

Great Mage 681

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 381

They walked through the desert, feeling the texture of the sand on their skin, and the crunch as they crushed it beneath their feet.

Lukas looked at the back of Kwak Do-san, who walked ahead. It wasn't just Kwak Do-san. The other four Swordsmen, who appeared to be Kwak Do-san's party, also showed their backs to Lukas. Their swords slept quietly in their sheaths.

Even with their skill, it would take them a few seconds to fully draw their swords and be ready.

In other words, they were giving Lukas their completely defenceless backs.

In their current state, Lukas could subdue all five of them in five seconds or less. In fact, at least a dozen methods to do so were already running through his mind.

There was no way that Kwak Do-san did not know this.

'Do they trust me?'

That couldn't be it. Instead, it felt closer to resignation.

They had already witnessed Lukas' might for themselves. Even if they remained on guard and had their swords out. Even if they were ready in advance, they knew it would only delay their deaths by a few tens of seconds.

So the thing that was truly surprising was their stubborn determination to not show their helplessness or inner feelings.

"Wouldn't it be dangerous to follow them so easily?"

Pale spoke up. At first glance, it might seem like she was worried, but there were no signs of nervousness in her voice.

She'd told him before that if he recklessly entered someone else's territory, he'd get 'painted'. He still wasn't sure what that meant exactly. However, he had the vague understanding that it would be an extremely dangerous situation.

Nevertheless, Lukas shook his head.

Michael had said. 'Even though you have stepped into my territory, for some reason, there is nothing I can do to you'. If those words were true, then even if it was a Lord, they would not be able to subdue Lukas.

He looked at the backs of Kwak Do-san's party once again.

Even though they were walking a short distance behind them, Pale had not spoken in a soft voice. So they must have heard her words.

Nevertheless, there was no change in their pace or gait. Even in the face of blatant suspicion, their attitudes remained the same.

He decided to shake them a bit more.

“That might be true. However, if they tricked me into following them, then they should hope they prepared their trap thoroughly.”

“Why’s that?”

“Because if their preparations are even slightly insufficient, the Flower Mountain will lose at least half of their men.”

“...”

He spoke in a quiet voice, but there was no wind in the desert. So it would have easily reached the ears of those walking ahead.

And yet, there was no change to Kwak Do-san’s footsteps. It was the same for the rest as well.

Except for one. The woman on the far left, who appeared relatively young. When she heard Lukas’ words, her shoulders shook slightly. But that too was only for an instant.

In the blink of an eye, her agitation completely disappeared.

Unfortunately, there was no reaction beside that one.

Lukas turned his head to look at Pale. No, to be precise, he looked at the woman she was carrying.

Witch.

Witch...

She didn’t seem like one. There were no traces of black magic on this woman. Instead, what he could feel was the faint reverberation of extremely dense and pure mana. In that case, was she a Wizard? Perhaps she was, but... he couldn’t tell.

Lukas couldn’t help but question this conclusion. Why couldn’t he tell? He could not inspect the inside of her body. Then why couldn’t he inspect her insides?

Was it because this was the Imaginary World? Or was there something wrong with his senses? That was also unknown.

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For a moment, Lukas felt like bursting out in laughter.

He carefully looked around him.

The Swordsmen from the Flower Mountain whose true intentions were still unknown.

Pale, whose identity he hadn’t yet guessed.

And a woman who could be from the universe that he hadn’t yet spoken a word to.

He had no one to talk to, no friend to trust.

Anyone could try to trick him at any time and stick a knife in his back. He was surrounded by beings that he didn't know if he could trust.

In fact, it was possible that this was a situation where he was walking into the jaws of the enemy with his own two feet. After all, just because Michael couldn't do anything, it didn't mean that the Lords of other territories would be similarly incapable.

He was aware of all of these possibilities, and yet... he was still walking forward without hesitation.

'Because it doesn't matter.'

Right.

Even if all of them were deceiving him, even if he were walking to his own grave.

Lukas felt that it didn't really matter to him. It was strange.

It was not confidence. Nor was it desperation. It was also far from resignation.

Whatever happened happened.

If he had to say, that would be the best way to put it.

* * *

At some point, the surroundings had become foggy. Visibility fell so low that even the backs of Kwak Do-san's party, who were only a few steps ahead, were blurred.

That wasn't all. The ground below their feet also hardened. It was easy to see that they weren't in the desert anymore.

It didn't feel like they were walking on a well trodden path. Like a mountain road. It felt more like they were walking on a path that had been carved by nature, by roaming wild animals.

"We've reached the entrance."

Pale muttered.

When he heard the word entrance, Lukas thought of the ant hill he'd seen right before they entered the underground city.

As he had this thought, the scent of plum blossoms filled his nostrils and their view changed.

"Wow!"

Pale exclaimed softly. The sight before them was worth such an exclamation.

A giant mountain that reached through the clouds and seemed to pierce the sky. Combined with the faint scent of plum blossoms, the subtle magnificence of the scene could be felt with a glance.

Flower Mountain.

It wasn't just the huge mountain, but also the surroundings that were beautiful. They felt warm sunshine and refreshing air on their bodies as if they had come to appreciate the mountain scenery on a beautiful spring day.

It was a hundred times more colourful and lively than the desolate underground city that Lukas had visited before.

"Welcome to Flower Mountain."

Kwak Do-san's voice was filled with pride. But he couldn't help but wince slightly when he saw that Lukas' expression hadn't changed in the slightest.

"...ahem. Before we take you to see the damage, I would like to guide you to the underground prison first."

"Prison?"

When Lukas frowned at that word, Kwak Do-san shook his head.

"Please don't misunderstand. Although it is a prison, we don't intend to detain you. I would just like to remind you that the witch is an extremely dangerous being. To be honest, I'm fearful that she will regain consciousness any moment now."

"..."

"If the place where the witch wakes up is the underground prison, the elite masters of the main mountain will be able to respond quickly. I'm making this suggestion because I think it's the safest option."

Kwak Do-san's voice remained unshakeable.

Besides, he'd said it was a suggestion, not a demand. Perhaps if Lukas refused, he would not say anything else.

"Fine."

When Lukas accepted his suggestions so easily, Kwak Do-san's eyes widened slightly, but he quickly regained his composure.

"I thank you for your trust. So-han, guide these people to the prison."

"Understood."

A tall young man bowed his head politely before turning to Lukas.

"This one is called Yong So-han. I will be your guide from now on."

"Are you not going to guide me?"

Lukas' gaze turned to Kwak Do-san.

"I would love to, but I have a responsibility as the team leader. Since we have returned to the main mountain, I naturally have to report to our Senior Brother first. I beg for your broad generosity to accept this much."

"..."

Lukas nodded his head without saying anything more, and Kwak Do-san took that as his permission to leave.

Two of the Swordsmen, who hadn't spoken a single word so far, followed him.

"Please follow me."

The young man, Yong So-han, bowed his head to them before walking away, followed by the last of their group.

Lukas and Pale followed.

The underground prison was located a short distance away from Flower Mountain. It had the appearance of a naturally formed cave.

Unlike the beautiful scenery outside, the cave seemed to exude a gloomy aura.

"Here is fine."

Pale muttered softly. It felt like her footsteps became more lively.

What was fine? Lukas pondered inwardly, but he was not curious enough to ask.

The cave was quite deep, and it gradually began to slope downward. It was unclear just how far they traversed down the rough stone steps.

After a while, Yong So-han stopped walking.

"..."

The smell of wood incense mingled with the humidity in the cave. It carried a scent similar to a temple sacrifice.

The scent of the wood incense seemed to mask another faint smell.

The smell of blood.

"This way."

Yong So-han resumed walking.

On both sides of the path, jail cells made of solid iron were erected. In them were men and women, old and young, even children.

And,

"..."

Lukas' form stopped.

He was in front of a jail cell. His gaze was locked onto someone on the other side of the iron bars for a long time.

“What are you doing?”

Yong So-han, who was walking ahead, turned around.

Without even looking up, Lukas said.

“Who is this person?”

“One of the sinners.”

“What is his crime?”

“Massacre. He killed 11 of our disciples and wounded another 25. He is one of the most dangerous sinners in this prison.”

“...”

Massacre.

Lukas felt his mouth go dry. It felt like he’d swallowed a mouthful of sand.

He walked closer to the jail cell.

“Wa-, wait. Don’t get too close.”

Ignoring Yong So-han’s call, he reached his hand as far into the cell as it could stretch. Then he quietly spoke again.

“Is that really the truth?”

“...”

“Did this man really commit a massacre with his own hands?”

At that moment, the person inside the cell stirred slightly.

Slowly, he raised his head. His entire body was covered in scars, and he was so thin that his rib bones were visible. This showed that he had experienced a long period of torture and neglect. Rather than meals. He had probably only been given enough to eat to maintain his existence.

Suddenly, his chapped lips parted, and it seemed that a voice that hadn’t been used in a long time tried to flow out.

“_”

But no sound came out of his mouth. Nevertheless, Lukas heard his words.

He turned around.

The prison didn’t seem to have any specially assigned guards.

In other words, the only ones there were the two Swordsmen.

“I’m not sure what’s going on, but please calm...”

Just as Yong So-han had a strange feeling and brought his hand to the hilt of his sword.

Paak!

A Hyper Bolt struck him in the stomach. Yong So-han coughed out the air in his lungs and his eyes rolled back into his head.

Knocked out in one hit.

“What-!”

The other swordsman a short distance away was surprised and drew his sword like lightning.

Lukas turned to him, preparing to cast another spell, but it wasn’t necessary.

Crack!

Because the Swordsman’s face was crushed in the next instant.

Red Blood and white brain matter mixed as they flowed down. The body, which had lost its head, convulsed a few times as if it couldn’t understand what had happened, before finally collapsing to the ground.

Blood soaked the cave floor.

Lukas turned to the woman who had created such a horrific scene.

“Pale.”

She twisted her mouth instead of answering.

Then, she licked the blood from her hands. The image was alluring, but at the same time, it carried a frightening aura.

“Uncle, do you remember what I said last time?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I told you that territories have a lot of tasty things.”

There was no need for him to ask what she meant.

Pale showed the meaning of her words through her next actions. After walking over to the body, she grabbed it by the ankle. Then, she pulled it in the opposite direction from the hip.

With a gruesome sound, the man’s leg was ripped off, like a boiled chicken leg that was pulled off.

With a hum, Pale opened her mouth wide.

“Hap.”

Chomp, crunch, munch. The sounds of her chewing not only the muscles and blood vessels, but also the bones, filled the underground prison.

Lukas' gaze became cold.

He wasn't surprised or shocked. But the sight of cannibalism was something that he never liked to see.

"Are you not going to eat?"

Pale didn't look back at him and instead asked with a smirk.

"You put in a lot of effort. That should make up for it."

Pale's question carried genuine curiosity.

Certainly.

If Lukas were to kneel down and carry out a similar predatory act, he would be able to completely replenish the mana he'd lost. Perhaps the nutritional value of a warrior like Yong So-han was much better than the rats and monsters he'd eaten before.

However, he had no intention of doing so.

No matter how polluted, corrupted, or soiled he became, there were actions that he would never tolerate.

Cannibalism was one such action for Lukas.

Pale finished eating the leg in a flash and wiped her lips. However, that only served to spread the blood that had splashed onto her face while she was ripping the body apart, making it even messier.

"If you don't eat, it'll be your loss. If you just leave it, it'll disappear."

"Disappear?"

"Look at that."

As if to prove her point, the body of the unnamed man began to slowly disappear.

That wasn't all. Even the pieces of flesh and bone fragments that had scattered and the blood that had splashed onto Pale's face began to disappear.

"That's why it's better to eat. Even when everything is gone, the feeling of fullness will not disappear."

Pale patted her stomach in satisfaction.

He knew that she was a glutton. She always seemed to be eating something. When they were walking, Pale would take things out of her pocket to eat.

And yet, her cheeks were still sunken, her limbs were still thin.

This fact unsettled Lukas, but he'd never taken the opportunity to ask.

"Why did you kill him?"

He'd had no intention of killing. The Hyper Bolt that Lukas had used had only been strong enough to knock him unconscious. Pale was different. She'd smashed the Swordsman's head with the first blow.

“I hate liars. And this place is a den of liars.”

Pale straightened her knees and stood up.

Then she turned to Lukas.

“By the way, why did you do that? Did you know they were lying too?”

“I’d had my suspicions before. But I was certain after what just happened.”

“Just happened?”

“Right.”

Lukas turned to the cell he was standing in front of.

“This man is not someone who would commit a massacre without cause.”

“Do you know each other? Are you from the same universe?”

“No.”

Lukas shook his head as he looked inside the cell.

Many things had changed, but those eyes hiding behind his long hair remained the same.

Lukas was more surprised that he’d met this man here in the first place.

He hadn’t expected this man to be in the Imaginary World. Because this was a place only forgotten beings were supposed to enter. Even now, as he stood face to face with him, he couldn’t understand what was going on.

However, there was no doubt that they had reunited.

Lukas called his name in a soft voice.

“Lee Jong-hak.”

As if to answer him, the Human Dragon lifted his head.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 382

Cloud Pavilion, which was built at the top of Flower Mountain, was the residence of Flower Mountain’s Senior Disciple. No one else stayed there. This wasn’t because it was impossible to enter, but because the disciples of Flower Mountain would only enter if they had special business. It was a so-called unwritten rule that even the elders of Flower Mountain adhered to.

Fortunately, Kwak Do-san, who was now setting foot in Cloud Pavilion, had a special reason.

“...”

He thoroughly prostrated himself.

Kwak Do-san bowed so low that his face was practically touching the ground.

It was not a rare sight to see disciples prostrating themselves in this place, regardless of who it was that was reporting to the Senior Disciple.

His forehead was damp. But this was the only sign that Kwak Do-san was nervous.

The Flower Mountain's Senior Disciple.

The Everlasting Plum Sword, Yang In-hyun, had his back turned as he watched the beautiful mountain scenery.

His years could be felt in his white hair, but his straight waist and unblemished white robes displayed indescribable purity and uprightness.

Suddenly, Yang In-hyun stretched forth a finger and a butterfly, which had been flying in the sky, came to rest on it.

"You brought them here."

The voice was overflowing with kindness. But Kwak Do-san gulped heavily as if the tip of a sword was pressed to his throat.

"Th-, that's right."

"And now?"

"I entrusted So-han to guide them. If all goes according to plan, we'll be able to deal with them in the time it takes to have two meals*." (*: 식경- the time it takes to eat a meal. Roughly 30 minutes.)

