

Great Mage 791

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

Season 2 Chapter 491

After the one guest and one unwelcome guest left, the space was tinged with silence.

Iris slowly lowered her gaze. Faint traces of destruction were left in the place she arbitrarily called 'the inside of God's skull'. The sight added to the gloominess.

As she didn't like it, she waved her hand.

Shak-

The destroyed ground, the spilt bookshelves, and the library that had been left in a mess all began to gradually recover. The number of damaged books was by no means small, but that was fine. It would be fine even if a fire was to cover the entire library and burn all the books to ashes.

The things recorded in the Akashic Records were all the original forms of the information. Even if a force strong enough to wipe out a universe was used, they wouldn't disappear.

"..."

Reaching out, she picked up one of the fallen books. Then, Iris noticed that her fingertips were trembling.

She suddenly had a thought.

Had Lukas noticed her agitation?

She wasn't sure. She focused on the beat of her own heart.

Please notice, please don't notice.

Such conflicting thoughts filled her head, but she soon shook her head. The movement was slow, but at the same time, it seemed to be filled with certainty as if she was reassuring herself.

After her hair, which looked as if it had been soaked in black ink, swayed a few times.

Smack!

Iris slapped herself on her cheek.

"...good."

Then, she thought of the blue haired young woman. She intentionally erased the memories of her pulling Lukas and only paid attention to that woman's identity and goal.

"Not good."

If things were to continue at this rate, it was bound to end badly.

As she stood in front of a certain bookcase, Iris Peacefinder made up her mind.

Her twirling fingers eventually pulled out a book.

* * *

Shortly after leaving the Akashic Records.

[How interesting. The Akashic Records, kukuku.]

Lukas frowned as the Lightning God's voice resounded in his head. This guy always showed his presence when he was about to forget him.

If possible, he'd prefer to not talk to him when Pale was around.

'What is interesting about it? Was that your first time entering the Akashic Records?'

[That's not it. What I'm interested in is Iris Peacefinder's aim.]

'Her aim?'

[Right.]

'...you know her aim that even I don't know?'

[If you take a few steps back, you'd be able to see the wider picture.]

Although those words were right.

'What is it? Iris' aim.'

[There's no reason for me to answer.]

He couldn't help but think that his timing to say that was right.

Lukas clicked his tongue inwardly and decided to ignore the Lightning God the next time he tried to talk to him.

...Dammit. Even as he had those trivial thoughts, his heart pounded as if he had been sprinting. He found it hard to calm down.

He recalled his helpless appearance just now in the Void Records.

When Iris and Pale were about to fight, although it was only for an instant, Lukas simply watched the situation. Fortunately, it didn't continue till the end.

If,

If the fight had continued, if it really became intense to the point of either side dying.

If that did happen, whose side would Lukas take?

Generally speaking, it would be Iris. Although his feelings towards Pale were better than before, he still couldn't trust her fully.

However.

*-You forgot your oath. Did you know? It's much harder and crueller to forget a promise than to break it!
But every single one of you betrayed Lukas.*

...Pale's words made his heart thump heavily. Those were the words Lukas' pride didn't allow him to utter.

God's doing? The rules of the world? They forgot him just because of that?

Him, who had abandoned everything for them, for humans.

Now that he had regained his humanity, he was up to his neck in childish whining, which never happened when he was an Absolute.

That was why Lukas couldn't help but feel grateful to Pale. She said what he couldn't say in his place. In all honesty, it made him feel relieved.

'Huhu.'

He let out a chuckle.

Once more, he realised what state he was in.

The current him... was pathetic.

Lukas turned around.

The crack in space was disappearing. Stretching out his hand, he tried to read the coordinate values from the disappearing space.

It didn't work.

'It's Iris' doing.'

She had deliberately twisted the space in a complex manner. This made it impossible for him to enter that space again even though he had entered it before. As expected, the authority over space that she'd obtained had advanced by leaps and bounds.

"Huu."

He didn't know Iris' aim.

However, he could at least tell what she was thinking.

She had learned about Lukas again, but she didn't feel any emotion. Knowing that was enough.

It was at that moment that he felt a sudden impact on his back. Turning around, he saw Pale with her palm unfolded and a smile on her face.

"Fix your face!"

Pale had slapped his back with her palm.

Of course, her aim wasn't to attack him... Was she comforting him?

"Are you upset because you met your ex lover?"

"Ex lov-... no. Not. That."

“Heh? I see.”

Giggling as if she was satisfied, she closed the distance.

Her blue eyes shined brightly through her unkempt hair.

Pale looked up at Lukas with an expressionless face for a moment before the corners of her mouth raised. It was a smile that would better be described as cool rather than beautiful.

“-you know.”

Her whispered voice tickled his neck like a feather.

“I, surprisingly, don’t like the leftovers of others.”

“...you’re saying.”

“Right. I’m saying you haven’t been eaten yet.”

