

## Great Mage 511

### Chapter V2C211

"I should probably get going now."

Arid said these words with a sad expression on his face. Seeing this, Lukas decided to ease his disciple's worries a bit.

"I will come see you as soon as possible."

Like a light being turned on in a dark room, Arid's expression became bright in an instant.

"Is that a promise?"

"Yes."

He slightly restrained Arid, who was coming in for another hug, patted him on the shoulder, and hurriedly left the room.

Lukas then witnessed the situation he had expected.

The East and West Priests and Bargan were glaring at each other.

When the door opened, they all turned their heads at the same time.

"My Lord."

"Young Dragon!"

As Lukas and Arid approached them, they greeted them with similar expressions.

"Young Dragon, did this guy do anything rude to you?"

"I told you that it would be fine."

Unlike before, Arid answered in a sharp voice.

But the East Priest's words touched Bargan's reverse scale.

"...this guy?"

He glared at the East Priest with a fierce expression.

"East Priest, please watch your words. That is not a person you can treat lightly."

The East Priest chuckled.

"Then what kind of person is he?"

"He is my Lord."

"But that doesn't make him my Lord. At best, he is just a Fighter, and even if he does well in the arena, he would just be a Champion."

“...”

For a moment, Bargan couldn't think of anything to refute the East Priest's words.

“You are the same, Fighter Bargan. You are receiving the treatment of a Major City Lord now because you are impersonating Kangki, but do not think that such treatment will last forever.”

“...East Priest.”

This time, it was a cold voice that called out to him.

It was Arid.

His face was twisted in an expression of anger that Lukas had never seen before.

“I have advised you over and over to not be rude.”

“Young Dragon, I-”

“Ah, it seems that the East Priest doesn't acknowledge me as the Young Dragon.”

“How could that be possible? The Young Dragon knows how loyal I am, don't you?”

“Even though I said something many times, you refused to heed my words. Is that how the East Priest shows me his loyalty?”

“Th-, that's not...”

The East Priest was so nervous that his wrinkled face became pale.

Bargan looked at Arid in surprise.

He didn't know what kind of conversation they'd had inside, but the Young Dragon seemed to be more polite than the two old priests.

“Fighter Bargan, will you please excuse the rudeness of the priests?”

“N-, no. It's fine.”

Bargan quickly bowed his head as he stuttered a response. Seeing this, Arid smiled gently before turning back to Lukas.

“Then I look forward to seeing you again.”

“I hope you have a safe and smooth trip back.”

Lukas used a different tone when seeing Arid off.

It was fine when it was just the two of them, but it wouldn't be good to speak informally to Arid in front of members of Dragon God Island.

Because they had spoken a lot beforehand, Arid bowed his head and left Lirua with light steps.

Bargan glanced at Lukas and said.

“By chance, did the Young Dragon express any concerns about the current situation in Lirua?”

The thing Bargan mentioned now was probably the thing he was most worried about.

Major City Lord was a position that was originally meant to be obtained through bloody efforts and after fulfilling several tricky conditions.

One needed to obtain the position of Champion and maintain it for a year in at least five cities, and, most importantly, they had to have reached the semifinals in the Championship.

But what about Bargan?

He had failed to become the Champion in even a single arena.

It was for that reason that Bargan had tried to hide his identity with the [Creed of Kamesh], but the Young Dragon had been able to see through him from the very start.

Lukas shook his head at Bargan’s worries.

“No.”

“If not, maybe he proposed some kind of condition to you in order to keep it a secret...”

“There’s no need to worry, Bargan. The Young Dragon is on our side.”

“...”

Although his anxiety didn’t disappear completely, Bargan nodded because his trust and confidence in Lukas far exceeded his fear.

After thinking for a while, Lukas opened his mouth again.

“There is only a bit over a month left before the Championship begins.”

“That’s right. It’s just around the corner.”

“...there’s some place I need to go first.”

“Huh? Where...?”

“Death Island.”

“...!”

Bargan was shocked.

“Th-, that...”

“It’s a very dangerous place. I know, but I’ll be fine. I plan to head there in order to prepare thoroughly.”

Lukas continued in a low voice.

“Bargan, before I leave, there’s something I need to tell you.”

\* \* \*

The next day.

As the day dawned and he prepared to visit Nekdu, Lukas welcomed an unexpected visitor.

“Long time no see, Master.” (TL: Imagine if this was a cliffhanger...)

It was none other than Min Ha-rin. The young woman tried hard to not display her joy on her face.

“It has been a long time.”

“Yes. You... Are you feeling better now?”

Lukas tilted his head at Min Ha-rin’s concern.

“Mm? Who told you I was hurt?”

“N-, no. It’s not that. I just kept hearing a lot about Master in Lirua, and I thought that you went through a lot of hardships here.”

Before coming here, Min Ha-rin had wandered the streets of Lirua for a while.

She heard the citizens of Lirua swearing at Lukas.

Calling him a coward, a fraud, and a runaway.

Just thinking about it made her puff up in rage.

Min Ha-rin really wanted to throw a couple wide range spells in their faces, but she forcibly endured it with superhuman will.

“I’m fine. Everything is alright.”

“I, I’m glad. And...”

Min Ha-rin bowed her head and apologised.

“I’m sorry.”

“What for?”

“I was the one who recommended Lirua. I think that made things more complicated...”

She wasn’t wrong.

Had he headed to another city, Lukas could have won the title of Champion easily.

But Lukas shook his head.

“You only made the suggestion, but the choice was mine. Moreover, it is thanks to Lirua that I was able to reach 8 stars faster than expected. So in the end, everything worked out.”

“You reached 8 stars?”

“Right. It’s a bit of a long story, so I think I’ll put it off until next time... By the way, you’re the Champion. Is it okay for you to wander around like this?”

Min Ha-rin smiled awkwardly.

“I’ve been having a lot of matches lately so I’ll have to go back tonight. The Championship is just around the corner, so the arena is at its fiercest.”

Considering the time it took to travel there and back, it was clear that Min Ha-rin had only just managed to squeeze a bit of time to come.

Lukas nodded.

“That’s why you came so early in the morning.”

“Yes.”

“I don’t think you came here just to see me. Did something happen?”

“Actually that was my first reason. Fortunately, it seems that you’re okay, so I’ll tell you the rest right away.”

Min Ha-rin paused for a moment, her expression changing.

“Do you read the news, Master?”

“I paid attention to it in the past, but I haven’t in the past few days.”

It was necessary to collect information in order to bring down Kangki. So he’d taken the time to read the various newspapers in the city every day.

Thanks to this, he was able to obtain knowledge that he couldn’t get just by reading books.

“Then you probably didn’t see these articles.”

After saying that, she reached into her pocket and pulled out two pieces of paper. She held the first one out to Lukas.

There was no need to unfold it.

The article was so large that it filled the entire page.

The words written in those large letters were as follows:

[The Kisura Arena completely dominated!]

[The Greatest Upset! Super strong Champion Shivar killed!]

[What is the true identity of this super rookie who shot up like a comet, ‘Kran’...?]

“...”

Lukas was silent for a moment before finally speaking.

“Kran.”

“Yeah.”

Min Ha-rin nodded.

“Over the past few days, his name has spread across the entirety of Combat Island. I heard that he displayed an amazing performance. So it’s natural that they’d be enthusiastic. The Fighter he faced was no joke. In fact, he was one of the strongest contenders for this Championship.”

Champion Shivar.

He’d seen that name before.

It had been on the ranking list of Champions that had been made by dozens of experts.

“If it’s Kran, that wouldn’t be too difficult.”

A man who stood at the very edge of mortality.

It was for that reason that Lukas had wanted him to be his ally in the Great Game.

The fact that Kran had appeared in the Heavenly Realm...

‘Kasajin...’

Was he also somewhere in the Heavenly Realm?

Was the identity of the Absolute on Death Island none other than Kasajin?

Deciding to not express his doubts and worries for now, Lukas opened his mouth.

“There is another article. Is that one also about Kran?”

“No, but...”

Min Ha-rin’s expression became very serious at that moment.”

“It might be something even more serious than that.”

Then she showed him the second article.

And Lukas’ eyes went wide when he saw it.

## **Chapter V2C212**

The article was much longer than Lukas expected.

He wasn’t able to immediately understand why Min Ha-rin wanted him to see this article, unlike the other article about Kran from which he grasped her intentions just from the headline.

It seemed that she wanted him to read the entire article.

Considering Min Ha-rin’s meticulous personality, she must have gone over the contents several times and cut off the unimportant part, but it was still quite long.

Fortunately, Lukas could read through it quickly.

As he read the article, he categorised the important components and keywords that he found and separated them in his head.

After reading for a while, he realised something.

This wasn't a single article. Instead, it was a compilation of at least a dozen or more articles that had been cut and pasted onto a new piece of paper. They were probably articles Min Ha-rin had collected. (TL: It took him that long to realise that?)

All the articles spoke about a murderer.

The murderer seemed to have first appeared on 'Desire Island' about three to four years ago.

So far, about 131 people have been killed by them. Or at least, that was how many had been found.

Nevertheless, their notoriety had spread even to Combat Island, which was almost on the other side of the Heavenly Realm.

This was because most of the people he killed were bigshots who dominated the island.

Lukas knew about Desire Island.

It could be said that the entire island was like a giant red-light district.

It was a place where rights claims, confrontations, and territorial disputes were more severe than anywhere else, and where murder, drug abuse, and human trafficking were common occurrences.

It was a thorn in the eyes of Dragon God Island, but they couldn't do anything about it openly.

The rulers of Desire Island were crafty. They learned their lesson from the 'Island of Adventure' of the past and made sure not to go past the Goddess' bottom line.

