

Great Mage 601

Volume 2 - Chapter 301

The door flew.

This wasn't a metaphor for something, the door was actually flying.

It was also dozens of times faster than a cannonball and its momentum was extremely heavy.

It was coming towards them.

Lukas couldn't react. He was aware that the door was speedily approaching. In fact, it was flying straight towards his head.

But he couldn't move his body. No, even if he moved, he didn't have the ability to block or cut through a solid marble door like that one.

Piht.

As he was thinking this, the door suddenly split into two.

Bang!

The two halves of the door flew to a corner of the conference room.

Click.

Snow sheathed her sword without changing her expression, but she turned her gaze towards the doorway.

“Are you on your period? You’re being much more moody today.”

“I haven’t slept in four days so I’m a bit sensitive. To the point where I wanna tear apart every bastard I hear spouting bullshit.”

It was a voice Lukas knew.

“So you better think twice before you open that mouth of yours.”

From the doorway that no longer had a door, a man walked into the room.

The first thing that one would notice was his hair, which was like a lion’s mane. Then, they would see his body which seemed to be made of steel.

“...”

Lukas pursed his lips tightly.

He thought that if he opened his mouth, he would definitely say something strange.

“Am I second? At least I’m not last.”

The man then sat down on one of the three chairs.

For the speechless Lukas, surprising things continued to happen one after the other.

“No, you were last.”

A soft voice sounded in the room.

Swoosh-

A ripple in space appeared, covering the remaining chair.

This was a somewhat familiar sight for Lukas.

The power to use space.

“...”

A purple haired woman stepped out of the ripple.

“...hmpf.”

“Haam.”

Ivan snorted and Snow yawned.

“Everyone’s here now. So let’s get started with the meeting.”

Iris smiled.

For a moment, their eyes met in the air.

Hostility and vigilance.

There were no gentle emotions in their gazes.

In other words,

Snow, Ivan and Iris were all hostile to each other.

After seeing that.

'...what the hell.'

Something in his mind broke.

And that became a fuse that caused his insides to start boiling.

As if it contained lava, something deep within his heart began to burn furiously.

That fire then began to spread to the rest of his body.

Crunch.

Suddenly, a strange sound resounded. Peran turned to Lukas. He intended to remind him that this was not a place where he should recklessly show his presence.

But he couldn't.

The moment he saw Lukas' facial expression, he couldn't help but subconsciously hold his breath.

0

'...what the hell.'

He'd been able to leave confidently.

Because he had left them behind.

Because they told him to leave it to them.

He'd believed them. So he hadn't been worried even as he traversed countless universes. He'd always thought that this world would be the most beautiful and peaceful by now.

The only thing he'd ever been concerned about was whether he could return here or not. He was afraid that he'd never be able to see the beautiful universe he'd worked so hard for ever again. Or that even if he did manage to see it again, he would not feel the same appreciation for humans.

...Just.

Just to look at it.

That was the reason he'd endured for so many years.

'...what the hell are you all doing?'

So the emotions he was feeling at that moment were justified.

Lukas Trowman was truly angry at that moment.

* * *

Syris Triznine* was previously a Circle member belonging to the Phisfounder Armlets. At that time, she'd sat in the position of Force Honor and could be considered a Circle executive. (*: Formerly 'Sirij'. I'd forgotten that I'd tl'd the name before but the last name made me remember. She's the Headmistress of Westroad Academy and Isabelle's aunt.)

That was why she knew the minimum requirements for joining the group known as the Circle.

Their enemies were the Demigods. They were an entire race of semi-transcendent beings who, from the perspective of the general public, were no different than gods.

In order to confront such beings, one could not be ordinary. They had to have at least one extraordinary capability that no one else had.

Whether it was innate talent, indomitable mental strength, or extraordinary growth potential.

10 years ago.

Among the various circles that were made up of various races, there were three that stood out the most.

The members of the Circle called them the Three Great Circles.

This was because their influence and power easily stood out when compared to the other circles.

They were the Strow Necklaces, the Lucid Swords and the Phisfounder Armlets.

...How strong were leaders who led the Three Great Circles.

The Strow Necklaces' Rezil Wilsemann was a 9 star Great Wizard that would forever be recorded in the annals of history. (TL: Wasn't he quasi 9 stars?)

The Lucid Swords' Jekid Deosis was a Master Swordsman who had been given the title 'Lord of the Sword'.

The Phisfounder Armlets' Altan was the greatest if not the only authority on black magic and was a specialist in Demon summoning who had even signed a direct contract with one of the six Archdukes of the Demon World.

All three of them were beings who had no issues controlling the immense power of the Three Great Circles.

They were all super geniuses who stood out even when placed in a group with other geniuses.

Talent and hard work were natural.

In addition, their experience and luck allowed them to stand on a level that very few others could even place their feet.

...The reason she was even thinking this in the first place was simple.

It was because the three sitting in the conference room were beings who had reached a level even beyond those old Circle Masters.

That was why the meeting that day was so important.

Of course, there would only be about twenty people who ever knew about this meeting, including those who were present.

After all, it was just an informal meeting. Their official encounter wouldn't take place till two years later.

And of course, that time would not be as peaceful as it was now.

Everyone gathered there were all great figures who held immense power across the continent, both in influence and strength.

If they had a minor argument which developed into a fight, then several kilometres around the academy would become a barren wasteland in the blink of an eye.

That's why she couldn't understand.

'Is he crazy...?'

She couldn't help but think this as she looked at Lukas.

Everyone in the room immediately noticed when his anger erupted. Naturally, this caused the attention of everyone there to focus on him.

"..."

"..."

In the first place, there wasn't much to look at. No, in fact, it wasn't good at all.

Everyone there could easily spot the disabilities in Lukas' foot and arm with a glance. If he didn't manage to somehow overcome those, they would become a fatal obstacle that would prevent him from even reaching the First Class level.

But he couldn't just be a cripple.

Since he was accompanying none other than Snow herself, he had to have something that at least didn't make him inferior to Peran since he was standing beside him.

Did he have a special power other than his physical ability?

Or did he have enormous wealth or special status?

Or perhaps he had a brain that was superior to everyone else in the room?

...There was a man whose attitude was to ask questions directly rather than making guesses and conclusions in his head.

"What's up with that guy?"

Ivan crossed his arms as he opened his mouth.

Volume 2 - Chapter 302

Whoosh-

In an instant, the anger that had been radiating from Lukas vanished without a trace. It was clean and quick, like a blaze that had been doused.

Snow smiled at Ivan.

“I picked him up on my way here.”

“...”

“Your eyes are burning, Ivan, are you that curious about my new subordinate?”

Only then did Ivan take his eyes off of Lukas.

And when he raised his chin slightly, a middle aged man, who had been silently standing behind him, stepped forward.

When Syris saw this man, she couldn't help but gulp subconsciously.

‘Cairo Wilsemann...’

Each party was allowed to bring two people into the meeting.

Nevertheless, Ivan had only brought Cairo. Was it because he was confident that one person was enough?

...That wouldn't be an incorrect judgment. After all, Cairo was capable enough to warrant such confidence.

But the truth was that Ivan brought only Cairo because he felt it would be too bothersome to bring two people.

In addition, Cairo was deeply related to what they would discuss in the meeting.

“Then let’s start the discussion.”

Cairo was Ivan’s representative in the discussion that was about to begin.

The others also had their own representatives.

Snow had Peran, and Iris had the Vampire Queen Sheryl.

The three representatives stepped forward and began sizing each other up.

Cairo’s gaze turned to Peran.

“Peran Jun, you really are improving day by day. You probably don’t understand how fortunate you are to be such a talented young man.”

“Thank you for the compliment. If you’re ever struggling with anything, I’d be happy to give you some advice.”

“...”

Sheryl held back a snicker.

Without a doubt, it was nothing but a childish exchange. However, in Sheryl’s opinion, Peran’s blow was heavier. Cairo, who had been trying to gain the upper hand by acting like an elder, became rather silent after being hit by the unexpected blow.

He was definitely embarrassed, but it was commendable that he didn’t show it on his face.

“Hoho. Thank you for your care, but I don’t think I can improve any further. I’m just envious of you, who still has an endless path ahead of you.”

Peran smiled strangely at those words.

“11th Tower Master, do you really think 9-stars is the end?”

The genial smile disappeared from Cairo’s face.

“...that’s quite the presumptuous remark. You are not yet at the level to discuss such things with me.”

“Well... I know my level best.”

If they continued this conversation, they would definitely cut into the discussion time. So Sheryl decided to end their little spat.

Clack-

With a snap of her finger, two bats appeared behind her.

Each bat was holding a corner of a roll of parchment that was much too large for them, but they flapped their wings hard and gently placed them on the table.

Swoosh-

Soon the parchment was unfurled on the table.

It was a map large enough for everyone to see everything clearly.

“We found their base.”

Peran and Cairo turned their gazes over at the same time.

“Where?”

“Here.”

Another bat appeared.

This one was much smaller than the bats that appeared before. The bat flew across the parchment before falling from the air when it reached its destination.

Spat!

The bat was crushed, causing black juices to spread, staining the map.