The moment her brightly coloured tongue darted out, Lukas unwittingly took a few steps backwards.

At that, Pale giggled and took a few steps back as well.

“I’m joking, then, since you’re done with your business here, let’s go up.”

Although he was a bit confused by Pale’s previous attitude, Lukas replied.

“Now that I think about it, you said the ‘top’ is noisy. What happened?”

“Huh? It seemed like a fight.”

...A fight?

Was it Yang In-hyun, Dok Go-yun, or someone else?

It was hard to believe.

Dok Go-yun’s martial prowess was so high that it was hard for him to find an opponent not just among humans, but in this entire Great Universe. Even a dozen martial artists who would be regarded as experts wherever they went would not be able to deal with Dok Go-yun. Not to mention Yang In-hyun.

Pitter patter...

Suddenly, dust fell from the ceiling.

It was caused by vibrations that came from the surface, in other words, it was the aftermath of a fight.

It was as Pale said. Lukas could sense a fierce battle going on above.

“Let’s head up.”

“Yes.”

Pale, who was a few steps away, strode over and grabbed Lukas’ hand. With both hands. After a moment, she looked up at him, smiled, and said.

“We have to be touching to move together, don’t we?”

Although that was true, she had never been this active before.

Lukas forcibly swallowed what he wanted to say. It would be difficult to reach the surface in one go, so he would have to separate the spatial leap into two parts.

‘I still need to think about what to do with the people in the mine.’

The humans in this place, who had already lost their human intellect.

They couldn’t be fixed. At the very least, it was impossible for Lukas.

Then should he just leave them like this? Was it right to leave them to endlessly repeating labour?

Shuk-

The first movement ended.

It was a layer filled with the scent of blood, the same layer where he’d killed Twohands.

He could see the people who were indistinguishable from monsters. Despite Lukas’ sudden reemergence, they continued to be preoccupied with their work.

It was a sight that he didn’t want to see again for a long time.

Just as Lukas was about to space leap again.

“Huh? Wait.”

Letting go of his hand, Pale walked off in a direction. It was towards the body of Twohands.

Did she want to eat more because she didn’t eat enough? Lukas thought about a way to refuse. Right. He could say that Iris had served him a meal before she arrived.

But the excuse Lukas came up with was not needed. Because it seemed that Pale’s goal was not a meal.

Standing in front of Twohands’ corpse was an indistinct figure. He was about to draw upon his mana, but Pale stopped him with one hand.

“Hey, what are you doing?”

“...”

The indistinct figure was gradually revealed.

It was a child.

A little girl who was probably less than 10 years old.

But she wasn’t human. She had red skin, white hair, sharp teeth, and deformed horns sprouting from both temples. She also had hook-like fingers.

“Hiss...”

Hissing like a cat, the girl raised her claws. Her vertically slit pupils were filled with vigilance.

But Pale reached out without a care.

Crack! Lukas was startled. This was because the girl bit Pale's hand. He was worried about her attitude, which was no different from that of an animal. Of course, rather than Pale's hand, he worried about what would happen to the girl afterward.

He couldn't imagine what the expression of Pale, whose hand was suddenly bitten, looked like.

"That was a mistake."

But Pale spoke with a gentle smile.

"There are better things to eat here than me."

It was very much like Pale to classify even herself as food. No, it wasn't that. Pale forced the girl's mouth open before pointing her head towards Twohands' corpse.

"These are leftovers. Eat."

"..."

"Quickly."

It seemed like some kind of rapport developed between them.

After hesitating for a while, the girl once more began to eat Twohands' corpse.

"Aha, ahahah."

Pale suddenly burst out laughing as if she was having fun.

Then, looking at Lukas, she said.

"I'm taking this kid."

* * *

He didn't refuse.

No, it would be more accurate to say that he couldn't. In any case, that wasn't that important right now. After the girl finished eating, she fell asleep in Pale's arms.

Lukas looked at the sleeping girl.

Was she originally a human or a monster? He couldn't tell. Perhaps Cairo didn't know either.

What he was more curious about was why Pale took this girl in.

Sympathy?

He wasn't sure. Pale, of course, was a being with human emotions, but... she was not someone who possessed a good enough character to show kindness to the weak.

“Huah. As expected, the air outside is best.”

Upon arriving on the surface, Pale stretched her back as she said this. But the air in this place couldn't be called good. Because there was still the thick black fog outside.

Now that Cairo was dead, no more black fog would be produced. In other words, if the fog that was currently settled was blown away, the uniquely gloomy atmosphere of the mine would disappear.

He could do it now. It wouldn't be difficult. One large scale wind spell would be enough.

‘No.’

First of all, he needed to figure out what was happening on the surface.

He didn't even need to look around for long. He could feel the two strong energies clashing not so far away.

Lukas' expression suddenly became strange.

Dok Go-yun.

