

Great Mage 571

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The Seven Fanged Dragon God, a Ruler who had lost their authority, had become such an easy opponent that Nodiesop couldn't help but be disappointed. For him, it felt like defeating such a being and getting the special statue was as easy as twisting a baby's arm.

Of course, this didn't mean he didn't like it. Nevertheless, it took away the sense of 'achievement'.

Nodiesop chuckled at his sudden thought. Perhaps he was also being affected by his emotions.

But it wasn't really a bad feeling.

He knew that emotions were nothing more than unhelpful impurities. But they felt good. Just like an addict didn't stop taking drugs even though they knew they weren't good for them, he didn't stop his emotions from controlling his mind and body.

"...I see. So you have no intention of retreating."

Lukas murmured to himself as if he'd finally realised that fact.

Then he stretched his finger again and pointed it towards Nodiesop.

"Then, as I promised, I will kill you."

“...”

Nodiesop was certain Lukas couldn't repeatedly use the technique he'd used to injure him.

Nevertheless, he didn't appear to be bluffing.

Nodiesop prepared for Lukas' attack.

“Nodiesop.”

“What is it?”

“It won't take that long to crush you.”

“...what?”

Puht.

A spell appeared in front of Lukas.

Nodiesop tilted his head to the side, easily avoiding the spear of white light.

'What is this...?'

The level of this spell didn't seem to be very high. No, it was definitely low. The most basic spell. But it somehow felt different from normal magic.

Fwoosh-

Suddenly, a ball of flame the size of a fist appeared. It also shot towards Nodiesop.

He dodged it.

However, there seemed to be no end to the spells flying towards him. The types were also gradually becoming more diverse, and their power was increasing as well.

Lightning, earth, ice, darkness, light, and fire again.

Dozens of spells attacked Nodiesop at the same time.

"...was this what you were relying on?"

As he looked at this scene, Nodiesop couldn't help but mutter despondently.

They were different from normal spells. There were many of them. And they were powerful.

“Ha.”

Nevertheless, he couldn't help but let out a laugh.

This, this was nothing.

Rumble.

Nodiesop's hair began to flutter as if he was floating in water. His overflowing killing intent seemed to spill from his gaze as if he couldn't hold it back any longer.

“You really... really know how to piss me off.”

“...”

“What the hell is the point of this trick? At best, all it would be able to do is buy you some time.”

...There was a meaning.

But he didn't think Nodiesop would understand.

When Lukas remained silent, rage spread across Nodiesop's face.

He was disappointed and even more angry.

Did he really think that he'd be able to block him with such a paltry trick? Was this really the thing that gave him hope?

If that was true then it was disgustingly conceited, and the greatest insult that one could ever make to an Absolute.

"I will do my best to get my hands on your soul, no matter what. If I win this qualifier, I'm sure the Sun Giant would be kind enough to show me that much generosity."

"..."

"I will collect the souls of not only you but everyone who has ever followed you or believed in you. Then, I will plant your souls into the bodies of livestock before taking you to a destroyed universe. There I will make you suffer for eternity without any hope of freedom or death."

As he said this, Nodiesop unleashed his external force, which caused the spells flying towards him to collapse midair.

This was as Lukas expected. After all, no matter how powerful 9-star magic was, it was far from enough to kill an Absolute. This shortcoming was something that he'd known for a very long time. Nevertheless, he knew that Nodiesop still wouldn't be able to break free from this 'spell', <Infinite Field>, in a short time.

Nodiesop had actually said the answer already.

There were two reasons why Lukas had decided to use that spell, and one of them was to buy time.

As for the other reason.

“Mas-, ter.”

“...”

A faint voice sounded, as though it would fade away at any moment.

It was Min Ha-rin, who was staring at him from the side with a disbelieving gaze.

“Why did you come here?”

“...”

“You can’t stay here. You can’t use your power anymore. I-, if Master is hurt here, then I, I would never be able to...”

As she spoke, Lukas slowly walked towards Min Ha-rin. He stopped just within reach and looked down at his disciple, which caused her to stop talking.

“...”

For some reason, his gaze felt strange. Min Ha-rin belatedly realised that she was actually shivering slightly.

Then immediately after, something that couldn't simply be expressed as 'strange' happened.

Paak-!

Her head was forcibly turned away.

'Huh...?'

What just happened?

Throb.

Although her cheek tingled with pain, she wasn't able to easily understand the situation. She could also feel a stinging sensation in her mouth as well as the familiar and unpleasant taste of blood.

Blood trickled from her torn lip.

Min Ha-rin turned to look at Lukas once again with an empty gaze.

“Mas-”

She was once again unable to finish her sentence.

This was because Min Ha-rin was deeply shocked the moment she raised her head to once again look at her Master.

His face was the same, but it felt like this was her first time looking at him. It felt like someone else was standing in front of her at that moment.

Lukas was looking down at her with a cold gaze. He was looking right at her, so the emotions displayed in his eyes were also directed at her.

Disgust and contempt.

And more than that, disappointment.

“...did you just ask why I came here? You are asking me that? You?”54055

“M-, Master.”

“Stop calling me that.”

Min Ha-rin felt like she'd been punched in the gut.

Her eyes fluttered violently and her chest heaved.

“That... what do you...!”

“Didn't you hear me? Min Ha-rin, I told you to stop calling me your Master.”

Lukas spoke in a cold tone.

“Because I no longer consider you and the others as my disciples.”

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A voice that she'd always relied on.

A face that always gave her strength when she thought about it during her hard times.

A hand that could make her mind and body relax just by resting on her head.

All of them were clear in her eyes at that moment.

And because of that, Min Ha-rin's heart sank even further.

The gentle, kind expression her Master usually had was gone.

In its place was an expression she'd never seen before... No, it wasn't that she hadn't seen this expression. Min Ha-rin realised why she felt strange when Lukas had looked at her in this way.

It was the same way he looked at an enemy.

Lukas was now treating Min Ha-rin like an enemy.

"Ah, uh..."

The tip of her tongue became stiff and she found it hard to speak.

She was scared, terrified.

She'd never been so afraid in her entire life.

Did this fear come from the aura that the Absolute, 'Lukas', subconsciously exerted? Or was it from the sense of betrayal that she felt after hearing the words of her beloved Master?

She didn't know. She didn't want to know. She didn't even want to think about it.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean...?!"

This shout came from Leo, who was not too far away.

He had seen everything. He'd seen it, but he couldn't believe his eyes.

Lukas' attitude, tone, and facial expression.

He thought that he'd seen wrong. That it was all an illusion.

But those idle thoughts disappeared as soon as Lukas turned to him and their gazes met.

"What does it mean?"

Hup. Leo couldn't help but subconsciously suck in a breath of cold air. Only then did he understand the feelings of the trembling Min Ha-rin.

"Do you still not know? Why I am disappointed in you all?"

Crunch.

Lukas gritted his teeth. He looked around in a slow, almost mechanical, manner.

“Look around. Look at this mess. Dragon God Island has sunk, and most of its inhabitants are dead. But what about Nodiesop? Before I made that hole in his neck, did you guys manage to give him any meaningful injuries?... I also know that even the wound on his stomach was caused by the Priestess.”

Sedi, who was silent all this time, finally spoke up after biting her lip.

“He’s an Absolute, Father. Don’t you think you’re being too harsh? We-”

“Did your best, right? That’s what they always say. The enemy was too strong. The situation didn’t turn out as planned. They were unlucky... Those are just excuses, disgusting excuses. In the end, it became like this because you were too weak, had poor willpower, or lacked preparation.”

“...”

Sedi bit her lip again, unable to respond. This was because nothing he’d said was wrong. Or maybe it was because she thought it would be useless to say anything to Lukas now.

Lukas slowly lowered his head. Then, after a moment of silence, he spoke in a slightly hoarse voice.

“...until now, I believed in you all, even if only a little bit. I thought that maybe you would be different, not like the other humans. I thought that you might be able to shape your own destiny even without my help, but in the end, I was wrong. You guys betrayed my expectations.... If I knew this would have happened, I wouldn't have bothered to bring you here.”

Lukas' gaze slowly turned to those standing around him.

Min Ha-rin, Leo, Sedi, and even Arid.

Without fail, those that met his gaze trembled involuntarily. They never imagined that they would ever be looked at in such a way by Lukas.

It was a cold and contemptuous gaze that they'd never received before.

“I'm truly disappointed that all of you are just like the other humans.”

“...”

“But the most pathetic among this group is you, Min Ha-rin.”

Lukas' gaze once again turned to the girl in front of him.

He walked up to Min Ha-rin with slow, staggering steps before roughly picking her up by her collar. The power of his grip wasn't much, and if Min Ha-rin wanted to, she could easily break free of his grasp. But at that moment, her body was frozen as if she had been paralysed.

Their eyes met.

When she looked into Lukas' cold blue eyes, she desperately wanted to close her eyes, but he didn't let her.