"..."

"They are formidable, but not to the extent that the main mountain would need to go all out to defeat them. As long as we get the help of the Elders, Senior Brother wouldn't even need to..."

"Why?"

Kwak Do-san was interrupted by Yang In-hyun's soft mutter. He never asked a stupid question. Kwak Do-san felt suffocated, he thought that he might really die if he opened his mouth without thinking.

After a short pause, Yang In-hyun continued to speak in a relaxed tone.

"I sent five great disciples including you. And yet you didn't even have the strength to cut off a single one of your enemy's limbs?"

"I'm sorry for disappointing you. However, it was impossible with our strength..."

"Impossible if you fought normally. But it would have been possible if you detonated your true ki. Am I wrong?"

"..."

Kwak Do-san inhaled sharply. Telling him to detonate his true ki was no different from telling him to die.

Nevertheless, Kwak Do-san simply bowed deeper as his complexion paled.

“...I’m sorry.”

“However, the decisive blunder is what you did after that. Leading them to the prison was the worst possible choice.”

“Huh?”

The butterfly that rested on his finger flew away again.

At the same time, Yang In-hyun turned around.

“It would be fine if they accepted your suggestion. Because the prison has the Five Stage Plum Illusion Formation. So as long as they put the witch into one of the cells, a potential threat would disappear.”

“...”

“But you did not consider the opposite.”

“...the opposite?”

“What if they let all of the criminals in the prison out?”

“...!”

Kwak Do-san gulped when he heard those words. Yang In-hyun’s calm gaze swept over to him and he realised at that moment.

‘If I don’t give a proper excuse here, I-’

Before he could even finish his thought, he opened his mouth.

“Th-, the criminals trapped in the prison are all people with twisted minds that cannot be understood. Even if they tried to negotiate a jailbreak, they wouldn’t accept it. After all, they might just turn on them after they were set free...”

“You tend to think too positively. The probability of that happening might be small. But when it comes to possibility, it’s always better to assume the worst. That way, you will be less shocked.”

Tuktuk, Yang In-hyun, who had been rubbing his temples gently, picked his sword up from the table. It was a plain sword with no other special features apart from a gem the size of a thumb that was embedded in the hilt. But the moment Yang In-hyun collected the sword, its aura changed.

In the blink of an eye, the plain sword transformed into a treasured sword.

The Senior Disciple had taken his sword.

Kwak Do-san immediately understood what this action meant.

“D-, does Senior Brother intend to go there personally?”

“I’ve already sent the elders, but I don’t think they will be able to handle it.”

When did he send them?

Kwak Do-san felt a chill down his spine. Since he'd entered the Cloud Pavilion, it hadn't even been enough time to have one meal. And in that time, no one had entered this place apart from Kwak Do-san and Yang In-hyun.

"The timing is good. It's the perfect time to warm up."

"Ye-, yes."

"But why are you asking me that? Is there a reason why I shouldn't go down?"

"N-, no."

Warm up.

He didn't think that was the only reason.

Suddenly, Yang In-hyun smiled for the first time.

"In any case, it's clear that they are from the underground. Since they came to the main mountain on their own, it would be better to deal with them as efficiently as possible. Without too many losses."

"...I will accompany you."

"You don't have to."

Yang In-hyun gently refused. Then he opened his mouth.

"Do-san."

"Yes."

"How long have you been here?"

"Yes?"

"I mean the time. How long has it been?"

"...I'm not sure, but perhaps, hundreds of years."

Yang In-hyun smiled again.

"And how long has it been since I came here?"

"..."

Kwak Do-san was silent for a while before he finally managed to force the words out.

"About half a year."

"Right. That's right."

Half a year. Since he'd come to the Flower Mountain.

Only half a year.

And within that half year, Yang In-hyun had risen to the position of Flower Mountain's Senior Disciple.

The smile on his face grew wider.

He recalled the time when he killed the previous Senior Disciple. It hadn't been that difficult.

"Do you hate me?"

"T-, that's impossible."

Kwak Do-san denied it immediately, but Yang In-hyun didn't stop smiling.

It felt like he had all of his emotions in his hand.

Hate might be there, but fear was much more abundant. Yang In-hyun liked that kind of primitive feeling. He really wanted to thank fate again for allowing him to come to this world.

"Change has begun. Not just in this world, but the entire Three Thousand Worlds. Did you know, Do-san? There are two ways to deal with a storm. The first is to grab a tree and hold on. And the other is to just let the wind take your body where it pleases."

It was impossible to know where you would be sent by the fierce winds. So it was a gamble that was close to an adventure.

Yang In-hyun didn't mind that.

A colourless world. A world that had stopped, a world that existed but didn't exist, was now being born for the first time.

It was becoming coloured and was moving wildly.

Was this the era of war?

That would be fine too. But it may not be suitable for him to stay a member of the Murim.

Unable to hold it any longer, Yang In-hyun left the Cloud Pavilion with a burst of laughter.

* * *

Each jail cell had an entrance, but naturally, they were locked.

Purple energy which swayed like a mist was formed into thick, hard chains. Naturally, it couldn't be magic.

Even Lukas wasn't able to grasp the principle or effect of this energy.

'Should I force it open?'

Just as he had this ignorant thought...

"Let me do it!"

Pale struck the chain with her blade-like fingertips.

With a crack, the purple energy dissipated, and the chain snapped like a cookie. It was an unbelievable display of power.

“...thanks.”

“It was nothing.”

Lukas stepped into the prison and looked down at the man there.

Lee Jong-hak.

This man, who was called the Human Dragon, had been so thoroughly broken that there were almost no traces of his past self.

Untrimmed hair and beard, and skin so stained with dirt that it had become the colour of a honey cookie.

But the really serious thing was the condition of his body itself.

‘...all of his tendons have been cut.’

They had been cut intentionally.

It was only then that he understood why a Swordsman like Lee Jong-hak had no choice but to remain locked in this prison.

“Are you alright?”

Lee Jong-hak nodded.

His body was in the condition mentioned earlier, but his eyes were still alive.

“Are you having trouble speaking?”

“...”

When he heard those words, Lee Jong-hak’s expression changed slightly.

He seemed hesitant at first but slowly opened his mouth as if he’d made up his mind.

“...!”

Lukas’ expression hardened.

Something was missing from the opened mouth.

Lee Jong-hak didn’t have a tongue.

“Did they cut it out or pull it out?”

Pale asked in a relaxed voice.

But Lukas couldn’t be so relaxed.

“Can you heal him?”

It was a question for Pale.

With the smile still on her face, Pale replied firmly.

“No.”

“...”

“I helped you a lot because I like you. When some people continue to receive favour, they think it’s their right. You’re not that kind of person, are you Uncle?”

This was a hint of coldness in her last words.

“This place is about give and take, right?”

Michael had told him something similar. That was probably the basic iron rule of this world, regardless of where you went.

Pale suddenly began to imitate a weak and ill old man. She bent her back and began to cough.

For a long while actually,

Then, she violently pointed to Lukas.

“So if you want more, you have to give me something equivalent!”

At this point, she’d long surpassed the stage of ‘unpredictable’.

For Lukas, Pale was ‘unknown’.

Her identity was unknown, her goal was unknown, and her personality was also unknown.

Everything about her was unknown.

“I’ll be your friend.”

“What was that?”

“I’ll be your secret friend.”

Lee Jong-hak’s eyes shook slightly at the strange word.

But Lukas pretended not to see it as he continued.

“I will do the treasure hunt with you in the desert, so please help me.”

“Hmmm.”

When she heard those words, the corners of Pale’s mouth rose once again.

“Ay, I’ll be generous again!”

Then she took out a piece of jerky.

This one was also different from the jerkies he’d seen before.

It was small and grey, but it looked very hard. If he had seen it from a distance, he would have probably mistaken it for a stone.

“It looks difficult to eat.”

“You’re welcome. This is a special product! He can eat it even if he doesn’t have a tongue or his teeth aren’t strong.”

“Really? Thanks.”

When he picked up the jerky, Lukas realised the truth in her words. Unlike its appearance, the jerky had a very soft texture. It felt like if he were to squeeze it hard, it would pop like a fruit.

“...”

Lee Jong-hak stared at the strange jerky with a bewildered expression on his face.

No. Instead of bewilderment, it was more like immense surprise.

Next, he turned to look at Pale’s face. Did they know each other? That didn’t seem to be the case. After all, Lee Jong-hak had only shown that surprised expression after seeing the jerky.

Then the reason he’d turned to look at Pale was probably because he wanted to see who could take out an item like that.

Lukas turned to look at Pale as well, but she had the same unflappable smile as always.

“I’m a little hungry too, so I’ll also munch on something.”

Then she rummaged through her pockets.

Lukas turned to Lee Jong-hak and handed the jerky to him.

“Can you eat this?”

“...”

Lee Jong-hak nodded before putting the jerky in his mouth.

Instead of chewing, it looked like it melted in his mouth and flowed down his throat.

“I don’t think you’ll recover right away.”

“...”

“...I don’t know what happened to you. But it’s nice to see you again.”

“...”

When he heard those words, Lee Jong-hak’s gaze became strange. The reason for that was easy to guess.

The Lukas he knew was not the type to say something like that.

That was natural.

The Lukas Trowman that Lee Jong-hak remembered was the Absolute Lukas.

While it was true that he sometimes showed his human side, he was essentially an existence that was close to perfection, without wavering or weakness.

But it was different now.

Lukas had fallen from Absolute. All his external force was lost, and he'd suffered a series of events that caused him significant mental pain.

"Mm?"

At that moment, Pale, who had been chewing on something in the corner, narrowed her eyes slightly.

"We have guests."

As soon as she finished those words, two old men appeared in the hallway.

There was a red robed old man and a blue robed old man.

They had no presence, and their footsteps made no sound.

Lukas observed these new opponents. He looked at the swords hidden in their robes and the faint aura that emanated from their bodies. They would not be easy.

"...did that child So-han get defeated?"

"He was a talented child. They must have used a surprise attack."

"What about Ha-wol? I thought the two of them were together."

"Mm?"

Pale, who had tilted her head to the side at those words, raised her hand.

"Ah. I ate the other one!"

"..."

The old men's expressions became cold.

Then they turned to look at Lukas.

"Your vigour is good. You broke into our main mountain, killed our disciple, and released a sinner from prison.

"A sinner?"

Lukas asked.

"Yes. That one behind you is a murderer who caused a terrible bloodbath on the main mountain. Ridiculous. Did you release him without knowing that?"

"That's not what I need to know."

He knew how important it was to understand the situation before making a decision. But Lukas already knew something more important than that.

He knew that the members of Flower Mountain had deceived him. And he knew Lee Jong-hak's personality.

If that was so, then what would he do now?

There was only one answer.

As if reading the intent in Lukas' eyes, the old man in blue snorted imperiously.

"Insolent! Did you grow arrogant after defeating two disciples of our Flower Mountain? Do you take us Elders of Flower Mountain as jokes?"

"Maybe he came to save Lee Jong-hak from the start. I think there is a lot of information that we will be able to obtain from him. Let's make him like that guy."

Make him like that.

Just as Lukas' eyebrows began to twitch at those words, he felt someone grab the hem of his robes.

It was Lee Jong-hak. When Lukas looked down at him for a moment, their eyes met.

'Don't fight.'

The eyes hidden behind the dishevelled hair were warning him. He was worried. Lee Jong-hak also wouldn't have thought he was weak.

No, it probably meant that his opponents were that strong.

Lukas nodded. But he didn't heed the warning. Firmly but gently, he reached down to remove Lee Jong-hak's hands, then he stepped forward.

Then he looked at the old men,

No, at the elders, and asked in a calm voice.

"Which one was it?"

"What?"

"What are you talking about?"

Instead of answering their questions, he continued to step forward.

He felt strange. His head was cold, but his chest felt like it was filled with raging flames.

Slowly exhaling a hot breath, he asked once more.

"Between the two of you, which one pulled out Lee Jong-hak's tongue?"

"Ha."

"Is that important?"

"Not for me, but it is for you two. I don't have a talent for torture, so I wouldn't make you like him."

Lukas didn't stop walking. Slowly but surely, the distance between them narrowed.

This was not something that someone who called themselves a Wizard should do.

Both of his opponents were Swordsmen. Kwak Do-san, who he had seen before, was powerful in his own right, but he would be no match for either of these two. For enemies like this, instead of closing the distance, it would be wiser to increase it.

There was only one reason why he didn't do so.

Lukas was now moving with emotion, not reason.

"You will probably suffer a little more."

"..."

The elder's expressions became distorted.

At the same time as the sound of swords being drawn resounded, flames erupted from both of Lukas' hands.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#) **Season 2 Chapter 383**

Lukas wasn't the only one surprised by his impulsive approach.

Naturally, the two elders that were about to fight him were more surprised than he was.

It was the red robed old man that returned to his senses first. He squinted his eyes as he observed his opponent.

There were strange beings with a distinctly foreign aura, who wore clothes similar to those of monks, those who used all kinds of sorcery and other magical spells and wielded canes and staves with large gems embedded in them.

They were called... Wizards.

He was certain.

The man in front of him was a Wizard.

Despite not holding a weapon, the flames that coated both of his hands were the best proof of that fact.

And that was what made the current situation even harder to understand.

'Would a Wizard voluntarily reduce the distance like this?'

'Something so foolish...'

The elders laughed inwardly at Lukas' judgement, but their outward reactions were different. Instead, they began to shuffle backward, widening the distance slightly.

That was not the reaction that Lukas expected.

In any case, thanks to their voluntary retreat, he had a bit more leeway. Lukas' eyes turned to Pale.

She was still standing in the same spot, twirling her hair around her finger as she watched the situation with an interesting expression on her face. When their eyes met, she smiled like an idiot.

Clearly, she didn't have any intention of joining the fight.

That was too bad. Pale's power was something even Lukas hadn't gained a full grasp of. It would have been great if she could help him with even one elder.

...Nevertheless, it didn't really matter.

He looked around. He realised just how disadvantageous the terrain was.

It was an underground cave. A closed off, narrow space.

If he were to recklessly use magic, he himself would suffer from it. The key to the Wizards' fighting style was to maintain distance, and in such a narrow, straight place, the difficulty of the fight would increase several times.

Not to mention he had to be considerate of the woman who was still unconscious and Lee Jong-hak who was in poor physical condition.

Nevertheless, those series of problems were not a major obstacle for Lukas.

Srrng-

When the distance between them narrowed a bit more, the sound of swords being drawn was heard.