This man, who was fairly skilled, was now locked in combat with someone else.

The fight was quite fierce. In other words, this meant that the opponent was another Peak Master like Dok Go-yun.

Lukas walked towards the battlefield.

“...”

Before suddenly stopping.

His body became stiff as if he was soaked in cold water. He could almost feel his neck becoming stiff.

“...dammit.”

Eventually, he let out a swear for a reason even he didn't know.

However, Lukas no longer tried to get closer, and even went on to hide his presence.

He didn't know what kind of day this was. But relationships that he'd thought he'd put aside were rushing in one after the other without any warning.

It wasn't that he wasn't happy. And it wasn't like he didn't want to meet them.

However, Lukas suddenly looked down at himself.

His robe was stained with blood. It was probably Bullseye, Twohands, or Cairo's.

Even if he tried to brush it off with his hand, as it had already hardened, it would not come off.

Bloodstains were naturally like that. They were easy to apply but difficult to remove.

He didn't want to appear like this. Especially in front of that child.

Boom!

In the meantime, the fight was escalating.

Whenever the fist and palm connected, the ground shook as if there was an earthquake.

The more he looked on, the more he realised.

‘He grew stronger.’

It was so hard to believe that it was like he was a completely different person.

The boy, who had once been dominated by his past trauma, had overcome his flaws and become an undeniably powerful being. In addition, he wasn't losing at all despite facing Dok Go-yun, the proxy of the Heavenly Demon.

But this wasn't the time to feel moved.

The gradually heating fight was approaching its end.

Both sides could be seen putting all of their remaining energy into their fists. They intended to end the contest with the next blow.

‘Dangerous.’

When that much power collided, one side would surely die.

And Lukas didn't want either side to die. There was no time to hesitate. Just as Lukas was about to step in between them, Yang In-hyun appeared like a phantom and brushed off their attacks. It was an intervention that was perfect enough to be admired.

“—.”

“—? —.”

Soon after, he heard them start talking about something. It was at this moment that Lukas got a bit closer and overheard their conversation.

“If that is the case, then you...”

“Yes. I came here as a member of the Trowman Rings. To subjugate the Demon of the Mine.”

“On your own?”

“No.”

The young man,

Leo Freeman, shake his head.

“There is one more person.”

At those words, Lukas spread out his senses.

And soon, he was able to find the ‘other person’ Leo mentioned.

[Kuhaha... if it isn't a nostalgic face.]

The Lightning God burst into laughter.

A few kilometres away, outside of the black fog's influence, was Venian Argento.

[Hey, Madman.]

'...what is it?'

The Lightning God spoke in a mocking voice.

[If you encounter that being now, you'll definitely die.]

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

Season 2 Chapter 492

The appearance of Venian Argento was that of 'Venian'. In the first place, if that hadn't been the case, he probably wouldn't have been able to recognise her at first glance.

Compared to the various appearances she'd displayed in the 'Great Field', her current expression was closer to 'Venian' than it was to 'Chorong'.

But Lukas couldn't recklessly approach her. Just because her outer appearance was that of Venian didn't mean that the personality inside was the same.

Venian was one of multiple personalities, a fragment of the Ruler, Seven Fanged Dragon God.

Of course, the Lightning God's warning was also probably for that reason. He really hated that guy, but he could at least trust the fact that he wouldn't lie.

'...definitely die.'

Speculation mixed with conviction. This wasn't because he doubted it.

However, if he were to die, Lukas wondered as to the reason.

Would it be because of the remnants of the Lightning God in his head?

To deal with Lukas, who could now be considered as half a person of the 'World of Void'?

Or would the presence of Pale, who was standing still with a relaxed expression, be the cause of conflict?

'Yang In-hyun.'

Lukas turned his gaze over to the Void Lord.

He could feel it.

Venian's attention hadn't yet picked up Lukas or Pale. Instead, she was completely focused on Yang In-hyun, who was talking to Leo.

'Venian and the Seven Fanged Dragon God should know about Yang In-hyun.'

He wasn't sure.

The one who had defeated the Seven Fanged Dragon God was the '4th Beast'. But Lukas had never encountered that Void Lord before.

However, the Twelve Void Lords, no, every being in the World of Void, had a unique aura that only they exuded. They generated unique energy waves that were unlike any being in the Three Thousand Worlds, so it was impossible for the Seven Fanged Dragon God to not notice.

And yet, Venian continued to watch the situation.

Even as Dok Go-yun and Leo came to blows.

'...I have no choice but to watch the situation first.'

Thinking that, Lukas hid his presence even more, but things didn't go as he intended.

"I can feel a disgusting aura."

When Lukas turned around, shaking, he saw Pale, who was smiling toothily.

"I didn't expect to meet one of them so soon. It's bothering me so much I have to kill them."

"...wait."

In terms of numbers, this was already the third time. He stopped her. Of course, it went without saying that this time was the most dangerous.