"Why did you become so pathetic? Did Lee Jong-hak's death remind you of the past? Did you remember the faces of the parents you couldn't protect? Did that stimulate your trauma and as a result, you were overwhelmed with guilt and shame?"

"Ah, uh..."

"If that really is the case, then you are the biggest idiot in the world."

Lukas let go of her collar that he'd been holding tightly before. It was almost as if he was throwing her away.

Min Ha-rin helplessly collapsed to the ice.

"Look around you. Was Lee Jong-hak your only companion? Why don't you pay more attention to the others? You have a lot more than you lost, but it seems that you can only think about those that are already gone... And this is the result. It was your narrow perspective that caused this situation."

"Ah, ah..."

“...if you hold all your marbles tightly in your hand, there will come a day when one of them slips out of your fingers. If you flounder to catch the one you dropped, you might end up losing everything you were holding. Why the hell were you unable to realise such a simple fact?”

Lukas took a deep breath as he looked down at Min Ha-rin. Min Ha-rin pursed her lips slightly.

Then, with half dead eyes, she looked up at her Master.

No.

She looked up at the being she called Master.

“You’re... not Master...”

“_”

Lukas was silent. He was silent for a long time. He couldn’t see her expression well because of how much her head was lowered.

But even if her head wasn’t lowered, he would not have cared about Min Ha-rin’s expression.

“M-, Master... wouldn’t say things like that. He’s always kind and gentle...”

“...are you really still expecting that? How disgusting. Right, that’s enough.”

It felt like cold daggers had been stabbed into her lungs. Min Ha-rin looked up at Lukas with a trembling expression, but he’d already turned away.

He was looking at Nodiesop, who was still in his <Wizard’s World>.

But it wasn’t enough.

As mentioned before, the 9 star spell <Wizard’s World> lacked decisive power. At best, it would only be able to buy time.

Crack!

“Is it me? Or are you really desperate?”

“You’re thinking too much.”

“Don’t try to deceive me. Your body is crumbling like dried porcelain.”

“...!”

Leo, who was still reeling from Lukas' previous words, turned to look at him in surprise.

Most of his body was covered in clothes, but there were still some parts that were visible.

His face and fingertips.

'Why didn't I notice before...?'

Lukas' fingertips were split open. Just like Nodiesop's analogy, it looked like cracked pottery.

What appeared to be powdered flesh slowly fell from his cracked fingers.

"...this is the price to pay for using a power that doesn't fit the level of your body. All of the techniques you've used so far are things that go way beyond your current capabilities."

"What are you trying to say?"

"I'm saying that I don't understand."

Nodiesop spoke in a doubtful tone.

“I hate you. In addition, I have nothing but disgust for your way of thinking. Nevertheless, I still acknowledge the path you took to become an Absolute... That’s why I will ask you now, Lukas Trowman. Why are you shaving away at your transcendent body?”

“What...?”

Sedi’s expression changed drastically when she heard those words.

She turned to look at Lukas with wide eyes, but Lukas’ gaze remained on Nodiesop as he responded in low tone.

“Enough of pointless conversation. Nodiesop, wasn’t it always your goal to get my head?”

“Do you want to die?”

“If you don’t come to me, I will go to you.”

“...I really can’t understand.”

Nodiesop sighed heavily.

Then, in the next moment.

Piht-

The figures of the two Absolutes disappeared.

Clang!

Two huge forces clashed in the sky. The resulting force alone was enough to create a large crater in the ice cap.

Bang! Clang!

The sky and sea seemed to tremble whenever the two clashed.

Lukas shot another beam of Absolute Power from his finger.

“How many times do you think that trick will work-!”

With a loud cry, Nodiesop raised both hands in front of him, creating a screen of water.

The Absolute Beam, which touched this screen of water, changed direction as if it had been refracted by a mirror. To Min Ha-rin, who was still motionless on the ice.

She sat there with a bewildered expression on her face as if she was in a trance. It seemed that she didn't even notice the approach of an attack which would erase her entire body in an instant.

No. Nothing would have changed even if she did realise it.

“...”

Lukas bit his lip slightly.

Puht.

Then he used a blink spell, his figure disappeared in an instant. He reappeared in front of Min Ha-rin.

This was an Absolute Beam that he himself had fired, but once it was reflected by Nodiesop's mirror, his external force had been injected into it. Because of this, it was impossible for Lukas to simply reabsorb the energy or force it to dissipate.

Left with no choice, he stretched his left hand out in front of him to block it.

Clang!

Intense shock.

The force of the collision caused blood to pour out of Lukas' eyes, nose and mouth at the same time.

His body had already reached a stage where even calling it a 'mess' was not enough, but he sincerely hoped that it would be able to endure a bit longer.

Crack-

The palm of his hand began to crack, revealing his flesh, muscles, and eventually his bones.

Lukas grabbed his left wrist with his right hand before sending the attack back to Nodiesop again. Unlike Lukas, who struggled to overcome the attack, Nodiesop simply slapped the Absolute Beam that returned to him.

"..wh-, y?"

Min Ha-rin, who was behind him, called out in a broken voice. Lukas' left hand had become nothing but white bone.

Lukas didn't wipe off the sweat pouring down his face, nor did he respond to Min Ha-rin. Instead, he immediately started battling Nodiesop once again.

"..."

After spacing out for a bit longer, Min Ha-rin turned to look at Sedi.

“...Sedi, what does shaving away his transcendent body mean?”

“...”

“You know something, don’t you? What... what’s Master’s current situation?”

She once again called Lukas Master.

Sedi bit her lip so hard that blood trickled down her chin.

“...his very existence is disappearing.”

“What...?”

“He is using all of the achievements that allowed him to become an Absolute as fuel.”

“Then what will happen?” 54055

“Instead of dying, he will face an even more terrible end.”

In other words, Lukas’ very existence would disappear completely and he would become nothing.”

“...”

The Priestess stared at Lukas with a sunken gaze.

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He couldn't understand.

'Why is he fighting as if he is fully prepared to stop existing?'

The techniques that Lukas used were threatening, but that was it.

They couldn't kill him. This was a fact that Nodiesop was certain of.

In the end, the fight that he was sacrificing his very existence to prolong would only make his inevitable extinction a slower and more painful process.⁵⁴⁰⁵⁵

'If he had just given in and let me kill him here, it's possible that he could have been given a bit of leniency.'

The hatred that the Demon God had for Lukas was extreme, to say the least, but the Sun Giant's hostility was not at that level. There were even rumors that Lukas was on good terms with the Lightning God.

Therefore even if his soul fell into their hands, he might not be treated too badly. Nodiesop had said that he wanted to take his soul and put it into a livestock animal, but he knew that the chances of that actually happening were exceedingly low.

'What is the meaning of this struggle?'

It was at that moment.

"...!"

Nodiesop couldn't help but widen his eyes in shock.

Not because of Lukas. But because he felt something incomprehensible happen inside of him.

'My power...?'

It had all been returned?

Nodiesop clenched his fist.

At that moment, it was possible for him to use the full extent of his Absolute powers.

All of the restraints and restrictions that had been placed upon his body had disappeared at that moment.

‘Did the Priestess use up all of her power?’

No, that shouldn’t be the case.

The first thing that Nodiesop felt at that moment was suspicion.

This was a natural reaction.

After all, if the chains binding someone were to suddenly disappear without a clear reason, the first thing that person would feel wasn’t happiness, but doubt.

Because of this, Nodiesop froze in the air for a moment.

And that was the exact reaction the Priestess was hoping for.

Rumble-

“...!”

In an instant, the Priestess appeared behind Nodiesop. Something that he didn't notice until it was too late.

Her hair shined brightly in seven different colors, her eyes glowed white, and both of her palms were stretched towards Nodiesop.

“—Breath of the Rainbow.”

Flash-!

A powerful explosion of light erupted in the sky. It was so bright for a moment, the sky behind it appeared dark.

The light spread out like a curtain. It had reached the point where one would be able to see the light no matter where they were in the Heavenly Realm.

Crackle!

“Kuhh!”

The tremendous pressure exuded by the seven colored light crushed Nodiesop's body.

‘So this is why she lifted the restrictions...!’

For this attack, the Priestess hadn't just removed the restrictions around Dragon God Island, instead, she had also temporarily removed the restrictions that covered the entirety of the Heavenly Realm.

All in order to create an attack that even Nodiesop couldn't defend against.

The Breath of the Rainbow forced Nodiesop down to the bottom of the ocean in the sky and even continued to directly push him out of the Heavenly Realm without losing momentum.

A fall from 10,000 meters above the sky.

After this tremendous fall, Nodiesop once again fell into an ocean. Only this time, it was the ocean on the continent instead of the one in the Heavenly Realm.

He was probably the first being in existence to sink to the bottom of two oceans in quick succession.

Lukas took a deep breath and turned to look at the Priestess. Then, after calming his shaking body, he opened his mouth.

"I didn't need the help."

"Right. It looked pretty dangerous to me."

"You've lifted the barriers surrounding the entirety of the Heavenly Realm, not just the ones around Dragon God Island. Is this your true power?"

“Right.”

