right."

Lukas knocked on the door and opened it after hearing an answer from within.

Click.

“ ... ”

The interior of the room was quiet, so it didn't feel like anyone was there.

Nevertheless, in the dim light, the figures of the envoys were barely visible.

Both of them were wearing hoods, so he couldn't see their faces.

Without any hesitation, Lukas took a few steps towards them. Then, after he was about two steps away, he opened his mouth first.

“I am Lukas.”

“Why don't you take your hood off first?”

“ ... ”

He complied.

As the hood lifted and revealed Lukas' face, he felt one of the envoys take a deep breath.

“What kind of business does Dragon God Island have with me?”

“...hoh.”

One of the envoys let out a soft exclamation of admiration. It was the envoy on the left. His voice sounded older than Lukas expected. From his small stature and the curve of his back, it was clear that this was probably a fairly old man.

“You certainly do have some skill since you managed to kill Kangki.”

He knew about him killing Kangki.

It didn't seem like someone had leaked the secret, so Lukas didn't show any external reaction as he replied.

“I showed my face, it would be polite of you to do the same.”

“Huhu! This kid who can't tell the difference between heaven and earth is really talking to us about courtesy?”

“...if you wish...”

When he heard the tone in the man's voice, Lukas' voice became cold.

“I can say something even worse. Would you like to hear it?” (TL:...is this really Lukas?)

“Impudent!”

This time it was the one on the right who spoke.

He also seemed to be an old man, but the vigor behind his voice was formidable. His short shout was like a clap of thunder.

“Do you know who we are to talk to us like that?”

“I don’t know. Did you introduce yourselves to me?”

“What did you say?”

“If this is all you called me for, then I’ll be taking my leave. I’m a very busy person, and I have a lot of work to do.”

“...”

A rough breath was heard.

It seemed that the old man on the right was at the end of his patience.

Just as the momentum in his body was beginning to seep out...

“Priests of East and West, please contain yourselves.”

He was interrupted by a sudden voice which was as refreshing as a stream flowing in a forest.

The moment he heard this voice, Lukas’ eyebrows twitched slightly.

He turned to look at the envoy in the middle.

Chapter 208

(TL: Minor edit of the . The middle speaker was telling the sorcerers to contain themselves, not Lukas. Also, their name has been changed to ‘East and West Priest’ to represent the difference between them and the other sorcerers.)

When the two heard the words of the man in the middle, they quickly restrained their auras and lowered their heads.

“I’m sorry.”

“Please forgive me.”

“The one you should be apologizing to isn’t me, it’s him.”

“...”

These two, who were called priests, mumbled softly at that, clearly not intending to comply. From their attitudes, Lukas could tell that they weren’t completely submissive to the person in the middle.

As they continued to hesitate and procrastinate, the man in the middle spoke coldly.

“Would you like me to tell the Goddess about this?”

“T-, that...!”

“Of course not.”

Startled, the two old priests immediately turned and lowered their heads to Lukas. They even went as far as to take off their hoods, allowing him to see their old, wrinkled faces.

It was only then that Lukas realised they were a man and a woman. The one with the particularly heavy voice was the man, and the other was the old woman.

“Apologize for your rude behaviour.”

“East Priest.”

“...sorry.”

The old man shut his eyes tightly and said what was likely the best apology he could give.

Surprisingly, the old woman bowed her head calmly and spoke clearly.

“Please excuse my rudeness.”

Lukas nodded slightly.

Seeing this, they quickly regained their posture after completing what they were told to do.

“The priests have shown you something embarrassing. Please don’t take it to heart.”

“It’s fine.

“...then, first off.”

The man turned to the two at his sides.

“Priest of East and West, please excuse us for a moment.”

“Huh?”

“That could be dangerous, Young Dragon.”

“This is an order.”

His firm tone showed that there was no room for discussion.

The two old priests looked uncomfortable, but they didn't try to argue. Instead, they turned their eyes to Lukas.

Though they remained silent, their eyes told a thousand words.

If he was to do anything to this person, they would grind his bones to dust.

Lukas ignored them.

“...kuk.”

They grit their teeth for a moment before reluctantly standing bowing to the Young Dragon.

“Please be careful.”

“If he tries to do anything, give us a signal immediately.”