He had expected it, but it was much harder to deal with Pale than Yang In-hyun.

Pale turned her head to look at Lukas. She seemed to be waiting to hear what he wanted to say. In all honesty, just being able to elicit such a reaction from her could be considered a huge step.

But what should he say?

"Why do you want to kill her?"

"Because I hate those guys."

"The Rulers, or Absolutes?"

At that, Pale released a seething momentum. Her expression was gradually being coloured with irritation. It could be interpreted as 'why are you asking something like that?'

"Those guys don't know hunger."

"...what?"

"They probably lived their lives without knowing hunger. Satiety pickled brained bastards*. I'm going to wring the oil out of their stomachs with my bare hands. Only then will I feel better." (*:Bastards whose brains have been pickled in satiety)

Pale rarely showed such strong emotions. But whenever a Ruler was involved, the emotions she displayed were special.

It wasn't just hatred or anger.

Lukas...

Could understand what Pale was saying to an extent.

Contempt towards those who were born as Absolutes, those who had lived without a single crisis or risk. What Pale wanted to shout about was the so-called 'discontent of the underdog'.

In that case, he could persuade her.

"I hate them too. My reasons are different from yours, but my hatred is no less."

"I suppose."

"However, not that woman. Take a closer look. Does that really look like a Ruler?"

"Definitely. I can't tell the difference."

"She's not."

Lukas shook his head. It had been a long time since he'd felt Pale's cool gaze.

Her actions in the mine allowed him to realise that their relationship was much more advanced than before. He wasn't sure exactly what direction it had advanced in, but it was clearly deeper than before.

However, for Pale, the Rulers could be considered her 'reverse scale'. If he were to answer incorrectly here, Pale would turn her sword on him without hesitation.

"That woman knows hunger."

"Huh."

"She has experienced failure."

The 'hunger' Pale was talking about was failure.

There are ups and downs in the lives of every being. There is no life that is only happy or only unhappy. There are times when you succeed, and times when you fail.

That was the reality.

But not for Rulers.

Their lives had no crises, no misfortune, and no failure.

They were selfish lives that travelled the road of success from the moment they were born.

However, the Seven Fanged Dragon God had experienced defeat in the World of Void.

Even though they could not tolerate defeat, it had happened. Perhaps Rulers were beings who were not allowed to have even a single defeat. It was possible that the Dragon God's fall had something to do with that defeat.

Without even mentioning that speculation, Lukas spoke.

“You should know. Where she was defeated.”

“...”

There was no way she didn't know.

After all, she was none other than the Blue Knight, Pale, one of the Four Knights.

She was the one who had sensed the Ruler's invasion through the use of puppets and had clearly shown that she was on full alert.

On the other hand, although he didn't know much about the Seven Fanged Dragon God, her power should have been equivalent to the strongest beings in the World of Void. So there was no way that the battle would have gone unnoticed.

It was even possible that Knights were involved in the conflict between the '4th Beast' and the 'Seven Fanged Dragon God'.

“She's not worth fighting. At least I don't think so.”

There was no guarantee that his persuasion would work.

But that was all he had. Lukas had no other excuse to persuade her with. If Pale still decided to kill Venian...

“...”

The gleam in Pale's eyes calmed. Then, she puffed out her cheeks.

“Tch.”

And, after squatting again, she began to play with the face of the sleeping girl.

The skin piercing momentum also disappeared, and Lukas could finally let out a sigh of relief.

The worst had passed.

* * *

While his attention was on Pale, the conversation between Leo and Yang In-hyun came to an end. Lukas clicked his tongue. He'd been so distracted, he'd ended up missing what they had talked about.

Leo politely bowed towards Yang In-hyun before disappearing.

'He's heading into the mine.'

There was no need to stop him.

He couldn't say for when Cairo was still alive, but there was nothing in the mine that could threaten Leo now. As he thought of the mine that had already lost its original function, Lukas recalled another of his disciples.

'Arid.'

If it was Arid, then maybe even those who had already become monsters would be able to regain their original forms. It might seem irresponsible, but it seemed reasonable to leave the mine to the 'Trowman Rings'.

Lukas confirmed that Leo had left. Then, while maintaining his awareness of Venian's attention, Lukas space leapt into the 'Omega'.

After a while, Yang In-hyun and Dok Go-yun entered the aircraft, the latter looking at him in surprise.

"Uh, why are you here?"

"I'll give you a detailed explanation later. For now, can we leave this place immediately?"

"Yes."

"I killed the Demon of the Mine."

"Ah, yes..."

Although he was confused, Dok Go-yun carried out Lukas' orders. The Omega immediately took off, quickly rising several hundred metres in the air.

"..."

He could feel Venian's gaze in their direction. Fortunately, she made no moves to stop them, but it made Lukas suspicious.

Why was she letting Yang In-hyun go despite realising his existence? Was it because she judged that she had no chance of winning on her own, or was there some other reason.