“The western part of the continent? I think there is a country there.”

“...Matuui.”

It was Peran who muttered softly.

“...Matuui?”

Although he was a bit narrow-minded at times, it couldn't be denied that Cairo was much more knowledgeable than most people. And yet, he had never heard of a country called Matuui before.

“It is a very small country with a population of only about 100,000. Their warriors are known for having many unique fighting styles.”

“A land of warriors, like Silkid.”

“It’s similar but different. Matuui’s warriors are more savage and barbaric. This is because there are a lot of monsters in the region due to the tropical climate. As a result, the people became strong warriors to combat them.”

“Those that fight for survival.”

“Exactly.”

“...right. I knew there was a reason we weren’t able to find them. So they were hiding in the tropics.’

Cairo muttered in a bitter tone. Noticing the emotion in his voice, Peran couldn’t help but say something.

“Are you feeling sympathy for your old comrades after coming this far, Cairo Wilsemann?”

“...are you testing me?”

“I’m just checking. I’m sure you understand how important this operation is. Regardless of whether you’re a 9-star Wizard or not, if you don’t cooperate with everyone, then you’re just a burden.”

“That won’t happen. I still have karma to complete.”

Cairo spoke in a firm tone.

“I will personally watch Diablo’s end with my own two eyes.”

“...”

He wasn’t forcibly saying this.

It was clear that it bothered him, but he had made up his mind. So Peran had nothing more to say.

Sheryl spoke up again.

“This is the problem. It’s possible that Matuui has already fallen into Diablo’s hands.”

“Does that mean it’s already become a country of undead?”

“We’re not sure. In the past, we sent a subjugation squad into swamps surrounding Matuui at least once per week. To reduce the number of monsters as much as possible.”

“But?”

“We haven’t seen the subjugation squad for a month. In addition, we confirmed that most of the monsters in the area have become undead. To be precise, they mostly consist of lizardmen, basilisks, and swamp trolls. That is why we made the guess.”

Sheryl’s gaze turned to Ivan.

She could already imagine how this man would react when he heard what she said next.

But it couldn’t be helped. Sharing information was a fundamental and important step in their cooperation. If she skipped this step, it would be impossible for them to form a unified front.

“Matuui and Diablo might have made a deal.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

A heavy silence descended in the room.

Almost everyone turned to look at Ivan. They too had similar thoughts to Sheryl.

But it was Cairo who spoke up first.

“You should confirm that first.”

“And after confirming?”

And it was Sheryl who asked back.

Their eyes met.

“If they truly did make a deal with Diablo, then they should pay the appropriate price.”

The appropriate price would naturally not be light.

The current Circle, including Cairo, had the power to wipe out a country with a population of 50,000 in a single day.

“There it is again.”

A small smirk appeared on Sheryl's lips.

This caused Cairo's expression to harden.

"Then? Are you saying we should negotiate again? Show them that it's wrong to join hands with the undead and forgive their sins?"

"I think that would be much more peaceful than erasing an entire country."

"Peace, peace, peace... Stop chasing after those fancy words. You've lived for over a hundred years, how do you still not know the truth about reality?"

"I know. I know so well it makes my teeth chatter. That's why I can say it now. Sometimes, the long way around is the fastest way."

"The long way around is the long way around, it's not a shortcut... I know what I'm suggesting is a massacre, for lack of a better term. And I know it's not ethical. But think back to five years ago."

"When Diablo first appeared in Silkid, what happened to the Warriors who fell for his tricks?"

"..."

"They became Death Knights with formidable power. Hundreds of those dreadful monsters appeared. It took us three years to just take care of them all. At the end, there were millions of casualties and the neighboring countries became dead wastelands."

Cairo's gaze turned to Peran.

“If what Peran said is true, then the skills of the warriors in Matuui wouldn’t be lacking when compared to Silkid. What if thousands of undead on the same level jumped out this time? How do you intend to deal with that?”

“It hasn’t happened yet, and if we are fast enough, we can prevent it. Depending on how we deal with it, we can end this without anyone else having to die. Like you said, five years ago, we failed. I know that. But this time, we won’t fail.”

This time, it was Cairo’s turn to laugh.

“How optimistic. I think it’s time you woke up from your dream, vamp.”

“...don’t call me that.”

Sheryl’s eyes shined with bright red light.

The aura of the two began to rise. Peran sighed.

Seeing them like this, he found it was understandable why Snow decided to separate herself from the Circle.

No. It was the same for Peran too.

He'd always dreamed of joining the Circle, but he'd long since woken from his delusion.

Creak-

Suddenly, Ivan got up from his seat.

Then he turned around and tried to leave the room without saying anything.

"G-, Grand Master...?"

Even Cairo was shocked by the sudden action, but he didn't dare to stop him.

It was Snow who stopped Ivan's steps.

"Where are you going, Ivan?"

The answer came back easily.

"Now that I know where Diablo is, I'm going to end this."

"Right now?"

“Right now.”

“The meeting isn’t over. Sit down.”

“I’ve already achieved my goal. In the first place, I only wanted to know Diablo’s location. I never had intention of working with you lot.”

Snow chuckled.

Even though it was a laugh, it was frighteningly cold.

She was finally releasing an aura befitting of an Ice Elf.

“Is that your choice? Ruling with force? What’s the difference between you and the Demigods?”

Snow sneered.

“Ivan, have you still not gotten over your Master’s death?”

“...wh-, what...?”

Caira was greatly shocked by those words. Iris’ eyebrows twitched slightly, and Peran and Sheryl turned to look at Snow with shocked faces.

The words she'd just spoken were, without a doubt, Ivan's reverse scale.

"...except one thing."

Ivan slowly turned to look at Snow.

"Before coming here, I made a pact with Cairo. I told him that no matter what you said, I wouldn't fight you. Except for one thing."

Krrr...

An earthquake shook the building.

No, Ivan was the earthquake.

"As long as you didn't say anything about my Master."

Snow stood up and said.

"Peran, step back a little."

Just as Deukid was about to slide out of its sheath...

A hand blocked its hilt.

Snow turned to look at the owner of the hand.

“Lukas?”

Lukas’ face was expressionless so Snow had no idea what he was thinking.

Then, after a moment of silence, he spoke in a low voice.

“...I have something to say.”

Volume 2 - Chapter 303

It was a good idea to let go of his anger.

Lukas looked around. Of all the beings gathered in that room, he was, without a doubt, the weakest. At this point, comparing himself to them was like an insult. (TL: Sometimes I feel like Lukas forgets who he is...)

Only the strong were allowed to act in an emotional manner. The weaker someone was, the more they had to rely on reason.

If he showed off his emotions for no reason, he might end up dying in vain. Although it could be said that Peran and Snow had developed a strange liking for him, it would be better for him to not bank on that.

With that in mind, Lukas had stayed silent and listened to their discussion. That alone allowed him to obtain a lot of valuable information.

First of all, it was clear that the Circle had become divided. Despite her silence, he believed that a confrontation between Ivan and Iris was the root cause of this.

Secondly, the appearance of undead, who were causing havoc across the continent, was closely related to Diablo.

'...Diablo.'

The Archlich of the Frozen Lands was a member of Paragon, which had been led by Cairo Wilsemann, and a true 9-star Wizard.

'What changed?'

Although he was an undead, his goals had always been clear. Also, his hatred and resentment for the Demigods overflowed...

"..."

Lukas furrowed his eyebrows.

The Demigods were all dead. Diablo's long awaited dream had been achieved.

Was that the reason?

He might not have been able to handle the deep emptiness that came after completing his only purpose in life, causing him to sway.

Right. In the first place, undead were beings who embraced the darkest emotions. Diablo had probably only cooperated with Paragon because they shared a common enemy.

If that was the case, then Diablo's change was understandable.

—Finally, the third thing.

It was just his guess, but it was about the reason Snow left the Circle.

"I see, so as Snow's subordinate, you've decided to die first."

Lukas stopped pondering for a moment when he heard Ivan's words.

He was looking directly at Lukas.

This was the first time he'd met his eyes since they reunited.

...Snow had just said that his Master was dead.

Naturally, Lukas knew who she was referring to.

Nora. The previous Successor of the Warrior King Fist, who had a petite figure that didn't suit her age.
(TL: Legal loli died T~T)

He knew just how much Ivan looked up to her. She was the one who taught him and raised him like, who was basically an orphan, like a mother.

...If Ivan lost her due to some event, it wasn't impossible for it to break his mind.

It wasn't just that, there should be much more.

Lukas believed that an unimaginable number of things had happened, which gradually eroded Ivan's iron will.

"Diablo is a formidable opponent."

Snow's eyes narrowed imperceptibly. The same was true for Peran.

He spoke as if he knew the Archlich...

But neither of them had told Lukas about Diablo.

“Do you think you can win on your own?”

Ivan, who wasn't sure where he was going with this, just smiled violently.

“Do I look like that much of a joke? To the point where you doubt whether I can handle an Archlich? Right. Now I get how you guys see me. It's been a while since I have been looked down on like this.”

“Don't get me wrong. If I was looking down on you, I would have said something more insulting.”