Lukas found this amusing since he’d heard something similar before entering the room.

While he was thinking this, the priests had left the room.

Click.

Now, Lukas and the Young Dragon were the only ones left in the room.

Nevertheless, the atmosphere wasn’t awkward or tense.

Lukas spoke in a calm voice.

“I almost didn’t recognise you.”

“...you know who I am?”

A soft smile appeared on Lukas’ lips.

“Right.”

“...”

The Young Dragon fell silent for a moment.

“A-, ahaha...”

Then they burst into joyful laughter.

The sound of his laughter was pleasant and familiar.

The Young Dragon slowly lowered his hood, revealing features so beautiful it was easy to mistake him for a woman.

The Saint of Salvation.

Arid, who had been called by that title in the past, looked at Lukas with a teary gaze.

“Master.”

“Should I say it’s been a while?”

“Yeah... It has.”

Arid nodded, wiping the moisture that had settled in the corners of his eyes.

His tender and pure demeanor seemed the same, but he also appeared bolder and more mature than before.

Most importantly, the charisma that he’d displayed when dealing with the old priests not so long ago was nothing to scoff at.

“Finally, I finally managed to meet you...”

However, it seemed that charisma had disappeared now that he was alone in front of Lukas.

“I... Master...”

“Say it.”

“Can I hug you?”

“That...”

Unsurprisingly, when Lukas, who was not fond of direct contact, trailed off without finishing his sentence, Arid’s expression became one of disappointment.

It was an expression that would make anyone who saw it feel guilty, causing them to reluctantly go along with whatever request was made.

Although Lukas could resist this, in the end, he chose not to.

“...just a light hug.”

“Yay!”

Arid ran to Lukas with quick steps and stuck to him like a cicada. Lukas patted him on the back a few times with an awkward expression.

“Ah, it’s been so long. Master’s voice...”

“Right.”

“Master’s body temperature, Master’s heartbeat...”

“...”

“Master’s scent...”

“...I think that’s enough.”

Lukas had a feeling that if he let this continue, Arid might say something stranger, so he gently but forcibly removed him.

“Arid, I think that’s enough for the reunion. There are many things I want to ask you.”

“Yes.”

First off... How long have you been in this world?”

“It’s been about 10 years.”

10 years.

In other words.

“You didn’t even clear the first stage of the tutorial.”

“That’s right.”

Arid nodded without any signs of embarrassment.

Instead, Lukas was the one who stared at him with a puzzled expression and asked.

“Did you know that your time of entry would be delayed for every tutorial stage you cleared?”

“Yeah.”

“How?”

“Because I was able to figure out when the other participants would enter.”

Lukas narrowed his eyes slightly.

“That means your ‘Power of Communication’ can also be used in the Heavenly Realm.”

“Yep.”

“Before meeting you, I’ve already met Min Ha-rin and Lee Jong-hak. It should have been quite a while since they entered the Heavenly Realm, but I haven’t been able to find the others yet. Since you can use your Power of Communication, we should be able to find where the others are.”

“That’s right. I know where they are.”

“...”

When he heard Arid’s confirmation, Lukas’ expression became quite bizarre.

“You know where they are but you didn’t search for them?”

Arid’s expression changed slightly when he heard that.

“It’s not something I could decide on my own.”

“What do you mean?”

“...Master, I can’t leave Dragon God Island without permission from the Goddess.”

Goddess.

Once again, this name had appeared in front of him.

Lukas looked at Arid.

The envoys from Dragon God Island had mentioned his surname 'Trowman'.

When he first heard that, his first thought was that it could be Leo, Arid, or Sedi. This was natural, because no one in the Heavenly Realm, apart from those who came from Earth, knew his full name.

And as he expected, the envoy from Dragon God Island turned out to be Arid. But now, the situation seemed to be more complicated than he'd originally thought.

"I came to Lirua today for many reasons, but the most important one was to convey the Goddess' will."

"The Goddess will?"

"Yes. Ahem."

Arid cleared his throat for a moment, and when he opened his mouth again, his attitude was completely different from before.

* * *

“Come to Dragon God Island as soon as possible.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Lukas waited for the rest of the message, but Arid just continued staring at him with a solemn gaze.

In the end, he couldn't help but ask.