They carried out their debauchery in the shadows without directly violating the rules set by the Goddess.

The ones the murderer had killed one after the other were all leaders of the underworld.

Perhaps because he had been active for quite some time, there was a lot more information about the murderer than would be expected.

[Meticulous and ruthless skills.]

[Presumed to be an outsider.]

[According to eyewitness testimony, he is a young man with features so beautiful he could be mistaken for a woman.]

[It is assumed that he doesn't use weapons.]

"..."

Min Ha-rin slowly opened her mouth.

“I was focusing on any news about outsiders in the Heavenly Realm. Before we came, outsiders were pretty rare in the Heavenly Realm.”

“That’s an efficient approach.”

Since all the participants were outsiders, the scope of Min Ha-rin’s information collection method could be narrowed significantly.

In addition, it was worthwhile since she would be able to passively gain information about Lukas and the other members of their team as well as the other Absolutes and their teams.

“It’s said that the murderer is so famous that there is no one in and around Desire Island who doesn’t know of him. The communication media in this world isn’t very developed, so I was only able to gain this information recently.”

Lukas was silent for a moment before speaking.

“Is it Leo?”

“I think the odds of that are very high.”

The time of his first appearance and the fact that he was an outsider, coupled with the fact that he didn’t use any weapons and had a dazzling appearance all hinted to this fact.

As Lukas expected, Leo had entered this world about four to five years ago.

In that amount of time, it was enough for a young boy to become a young man.

Nevertheless, he couldn’t understand why he was committing murder.

“I heard that all the leaders of the underworld in Desire Island are... trash.”

In truth, ‘trash’ was a vulgar word that she wouldn’t normally say in front of her Master, but Min Ha-rin couldn’t find a more suitable word.

“But the Leo I know wouldn’t kill hundreds of people.”

“Right. Because Leo’s hatred was always directed at the Demons.”

“...should I go search for junior brother as soon as possible?”

Min Ha-rin asked this question in a serious voice.

If Lukas was to nod his head at that moment, it seemed that she would give up her Champion position and immediately leave for Desire Island.

But Lukas shook his head.

“No. You don’t have to.”

“May I ask why?”

“I met Arid yesterday.”

“...huh?”



Min Ha-rin blinked.

“Arid?”

“Right.”

Lukas then briefly told her about his meeting with Arid the day before, before adding.

“It’s a pity. If you had come a day sooner, you would have been able to meet him.”

“Ah... it’s fine. At least I know he’s okay.”

Min Ha-rin let out a sigh of relief. Although it was a bit disappointing that she hadn’t been able to meet Arid, she was more pleased to know that he was safe.

Lukas continued.

“And I also met Lee Jong-hak.”

“...ah.”

This time, her expression had none of the enthusiasm of before.

Realising this, Min Ha-rin quickly changed her expression and looked up at Lukas.

“I see.”

Lukas couldn’t help but smile slightly.

It seemed that although she had matured a bit, she was still immature on the inside.

“Is something wrong?”

Knowing that lying wouldn’t work in front of her wise teacher, Min Ha-rin reluctantly spoke the truth.

“To be honest, I don’t like him.”

“Why?”

“Because he insulted Master. And he doesn’t know anything.”

“That’s exactly why he said that. He said it because he didn’t know anything. Of course, that doesn’t mean one should say whatever they feel like without thinking, but you shouldn’t feel too prejudiced towards Lee Jong-hak. He will take responsibility for his own actions. And more than that, he is a man with impeccable character. He is a necessary talent for us.”

“Yes.”

Although she didn’t completely agree with him, Min Ha-rin hid her dissatisfaction and nodded at her Master’s words.

“Back to what we were talking about before, Arid told me that Leo has changed a lot, but he also said that he would be able to go back to his former self.”

“...if it’s Arid.”

Min Ha-rin also knew about Arid's abilities, so she nodded.

"It's the other side that's more serious."

Lukas then told her about the situation on Sedi's side.

This time, Min Ha-rin's eyes widened when she heard his words.

"Sedi is on Death Island?"

"Right. There is also an Absolute there."

"She's in a very dangerous situation."

Min Ha-rin narrowed her eyes.

She knew Sedi's strength, but her opponent wouldn't be a slouch either.

"We'll have to go save her first."

"I plan to head to Death Island after my preparations are complete."

"Alone?"

"Right."

Min Ha-rin's eyes lit up.

"I can..."

"No."

Lukas interrupted Min Ha-rin, something that rarely happened.

"I will go alone."

His expression was serious, and it was clear that he would not allow any counter arguments.

This was her first time seeing her teacher so determined, so Min Ha-rin couldn't help but flinch subconsciously.

"...are you afraid that I'll be a burden?"

"It's not that. First of all, I only have one Dragon Plaque which was given to me by Arid."

Lukas took out the plaque and showed it to her before putting it back in his pocket and continuing.

"And it would be better for you to participate in the Championship than follow me to Death Island."

He shook his head.

"Let's talk about that later. For now, follow me. There's a place I'd like to show you."

**Chapter V2C213**

The place Lukas headed was the smithy that Nekdu used. And as he'd said before, he took Min Ha-rin with him.

In truth, he would have had to meet her before he left for Death Island anyway, so he decided to save her some trouble.

Nekdu wasn't in the workshop, so Lukas went directly to the room she'd taken him to the day before yesterday. (TL: The day before the day before.)

Knock knock.

"...come in."

A slightly strained voice was heard from inside the room.

When Lukas opened the door, he found Nekdu half-buried in the dusty sofa.

Min Ha-rin asked in a small voice.

"Who is this woman?"

"The best blacksmith I know."

At the same time that Lukas was giving her this answer, Nekdu slowly rose up while rubbing her eyes.

"Is it dawn already...?"

"It's already midday. Have you had enough time to think?"

"...yeah."

Nekdu rubbed the back of her neck and sat in a better position on the couch. Then, after washing her face with a bottle of water that was laying on the desk beside her, she looked at Lukas with bloodshot eyes.

"I think I know about the statue you're looking for."

"..."

"But I don't think I can tell you about it."

"Is it because you're also from Dragon God Island?"

Nekdu couldn't help but let out a short laugh.

"I'm surprised. Who told you that?"

"Yesterday I met with envoys from Dragon God Island."

"That's not something that simple errand boys would know."

"The Young Dragon was among them."

"Is it the Young Dragon of this generation? We don't know each other, but I guess they must be interested in stories of the past."

Or someone with way too much free time.

Instead of adding that last piece, Nekdu spoke with an attitude as if she had nothing to hide.

“That’s right. I was born and raised on Dragon God Island. There was a time when I even made some sculptures there too.”

“I see.”

Lukas nodded.

“Then I won’t ask you anything more about the statue.”

“Mm?”

Seeing him back down so easily, Nekdu narrowed her eyes slightly.

“Is there something else you’d like to ask then?”

“You said before that you would make three items for me.”

“I did. Have you already thought of one?”

As long as it was making equipment, then she had nothing to be afraid of.

With a much more relaxed attitude, Nekdu said.

“What do you want me to make?”

“I’ll be heading to Death Island soon.”

“That place? That’s crazy. Haha, but I got it. You want me to make you some equipment that would block the death energy, right?”

Lukas nodded.

“That’s easy. Anything else.”

“Make armor and weapons out of the Ancient Dragon’s skull.”

This time, Nekdu tilted her head to the side.

“I made a weapon for you not so long ago. As for armor, you are a Sorcerer, I can’t make light armor with those bones.”

“It’s not for me.”

Lukas put his hand on the shoulder of Min Ha-rin, who was standing behind him and gently pushed her forward.

“It’s for this child.”

“...huh?”

Shocked, Min Ha-rin couldn’t help but ask dumbly.

In the meantime, Nekdu looked at Min Ha-rin with a sharp gaze. Under her skilled eyes, the fact that Min Ha-rin was a fighter couldn't be concealed.

"It wouldn't be difficult, but it would take some time. The bones of an Ancient Dragon aren't things that can be manipulated after tapping them for a day or two."

"As long as it's finished before the Championship begins. Can you do it?"

"...that means I have little more than a month left. If it's that long, I think I can make it work somehow."

While the two of them chatted as though she wasn't in the room, Min Ha-rin was unable to stand it anymore. She turned to Lukas and opened her mouth.

"Wa-, wait a minute, Master. I don't really need armor or..."

"Before I killed Kangki, I went to all the other major cities."

"Huh?"

"And when I was there, I saw the Champions who dominated their arenas."

Lukas looked down at Min Ha-rin and continued.

"They are all difficult enemies for you to defeat at your current level. There is still a month left and you seem to be making steady progress with your training, but that alone isn't enough."

"...so you want me to make up for it with good equipment?"

Min Ha-rin tried not to show it, but Lukas was easily able to spot her dissatisfaction.

"What is it? Do you not want to depend on equipment?"

"That..."

"I know what you're thinking. In the long run, it's not good to depend on equipment. But you're thinking too rigidly. You need to be able to bend flexibly depending on the situation." (TL:...says Lukas)

"...I'm sorry. But I don't think I can understand Master's meaning. Can I ask why?"

Min Ha-rin's attitude was humble and respectful.

It was good that she knew where she was lacking and sought guidance.

Lukas smiled softly.

"You'll be fighting in more than one match. And in the Championship, there will be many Fighters who are either on your level or stronger than you. Battles like those which will force you to risk your life are both great perils and rare opportunities. If you are lucky, you will be able to gain experience comparable to several years of training."

"Ah...!"

Min Ha-rin finally understood what Lukas was trying to say.

He was saying that the Championship could become a great opportunity for her to experience explosive growth.