“It doesn't matter what intentions a bastard has when he talks. All that matters is how it makes the listener feel. And I feel dirty after hearing those words. Of course, the most important reason is because your boss already touched my bottom line.”

“...”

“Unless you're deaf, you should have heard the way she talked about my Master. She did something like that when I was already on the brink of snapping. Don't you think that's enough reason to die?”

Indeed.

Coming from Ivan, it truly was a logical statement. Moreover, it could be seen that he was still exercising some patience. If it was the past Ivan, he would have just swung his fists without bothering to say so much.

Nevertheless.

“You don’t have any intention of killing me.”

“What?”

“Even if you were to try to stab my skull with two fingers right now, I would be unable to stop it or dodge it. I probably wouldn’t even be able to react before my brain was destroyed and I died. You know that. You can clearly see how weak I am, and yet, you’re just talking to me instead of killing me directly.”

“...”

At those words, not just Ivan, but the entire room became silent.

Those that had only taken Lukas for a crazy person before were now beginning to look at him in a different light.

This man was able to tell Ivan’s personality with just a glance.

A man like Ivan would never lower himself to resort to violence against the weak.

As long as he didn't cross the line, he wouldn't kill him.

It might appear that Lukas was being rude to Ivan at first glance, but he had never actually crossed the line.

“...”

Ivan's eyebrow began to twitch and his expression darkened.

On the other hand, Cairo, who was standing beside him, had a displeased expression.

“You sure do talk a lot. But we don't even know your name yet.”

“My name is...”

Lukas gaze shifted slightly to the left. Iris was sitting there, but she seemed to be an independent party to everything happening in the room. From beginning to end, her gaze had never left the map that Sheryl had spread out.

“...not important.”

“Ha.”

Cairo snorted derisively.

To speak up against the Grand Master of the Circle but be unwilling to share his name. This man was truly shameless.

With the thought that words wouldn't really work here, he turned to Snow.

“Is your Majesty really intending to cut all ties with us? When the true discussion hasn't even begun yet?”

Snow shrugged.

“Don't misunderstand. As I've always said, this Queen's aim is true neutrality... Well”

A sharp smile spread across her lips.

“It's sad that there are people who can't seem to stop doubting that and keep sending attackers.”

“ ... ”

Cairo's expression disappeared completely.

Ivan looked up when he heard this.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Ohhh... Are you going to pretend to not know?”

“What did you say?”

Their eyes met.

Snow, who paused for a moment after seeing the look in his eyes, suddenly burst out laughing.

“Ahahaha! Ah. I see. You’ll have to excuse me for that. I forgot you weren’t that sly. Indeed... So that’s what it was. Huhu.”

Snow chuckled.

“It seems the Circle’s condition is even worse than I thought.”

Ivan wasn’t the type to ponder things for a long time. In fact, it could even be said that he was completely clueless when it came to battles behind the scenes and wars of wits.

Nevertheless, he was by no means a fool.

He looked back. Cairo flinched when he met his gaze.

“What the hell did you do?”

“...”

“We will talk about this later... Then.”

Ivan’s gaze once again returned to Lukas.

White hair.

An extremely thin body.

A left arm with several paralysed nerves.

And a right leg that had severely deformed joints.

‘...where have I seen him before?’

Although he thought this, Ivan felt that even if he saw a man like this once, he wouldn't easily forget him.

Despite his paltry strength, he left a very distinctive impression.

It gave him a strange feeling.

Until now, Ivan's heart had been brimming with uncontrollable rage. This was because of the remarks Snow made. Her words dug into the biggest wound in Ivan's heart.

And he had no intention of forgiving that.

He even had thoughts of putting an end to Snow right then and there.

But... the anger had dissipated to an extent.

He didn't know if it was intentional, but as he talked to this man, his intense anger slowly began to cool down.

He had a somewhat eccentric expression, a calm voice, and an aura that made it seem like he knew every detail about one's essence.

Just as he was beginning to have a familiar feeling.

“...”

His head began to hurt a bit, so he shook it before looking at Lukas again.

“I’ll answer your earlier question first. Naturally, I have no intention of initiating a fight I have no confidence of winning. So I will say it clearly and plainly. I alone am enough to kill that Archlich.”

Volume 2 - Chapter 304

Cairo was speechless.

Somehow, a conversation had been established between the Grand Master of the Circle, who could be said to have the greatest influence on the continent, and this crippled man, who had seemingly rolled out from somewhere.

Of course, this was only possible because of Ivan’s personality.

Ivan was the type of person who hated rigid manners and pretentiousness, so it could be said that this man suited his personality perfectly. They treated each other as equals regardless of strength, origin or authority.

In other words, Ivan had approved of this man.

“It doesn’t seem like you’re aware of your position.”

Nevertheless, Cairo felt that this man was going too far. He really wanted to say something, but he knew he couldn't open his mouth because of the warning Ivan had given just before.

"My position?"

"It seems to me that you are the leader of this group. This is a situation where everyone is relying on you. It can be said that you are the centre of this group."

"Ha."

A sneer stretched across Ivan's lips.

"They should rely on themselves. I never wanted to do something like this in the first place."

"..."

That was true. He hadn't wanted it from the start.

'In the end, he was just doing me a favor.'

When he'd heard his selfish request to become the leader of the Circle, Ivan had reluctantly agreed.

...Lukas still wasn't completely sure about what Ivan had experienced during those 10 years.

He didn't know how much he'd changed or what his thoughts were.

Nevertheless, there were still a few things that he knew.

He knew that Ivan had suffered greatly under the burden of being the Grand Master. And that he thought he wasn't suitable for the position.

He knew that look on his face.

Since it was the same look Lukas had in the past.

He hadn't thought very deeply about this at that time. No, he'd thought about it, but he'd simply ignored it. He deluded himself into believing that even if he died, there would be others that could take his place.

And he'd wrapped that delusion into a nice package called trust.

But he finally realised. It had never been about trust. He'd simply been trying to shirk his own responsibilities.

4,000 years ago.

When Lukas disappeared, the heroes who had been fighting against the Demigods with him died or disappeared one after the other.

Therefore, the role of the centre was much more important than most could understand.

...Maybe Ivan was the Lukas of this era. That was the thought Lukas had at that moment.

He thought that Ivan could lead people in a different way than he did, perhaps even better than he did.

‘Nevertheless.’

The Circle was currently divided. The conflict and strife hadn’t disappeared at all.

Even though the Demigods had disappeared, peace was still a distant thought.

That thought caused his heart to fluctuate once again, but it quickly calmed down.

Lukas felt that he needed to know a bit more about the Circle’s situation before he could make any conclusions.

“...You.”

Ivan's gaze locked onto Lukas.

"Have we met before?"

"..."

"Hoh."

Unlike Lukas, who was stunned into silence for a moment, Snow let out a soft chuckle as she crossed her legs on the chair.

"This guy said he lost his memories. I'd brought him here because he seemed to be related to the Circle somehow, but he's exceeded my expectations."

She didn't stop after saying that.

"I'd intended to ask after we'd finished our discussion, but I might as well do it now. Everyone here can be considered to be pretty knowledgeable about the Circle. His name is Lukas. Do any of you know him?"

A small buzz rippled through the room.

Those there.

Ivan, Cairo Wilsemann, Sheryl Roland, and Iris Phisfounder were all people who knew Lukas' true identity.

Especially Iris...

But at that moment, their voices began to ring out.

"...Lukas?"

"That's a pretty common name. It's especially common here in the empire."

"His disposition is fairly impressive. At the very least, I don't think I would easily forget him even if I only met him once."

Those words made Lukas forget how to speak for a moment.

Ivan, Cairo, and Sheryl had all responded one after the other.

It seemed that none of them knew a Lukas.

"..."

Lukas was suddenly filled with unease. In an instant, his body was covered in goosebumps.

His current appearance was obviously different from his appearance in the past. So he could understand why it might be difficult to equate the current 'Lukas' to the 'Lukas' of the past.

Nevertheless, he found their reactions quite strange.

Was the weight of the name 'Lukas' so light?

Lukas finally turned his gaze to the only person in the room who had yet to speak.

Iris.

This woman with eye-catching purple hair had her head lowered as she seemed to be pondering something.

“...”

“...”

Their gazes met for a moment.

Iris slowly opened her mouth.

And Lukas continued to look into her eyes as she spoke.

“...I too.”

A terribly indifferent gaze met his own.

“Am hearing it for the first time.”

* * *

There was a library in Westroad Academy.

As it had been built in a prestigious educational institution, it was much larger and had a more extensive collection of books than the libraries in most major cities. But because of the average level of the cadets, there were very few books that had in depth content.

Nevertheless, it couldn't be denied that the number of books in this place was enormous.

Tap, tap, tap.

In a dark, quiet hallway.

Only the footsteps of a person could be heard.

'This should be a vacation period.'

That would explain why there were no cadets there.

Snow glanced out of a window.

The sky was gloomy, as if it would rain at any moment.

The rain was nice. It could be said that there was no elf who didn't enjoy the sound of raindrops falling on grass leaves. Snow, an Ice Elf, was no exception.