Lukas sighed softly.

“Nodiesop wouldn’t die from something like that. Your power is considerable, but he probably didn’t suffer much damage from your attack. He’s hurt, and he will want to vent his anger. This time, he might actually try to bring down this entire continent.”

“I’m sure you’ll think of a solution for this, Lukas Trowman.”

Lukas’ expression became cold at those words.

“You speak as if you know me well.”

“Of course, I know you well. I’ve probably heard about you thousands, no, tens of thousands of times.”

“Did you talk to Arid?”

“No. To your first disciple.”

“Ha-rin... Min Ha-rin was definitely not relaxed enough to have such a long conversation with you.”

In addition, they had only been in close contact with each other for around a week. They might not have even gotten the chance to talk a few times, let alone a few thousand.

The Priestess burst into laughter at that moment.

“Hey. She’ll get sad if you say something like that. Or did I say it wrong?”

“What?”

“Have you already forgotten? The first disciple you ever had.”

“...”

The eyes of Lukas, who had been looking at the Priestess carefully, gradually began to widen.

“No way...”

“I am the source of every Dragon in the entire multiverse. All Dragon races are just branches that stem from me. And when any member of the Dragon Race dies, even if it might take a bit of time, their souls will cross time, dimensions, and universes before eventually returning to me.”

“But that child... was only a half.”

The Priestess simply smiled at him.

Then her hair slowly became green.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Their gazes were locked together.

The Priestess, who had now had green hair, looked at Lukas with an indescribable expression in her eyes.

“A-,ahaha.”

The slightly shy laugh was very familiar to him.

“I didn’t want our reunion to be like this, but...”

“ ... ”

“Still, it’s nice to see you again.”

...She was.

That child who’d become the leader of a secret organisation even when she was clearly not ready for such a role.

However, she was a child with one of the most wonderful, noble, and beautiful personalities that Lukas had ever encountered.

At the same time, she was the child that had remained as lingering resentment in his heart.

Because, in the end, she was the one he didn’t manage to save.

“...”

They didn’t have the time.

He also knew that this wasn’t the right time for this.

Nevertheless, Lukas was so moved that, for a moment, he forgot how to speak.

He’d never thought about a reunion.

Lukas had never thought too deeply about reuniting with anyone from his homeworld.

Because he knew how long and hard the road was. In a sense, it could be said that he'd intentionally avoided thinking about it.

This was especially so after he met Kasajin again and witnessed his changes.

That fact made him even more speechless.

At that moment, the being standing in front of him was not someone who knew the Absolute Lukas, but the Great Mage Lukas.

Lukas called her name softly.

"...Beniang."

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How have you been?

What exactly was the situation you were in right now?

Why had you become a part of the Seven Fanged Dragon God?

There were so many questions that he wanted to ask that even the word 'mountain' wouldn't be enough to describe it.

Nevertheless, Lukas didn't ask any of them. He knew that they didn't have the time for such a conversation.

"..."

Beniang seemed unable to easily control her surging emotions, but she managed to guess Lukas' intentions.

It was really... really unfortunate.

This wasn't a situation that would allow them to enjoy their reunion.

"That one attack depleted most of my power."

Beniang spoke in a calm tone. Inwardly, she was glad that her voice didn't waver.

"It should have done some damage to Nodiesop, but it wasn't enough to kill him. At best, it would only be able to buy us some time."

Nodiesop had fallen from the Heavenly Realm to the continent below, and even at that moment, he was being pushed into the depths of the ocean.

Of course, it was impossible to drown a Water Spirit King that had become an Absolute, but the power contained in the Breath of the Rainbow wasn't just light.

It was clear that it would take some time for him to disperse the force of the attack and return to the Heavenly Realm.

"Why did you do that?"

"I wanted to talk to you... As for another method..."

Beniang spoke with a serious expression on her face.

Her words were vague, but Lukas understood what she was asking.

She seemed to know exactly what he had planned.

"I don't have one."

Lukas replied with a faint smile.

“And I think you know that too.”

He didn't know how Beniag had become the Seven Fanged Dragon God, but he was certain that it hadn't been for a short time.

It was even possible that the eons Lukas had experienced were nothing in comparison.

After such a passage of time, there was no way that this woman would lack inner maturity.

The current Beniag would understand. There was no choice but to make a sacrifice.

“It can only be one of two things. Either I die alone, or everyone dies together. There are no other options.”

“...there are other options.”

“You mean me being the only survivor?”

He recalled the proposal the Priestess had made to him the first time they had officially met in the garden.

“I became an Absolute for the sake of humans. I have no intentions of using their sacrifice to maintain or prolong my existence. Because that would be defeating the purpose... No.”

Lukas slowly shook his head.

“That might just be trying to rationalise my thoughts.”

He looked at Benieng.

At the face of the first disciple the Great Mage Lukas Trowman had ever accepted. (TL: Isn't her face the Priestess' face?)

It was strange.

With her in front of him, it felt like he was able to see his twisted inner self more clearly.

“Rationalise?”

“I promised the people of our homeworld that I would return. I told them that I would definitely return someday.”

“...”

“That was a statement made out of ignorance. After becoming an Absolute, I realised just how close to impossible it was.”

Lukas slowly shook his head.

“...in the end, I started to feel defeated. I lost interest in the topic that I was most proud of. And I’m not exactly sure when it happened, but my heart was broken.”

After entering the Great World, he had been given a human body. The body had become intimately connected to his soul, and he regained the ability to feel emotions like a mortal.

That was when he was able to look at his situation more objectively.

Lukas realised that he had already been incredibly exhausted for a long time. But he’d continued to suppress it. He deceived himself and acted like nothing happened.

This action had caused his exhaustion to gradually corrode his will from the inside. Very slowly, but surely, his mind was breaking down.

“It was around the time that Nodiesop attacked. My thoughts at that time filled me with disgust.”

Lukas hesitated for a moment, he didn’t want to reveal such a disgraceful thing to his disciple. This was a common mindset of teachers.

Nevertheless, he opened his mouth a moment later.

“...I thought that I could finally rest...”

“...”

“A Master who sacrifices himself for his disciples. That’s a good excuse, right? But what I was trying to do wasn’t a noble sacrifice. It was nothing but a simple escape.”

It was utterly irresponsible.

Lukas couldn’t even face Benieng. This showed just how much his willpower had deteriorated.

If one of the Rulers’ goals was to completely destroy Lukas, then it was about to be accomplished brilliantly.

“That’s not true.”

A clear voice sounded out.

Lukas slowly raised his head. Then he saw the bright eyes staring back at him.

“Anyone who knew even a fraction of what Master had been through all these years would never think of the word ‘escape’.”

“...”

“I heard about ‘Argento Spell’.”

A gentle smile spread across Beniang’s lips.

“It really... made me happy. Because it showed that Master still hadn’t forgotten about me even after all this time. You still remembered me. That was what I thought...”

She meant it.

She knew just how much time had passed.

Memories of their homeworld were something that Absolutes rarely paid attention to. Everything that they had experienced at that time was no longer bitter memories that made their hearts flutter, instead, they were simply processed as ‘information’ before being stored in some random corner of their mind.

But Lukas.

He didn’t do that.

If that were the case then there was no way he’d name an organisation ‘Argento Spell’.

She knew how hard it was.

“Master valued a past relationship that much. Even a disappointing disciple like me wasn’t forgotten... Even after countless eons, you still hadn’t abandoned humanity. I know that living such a life was worse than any form of punishment or torture.”

She knew the fundamental reason why Absolutes’ emotions became diluted over time.

It was because they couldn’t stand to have a soft hearted attitude and deal with every trivial thing.

If they did, then their minds would collapse or they would simply go insane after saving only a few universes.

But Lukas confronted that belief head on.

He never abandoned his identity as a human even after saving countless universes. Countless humans.

He endured mental fatigue and suffering while holding all of his guilt inside.

“...as a being who knows a bit about your life, as a being with half human blood, and above all, as a disciple who received your grace and care in the past, there is something that I’ve always wanted to say to you.”

Beniang bowed to him.

“Thank you.”

“...!”

Lukas’ eyes widened when he heard those words. His entire body shook as if he’d been struck by lightning.

-Somehow.

He was reminded of the time he’d comforted her in a dark desert night.

“It is something I’ve wanted to say for a long time. Thank you so much.”

This time, the roles were reversed.

This time, it was Lukas, not Beniang, who was breaking down from exhaustion. And it was Beniang, not Lukas, who was caring for the other’s weak mind and body.

“...you.”

Lukas’ voice seemed to have a bit of airiness mixed into it.54055

“You’re telling me the thing I wanted to hear most right now.”

Beniang smiled faintly.

“...I respect your choice, Master. I won't try to stop you. No, there is no human in the entire multiverse who has the right to stop you.”

The Absolute, who had fought for humans for an eternity, was now about to die for humans.

He intended to close his eyes and call the eternity that he would experience after his extinction a 'break'.