“...is that it?”

“Yes.”

Seeing him nod innocently, Lukas couldn't help but feel a bit strange.

What did she mean by 'come to Dragon God Island'? Even if she hadn't told him, that was his goal. Or... was there some kind of hidden meaning behind it?

With that thought in mind, Lukas turned to Arid.

“Arid, do you know what my current goal is?”

“Yes. I heard that you were looking for ‘special statues’.”

Heard.

...From who?

Lukas had this question in mind, but he refrained from asking it for now.

There were already quite a few things that he wanted to ask Arid, and they were likely to increase as their conversation progressed. If he were to cut the flow every time he wanted to sate his curiosity, their conversation would never progress.

“Right. There’s something I want to ask. Is the Dragon God Statue on Dragon God Island one of the ‘special statues’ I’m looking for?”

It was a straightforward question, but Arid’s reaction was unexpected.

His expression was strange, and it neither confirmed nor denied his question.

He licked his lips for a moment before looking Lukas in the eyes and taking a deep breath as if he'd come to a decision about something.

"That... Actually..."

Crackle!

"Ugh!"

A white spark suddenly ran across Arid's chest.

Immediately afterward, his face became pale and he stumbled backward.

Lukas quickly rushed forward and caught Arid, who was about to fall over.

Then he looked at his chest with a slightly strained expression.

"This..."

There was a rune on his chest.

It seemed to have the function of preventing Arid from saying certain things.

It looked like sorcery... but there also seemed to be a different kind of power added to it. Something that Lukas hadn't encountered before.

His face became cold.

"Did the Goddess do this to you?"

"Yes. Ah! B-, but!"

Seeing his expression, Arid hurriedly added.

"This isn't because she doesn't trust me, or she doesn't like me, or she wants to abuse me!"

"Then what is it?"

Arid didn't seem to hold any resentment towards the Goddess who had put this rune on him.

His reaction was something that Lukas couldn't readily understand.

"...I'm sorry, Master. I don't think I can tell you anything about Dragon God Island without permission."

“That’s fine.”

It was a pity that he wouldn’t be able to obtain the information he wanted right away, but that didn’t mean that it was a major obstacle.

Lukas had already made all of his preparations to enter Dragon God Island. Now, all he needed to do was compete in the Championship and win.

This meant that it was only a matter of time before he met the Goddess for himself.

“Rather than that, there is something else that I want to ask you. Are you sure the Goddess is not an enemy?”

“Yes. It’s impossible.”

Arid denied it in a firm voice.

Lukas looked at his expression for a while.

This was because it was also possible that he had been manipulated and brainwashed in order to make such a denial.

If he was being manipulated or forced to say those words then there would be a subtle sense of awkwardness when he said it. And at Lukas' level, it wouldn't be difficult to find that sense of awkwardness.

But he didn't find any such signs.

It seemed that Arid hadn't been brainwashed.

From his tone and expression, Arid's remarks were his own thoughts and feelings. But when he saw this, Lukas realised this situation might be more complicated than he initially thought.

'...she's not an enemy, but she put restrictions on Arid's actions?'

At first glance, this behaviour seemed contradictory, but... it wasn't.

It wasn't Arid that the Goddess didn't trust, it was Lukas. She probably knew how Arid thought of Lukas. If it wasn't for her rune, it was clear that Arid would have already told Lukas everything he'd seen and heard on Dragon God Island.

This was probably the situation that the Goddess wanted to avoid.

After thinking about this, two questions appeared in Lukas' mind.

First, what exactly was the Goddess' goal?

And second, was the Goddess an enemy, or an ally?

“...”

He looked at Arid.

Arid was currently looking at Lukas with a slightly anxious expression.

When he saw that, Lukas realised that there was something else that he should prioritize instead of urging him to answer his question.

“Before that, tell me about you.”

“Huh?”

“You said you arrived in the Heavenly Realm 10 years ago, didn’t you? Many things must have happened in that time, and you must have experienced all kinds of hardships on your own. Tell me about them.”

“...”

“I’d like to hear everything that’s happened till now.”

When he heard those words, Arid began to tremble.

As he stared at Lukas, tears began forming in his eyes once again.

He sniffled and nodded.

“Yes. I...”