...He couldn't tell.

This was because Lukas didn't even know how powerful Venian was now. This couldn't be helped. After all, he might have been caught if he tried to inspect her more carefully.

'The Trowman Rings came here to kill Cairo.'

It wasn't a good feeling.

Iris had said. Most of the beings from his home universe empathised with Diablo's ideals.

In other words, it was possible that his 'home universe' and 'Earth' might one day enter an all out war.

"..."

If such a situation did occur, should he remain silent?

Should he dismiss their actions as those of the outside?

-I'd like to... apologise in advance... but it can't be helped... Regrets... there is a being who... doesn't want you to have them...and I... owe them...

-Go... take a look and... judge for yourself...

The Exile.

Lukas recalled the last things the person who sent him to the Three Thousand Worlds said.

Then he thought.

In the end, what would his role be after coming to this place?

* * *

He finished giving a short explanation to Yang In-hyun and Dok Go-yun. He told them that the situation in the mine had been resolved, and that he thought it would be better to leave since the 'Trowman Rings' who came after them would be better at cleaning up.

His various explanations were insufficient, but neither of the two expressed any doubts.

The cabin was quiet.

Pale had fallen asleep while hugging the little girl like a doll, and the Heavenly Demon was also meditating to replenish the mental energy he'd exhausted in the fight against Leo.

Apart from the sounds of breathing and faint mechanical sounds, there were no other noises.

Pale moonlight shined gently on the white interior. Lukas sat in front of the window, looking out at the landscape outside which didn't change much.

"A moonlit night."

He heard a deep voice. Even without looking back, he could tell that it was Yang In-hyun's voice.

"It's not easy to fall asleep on a night like this."

He felt him sit down beside him. He was a bit far away, but it was close enough to see his face. Of course, it was a face that made it impossible to tell what he was thinking.

"That's the way you looked at those people."

Yang In-hyun suddenly spoke up.

"What do you mean?"

"You don't always need to know what the other person is thinking."

"..."

Did he notice that he was looking for something?

If that was the case, then Yang In-hyun had pointed out Lukas' rudeness in the politest way possible.

"I apologise if I offended you."

Yang In-hyun silently shook his head.

He wasn't sure if that meant he was forgiving him or he didn't want to accept it.

Gurgle-

He heard something being poured. When he took a look, Yang In-hyun was pouring a drink for himself. But after pouring the alcohol, he didn't drink it, and instead simply looked at glass.

"The young man I saw today."

Yang In-hyun spoke without even looking at him.

"An acquaintance?"

He pondered that question for a while.

Should he be honest, lie, or remain silent.

"My disciple."

"That young man wasn't a Wizard."

"I didn't teach him magic."

"Indeed, so you had an impact in a more ideological sense."

He wasn't wrong, but Lukas' expression changed slightly.

"You don't know anything about having a disciple."

"I at least know what it means to be Master and Disciple."

So conceptually.

Shaking his head, Lukas changed the subject.

"Do you not have any disciples?"

Yang In-hyun smiled. Of course, it was a wry smile.

"I'm not qualified for that."

"...qualified."

Lukas looked at Yang In-hyun for a moment before blurting.

"You're like me."

Yang In-hyun's figure froze.

To be honest, even Lukas himself was surprised, but his mouth didn't stop.

"I also didn't have any disciples for a long time. Because I felt that I wasn't qualified."

"You're saying..."

"Right. I thought that it would be shameful to teach someone when my own inadequacies and inferiority constantly drew closer like the air. I couldn't afford to. However, one day, I happened to get a disciple."

"How and where did you find them?"

"I didn't find them. It just... just happened to happen."

Even Lukas himself thought that was a terrible explanation, so he added.

"I don't like the word, but it must have been fate."

"...fate."

"That meeting made me feel a bit better. It's not about learning something new while teaching someone or anything like that. However, I learned that the person teaching doesn't necessarily have to be perfect. In the first place, that's not possible."

"..."

"What's important is the kind of educational views you have. And how you set yourself to be seen by your students."

In all honesty, he never thought he'd bring up these inner feelings to Yang In-hyun out of everything.

This was probably also thanks to Lukas regaining some of his humane sensibility.

"Which form did you choose?"

"Mm."

"What form did you show to your disciples?"

"I pretended to be perfect."

"..."

Looking at Yang In-hyun who was lost for words for a moment, the corners of Lukas' mouth twisted.

"I couldn't be perfect, so I decided to act as perfect as possible. Being fair, saying the right things they did were right, saying the wrong things they did were wrong... the kind of being to become. It didn't matter if they really do or not. Because it was simply a Master's wish."

"Wish."

"That our disciples become better than us."

As he said that, Lukas thought of a woman with black hair.

"That they don't fail as spectacularly as we did."

The conversation paused there.