The red robed and blue robed elders were ready to start the fight.

At first glance, it might seem like they were just retreating, but they had moved with strange shifting steps and before he knew it, they were standing on both sides of Lukas, their swords at the ready.

Suddenly, Lukas stopped walking.

"..."

One step.

If he had taken one more step, he would have entered the elders' most comfortable rhythm and exposed an opening. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say he almost stepped towards death with his own two feet.

This distance was perfect.

Fwoosh!

At the same time, the flames that flickered on Lukas' hands shot towards the elders.

Taht, the figures of the two elders disappeared. Their swords, which they had been holding openly, seemed to become undetectable flashes as they pierced the flames. In an instant, the intangible element disappeared silently as if it evaporated.

Their advance did not stop because of Lukas' first attack. Rather, it was only beginning.

The two elders clearly kicked off at the same time, but it was the elder on the left that reached him first.

In other words, it was the blue robed elder.

He hadn't arrived first because he was faster or closer. Instead, it was simply because the red robed elder deliberately slowed down in order to sync their attacks.

When the blue robed elder was only one step away...

Fwoosh!

Lukas saw plum blossoms in full bloom.

It felt like the dark cave had become brighter. Then he felt a tingling sensation all over his body. It felt like he was pressuring him with his aura.

'He's at a level close to Master.'

He was impressed by his opponent's achievements, but the progression of the blue robed elder's mastery was about to come to an end.

Fwoosh!

The plum blossoms fluttered and covered most of his vision. It was a beautiful sight, but now was not the time to admire it. Lukas could feel the dozens of blades fluttering around him.

It was a sword technique that mixed truths and falsehoods while bewitching the opponent.

In other words, it was a phantom sword.

Lukas' eyes glinted coldly and his fingers shot into the air.

Motion magic. A spell was triggered by his simple gesture, and the ground stretched like rubber before soon shooting up like a sharp spear.

"What?"

The blue robed elder uttered a cry of shock. He wasn't surprised that spears of earth rose up from the ground. It was the same even for the fact that they were able to pierce through his sword technique.

No, the truly surprising thing was what happened next.

A total of fifteen spears, large and small, rose up from the ground.

It was the same number of blades hidden in the blue robed elder's sword technique.

'Did he immediately see through my phantom sword?'

It was unbelievable.

Of course, he also knew the weakness of his phantom sword.

It was a sword that was vulnerable to prolonged combat. The longer a battle went on, the more accurately his opponent would be able to discern the truths hidden in his sword.

The better the person's eyesight, the shorter that duration would be. However, he still had strengths that could make up for those shortcomings.

First Stage, Thirty Moves.

During the first thirty sword moves, the blue robed elder's sword technique was able to demonstrate overwhelming power. He couldn't help it that his technique lost power over time, but in exchange, he specialised in ending battles quickly.

Among his techniques, the one he was most confident in was the one he used first, Dancing Plum Blossoms.

In fact, the probability that the blue robed elder could injure his opponent with Dancing Plum Blossoms was over 90%.

...10 percent.

In other words, only once in ten battles would there be a time when he was unable to inflict a fatal wound. However, this was the first time his technique had been discovered and destroyed so easily.

Unlike the shocked elder, it wasn't that surprising for Lukas.

This wasn't because he was special.

It was because Lukas was an Absolute. From the very beginning, Absolutes were beings that were the furthest from delusions and deceit. This was because they had utmost confidence in themselves and strong wills. The eyesight they gained as a result could not be fooled by any tricks.

He was a Fallen Absolute. But just because he had lost his external power didn't mean he had lost his eyesight.

At the very least, Lukas' eyesight hadn't fallen to the point where he could not distinguish the truths in his opponent's sword technique.

Crack crack crack!

Like a monster moving underground, the floor rose sharply towards the blue robed elder. The blue robed elder stepped back, sweeping his sword at the ground which rushed towards him like thorns.

At the same time, the red robed elder attacked.

Swoosh!

A sword cut through the air, its blade coated with sword ki.

Lukas felt that an improvised barrier would not be able to stop this attack. Shuk, so he used Blink to widen the distance slightly. However, short distance teleportation was not enough to serve as a breather.

The red robed elder continued to swing his sword at the same speed as before. Lukas had appeared about ten steps away from him, but he could feel a cool sensation on one side of his chest.

His premonition soon became a reality.

Thick, powerful sword ki shot out of the red robed elder's sword.

'A long ranged attack.'

In the blink of an eye, the red robed elder swung his sword five times. As a result, five thick sword slashes shot towards Lukas.

If he wanted to use Blink to avoid this attack, he would only be able to go backwards. But the blue robed elder was behind him. If he were to step back recklessly, the chances of him being hit by his sword would increase dramatically.

The best option would be to stay in place. But as mentioned before, it would be impossible with a barrier.

‘Absolute?’

Lukas shook his head as the thought passed through his mind.

Certainly, if he used the power of 9 stars, the battle would be over in an instant, but the consumption would be too high. These two were not the full power of Flower Mountain*. In fact, they were probably just a small portion of it. (*: Sei reminded that ‘Mount Hua’ is a thing. Would you guys prefer if I changed it to that instead of ‘Flower Mountain’.)

Therefore, he still had to preserve his power.

‘7 star spells or lower.’

If possible, he should only use that level of spell to defeat these two elders.

“Lava Blast.”

Fwoom!

With a soft mutter, red lava erupted in front of Lukas. The five sword slashes, which had almost reached him, disappeared as if they had been burned in an instant.

That wasn’t the end.

Like a rampaging beast opening its mouth, the Lava Blast tried to swallow the red robed elder.

The red robed elder held his sword in front of him with both hands with a stiff face.

Immediately after, the sword ki coating his sword soared.

Clang!

Then he slashed it down. A storm swept through the area. It was not just wind generated by his swing.

He had controlled the flow of air with the tip of his sword. Hoooooh- A strange sound filled the cave. It was a phenomenon caused by the sudden shift in the air currents.

It wasn’t just the air currents that the red robed elder controlled. The Lava Blast, a great spell that filled the hallway, was attracted to the tip of his sword before being directed away.

‘Soft.’

Lukas realised the true meaning of the swordsmanship being used by the red robed elder.

One thing he noticed was that the two techniques of the two elders were fundamentally the same. Lukas guessed correctly.

Twenty Four Hand Plum Blossom Sword Technique(二十四手梅花劍法).

The martial arts techniques of the Flower Mountain all had the same underlying basis. In addition, the specific characteristics of the sword technique depended on the user.

When used by the blue robed elder, it became a phantom sword that confused his enemies.

And when used by the red robed elder, he unleashed a series of sword slashes. Or, it became a sword that softly cut through an enemy's strong attacks.

Boom!

The ground shook.

The Lava Blast, which had been pulled in by the red robed elder, was directed into a hole the elder had created.

The direction had changed, but the power had not dissipated.

The violent explosion that occurred shortly after shook the underground cave. Krrr... Pieces of stone fell from the ceiling like rain.

"...you're strong."

The red robed elder muttered.

Unlike his soft sword technique, the red robed elder's eyes were practically blazing. A violence that didn't match his noble and elegant swordsmanship seemed to flicker within them.

"The lava you just summoned shook the entire prison."

He continued to talk in a gentle voice.

"So?"

"...this prison is quite sturdy, but that impact clearly exceeded its durability. It won't be long before its foundation begins to collapse."

The foundation was collapsing.

It went without saying what the consequences of such a thing would be for this underground cave.

Lukas asked.

"Do you intend to die together?"

"That wouldn't be a bad outcome. Because you... are stronger than us."

The red robed elder acknowledged this fact after their few exchanges. Until now, their engagements hadn't been largely biased to one side.

However, they could understand one thing.

That Lukas was hiding his power.

Perhaps the strength he had revealed was only around 30% at best. And yet, this monster was able to gain the upper hand against two elders.

'In that case, then our mission also changes.'

In the first place, the mission they had was to capture or eliminate the intruders.

If that was not possible then the next best option would be to do exactly what Lukas mentioned. However, even that seemed difficult to do.

In that case, there were only two options left.

To cause even the slightest bit of damage, or to make him use more energy.

To make it easier for the Senior Disciple to fight him later.

Krrr...

The falling stone fragments and the shaking cave walls.

They were no different from the screams of the cave. Even at that moment, the sinking of the foundation continued to accelerate.

Lukas also felt the change in their mindset. The arrogance in their expressions had faded. Their will to fight had also changed.

Basically, they intended to take the defensive instead of the offensive, but if his response faltered for even a moment, they would not hesitate to rush in at the risk of their lives. Just to leave an injury of some kind on Lukas.

This was going to become a real hassle.

"..."

The corners of Lukas' lips rose.

* * *

Lee Jong-hak watched the fight unfolding before him.

He knew how strong the elders of Flower Mountain were individually. When they attacked together, the difficulty rose to an unimaginable level.

Naturally blocking and counter attacking.

The martial arts ability that Lukas was displaying. It was definitely amazing. To the extent where he couldn't help but feel admiration.

'However...'

He was weakened.

Even Lee Jong-hak could tell that much. He couldn't feel the same aura and pressure of an Absolute that he'd felt every time he faced him in the past.

What was the reason? Did it have something to do with the strange feeling he'd had during their short conversation.

"My friend fights well, doesn't he?"

Lee Jong-hak turned his head at the sudden voice.

A blue haired woman was standing there. She continued with a grin.

"I like fighting as well."

"..."

"An overwhelming fight is not worth watching or doing. Fighting is always rough and ugly, but above all else, the more equal it is, the funner it is. Don't you agree?"

Lee Jong-hak didn't answer.

He didn't know why, but every time she talked, he felt an inexplicable sense of strangeness.

However, he didn't show his discomfort. After all, the other was his benefactor.

He'd seen the jerky Pale had taken out.

Regardless of whether it was a trade with Lukas or not, she had handed over such a valuable item.

"You know. There is something I want to ask you, Oppa."

"..."

"Answer me. I know you can talk now."

Pale chuckled.

It was true. Lee Jong-hak's tongue had already regenerated. It was possible because of this world.

Lee Jong-hak opened his mouth and spoke in a slurred manner.

"What is it?"

"I want to talk to the person behind you."

Behind?

Lee Jong-hak looked behind him. Naturally, there was nothing there. Just a dank cave wall.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Don't pretend to be innocent."

Pale's smile deepened even more.

"I'm saying I want to talk to the Lightning God."

Lee Jong-hak's expression hardened.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 384

Lee Jong-hak still remembered that world.

Where the prelude to the Great Game took place.

That place, which he'd arbitrarily thought of as a 'field', had turned out to be many times larger than Earth, the planet he was from.

And one of the most important regions in that world was the 'Sky Continent', a place where a race called the Dragonmen created a society and lived. The breadth of that region was so great that it wouldn't be strange to call it a world.

Lee Jong-hak had found himself on Combat Island, one of the seven islands that made up the Sky Continent.

Championship.

The largest martial arts competition that was held once every 10 years.

And the most honourable title, Grand Champion, that only its winner could obtain.

Many famous fighters from across the world had applied. Likewise, Lee Jong-hak also applied, but he did not do so for honour. Lee Jong-hak had a goal... Of course, the important thing now was not his reason for participating.

What was important was the end he met.

Lee Jong-hak had died. He'd died after losing in the Championship.

The strength of his opponent, the involvement of a third party. Those could not even count as excuses.

He'd made a promise that he wouldn't die, and he'd failed to keep it. His declaration that he would give up if the situation became too dangerous also ended up becoming a lie.

That was why Lee Jong-hak could not accept his death.

But so what?

What did it matter if he accepted his death or not?

Similarly, Lee Jong-hak had also killed many people. Even if most of them were the Demons he hated, the fact that he had personally ended countless lives would not change.

How many of them could calmly accept their deaths?

Death, and acceptance. It was difficult for those words to mix.

So his denial of reality made no difference.

Lee Jong-hak had lost and died.

Or at least, he should have.

* * *

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Lee Jong-hak denied again. It was at this moment that Pale’s expression changed.

She was still smiling, it was just that it felt like her aura had changed.

Of course, Lee Jong-hak had never been one to judge others by their appearance.

Even if they were a small and thin woman like her, there could be an immeasurable monster hiding within.

It was at this moment, when he was looking directly into her eyes, that those thoughts became stronger.

Pale’s blue eyes were so dark that he couldn’t look at them for too long. This had nothing to do with Lee Jong-hak’s current weakened state. He probably wouldn’t have been able to look at her for a long time even if he was in perfect condition.

“...”

Pale’s gaze remained locked onto Lee Jong-hak’s face for a while longer. This didn’t seem like it was because she wanted to force an answer. Instead, it was more like she was carefully observing and analysing him.

A short while later, a subtle glimmer flashed across Pale’s face.

“How strange.”

The voice that came out wasn’t as cold as a moment before, as if it was a brief chill down the spine.

Pale seemed to be lost in her thoughts for a moment before letting out a breath as if she finally understood something.

“Ahhh... Right.”

“What are you talking about?”

When Lee Jong-hak couldn’t bear it any more and asked back, Pale’s gaze had already turned away from him.

“Ay. I’ve completely lost interest.”

After she turned her head away, she didn’t look at Lee Jong-hak again. Just like she said, it was as if all the previous interest she’d shown had disappeared.

‘...who the hell is this woman?’

On the other hand, Lee Jong-hak’s thoughts grew louder and louder, but he couldn’t continue his thoughts for long.

Krr...

The screaming of the cave grew louder.

Lee Jong-hak's gaze naturally shifted towards the battlefield. To Lukas, who was fighting against the two elders.

* * *

—Fighting was the best way to refresh your mind.

That was one of Kasajin's favourite sayings, but Lukas had never been able to understand it.

For Lukas, fighting was like slowly solving a very difficult problem over a long period of time. The fatigue that inevitably came afterward was nothing to scoff at.

Naturally, battles he considered 'fights' were never easy. Firstly, the opponent needed to be at least equal to or stronger than him. Of course, there were times when he would have confrontations with weaker opponents, but Lukas never thought of those trivial conflicts as fights.

In a fight, magical formulas weren't the only things that he needed to think about. He also had to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy, predict the flow of battle, and keep in mind the surrounding topography, among other things. Then, after considering all of the necessary factors, he would have to carefully think and devise so many plans that steam could pour out of his ears.

In the past, right after his fights ended, he would always be left with a throbbing headache. And even when he didn't get it, he would feel extremely tired. It was a so-called natural aftereffect, the price he had to pay when he used his concentration past the allowed range.

That's why it was weird.