Chapter 209

Arid entered the Heavenly Realm 10 years ago. This was because he didn't kill any of the monsters that appeared in the tutorial.

This wasn't because he was weak. The most probable reason was that he was reluctant to actually kill anything with his own hands.

In any case, he said that the place he had appeared in was the very center of Dragon God Island.

“When I opened my eyes, the Goddess was already in front of me. She later told me that she knew I was coming and had waited for me.”

“What type of person is the Goddess?”

“Hmm...”

After thinking for a while, Arid spoke slowly.

“I’m not exactly sure. It’s been 10 years since I met her, but she seems to show me a new side every time I see her. Sometimes she seems to be a young girl in the prime of her life, other times she’s like an old hermit who has seen through the vicissitudes of life, and sometimes she even seems to be a cold empress who wouldn’t shed a single tear even if blood was shed. In fact, sometimes...”

Arid smiled slightly as he thought of something.

“She slightly resembles you, Master.”

“Me?”

“Yes. Maybe the reason why I found it so easy to follow the Goddess at the beginning has something to do with that.”

“...”

Someone who resembled him.

Lukas' expression became strange when he thought about that.

That statement impacted him more than the fact that she sometimes appeared to be a young girl, an elderly hermit, and an empress. He found it hard to believe that there was a person that resembled him.

"She also knew about my power. And she taught me how to use it."

This wasn't that surprising.

Although it was rare, there were still many people in the multiverse who had the same power of communication that Arid had or similar powers.

The Great Medium that Lukas had met in his homeworld was one such person.

If the Goddess from Dragon God Island had a power similar to that of Arid and the Great Medium... and if she had lived as long as it was reported, and had steadily learned how to use her power...

Then it wasn't strange for her to have known Arid would arrive in advance, get a glimpse of Lukas' true identity, or know that he was looking for the 'special statues'.

'I don't know how potent her power is, but I doubt it would be stronger than Arid's.'

The strength of Arid's power of communication was unprecedented.

“After that, I stayed on Dragon God Island, and worked hard to get stronger.”

“For ten years?”

“Yes.”

“...”

Arid had been the first to enter the Heavenly Realm, but he seemed to be less experienced than Min Harin and Lee Jong-hak, who had spent time searching the various islands.

‘Come to think of it...’

He hadn’t taken a look at Arid’s status window yet.

Lukas looked at Arid.

[Arid]

[Level: 49]

[Title: Saint of Salvation, Young Dragon]

[Occupation: Saint]

[Race: Human]

[Skills: Communication(Lv.?), Void Records(Lv.?), Healing(Lv.8), Beginner Sorcery(Lv.MAX), Intermediate Sorcery(Lv.MAX), Advanced Sorcery(Lv.7), Dance of the Young Dragon(Lv.5)]

Arid's level wasn't very high.

That wasn't very surprising. His abilities were special, and they were not things that could be bound by a concept like level.

Naturally, the thing that Lukas paid most attention to was his skills.

The levels of communication and void records were unknown. This was represented by the question mark which sat in the place that the level number was supposed to. Lukas had seen several status windows by this point, but this was his first time seeing this.

Other than that...

"You learned sorcery."

“Yes. How did you know that?”

“I can see your skills.”

“Wow. As expected of Master.”

Arid gently applauded in admiration.

Then, with a shrug, he explained.

“The Goddess said that I have a natural talent for sorcery. That’s why she decided to try teaching me.”

This was obvious. After all, without talent, it would be impossible to master both beginner and intermediate sorcery, and even have a high level in advanced sorcery.

Lukas was fairly interested in sorcery, so he was well aware of how demanding the study was on one’s mind and talent.

His eyes turned to the door.

To be precise, he was focused on the two priests who were waiting outside with Bargan.

“Who are the two people that came with you?”

“They are two of the four priests in charge of protecting Dragon God Island.”

“Priests?”

“Yes. They are the ones who protect the North, South, East, and West respectively, and they check the qualifications of anyone who wants to enter the island.”

“It seems they aren’t the Black and White Sorcerers.”

In all honesty, both of the elderly priests were formidable Sorcerers.

Therefore, Lukas had suspected that they might be the powerful and renowned Black and White Sorcerers of Dragon God Island.

Arid smiled at that.