Nevertheless, Snow couldn't help but show a hint of worry on her face.

'I hope there won't be any thunder.'

For elves, who had enhanced hearing, the sound of thunder was particularly harsh.

While thinking about such inconsequential things, she finally arrived at her destination.

Click-

With a soft sound, she opened the door and entered the library.

The hundreds of bookshelves seemed to create a heavy atmosphere.

0

There was no one else in the library. Thanks to that, she was able to easily find the person she had been looking for.

In any case, with his rare white hair, it wouldn't have been that hard anyway. Snow hardly knew anyone who had a similar hair colour.

Perhaps it was this strange feeling of unfamiliar familiarity that caused her to be so interested in him.

"Have you eaten yet?"

"..."

She didn't receive an answer.

Lukas was practically buried in a pile of books.

Two days.

That's how long he had been in this place. As soon as the discussion ended, he headed straight for the library. She hadn't heard any reports of him leaving, so this man should have been here the entire time.

Snow looked at him for a moment before walking past him.

The library was also a pretty good place to take a break, with soft couches and magazines that had nothing to do with learning. She could even have whatever drinks she pleased.

Ssss...

She boiled two cups of black tea in her hands. While she couldn't say that it tasted amazing, at the very least, it wouldn't taste bad.

Clink-

Then she placed one of them in front of Lukas.

It was only at that moment that Lukas finally stopped reading the book. To be precise, he simply lifted his eyes from the pages of the book and looked at Snow.

“Even if you don’t want to eat, you should stay hydrated.”

“...”

“Drink up. If you want to keep reading.”

Lukas finally put the book down.

Then he took a small sip of tea, savouring the taste for a moment before swallowing it.

Snow stared at him for a moment before slowly opening her mouth.

“...those two.”

At that moment, she thought back to the meeting two days ago.

“Are the ones who currently stand at the very top of the Circle. Therefore-”

“The chances of me having met them is very low?”

Lukas’ voice cracked slightly. This showed that it had been quite a while since he’d last spoken.

“Hmm.”

Instead of responding, Snow let out a small sigh.

It was in her nature to simply blurt out whatever she was thinking. So for her to not directly affirm Lukas' words could already be considered a great consideration on her part, but Lukas couldn't realise that fact.

Tak.

He put the teacup down. It was half empty.

“Do you remember everything now?”

If Snow hadn't been mistaken, then Lukas had been surprised when Ivan and Iris didn't recognise him.

Lukas didn't answer directly and instead looked up at her again.

“There's something I'd like to ask you.”

“Say it.”

“...the name Lukas Trowman. Have you ever heard it before?”

Volume 2 - Chapter 305

Snow looked at Lukas' face.

Hope.

Compared to the despair that seemed to cover his face, there was a tiny glimmer of hope hidden in his eyes.

Even Snow couldn't help but want to satisfy this man's small hope.

“I've never heard that name before.”

But she couldn't.

If she did that, it would be a deception that went far beyond a simple lie, and it might have terrible consequences.

“...Great Mage.”

Nevertheless, Lukas continued to ask questions.

“What comes to mind when you think of the title Great Mage?”

“Wizards who managed to reach 9 stars. Like Cairo and Diablo.”

“Is there a circle called the Trowman Rings?”

“Trowman Rings? This is my first time hearing about it?”

“10 years ago... how did Lord die?”

“At the hands of the Circle’s heroes, including myself, Ivan and Iris.”

“...I... see.”

Lukas slowly lowered his head.

Snow looked down at him with her arms folded.

“I’m not sure what’s going on. This Queen was going to train you for a month as promised, but... things have changed. At best, I can only train you for about a week. And that’s a very tight timeframe to learn swordsmanship.”

The meeting could roughly be considered to have gone well.

Even though it was unstable, Snow, Ivan and Iris had agreed to form a temporary alliance until they dealt with Diablo.

The preliminary work such as selecting subjugation squads, investigating Matuui, and formation of a siege network would take at least two or three months after which they would begin their full scale assault.

As the leader of the Anti Circle Alliance, there was a lot that Snow had to do. No matter how interested she was in Lukas, she couldn't invest more than a week into him at the moment.

"After that, I planned to send you to a talent development centre established by the alliance, but... Now it feels like you are no longer motivated to accomplish your goals."

"..."

"I will give you one more day. If you don't make up your mind by then, this Queen will leave you behind."

With those words, Snow left the library.

Lukas' gaze fell back to the book he had been reading.

[Magic Warrior King Kasajin]

[Sword King Lucid]

[Black Witch Iris Phisfounder]

[Great Sage Schweiser Strow]

Not there.

[As the existence of the Demigods was slowly revealed to the surface, so too were the achievements of the four heroes who fought desperately against them in the past.]

[The situation 4,000 years ago was much worse than it is now. Conflicts between humans were much more frequent, countless monsters roamed the continent, and the relations between races was by no means smooth.]

Not there.

[In such an era, they were the heroes who gained the ability to threaten the Demigods, gathered talents regardless of race, and eventually fought for freedom in a situation where there were many traitors among them.]

...Not there.

Lukas closed the book. For two days, he'd read countless books in the library.

Nevertheless, it wasn't there.

There was no book in which the name Lukas Trowman had been written.

Crunch.

He grit his teeth.

He couldn't accept it.

There was no way he could accept it.

Lukas got up from his seat.

...Lukas? A common name?

He looked for another book.

This library was very large.

—At the hands of heroes of the Circle, including myself, Ivan and Iris...

He'd spent two days, but he hadn't even read 10% of the books there.

So there was still hope.

There had to be a record of Lukas in a book that he hadn't yet found.

In particular, he focused on the older texts.

On information from 4,000 years ago...

—I too... am hearing it for the first time.

"..."

Tuk.

Lukas' hand, which was reached for another book, fell helplessly.

...He'd already read hundreds of books.

Nevertheless, it wasn't there. It was nowhere.

As if Lukas Trowman had completely disappeared from this world.

Lukas returned to his seat.

There, he saw the teacup. Still half filled with the black tea Snow had made for him.

Gulp.

He swallowed the rest of the tea in one large gulp.

It was cold.

* * *

He stopped reading books. He realised that it was just a meaningless act. It was something that any logical person would be able to understand.

This fact let Lukas realise that his composure had been greatly shaken.

'There isn't much to think about.'

He regained his cool, his calm.

Then he analysed the situation properly.

He had been perplexed for a while, but that didn't mean he was at his wit's end.

After thinking about it carefully, he realised that this situation wasn't impossible at all.

Of course, ordinary people would either think that the entire world had gone mad or they had gone mad.

But Lukas knew of a being that was capable of doing something like this.

'God.'

A being that had a hand in the creation of every creature in the universe, and who was capable of making records that had already been written blank.

Right.

God could do it.

In fact, erasing all traces of the human Lukas Trowman couldn't even be considered a difficult task for that being.

He'd probably done something to make things like this.

This made it clear to Lukas what he needed to do.

He had to meet God.

He also knew how to do it.

As long as he regained his position of Absolute, God would appear before him even if he didn't want to meet him.

"...good."

What he needed to do had been decided.

Lukas got up from his seat and left the library. He had no more time to waste there.

...A way to get stronger.

As he'd thought before, it would be better to learn swordsmanship from Snow first. At the very least, there were no Sword Masters in this world that could surpass her.

Although it was a pity that their time had been limited to a week, it was clear that this was an opportunity that mere Swordsmen could only dream of.

Krrr....

The sky rumbled. Lukas looked up at the dark clouds above him. Dark clouds were continuously rolling in. He felt that it was exceptionally dark considering the time, but this was just a precursor to the rain that was about to fall.

Pat pat pat.

Finally, the rain began to fall.

Nevertheless, Lukas chose to continue walking instead of entering a building.

Come to think of it, where was he going?

Ah. He was going to find Snow.

Shaaaa-

0

The cold rainwater pounded his skin. In the blink of an eye, his entire body was thoroughly soaked. Nevertheless, he continued to walk.

The heavy rain wasn't unwelcome in his current situation. In fact, the rhythmic pattering of the raindrops on his body allowed him to clear his head. So now he had the chance to think carefully.

About what he would do from now on. About where he'd find Snow.

'...If.'

Nevertheless, the thoughts that he didn't want and shouldn't have kept creeping into his mind like the memories of a past nightmare.

'If no one remembers me.'

His instincts cried out in alarm, telling him that it was dangerous to think more deeply about this.

'If no one was waiting for my return.'

But he couldn't stop them.

Lukas' inner musings continued until they reached the final knot.

'...what is the point of everything I've done so far?'

Boom!

Thunder roared.

Lukas looked up at the sky. He saw bolts of lightning spread across the sky, like cracks in the void.

"Huu."

He let out a slow breath. The tension in his body relaxed and his mind became calm.

Using all the methods he knew, he was able to calm his turbulent mind.

'It's the same as it's always been.'

Nothing had changed.

He was in a desperate and seemingly hopeless situation, but he had a plan and the means to get through it.

All that was left was his mindset.

To not stop. To not give up.

The things he had to do and the goals he had to achieve were clear.

So... all he had to do was overcome this setback and get back on his feet.