Kasajin was a natural fighter. But even people like that did not fight without thinking. While at first glance it might seem like they were swinging their fists according to instinct, their actions were always backed by thorough calculations. In some cases, even if they might not realise it, they instinctively took advantage of their opponent's strengths and weaknesses, and psychology, as well as the terrain and the skills their opponent had trouble dealing with.

In other words, even though the directions might be different, Kasajin thought just as much as Lukas did in a fight.

Nevertheless, Kasajin looked happy before a fight, happy during the fight, and refreshed after the fight.

'Am I jealous of him?'

Lukas asked himself, but he wasn't able to get an answer immediately.

Shuk.

The hem of his robe was cut.

If he had been a bit slower to dodge, it might have been his heart that was cut instead. Cold wind seemed to lick the nape of his neck.

This was not the time to shiver with chills. The attack had begun.

Waves of petals that seemed to be made from blades fluttered around him. Huk, as the breeze stirred, the petals suddenly changed appearance.

Fwoosh!

Dozens, Hundreds. Perhaps more.

An uncountable number of blade petals rushed forward like a flood.

In truth, there were no 'blade petals' rushing in.

In truth, it was just a fleeting illusion created by a quick stab that could not be followed with the naked eye. However, this technique was fundamentally different from the phantom sword used by the blue robed elder.

It was not an illusory sword to deceive the opponent, but a sword technique that had been polished to the pinnacle of swordsmanship.

'A quick sword, and heavy sword were put into one sword.'

It was so skillful that he couldn't help but feel admiration.

How many years had he trained in order to display a sword strike like that?

But the elder's sword technique did not end there.

Swoosh!

In an instant, he took a slightly twisting step. The tip of his sword seemed to shake slightly.

Before long, the tip began to vibrate like crazy.

Woowoong-

Following the strange swordsmanship, the afterimages began to take shape. The hundreds of blades surrounding Lukas were no longer illusions, but had instead become real threats.

The hem of his robe fluttered violently like the clothes of a scarecrow in a typhoon.

The blade petals, which seemed to shoot forth at the same time, quickly narrowed the distance with violent force. And before long, Lukas' body would be torn apart by the blades.

Boom!

A huge explosion erupted from Lukas. Although it had been condensed and the range and power were much less than usual, the fact that Explosion was a 7 star spell could not be changed.

The wreath of blades collapsed futilely in the face of the explosion.

"..."

The red robed elder shuddered.

The fact that his attack didn't work was surprising. But there was something that confused him more than that.

'He responded with an explosion?'

It was a seemingly ignorant response that didn't take the current situation into account.

Nevertheless, Lukas' attack didn't stop there.

Crackle, five rays of light shot out of his outstretched fingers. The red robed elder pulled his sword to his chest and used the Falling Plum's Return technique to redirect the beams of light.

Crack crack!

His sword cried out.

It was only then that the red robed elder realised that Lukas' five beams of light each had a different colour.

Cold and heat, crackling lightning, sharp wind, firm earth could be felt at the same. Such a complex attack could not be deflected perfectly with a single sword.

0

'My judgement was wrong.'

Dodging instead of blocking or deflecting would have been the right response. Because of that, the durability of his sword had been drastically reduced. His muscles were also strained quite heavily. Part of the attack, that he was unable to deflect, slipped through and scratched his body.

Paak!

"...!?"

For a moment, his face went pale. But it wasn't because of the dizzying pain in his jaw.

Ignoring the pain in his jaw and teeth, the red robed elder forced his eyes open to glare in front of him.

'He narrowed the distance...?'

He could see Lukas, who was within arms reach now, with his palm raised. He couldn't believe that a Wizard had voluntarily come within reach of a Swordsman.

The expression of the red robed elder, which had been bordering on despair for some time, was soon replaced with rage.

"Insolent!"

Along with his loud shout, the Plum Blossom's Nine Changes unfolded. His twirling sword seemed to change shape multiple times in a fleeting moment, creating a sword strike where the point of attack could not be easily predicted.

And yet, Lukas predicted it.

He was able to perfectly read the Plum Blossom's Nine Changes, the anomalous sword strikes, and the complex sword path that it created. It was a prediction based purely on his eyesight, experience and senses.

Shuk-

Nevertheless, that didn't mean he could avoid every attack. The mastery of the red robed elder was not for show.

Soon, dozens of scars covered his body. The wounds themselves were not very deep, each one only slightly cutting into his skin and muscles. But he couldn't prevent the bleeding.

'Certainly...'

It was difficult to keep attacking from this distance.

Lukas took a step back and released a bombardment of spells. This time, the red robed elder made sure to dodge them instead of blocking or deflecting.

Boom boom boom!

The untargeted spells pounded against the walls of the cave.

'The collapse of the cave is accelerating.'

The expression on the blue robed elder's face changed.

This was because the cave wall, which was already having difficulty maintaining its shape, could not withstand the shock and started to crack. It would not be much longer before it completely collapsed.

The two elders realised this at the same time and quietly distanced themselves from Lukas. Then, with their swords hanging by their sides, they opened their mouths.

"You've basically dug your own grave."

"Due to your explosions, the prison is about to collapse."

The blue robed elder pointed behind him.

"And the only way out is behind us. Do you think it's possible? To escape before this cave is completely destroyed?"

"Of course, we would never let that happen."

"..."

"You walked in here on your own so you should know that the passage behind us is by no means short..."

The elders' expressions were completely relaxed. They seemed indifferent to the fact that they would die soon. Instead, they seemed to be filled with pride at the fact that their plan had worked.

Krrr, as the cave around them rumbled loudly, Lukas nodded.

"It would be difficult like this."

The 'like this' he was referring to was his insistence to only use 7 stars spells.

The elders might not have realised his meaning, but it was strange for someone who was about to die to be so calm.

“You’re quite relaxed. What is it? Do you think you could survive the collapse?”

“Well. I don’t think I need to tell you that.”

“...”

“You said so much to me to buy time. It’s quite the dirty trick.”

At Lukas’ words, the red robed elder’s eyes sank.

“You followed our conversation despite knowing that?”

“There’s nothing wrong with me taking my time.”

“What?”

Sss-

Lukas began to draw upon his mana. In that state, he was close to defenceless.

The expressions of the elders grew even more bizarre, but he simply turned his back on them in an unhurried manner. As he walked over to Pale and Lee Jong-hak, he spoke.

“That was a pretty interesting fight. It’s a pity we didn’t have more time.”

“What?”

“I’m leaving.”

“...”

At that moment, the blue robed elder had an amused expression.

He had figured out what Lukas was thinking.

“...ha. I was wondering what you were thinking.”

“Spatial Movement.”

The red robed elder had also figured it out. A similar smirk spread across his lips.

“Right. The Wizards are also adept at such tricks. However, it seems you are ignorant of this world.”

“The Flower Mountain is the Sect Leader’s territory... That means that regardless of how fast you run, how high you jump, or even if you use spatial movement, it would be impossible for you to leave.”

“...”

The elder’s voice didn’t seem to carry a bluff. That statement was probably the truth.

That was why it was weird.

Lukas didn't feel like he couldn't use Warp. He knew what it felt like when he was unable to use a spell or if his mana was being restricted.

'If I can't use Warp...'

He would just think of a different method. It might be a rougher and dirtier escape, but it wasn't like they couldn't escape at all.

Nevertheless, Lukas still had his doubts.

'Can I really not use it?'

He'd have to try.

Lukas grabbed Pale and Lee Jong-hak's hands before muttering.

"Warp."

Shuk-

A moment later, the three figures completely disappeared from the underground prison.

"Huh?"

"What...!"

The two elders couldn't help but mutter with blank expressions.

Boom...

The sound of the ceiling collapsing echoed through the cave, but it didn't seem to reach the ears of the two elders. They were still looking around while having trouble accepting reality.

"That's impossible! How could he use spatial movement...!"

"He must have just gone invisible! How dare he use such a cheap trick-"

Crack-

The broken fragments of the cave fell upon them, swallowing the elders' cries.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 385

Six years old.

A young child who didn't even have a name.

Without parents or siblings, the child wandered the streets every day, hungry.

The figure of this child, who was searching for food to fill his aching stomach in the trash, was spotted by someone.

An elder of Flower Mountain, Jo Seong-chu.

Jo Seong-chu recognised at a glance that the child was a possessor of natural martial bones. That wasn't all. Despite his squalid appearance, the child's eyes sparkled with intelligence even as his hands desperately searched through the garbage.

In other words, the child was perfectly equipped with all of the necessary tools to practice martial arts.

Jo Seong-chu collected the child. And he had no doubt that the child would become a key figure in his secret plan.

At that time, the Murim was experiencing unprecedented chaos due to conflicts between factions, the overflowing power of the various sects, and the establishment of the Demonic Cult.

Jo Seong-chu's plan was to create a secretive organisation to protect Flower Mountain from the turbulent Murim, so he sought out and collected talented children regardless of their origin, age, or character.

A secret organisation that would protect the peace of Flower Mountain from the shadows.

He had planned slowly and meticulously.

But as a result, Jo Seong-chu's plan failed before it could ever bear fruit.

In the grandest and most miserable manner.

* * *

A cold wind.

Lukas found himself standing near the entrance of the underground cave. The ground beneath him shook, signifying that the collapse of the cave was still underway.

Then, with a loud crash, the shaking stopped.

"..."

No presence could be felt from the prison. This meant that the elders had been crushed.

"Huu."

Lukas let out a breath.

While it was possible for him to use Warp, it seemed to have some conditions attached.

Firstly, the destination could only be a place that he had been to before.

For example, the peak of Flower Mountain stood high in the sky, piercing the clouds. Although it was a place that he could see, Lukas could not designate it as a destination. This wasn't a condition that was added because it was the Imaginary World. In the original world, in order to use Warp accurately, it was necessary to have an accurate grasp of the destination's coordinates, and the most accurate way to do so was to have personally visited the location.

Instead, it was the distance restrictions as well as the mana consumption that was much more fatal. According to his rough calculations, he had used up at least five times as much mana, but the distance they had travelled was less than half of his initial expectations.

'I have roughly half of my mana left.'

He had about 60% of his mana left.

While it was by no means a small amount, it wasn't enough to be considered plentiful.

Lukas felt that he was at a crossroads of choice.

If more than five elders like the ones he'd just fought were to appear, then even Lukas wouldn't be able to win without using absolute.

In addition, the mysterious 'Sect Leader' was likely to be even stronger than an elder.

'Let's leave this place first, then come back when I'm in perfect condition.'

Just when he turned to Pale with that thought.

Another thought flashed across his mind.

"Wait a minute."

"What is it? Why do you have such a scary look on your face?"

"Are you alone?"

"Huh? No, there's that one there."

Pale pointed towards Lee Jong-hak, but Lukas tried to suppress his rising anger.

"No. There was another person besides Lee Jong-hak."

"...?"

"The woman we found in the desert."

"Ah."

Pale's eyes went wide.

Then she smiled bashfully and clasped her hands together.

"I forgot. Sorry."

"You..."

His anger flared for a moment.

He hadn't known anything about the woman, but he was certain that she was from the same universe, he hadn't meant for her to die.

Lukas almost let his anger out, but he decided to suppress it instead. After all, he didn't think Pale would actually feel apologetic even if he were to show his anger, and now wasn't the time for that.

'Is she still alive?'

Generally, it would be better to consider her dead.

However... there was a twisted law in this world where even fatal injuries could be healed just by eating.

Even if she was in a terrible state that was difficult to look at, it might be possible to save her even if she was on her last breath.

Of course, in order to do that, he would need more jerky from Pale.

It didn't look like she'd be willing to give it, but if she had any conscience left, she might give it to him surprisingly easily.

...However, that was just his wishful thinking.

In general, he didn't believe that defenceless humans could survive a cave collapse.

As he was contemplating what to do, Pale spoke.

"Rather than that woman, wouldn't it be better to focus on the situation in front of us?"

"What?"

Instead of answering, Pale pointed behind them.

The moment Lukas turned around, he felt his back go cold.

A middle aged man was standing there.

'Since when?'

He hadn't noticed.

If Pale hadn't said anything, Lukas would not have noticed his presence.

"..."

The middle aged man seemed to have an empty aura. His expression was calm and his hands were held behind his back. If it wasn't for the location and the situation, Lukas might have mistaken him for someone taking a stroll through the mountains.

But there was no way that was true.

A single sword hung from his waist, completing the image that they were being looked down on.

"...Yang In-hyun."

Lee Jong-hak stuttered.

Lukas picked up the subtle terror in his voice.

“Yang In-hyun?”

“The Sect Leader of this place.”

...This man.

Lukas looked at the middle aged man again.

The man, now identified as Yang In-hyun, tilted his head to the side and opened his mouth.

“Is your body feeling better, Human Dragon? It’s been a while since you last had a breath of fresh air.”

“...I didn’t expect you to show up so quickly.”

“I had some free time.”

There was no tension in Yang In-hyun’s voice.

He was peaceful as if he was just greeting them.

“It seems Hae and Jung lost.”

Although it was their first time hearing those names, they could roughly guess who those two were.

The two elders who had just fought a fierce battle with Lukas.

Eventually, Yang In-hyun’s gaze turned to Pale.

To their surprise, he politely bowed his head towards her.

“It is a pleasure to meet you again.”

Both his attitude and tone were polite. This was not an act either, it was an honest gesture.

Pale blinked a few times.

She looked surprised, but more than that, she looked confused.

“Huh? Who are you?”

“I’ve seen you once before. In the ‘War of Existence’ in the Western Region...”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. Are you sure you’re not mistaken?”

Those words cause Yang In-hyun to raise his head and stare at Pale for a while.

It was as if he was trying to peer into her brain.

“...indeed.”

After a while, he muttered as if he understood something.

“As Young Miss said, I must have been mistaken. Please forgive my rudeness.”

“Hehe. So you agree.”

“There is one more thing I would like to ask you.”

Afterwards, Yang In-hyun looked at Lukas.

"I am going to kill that man now. Will Young Miss stop me?"

Even when he said those words, his tone did not change. Lukas' gaze sank as he heard that calm tone.

"Uh. Why are you asking me that?"

"If Young Miss intends to stop me, I will back down immediately."

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"Aha."

Pale chuckled.

"I'm not going to interfere. I'm not so tactless as to interfere in someone else's fight."

"I see. Under--"

Shuk-

Lukas bowed his head.

"-stood"

He heard the end of the word afterwards. He felt a cool breeze sweep past the back of his head.