“That’s why I’m telling you to use whatever means you can to hold out for as long as possible and gain as much experience as possible.”

Min Ha-rin realised that Lukas was about to reveal the second reason he’d mentioned before.

Nodding, Lukas continued.

“Because after this qualifier is over, I believe there is a high chance that we will have to return to your homeworld.”

When she heard that, Min Ha-rin couldn’t help but turn to look at Nekdu.

After all, she wasn’t sure if they could say such things in front of this unrelated woman.

Of course, Lukas wasn’t the type of person to act without thinking.

He spoke so easily and openly because he had long understood Nekdu’s nature.

Even now, her expression remained one of indifference as if she didn’t care what they were talking about.

In fact, she was probably thinking about what kind of equipment she should make with the Ancient Dragon’s bones.

“And it won’t just be like this small qualifier, instead, the Great Game will begin in earnest. At that time, you will need to be much stronger than you are now.”

Min Ha-rin initially nodded at Lukas’ words, but then he said something that was much more shocking.

“To put it simply, you will have to at least be strong enough to deal with the Five Dukes.”

“...th-, the Five Dukes?”

The Five Dukes. Not a Count, not a Marquis, or even a normal Duke.

Min Ha-rin began to sweat slightly but Lukas didn’t stop his bold words.

“If we were to use the unit called ‘level’ that is used in the status window, it would probably be around 200. Of course, level is just an objective indicator, you should not trust it blindly. Even if your opponent is lower level than you, that doesn’t mean you are guaranteed to win.”

However, Min Ha-rin was still focused on the first part of Lukas’ statement.

“Tw-, two hundred...?”

This was an incredibly distant number for Min Ha-rin, who hadn’t even reached level 100 yet.

...Now that she thought about it.

From the very first time she saw her level, there was something she’d always been curious about.

“Master, there’s something I’d been meaning to ask you for a long time. Ah, but you don’t have to answer.”

“What is it?”

“What is your level, Master?”

She asked this in a cautious tone, but Lukas responded indifferently.

“I believe it’s currently at 143. Somewhere around that.”

“...currently?”

“Right. Because my powers were restricted.”

“...then what is your original level?”

Lukas didn’t remember seeing this even when he’d briefly checked his status window after the tutorial. He directly opened his status window to check before reading it out.

“4,362.”

“F-, four... ! Cough! Cough, cough!”

Min Ha-rin coughed heavily as she choked on her own saliva.

## **Chapter V2C214**

After a while, Nekdu, who seemed to have finally awoken from her thoughts, turned to Lukas and asked.

“Do you intend to go to Dragon God Island?”

When he nodded his head without denying, she then turned to look at Min Ha-rin who was quietly standing to the side before speaking in a soft tone.

“There’s something I want to tell you. Is that alright?”

She wanted to talk to him alone.

Lukas glanced at Min Ha-rin, who was standing beside him. Realising what he meant, Min Ha-rin nodded without any complaints.

“I’ll wait outside.”

Even after Min Ha-rin left the room, Nekdu hesitated.

She appeared a bit conflicted. It was only after twirling her hair around her finger for a while that she finally opened her mouth.

“What exactly are you going there for?”

Now that he thought about it, Lukas realised he’d never told Nekdu just what his goal was.

The same was true even when he'd asked her about the Dragon God Statue. He'd only said that it might be something he was looking for.

"The four most special statues in this world."

Although he said it, Lukas didn't have any expectations.

Of all the people that he'd met so far, none of them had any reaction when he mentioned the term.

"That's the first time I've heard that term..."

Nekdu responded as he expected.

But the words that she spoke next were surprising.

"It's the number four that bothers me the most."

"What do you mean by that?"

"..."

Nekdu seemed to think seriously about something, but in the end, she could only shake her head.

"I'm sorry, but I don't think I can tell you more than that."

"Because it's related to Dragon God Island?"

"No. It's much larger and more complicated than that."

"..."

"...I know it's a bit sudden and inappropriate to say it now, but can I ask you a favor?"

The timing was definitely not appropriate.

After all, Nekdu had just avoided answering Lukas' question.

"Of course, it's up to you whether you agree to it or not."

Although she added that, there was a hint of desperation in Nekdu's voice.

Lukas simply nodded without changing his expression.

When she saw this, Nekdu spoke with a much brighter expression.

"The most peculiar statue on Dragon God Island. Perhaps it is the statue that you're looking for, but even if it isn't, I'd like you to check if it's safe."

"...the most peculiar statue?"

Lukas couldn't help but frown at her puzzling words.

"What is the name of the statue?"

"I can't tell you that."



“Then what does it look like?”

“I can’t tell you that either.”

“...”

When Lukas turned to look at her, Nekdu grimaced and said.

“I know I’m saying a lot of nonsense. That’s why I’ll leave it up to you whether you do me the favor or not...”

\* \* \*

After that part of their conversation, Nekdu finally promised to make the best weapons and armor she could. She seemed guilty for not being able to answer so many of Lukas’ questions.

Seeing that she even swore on her pride as a craftsman, he couldn’t help but wonder how amazing those items would be.

Nevertheless, Lukas wouldn’t be able to see the finished products for a while. Because he intended to head to Death Island as soon as possible.

Lukas walked up to Min Ha-rin, who had been waiting outside, and spoke.

“The armor will be sent to Herui as soon as it’s completed, so I don’t think there’s a need for you to come back here.”

“Ah. Yeah. Thank you for your concern.”

The sky was still bright, but it was already past 4 in the afternoon. Min Ha-rin was scheduled to head directly to Herui by Sky Carriage that very evening. In other words, it meant that she had to prepare to leave in about 2 to 3 hours.

Lukas had wanted to use the Warp spell, but he couldn’t. The Heavenly Realm was an ultra-large continent that floated about the ocean, but it wasn’t just floating. Instead, it was constantly moving at a slow speed.

And in order to properly use the Warp spell, he would have to know the exact coordinates of the destination. This made it difficult because the coordinates of the floating islands were changing constantly.

Of course, given enough time, it was possible to derive the answer by calculating the exact value of the change between coordinates, but in order to do that, it would be necessary to first calculate the rotation of the planet.

Even for Lukas, it was a task that would take too much time.

This wouldn’t be a problem if he were to use Space-Time Movement, but unfortunately, that wasn’t a power that could be used by a mortal.

And even if he could use it, Min Ha-rin’s fragile body would never be able to withstand it.

“It’s fine. I’m just sorry I couldn’t be of more help to you, Master.”

“Don’t think like that.”

Lukas looked around before pointing towards a nearby restaurant and saying.

“Since we have a little more time left, would you like to have a meal together?”

“Yeah.”

Min Ha-rin smiled and nodded.

Now that she thought about it, she didn’t think there had ever been a time when she’d been able to leisurely sit and enjoy a meal alone with Lukas.

It wasn’t evening yet, so there weren’t many customers in the restaurant.

Thankfully, this also meant that the food was served quickly.

Their meal consisted of crispy bacon, grilled sausages, and salad with dressing along with mugs of stout(1).

Min Ha-rin’s palate seemed to have changed after living in the Heavenly Realm for a long time, so without hesitation, she comfortably ate the meat and drank the cold stout without caring about the calories.

She pretended to take polite bites and sips since she was in front of her Master, but Lukas couldn’t help but feel that she might have become a heavy drinker.

Lukas almost only sipped the beer and touched the salad from time to time.

After their meal, they ordered a plate of beef jerky and two more mugs of beer before having a nice conversation about relatively trivial things.

Soon enough, Min Ha-rin’s expression became exuberant.

She was probably drunk, as there was a subtle flush on her face, and she spoke in an excited voice.

“Then, in this Championship, I might be able to fight Master.”

“It’s possible. Perhaps we’ll meet each other in the finals.”

“I won’t lose so easily this time.”

“Don’t get your hopes up too much. It’s possible that both of us will get knocked out in the first round.”

Although he said this in a mischievous voice, Lukas didn’t actually rule out the possibility of that happening.

At the present time, Kran was probably stronger than him, and the Champions of the other arenas were no slouches either.

It was always good to prepare for any unexpected situation.

Nevertheless, Min Ha-rin tilted her head to the side as if she couldn’t imagine Lukas losing to anyone.

“Ha-rin.”

“Yes.”

Lukas’ voice became a bit serious.

“I always think of the worst outcome.”

“...yes.”

Min Ha-rin’s expression also became a bit serious and she slowly nodded her head to show that she understood.

“There is an Absolute on Death Island. Since Arid said it himself, then the odds are at least 9 out of 10. It won’t be easy to protect Sedi from that Absolute.”

Now that Min Ha-rin also had an idea of how ridiculous an existence Absolutes were, she listened to Lukas with a solemn expression.

“There is little more than a month before the Championship begins. In all honesty, time is a bit tight. That means that we have to consider the possibility that I wouldn’t be able to make it back in time for the Championship.”

“...”

“If that happens, then I’ll leave it to you to become the Grand Champion.”

“...Rather than me, doesn’t Lee Jong-hak... have a better chance?”

She didn’t doubt her Master’s words, but she couldn’t help but ask.

Min Ha-rin had also heard a lot about Lee Jong-hak, no.

Li Hao.

Unlike her, who reigned as the Champion in a small town, Li Hao was a major sensation in the Babylon Arena, and many people had high expectations of him.

“That’s only the case for right now.”

“...”

This was something he’d told her before, but he didn’t want her to think that he was simply affirming that. After all, he wasn’t trying to comfort her.

Lukas added.

“If you look at pure potential, you are far superior. Of course, luck will also be a factor. After all, if you happen to meet Kran as your first opponent, you would be eliminated before you’re even given the chance to grow.”

“A, ahaha.”

In simpler terms, she would be crushed.