All he had to do was step over the numerous obstacles blocking his path and reach the faint light hidden behind them.

Just like he'd always done until now.

...That was all.

Lukas started walking again.

But he didn't get far before his weight shifted because of the slippery, muddy ground.

He'd taken a big step with his right leg and tried to carry his weight, but it didn't work as he'd hoped.

Bang.

“...”

With a loud thud, he fell face first onto the ground. He was given a taste of thick mud and bitter failure at the same time.

At that moment, more than ever, he felt that his limp was bothersome.

His left arm, through which he couldn't apply any strength, felt pathetic.

And his body, which couldn't hold mana, felt empty.

Lukas wanted to lift his head to look at the sky, but contrary to his thoughts, his gaze shifted downward instead.

Soon after, when his head was completely lowered, he could see nothing but the dark mud path.

Lukas fell silent for a while.

...That day could be considered to be unusually loud.

“...it’s hard.”

So no one heard that murmur.

Volume 2 - Chapter 306

Pitter patter.

The sound of the raindrops falling onto the carriage roof was surprisingly not very soothing. In fact, it was loud and annoying enough to cause a headache.

In the first place, a carriage traveling in the middle of the night on a rainy day in itself was an incredibly dangerous act, but the two passengers didn’t seem to be aware of this.

“...something’s wrong.”

Muttering to herself was a habit Iris Phisfounder had never been able to grow out of.

Sheryl tilted her head as she looked at her.

“What do you mean?”

“Well. I’m not sure.”

0

In any case, 10 years had already passed since she’d first started having the strange feeling, but Iris still had yet to find the cause. If it was not a problem that she could solve after thinking about it for so long, then it was better to just ignore it completely.

She shook her head and opened her mouth again.

“I’m still surprised that Ivan agreed to cooperate so easily. I thought he’d act more stubbornly.”

“It’s not just that. If things had gone differently, then Snow or Ivan, one of them would have died today.”

“...that man’s balls are pretty big.” (TL: I choked)

Sheryl nodded, knowing what man she was referring to. That white haired man, who seemed like he’d collapse from a sneeze, had managed to stop Ivan’s rampage.

It was an amazing feat for all of those who had witnessed it.

Iris was also recalling the same scene.

“...Lu... kas...”

He was a man she'd never seen before, but the way he looked at her left an impression. Maybe that man was the reason she was feeling strangely depressed at that moment.

“In any case, one thing is clear.”

Sheryl's voice roused Iris from her thoughts and she nodded.

“Right. The situation of the radicals is much worse than we expected.”

Sheryl nodded as well.

“Do you think there will be internal conflict?”

“I don't think there will be internal conflict. I doubt they would dare to go against Ivan. There is no one in their camp who has more charisma than Ivan. He is a necessary existence both in terms of strength and symbolism.”

“...then...”

“Don't forget what era we're in. Only fools would mistake actions done behind their back for loyalty.”

Iris smiled coldly.

“In the end, secret actions are still secret actions.”

“...Cairo Wilsemann, that man...”

He was one of Ivan’s closest aides and even had the guts to do things he wasn’t asked to do.

It was then.

A single strand of Sheryl’s trembled.

One of the minions she’d spread everywhere, in other words, a spy, had just made a report.

“They’ve arrived at the academy.”

The words were said in an unfriendly tone without a subject, but Iris knew who she was talking about.

* * *

Snow brushed a few raindrops off her shoulders as she stepped into the headmaster’s room.

Syris, who had been reviewing documents, immediately got up from behind her desk, grabbed a nearby dry towel and tried to wipe the water off of her body.

“This Queen also has hands.”

Then she grabbed the towel and roughly wiped the water from her face.

“...how’s the situation?”

“For who? This Queen? Or...?”

“Naturally for your Majesty.”

In all honesty, Syris didn’t have much interest in the white haired man or his situation.

She recalled Lukas’ performance at the meeting.

His show of stopping Ivan was impressive, but in the first place, humans had always been impressed by those who stepped above their station.

As a result, while everyone who witnessed it had some degree of respect for him, they all still view him as a crazy or conceited person.

“There is no situation. I’m just a bit tired.”

“How long will your Majesty be here?”

“One more week.”

In Syris’ eyes, Snow was simply wasting a week of her time, but she used her superhuman patience to suppress the urge to say something.

“I don’t think it was a good idea to stimulate the Grand Master like that.”

She was talking about the things she’d said to Ivan,

Snow chuckled.

“That might be true. But you should know Ivan’s personality. If I hadn’t done something, that man would have simply left the meeting before it got too far.”

If that did happen, then the entire meeting would have become a pointless waste of time.

Since she was also aware of them, Syris didn’t voice any more complaints.

Snow, who was wiping her wet hair with the towel, suddenly said.

“By the way, where’s Peran?”

“It seems that one of his younger siblings came.”

“...his younger sibling...”

Snow’s eyebrows furrowed.

If it was just a family member that came then there would be nothing to worry about. But both Syris, who brought it up, and Snow, who heard it, exchanged subtle glances at that moment.

This reaction was natural.

“It doesn’t seem like she came with Iris.”

This was because Lylia Jun, Peran’s younger sister, was Iris’ servant.

Each side had been allowed to bring up to two people into the meeting, but Sheryl had been the only one standing behind Iris. She’d thought the other had just been waiting outside the meeting room, but after the meeting she found that wasn’t the case.

“Right. She came through the Warp Stone.”

“...”

Lylia Jun.

They believed that it would have been much more beneficial if Iris had taken her into the meeting with her.

The reason for this was simple.

Lylia was a master negotiator.

Even if the meeting was filled with childish battles of wits and conflict, it was possible for talented people like her to lead the direction of the meeting just by being there.

Could it be that she couldn't come because she was busy with another task? That shouldn't be the case. Iris was also aware of just how important that meeting was. It wouldn't have been difficult for her to adjust Lylia's schedule accordingly.

Nevertheless, the fact remained that she'd sent Lylia to the academy after the fact rather than let her accompany her.

“From the start, she had no intention of negotiating with us.”

Snow smiled as she came to this conclusion.

Iris Phisfounder had intended to unconditionally agree to the Anti Circle Alliance’s request for cooperation without negotiating terms.

Of course, this wasn’t a bad thing for Snow, but it somehow felt like she was the one to take the loss.

‘I can’t predict her. That’s the difference.’

Ivan usually acted in the exact opposite of what Snow wanted, but that meant that his actions were in a predictable range.

Although it was annoying, it didn’t make her uneasy.

But Iris was different.

She was a woman who could pretend to be quiet, and smile softly, while having hundreds of venomous snakes lying in wait.

Perhaps from the moment she’d heard that they’d be having a joint operation, she’d already devised a way to get the most benefit.

'Is Lylia the first step?'

Even though she'd noticed this already, Snow wasn't worried.

The reason for this was simple.

She trusted Peran.

Volume 2 - Chapter 307

It had been a year since the siblings had last met.

"We've found Diablo's location."

Hearing Lylia's cold, business-like tone made Peran feel a tinge of bitterness.

His cute little sister, who'd always liked going to tea parties and balls, had now become a stubborn negotiator with the ability to manipulate conversations as she pleased.

Naturally, Peran felt a bit of guilt and responsibility since it was his departure that caused this change.

Of course, he didn't show any of this on the outside.

They stood facing each other not as two siblings of the Jun family, but as negotiators who represented the Circle and the Alliance respectively.

“So?”

“Can’t it then be said that we have made the greatest contribution so far?”

“Well. We’ll have to verify the accuracy of the information first.”

“Do you really think we’d present false information at the meeting? That’s a bit disappointing. I can’t believe that’s the way the Alliance views our Circle.”

Ivan and Iris.

It gave the Alliance a bit of a headache when they shamelessly called themselves ‘the Circle’.

In the first place, they had long separated themselves into radicals and conservatives, realists and idealists, but those couldn’t be considered as accurate designations.

Nevertheless, it was important for both sides to maintain the legitimacy of the Circle, so neither of them would be willing to give up the name.

“Of course, if Her Majesty was here, I wouldn’t have had to mention such a thing. You should know just how meticulous I am.”

“...”

She had already participated in several major negotiations.

She'd had many failures, but even more successes.

This gave her the chance to learn from the results of both sides and gain experience.

Thanks to this, she wouldn't be pushed around even when her opponents were politicians or merchants with great experience.

'...as expected, it won't be easy.'

Nevertheless, Lylia had no choice but to acknowledge this older brother of hers. Even when she tried to misinterpret Peran's personal opinions as the will of the entire Alliance, he naturally separated them.

He calmly stated that his words were his own opinion instead of Snow's will, and clearly drew a line to distinguish the two.

After reviewing dozens of thoughts in his mind, he would then say the most effective response. For a man like Peran Jun, such a seemingly difficult process was as easy as breathing while exchanging words with his opponent.

“After the meeting, we sent a few of our people to Matuui. We should receive a report in a week at the latest.”

“Are you saying that we should have our conversation then?”

“That is an option. It wouldn’t be a problem to end this here.”

—However, if that was the case, then you wouldn’t be able to take advantage of the merit of ‘finding Diablo’s specific location’.