There was no human being in existence that had the right to block his sacred rest.(TL: Iris would disagree)

Beniang also conveyed her inner thoughts to Lukas.

He was thankful.

His first disciple, who used to cry about trivial things in the past, had grown up so beautifully. She'd grown to such an extent that she was even able to overlook her Master's pathetic greed.

“Can I ask you to watch over those children? They are not going to know what to do for a while. And it will certainly be a painful time. But I want you to be the one to guide them.”

“...if that is what Master wants.”

“Thank you.”

Lukas closed his eyes.

Tears mixed with blood flowed down from his closed eyes.

“I’m happy to be reunited with you. I feel like I managed to receive the best gift at the end of my life.”

Beniang kept smiling brightly.

She didn’t want her face, which would be the last thing Lukas would remember, to be tearful, but she couldn’t stop the two streams that started rolling down her cheeks.

Volume 2 - Chapter 275

‘Why did you protect me...?’

Min Ha-rin stared at the sky with a blank look in her eyes.

She could barely see Lukas’ silhouette. And at some point, the roaring which sounded like heaven and earth were being torn asunder, also stopped.

Was the battle... over?

Who won?

“Did the teaching help?”

Suddenly, she heard a voice from behind her.

When Min Ha-rin turned to look, she saw the Priestess standing there.

“...tea-, ching?”

“The teaching you received from Master.”

“...I... was taught by Master?”

“Do you not know what you received?”

The Priestess' voice gradually became sharper.

“Although the method might have been a bit radical, what Master told you was the thing you needed to hear the most.”

Min Ha-rin's mind had been on the verge of shattering. Talking softly to someone in this state was no different from forcibly fixing a broken item after it had reached the end of its lifespan.

That's why Lukas chose to directly shatter her mind. It was because he thought it would be better to start over from scratch.

"Why do you think he used 9 star magic? He already had the means to deal with Nodiesop. Nevertheless, he continued to fight against him while only using magic. Haven't you wondered why that was the case?"

"..."

No. She hadn't. In fact, she hadn't really been thinking about anything, she couldn't.

Min Ha-rin looked at Benieng with a slightly dull gaze.

"It was to show you. The fighting style of a Wizard who has reached the peak of magicology."

"...!"

There was a difference between seeing and not seeing the true power of 9 stars at least once.

And this difference was incredibly large.

“In the future, when you have reached 8 stars and are preparing to enter 9 stars, you will encounter the largest and most frustrating wall that you will ever experience in your entire life, and you will feel despair because of your lack of talent... The memories you have gained today will guide you to the next ‘step’.”

Her body couldn't stop shaking.

Min Ha-rin grabbed her hair roughly.

“Ah... uh... ah...”

Her thoughts were a mess.

Far too many things had happened too suddenly.

Still, there was a lingering question in her mind that she was able to voice.

“Does he... intend to die?”

“...”

Beniang didn't answer this question. Instead, she just took a deep breath.

“Do you know why I said those things to you?”

“Why...”

“Because if I didn’t, you would probably regret it for the rest of your life. If I didn’t tell you that, you probably would have been able to grow stronger at an explosive rate. After all, malice has always been one of the greatest driving forces of growth since ancient times. However... you definitely would have suffered tremendously during the process.”

Beniang let out a bitter chuckle.

“You can take it as the kindness of a senior. Min Ha-rin, is there anything you want to say to Master?”

“...!”

Kuk.

She bit her lip hard, her gaze returning to the sky.

She did have things she wanted to say. In fact, there was so much that she felt like she would burst.

But Lukas... was too far away to hear her.

Paah!

The Priestess waved her hand and Min Ha-rin's body suddenly appeared in the sky.

There was no need for her to look around since she could see Lukas in front of her.

'Master. Master.'

He was still some distance away.

She didn't want to be late.

No, she couldn't be late.

She had already exceeded her limit, but she still roused the little mana still remaining in her body. Using the Fly spell, she approached Lukas.

The Priestess was right.

If she were to let Lukas just go now, she would definitely regret it for the rest of her life.

“Master-!”

She shouted as loudly as she could.

She saw Lukas look up at her in surprise.

The gaze he sent to her wasn't the same as before. Right. It had all been an act.

As soon as she realised that, tears poured down her face as if a dam had been opened.

“I'm sorry... I'm sorry... I'm so sorry...!” (TL: Somehow, I regret tling this while listening to 'Everything I do' by Bryan Adams. T~T)

There were other things she wanted to say, but at that moment, her mind was a mess.

Min Ha-rin cried desperately and repeatedly apologized as if she'd become a broken record.

“...”

Lukas' eyes gradually closed, and a bitter smile spread across his lips.

“I'm probably the only one who didn't know. I was only thinking about my pain. I never thought about Master's pain. I... Even till the end, I was...”

“I was no different.”

Lukas shook his head as he spoke.

“I only thought from my own perspective... I never thought that making you reliant on me might suppress your potential. If it wasn't for me, I'm sure that you all would have become much more amazing beings. It feels like I forcefully replanted seedlings that would have grown into even taller trees if they were left alone.”

“No! Without Master, I, no, we would have been...”

“I also thought that separating like this would boost your growth. But I didn't take into account the pain I would leave you with... No. Maybe I just pretended to not know.”

Lukas smiled faintly.

“I was only aiming for efficiency. This is a bad habit that most Wizards have, so I hope you don't become like this as well.”

Again... Even in this situation, he was still giving her advice.

Right. Lukas hadn't changed.

It was Min Ha-rin who had changed.

She was the one who had become pathetic.

“...I don’t want to separate now.”

Like a child, Min Ha-rin cried even harder.

“I want to stay with you a while longer.”

“Our parting was determined from the moment we met. Whether it happened sooner or later, we were bound to be separated at some point. That is a providence that not even God can change.”

“I know that! But our parting could still be postponed for a while longer! If I, if only I were stronger...”

“That might have been possible if you were strong enough to defeat Nodiesop. But do you really think that’s possible? Do you think you could defeat an Absolute who has lived tens of thousands of years more than you have?”

“Then, then do you just... want me to accept fate?”

Min Ha-rin covered her face as she shouted.

“I, I don’t want to get used to parting...!”

Lukas remained silent for a while. Then, he slowly approached Min Ha-rin and wrapped his arms around her.

She sank into his soft embrace. A feeling that she wished could last forever.

“I’m not telling you to get used to it. I’m telling you to be strong. You’re still young. So you will experience many partings in your life. Are you going to collapse and cry every time?”

“...h-, huk.”

“Stop being a baby. It’s time to be mature. Someday, you will also have to leave someone. Someday... you will also want to rest. I have lived... far longer than a human can handle.”

The desire to stop him from leaving welled up inside her.

However, Min Ha-rin knew just how selfish that thought was.

“Can I be greedy one last time?”

“Yes.”

“Can you see me off with a smile?”

It was a difficult request, but Min Ha-rin gave in to his request. With a tearful smile, she looked up at him.

“...I’m really glad I got to meet Master.”

“Right.”

“I’m sure everyone else thinks so too.”

“Thanks.”

“You’ve been through a lot and you deserve to rest.”

“...”

“I will never forget you. Please-”

Min Ha-rin stopped talking.

At some point, she stopped receiving responses, and after a while, she felt the warm presence disappear.

The cold air hit her chest hard.

She didn't want to raise her head. Still, she forced herself to straighten up and look straight ahead.54055

Lukas was no longer there.

"Please... rest in peace..."

As she said that, Min Ha-rin collapsed.

Instead of the end of her sentence, the only thing that could be heard was loud crying.

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Thousands of meters below the surface of the ocean.

In a place where the water pressure was so strong that it wouldn't be strange for a human to be crushed in an instant.

Nodiesop's 'descent' finally began to slow down.

"..."

After feeling the force that pressed down on him taper off, Nodiesop straightened up before looking around.

All he could see was complete darkness.

In fact, it was a bit silly to say 'all he could see', since there was no place in the world that would be darker than this.

This was a world of complete and utter darkness, where not even a single ray of sunlight could reach.⁵⁴⁰⁵⁵

Darkness was one of the greatest stimuli of human fear. But Nodiesop wasn't afraid.

This wasn't because he wasn't human in the first place, or because he was an Absolute.

It was because this was an ocean.

For him, a place like this was no different from home.

In the first place, the reason he was able to stop so soon was because he'd borrowed the power of the ocean. Otherwise, he would have ended up embedded in the very crust of the planet.

'...so that is the power of the Seven Fanged Dragon God.'

He finally had an understanding of just how weak she had become. Compared to her, the restrictions that had been placed on Nodiesop couldn't even be called restrictions.

About 1/82,000th of her prime.

That was the most power the Priestess was capable of exerting in her current situation.

...The 'seven fangs' could be considered the symbols of the Seven Fanged Dragon God.

They were the vessels that contained the souls of the Absolutes who stood at the peak of the multiverse in the past.

According to the Sun Giant, the Dragon God had said that every tooth it lost meant that its strength decreased by 1/7th.

And it could be said that the Priestess had lost six of her teeth.

'How terrifying.'