Yang In-hyun's gaze turned, once more, to the window. As he looked at the moonlight dyed clouds, he suddenly downed his alcohol for some reason.

Then, looking down at the clean glass, he opened his mouth.

"It's something I never pictured before."

"..."

“However, right. Maybe that’s the way to find the answer.”

“...Lee Jong-hak is in Flower Mountain.”

“...”

“He is a man of substance, but I couldn’t be his Master. Even priests of different types could get along, but that guy and I wouldn’t.”

“...”

“Maybe you will be able to guide him to the right path.”

Yang In-hyun was silent for a long time. Then, he started emptying one glass after the other.

Eventually, as the scenery outside began to change, he heard him mutter in a slightly drunken voice.

“...one more reason to go back.”

They didn’t talk anymore after that.

However, Yang In-hyun, who got up from his seat, brought another glass with him, and the drinking party carried on until dawn.

—Then the Omega.

Arrived at the [Next Stage].

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

Season 2 Chapter 493

The 4th of October, dawn.

The Omega successfully landed on a snowfield so white it seemed to freeze the vision of whoever saw it.

“There are certain areas where the fluctuating climate caused by the Great Fusion has not recovered. This place is probably the same. This snowy field hasn’t melted in the slightest in the last four seasons.”

Lukas had a subtle feeling.

When he’d seen the map, this place had been covered by a black stain. That was why he’d believed that this place had already died or been devastated, but when they arrived, the scene was the opposite.

“Huu...”

With every breath, it felt like his lungs would freeze.

Although it was only the beginning of autumn, in this place, it was already winter.

“Although, geographically, this place was probably classified as [Inner Mongolia]...”

The reason Dok Go-yun used past tense was probably because he wasn’t sure just how many regions had been mixed into this place.

Letting out a breath, Dok Go-yun continued.

“...to be precise, this place isn’t the Next Stage.”

At those words, the members of the party all looked up towards the sky at the same time. In fact, they weren’t just looking as everyone noticed the presence of that thing.

In this region, even if the sun was in the middle of the sky, it would probably be difficult to notice. This was because of an array of metal that covered the sky.

Part of the reason the snowfield refused to melt might be because the sunlight was blocked.

“As I mentioned earlier, the Next Stage is an extremely large artificial island.”

“Wow. It’s big.”

Pale tilted her head back 90 degrees. As a result, her waist gradually bent backwards like a bow until she fell flat onto the snowfield. Buried in the snow, Pale burst out laughing. Not knowing why, the girl in Pale’s arms simply looked up at her.

Although he didn’t express it, Dok Go-yun appeared to marvel at the size of the island, and even Yang In-hyun seemed surprised.

Lukas didn’t have much of an impression.

He had visited universes with even more advanced scientific power, and the Sky Continent in the ‘Great Field’ was so huge that this artificial island could not even compare.

Instead, Lukas paid more attention to the surrounding geography.

“There is a city at the bottom.”

“Ah, yes.”

“It seems inhabited.”

“...that’s right.”

Yang In-hyun spoke in an absurd tone.

“Those people don’t have any sense of crisis. If that island were to fall by chance, they would all be annihilated.”

Dok Go-yun smiled bitterly.

“Moreover, it’s dozens of times more dangerous to live in the area outside than to be crushed to death by the island. At the very least, as long as the ‘Next Stage’ remains in the air, there is no force big enough to touch this place.”

In this era of countless groups and organisations, very few organisations were as influential as the Great Galactic Alliance. And even fewer were reckless enough to wage an all out war against them.

Of course, it wasn’t clear whether the city beneath the Next Stage was actually a part of their alliance, but the simple fact that they were related to the Great Galactic Alliance was enough to prevent invasions by over 90% of external forces.

Hearing this series of circumstances, Lukas nodded.

When it came to issues or information about this chaotic world, Dok Go-yun was pretty well informed. He'd brought him along simply to use him as an excuse to participate in the VIP's general review meeting, but he'd turned out to be surprisingly helpful in many other areas as well.

"Then let's go to that city first."

"Yes. We should obtain information about the Next Stage."

Lukas looked at Pale, who was still laying on the snowfield.

"Pale, let's go."

"Mhm. Help me up, Butterfly."

What was Butterfly? That was simple, it was the name of the monster girl.

Of course, she hadn't introduced herself as that, and it was Pale who had named her arbitrarily. Butterfly couldn't speak. This didn't mean she wasn't intelligent though, as she actually seemed to be very quick witted and able to understand what they said.

Even at that moment, she hesitantly got up from her seat and reached her hand out to Pale.

Pale seemed to like Butterfly very much. Lukas wondered why.

Did she simply sympathise with the fact that she was starving? Or was it Butterfly's appearance that greatly shook Pale?

He couldn't tell at that moment, but one thing was clear, Pale was beginning to care more and more about that girl.

* * *

The correct name for the region was [Manjuri City*, Inner Mongolia]. It was the place where Russia, China, and Mongolia met.