Lylia easily understood Peran’s unspoken words and sighed inwardly.

Although she’d expected it, it really wasn’t easy.

She recalled Iris’ instructions.

She’d told her that there was no need to overly apply pressure to them. It was fine to just maintain their relationship with the Alliance as it was now. After the events of that meeting, that thought must have grown much stronger.

Ivan and Snow were clearly not on good terms with each other.

What Iris wanted was to get Snow to help her drive Ivan out completely, but Snow was no fool. This was proven by the ‘completely neutral’ stance she had been prattling about. Breaking it would be impossible even for Iris.

“...I lost again.”

Lylia pouted slightly as she grumbled as if she'd been wronged.

It was only then that Peran smiled slightly, his business-like expression fading.

“It wasn't easy. Maybe there will be a different result next time.”

“That's what you said last time.”

“Did I?”

The two looked at each other before smiling.

Even those who didn't know them would be able to tell they were family from their smiles that were almost identical.

“I haven't seen you in such a long time, big brother.”

“I'm glad you're well, Lylia.”

The order seemed to have been mixed up, but they finally started their reunion conversation.

“You seem to have become even more beautiful. I’m sure the line of suitors stretches on for miles.”

“I’ve heard about marriage so much that I’m starting to get tired of it.”

“It seems to me that you’ve become more popular than when you were a socialite.”

“That’s true, but 90% of them are only after my background anyway.”

She was just being humble.

The true number was not 90%, it was probably closer to 60%.

The rest were young men who had truly fallen in love with Lylia.

“What about Father?”

“He’s well. It would be nice if big brother could send a letter every now and then though.”

“Right. I’ll write one sooner or later.”

Lylia rolled her eyes inwardly. This was a conversation that they repeated every year.

And far from sending a letter, Peran hadn't even set foot on the family property since his departure. And just like before, he wouldn't send any letters either.

"By the way, shouldn't big brother start a family soon?"

"Huh?"

"The Rainstorm, Lady Sonia, is waiting for you."

Peran made an embarrassed expression when he saw Lylia's mischievous smile.

The Rainstorm, who was waiting, was Peran's former fiancée.

"Our relationship isn't like that."

"That's an excuse that couples always use when they're now starting to connect."

"No. I'm serious. Besides... now really isn't the time for that. I still have many things to do."

Of course, Lylia knew that Peran was usually busy almost 24hrs a day. He didn't have the time to give someone his heart.

Her mischievous expression soon became clouded by worry.

“I’m worried about you, big brother. If you keep running around like that, you won’t even notice when your body can’t take it anymore. It’s only after you stop, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that you’ll finally notice just how much you’re overworking yourself.”

“...”

“Sometimes it’s good to take a break. Any kind is fine. Whether it’s by making love to a lover or immersing yourself in a hobby. Or even spending time with close friends.”

Lylia looked deeply into Peran’s eyes for a moment before continuing.

“...well, I don’t think big brother has a single person you can call a close friend anyway.”

“I do.”

“Huh?”

“A friend.”

Peran smiled brightly.

“I have one.”

Volume 2 - Chapter 308

The flower garden, which was filled with nothing but red roses, was the rose garden his mother had grown as a hobby.

When he was young, Peran liked to run between them.

“Be careful to not get pricked by the thorns.”

Young Peran paid great heed to those words.

This wasn't because he was afraid of the rose thorns. He was simply happy to receive praise for faithfully listening to his mother's words.

However, that day was different.

“Mm?”

Peran blinked.

He could see blue bugs hovering around a rose.

“Don’t do that.”

Even to a child’s eyes, the blue color was spoiling the beautiful colors of the rose garden.

They had to be brushed off.

No matter how mature Peran was, he was still a child. In that moment, his sense of duty to protect the rose garden became greater than his desire to heed his mother’s warning.

So he tried to swat the bugs on the rose with his small hand.

“Ow.”

A thorn pricked his finger. Drops of blood, redder than the roses around him, fell to the ground.

Peran didn’t cry.

In fact, the fear and surprise he felt at that moment were greater than the pain in his hand. He didn’t want his mother to scold him or be disappointed after seeing it.

So he hid the wound, but it was still revealed in the afternoon.

Peran's mother didn't scold him. Instead, she just asked him in a calm voice.

"Why did you do it?"

"...I was trying to get rid of the blue bugs that were on the rose."

"Blue bugs?"

Peran's eyes turned to his mother.

"They're buzzing around you too, Mother."

"...!"

Peran Jun.

That was the moment when he started seeing mana at the age of five.

* * *

"I've never seen such talent."

“H-, he’s definitely a genius. It’s unprecedented...”

Peran couldn’t really understand their words and reactions.

“What’s a genius?”

When he looked up at his father and asked this question, he stroked his head with a proud expression on his face.

“He’s also a bit smarter than others his age.”

“Like you, Father?”

“Right. However... You’ll definitely be bigger than me when you grow up.”

“I like that too. Mother said the bigger I get, the better.”

“...mm.”

Shepard couldn’t be considered a very large man, so he simply let out a soft grunt.

Soon afterward, he looked down at his son and spoke in a solemn tone.

“There’s something that you should never forget. Geniuses might be smarter than everyone else, but that doesn’t mean they are superior.”

“I don’t understand what you mean.”

“...to put it simply, don’t show off. Don’t you feel annoyed when you see other kids showing off?”

Peran recalled the Marquis’ son who’d come to play with him two days ago and was showing off a flashy pendant.

It was then that he vaguely understood what his father meant when he said ‘don’t you feel annoyed?’.

He raised his head to look at Shepard once again. Unlike his light tone, his eyes were serious.

Peran nodded his little head vigorously.

“I do.”

* * *

At the age of six, Peran began to pursue the field of magicology in earnest.

He was talented, had a suitable aptitude, and most importantly, found it interesting.

There was no obstacle that could stop him, so it was natural for him to conquer magicology at an unprecedented pace. The Wizards who had recognised his talent before were once again astonished.

They realised that what they'd seen at that time was simply the tip of the iceberg.

Peran reached 3-stars at the age of 13 and 4-stars at 17. 4-star Wizards were individuals that possessed great influence across the Kastkau Empire, and even those slightly talented individuals usually only reached this stage around the age of 30.

“Can you feel the wall now?”

At Shepard's words, Peran nodded slightly.

It didn't feel like something he would be unable to cross. However, he felt that receiving someone's guidance would allow him to save more time than if he were to continue learning on his own.

‘Will you teach me, Father?’

“...I want to, but...”

Shepard let out a tired sigh.

“I have so much work to do.”

“...”

He understood.

Shepard was the head of a duke family, and at the same time, he was one of the only five 7-star Wizards in the Empire, as well as the master of the 4th Tower.

Lately, he hadn't been able to spend much time at home.

17 year old Peran understood his father's position and the responsibilities that came with it which is why he didn't ask him anymore.

But his son's resolute attitude only made Shepard feel more guilty, so he mobilised all of his personal connections to find an outstanding teacher, and he was finally able to find someone competent enough to teach Peran.

It was the deputy master of the 5th Tower and a 6-star Wizard.

He was also a person with a high reputation even in Kastkau, which was known as the Magic Empire.

Peran greatly respected his teacher and followed him obediently. In a way, his position in his heart was even higher than his father.

But soon after, the Master-Student relationship ended in disaster.

It was the day Peran reached 5-stars. In other words, the day he became 19.

“Y-, you are a monster.”

The master that he relied so heavily upon could not handle Peran’s talent.

At first, he kept his distance because he was wary, but soon enough he became afraid.

That hurt Peran. Those with extreme talent were bound to be feared more than admired.

At that time, this wasn’t something that Peran could understand.

So he hid it.

He really thought that he would become a monster if he continued to learn and that the people around him, his friends and family, would also look at him in the same way that his master had.

Shepard didn't know the details of the incident. This was because Peran never told him about it. Nevertheless, some things could still be understood even if they were never said openly. Noticing his son's anguish, he recommended a different method.

"Why don't you go to the Westroad Academy?"

"..."

The Westroad Academy was a Wizard training centre.

A talent training centre where young people who were interested in magicology were gathered and raised to become pillars that would lead the empire in the future.

However, there wasn't much for Peran, who had already reached 5-stars, to learn in that place.

"I'll go."

Nevertheless, Peran decided to enter the academy.

This was because he had nothing better to do at that moment and there was a hint of expectation within him.

'Maybe I'll find someone bigger than me.'

A genius more talented than him.

If he met such a person, he felt that the thought that he was a monster would disappear. He felt like he could use a competitive spirit and inferiority complex as a driving force to continue pushing himself forward.

But there wasn't.

The academy didn't live up to his expectations in the slightest.

Instead, it was just filled with people who admired and glorified Peran's status, talent, and appearance.

'Empty.'

It was empty.

None of those people were treating him sincerely.

Their expressions, words, and actions were all empty.

If that was the case, then he didn't need to treat them sincerely either.

As he thought that, Peran smiled.

Then he began to ponder. The length of a course in Westroad Academy was four years. But he felt that spending that long in such a place was simply a waste of time.