If she'd managed to recover even two of her fangs, then Nodiesop would not have been her opponent.

By his calculations, if she had managed to recover three, then she would have been 40 times stronger than she was now. And if she got four, she would be 7 times stronger than that...

'Her condition isn't stable.'

Whether she liked it or not, in order to exist as the Seven Fanged Dragon God, she would need to have seven personalities. This was a part of the Seven Fanged Dragon God's identity.

So after becoming the Priestess, she would have gathered the required souls as quickly as possible. She'd probably chosen the best souls that were available to her at that point.

Nevertheless, the souls within the Priestess were beings that could only vaguely be considered 'Absolutes'.

'After all, there was no way the Priestess could contain the souls of seven Absolutes in her current state.'

This didn't mean that her abilities were lacking. It was just the reality.

The weakened Priestess was no match for Nodiesop.

This was proven by the fact that she was unable to kill him with her sudden attack. She didn't even give him a proper injury.

'...the injuries on my neck and stomach have also healed.'

This was possible because the Priestess had lifted the restrictions around the Heavenly Realm.

Now, Nodiesop had regained most of his power.

Swoosh!

He shot upwards, going from thousands of meters below the ocean to the surface in an instant. It was a magical sight, like a Dragon soaring to the heavens. But in truth, he was a murderer who was going to kill a Dragon.

Nodiesop shot out of the ocean and reached the sky above the continent in the blink of an eye. And above him, he could see the hole in the Heavenly Realm that he'd come from. He entered the hole once again, this time going in the opposite direction.

He was once again submerged in the heavenly ocean of the continent floating in the sky, but it didn't take him long to pierce the surface of that as well.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Less than a minute after breaking free from the force sending him downwards, he'd once again pierced through two oceans before returning from whence he came. And waiting for him there was Lukas.

The Priestess was nowhere to be seen.

Lukas was the only one there.

It was strange.

Nodiesop stared at Lukas. The difference in power between them was obvious. In fact, it was so large that it couldn't even be described in words.

No matter what he did, it was impossible for Lukas to defeat Nodiesop.

...No.

This wasn't the first time. From the time Lukas appeared, no, even further back. From the first time they'd met each other on 'Earth', this man had never been a match for Nodiesop.

He'd had many chances to beat him and even more chances to kill him.

And yet.

Nodiesop had yet to do so.

Of course, there was always a different reason for this.

Rapidly changing situations, unexpected situations, interference from a third party, and his own choice...

...But in the end, those were all just excuses, petty excuses.

As an Absolute, he should have completed his objective while ignoring the obstacles.

But now, he couldn't help but acknowledge this man to an extent.

That's why he couldn't help but think again.

It was strange.

At that moment, Lukas seemed to be completely detached. His face was calm and indifferent as if he had already put everything down, as if his fighting spirit had already disappeared.

"Do you intend to just accept death?"

Although he asked this, Nodiesop inwardly denied the possibility of this being true. He didn't think this stubborn man would accept such a futile end.

However, considering his attitude and the current situation, he couldn't think of any other possibilities.

“What would you do if that was the case? Do you have any thoughts of leaving after killing me?”

“Of course not. The first thing I’ll do after killing you is erase everyone connected to you.”

“Then?”

“Sink this entire continent.”

“That would cause an unprecedented catastrophe on a planetary scale.”

“It certainly would be unprecedented in this world. But it’s nothing strange for me. It’s not just out of spite. By sinking this place, it will be much easier to find Letip and the Demon King, who are looking for the other statues down there.”

“...I see.”

By not bringing anyone from Earth, Nodiesop was able to receive the advantage of being able to use his power sooner than the others.

On the other hand, Lukas, Kasajin, and Letip were still under many restrictions.

For him, it was a race against time.

He wanted to finish everything before the other Absolutes managed to regain their strength, while they were still as weak as possible.

If the floating continent fell to the ground, it would almost certainly cause an enormous tsunami to occur.

The scale would be so large that even Lukas couldn't predict the outcome.

Most of the land would be submerged, and water was the substance that could be called Nodiesop's 'origin'. While it was true that it wouldn't help him find Kasajin and Letip's specific locations, he would still be able to narrow it down to some extent.

From Nodiesop's perspective, it was the smoothest and most natural first step towards his goals.

Lukas shook his head slowly.

Surprisingly, even though he was about to die, there wasn't the slightest bit of agitation in his heart.

His mind and body were as calm as the mirror-like surface of a tranquil lake.

"Nodiesop."

"What is it?"

“Let’s go together.”

“...what?”

Just as Nodiesop frowned.

Darkness suddenly engulfed the entire area.

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Where... was this?

Nodiesop couldn’t help but wonder as he looked around.

It seemed that he had been transported to a completely black space.

It was even darker than the place thousands of meters below the surface of the ocean where he’d been pushed to previously.

...It was like a space where nothing seemed to exist, not even light.

“Lukas Trowman...”

What the hell did he do to him?

He grit his teeth.

'Darkness' had suddenly surrounded his body without any warning.

When the darkness had first appeared, his first reaction was to cover his body in external force, but the darkness didn't have any offensive power.

In this way, Nodiesop was consumed by the great wave of darkness.

And when he opened his eyes, he found himself in this place.

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"Was there a place like this in this [field]."

Tap, tap-

After an unknown amount of time, the sound of footsteps resounded in the dark space.

Lukas had finally made an appearance.

In this dark space, his face looked exceptionally pale.

No. It wasn't just pale.

It was as though a subtle glow suffused his entire body.

That... didn't seem to be mana.

"Where did you take me?"

"A place without water."

"..."

Nodiesop couldn't help but look around a bit when he heard those words.

There truly was no water in this place.

No, there wasn't even any air there.

There was literally nothing.

It was an empty world where only two things existed,

Nodiesop and Lukas.

“Ha.”

Nodiesop couldn't even laugh.

A last resort. Nothing but a last resort...

Did he intend to toss around until the very end? Was that why he brought him to a place without water?

“If this is your last resort, then I can't help but be disappointed.”

“...”

“Did you think you'd be at an advantage just because there was no water here? Is this the method that you came up with?”

As he said this, Nodiesop waved his arm.

Swoosh-

And in an instant, his arm transformed into water.

“I am water. It seems that you have already forgotten. There are no longer any restrictions on me.”

“...”

“Open your eyes and take a good look. In front of you is the full strength and dignity of an Absolute. You should understand by now. The moment the Priestess’ attack didn’t kill me was the moment the ending in this fight was set in stone.”

“Your defeat is the only thing that has been set in stone, Nodiesop, the Spirit King who abandoned humanity.”

Nodiesop furrowed his eyebrows.

Even after reaching this point, his tongue was still wagging like before.

Now, he looked comical, ridiculous, and disgraceful.

“...You’re not even worth arguing with.”

Droplets of water slid down his liquefied arm before floating in front of him.

He shook his hand.

Swoosh-

The thousands of water droplets of water changed their shape, becoming sharp spears that were all aimed at Lukas.

Each of those spears contained enough power to destroy an entire planet.

Nodiesop raised his eyes to look at Lukas.

In his current state, it would be impossible for him to block or dodge this attack.

“Goodbye.”

With one last gesture, the spears shot towards Lukas’ body.

In an instant, they would turn him into a sieve before the ferocious spears of water completely destroyed his body without leaving even a single piece of skin or flesh remaining.

—Or at least, that should have been the case.

"<Disappear>."

With that one word, the spears of water vanished in thin air.

"Huh?"

"<Kneel>."

Thud!

"...!"

He immediately felt a sharp pain in his knees. Nodiesop's eyes went wide.

He wasn't sure what had just happened.

It was as though the things that had just occurred surpassed his cognitive ability.

"A-, uh..?"

It took him a while before he understood the situation.

The water that he'd created had disappeared as if it had evaporated, and he was now looking up at Lukas while on his knees.

His body couldn't move. He couldn't even blink his eyes.

It was as if he'd completely lost control of his own body.

'Wh-, what the hell...'

"Endtongue."

Lukas indifferently looked down at him.

"What's wrong? Your face looked like that was what you wanted to ask, so I gave you an answer. That's the name of the authority I used." (TL: 'Authority' is the 'power' the Demigods had. But another word for 'power' is being used as well, I'll just separate them.... Even though it's a bit late.)

"Did... y-, you say... au-, thority...?"

"Right."

"That's... im-, possible...! Th-, there is no way...! With that body that's close to being destroyed...! With your power restricted...! Even if you use your transcendent body as fuel, it's not possible...!"

“I don’t need to worry about that. It seems you haven’t realised it yet. This is no longer the [field] that was created by the Rulers. This is a completely different world...”

“What did you say...?”

Another world?

Did he just say another world?

Nodiesop’s eyes went wide.

“Quit your bullshit! Are you trying to say that you, a bastard like you, has the power to create a personal space-!”

Water began to drip from his body.

The falling droplets came together once again to take the form of a water giant.

Giant of Annihilation.