...No.

Was it possible for her to defeat Kran even if she had the time to grow? She couldn't even imagine defeating Lee Jong-hak, who was much weaker than him.

After thinking that, Min Ha-rin couldn't help but speak in a low voice.

"...that might be difficult for the current me."

"Hmm, I think you were better when we first met. You were filled with so much confidence back then."

"..."

Of course, it was none other than Lukas who had trampled that rising confidence until it became impossible to find.

Lukas laughed and poured some of the stouts into his mouth.

"As I said, that's only the worst-case scenario. I will do my best to return to Lirua no matter what."

"Yes. I'll wait for you."

"Right... The sun is beginning to set."

He turned to look at the sky. Min Ha-rin also turned her head to follow his gaze.

The sky was slowly being painted with the colors of sunset.

It was time to part ways

## **Chapter V2C215**

Min Ha-rin left Lirua that evening.

When she left, she had a conflicted expression. This was because she had faith that Lukas would return safely, but she was still worried about him.

Lukas noticed her inner turmoil, but he still quietly sent her away without mentioning it. This was because he believed she would solve her inner issues more easily if she were alone.

Now, the only thing he was waiting for were the 'clothes' that he'd requested from Nekdu.

According to her, clothing that could block the demonic energy on Death Island took about three days to make. (TL: Author really bounces around between death energy and demonic energy)

It had only been a day, so Lukas still had to wait two more days.

During that time, there were still things for him to do. First, he had to find the quickest route to the [Temple Island] that Arid had mentioned.

According to the map that Arid had given him, the fastest way to get there was to go through the largest port in the north of Combat Island called [Port Akad].

It was said that at least one ship passed from there to Temple Island every day.

However, there was a large distance between Lirua and Akad.

Even if he were to use a Sky Carriage, it would take about two weeks.

If the round trip in itself was four weeks, then even if Lukas moved like lightning, he wouldn't be able to save Sedi and return in time for the Championship.

That's why Lukas decided to abuse one of the privileges that only Major City Lords had.

The Sun Carriage.

He decided to use the super large mode of transport that only major cities built for private use.

With the Sun Carriage, it was possible to reach Akad in three or four days. In fact, when he'd slain the Ancient Dragon, Spera, the Major City Lord of Akad, was able to arrive at almost the same time as the other Major City Lords.

After deciding on his mode of transport, Lukas then spent the rest of his time making preparations and detailed plans for the long journey.

"The size is about right."

Nekdu nodded and commented.

Lukas stood in front of her, dressed in robes that were made exclusively for Death Island.

"I thought you preferred to wear robes, so I made something similar. Although it's a bit plain since it doesn't have any patterns or designs, there won't be any problems in terms of practicality."

Lukas nodded.

"There isn't even a need for you to raise the hood since I had it engraved with sorcery runes. It's basically waterproof and the durability isn't bad, but it won't stand up to a Dragonling's claws or teeth, so be careful."

"Thank you."

"Don't worry about it. It's the least I could do."

Nekdu waved her hand as she said that.

"I heard that you're planning to use the Sun Carriage, is that true?"

"Yeah."

A slight smile spread across her lips.

"If you use it properly, that's a round trip that will cost you a few million erus."

"It's because it's urgent."

"I see... Well. I wish you all the best. Good luck."

Lukas also said words of farewell to Nekdu. Afterward, the two of them went their separate ways without saying anything else.

Nekdu didn't show the lost expression that she had the last time they met. Maybe she was intentionally hiding her feelings, or maybe she had already cleared her mind, he couldn't tell.

After all, Nekdu had always been good at hiding her inner thoughts.

If he tried, he could probably figure it out, but that wouldn't be polite.

With the Sun Carriage parked out front, Bargan walked out of the castle to see him off.

"I'll wait for your safe return."

Lukas smiled faintly at his characteristic heavy tone of voice.

"Bargan."

"Yes."

"I'm sure you remember the request I made to you last time."

When he heard this, Bargan's expression became solemn.

"Yes. But I'm sure that won't happen. My Lord will return safely and in time."

"Of course, that would be best. But there is nothing wrong with assuming the worst in a situation. If that truly comes to pass, please..."

"..."

Bargan hesitated for a moment before bowing his head.

"...yes."

After hearing his confirmation, Lukas' heart also became a bit lighter. Then, with equally light steps, he got onto the Sun Carriage.

Roar!

With a roar of the giant flying dragon, the Sun Carriage floated into the air.

That alone caused the trees in the vicinity to bend dangerously. Dust flew in every direction, and heavy winds pulled at Bargan's clothes.

Nevertheless, he didn't take his eyes off of the rising carriage.

Before long, the carriage rose high in the sky and shot towards the north at a high speed.

It only took a few short minutes for it to completely disappear from his sight. Nevertheless, Bargan continued to look at the sky.

"If I fail to come back in time..."

And remembered the request Lukas had made before he left.

"Please enter the Championship as the Champion of Lirua."

He refused to accept Lukas' words.

"That won't happen."

Lukas would definitely come back safe.

He mumbled to himself as he recalled the conversation they had just had.

"Please return home safely, my Lord."

Bargan prayed sincerely.

—And a month later.

The opening ceremony of the Championship that everyone had been waiting for, finally began.

And at this place where dozens of Champions from Combat Island had gathered,

Lukas, the Champion of Lirua, was nowhere to be found.

\* \* \*

"..."

Min Ha-rin gulped slightly while looking at the armor in front of her.

Her first armor.

Its appearance showed that it had been molded into the shape of armor while maintaining the original shape of the bones as much as possible. It looked like it had been created by the entire skeleton of a Dragonling, but it had actually been created from one bone(1).

The bone that Lukas had given Nekdu was none other than the skull of the Ancient Dragon.

Even if they wanted to maintain the shape of the skull, such gracefully curved armor couldn't be made.  
(TL: Skull-shaped armor. Practicality 10000%)

After all, the finished product didn't just consist of chest and leg armor, but also shoes and a helmet.

Min Ha-rin had a bit of knowledge with armors, but for this set, that wasn't necessary.

Even a complete novice would easily be able to tell with a glance that this armor was not simple.

But only Min Ha-rin knew the true worth of this armor.

[Explosive Dragon Armor]

[A masterpiece created by an eccentric but extremely talented blacksmith. Crafted from the skull of 'Bultasie', ruler of the Samas Great Forest.

Its durability is so high that it won't be scratched by most weapons, and it has a strong resistance to attacks of most attributes because of the runes that were engraved on it. However, it is vulnerable to attacks of the ice element, so special attention should be paid.

Allows the user to cast [Dragon Fury] once per day, but it is not advised as the skill puts great strain on the body.]

It wasn't just armor.

A red club, thinner than most swords, lay beside it.

[The Dragonstick of Overflowing Fighting Spirit] (TL: These names...)

[A masterpiece created by an eccentric but extremely talented blacksmith. Crafted from the skull of 'Bultasie', ruler of the Samas Great Forest.

Allows the wielder to gather natural energy, and if you swing it with this energy, it will release an attack comparable to that of the most famous swords.]

In other words, this dragonstick was a weapon that could play the roles of both a staff and a sword.

There was nothing more suitable for Min Ha-rin who was aspiring to be a Magical Swordsman.

A note beside them contained explanations about the armor and staff, presumably written by Nekdu. Although she was able to receive a description from the status window, she wouldn't dare to neglect any advice given by the creator of the items.

Min Ha-rin read the note carefully a few times before placing it in her pocket.

"...but..."

Her gaze then turned to the man who had delivered the items to her.

"Where is Master?"

Bargan responded with a heavy expression.

"He hasn't returned yet."

"..."

Yet.

There were only two days left before the Championship began.

"Did he not tell you anything at all?"

"He did, but..."

Bargan's face was stiff as he responded in a more hesitant manner than before.

"He said that if there was no news from him four days before the Championship began, I must participate in his place."

"...I see."

This time, the Championship was being hosted by 'Uruk', one of the major cities, and draws and matches would happen here, but the entire Championship wouldn't be held in Uruk.



After a certain number of matches were fought, they would move to another major city and host matches there instead.

'If you don't attend the opening ceremony, you will be automatically eliminated from the Championship.'

There were two days left.

As far as Min Ha-rin knew, the majority of Champions had already gathered in Uruk.

But it still wasn't too late.

Although the position of Champion of Lirua was currently being held by Bargan, he'd still reserved a spot on the top three, which was a privilege only afforded to major cities, in preparation for Lukas' late return.

But this arrangement would be useless if Lukas didn't arrive in time.

Min Ha-rin felt the excitement she'd felt at receiving her armor and weapon slowly cool down as if water had been poured on it.

'...he won't be late.'

Tomorrow.

No, Min Ha-rin prayed that she would see Lukas' face by the morning of the last day at the latest.

## **Chapter V2C216**

"Then I hereby declare the opening of the Championship!"

"Wooooh!"

"..."

The Uruk Arena.

Min Ha-rin stood in the center of this arena, receiving the enthusiastic cheers and applause of the audience.

She wasn't alone.

All of the Champions and Fighters from all over the world who had come to participate in the Championship were gathered in the arena.

But Lukas wasn't among them. In the end, the Championship had started before he could arrive.

Min Ha-rin was worried about her Master's safety. But she eventually shook her head and forced herself to calm down.

This was a situation that Lukas had already imagined from the start. He had already mentioned the possibility that he wouldn't return in time for the opening ceremony.

'What he went to do wasn't something easy.'

Nevertheless, she was sure that he would be fine.

It was still many years too soon for a disciple like her to worry about Lukas.

Rather, she should be more worried about herself at that moment.

She looked around,

Lukas was right.