If someone were to ask him why he bowed his head, he wouldn't be able to give a definitive answer. In any case, it was clearly an instinctive reaction. Lukas had not been fully aware of Yang In-hyun's attack.

That wasn't all. He'd also missed his movement.

'A completely different level.'

The two elders he'd just met.

They were also rare Swordsmen who had caught a glimpse of the peak of swordsmanship, but Yang In-hyun was a level far above them.

Swoosh!

Yang In-hyun's offensive didn't stop.

He no longer felt empty. On the contrary, a ferocious aura of intimidation radiated from him like a wild beast.

A deluge of swords. In an instant, the tip of his sword seemed to split into countless pieces.

This wasn't a part of Yang In-hyun's sword technique. It was a sight that only lasted for a few seconds.

Sword Road.

Lukas had to analyse the hundreds of thousands of swords that Yang In-hyun could 'choose'.

'Find it.'

Which of these swords would be the most suitable for his opponent to choose.

He couldn't simply rely on his senses. Such an analysis wasn't couldn't be fully trusted without sufficient support.

He recalled the skirmish with the two elders. The Plum Blossom Sword Techniques they used seemed completely different, but they were fundamentally the same.

The form of their swordsmanship, or its personality.

There were some commonalities that could not be eliminated.

That was part of the reason why Lukas let his fight with the elders carry on for so long. To learn even a little about their swordsmanship.

Yang In-hyun.

This man was probably no exception. The sword technique he was using also seemed to be the Plum Blossom Sword Technique.

'Three.'

In the meantime, Lukas had reduced the hundreds of swords down to three. The time it had taken to reach this point was extremely short, but the most important part was what came next.

A one in three chance.

Some might consider this probability to be quite high, but for a Wizard, it was still too risky. He had no intention of gambling. Lukas raised his concentration even more, to the point where his face went pale.

It wasn't just the eyes, hands, or waist.

He also carefully observed the factors that appeared in flashes when his clothes moved like his soaring tendons and stretching muscles, to factors that were difficult to see at all, like the tips of his toes.

And he saw it.

'Left side cut.'

It was hard to avoid. Lukas' body wasn't fully trained in dodging attacks at such a close range.

As expected, the only way to respond was with magic. Crackle.

Ice spread across his skin. Of course, it wouldn't be possible to fully block the sword attack with the ice. But he would be satisfied if it was able to buy him even a single second.

"—kuk."

For a moment, his thoughts froze as he coughed out a breath. He felt like his intestines had twisted.

Pain?

'My stomach...'

Yang In-hyun's fist was buried there.

What was going on?

Paak!

His head was quickly jerked to one side. The forming ice shattered. That meant that his concentration had been broken, which was an extraordinary phenomenon for Lukas. He had never stopped a spell after casting it. He always held on to the end regardless of what happened. That was the case even if his limbs were torn off or his tongue was pulled out.

However, this time was different.

It wasn't the pain that was the problem.

Instead, he was more shocked by Yang In-hyun's unexpected move.

"An opponent with the habit of analysing can be pretty tricky, but once you get used to it, there is nothing more trivial."

He heard a whisper beside his ears.

Lukas fired off a number of Hyper Bolts, but it was futile. Yang In-hyun avoided everyone with ghost-like movements.

"Twet,"

He spat a mouthful of bloody saliva.

Pieces of his teeth followed his spit to the ground.

Eventually, his gaze settled coldly onto Yang In-hyun.

"You know about Wizards... No."

He denied his own words.

That wasn't right.

The two elders he'd fought not so long ago had known about Wizards. But he was not like them.

The knowledge of Wizards that the elders had... was shallow at best. It could even be called crude. The knowledge they had was nothing more than a superficial touch, a scratch on the surface, and even then, it was not information that they could put into practice.

On the other hand, what about Yang In-hyun?

Lukas was well versed in battles of wits.

And yet, he'd lost. It was an unfamiliar experience for Lukas, and it could only mean one thing.

"You have experience fighting Wizards. Perhaps even with a Wizard with skills similar to mine."

"..."

At those words, Yang In-hyun drew his sword.

The tingling pressure that had enveloped the area also seemed to vanish in an instant.

Silence fell on the area, then, after a while, a small smile appeared on Yang In-hyun's face.

"How arrogant. Great Wizard."

"...you know me?"

"I do. I've heard a lot about you, from a certain being."

Lukas listened quietly.

This is because he didn't think Yang In-hyun would need his urging to keep talking.

"You're probably thinking about a few people. But your guesses are all wrong. Because you don't know the answer. It is not someone you know."

"You're saying it's someone who knows me one-sidedly?"

"You're trying to dig for more information. There's no reason for me to tell you that much. However... Indeed. I can understand what that person said now that I'm seeing you for myself."

"What did they say?"

"(The magic that is spread across the Three Thousand Worlds has many different branches. However, the roots are the same. In other words, the higher the level they pursue, the closer they get to the true form of magic.)"

"..."

His tone changed.

Those were not Yang In-hyun's words.

He was just repeating what he'd heard while imitating the voice of the other person.

"(The Great Mage, Lukas Trowman, is probably one of the closest to the origin of magical science. A man who realises the truth. A being born with talent, fate, and luck, all exquisitely intertwined... And a being watched by God, the four Rulers, the King, and the four Knights.)"

Lukas couldn't fully understand that statement.

God and the four Rulers... he knew them.

But who were the King and Knights?

"Do you believe that you are the Wizard who has reached the highest point? Do you think there is no one with greater understanding of the truth than you? No. Not at all. The words 'frog in a well' might not be fully accurate, but you are still not good enough to call yourself the Lord of that field. If you hadn't come to this world, you wouldn't have even known about that delusion."

When he stopped talking, Lukas bit his lip.

"Who is it that you were talking about?"

“Even after I said so much, you still couldn’t figure it out... It’s a Wizard.”

Yang In-hyun slowly raised his sword and pointed it at Lukas.

His aura was beginning to rise again.

Plum Blossom Sword Technique? No. It was something completely different.

Dark red light flicked across Lukas’ entire body.

Absolute.

He had decided that it was not the time to conserve power.

Just before the two collided once again, Yang In-hyun’s voice drifted into Lukas’ ears.

“A Wizard who is far stronger than you.”

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 386

No human was strong from the start. Growth was a destiny that all humans shared from birth.

It was the same for Lukas.

Even he had a period of weakness, a period when he needed to be protected, in other words, a period of growth.

In the future, 4,000 years after he was born.

Lukas searched for literature of the past.

The Age of Light, The Prosperity of magicology.

And the Great Heroes.

Among the Great Heroes, the records about Lukas were very detailed. Although there were obvious differences in the interpretations by historians and Wizards, no one could deny that he was the idol of all Wizards living in the present era and a pioneer with absolute influence in magicology.

Naturally, there were many books that analysed Lukas’ activities very carefully.

But in all of those books, there were no records of Lukas Trowman’s childhood.

Lukas’ actions in his youth were recorded in detail, that is to say, after he entered the world of magicology, and revealed his existence to the world.

If so, then what about before that?

Naturally, Lukas couldn’t be a human who suddenly fell from the sky one day.

He must have parents. He must have siblings.

For him, his childhood memories were always blurred whenever he tried to remember them.

Lukas was also reluctant to talk about the past. The same was true about his family.

He deliberately suppressed those thoughts, and even his closest friends knew nothing of Lukas' childhood.

What was the reason?

Was it because Lukas was a pathetic, shabby human before he came into contact with magic? Was it because he didn't want to bring up his immature days?

Those sounded reasonable, but it always felt like there was something more. Lukas himself wasn't able to give a clear answer to that question.

Nevertheless, one thing was clear.

Lukas had also had a time when he was weak.

There were countless Wizards more powerful than him.

In the beginning, he walked along the path they paved. He read their books, listened to their teachings.

He enjoyed the learning process, and he never got tired of it. It was like he was addicted.

'Since when?'

He stopped feeling excited about learning new spells. His heart didn't pound heavily when he found a book he'd never read. He stopped having expectations before listening to the lecture of a renowned Magicologist.

-There has to be a formula more efficient than this one.

-The information in this book is incorrect.

-This Wizard's lecture is strange.

At first, he thought he'd become arrogant. This was considered a process that all Wizards with outstanding talent had to experience.

There was only one person that he considered a teacher deep down inside, but they always emphasised humility.

But this wasn't arrogance.

It was something else. He was different from others.

Lukas realised that he was special.

From that moment on, he solved everything on his own. He no longer craved for anyone else's advice or instruction.

He showed off his own talent.

He informed others about more efficient formulas, shouted that the contents of the books were wrong, and preached on the spot if he found anything wrong with the lectures.

Most of the time, he was met by people who couldn't accept his words.

At that time, Lukas' social standing was low, and Wizards were usually quite proud.

So Lukas fought them.

Sometimes with his tongue, sometimes with his knowledge, sometimes with his fists.

And most of the time, with magic.

Lukas defeated most of the Wizards who were 'stronger than him'.

At those times, Lukas' heart would pound heavily in his chest. He didn't enjoy fighting, but it felt good to convince others that he wasn't wrong.

Sometimes, there were problems that weren't so easily confirmed, but when that happened, his heart beat even harder.

Right. Even before encountering the Demigods.

Lukas had always enjoyed standing in the shoes of the underdog.

'Since when?'

At some point, no one could listen to Lukas' comments without arguing.

He found himself in a position not to learn, but to teach.

Whenever he encountered a question, he couldn't expect anyone's advice.

—That was when he suddenly realised.

There was no one in front of Lukas on the road he was walking.

He was alone.

If a question arose, he had to find the answer for himself.

It was a road without a single footprint.

A rough, barren, unfinished road.

Looking at the road he would have to walk on from now on, Lukas didn't feel fear.

However...

He sometimes missed his youth.

At that time, there were still a lot of beings to compete with.

* * *

'A Wizard stronger than me.'

When he heard Yang In-hyun's words, Lukas wasn't sure how to describe the feeling that arose within him.

But it was clear that his heart beat suddenly accelerated.

Confusion, shock, disbelief, faint expectation.

The wave of complex emotions soon began to influence his body as well.

—*The magic that is spread across the Three Thousand Worlds has many different branches.*

He recalled what Yang In-hyun had said.

To be precise, the words of someone else that Yang In-hyun had recited.

‘I know that.’

Lukas had visited many universes in his time as an Absolute, and he’d also been exposed to the ‘magic of other universes’.

Although they all had minute differences, the spells and context that Lukas was accustomed to were the same. They had the same method of interpreting natural mana, tuning it, and applying the laws.

At first, he couldn’t understand the reason. Universes could not interact with each other. Naturally, this meant that it was impossible for them to share information. And yet, their interpretation of mana was so similar.

...But after a while, he realised that it wasn’t that strange.

It was the same in history as well. There were many cases of different ethnic groups developing similar weapons at the same time without ever meeting each other. While there were still minute differences between them, it was clear that they were essentially the same weapon.

That’s why it wasn’t that surprising that intelligent beings who discovered the existence of mana, learned to use similar concepts.

‘The roots are the same.’

The higher they reached in their pursuit, the closer their magic got to the root.

...The original form. Maybe it referred to Endtongue, maybe it didn’t.

Endtongue was what Lukas believed to be the end of magicology.

Utilising the infinite power and possibilities that were contained in mana to adjust the material laws. An absolute power which wouldn’t feel strange even if it was called reality manipulation.

Yang In-hyun had said.

The being he knew was a Wizard who was stronger than Lukas.

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Far stronger? Even if he was speaking carelessly, that was not an expression that could be used lightly. Especially to a being like Lukas Trowman when it came to the field of magicology.

However, Lukas was certain that Yang In-hyun was not lying.

Babump-

Knowing that Lukas' heart pounded even harder.

* * *

Clang!

Yang In-hyun's sword collided with Lukas' magic.

Absolute.

The power of 9 stars, which could tear even space itself apart, was being blocked by a single sword. He couldn't even find the slightest hint of strain on Yang In-hyun's face. He maintained his calm expression and light steps even while withstanding the full force of absolute.

Following a series of low cracking sounds, Absolute Line broke into pieces.

"..."

Lukas couldn't help but feel a bit speechless as he witnessed this scene with his own eyes.

A state where he only needed his swordsmanship to affect space. Yang In-hyun stood far higher than Snow, the best Swordsman Lukas knew.

The information he had about Yang In-hyun needed to be revised significantly.

This opponent was a monster who had already transcended mortality and could be considered an Absolute even if he only met the lower requirement.

"..."

Their gazes met.

Flap, the hem of Yang In-hyun's clothes fluttered slightly. But this was because of his tangible aura, not the breeze.

Once again, he felt the strange aura he'd felt before he'd shot an Absolute Line towards him.

This was the first time Lukas had ever experienced something like this. In other words, everything was unclear. The principles behind the attack, the form, the manner, he knew none of them.

Nevertheless, there was one thing that Lukas could be abundantly clear about.

Yang In-hyun should never be allowed to easily draw his sword.

Crackle-

His entire body sparkled with dark red light. He could feel the mana in his mana room rushing out.

It couldn't be helped.

Spells at 8 stars and below would have no effect on Yang In-hyun.

Absolute was the minimum that could be used as a deterrent to stop this monster's advance for a moment.

However, Absolute Line could not even withstand one of Yang In-hyun's sword strikes.

If that was the case, then...

'...Absolute Field.'

At the same time as he thought that, the entire area around them became Lukas' territory. Dark red light quickly engulfed the surrounding area.

"Hmm."

Even though the colours of the world around him changed and his movements were restricted to an extent, Yang In-hyun didn't seem to be very surprised.

He still looked at Lukas calmly while holding his sword.

"This is a bit annoying."

He tilted his head slightly like he was loosening his joint.

Crack. Crack. A soft sound could be heard for a while and that was it.

Yang In-hyun's stretch was over.

Piht, with a faint sound that was almost inaudible, Yang In-hyun's figure disappeared.

'Fast.'

Much faster and stealthier than when he'd missed his movements in their first encounter. This meant that even Absolute Field, which had cost a lot of mana, was no deterrent for him.

It was a desperate situation, but to some extent, it was expected.

Shuk.

His forearm was cut. A bit of flesh fell and blood splattered.

But Lukas ignored the pain and stretched out his right arm.

Suddenly, his outstretched hand grasped Yang In-hyun's collar.

"..."

Yang In-hyun opened his mouth slowly. It seemed that he wanted to say something, but Lukas didn't give him the chance.

Bang!

An explosion erupted from his palm.