It was needless to say that this technique, which was obviously inspired by the Sun Giant, was Nodiesop’ trump card.

The giant that he created had the power to destroy an entire universe with a single attack.

Nevertheless, Lukas' expression remained calm.

"In this world, I can change the concepts as I wish. I can make fire freeze, earth soft, wind hard, and water..."

Fwoosh.

"Burn."

"What? Guaah!"

Nodiesop screamed.

The Giant of Annihilation that he had created began to burn. Raging flames swept across its entire body before it soon began to consume Nodiesop's body.

This... What the hell was this?

The water was burning his entire body.

How was something like this possible?

'Change the concepts?'

That was impossible! There was no way that such a thing was possible!

"Y-, you... did you really create this world? Does that mean you really have the 'authority of creation' that only very few Absolutes have?!"

Nodiesop shouted in a broken voice.

Space creation. Personal Space.

Absolutes with this authority were incredibly rare.

No, even calling it rare was a severe under-exaggeration.

At the very least, Nodiesop had never met an Absolute who had that authority except for the Rulers.

Of course, there had been rumors that Lukas had this authority, but Nodiesop had never believed it.

'It's not my authority.'

Lukas muttered in a low voice.

"This power belonged to my greatest and worst enemy. The being who God loved the most. The being who was the closest to God. If he had headed in the right direction, and if he had enough time... He was a being that probably would have become another Ruler."

Another name he had was 'The One closest to God, Michael'.

Lukas had only realised after becoming an Absolute himself. No other Absolute had such a name. Even the four Rulers who stood at the very peak of existence were no exception to this fact.

There was only one being in the entire multiverse that had been given that name.

There was only one 'Lord'.

"S-, s-, st-, stop talking nonsense-!"

As he shouted, Nodiesop tried to raise his external force. But it was strange.

His external force was escaping as if there were holes all over his body.

“A-, a-, ahhh...”

It... It was strange. It was the first time in his entire life that he'd experienced a situation that managed to disturb his mind.

This strange, unidentified space was slowly causing Nodiesop to fear the unknown.

...Fear?

'I, an Absolute, am feeling fear?'

It felt like he had been punched in the gut.

Weakness, helplessness, fear.

He couldn't stop his external force from leaking.

His body and mind... No.

It felt like his very existence was beginning to disappear.

His consciousness gradually began to fade.

“I didn’t tell you the name of this place yet, did I? This place and I had a pretty bad relationship for 4000 years, nevertheless... Welcome.”

Lukas’ whisper was the only thing he could hear.

“To the neverending hell. Welcome to the Abyss.”

* * *

“Ahhhhh!”

Nodiesop called upon his external force once again.

His body also began to gradually grow darker.

His condition became similar to the way Lukas was before. He was using his transcendent body to fuel his external force.

But it was pointless.

Crack.

The external force that flowed out was suddenly devoured by a set of jaws that appeared in the air.

Nodiesop couldn't help but watch this scene with wide eyes. No, to be exact, he could only watch.

Lukas Trowman didn't move. He only stood there like a statue, silently looking at Nodiesop. However, that only served to increase the fear Nodiesop was feeling at that moment.

He couldn't find a way to break free from this predicament.

He couldn't think of a way to win.

All of the dark space around him was his opponent's territory.

Blegh!

He vomited up something like seawater.

This was the so-called essence that formed the very source of Nodiesop's existence. And immediately afterwards, his body became soft like jelly.

He no longer had enough power to maintain the shape of his body.

“...what... the hell is wrong with you...”

A low murmur came from him.

His annihilation had already become a fact, and not even God would be able to stop it now.

“If you had a power like this, then why...”

Nodiesop didn't get the chance to finish his question.

Gurgle-

His entire body melted like a candle in front of a raging flame.

And after a brief moment, only a soft and sticky liquid that used to be 'Nodiesop' floated in the black space. But it didn't take very long before that too disappeared, vanishing in the air as if it had evaporated.

“...”

Nodiesop was dead.

The Absolute who had once driven him into a corner, threatened him and tormented him was dead.

Nevertheless, Lukas didn't feel any sense of accomplishment.

"You want to know why I didn't use this power all this time?"

Lukas continued the question Nodiesop hadn't been able to finish.

The one that wanted the answer was dead, but he still felt the need to answer it.

"It's because I'm not confident that I can completely control this power... For example, it's impossible for me to leave this place on my own."

In order to leave this world, he would need the coordinates for the outside world, a complete understanding of Lord's power, a certain amount of external force, and a mind and body capable of withstanding the inter-universal movement.

Among that group of conditions, there was not a single one that Lukas was capable of satisfying.

That was the very reason why he chose this world to be his tomb.

"..."

Lukas quietly laid down in the darkness.

Psss—

His body slowly began to crumble. Although the form was different, it was the same 'premonition of annihilation' that Nodiesop had experienced.

'This is my end.'

He calmly accepted this fact.

He'd already made up his mind about it.

The only thing he regretted was that he couldn't keep his promise.

"...I hope you can understand."

He closed his eyes while muttering those pathetic, selfish words.

The urge to sleep descended on his mind, and Lukas didn't fight it.

Gradually, his consciousness began to fade.

The Abyss.

This empty world of darkness had become the perfect tomb for Lukas.

The first sweet rest he was allowing himself to have.

His mind and body gradually relaxed. And the Abyss would never tolerate such indolence.

The darkness began encroaching on his fingers and toes. And after a short while, his entire body became covered by it.

This wasn't unpleasant. In fact, it was warm as if he was being covered by a warm blanket.

Dang...

Then he heard a strange sound.

It was a clear sound, like a coin falling on the ground.

What was the sound? Where did it come from?

...He didn't know. But he was no longer curious.

Lukas Trowman ignored the questions in his mind and fell into a deep sleep.

Volume 2 - Chapter 278

Four huge thrones sat in the center of a certain universe.

A voice echoed from the golden throne.

[I never would have expected this result.]

The Thunderous Lightning God was the one to break the silence. His voice spread across the entirety of the dark universe, and it seemed to carry a hint of irritation within it.

The Lightning God might have spoken lightly, but the reality of his words was anything but.

Rulers usually took most of the possibilities they could imagine into account when they encountered something. But their concept of 'most' was generally different from that of others.

After all, it was possible for a 'mere' mortal to imagine hundreds of thousands of possibilities into account and select the most probable ones from the group.

For a Ruler, this was something they could do without even thinking too deeply about it.

And the thing that had just happened was one of the possibilities that even the Lightning God thought had an extremely low chance of happening.

[Is Nodiesop completely dead?]

The Sun Giant answered the Lightning God's question.

[I can no longer sense his presence in the multiverse. It's as if he disappeared into the imaginary world.]

[...]

The imaginary world.

A place filled with mysteries that even Rulers were unable to 'rule' over.

Naturally, the Rulers found the existence of such a place extremely unpleasant. It was to the extent that the Lightning God became displeased just by the simple fact that the Sun Giant mentioned the imaginary world in the first place.

[First of all, it seems like I've lost these qualifiers. So I'll accept the results. Notify me later if the situation changes.]

After saying this in his unique blunt tone, the Sun Giant directly left.

Now, the only beings that existed in that universe were the Lightning God and the Demon God. It was at that moment that the Demon God finally opened his mouth for the first time.

[...the Dragon God is still in that world.]

[Are you going to order Kasajin to put an end to her?]

[That's not necessary. It wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing for us if she becomes a Ruler again.]

[It's an absurdly slim chance. Even if she became a Ruler again, I wonder if she'll regain her old prestige.]

In the first place, it was an unprecedented situation for a Ruler to lose their position in the first place. Even if she was to regain her strength, it was impossible to say whether she would regain her former power.

After all, even if a broken jar is repaired, the traces of the cracks would not disappear.

[Even so, wouldn't she be better than most Absolutes?]

[We don't need a stronger Absolute.]

The Lightning God responded in a slightly irritable tone.

The Demon God was silent for a while before finally opening his mouth.

[It seems you had higher expectations of Lukas Trowman than I initially thought.]

[Is that how it looks?]

[Don't pretend to be innocent. I would have thought that you would place your highest expectations on Letip.]

[...]

[I do admit that he is quite strange for an Absolute. However, we all know how contradictory of an Absolute he is.]

An absolute with emotions was a very precarious being.

It was like a mind that could collapse at any moment. Of course, Lukas' mental power was so high that there was no precedent among the Absolutes. If it wasn't for his mental power, he would have been ruined long ago.

[That's exactly what I was hoping for. I was wondering what type of person he would become if he managed to overcome that contradiction.]

[That sounds like a step backwards instead of a step forward. That man was going to disappear eventually. Unfortunately, it was only the annihilation of Nodiesop that allowed it to happen.]

In the end, this end was decided from the moment Lukas decided to not put aside his feelings.

If he had become a Ruler, it was possible that he could have postponed this, but the Demon God still couldn't accept the Lightning God's suggestion.

[Now what? Will you change your plan?]

[It seems that some form of correction is necessary.]

The Lightning God looked across the universe.