The Champions, no. None of the Fighters in the arena were easy opponents.

It wasn't just those from the major cities. Even Fighters from small and medium cities were overflowing with fighting spirit and the desire to win.

Among them, there were a few Fighters who were particularly fierce.

Lee Jong-hak of the Babylon Arena was one of them.

"...so that's the guy."

"Probably."

"He looks pretty weak on the outside."

"Shambar is the same."

"Well."

And so was Kran.

In fact, he was the center of attention not only for the spectators but for the other Fighters as well.

This couldn't be helped.

After all, he was the one who killed the previous Champion of Kisura and one of the top three contenders for the title of Grand Champion, Shivar, with a single blow.

Min Ha-rin also looked at him.

Kran stood there with a blank expression on his face. He didn't release his fighting spirit or aura like the other Fighters.

It was like standing naked on a battlefield as bullets rained down.

No.

He probably didn't consider the hostility and killing intent of the others to be a threat at all.

"Then we will commence the draw!"

While the Fighters observed their competition, the host completed the ceremonial greetings.

In the middle of the stands was a place where large, colourful chairs were placed. This area had a lot more space compared to the other parts of the stands.

This was the place where the city lords and aides of the major cities who had sponsored the Championship as well as the powerful people from the other islands sat.

Without exception, all of the other seats in the arena were filled.

Whether they were expensive or cheap, all of the tickets had been sold out in an instant.

This clearly showed the public's interest and enthusiasm in the Championship.

"Then, Champions! As I call your names, please come up to the stage!"

In addition to creating a match-list, the drawing ceremony also served the purpose of briefly introducing the various Fighters.

"Nonto Arena's Pog!"

The crowd cheered as the various Fighters were called to the stage.

The degree of their cheering showed the level of interest they had in that specific Fighter.

Naturally, the host also made the effort of introducing the strong Fighters in a more dramatic manner.

"Babylon's Whirlwind! Liiii Hao!"

"Waaaaaah!"

When his name was called, the crowd erupted. Min Ha-rin also turned to look at Lee Jong-hak.

He climbed the steps of the stage with his characteristic calm expression and proceeded with his draw.

[C-15]

The Championship had been divided into four groups.

They were groups A, B, C, and D, and each group had a total of 16 people.

It only took a simple calculation to determine that one would need to win 4 matches in order to advance.

Even if one were to fail after advancing from the group stage, they would have still made it to the semi-finals.

However, none of the Fighters there would be satisfied with such an ending.

Since they joined the Championship, they naturally wanted to win.

The eyes of the Fighters burned with fighting spirit.

Suddenly.

The host began speaking in a more heated voice than usual.

“Attention everyone! I will now introduce the top contender for the position of Grand Champion!”

His voice, which was amplified by sorcery, was loud enough to shake the arena.

As they looked at him with anticipation, everyone in the crowd could even feel the tips of their fingers tingling with excitement.

“The Fighter King of Spera....! The Undefeated Champion...! Shambarrrrr!”

“Waaaaaaaaah!”

An incomparable cheer swept through the arena. It was as though dozens of explosives had been detonated at the same time.

More than half of the audience members left out of their seats and shouted at the top of their lungs.

“Shambar! Shambar! Shambar!”

“Shambar! Shambar! Shambar!”

Then they began to chant his name like crazy.

The entire arena shook.

Nevertheless, this reaction was to be expected.

The man who walked towards the stage had a subtle smile on his lips.

He was called the undisputed favorite to win the Championship.

The Fighter King, Shambar.

His official record was 491 wins and 3 losses.

He was the holder of the insane win rate of nearly 99%.

Even the three losses he suffered were only a small blemish that he'd acquired when he was still a rookie. Ever since he'd reached the top of the arena, he has continuously held on to his winning streak.

‘...this is a man who is at the [peak of mortality].’

This was a stage that Lukas often talked about.

A stage that he hoped Min Ha-rin would reach someday.

The Fighters looked at Shambar with tense expressions. Their eyes were affixed to his fingers that were slowly going into the lottery box to draw his number

Soon, the host shouted.

“A-2!!”

Some of the Fighters' expressions became sullen, while others let out sighs of relief.

None of the Fighters gathered had any intentions of avoiding a fight, but they still didn't want to fight the strongest candidate in the Championship from the very start.

'...perhaps...'

Min Ha-rin couldn't help but wonder who was stronger between Kran and Shambar.

"Herui Arena's Rin Summers-!"

Suddenly, Min Ha-rin heard her name.

There was restrained applause from the stands.

Although this kind of reaction was common for Champions from small cities, her pride was still bruised a bit. This proved that she had the blood of a Fighter.

As she walked up to the stage, she felt several eyes focus on her. Some of the Fighters whispered to each other about her Dragon Armor. They were able to realise with a glance that it was not simple.

As its name suggested, the draw involved each Fighter placing their hand in a box filled with rocks of the same size and made from the same materials.

Each stone was engraved with letters and numbers, so the results would be known as soon as they pulled them out.

Min Ha-rin put her hand in the box and immediately pulled out the first stone she touched.

"B-8!"

She wondered if she should be happy that she wasn't in the same group as Shambar... or even Lee Jong-hak.

Min Ha-rin let out a small sigh of relief before walking off the stage.

"Ah! I think a lot of people will pay attention to this one too!"

The host smiled mysteriously for a moment before continuing.

"The greatest dark horse in this Championship! No, I should call him another contender who is being compared to Shambar! I'm talking about none other than the Conqueror of Kisura, The One Shot Killer, Kran!"

Once again, the heat of anticipation could be felt by the audience.

But unlike before, the arena remained as quiet as a cemetery.

Crunch-

And within this strange state of silent excitement, the sound of Kran's footsteps was exceptionally loud.

All of the Fighters, including Shambar, were looking at Kran.

After walking up to the stage without a single change in expression, Kran reached into the box in an uncaring manner.

And he picked up a stone without any signs of hesitation.

“C-7!”

“...!”

When she heard that, Min Ha-rin turned to look at Lee Jong-hak.

Group C was the group that Lee Jong-hak had been assigned to. In other words, Kran and Lee Jong-hak were in the same group.

“...”

Lee Jong-hak’s expression remained calm, but his heart was pounding so loudly in his chest that it was almost impossible to hear his thoughts.

His clenched fists were covered in cold sweat as his eyes remained locked on Kran.

Kran also turned to look at Lee Jong-hak at that moment.

“If you don’t... want to die...”

Then, for the first time, he opened his mouth.

His voice sounded weak and came out in a broken manner, but it was still able to reach Lee Jong-hak’s ears.

“...then give up.”

## **Chapter V2C217**

“Don’t be ridiculous. How can you say that before you’ve even fought?”

It wasn’t Lee Jong-hak, but a Dragonman standing beside him who spoke in a cold voice.

This was ‘Shinz’, the Champion of Babylon, and a Fighter who ranked higher than Lee Jong-hak.

He was a man who had a small physique for a Dragonman, but his gaze was fierce.

“If you were a Fighter, then there’s no way that you wouldn’t know how insulting it is to tell someone to give up.”

“...”

Nevertheless, Kran didn’t even spare Shinz a glance as though he wasn’t the least bit interested in him. This naturally caused Shinz to bristle even more because of his rude behaviour.

“It’s fine, Shinz.”

Lee Jong-hak calmly called out to him.

“It’s fine? That man is completely tarnishing your pride.”

“That’s true, but it’s not something that can be solved by discussing it here. A Fighter does not prove themselves with their tongue, but with their fists in the arena. He and I will cross swords there.”

After saying that, Lee Jong-hak’s eyes met Kran’s.

“It’ll be fine to repay the insult then.”

“...hmm. I guess you’re right.”

Shinz didn’t seem to have let go of his displeasure, but he nodded his head in acceptance.

With his eyes still on Kran, Lee Jong-hak continued.

“I will not give up.”

“...”

Kran seemed to pause for a moment after hearing those words, but it was only for an instant. Without saying another word, he immediately turned his head and walked away as if he’d lost interest.

\* \* \*

All the groups had been decided.

To summarise the persons that Min Ha-rin had been paying attention to,

It was Barga and Shambar in Group A.(1)

Herself and Shinz in Group B.

And Kran and Lee Jong-hak in Group C.

The matches would begin the next day, but that didn’t mean that that day’s events were over. This was because there were a few novelty events left.

One of them was announcing the results of the popularity vote.

This vote was held a few months before the Championship, and there were no restrictions on participation. Anyone staying on Combat Island had the right to vote.

Because of this, it usually took around a month to count the votes.

Thus, one by one, the ten Champions with the most votes, the current most popular heroes, all walked onto the stage. (TL: I’ll just call everyone participating in the championship a champion since apart from the few from the major cities they all are, and that’s what the author does.)

And it was none other than Lee Jong-hak who stood at the end of the line in 10th place.

He was a Fighter who was known for his calm attitude, and he often displayed unique fighting skills. Many people felt that these traits brought a sense of freshness to the arena, and his fanbase was so large that it was strange for an outsider.

In 7th place was Kran. It could be said that his ranking was a bit lackluster compared to his skills, but it could also be considered an amazing rise since it had only been a few months since he'd first made an appearance.

In third place was Shinz, a Champion of the Babylon Arena like Lee Jong-hak.

Contrary to his small size, he was often compared to a rabid dog in the arena since hardly anyone could stop him after he got going. It was no wonder that the mere sight of him was enough to make the crowd go wild.

And finally, the long-awaited first place was Shambar.

This was a natural result that everyone expected.

Shambar had an absolute influence not only when it came to his skill, but also his popularity.

Standing at the highest point on the stage, he looked at the crowd.