It wasn't an ordinary explosion. With the power of Absolute Field, he condensed space to the limit before letting it explode. The compressed space spread out in an instant, forcibly pushing away anything that came into contact with it.

No matter how tough a material was, it could not completely block a force capable of destroying space itself. The only variable in this situation was Yang In-hyun's sword technique, but the distance was much closer than a Swordsman was comfortable with. In other words, it wasn't suitable to use a sword technique.

Absolute Burst was a technique with many restrictions and high risk, but it had great destructive power to make up for it.

When it was used at such a super close range, even Yang In-hyun wouldn't be able to easily handle it.

"..."

Blood dripped from Lukas' wrist. Smoke blocked his view for a moment.

Yang In-hyun...

"You even sacrificed your own hand. Such an unbecoming and ignorant way to fight..."

A soft voice was heard from within the smoke.

Bang!

With a loud sound, the smoke was cleared in an instant. A strong wind swept across the area as if he'd swung his sword to clear it.

When the smoke dissipated, Yang In-hyun could be seen standing about ten steps away from Lukas. Lukas' expression hardened.

'...wounds.'

He didn't have any. The only thing different was the slight tear on his collar. The result of offering his right hand was just a piece of cloth.

Lukas bit his lip.

He couldn't help but feel deep regret.

"Using this absolute space to read my movements was a pretty good move, but it probably wasn't the best method. Your next actions were even more disgusting. I'm talking about that attack that was close to self destruction, sacrificing your own arm."

"..."

"Fighting without thinking is not a bad thing. But I cannot feel a desperation for victory or desire for survival at all. You don't feel desperate in the slightest. It's bad enough to fight someone like that, but that's not all."

Rage seeped into Yang In-hyun's voice.

“What pisses me off the most is that you’re trying to take advantage of me.”

Crunch-

Yang In-hyun grit his teeth.

“You bastard, you’re trying to use me to die.”

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 387

Shuk-

A blade cut into his skin and muscle. It didn’t reach his bones or internal organs. The reason it had missed his internal organs wasn’t because Lukas’ dodge had been excellent.

Although he had twisted his body to avoid the blade, from Yang In-hyun’s perspective, it would have been like the struggles of a bug that had lost its leg.

The time when his struggles had any effect had long passed. In terms of time, it would have been about ten minutes ago. His mana room, which didn’t have much capacity left in the first place, quickly emptied out, and there was no way for Lukas to respond to Yang In-hyun’s attacks without mana.

Zero Technique? That was impossible.

There was no mana in the atmosphere of the Imaginary World. It was the same for the desert, and it was the same for ‘territories’ like Flower Mountain and the Underground City.

This place, which looked rich in natural energy on the outside, was actually no different from an empty wagon. Even a land of death, which had been soaked in blood and left neglected for hundreds of years, would have more mana than this place.

The only way to replenish mana in the Imaginary World was by consuming food.

The powerlessness of a Wizard without mana.

Currently, Lukas, who was in an empty state, had absolutely no way to respond to the attacks he was receiving.

Nevertheless, there was one simple reason why Yang In-hyun’s sword had not taken his life yet.

Yang In-hyun had no intention of killing Lukas just yet.

Shuk, the pain was a bit clearer this time. His right ear had been cut off. He could feel his blood flowing. Even though his vital points had been left relatively untouched, his blood loss was already serious.

His consciousness was faint, and the only thing he could feel was pain, but Lukas didn’t even make a sound.

“Is torture your goal?”

Compared to the ruined state of his body, his voice was relatively clear.

The reason for his question was simple. If his goal was torture, then he would never achieve it.

Yang In-hyun stopped swinging his sword.

Then he stared at Lukas. The moment their eyes met, Lukas realised that his goal had nothing to do with torture.

“No one truly wants to die.”

Yang In-hyun opened his mouth.

“There are many people who can ignore their lives and rush in, but that usually only occurs when they have the determination to protect something even at the cost of their lives, or if they want to escape a fate worse than death. Pessimists who say they want to die. Cynics who treat life like nothing. What do you think their attitudes are when they realise that they are on the verge of death? Do you think they feel happy to finally die?”

It wasn't a question he expected an answer for.

Yang In-hyun shook his head calmly and denied the question himself.

“No. Not at all. There has never been a case like that. When they realise what's about to happen, their faces are always covered in fear. Regret and despair engulfs them in waves. It is a vivid, ugly sight.”

“Do I look like that too?”

This time, Lukas' voice cracked slightly. It felt like his head was being split open. Even just opening his mouth felt like it took all of his energy.

Nevertheless, Lukas asked again.

“Does it look like I'm filled with regret at the brink of death?”

“No.”

Yang In-hyun denied it simply.

“You sincerely wish to die.”

Then he spoke in a softer voice.

“That's why it's even harder for me to understand. Why are you still alive if you wish to die?”

“...”

“No one really wants to die. Do you know why?”

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“...if there was such a person, they would be dead already.”

Yang In-hyun's eyes widened slightly.

After a while, he smiled slightly and lifted his sword.

Kuk, the tip of his sword touched Lukas' Adam's apple.

Soon, drops of blood appeared on the tip of the sword like fruits.

With just a bit more force, his sword would easily pierce through Lukas' throat.

There was no way he didn't know that fact. Nevertheless, Lukas' eyes didn't even shake in the slightest.

"Look at yourself. And realise just how contradictory you are. If you want to die that badly, then why don't you take your own life? Is it that you cannot accept suicide? So you're looking for someone strong. If you were to die at the hands of someone stronger than you, then it can't be helped."

Yang In-hyun's voice was like a cool blade.

In a sense, it was even sharper and fiercer than his sword technique.

Most of what he'd said was true.

Yang In-hyun had accurately read Lukas' inner thoughts, which even he himself had been unsure of.

Nevertheless, Lukas smiled vaguely.

"Do I still look like I'm alive?"

"Do you think this place is the afterlife?"

"No. I know that it is similar, but it's something different. I'm not talking about that concept... I mean that my very existence has disappeared from my home universe."

"I know that. It is the fate of Absolutes."

"Right. Nevertheless, it was not perfect, there are still people who remember me there."

Lukas' voice was soft. For some reason, Yang In-hyun didn't interrupt his speech. He just stared at him with a hollow gaze.

"I was happy. I thought that it could perhaps be a clue. Maybe, maybe if I used that as a key, other people will remember me as well. I had that kind of hope."

His soft smile slowly turned cynical.

"But it wasn't. In the end, fate still forced me to die."

When he learned the truth of the world from the Great Medium, Lukas had collapsed. It had happened many times before, but this time was different.

He couldn't get back onto his feet.

For the first time, he found himself unable to overcome his despair.

"When I realised there was no way out of this place. That all that I could do was accept. I became a corpse. Yang In-hyun, did you know? A beating heart doesn't mean you're alive. If I don't have the means to prove my existence, I am a corpse. Right now, I'm nothing more than a wandering ghost."

"...not looking for someone to kill you, but for a place to die."

Yang In-hyun knew the difference.

“And you are not the only one who has the discerning eye to see the essence.”

“What do you mean?”

A bright light flickered in Lukas’ eyes.

“I can see your twisting as well. Unlike me, who collapsed due to exhaustion, you became disillusioned with everything. You too, must have experienced numerous ups and downs.”

“...”

At those words, Yang In-hyun froze for the first time.

And he looked at Lukas with a strange gaze.

“...disillusioned.”

His mumbled words seemed to be filled with sorrow. That was probably the word that best described the being known as Yang In-hyun.

Yang In-hyun looked at Lukas again. He had a strange feeling.

This was the first time Lukas and Yang In-hyun were meeting each other, but they got to know each other’s inner thoughts deeply. Perhaps even more than all of the beings that knew them.

It was such a strange event that would probably never be replicated.

“I’m curious. Lukas Trowman, a man who even possessed the status of Lord in the past. Why do you accept death so easily? You called yourself a corpse, but that isn’t true. You can still move, still think. In other words, you can still struggle. Are you really completely exhausted? To the point where you don’t have the strength to throw off a fly that landed on your eye?”

“I knew that I would be crushed by my task one day.”

“Task?”

“After I became an Absolute, I killed many people. I killed so many that even the word ‘genocide’ is not enough. Simply for my personal goals. That task gradually gnawed on my mind, destroyed my ego. It is a madness that even Absolutes cannot withstand. That’s why most of them...”

“Leave it to the Rulers.”

Yang In-hyun interrupted.

Lukas nodded.

“I didn’t do that. I thought it was my own responsibility, and above all, I didn’t want to forget the fact that I was human. Because only I could be responsible for my own actions.”

“...you are obsessed with humans.”

Yang In-hyun’s expression became strange.

“Humans are not a beautiful race.”

"I know that."

"No, you don't know. I'm not talking about duality or two-facedness. Humans are inherently ugly. They are the most disgusting, evil race."

There was certainty in his quiet voice.

Humans were an inherently evil race. That was the answer Yang In-hyun had derived after a long period of pondering.

If that was the case, what was Lukas' answer?

"...you're probably right."

"..."

"But they have the most colourful emotions in the Three Thousand Worlds. Even when they do something wrong, they may someday realise it and regret it. Then, they would learn to repent."

He heard Yang In-hyun suck in a breath.

He silently looked at Lukas for a while before opening his mouth.

"...is that the answer of the being who wanted to become the God of Humans?"

Lukas didn't answer. They simply looked at each other.

After a while, Yang In-hyun took a few steps back. Then, after sheathing his sword, he cupped his hands politely.

"I didn't know anything about you and yet I spoke carelessly. I apologise."

He wasn't speaking vainly or being sarcastic.

Yang In-hyun's expression was serious, and his hand gestures were sincere.

"My thoughts are different, but I will respect yours as well. I also salute the thorny path you've taken."

His tone also changed a bit.

Was it because he acknowledged Lukas? He wasn't sure.

He didn't have the time to dwell on it.

Yang In-hyun drew his sword again and took a stance. Seeing this, Lukas smiled.

Death.

He had felt its shadow numerous times in his long life, but this time, it felt like it was devouring his entire body.

"Everlasting Plum Sword, First Move, Martial Annihilation."

Suddenly, a colourless flower bud appeared.

The bud was hazy like smoke, and it seemed like it would collapse with a touch, as though it was made from ashes.

But the moment the bud bloomed.

‘Ah...’

There was an explosion of light, creating a variety of colours like sunlight reflected off of a piece of glass. The scent of flowers that pierced his nose was enchanting. Lukas found himself standing in the middle of the most beautiful flower garden he’d ever seen in his life.

‘This is the end of the path of the sword.’

Lucid, Riki, Snow.

It was a state that all the Swordsmen he knew were aiming for.

“With this move, I erased the world of Murim.”

Swoosh!

With that voice, the scene disappeared as if it evaporated. The same was true for the scent of flowers. Everything he saw seemed fleeting like a midsummer night’s dream.

Through that, he felt a sharp pain in his chest.

“...”

Jurk.

Blood dripped from Lukas’ lips.

Yang In-hyun, who looked down at him with a solemn gaze, asked.

“Do you have any last words?”

“...my party, there are two of them.”

“I know.”

“Please spare them.”

At those words, a bright smile appeared on Yang In-hyun’s face.

“One of them is an opponent I cannot face, but the other, I can accept that.”

“...thanks.”

Splatter!

Lukas’ chest cracked open and a fountain of blood gushed out. A few drops managed to splash onto Yang In-hyun’s face, but he did not wipe them away. Instead, he continued to look at Lukas with his solemn gaze before silently turning away and leaving.

—There was a boundary between day and night in this place.

Even though it was fake, the sun that lit the world went down and the entire area was shrouded in darkness.

It was around midnight when someone appeared in this place.

“...”

It was a woman with dark blue hair.

She poked Lukas with her foot.

“Uncle.”

“...”

“Hey! Are you dead?”

“...”

“Wow. I can’t believe it. I can’t believe it.”

Pale squatted down and looked at Lukas in disappointment.

“That fight was really one-sided, ya know. It was really boring.”

“...”

“...or was it my expectations that were too high? It might have been too much for you to deal with one of the Twelve Imaginary Lords from the start.”

Huu.

Pale sighed awkwardly and straightened up again.

“In any case, you did well, Uncle. Sleep well. Bye.”

After the brief farewell, Pale turned around.

At first glance, no traces of regret were visible on her face.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 388

The first scene was of a flickering candle providing light to a dark room.

Beyond that, the sight of two people sitting across from each other at a table.

The atmosphere was gloomy. The reason was probably not just because the table was empty.

“...”

The man sitting on the left, Ivan, crossed his arms and tapped his fingers. He didn’t appear to be thinking about anything. Instead, he was simply observing the woman sitting in front of him.

Eventually, Ivan opened his mouth.

"I refuse."

The voice that came from his lips was firm. It carried his honesty and insistence that he wouldn't allow any disagreement.

Iris, who had been silent for a while, finally asked a question.

"...you refuse?"

"Right."

"Why?"

"A week ago, Cairo came to me."

"...the traitor?"

"Diablo has declared that he no longer has hostile intentions towards us."

"Are you telling me that you believe that?"

Iris spoke in an exasperated and angry voice when she heard those words which were beyond ridiculous.

"I don't believe it. However, I'm certain of one thing. Diablo currently has no intention of fighting us. His attention has been drawn elsewhere."

"I know that. That's why this is the best opportunity. Now that he is concentrating on something else."

"An opportunity? Don't be ridiculous. Even if we fight him in the current situation, our chances of winning are less than half."

"So should we just leave him alone? How many will he kill if we do that?"

"No, we will monitor him closely. If we find any signs that he's playing dirty tricks, we will respond to them immediately."

Iris pursed her lips slightly and spoke in a low voice.

"...that's wrong. What we need now is prevention, not response. If we respond, we'll have no choice but to act only after damage has been done."

"I know that. But it can't be helped."

"What can't be helped? Is that something you should say? You, who lost your Master to Diablo?"

Ttuk.

Ivan froze.

If it was the Ivan of the past, he probably would have swung his fist at that moment. Or he might have kicked the table away instead.

In any case, he would have done something. He would have expressed his anger in some form.

Not this time.

“Iris Peacefinder.”

He quietly murmured her name.

It wasn't that he wasn't expressing his anger, it was that he wasn't angry.

Ivan simply glared at Iris with a contemptuous gaze.

“Do you really think that Diablo is the biggest headache we have to deal with right now? Did you know? About the anomalies that have been discovered all across the continent?”

The sharp aura that was surrounding Iris faded. She remained silent.