Some mortals considered the universe itself to be a divine being. Compared to the vastness of the universe, they thought that their existence was no different from a speck of dust.

For them, this was a natural idea.

However, to Absolutes, especially the Rulers, such a thought was incredibly strange. This was because there was nothing in the universe that they couldn't know.

So in a sense.

The unknown could be considered something that even Rulers feared.

* * *

“Is something wrong?”

A woman spoke as she spun around like a dancer.

“Your face is stuck in disbelief. Is it that you don’t believe what the Demon God said?”

Kasajin cast an indifferent gaze towards the woman before speaking in a cold voice.

[I only believe what I see with my own two eyes. Even the Black Horned Demon God cannot change that fact.]

“That’s... not someone who only lives because of his grace should say.”

The woman chuckled.

“I think you’re just denying reality. What’s with the attitude? What’s wrong? Are you upset that your rival died-”

[Shut up.]

Kasajin reached out a hand and picked the woman up by her slender neck.

“Kuk.”

It was clear that with even the slightest bit of force, the woman’s pale neck would be crushed without resistance.

Kasajin’s eyes burned red, but the woman simply smiled at him.

Even though she was struggling to breathe, she still opened her mouth to speak.

“Hu... huhu... I didn’t think you still had any emotion left in you.”

[...]

“As expected. How interesting. You...”

Kasajin let the woman go before she could finish her sentence.

The woman fell to the ground, gasping for breath.

“Did you see it for yourself?”

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“What?”

[Lukas’ transcendent body being shaved away, and his soul trembling in anxiety just before it was destroyed. I’m asking if you saw it with your own eyes.]

“I don’t need to. The Rulers are all convinced that he’s dead.”

[...I see.]

Kasajin clicked his tongue.

[Stop trying me, Ringo. You have work to do.”

“Ah. But it’s scattered all over the place. First, I’ll need to kill our cute little Kran’s mental strength a bit more. Now is the best time since the Priestess’ barrier has weakened.”

With a slight bounce in her step, the woman, Ringo, left the room.

Soon after, Kasajin, who was left alone in the hall, slowly closed his eyes while cupping his chin in his hand.

[You definitely wouldn't let me down. As always... So answer me. Where are you now?]

With his eyes closed, Kasajin shook his head.

[Go ahead and prove to me that you really are Lukas Trowman.]

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Crack...

“Hah...”

Min Ha-rin let out a long sigh.

The ice around Dragon God Island suddenly began to melt, and the tsunami that hung above their heads slowly receded. Of course, this was not a natural phenomenon.

It was the priestess.

She was creating the barriers again.

“...Nodiesop?”

“Dead.”

The way the Priestess responded had changed once again. She now spoke in a cold voice. The hair that had gotten wet and stuck to her cheeks had also become blue.

“...”

Min Ha-rin opened her mouth for a while before closing it again.

She forcefully swallowed the words that threatened to climb up her throat and out her mouth.

...It was short, but the conversation they had was something she would never forget for her entire life.

Her master’s decision had been sad and painful, but she couldn’t help but understand it in her heart.

She didn’t want to mention him just yet. It felt like just saying his name would rip her heart to shreds.

She looked around.

Dragon God Island had changed into a very miserable form, but it was the people who lived on Dragon God Island that were the most miserable.

How hadn't she seen this before?

She had her eyes open, but she had been no different from a blind person.

Lukas was right.

She'd been so focused on the things she'd lost that she'd completely lost sight of the things that really mattered.

She would make sure that never happened again.

"Why..."

Staggering, Sedi got up from her seat.

"...are you the only ones here? Where is Father?"

It wasn't just Sedi.

Arid and Leo were also looking at them.

Min Ha-rin tried to speak in the calmest voice she could muster.

“He passed away.”

“What...?”

“It is something he wanted for a long time, and it was his own will. Even if I am his disciple, I have no right to stop him from doing what he wants.”

“You... What the hell are you talking about?”

Sedi growled in a low tone. She appeared in front of Min Ha-rin in an instant and pulled her down by her collar so that they were face to face.

Close enough to feel each other’s breath.

Their eyes staring directly into the other’s.

“...don’t try to beat around the bush, tell me straight. What happened to Father?”

Her anger was obvious in her voice.

She knew what Sedi was like.

The answer she wanted was the firm truth. But Min Ha-rin could guess what her reaction would be when she heard the truth.

Nevertheless, she still had to say it.

Because Min Ha-rin.

As the only one who saw Lukas' last moment, it was her duty to tell the others what she'd seen.

"He's dead."

"..."

Sedi's eyes went wide. Her lips twitched back and forth as if she was holding something back.

"...dead?"

"Yeah."

"And you... just left him alone?"

“ ... ”

“Answer me. If you were watching from the side, you should have been able to stop him somehow.”

“...there was no other way. If Master didn't stop Nodiesop, everyone would have died.”

Demonic energy erupted from Sedi's body at those words.

She knew.

Sedi wasn't Lukas' disciple. Although the father-daughter relationship had only been decided verbally, she didn't intend to downplay their relationship as superficial.

Therefore, unlike a disciple, his daughter would not be able to accept his death, regardless of the reason.

“You promised me when Father fell unconscious. You said that we would protect him this time. You said that you would definitely even if it meant risking your lives, didn't you?”

“ ... ”

“Answer me!”

Sedi's voice was infused with demonic energy.

She used to be an Absolute.

So she understood Lukas' determination and sacrifice better than any of them.

Min Ha-rin also knew this, so she found it hard to open her mouth.

"Ha."

Sedi let out a short laugh. Her lips were twisted in a way that showed that she might cry at any moment.

Her head dropped and her small fists trembled.

She knew how strong she was. But at that moment, Sedi looked as delicate as a cat that had been soaked by the rain.

"...right. You guys survived. It's fine since he saved your lives."

"I don't think so."

"Shut. Your. Mouth."

Sedi raised her head again, and the rage and hatred within her eyes surprised Min Ha-rin for a second.

“I can’t accept this.”

After saying that, Sedi turned around without hesitation.

“Where are you going?”

“To bring my Father back to life.”

“...that’s impossible.”

“If you say one more word, I will kill you.”

Her voice was so laced with killing intent that it caused chills to go down Min Ha-rin’s spine.

Sedi grit her teeth as she continued.

“If Father is really dead, then there’s no reason for me to stick around with you. From this moment on, you and I have no relationship, so don’t act like we’re close.”

After saying those words, Sedi disappeared.

No one there could stop her from leaving.

“...”

Min Ha-rin was heartbroken.

From the start, no.

It hadn't even started yet and there was already discord in their group.

“Is Master... really...”

“Ah...ah...”

Leo and Arid still had yet to regain their bearings.

...So it would be up to Min Ha-rin to care for them and lead them.

‘I won't give up.’

She would continue Lukas' wish.

Win the qualifiers, return to Earth, expel all the Demons, and make sure the name Argento Spell was known by the entire world.

And she also wanted to hold a funeral for Lukas. It might not seem possible now, but she hoped that Sedi would be with them by then.

It would not be easy, and it would probably take a long time, but at least she had a clear goal.

She won't wander aimlessly any longer.

'I will never forget.'

She would never forget the kindness she received from him. She would prove herself to him.

'So please rest well, Master.'

You really worked hard.

Master.

* * *

Time passed.

...

...

A lot of time passed.

...

...

So why was he still 'existing'.

"...ah."

Lukas spoke after a long time. It was amazing that he even had a voice in the first place. No, maybe he was only thinking that he'd made a sound.

...Lukas.

He'd chosen to make the Abyss his tomb.

He'd prepared to be annihilated there and that is exactly what should have happened.

But like his body, which was still floating uncorrupted in space, his mind still remained conscious.

'Why... why haven't I disappeared yet?'

After aimlessly floating in this world, he should have already been assimilated by the darkness.

That was the end that Lukas hoped for and the end he should have met.

Even at that moment, half of his body and mind had been immersed in the darkness.

Nevertheless, Lukas still existed.

He was still able to think.

Raising a hand, Lukas patted his body. And he realised a surprising fact.

The cracks were sealed. As if his wounds were being repaired.

'Did I do this?'

Lukas was the only thing that existed in the Abyss at that moment.

Other than Lukas, there was no one capable of healing his injuries, which led him to think about himself.

But he couldn't remember doing it.

'Did I subconsciously heal my wounds?'

Anger surged within him for a moment.

It was a clumsy response that couldn't even be called a temporary measure. At best, it would simply slow down his rate of annihilation.

Therefore, his anger was directed at none other than himself.

Wasn't he the one who said that he wanted to die? But now that he'd finally reached the point of death, he'd suddenly developed a desire for life? Did this mean that there were still some lingering regrets in his heart that even he had been unaware of?

'That's not possible.'

Lukas was certain that his desire for death was sincere.

Even if it was subconscious, it was impossible for him to do such a thing like extending his life.

[Don't give up...]

"...!"

Suddenly, he heard a faint voice.

Lukas immediately knew who this voice belonged to.

[Never give up...]