"I, Shambar, Fighter from Akad, hereby swear on behalf of the 64 warriors gathered here."

Those who sat in the stands, and the Fighters standing in the arena all looked at him.

With all of their attention on himself, he continued.

"That no shame shall be brought to the souls and prides of every Fighter, and that not one single drop of shed blood shall be forgotten."

The Champions below repeated Shambar's words under their breaths, and quiet applause filled the arena.

At that moment, Min Ha-rin realised that the Championship had officially begun.

\* \* \*

By the time the schedule for the day had ended, the sun had already begun to set.

"Mr. Bargan."

Min Ha-rin called out to Bargan, who was mixed among the Champions.

"You're looking for me?"

Turning around, Bargan replied.

He had changed. No. It wasn't just that he'd changed, he'd become an entirely different person.

Of course, this wasn't to say that he had undergone drastic changes over the course of a month.

It was because Bargan was wearing armor.

It was Kangki's [Creed of Kamesh]. However, it wasn't so large that he could look down on the surrounding Dragonmen. Bargan didn't intend to stop using the Creed of Kamesh for the time being. (2)

This was especially because it was necessary to maintain Kangki's persona for certain activities.



“You’re in Group B, right?”

“That’s right. And you’re in Group A?”

“Yes. Luckily we won’t encounter each other for a while.”

After saying that they both let out a soft chuckle, but it was forced.

Shinz was in Group B, and Shambar was in Group A.

Both of them had excellent equipment, but they still weren’t sure whether they could defeat them or not.

The only fortunate thing was that the matches wouldn’t occur until the next day.

“Ah.”

At that moment, Min Ha-rin’s eyes turned to a man that was walking past them.

“Lee Jong-... Mr. Li Hao.”

“...”

“I’d like to talk to you for a moment.”

Lee Jong-hak, who was about to leave the arena with the other Babylon Fighters, stopped.

He looked at Min Ha-rin for a moment before turning back to his party.

“Something has come up. So you guys go ahead.”

“Someone you know?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm... got it.”

Shinz nodded and left the arena first.

Then Lee Jong-hak spoke.

“I don’t think our conversation will end soon.”

“Yeah. Let’s go to a quiet place first.”

“Sure.”

With that, Min Ha-rin took Lee Jong-hak to her room.

The Champions were all given large, extravagant rooms for free. They would be able to talk comfortably there.

Click-

The door closed.

It was Min Ha-rin who had brought up talking to Lee Jong-hak, but it was Lee Jong-hak who opened his mouth first.

“I heard about you. You came to this world 5 years ago.”

“Yes.”

“You have experienced amazing growth. I can tell with just a glance.”

“Mr. Lee Jong-hak is the same.”

They traded polite words.

Their conversation seemed to contain a sense of closeness, but she couldn't erase the feeling that she was just pretending.

Min Ha-rin's heart was a bit unsettled.

In all honesty, she felt a certain amount of joy from meeting someone else from her world other than her Master.

But more than that...

[Is something wrong?]

When she thought back to her conversation with Lukas, she sighed inwardly.

Although he had forgiven him, Min Ha-rin still felt a bit uncomfortable when she thought about Lee Jong-hak.

She desperately tried to hide this feeling.

“...by the way, where is Sir Lukas? He didn't seem to be the armored man in the arena.” (TL: Using 'sir' to show that Lee Jong-hak is speaking formally when mentioning Lukas)

He was talking about Bargan.

He was covered completely by his armor to the point that not even a single bit of skin was exposed, but Lee Jong-hak was able to infer that it wasn't Lukas by his movements and aura.

“He's a Fighter by the name of Bargan. Master hasn't arrived yet.”

“Did something happen?”

“Yes.”

Min Ha-rin nodded and briefly explained the situation.

About Lukas meeting, Arid, learning where Sedi was, and the fact that an Absolute was there as well...

After hearing all of this, Lee Jong-hak nodded.

“The fact that he hasn't returned yet means that things aren't going too smoothly.”

“It's possible.”

“...”

Lee Jong-hak seemed to be deep in thought for a moment.

Min Ha-rin waited for a while to let him organise his thoughts before she continued. Then, after about five minutes had passed, she asked.

“Are you really going to fight Kran?”

Looking at Lee Jong-hak who remained silent, she softly continued.

“I know that he had been kidnapped by the Demon King. So it’s highly likely that he entered the qualifiers as a member of his team.”

At this point, it was clear that Kran was probably their enemy. She had also heard Kran telling Lee Jong-hak to give up.

Min Ha-rin didn’t think it was an insult. Instead, she felt that he was sending a warning.

Lee Jong-hak was strong, but not as much as Kran.

If he really fought without any intention of giving up... She felt that Lee Jong-hak might really die.

“This is unexpected.”

“Huh?”

“You don’t hate me.”

Min Ha-rin’s eyes widened in surprise. Has it been that obvious?

Or was it that Lee Jong-hak’s eyes were similar to Lukas in how discerning they were.

Hiding her suspicions, Min Ha-rin softly made an excuse.

“...I don’t... hate you...”

No. It wasn’t an excuse. It was the truth. After listening to Lukas’ advice, the bad feelings she had towards him had dissipated on their own.

All she felt now was a bit of discomfort and awkwardness.

As she thought this, Min Ha-rin lowered her head, but Lee Jong-hak smiled.

“I see. I’m glad.”

“...”

“Thanks for your concern, but I’ll be careful in my match against him. I’ll tell you now, I have no intention of dying. Fortunately, there’s a rule that allows you to give up in the arena at any time, isn’t there?”

By saying that, it meant that he intended to give up.

However, as Min Ha-rin looked at Lee Jong-hak’s softly smiling face, she had a very ominous feeling.

## Chapter V2C218

The door closed with a click.

Kran looked around for a while before walking towards the window and drawing the curtains. The room, which didn't even have a single candle in it, was immediately engulfed in darkness.

Without any change of expression, he then walked towards the bed where he immediately collapsed as though he'd fainted. His breath was barely audible, and not even a single one of his fingers twitched. He looked like a puppet whose strings had been cut. If someone saw this scene from a distance, they might even think he'd suddenly died.

Shuk-

Fog suddenly began to appear in the dark room.

Like clay, it clumped together piece by piece until it created the shapes of two figures.

One had the shape of a gracefully curved woman.

The other was shaped like a Demon.

[It seems the adjustments haven't been completed.]

The figure of the woman fluttered like a candle in the wind.

[He still managed to keep some of his consciousness. At this stage, it should be simple to completely erase his ego. Is there a reason why you haven't made him into a complete puppet yet?]

The demonic figure replied.

[He needs to have at least his basic thoughts in order to showcase his full power in battle. It would be much too wasteful to delete the experience Kran has accumulated thus far.]

[Hmph. Is that really all there is to it?]

[...]

[Are you sure you're not planning something else?]

As if seducing him, the female figure spoke in a soft tone.

[Don't push it.]

[...]

[You should be able to distinguish those you can't run your mouth recklessly around. And you should know exactly who is standing in front of you.]

[Of course, I know you better than anyone else in this world, Great King.]

The Demon remained silent for a moment before speaking.

[Finding the statue in the 'Black Lands' is taking more time than I expected. Letip is probably also having a hard time... And in the case of Nodiesop, he seems to be doing something interesting.]

[What about the other one?]

[You mean Lukas?]

The cold voice rang out in the room.

[At least for the rest of the qualifiers, he will no longer be a threat.]

\* \* \*

Fwoosh.

It was a place filled with smoke and flames.

Lee Jong-hak was the only one who was recognisable in this place where everything was on fire.

“...”

He didn't display any discomfort.

There were three reasons for this.

First, the flames surrounding his body weren't hot at all. It burned everything around him, but it wasn't hot enough to actually harm Lee Jong-hak's body.

Second, the flames burning around him were not illuminating the surroundings at all. Even the sky glowed a dull orange as though it was also being burned.

And finally, and this was the most crucial point, Lee Jong-hak already knew this was a dream.

It was a dream that he'd seen so many times, he had already lost count.

Kyaaah!

He heard a horrific scream.

The figure of a woman could be seen struggling in the fire.

She cried and squirmed desperately as though she was experiencing the greatest pain in the world.

She was Lee Jong-hak's mother.

Ah... uh... ah... ah...

With a bitter look in her eyes, she glared at Lee Jong-hak, her half-melted eyeballs filled with hostility and resentment.

He knew.

He knew that this place was a dream.

He knew that his mother would never direct such a gaze towards him.

Nevertheless, he still felt stifled. He felt cold sweat cover his entire body. And he felt his hands and feet go numb.

“...”

Still, he got to his feet.

In this dream that he had entered hundreds of thousands of times, Lee Jong-hak's actions were always the same.

He threw himself into the flames and swung his hands until those oozing orbs burst.

Kyaaah!

And once again, just like every time before, the screams scratched Lee Jong-hak's heart.

\* \* \*

“It was a great match.”

“...ah.”

Min Ha-rin raised her head at the sudden voice. It was Lee Jong-hak. Smiling slightly, she touched the bandages that had already become stiff because of the blood.

“So Mr. Lee Jong-hak also knows how to say empty words.”

“Empty words?”

Lee Jong-hak's expression darkened.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because I already know that the word ‘great’ is not something that should be associated with my match.”

Min Ha-rin's first match had been held the day after the opening ceremony.

She hadn't been nervous.

It was her first match of the Championship, but her heart had been tranquil like a lake. Her condition was the best.

Nevertheless, even though she gave it her all, it hadn't been easy for her to win the fight.

She and her opponent fought neck and neck for more than three hours before she finally managed to win by taking advantage of a paper-thin opening.

She felt like she'd poured out every single ounce of energy she had stored in her body.