Then, as he began to seriously contemplate whether he should graduate early, or get expelled.

—He heard an interesting rumor.

* * *

“Did you just say... he’s sick?”

Peran looked at Snow with a strange expression on his face. Perhaps it was because of the unexpected situation, but her expression was also unpleasant.

“That’s what I said.”

“How could...”

“Look at that guy’s body. He stayed up for two days and two nights with a weak body like that. He didn’t eat or drink properly during that time, and then when he went outside, he just walked into the heavy rain as if he’d been possessed by a ghost or something, fainted, and was left soaking in the mud for thirty minutes.”

She was so upset that the tips of her ears had become red. If he hadn't been found in time, he really would have died.

Snow muttered to herself before snorting as if she'd been offended.

"The doctor said he'd be sick for three to four days which means he wouldn't be able to keep his promise with this Queen. What an arrogant guy."

54055

"His promise?"

"I told him yesterday that I would give him one more day."

"I see."

Peran looked down.

There, lying with a pale face that matched his white hair was the topic of their conversation. He'd always given an impression of weakness before, but now, he felt fragile, as if he would crumble with a touch.

It was strange.

When he first saw this man, while he did appear insignificant, he never thought of him as 'weak'.

In fact, he felt a bit overwhelmed. This was because he gave him a feeling similar to the 'untouchable beings' like Snow and Iris...

His condition had become strange ever since the meeting two, no, three days ago.

It felt like something within him broke.

Peran had a lot of work to do so he hadn't been able to pay much attention to it, but he never thought it would become like this.

"You take care of him."

"What about Your Majesty? Are you leaving today?"

"No. I want to see what excuses this man will make when he wakes up. The crime of mocking this Queen is heavy. I won't let it go."

"..."

Snow had a talent for being dishonest and only said things like that when she was worried.

As if sensing his thoughts, she snorted before turning around and leaving the room, allowing silence to descend once again.

Peran looked at the thin soup and hot water in his hands before placing them beside the bed.

So that Lukas could eat it whenever he woke up.

Volume 2 - Chapter 309

In a dark place.

A cave where almost no trace of light existed.

Scrape, scrape...

The sound of stone being scraped resounded.

Someone was sitting in front of a boulder.

But the darkness made it almost impossible to tell their appearance.

All that could be seen was a faint outline of their face.

It was a familiar face.

“...what are you doing?”

“Can’t you see? I’m making a statue.”

As he gave this answer, Kasajin continued to sculpt the statue. All he had in his hand was a rough carving knife that seemed to be made from animal bones.

“That’s unexpected. Have you always been able to sculpt?”

“No. I learned it for the first time in this place.”

“Why did you learn it?”

“Because this can’t be taken away.”

“...”

He didn’t really understand what that meant. But this was not the time to ask. Kasajin was wielding his carving knife with the serious expression he usually had when he trained his body.

Since it was a bit tiring to keep standing, he decided to sit in front of him as he watched.

Phew.

After a while, Kasajin brushed some dust off the statue and let out a slow breath before turning to look at Lukas.

“You look like shit.”

“A lot happened.”

“I know. That’s why you came to this place.”

“...”

“Tell me. I’ll listen.”

His manner of speech hadn’t changed at all.

...He missed it.

Although it wasn’t the time, Lukas couldn’t help but let out a soft chuckle.

“...do you remember? A long time ago, when we were fighting the Demigods... I told you that it wouldn't matter even if no one remembers what we did.”

“I remember.”

“That even if our footsteps were never recorded in history, it would be fine as long as we didn't forget.”

“Right.”

“...but, it's not.”

He fell silent for a while.

At some point, Lukas' smile had become bitter.

“...I don't want to be forgotten. I don't need to be praised for what we did. We didn't save humanity, the continent, and the world because we wanted fame or rewards for it. We didn't fight against the Demigods just for that.”

A desire for success, fame, or wealth.

If they had just been fighting just to satisfy those desires, then they would have given up a lot sooner.

The reason they did it was because they thought it was wrong. Because they knew the things the Demigods did weren't right. So they kept fighting.

...No. It wasn't just that.

Lukas' gaze turned to Kasajin.

"I was only able to hold on because of you guys. Because even when we were struggling desperately, we knew we were doing it together. It was that sense of camaraderie that comforted me. But I didn't realise."

That it would hurt so much if no one remembered him.

Lukas didn't add the last part.

He didn't want to show how much those words affected him to Kasajin.

It was better to call it his last sliver of pride.

"You're wrong."

"What?"

Kasajin got up from his seat.

It was only then that Lukas was able to see his full appearance.

“...you.”

He didn't know what to say.

It was a body so weak that he couldn't imagine that this was Kasajin.

His wrists were so thin it looked like they would snap with a touch, and the legs that supported his body looked frailer than twigs in the middle of winter.

But the look in his eyes.

If it wasn't for that fierce gaze that was almost synonymous with Kasajin, he might not have recognised him.

“Not everyone has forgotten you. Your life wasn't that short, and your achievements weren't that small.”

“...!”

“At the very least, I will always remember you in this place. Always.”

He could feel the emotion hidden in Kasajin’s voice.

His heart ached,

“...Kasajin, where is this place?”

He’d thought that it was a dream, or that he was reflecting on the past.

But that wasn’t the case.

This place...

Kasajin smiled faintly.

“It’s a place you don’t need to know about just yet.”

Paht-

Lukas’ body was flung out of the cave. Lukas tried to grab Kasajin to stop himself, but Kasajin shook his head and stepped out of reach.

“You shouldn’t come to this place. Not yet.”

“Kasajin! You...!”

“Lukas, you just said it yourself. You saved our world. Do you understand what that means? The universe couldn’t survive without you. It’s impossible even for God to make those achievements disappear.”

“What are you talking...”

“One more thing. You weren’t just ‘Lukas Trowman’.”

Kasajin chuckled.

“You should have had another name as well.”

* * *

“...”

Lukas woke with a slightly hazy mind.

...A dream.

Had it been a dream?

His head spun. He was incredibly thirsty. He also had chills as if the condition of his body was not good.

Was he still dreaming?

...Another name.

The other name he used in this world...?

“Frey, Blake...” (TL: Pray Blake...)

Crash!

A loud noise came from beside him.

Lukas forcibly opened his eyes and looked over.

A man was standing beside the bed and staring at him with a shocked expression.

It was Peran Jun.

* * *

When he opened his eyes again, it was dark.

Lukas couldn't tell if it was the middle of the night, or approaching dawn. He decided to get up first.

To an extent, his body, which had been stiff and shivering before, had regained its original condition.

'...this body...'

He couldn't remember being this sick even after staying in his workshop for months on end studying magicology. But he'd stayed in the library for just two days and gotten soaked by a bit of rain, and now he'd gotten so sick he could barely move.

Although he knew how weak his body was, he couldn't help but feel surprised.

"..."

His chest still felt like a heavy piece of lead had been placed on it, but his mind felt a bit clearer. Perhaps as his sickness cleared up, so too had the bad thoughts in his head.

'...I feel like something important happened.'

As he'd laid on the bed, he'd woken up and fainted several times. Thanks to that, his memories were still unclear. He felt like something had happened, but he couldn't remember.

He let out a sigh.

He had completely lost control of himself. He felt like even if he kept scouring his memories, he wouldn't get what he wanted, so Lukas decided to let it go.

His gaze turned to his right.

There, on a small round table, were a suitably wet towel, a bowl of soup, and a cup of lukewarm water.

Traces that someone had been caring for him.

'Was it Snow?'

Lukas thought of the cool touch that he'd felt on his forehead, but she'd told him that she would only wait one more day. Even though he was unconscious, he was aware of the fact that it hadn't just been for one day.

Snow had probably already left.

Creak-

But at that moment, the door opened, and it was none other than Snow that walked into the room. Lukas was a bit surprised.

Not only because of her sudden appearance, but also because of her expression.

Usually, she had a smile on her face. Whether it was a mischievous smile or a confident smile, most of the time, the corners of her lips were raised.

But at that moment, the Snow that entered the room was visibly upset.

“...hmpf.”

She glanced down at Lukas and crossed her arms.

For a while, she didn't say anything and simply stared down at him with an annoyed gaze.

Seeing that she didn't intend to speak up first, Lukas opened his mouth.

“How did you know I was awake?”

“Ha.”

Snow snorted.

The expression on her face, which was as white as the moonlight, changed.

It was to the point where he could almost hear her thinking, ‘what did this bastard just say?’

“Is that all?”

“What?”

“The first thing you say when you fully regain consciousness. I’m asking if that is all.”

“...”

Lukas looked down at the table.

“...thanks.”

“...”

“I’m really in your debt.”

“...”

“You saved my life.”

He spoke with sincerity, but Snow’s expression didn’t relax at all.

She still looked annoyed, but eventually let out a sigh as she looked at Lukas’ face.

“...right. Well, I guess it’s natural to say thank you, but I’m not the one you should be telling it to.”

54055

“Then the person...”

“It was Peran. But he left the academy a few hours ago. You missed it perfectly. He seemed to want to talk to you about something...”

Snow narrowed her eyes for a moment before shaking her head.