The basic foundation of the city was modern. Of course, this was according to Earth's technological standards. Unlike Kazan, where there were almost no natives, there were well built streets in this place which seemed to be performing their roles properly. Cars were driving smoothly on them.

"Most of the people here are Earthlings."

This fact became more apparent when they saw the crowded streets.

There were some people who were wrapped tightly in thick clothing, and others who seemed to have trained their bodies. But the vast majority were civilians with no visible combat capabilities.

People's eyes turned towards them. The reason could be guessed.

"...our outfits stand out too much, I think that we should change outfits first."

Dok Go-yun basically hated to stand out. Whenever attention was placed on him, for some reason, he felt uneasy and even displeased. He wasn't sure if this was a natural tendency or an unwelcome by-product of living as the Heavenly Demon's agent.

In any case, Dok Go-yun led the party into a nearby clothing store.

"Welcome."

"The best and most expensive."

"..."

The employee's expression changed as they heard Dok Go-yun's short and bold words, and they soon began the sales zealously.

Consequently, Lukas and Yang In-hyun chose coats, Dok Go-yun wanted to wear street fashion, and Pale strongly insisted on a pair of denim jeans and a jacket. Purely because she liked the colour blue.

"Blue is a bit..."

Dok Go-yun muttered softly but it didn't look so strange that he couldn't stand to see her wear it.

Pale had a tall and slim physique, so her look could roughly be called stylish. He couldn't help but think that if her messy hair was arranged and her face gained some more flesh she would look even better.

Finally, Butterfly was dressed in a hooded parka. It was a choice made because she was the one with the least resistance to cold among them.

When they came out dressed like that, it felt like they could blend better with the people in the street.

Afterwards, they headed to a nearby fast food store. Of course, this decision was secretly impacted by Dok Go-yun's secret craving.

They sat at two tables, with Pale and Butterfly sitting together at a different table. This was because they alone ordered over 50 hamburgers. They piled the hamburgers up like a mountain and hummed as they peeled off the wrapping paper.

"The atmosphere in this city is stable."

Dok Go-yun was speechless.

"It can even be said that not even the slightest hint of a sense of crisis could be felt. The citizens living here have never been directly exposed to danger."

"Public order is maintained and public security is flawless. It must be quite peaceful."

"Yes. The people outside would probably faint if they saw this."

Horrible rumours about the regions on the map commonly known as 'black spots' circulated constantly. They either said the people there were treated like livestock, that large scale biological experiments were held, or that there was a never-ending war.

At least, based on the appearance of this city, they were all false.

“With this extent, it is safe to assume that they are protected by the Great Galactic Alliance. This isn’t a bad thing for us. The closer the relationship between this place and the Next Stage, the easier it will be to get information.”

“There are still six days left until the general review meeting. That should be enough to scout the surroundings and gather information.”

“First of all, it would be better to find out exactly how to enter the Next Stage.”

Yang In-hyun, who had been staring down at the fries, soon turned away and spoke.

“You mean a legitimate way to enter.”

“Yes. And... pardon my rudeness, but I believe it would be more efficient for me to do this on my own.”

“On your own? Will that be okay?”

“I’m confident in my ability to hide my presence.”

“Then we...”

“Can you take a look around the city together, to check if there is anything unusual?”

Although he said it politely, he was basically telling them to relax and tour around the city.

Lukas nodded. But he didn’t accept Dok Go-yun’s proposal. He also intended to obtain information on his own.

“Then the first thing we should do is establish a base of operations. On our way here, I saw a hotel. Shall we stay there for the time being?”

* * *

Along the way, they bought a lot of food from a supermarket. Pale had swept up most of the snacks, drinks and frozen food on the shelves. Lukas didn’t stop her. At the very least, he had learned that when Pale was quiet, she was probably eating something, so the more things she had to eat, the better.

Of course, the balance was left entirely to Dok Go-yun.

The hotel room was large and spacious, had centralised room service, and served meals in a buffet style.

There was no doubt that the cost of a day’s lodging would be huge.

“Osha.”

Pale rolled on the bed. It seemed that she liked it because it was soft. Butterfly was still beside her, while Yang In-hyun looked out at the scenery outside through the window. It seemed that he liked to look at the scenery from a high place as he’d done the same at the location of the Cloud Pavilion, where he’d stayed in the past.

Dok Go-yun left. It seemed that he intended to start collecting information immediately.

...Then.

What to do at that moment?

“There’s nothing to do.”

The expression of Pale, who seemed to have grown tired of the bed and was rummaging through a drawer, suddenly brightened.

“Ah. There is trump here t-”

“I won’t.”

He immediately rejected Pale’s proposal.

...He decided to take a break in the hotel since the sun was still up. It would be better to go out once it had become dark and Pale had fallen asleep.