After that match, she collapsed almost as if she had fainted, and subsequently slept for two whole days afterward.

Fortunately, despite the fierceness of the fight, she hadn't suffered any significant injuries. This was because the match was more of a stamina contest than a bloody life and death battle.

Even at that moment, Min Ha-rin couldn't help but think.

If she had been even a bit weaker, or if she had made even a single questionable judgment during the match, the positions of winner and loser would definitely have been changed.

"While it wasn't the cleanest, you shouldn't look down on your own victory, because that would be an insult to your opponent who used their all against you."

Min Ha-rin's eyes widened slightly.

Seeing this, Lee Jong-hak's expression changed.

"...no. I'm being too presumptuous. Forget what I said."

"No."

Min Ha-rin shook her head.

"You're right. It was my mistake."

Lee Jong-hak was right.

It was an insult not only to herself but to the opponent who had given their all and probably felt even worse than she did.

In addition, Min Ha-rin had gained a lot in the fight.

Lukas was right.

It was the type of battle that would be impossible to replicate, and because of it, Min Ha-rin was able to gain an enormous amount of experience, and even a bit of enlightenment.

"I saw your match today. It seems that Mr. Lee Jong-hak has grown a bit stronger too."

"It's only a slight improvement,"

"..."

Min Ha-rin felt silent.

For a while, the only sound that could be heard was that of her fiddling with her bandages.

Finally, after retying the knot on her right arm's bandage for the third or fourth time, Min Ha-rin spoke in a hesitant voice.

"Kran had a match today."

"Right."

"Did you see it?"

This time, he took a bit longer to answer.

"...I saw it."

“Then you know what happened to his opponent...”

“Right.”

Kran had perfectly displayed the reason for his title to the crowd.

One hit — One kill —.

When the match began, there was a flash, then his opponent’s head flew into the air.

Within seconds, the match had already come to an end.

When she’d seen this scene, Min Ha-rin had been so stunned that she’d even forgotten the pain of her injuries for a second.

This was because she’d put herself in the shoes of Kran’s opponent.

If she was the one standing in front of Kran in the arena, would the result have changed?

It didn’t take very long for her to come up with an answer.

Nothing would have changed.

Just like the fighter in the arena, Min Ha-rin would have died with her head flying into the air before she even realised what was happening.

That was why Min Ha-rin really wanted to recommend that Lee Jong-hak give up.

‘...not yet.’

But it wasn’t yet the right time.

Kran and Lee Jong-hak still had to fight two more matches before they would meet each other. From the schedule, there were still about two weeks left.

It was impossible to know what would happen at that time.

Lee Jong-hak could become stronger, or they could figure out a way to deal with Kran, or perhaps Lukas might even return.

Therefore, Min Ha-rin decided to suppress her innermost thoughts for the time being. Lee Jong-hak was Lee Jong-hak. For now, she had to worry about herself.

“How are your injuries?”

“They throb a bit here and there, but they’ve gotten much better. I think I’ll be fine before my next match.”

As she said this, Min Ha-rin looked at her bandaged arm.

The wound there was the worst one she’d suffered as she’d received a cut that managed to reach her bones. Although she had received some treatment, it was naturally not something that could be healed in a short time.



In truth, it would be better for her to refrain from moving in order to better help the healing process, but she couldn't.

Even if she was hurt more severely than this, she would not give up as long as she could still hold a weapon.

This was the same for all the Fighters who were going through consecutive fights.

Because of that, the Championship would become more desperate as time passed.

In fact, in a Championship finals held a few hundred years ago, it was said that the finalists only had two limbs remaining when they fought.

"Would you like to fight me later when your condition improves?"

"Huh? Mr. Lee Jong-hak and me?"

"Right."

Lee Jong-hak nodded in a cautious manner.

"It doesn't have to be anything special, just something like a small spar."

"Sure."

Min Ha-rin answered without needing to think about it.

"...but I have one condition."

"What is it?"

"Instead of waiting till later, let's do it now."

## **Chapter V2C219**

The Championship had begun, but Min Ha-rin only really paid attention to two days at a time.

The day of preparation before her match, and the day of her match.

Because of this, time flew by in a flash.

"..."

A blade flowed smoothly as though it was dancing, the uniquely gentle movements drawing the eyes of any who saw it.

This was the Plum Blossom Sword Technique. And it was usually hard to predict the next movements of those who used this technique.

Or at least, that is what Min Ha-rin would have thought only a short while ago.

Swoosh!

The blade, which had seemed to be flowing, suddenly changed direction and accelerated.

But she wasn't flustered.

She maintained her composure, but her eyes grew more focused.

She could see the sword's path.

And she responded with a familiar movement.

Clang!

It was impossible for her to win direct clashes of strength.

Therefore, Min Ha-rin half focused on swinging her sword and half focused on casting a fire spell.

Fwoosh!

They had been battling for more than an hour, and she was certain that her opponent's concentration was reaching its limit. Seeing an opening, she decisively swung at it, expecting to hit it.

But she didn't.

Instead, he stepped back, escaping her unexpected fire attack.

"Tch."

Min Ha-rin clicked her tongue upon seeing this, and just as she was about to follow up, she heard a voice.

"I think that's enough for today."

After saying this, he lowered his sword so that Min Ha-rin couldn't attack further.

"...alright."

She felt a bit regretful since her body was just starting to warm up, but she knew it couldn't be helped.

Unlike her, Lee Jong-hak had a match scheduled for the next day, so it would be best for him to not push himself too far.

After all, it was an important match.

"To be honest."

After a moment of silence, Lee Jong-hak spoke with a slightly emotional expression.

"I don't think I can guarantee my victory against you anymore."

"..."

It took her a while to realise that was a compliment.

Min Ha-rin also felt a bit emotional.

She never thought the day would come when she heard those words from Lee Jong-hak, a hero that all hunters looked up to.

Unable to respond immediately, she pursed her lips for a moment to suppress her building emotions and said.

“It was all thanks to Jong-hak oppa.” (TL: By now, everyone should know that oppa is how a girl says big brother... I’m not translating it)

It had been about two weeks since the Championship had started, and her relationship with Lee Jong-hak had gotten closer.

This was because she felt that he took care of her in many ways.

Just like the spar they just had.

After their spars, Lee Jong-hak never spared any advice and gave Min Ha-rin many tips on how to improve. This allowed her to win her next three Championship matches.

Of course, this wasn’t to say that any of them were easy matches. In all of those matches, she had to fight tooth and nail without any guarantee of victory or defeat. Nevertheless, Min Ha-rin didn’t lose.

‘...the biggest reason.’

In truth, it was luck.

It was almost as if someone had manipulated Min Ha-rin’s match draw.

None of her opponents were easy, but on the flip side, none of them were so hard that she didn’t have any hope of winning.

In addition, it was also a great advantage that all of her opponents somehow managed to be placed in a position so that the next one was always stronger.

If the order of her matches had been somehow twisted, for example, if her third opponent had been swapped with her first or even her second, the results would have changed drastically. It was possible that Min Ha-rin would have already been eliminated by now.

Nevertheless, there was no use speculating about things that weren’t possible.

In the end, she won, and she survived.

And as a result, she grew explosively.

Now, there was one left.

If she won just one more time, she would be able to advance to the semi-finals of the Championship.

It was the same for Lee Jong-hak.

“Tomorrow’s match...”

“Mm?”

“How about giving up...?”

It was very difficult for Min Ha-rin to say this.

For the past two weeks, she'd watched Kran and Lee Jong-hak closely. And she devised countless strategies until it felt like her head would explode. But in the end...

“I told you that I would give up if my life was in danger.”

“I think it's better to not compete at all.”

It was only then that Lee Jong-hak understood what Min Ha-rin was trying to say.

“Are you saying that you think I'll die without being able to withstand a single blow?”

“...”

He'd read her inner feelings perfectly.

Min Ha-rin sighed and said.

“Are you confident that you can survive?”

She had watched and carefully analyzed all of the matches in the arena, but when she watched Kran's matches, she made sure to push her concentration to the max.

She did this in order to find a possible weakness. But in the end, there was none.

Every time she watched Kran's match, all she could feel was shock, admiration, and astonishment.

And among them, the most shocking match...

“In yesterday's match, Kran's opponent was the Champion of the Major City, [Tikrit].”

“Junibal was an excellent Fighter.”

“Yeah. But his entire body was still crushed by Kran's attack.”

At the end, Junibal's body looked like he'd been stepped on by a giant. His blood, flesh, and organs were so entangled that it was impossible to see their original shape.

Junibal was by no means a weak Fighter.

He was a strong Fighter who was not inferior to Min Ha-rin or Lee Jong-hak, and he certainly had skill since he was able to become the Champion of a major city's arena.

In fact, the spectators all expected Junibal to be able to block Kran's first attack.

But in the end, he became a pile of flesh before he could even realise how he died, just like the others.

“...I'll be honest. I have no intention of surrendering.”

“Why?”

“He told me to give up too.”

A strange glimmer appeared in Min Ha-rin's eyes.

"He did..."

"That's why."

"...because Kran looked down on you? Are you saying that you will risk your life because he hurt your pride?"

Her tone showed that she clearly found the thought to be ridiculous.

Lee Jong-hak knew that she was acting this way because she cared about him. So he explained in a calm voice.

"It's not because of a foolish reason like that. Kran is being manipulated, but he still told me to surrender. Don't you understand what that means?"

Min Ha-rin tilted her head at the strange revelation.

"...he's being manipulated?"

Lee Jong-hak nodded and continued.

"That's not the only strange thing. I've seen Kran fight before. He was strong in the past, but not this strong. And there is something... strange about his current power."

"He could have grown stronger like us."