“The Black and White Sorcerers always stay by the Goddess’ side. As far as I know, it’s been a few decades since they last left the island.”

It seemed that there were no restrictions on him when it came to things like this.

So it was probably things about the Dragon God Statue, the Goddess' true identity, and other similar topics that were blocked.

"They called you Young Dragon."

"Ah."

Arid's expression became a bit strange again.

The title 'Young Dragon' had also been included in his status window.

This meant that Arid wasn't just called Young Dragon by those priests, but that he was acknowledged as the 'Young Dragon' by the entirety of Dragon God Island.

"It's like the Goddess' student."

"Student?"

"Sometimes people call me her successor, but that's technically wrong. The Goddess has been holding her position for more than 1,000 years already."

"..."

“The status is a bit excessive for me, but thanks to that, I have no problems while living on Dragon God Island. It’s a pity that I wasn’t able to meet my seniors though.”

Now that he thought about it, Arid had said that he’d known the locations of Lee Jong-hak and Min Harin.

If that was the case, then maybe...

“Do you know Leo and Sedi’s locations?”

These were the two members of his team that Lukas hadn’t met yet.

Lukas didn’t even know where they were.

So he couldn’t help but feel a hint of expectation when he saw Arid nod his head.

“Yes.”

It was at that moment Lukas became a bit cautious.

“If you can’t tell me about their locations then...”

“No no. Rather, I came to Master to tell you their locations.”

Arid's expression became serious.

"I don't have to tell you senior brother Leo's location. You'll probably get to meet him soon... Senior brother has been in the Heavenly Realm for five years and has changed a lot, but if he meets Master, he'll definitely change back to his past self."

Lukas wanted to ask for more details about Leo, but when he saw that Arid's expression had become more severe, he stopped himself.

Was whatever he was going to say next that serious?

"The problem is the other side."

The other side...

"Sedi?"

"Yes. Miss Sedi is in a very dangerous situation right now."

"Where is she?"

“Death Island.”

“ ... ”

Death Island.

Among the seven islands that formed the Heavenly Realm, it was the one that was regarded as a forbidden land.

It could be called the direct opposite of Dragon God Island which was considered a sanctuary.

Lukas had also learned some information about Death Island.

There were almost no living beings on Death Island.

Nevertheless, there were some with great tenacity who managed to survive in and even adapt to the harsh environment of Death Island. However, because of this, their appearances became somewhat distorted. It was almost to the point of saying that every being on Death Island was a mutant.

Of course, it went without saying that they were several times stronger than those living on other islands.

Lukas' expression became serious.

“Is Death Island a dangerous place for Sedi?”

He knew that even a few Ancient Dragons wouldn't be much trouble for Sedi. Even if a being stronger than an Ancient Dragon was to appear, she would at least be able to hold her own.

That was why, among all the companions he'd brought, the one Lukas was the least worried about was Sedi.

However, Lukas had never visited Death Island.

It was possible that this land, which was shrouded in mystery, was much more dangerous than the rumors or books claimed it was.

“Death Island is a very dangerous place, but it is not enough to be a threat to Miss Sedi.”

“Then what is?”

“An Absolute.”

“...!”

When he heard Arid's following words, Lukas finally realised what kind of danger Sedi was in.

“There is someone like Master on Death Island.”

Chapter 210

Lukas was lost in thought for a while.

He understood that Sedi was in danger, but there was one thing that he didn't quite understand.

There were a total of four Absolutes currently in this world.

Kasajin, Nodiesop, Letip, and of course, Lukas.

Naturally, all of them were beings that ordinary mortals could never hope to compare to.

‘However...’

Like Lukas, all of the Absolutes would have been subjected to several powerful restrictions.

The game pursued fairness, and fights were no exception.

If it wasn't for the restrictions that enforced this fairness, then let alone the Heavenly Realm, this entire planet would have been completely destroyed by now.

A single planet was entirely too small of a battlefield when the combatants were four Absolutes.

On the other hand, Sedi was a fallen Absolute.

It was highly likely that she hadn't been subjected to any restrictions, and if she had, they would certainly be weaker than the ones placed on Lukas.

Could an Absolute with limited power really be a threat to Sedi's life?

'The other Absolutes should have cleared the tutorial as well.'