“After the great earthquake. No, you called it the [Spatial Vibration]. After that mysterious phenomenon, catastrophe's occurred simultaneously. Everyone in the Circle is currently in charge of dealing with them. Of course, I, too, have officially rescued and provided aid to hundreds of thousands of people. If I had accepted your offer and fought Diablo instead, what do you think would have happened?”

“...”

“In all likelihood, all of the people I saved would be dead.”

“...the Circle is not a relief organisation. It seems you have forgotten the ideal behind the founding of your own organisation.”

“I didn't forget that it is to keep beings that humans cannot deal with in check. However, I have determined that there are currently more pressing matters.”

“You have determined?”

“Right. Because that is my responsibility as Head.”

Iris lowered her head as the tip of her chin shook slightly.

Then she got up from her seat in a rough motion. She realised there was nothing more to gain from continuing the conversation.

Just before she left without even looking back.

Ivan spoke again.

“Perhaps I thought, this might be an opportunity for us to bring our opinions together.’

“...”

“I had expectations that we would unite and join hands like we had in the past... But I guess it was all my delusion.”

“Yes.”

Iris responded coldly.

“It was a delusion.”

* * *

The second scene began with a man entering a room. His face couldn't be clearly seen because of his tangled mess of hair, and he had a staggering, unsteady gait as if he was drunk.

As soon as he entered the room, the man sucked in a deep breath.

"...huuu."

A moment later, he swept his hair back, finally revealing a haggard face. He had a sparse beard, and there were thick dark rings around his eyes that spoke of his fatigue.

The man looked at the piles of papers scattered across the desk in the room with a tired expression. Then, with another sigh, he reached for the nearest document.

"..."

His eyes moved quietly as he read the letters that stretched across the page.

[Hitume Ikar]

[Official Damage Count: Approximately 17,000 dead or missing, around 40,000 injured, 26.7% of the land submerged.]

[The extent of the damage is expected to increase, with the island being expected to be fully submerged within six months.]

[The number, goal, base, and combat power of the Undersea Race is still unknown.]

The document took the form of a report.

The more he read the report, the more the light in his dark eyes seemed to die.

And by the end,

Bang!

The man pounded his fist on the table. The wooden table creaked loudly, and various documents were sent flying in all directions.

"...dammit."

There was a hint of resentment in the harsh voice that leaked out.

The man touched his forehead. His expression was distorted as if he was experiencing a sudden headache, and his forehead was covered in sweat. He floundered like an unhinged person for a while before his eyes caught the sight of something on the table.

It was a bottle. Probably a bottle of wine, with an open lid. It seemed to have been left unattended for quite a while, but it was not empty. Reddish liquid was still visible inside of it.

The man picked up the bottle, the tips of his fingers trembling slightly.

Then, he carefully poured its contents into his mouth as if he were drinking the delicate wine of the heavens.

Gulp, gulp.

The careful sip soon became gluttonous chugging. He no longer seemed to care if the liquid leaked past his lips.

In an instant, the man emptied that half full wine bottle.

Then, he collapsed onto a nearby sofa. The man's face became calmer. It was still haggard, but from a certain angle, he looked a bit better.

The reason was simple.

Alcohol.

Because he drank alcohol.

"...kukuku."

A soft laugh escaped the man's lips. It seemed both pessimistic and self-ridiculing at the same time.

At that moment, he knew who the man was.

The man, was Peran Jun.

"..."

Peran got up from his seat and shambled out of the room again.

0

When he returned after a while.

He held a bottle of wine in both hands.

* * *

The third scene.

It was a dark place. Perhaps the inside of a building.

But presences could be felt. There was also the occasional rustle of clothes or brief chatter.

Paht.

The area was suddenly lit up by a faint stream of light. It was easy to see that it was artificial light created through magic engineering.

Under the dim lights, hundreds of seats and a gigantic stage could be seen.

It felt like a familiar scene.

...There was a feeling of unease.

“You all are lucky.”

A pleasant, low voice.

The man standing in the middle of the large stage was a middle aged man with a neat appearance.

He had a calm face and pleasant voice even when faced with hundreds of audience members.

His tone, proper usage of his aura, and subtle movements. Finally, his straight moustache which, depending on your view, may or may not be a bit ridiculous.

Even those who sat in the seats furthest from the stage noticed that moustache.

This was a man who had a talent for gaining the attention of hundreds. In other words, he was the owner of a natural stage presence.

“The number of events held at [Cortus] is 72. I was given the honour of hosting 50 of them.”

After saying that, he bowed his head as a roar of applause sounded.

“Thank you.”

After expressing his thanks, the man continued.

“I assure you. Of the 50 events I have hosted personally, and the 12 that I haven’t been in charge of, today will certainly be the best event ever.”

He remembered. Where he had seen a similar sight before. It was the Demon auction house on earth. It was a surprisingly similar scene to that time.

Of course, there was also a difference. The ones in control of the auction house were humans, not Demons, and unlike the auction house at that time, where only humans were treated like products, various races were led to the stage.

Humans were among them.

‘...’

As soon as the sight of humans placing value on other humans unfolded before him, a voice suddenly appeared in his mind.

—Humans are not a beautiful race.

—No, you don’t know. I’m not talking about duality or two-facedness. Humans are inherently ugly. They are the most disgusting, evil race.

The event proceeded slowly.

Those sitting quietly in the audience revealed their ugly desires. When the heat of the event had risen to a sufficient level, the host spoke again.

“This is the highlight of today’s event. I’m sure there are many enthusiasts who came here after hearing about this product.”

A great commotion swept through the crowd.

Some bigshots who had been silent before revealed their presence. They all looked at the stage with greedy eyes.

“Haha, understood. I will not drag it on any further.”

Rattle.

“The Divine Beast, the Phoenix. In particular, this is a notorious individual who, decades ago, single handedly wiped out an army of 1,000 men.”

As he spoke, a woman was brought to the stage.

The characteristic hair, which was clearly visible from a distance or in the dark, was long enough to touch the floor.

It was a woman with the appearance of a human, but she was not a human.

“I bring to you! The Nightmare of Ispania! The Monster Queen!”

Cheers erupted from the audience. It wasn't just because the woman was dazzlingly beautiful.

The Monster Queen.

No, Nix, was standing in the middle of the stage with her entire body covered in shackles.

Her eyes, which were stained with hatred and resentment, burned like flames.

* * *

Perhaps this was the last scene.

It was an instinctive feeling.

Boom...

Thunderclouds rolled overhead. Heavy rains poured as though there was a hole in the sky. In the middle of the night, countless corpses lay in a place that should have been a meadow.

In the middle, was a skeleton, but not a corpse.

Diablo.

The Elder Lich, who had reached the peak of necromancy, stood still in the pouring rain.

[That was a reckless fight.]

Diablo's gaze was directed to a hole in the ground.

There lay the body of someone.

It was a girl with silver hair. No, to be precise, it was a battle golem in the shape of a girl. She was in a miserable state. Half of her head had been crushed, and her limbs were nowhere in sight. Sometimes, her body shivered, but that wasn't a biological reaction.

[I have a lot of work to do, but I ended up consuming my power uselessly.]

As soon as his soft murmur ended, the sound of footsteps in the mud could be heard.

A Knight walked slowly in the heavy rain. The Knight, who was clothed in black armour, carried his sword over his shoulder, from which someone's body hung like a piece of luggage.

[Snow?]

At Diablo's question, the Death Knight, Lucid, shook his head.

[I see. Nevertheless, it was a sufficient achievement.]

Lucid lowered the person who had been skewered on his sword to the ground.

Splash.

Another corpse was added to the mud.

This corpse was different from the others. He'd wanted to see it with his own eyes, that was why he'd had Lucid bring it to him.

Because he felt like he needed to personally confirm this woman's death.

[Hmm.]

After a while, he nodded in satisfaction.

Because he realised that Iris Peacefinder was most certainly dead.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 389

Dark clouds hung above the continent. The scent of blood seemed to be everywhere, and there was no place without smoke. Despair and hunger mixed together to create intense madness.

Great chaos and calamity had stolen the reason from humans. They surrendered themselves to their ugly instincts. Those who were swept away by the disaster went mad and eventually became someone else's disaster. This was repeated over and over.

It was a terrible sight. He felt a tearing pain in his chest.

He'd seen this scene many times before, but this time, it was especially hard for him to endure.

The reason.

Was it because he was now seeing it as a human, not an Absolute?

Or was it because this disaster was occurring in his own home world of all places?

He didn't know. It was something he hadn't thought too deeply about.

He wanted to look away, but he couldn't.

As if he were being punished, the entire scene was imprinted onto his eyes.

“Why?”

Lukas muttered softly.

[This is only a small part.]

He received an answer.

But he wasn't sure where the answer came from or who said it.

[The continent will experience this era of blood for 100 more years. Civilisation will be set back by centuries and the total population will fall to less than 20%. The ground, marinated in flesh and blood, will stink of rot for decades.]

“Why are you showing me this?”

[It seems you want to pretend you didn't see it.]

“...!”

Lukas flinched.

His true intentions, which he wanted to hide the most and was doing his best to hide, were revealed. That is to say, his true intentions that even Yang In-hyun hadn't been able to see.

[You ignored your growing anxiety and just acted like you were worried about the world. You thought your role was over. That they would be fine without you. So you comforted yourself and allowed yourself to die comfortably. No. You brainwashed yourself in order to die like that.]

His view changed drastically.

He saw the ground, black and dead, and the countless corpses strewn across it.

And the humans who were still capable of moving were all running away with looks of terror on their faces. Chasing them were creatures with bizarre appearances.

Lukas' expression hardened. Those were beings that shouldn't exist in his home universe.

“Kariv...?”

They were lifeforms from a different universe. A species from a primitive planet with a first class danger rating. They were monstrous creatures with earthworm-like bodies, a huge mouth, and two arms. They were very aggressive and gluttonous, such that one would not come across even a single insect in their territories.

The kariv galloped at a tremendous speed and devoured the fleeing humans. The main way they ate was to crush their food with their two arms, then they would throw it into their mouths and chew it all at once.

“Why are kariv here...”

[This is one of the tragedies that occurred when all of the timelines in all of the universes were unified. This is only the beginning.]

It wasn't just the kariv.

Monsters like the Dobrams, Bickersticks*, Hungry Ghosts and Vine Sharks all appeared simultaneously. Humans struggled desperately, but they could not overcome the innate differences. (*:Biggersticks)

However, the bigger problem they faced was that there was no talent to bring them together and lead them.

Most of the heroes who protected the continent had died in the battle against Diablo.

For a while after that, the continent would be covered in death. He'd heard that only 20% of the population would survive.

It was unrealistic to view it as a percentage, in reality, that meant that hundreds of millions of people had died.

He had an intense feeling of nausea. He wanted to empty his stomach.

He wanted to stop looking at this, but he couldn't.

"...ah."

Then he saw a light.

A group of people could be seen walking on the blackened, dead land.

The man standing at the centre was Peran.

He still had a haggard face and dark circles around his eyes. He also seemed older. Proof of this could be found in the faint wrinkles on his face.

There were a lot of people around him, all of them gazing at Peran with hopeful eyes.

Crackle!

A dark red glow sparked around Peran.

Absolute.

Peran had finally learned how to use the greatest power in magicology.

The dark red light shot forward with a violent momentum like an outburst of anger, attacking the uninvited guests from other universes. The monsters who slaughtered the humans were strong, but they could not withstand absolute.

As a result, hope began to bloom on people's faces.

The central point.

The thing that the humans who faced the disaster needed the most.

Peran was born with the aptitude to be such a being. He had the right skills and heart. Hope began to glimmer faintly on Lukas' face as well.

Right. He was counting on him.

He might become an even greater Wizard than he had. He might even become another Great Mage.

Crack-

“...”

He didn't understand what happened.

It was a Giant. Probably 10 metres tall.

It had a body that seemed to be made of metal, and the face of a monster. That was all.

The power of absolute did not work on this Giant that Lukas was seeing for the first time.

It trampled on Peran, blood splattering in every direction.

The man Lukas had trusted. The man he thought of as a friend, had become a pile of bloody meat.

The giant peeled what Peran had become, which was stuck to the sole of its foot, and threw it into his mouth before chewing.

Crunch, crunch.

The humans reacted in two different ways at the sight of this horrific meal.

Some of them rushed forward in anger. But they were the minority. When the Giant waved its hand lazily, as if swatting annoying insects, their entire bodies burst like balloons. Even he could not understand the principle behind this.

The rest fled. They didn't get to run very far. Before they knew it, they were surrounded by other Giants.

The slaughter began.

“...”

His sight, which had been stained red with blood, became black once more.

His surroundings were quiet. And the scenes he'd just seen felt like a dream.

Even so, Lukas could not speak for a while.

“...that... are you trying to say it is my task?”

His cracked voice shook heavily.

“I'm asking if this is all because of me, because it is my task.”

[...]

“What the hell do you want from me?”

His targetless rage echoed.

“Should I have struggled some more? Could I not just die peacefully? Should I not have given up even if everyone forgot me and fate forced me to die? Cut the crap!”

When he wanted to rest even a little, he couldn't rest. When he didn't want to live, he couldn't die, when he didn't want to die, he couldn't live.

At some point, Lukas' life had become an endless series of denials.

He learned that there were some things that couldn't be achieved no matter how much he craved it or how hard he tried, even to the point of vomiting blood. He realised that there were some things he couldn't reach.

So for the first time, he compromised. He made the same choice as those he'd been unable to understand in the past. He felt a bit more relieved. At least at first.

It was only difficult to make the first step.

Since then, Lukas compromised, compromised, and compromised some more.

And yet, he wasn't able to accomplish even a single thing.

Even the countless yearnings that he'd compromised remained far beyond reach. No, in fact, it felt like they were getting farther and farther away.

There was no longer a man who believed that fate could be overturned and that enough individual power could change it.

Lukas Trowman became fragile enough to crumble at a touch.

"...I."

Don't want to see this.

Avoidance. Right, he was avoiding.

It was ironic how Lukas was avoiding his responsibilities and running away.

Because, he knew.

That it would probably be like this.

After he died, things wouldn't magically work out, and things would get worse instead.

However, the scenes of the catastrophes that unfolded before him were far worse than his expectations.

[Is it painful?]

"...it is painful. So much that I want to die."

[Do you want to die?]

"Right. I want to die."

[I can do that for you.]

Lukas looked up.

Without him realising it, a whitish figure had appeared in front of him.

[I can completely erase your existence. That will give you the eternal rest you desire. I still have that much power left. I promise you, you won't go to another world, to the underworld, or to the Imaginary World. Your ego will be completely erased in a complete sense, and no one will be able to bring you back.]