"He should have cleared all 10 stages of the tutorial. In other words, he only appeared in this world a few months ago. Counting the time he first appeared in the arena, it is impossible for him to have grown this much. So that leads me to an assumption."

"An assumption..."

"What if the first attack he displays at the beginning is actually an all-out attack?"

Min Ha-rin blinked a couple times before opening her mouth dumbly.

"Huh?"

"It literally means that he pours every ounce of his energy into the first blow. His first priority is to finish the opponent off as quickly as possible because his body will become strained if he overdoes it. If that assumption is correct, then it would mean that as long as he doesn't kill me with his first attack, defeating him is not an impossibility."

"...but it also can't be said that it's a possibility. Why do you think he would resist killing you in the first attack?"

"This is also an assumption, but I don't think the control over him is perfect. If the fight goes on for long enough, he might even be able to break free of the control. Assuming that's true, everything will be fine."

"..."

To an extent, that was a reasonable assumption.

No, in fact, the probability of it being true was fairly high.

However, in the end, it was still only an assumption.

If the assumption was wrong... If Kran's first attack wasn't an all-out attack, but a normal one... If the Demon King had somehow made him much stronger after kidnapping him...

"You asked me earlier if I'm confident I can survive the first attack. Of course, I am."

"..."

Lee Jong-hak smiled faintly.

"You don't have to worry. I don't want to die. So if I think that anything isn't going as I expected, I'll give up immediately."

## **Chapter V2C220**

Waaaah!

Screams of excitement filled the air.

Today, the arena was much more heated than usual. This was natural, after all, this was the day that the Group C's semi-final candidate would be decided.

Kran stood in the center of the arena.

'Dammit.'

Kran cursed inwardly.

At that moment, he was so annoyed that he couldn't help but swear.

His current state could only be described as comical frustration.

He could still feel the feedback from his senses. Just like at that moment. He could hear the loud roars of the crowd and feel the hot wind brushing against his skin. He could feel the dryness of his mouth and smell the acrid sand.

And he could see the face of the man that he was about to fight...

No. Of the man, he was about to kill.

'Lee Jong-hak.'

He didn't listen to his advice.

Kran wanted to grit his teeth, but he couldn't.

'My freedom is only limited to two things.'

One was the fact that he was able to even have thoughts like this in the first place, and the other was the few times he had been able to gain some control of his body.

Nevertheless, that control had its limits. In the beginning, he could only blink his eyes or wiggle his toes a bit, but just recently, he'd been able to open his mouth and move his tongue.

He'd used the precious time he had to advise Lee Jong-hak to give up, but he had ignored it, and now, he was standing before him.

'No.'

He hadn't ignored it.

He could tell just from looking at his eyes.

Lee Jong-hak seemed to have a reason for standing in front of him at that moment, something he believed in.

Did he have the confidence to defeat or even kill him? That wouldn't be bad either. At the very least, it was better to die than to continue living like this.

But Kran knew Lee Jong-hak.

Even if he put his life on the line, there was no way he'd be able to kill him.

\* \* \*

'My sword techniques aren't enough to defeat him.'

At that moment, while standing across from him, Lee Jong-hak had the same thought.

He looked at Kran.

An old sword hung loosely at his waist. Other than that, he didn't have any weapons.

This wasn't like Kran.

This man, who was called the strongest Demon Hunter in the past, always had at least a dozen or so weapons on his person. It would be better to consider him a walking weapon of mass destruction than a human.

Nevertheless, the fact that he only had one weapon didn't mean that he could let his guard down.

Kran had already killed three Champions with that old blade.

"Hoo..."

His palms were moist with cold sweat.

How long had it been since he was this nervous?

He was feeling more pressure now than in the battle to slay the Duke.

Lee Jong-hak suddenly turned to his right and looked at the stands.

This was a place that was isolated from the rest of the stands and the seats there were much larger and more comfortable than the regular seats. Naturally, this was the place where the other Champions sat.

Min Ha-rin was also sitting there.

Their eyes met.

'Don't overdo it.'

She mouthed those words to him.

Somehow, seeing that made him relax a bit.

The pressure on his shoulders also seemed to become a bit weaker.

Turning, his eyes locked onto Kran once again.

Ssng.

He drew his sword.

Most of the swords in this world were thick and heavy. Depending on the user, usually, when they were swung, they would smash the opponent more than cut them.

Lee Jong-hak's sword, on the other hand, was thin and sharp.

Compared to the large, heavy swords, this sword required more finesse. If it was swung poorly, it was possible for it to get stuck without even being able to reach bone, and then, the user would die an embarrassing death without being able to retrieve it.

It was a sword that wasn't suited for the Fighter's regular fighting style.

Despite knowing that, Lee Jong-hak didn't change his weapon.

He stood there, looking at Kran.

By this time, the cheers in the arena had gradually begun to calm down.

And the referee finally made his appearance.

Thuk, thuk.

Tens of thousands of people concentrated on the sound of the referee's footsteps, which were neither fast nor slow.

Soon, the referee stopped walking. He was now standing on a platform that allowed him to see the entire arena with a single glance.

"..."

"..."

Now that everyone was paying attention to him, the referee didn't make any unnecessary introductions. After all, everyone in the crowd already knew who the men standing in the arena were.



There, there was only one word that he needed to say.

“Be-!”

Clang!

“Gi-, in...?”

There were less than five people out of the entire audience of tens of thousands who could tell what had just happened.

“...”

Before the referee’s voice could even fade, Lee Jong-hak’s body had been sent flying in a straight line and struck the wall like a cannonball.

Boom!

The audience in that section of the stands felt like they were experiencing an earthquake.

“H-, huh?”

“...wh-, what was that?”

The crowd was in a daze for a while.

Finally, some people let out soft chuckles.

“What do you mean? It’s over.”

“Is this your first time watching him fight?”

“Dammit. I thought this time would be different.”

Even though they knew of Kran’s prowess, they still thought that Lee Jong-hak would be able to withstand Kran’s first attack.

There were many people who cheered for Kran’s overwhelming performance, but there were even more of them who expressed dissatisfaction.

Even if he was strong, they felt that he was too strong since he could easily defeat all of his opponents, which wasn’t fun to watch.

Originally, it was the desperation that appeared in the matches held in the arena that drew their excitement. The way the Fighters still rushed towards each other just to add another injury to their opponent despite the blood gushing from their bodies. Those savage exchanges were the true attraction of the arena.

It was probably for that reason that more than half of the audience in the stands were cheering for Lee Jong-hak.

And that was probably why they felt even more bitter at that moment.

The crowd looked down at the arena while filled with a deep sense of disappointment. Some of them were even wondering when the next match would begin.

Bang!

Suddenly, Lee Jong-hak shot out of the dust cloud that had been created when he hit the wall.

He kicked off the wall of the arena and rapidly closed the distance to Kran.

It took less than a second for him to charge, reach him, and attack.

Clang!!

Nevertheless, his sword was blocked.

Creak, creak. Their swords cried out as they were pressed together.

This level of defense was expected. Lee Jong-hak let go of the sword with one hand. Holding Kran back with one hand was easier than he expected. Then he slammed his elbow towards Kran's forehead.

Crack!

Kran didn't dodge.

Lee Jong-hak frowned. If he had been wearing a helmet, that attack would have been enough to crush it, but it only left a small red mark on Kran's forehead. Nevertheless, this much should be expected from an opponent like Kran.

'...however.'

By landing this attack, he realised that Kran couldn't use his full strength.

Lee Jong-hak knew the difference between the two of them.

If Kran were using his true skills, then it would have been impossible for him to gain the advantage, even if it was a surprise attack.

Whoosh!

Lee Jong-hak twisted his body in the air. This was a high-level movement that required flexible joints and abdominal muscles, but Lee Jong-hak performed this move easily.

Paak!

A roundhouse kick whipped around to the back of Kran's head. This was a natural follow-up to the elbow attack, but it didn't have much of an effect either.

It seemed the back of his head was even harder.

'Sword.'

Only his sword would be able to hurt him.

Since he had the momentum, he didn't plan to give it up easily.

Lee Jong-hak realised instinctively. To win this match, he would have to take advantage of this opportunity.

He once again grabbed his sword with both hands.

Suddenly.

Kran's eyes shone with a bright red light.

Black energy exploded from within his body.

"..."

Lee Jong-hak felt a chill down his spine.

It was a dark, disgusting power. something he was familiar with.

This power....

Whoosh!

Black fog enveloped Kran's body. It was like steam, but it had no heat. Instead, it was like a physical force that pushed Lee Jong-hak away.

Unable to withstand the force, his body flew through the air.

After tumbling in the air for a while, Lee Jong-hak finally managed to land in a fairly clumsy manner.

"Huff, huff..."

Their engagement had lasted for no more than ten seconds, but he had poured all of his energy into it. It felt like he had been sprinting for hours.

Naturally, he was exhausted, but Lee Jong-hak managed to calm his breathing.

"...how can a human use demonic energy?"

"..."

Kran didn't answer.

Lee Jong-hak didn't know that he was a hybrid.

Because of this, he could only make his own guesses.

'Did the Demon King do something to his body after he kidnapped him?'

If he had been forcefully injected with demonic energy, then his recent explosive growth would make sense.

Waaaaaah!

At that moment, explosive screams shook the arena.

The audience, who were just feeling disappointed at the match, was going crazy.

This reaction was natural.

After all, Lee Jong-hak had managed to withstand Kran's attack and was now fighting a real match with him.

"Li Hao! Li Hao! Li Hao!"

"Whirlwind! Whirlwind! Whirlwind!"

Like fanatics, the crowd screamed his pseudonym and title.

Lee Jong-hak took a deep breath.