In other words, their entry times should have been similar to Lukas. With only a few months difference at best.

Was it possible for them to regain even a tenth of their strength in such a short time?

Lukas looked at Arid.

"Do you know which Absolute is there?"

"...I'm sorry. I can't figure out who it is."

Even Arid's power of communication couldn't reveal who it was.

This confirmed that it really was an Absolute.

"Joining Sedi is the top priority."

"I think so too."

He'd heard that Death Island was incredibly large, but if there were two beings with incredible power on it, they would inevitably clash one day. In addition, with Sedi's personality, it was unlikely that she would sit in one spot and wait for Lukas to come to her.

"I came all the way here because I felt that I should tell you this."

"Thank you."

"No, I'm sorry I couldn't be more helpful."

Lukas thought for a moment and said.

"Ha-rin is too far away. Otherwise, she would have been happy to see you."

“...I would have liked to see her as well, but...”

Arid let out a bitter laugh.

“My goal was to meet Master. I wasn’t allowed any more time.”

“...”

If Arid wanted, Lukas could give him his freedom by subduing the Priests of East and West.

But it seemed that Arid didn’t regard Dragon God Island as an enemy.

Ten years was not a short time.

By now, Arid had probably overcome the mental hurdles that he’d had when he last saw him.

‘The Goddess acted as a guide for Arid.’

Although it felt like he’d been deprived of his role as Master, more than that, he felt that it was fortunate.

If Arid had been left to wander alone for 10 years without any guidance, then it was possible that he might have gone down the wrong path.

Arid was pure and blemishless, but the purer something was, the easier it was for it to be dyed by the various colors it encountered.

“Nevertheless, please say hello to senior sister Min for me. She seems to get easily worried about others.”

Lukas nodded at Arid, who was talking to him with a bashful smile on his face.

After that, he continued to have a somewhat frivolous conversation with Arid.

Arid had become quite talkative. Perhaps it was because of the pleasure of meeting Lukas after so long. His mouth constantly moved as he talked about everything that happened to him over the past 10 years, including the trivial things that occurred on Dragon God Island. Sometimes there were some things he couldn't say, but from his words, Lukas was able to learn a lot about Dragon God Island, which had always been a mystery.

‘...Dragon God Island.’

Lukas had a feeling that if he met the Goddess, he would be able to solve many of his remaining questions.

Around the time when the conversation was reaching its end, Arid pulled something out of his pocket.

“You’ll need this.”

It was a square plaque.

It looked like it was made of wood, and on it was an elaborate carving of a Dragon that almost seemed alive.

“What’s this?”

“This is the Dragon Plaque which is required to enter Death Island. And this is a map of the parts of Death Island that have been explored so far.”

This time he took out a piece of rolled parchment.

When he opened it slightly, Lukas saw a fairly detailed map of Death Island.

Not only did it display the general shape and topography of Death Island, but it also showed how to get there.

“What are these green markings on the map?”

“Those are the places where Dragonmen live.”

“Dragonmen? Wasn’t it said that no Dragonmen live on Death Island?”

“There are a few. But compared to the actual size of the Island, it’s basically nothing. The Dragonmen who live there are ferocious and barbaric, and most importantly, they are incredibly powerful. Most Dragonmen don’t consider them to be civilised. To survive in the harsh environment they live in, they had to change both mentally and physically.”

“ ... ”

“It would be best to avoid meeting them unless there is absolutely no choice. Like running out of food or water, or because of a life-threatening injury.”

This meant that every meeting with them was half a gamble.

Lukas nodded.

“There are several ways to enter Death Island, but the fastest and safest way is through a small island called Temple Island. Going through the sea instead of that island would be much more dangerous.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Yeah. And finally, you will need special equipment to block the demonic energy on Death Island.”

...As expected, there was a reason why it was called Death Island.

There were a lot more things that he needed to prepare than he thought.

“Originally, I was going to introduce you to a blacksmith from Death Island, but there is no need for that now.”

When Lukas tilted his head to the side, Arid explained.

“I heard that Miss Nekdu is in Lirua right now.”

“Ah.”

“With her skills, it won’t be difficult to make you a good set of equipment.”

“Do you know Nekdu?”

Arid nodded.

“Yes. Miss Nekdu is from Dragon God Island.”