"..."

[However, Lukas Trowman. I would like you to delay your choice for a while. There is still one scene that I would like to show you.]

"A scene you really want to show me?"

Once again, his view changed.

The continent felt a bit brighter. It wasn't an illusion, that was really the case. The sun shone slightly in the cloudy sky, and rough weeds could be seen growing on the dead land.

[Time has passed.]

A calm voice.

As expected, time seemed to have passed in the scene he was looking at now.

Tap, tap. A group of people appeared. They were all humans with shabby, hungry faces.

[The blood flow stopped, the wounds healed, and the deeply ingrained fear and despair have gradually faded.]

But they were different from before.

Their facial expressions.

There was no longer fear, terror, or despair on the faces of the humans. Intense rage. A will for war that had been suppressed until it was ready to explode.

[And those who have adapted to that fear will not back down. In other words, they have regained their courage.]

Ahhh-!

With a scream, the humans ran forward. They fought fiercely with various weapons, tools and techniques.

A warrior threw himself into the mouth of a kariv. This wasn't suicide. Instead, the warrior avoided its teeth and drove his axe into the roof of its mouth.

Kyaak!

The kariv let out a terrible shriek. This was only natural since it had been attacked so precisely.

It wasn't just the kariv.

The Dobrams' horns were cut off.

Bickersticks were engulfed in flame.

The Hungry Ghosts ran away from tree bark and salt.

The Vine Sharks were exterminated during their spawning season.

Lukas looked at the scene with a blank expression.

[They learned where to attack. Based on countless sacrifices.]

"..."

The black haired man fighting the monsters at the front.

It felt like a lot of people were following him.

A person that Lukas had never seen before.

Perhaps he was the central point and the hero of this era.

[The will was inherited, and a hero was bound to appear at some point.]

"..."

[Even if everyone you know is dead, sunny days will come again.]

"..."

[Even the tragedies that happened and the disasters that caused countless sacrifices will eventually become nothing but lines in history. It's even less from a cosmic scale. Even if a war engulfed the entire continent and left deep scars in nature, when the lifespan of the entire planet is taken into account, it could be considered a short term disease.]

Lukas understood what God was trying to say.

[A crossroads of choice.]

"...choice."

[If it's the you of now, you can judge it from two perspectives. The despair you saw earlier, the death of all of your companions, the collapse of the system, and the invasion of monsters. From the perspective of an individual, it's like your world collapsed.]

"..."

[However, hundreds of years later, hope arose on the continent once again. They lost a lot, but they were eventually able to get back to their feet. They found a way to overcome their pain and live. Although it was painful, they fought for a brighter future. Now, do you still think despair is all you saw?]

Lukas was silent.

He didn't say anything in a very long time. God waited patiently without rushing him.

After a while.

“...the things you showed me haven’t happened yet.”

Lukas’ voice was low.

The death of his friends, the advent of chaos, the blood covered continent. None of that had happened.

[That’s right. What I showed you were scenes from the future. If this had already happened, I wouldn’t be able to give you a choice.]

“...”

[The first scene you saw. It was the most despair a human could feel. And the scene you saw just before was the faint hope that you saw from the perspective of an Absolute.]

“What are my options?”

[Your heart must be much lighter than it was before. Because you were able to see the sprouts of hope from hundreds of years in the future. Even if you’re not around, even if there is no one you believe in left, humans will not fall easily. They will get back onto their feet somehow, they will survive.]

“...”

[You asked what your options were? The first is simple. Like I said in the beginning, you will close your eyes and disappear. Now that the burden on your heart has lightened, you should be able to go more comfortably... In other words, to die as an Absolute.]

Those words were right.

Without a doubt, the scenes that God had shown him were significant.

Now, Lukas was somewhat convinced by the deaths of his companions. He understood that their deaths were not meaningless and instead served as foundations for future generations.

Death as an Absolute.

He couldn’t deny it.

It would take time, but he knew that humans would rise again in the distant future, so he could turn a blind eye to the upcoming disaster.

That wasn’t the thinking of a mortal.

His hesitation grew.

God had said it was a crossroads of choice. This meant he had one more option.

But he was afraid of that fact.

He felt like he didn’t want to hear the second option. He felt like it would be more comfortable to just close his eyes and accept death like this.

“And the other option?”

But Lukas' mouth opened as if it had a will of its own.

[To continue to struggle as a human.]

"..."

[To live desperately to protect the world you belong to. It will be bitter and miserable. So the choice is yours only.]

"..."

[Choose...]

God's voice could no longer be heard after that word.

Lukas was left alone in the dark space.

"Kukuku..."

Suddenly, a laugh bubbled up from his throat.

"Kukuku. Kuku... Kuha, kuhahaha!"

The soft chuckle soon gave rise to maniacal cackling. At some point his laughter began to make the space shake before it stopped.

In the silence, Lukas' lips spread into a wide smile.

[The Great Mage Returns After 4000 Years](#)

Season 2 Chapter 390

From a grand perspective, disasters could be called purges, and Absolutes were sometimes tasked with completely destroying a universe's civilization. It was like squeezing out rotten blood.

If their science was highly developed or if the average strength of each individual exceeded a certain level, it would greatly reduce the lifespan of the universe. This was not a theory based purely on speculation. In fact, countless universes had been destroyed by intellectual beings who had gotten a glimpse into the realm of God. In other words, it was an argument that had already been proven.

And it was a fact that anyone who became an Absolute was aware of.

The disaster on the continent that he'd just witnessed.

As a result of it, the universe's civilization declined and its population was greatly reduced. In other words, the development of the civilization suffered a major setback.

In the short term, it might seem unfortunate, but the lifespan of the planet and the universe would be much longer.

In the end, it was always the development of intellectuals that led to the destruction of universes.

Therefore, God offered Lukas two paths.

One was to accept death while maintaining the contemplative attitude of an Absolute. This meant that Lukas would be able to receive the eternal rest he longed for.

However, that eternal rest would mean the inevitable death of all of the beings Lukas knew and a complete abandonment of all the responsibilities he had as a human.

If he considered himself a human, it was a path that he should never choose.

That was the reason for the laughter that suddenly burst out of him. Lukas couldn't stand his own existence so much that he thought it was funny.

He didn't want to forget he was human.

That oath, which had once been closer to a belief, had gradually transformed into a clingy, dark obsession. He was no different from a monster who considered himself a human.

That was why Lukas had no choice but to choose the other path. He had no choice but to struggle.

The implications of that choice would be great.

It would be different from before. He would have to refuse even if he was given the chance to die.

Therefore, in the future, he could no longer lament his plight or curse his fate. He could not display such an unsightly scene.

Because it was a path that he himself chose.

It was going to be grim, gruesome, and arduous, but he would not be able to regret it because it would be the result of his own choice.

Struggling desperately?

Right. Fine. Since he wanted it so badly, he would show him. Just how wild a wriggling worm could be. It didn't matter if it was an extremely limited struggle. The destiny and beauty of mortality were as fleeting as a burning candle.

Lukas looked ahead with clear, focused eyes.

And, as if his gaze was a signal, a whitish figure appeared in the space again.

[You will walk down a path that you have never walked before.]

One of God's characteristics was to end a conversation with words that seemed to be grasping clouds.

Without asking what he meant, Lukas just waited for his next words.

[Lukas Trowman, do not regret the external force of Absolutes. You became a Lord at an unprecedented rate, but you should have realised it at that time. That it's impossible to go beyond that limit.]

As God said, when he reached the Lord stage, he had vaguely sensed that he had reached his limit.

[Even if countless aeons pass, it would have been impossible for you to close the gap with the Rulers. That would be your last stop.]

“I heard that if I won the Great Game, I would become a Ruler. Was that a lie?”

[It's not a lie. But what is the meaning of just having a new title on your business card? What you need is not the title, but the power and authority to stand beside them.]

“...right. That's why I was frustrated.”

Unreasonable existences.

That was the only appropriate expression to describe Rulers.

They were born that way. Their births in themselves were nothing short of miracles.

In the end, when he looked up at them, he felt the same kind of intensity as the Demigods he'd encountered in the past.

[...moreover, by becoming a Ruler that way, you would achieve nothing.]

God murmured in a strange voice before continuing.

[You will find clues in the Imaginary World.]

“Clues?”

[Become one of the Twelve Imaginary Lords. Afterward, if you go to the throne, you will know how to act.]

Lukas felt like God was smiling.

[Lukas Trowman. I didn't...]

“What?”

For a moment, God's voice became muffled and he wasn't able to hear what he said. He wasn't sure if it was intentional or not, but God didn't repeat the words he'd spoken.

[Everything must be difficult for you right now. So I will give it to you. The power to struggle most desperately.]

Just as Lukas was about to say something, his figure disappeared without a sound.

[This is my atonement, Lukas Trowman.]

The words he'd spoken to him before.

Suddenly, the whitish figure began to flicker as though it would disappear at any moment.

[I knew which path you would choose. Nevertheless, I deceived you by presenting it as though I was giving you a choice. I apologise for that.]

There was no answer, but God's murmurs didn't stop.

[It will be painful. And there will be many times when you want to give up. However, that is what makes it meaningful. Lukas, everything you've experienced until now will become the central element that makes you who you are.]

God muttered bitterly.

[Please overcome it. As always...]

Swoosh.

With a sound similar to air leaking out of a balloon, the figure's form collapsed and disappeared.

* * *

Throb-

A throbbing headache made him realise that he'd returned to his body. Lukas could feel the sensation of touch from every part of his body.

"..."

Instinctively, he began to check for his wounds. Just before his death, he was cut up by Yang In-hyun.

But it was strange. There were no wounds. And he couldn't feel any blood.

Before finding the cause of his discomfort, Lukas decided to sit up first. The rough texture of the sand on his palms was a little familiar. Was he taken out of Flower Mountain? When his blurred vision cleared, he realised that was the case.

He was laying in the middle of a grey desert.

"Wow! You're finally awake!"

Similarly, a slightly familiar voice came from beside him.

When he turned his head, he was greeted by the familiar face of a blue haired woman. With her head tilted to the side, she looked down at him while standing in a strange pose.

"Did you take care of me?"

"Yep!"

"Thank you. I'm in your debt again."

"...?"

Pale, who tilted her head to the side at his words, scratched her head and smiled.

"Hehe! You're welcome."

Lukas looked at her with curious eyes.

He was almost certain that his body had died. Yang In-hyun's sword had left no loopholes, and his killing intent towards Lukas was clear. Lukas, who had desired death, accepted his sword attack.

What he was saying was that Pale should have witnessed the 'certain death of Lukas Trowman'.

In other words, from her perspective, his body should have been brought back from death, but she didn't display any surprise, confusion, or fear.

...Then he noticed something strange.

“What about Lee Jong-hak?”

“Huh? Who?”

“Lee Jong-hak. The man who was locked in the prison. The one I rescued...”

“Umm~?”

Pale folded her arms with an unsure expression on her face. Seeing that made his heart drop slightly.

Did Yang In-hyun break his promise?

No. He shouldn't have broken his promise. While he would not care about the survival of Lee Jong-hak, he would still do his best. Because he said it.

“Is he dead?”

“I don't know. I don't know what or who Jong Lee-hak is, but you were the only person here.”

...Something.

Was wrong.

He wasn't sure what it was, but he felt like something was wrong with his and Pale's conversation.

“Pale, what are you talking about...”

Suddenly, Pale's eyes went wide. She looked at Lukas in surprise, but there was also a glint of sharpness in her eyes.

It was at that moment.

“Ah!”

Pale raised her guard and pointed behind Lukas.

“Uncle! Be careful!”

A huge shadow covered them. Of course, there was no such thing as clouds in this place.

When he lifted his head, he saw a monster's jaws wide open above him.

“...!”

Lukas used Lava Blast almost instinctively. Boom, the Lava Blast devoured the body of the monster in an instant.

The monster's body melted like wax. It writhed madly in terrible pain but soon stopped moving.

“Wow!”

Surprised, Pale clapped her hands excitedly, but he didn't have time to pay attention to that right now.

There were two things that surprised Lukas.

First of all, his mana room, which he'd emptied in his fight against Yang In-hyun, was now filled. Did Pale feed him jerky while he was unconscious? He wasn't sure. In any case, there were many possible reasons for this, so he set it aside for now.

The thing that bothered him the most was the monster, or, to be precise, the appearance of the monster.

Lukas looked at the melted body of the monster that was still twitching slightly.

...As expected, he hadn't been wrong about it.

This monster was familiar.

The appearance was similar to that of an alligator, the body which stretched tens of metres long, and the huge jaws filled with rows of jagged teeth.

He was certain that it was the monster he'd encountered when he first came to this world.

'Is it the same species?'

Of course, that was possible, but...

Lukas felt a sense of confusion that couldn't be answered by just that.

Then, Pale, who had been looking on admiringly from afar, ran over and began to chatter excitedly.

"Awesome! How did you do that?"

"I used magic. My mana room is full now. Did you feed me jerky?"

"Huh? No. I don't give food to others."

Then, she asked before Lukas could speak again.

"By the way! How did you know my name?"

"Your name?"

"Yes!"

"What are you talking about?"

"What do you mean? You just said my name! But I never told you!"

"...Pale."

"Yep."

"What happened after I died?"

"After you died?"

"I lost the battle against Yang In-hyun and died. After that..."

Lukas began to explain the situation. But the more he spoke, the more strange Pale's expression became, and toward the end, she looked at him as though he was a crazy person.

"Uh. I didn't think I'd have to say this, but is your head okay?"

Pale reached out to touch his forehead with a troubled expression.

When Lukas avoided her hand, she pulled it back with a pout.

He looked at Pale with a complicated expression on his face, before opening his mouth.

"You and I, is this our first meeting?"

Pale nodded her head.

"Obviously!"

"..."

"Mmm. This is serious. I thought I'd found a candidate to be my friend, but it turned out to be a man with a serious head injury."

Pale muttered to herself as she walked over to the body of the monster Lukas had killed. Then she poked it with her finger while asking, 'can I eat this?', but Lukas didn't answer.

As he stood stiffly, Lukas replayed God's words in his head

-Everything must be difficult for you right now. So I will give it to you. The power to struggle most desperately.

...The most desperate power to repeat. The monster he saw when he first arrived, his fully recovered mana room, and Pale who said they hadn't met before.

0

After putting all of these pieces together, only one conclusion could be reached.

'...I returned.'

Lukas Trowman had returned to the past.

The point when he'd first entered the Imaginary World.