“...in any case. Do you remember what this Queen told you?”

“You mean about waiting for a day?”

“So you remember. For reference, four days have passed since then. 96 hours to be exact.”

Blood flowed into Snow’s pale white face.

Lukas gently bowed his head.

“I’m sorry... By the way, not that I intend to make excuses or anything, but why didn’t you just leave when I didn’t wake up in time?”

“Because I wanted to hear what would come out of your mouth. But if I knew you’d say something like that, I would have just left.”

“...”

She really had a fickle personality. To the extent that he pitied Peran, who was her assistant. Of course, since Lukas was completely at fault in this matter, he wisely remained silent.

Snow smiled once again, and only then did she take her annoyed gaze off of Lukas.

“Your condition seems to have improved a bit. Last time I saw you, you looked like you were going to die.”

“...you saw that?”

“Right. Anyways, I’m glad you’re better. Time’s a bit tight, so we’ll leave right away.”

“We’re leaving? To where?”

“The best place to train you.”

“Where is that?”

Snow finally smiled.

“Amalgam Forest.”

Volume 2 - Chapter 310

Even though they were in a hurry, he couldn’t skip his meal. After recovering from sickness, it was necessary to pay close attention to his body and nutrition.

Snow and Lukas filled their stomachs with a meal of soup and bread before setting off.

The forest was about two days away from the academy. Or at least, that was the case if one was riding a carriage, but Snow didn't get a carriage. She didn't use the Warp Stone either. (There weren't any Warp Stones near the forest in the first place.)

Nevertheless, Snow and Lukas were able to arrive at the Amalgam Forest in just one day.

"Urg..."

Lukas forcibly suppressed the urge to vomit. Even with the fresh air of the forest, the nausea didn't go away easily.

Snow snickered as she saw this. This sight pleased her a great deal.

"You're tougher than I expected."

"...wasn't there... another... way?"

"There wasn't. But thanks to that, we were able to arrive much faster than if we took a carriage."

She wasn't wrong.

Nevertheless, it wasn't good to only look at efficiency when doing a task. Oftentimes, it could cause disasters to occur.

Lukas gagged a few more times before finally straightening his back with a sigh.

“...the people we passed stared at us like they had seen some kind of ghost.”

“Ahaha. This Queen saw that too. They all had funny expressions on their faces.”

“...”

Well, anyone would stare if they saw a white haired woman carrying a white haired man and running at a speed that surpassed the Fly spell.

He thought that it would have been better since Snow was wearing a mask, but instead, it only seemed to make the scene even more bizarre.

...In any case, it was a memory that he would not easily forget.

“This is Amalgam Forest.”

He looked around at Snow’s words.

They were in a clearing in the forest, but it didn’t seem to be completely natural. The grass in the clearing was cut very short, there were tents at one end, and in the centre, were traces of bonfires.

Although the traces were a bit old, it was clear that a group of people had stayed there at some point.

“This is the place we take talented people who want to enter the alliance. To be precise, this place is a test site.”

“...a test site.”

“Right. The goal of the test is survival. You just have to survive in this forest for a month. Simple, right?”

“...”

It wasn't that difficult.

The forest was neither hot nor cold, there were tents, and it seemed easy to obtain drinking water. It wouldn't be difficult to find food either since he saw the shadows of beasts moving within the forest from time to time, and there were many fruit trees.

Snow walked forward with light steps before bending over and picking something up.

“This isn't too bad.”

It was a branch.

However, it was very thin. It wasn't even 1cm in diameter. It was a thin twig that even a newborn baby could snap into two pieces.

But.

“...”

Snow swung the branch once.

From top to bottom.

As if she was drawing a line in the air.

Whoosh-

And a strong wind billowed around her. He could even see bugs who were sent flying by the sudden gust.

Snow looked down at the branch appreciatively before turning back to Lukas.

“Draw your sword.”

It seemed she intended to start right away.

Well, she had said that they didn't have any time to waste.

Doing as she said, Lukas drew the sword he'd bought from the city.

"Get into your stance."

He did as she said again.

Lukas' swordsmanship was heavily influenced by Lucid's Dreadment, but he had added his own interpretation due to the constraints of his left arm and right leg.

He held the sword in his hand at an angle, and lowered his head slightly. He placed his left foot a half step in front of his right, and his right shoulder was also drawn back slightly.

All in all, it was a strange stance that caused the right side of his torso to stick out.

"..."

Snow glanced at Lukas for a moment before tilting her head to the side.

"You, are you from Luanoble?"

“...well...”

“Right. You did say that you lost your memories. Hmm... Anyway, this is better than I was expecting.”

She nodded to herself before continuing.

“First, we’ll work on fixing your stance.”

Swoosh-

Snow narrowed the distance in an instant. It was shorter than the time one took to blink. She circled around Lukas a few times before nodding.

“Imagine that this foot can’t move.”

Then, she pressed the tip of her branch to the top of Lukas’ foot.

“It can be used as a fixed point. Your legs and movement are limited, but that doesn’t mean you don’t have any power.”

“...that’s true.”

He understood what it meant to use it as a fixed point. But he felt that limiting his movements in battle could prove fatal.

Folding her arms, Snow continued her explanation.

“If your mobility is your weakness, then it’s better to leave it as it is rather than waste time doing a poor job at fixing it. You can be like a fortress.”

“You mean to focus more on defense than offense?”

“That’s right. With your legs, if you were to actively attack, the efficiency would be reduced by at least half.”

This was something he knew. In fact, it could even be considered a kind estimation. After all, if one took his left arm into account, it would probably be even more than that.

“There are attacks that I wouldn’t be able to deal with with a fixed right leg.”

“You mean magic?”

That was typically the case.

“How would I deal with attacks like that?”

“You can’t deal with those. So it’s best not to try.”

“...what?”

Lukas looked up at Snow with a frown, but the expression on her face was serious.

In fact, her eyes were even a bit cold.

“Are you telling me to just accept death then?”

“Who said anything like that? I’m just saying that if you encounter attacks that don’t suit your fighting style, you should avoid fighting as much as possible.”

“In most cases, fighting is inevitable.”

“That’s true. So you should find some way to buy time until an ally who is capable of dealing with magic attacks arrives.”

“...”

For a moment, Lukas was speechless.

It felt like he'd been hit in the back of the head with a hammer.

"Did I say something strange?"

"No."

It wasn't just strange.

He couldn't be sure when it had first started, but he was used to dealing with everything on his own.

Not 4,000 years ago.

At that time, he'd had four friends who were on par with him.

If so, then was it when he was Frey Blake? Of course, there were people who he'd called companions at that time. Snow in front of him was one of them, and Ivan as well.

However... had he really treated them as equals?

'No.'

In the end, Lukas had handled everything on his own, including the final battle with Lord.

Right. At some point, he'd gotten used to fighting on his own, and now it seemed that he had taken it for granted.

That's why he'd been so shaken by Snow's words.

To allow others to deal with attacks that he couldn't handle for him.

“...”

Of course, apart from that thought, the feeling of relying on others simply made him feel uncomfortable.

“For today, we'll only work on the general framework of your swordsmanship. Tomorrow, I'll guide you in swordsmanship. And on the day after that, the last day, we'll have a spar, so do your best to satisfy this Queen. Then I'll acknowledge you.”

“What happens after you acknowledge me?”

“I will recommend you to the Alliance's talent training centre. And I'll tell you this Queen's name.”

Talent training centre.

Snow's words made Lukas feel a bit uncomfortable.

"What about Diablo's subjugation?"

"..."

"Can't I take part as well?"

Snow's eyes narrowed slightly. Then she spoke in a slow tone.

"To be honest, the strength of our alliance is not much. Even though the Circle split into two parts, the sides led by Ivan and Iris are still stronger than us."

"..."

"Nevertheless, I can assure you. The number of talents the Alliance can mobilise is more than three figures. They are all stronger than you and they have no flaws either."

Snow didn't say more, but her meaning was clear.

In other words,

Even if Lukas were to participate in this battle, with his current strength, he'd most likely just die.

It was only then that Lukas understood the situation and Snow's attitude.

She wasn't treating Lukas like an 'equal companion' or 'someone to leave her back to'.

He was just one among dozens if not hundreds of people.

Although he was crippled, he still had a lot of potential.

That was all Snow's expectations of Lukas amounted to.

54055

Perhaps her act of investing her time now was also just a part of trying to recruit a good talent.

"..."

It was true. But it severely wounded Lukas' pride.

Crunch.

The hilt of his sword creaked a bit as the strength of his grip increased.

Before coming to this forest, there had still been a number of tangled thoughts in his head. His heart had been heavy and his mood was gloomy.

This was natural, because he'd gone there without any idea of how to deal with his many problems.

But at that moment, he forgot about everything else.

Snow's attitude was understandable.

In all honesty, it couldn't be said that she was looking down on Lukas, in fact, it was possible to say that her attitude was excessive compared to the worth he had displayed.

'...nevertheless...'

Lukas had no intention of being looked down upon like this.

He made a decision at that moment.

There were three days left.

During that time, he would change Snow's attitude towards him, regardless of what it took.