The voice grew louder and louder until it became a cry that rang in his ears.

[No matter what! I will never give up!]

It was a voice that was unfamiliar and familiar at the same time.

Lukas turned around.

Standing there was a man.

A blonde haired and blue eyed man was venting his feelings into the empty void.

Lukas couldn't help but call out the man's name.

"Lukas..."

'Lukas Trowman' was standing there in front of him.

This wasn't a reflection of his current self, as if he was looking into a mirror.

Instead, this was the Lukas from the past.

To be precise, it was the Lukas who had been defeated by Lord and gotten his soul trapped in the Abyss.

What was this? Was it a mirage? Or was it a remnant memory of the past that remained in this world? Or perhaps it was some kind of phenomenon created by the external force that had been released into the world...

Lukas stopped thinking about it.

Even when faced with an unknown phenomenon like this, there was no need to analyse it too deeply.

[I'm afraid that I might give up!]

Throb.

That cry resonated in Lukas' chest.

The voice of this man who hadn't given up became a sharp dagger that pierced into his chest.

He knew the reason but he pretended not to.

Instead, he just looked at 'Lukas' again.

It was faint, but he remembered a bit about this time.

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It was not long after he'd first entered the Abyss.

In other words, a few millenia had to pass before this man would be able to escape from this place.

...More importantly, this was something that the 'Lukas' at that time would never know. He didn't know when or even if he would be able to escape, but he never gave up.

While looking at him, Lukas couldn't help but mutter.

"How the hell did you endure that?"

[---.]

It was at that moment that 'Lukas' opened his mouth and muttered something.

It probably wasn't an answer to his question. Although it might seem like the present and past Lukas were existing in the same space, it was impossible for them to interact with each other.

Nevertheless, he didn't want to hear those words. Because he knew that as soon as he heard that voice, an uncontrollable change would begin to occur within him.

He was afraid of that.

Lukas covered his ears with both hands.

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Despite his wishes, the other 'Lukas' didn't disappear.

[I will definitely get out of here and kill all of you...!]

In the past, Lukas wandered all over the Abyss, shouting at the top of his lungs.

Looking at him caused Lukas to remember his past.

It was in this place that he'd learned to not give up. In order to not be broken, he kept thinking about the future.

Although his escape still seemed to be a ways off and there was nothing he could do now, he kept thinking about 'later' instead of 'now'.

...On the other hand.

What about the current Lukas?

Although his existence was slowly disappearing, wasn't he still in a better situation than when he was trapped in the Abyss?

'Why do you want to give up?'

It felt like the Lukas of the past was asking him that question.

With his ears covered, Lukas closed his eyes next.

* * *

The Absolute Lukas and the Great Mage Lukas.

There was no need to analyse which one of them was stronger.

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However, which one of them had stronger willpower?

...In general, it would be the Absolute who had more willpower.

But at that moment...

Lukas, who was looking at his past self, didn't feel like that was true.

[I will not die! You should have ended me directly, Lord!]

It was as unsightly as it was beautiful, even though there was no hope, he refused to give up. A man struggling against fate.

Seeing this man forced a thought into his head.

...Was he... better than his current self?

Past Lukas muttered.

[I still have work to do.]

He knew that.

He knew it, but... it was too hard.

He was so tired.

[I won't pass my responsibility on to someone else. Never.]

That's what he'd said.

But he hadn't thought it would be this hard.

It felt like his mind was being ripped apart every second.

That's why he thought it would be easier to just die, rather than suffer thousands of times a day.

[Thoughts of the weak.]

What do you know?

Do you even know the life I've lived until now?

Have you ever felt the weight that I've had to carry?

[I know. I've felt it.]

Right. That's right...

Because you are me.

Therefore you could be more considerate of me.

You are the only person that can truly understand me.

I've been running for such a long time without ever taking a break.

So even if it's just a little, it will be fine.

I just want to rest.

[But I won't give up. Darkness in my heart, don't try to sway me any longer.]

Lukas was speechless.

It was only at that moment that he realised.

That was the way he looked to the Past Lukas.

"You... why won't you just give up?"

For the first time, Lukas spoke directly to 'Lukas'.

And the answer came back immediately.

[Because I still have work to do.]

“Aren’t you really tired?”

[Even so, it is not yet the time for me to rest.]

“You have already saved many people. Even if you were to give up now and rest, no one would blame you.”

Lukas knew that those last words were not directed towards ‘Past Lukas’, but were an excuse for his current self.

At that moment, ‘Lukas’ let out a laugh and said.

[I don’t care what other people think.]

“...what?”

‘Lukas’ turned to look at him.

He was looking directly into his eyes.

It gave him goosebumps.

Was this Lukas really a mirage or a remnant memory?

[If I give up here, I will disappoint myself. I hate that. Because I've always cared about my own thoughts the most.]

"...!"

[So I don't want to give up. I won't give up. Because I don't want to disappoint myself.]

Lukas closed his eyes.

It might sound strange, but he could not look directly at 'Past Lukas'.

"...how can you shine so brightly?"

[Does it look like I'm shining?]

'Lukas' let out a laugh.

[You should know better than anyone else what it was really like when I was trapped here.]

“—.”

Lukas took a deep breath.

“...ah.”

Suddenly, Lukas Trowman realised.

The outer appearance of ‘Lukas’ was all a bluff. At that time, he had been incredibly anxious. He was so terrified that it took all of his willpower to not curl into a ball and tremble with fear.

Contrary to his proud appearance, his insides were burning black.

‘What if I can never leave this place?’

‘Would I have to spend the rest of my existence here? Neither living nor dying?’

‘What if I successfully escaped but the outside world has already been destroyed?’

Thoughts like this appeared in his mind thousands and tens of thousands of times a day.

Nevertheless, he never showed any of it on the outside. He was patient.

No.

Instead, it should be said that he was desperately trying to conquer his fear.

Without fear, there couldn't be courage.

By knowing your fear, you would be able to take a large step to not being conquered by it.

“Ah...”

Memories of his past continuously flowed in his mind, and it felt like something he'd forgotten was slowly refilling his heart.

—Even if he was bent, even if he was broken, even if he collapsed, he would rise again.

As long as he didn't give up, hope would never disappear.

The greatest strength of the human race, Indomitability.

'It's beautiful because we are so weak.'

Was it beautiful if a being who was strong from birth rose up again after falling?

Was it cool if a being like a Ruler got into a fight and won?

No. It wasn't beautiful or cool because it was expected. It was natural.

But for beings who knew how weak and trivial they were to show courage, hope and indomitability was extremely dazzling.

Sniffle-(TL: Not exactly... but I can't think of a good onomatopoeia for crying. For reference, author used '주룩 – Jurk'.)

Tears began to flow down his cheeks.

Looking at his past self allowed him to gain enlightenment. He'd regained the 'weakness' that he'd lost.

And the fighting spirit that he'd thought he lost long ago soared once again. He didn't want to give up. He wanted to stand up once again.

Because Lukas still had work to do.

But... How?

How would he get out of this place?

It was at that moment that 'Lukas' spoke once again.

[Do you think your situation now is darker than it was then? Seriously?]

“...”

[If you think so then it's because you haven't looked around properly.]

“...what do you mean?”

[Remember. Even in the past, you didn't escape the Abyss with your own strength. Look around a bit more carefully and listen. Lukas, are your mind and body really the only things that exist in this place?]

Suddenly, Lukas noticed something in this space that was filled with nothing but darkness.

The only item other than his own body that existed in this place seemed to give off a strange lustre even in the absence of light.

—A black ring.

The ring that Arid had given him back then was also in this place.

“Ah...”

The ring floated towards him and placed itself onto Lukas’ index finger once again.

Fwoosh-

And a moment later, pure white light rose up from the ring.

‘Coordinates...?’

The coordinates of that universe were engraved on the black ring.

And a strange power was trying to pull Lukas out of the Abyss.

No. That wasn’t all. Even with this, it wouldn’t have been enough for him to leave the Abyss.

Lukas turned to look at ‘Lukas’ once again.

“Who are you really?”

[I want to see you have a different end.]

“What...?”

Suddenly, Lukas' eyes went wide.

In the past, he had absorbed most of the Demigod crystals. And although faint, their consciousness still remained in his mind.

Lukas met those Demigods residing in his inner thoughts, and they taught him how to use their authorities.

Thanks to this, he was able to perfectly use the authorities of all the Demigods.

Except for one.

Lord had never appeared in his mind. It was as if Lord's consciousness had completely disappeared.

That was probably the reason why Lukas hadn't mastered the ability to use the 'authority of space'.

He knew of Lord's end.

And initially, he'd thought that since his end was different from the other Demigods, he was completely dead.

But if that wasn't the case...

"No way, you're..."

[No matter what, never forsake your people, Lukas Trowman.]

Lukas didn't get the chance to say anything after that.

Because at that moment, the faint white light grew more intense until it covered his entire body.

As his vision became completely white, Lukas felt like he was floating.

And when the light faded, he was nowhere to be seen.