As he sat on a chair with a sigh, Pale, who snuck up to him, stretched out something to his chin.

“Tired?”

“A bit.”

“Drink this.”

As she said that, she held out a drink in a glass bottle.

“What is... this?”

“Hmm? If you drink this, your fatigue should go away.”

“...”

It had a wrapper with the name ‘Bacchus*’. The words were neither Chinese nor Mongolian. He was certain that the text was Korean. (*: A South Korean energy drink aka Bacchus F and Bacchus D.)

Why were there Korean products in the supermarket?

“The name seemed similar to Lukas’, so I bought it!” (*: 루카스- Lukas 박카스 – Bacchus. Although the author censored bacchus(박카스) for some reason)

“...ah. Right. I’m so grateful I could cry.”

“Hehe. No sweat.”

Pale raised her thumb with a triumphant expression.

* * *

In an underground building in Manjuri City.

In a place where hundreds of monitors covered the walls, Gentleman began to report.

“Confirmed. A total of five individuals.”

Gentleman’s eyes busily moved back and forth across the screens.

“The middle aged Swordsman who destroyed the Infernal Heaven, a dark blonde man, a blue haired woman, a red skinned girl, and the Heavenly Demon. The Heavenly Demon probably chose to follow them after losing to the Swordsman.”

There was no response from the radio, but Gentleman continued his report as if he was used to it.

“Their current place of residence is unknown. But we will learn it soon. Please understand why the confirmation is delayed. If we try to check with our naked eyes, our traces might be found.”

Gentleman glanced at his missing left arm. The martial prowess displayed by Yang In-hyun had reached a level so high that he couldn't even imagine it.

If his goal hadn't been to capture him, he probably wouldn't have been able to escape.

“They probably intend to participate in the general review meeting, but their exact goal is unknown. I will report as soon as the information is updated.”

Then, he was done.

He turned off the radio after speaking briefly.

Burying his back in the chair, Gentleman narrowed his eyes. Then, they widened slightly as his gaze turned to one of the monitors.

He could see a man walking through a dark alley like fog.

...Heavenly Demon.

He seemed quite confident in his covert actions, but he failed to notice the Great Galactic Alliance's ultra small cameras.

'Should I deal with him?'

Gentleman narrowed his eyes before eventually shaking his head.

The Heavenly Demon's value to the group was probably not high. His goal was likely that of a guide.

The same was true for the red skinned girl.

The girl was their latest addition. She hadn't been with them when they left 'Kazan'. Then, that naturally left one person.

The woman with blue hair.

It seemed that the two unordinary men treated the woman with great care. It seemed that her weight in the party was different from that of the Heavenly Demon and the red skinned girl.

“...kidnapping and threatening a weak woman goes against my aesthetic, but...”

It couldn't be helped.

Before being a gentleman, he was a member of VIP.

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

Season 2 Chapter 494

When the sun set completely, Lukas got to his feet.

The rented room was quietly shrouded in darkness.

“You’re going out?”

Yang In-hyun, who was meditating in front of the window that overlooked the outside, spoke up.

“This is the best time to move.”

“Something is watching us.”

“I know.”

“It’s not a living thing-”

“Of course, I know. It doesn’t matter if we leave them alone.”

“You’re going to pretend that you didn’t notice.”

Lukas neither confirmed nor denied it.

But just as he grabbed the door handle, he realised that there was someone standing outside. Nevertheless, there was no need to be cautious. When he opened the door, he found Dok Go-yun standing there with a slightly surprised expression.

“Ah... where are you going?”

“A late night walk. You returned earlier than I expected.”

“So that’s what it is.”

Dok Go-yun scratched his head.

“Any results?”

“There were quite a few.”

He seemed confident...

Lukas glanced at Pale, who had fallen asleep with Butterfly, before saying in a quiet voice.

“Have you eaten?”

“No. Not yet...”

“Then let’s go out and talk.”

Dok Go-yun nodded and followed without a word, and for some reason, Yang In-hyun, who was sitting, stood up.

The three men headed to the restaurant on the first floor of the hotel. There were a few people in the restaurant, and some could be seen eating quietly.

After taking as much as they wanted to eat, they sat at a table in a corner.

When the meal had progressed enough to fill their hunger, Dok Go-yun wiped his mouth with a napkin before speaking.

“First of all, it’s safe to say that this city belongs to the Great Galactic Alliance. There were several invasions by foreign powers in the past, and each time, the air force from the Next Stage would stop them... No, it would be better to say they annihilated them.”

“Annihilated?”

“Yes. Literally that. Those who were designated as enemies were completely burnt without leaving even hair behind.”

If it was that much, then as Dok Go-yun reported, Manjuria could be considered as a part of the Great Galactic Alliance.

“In order to go to the Next Stage, three conditions must be met.”

“Three conditions.”

“Yes. The first is money. To be exact, \$100,000 USD. Of course, that is the price per person. In our case, we would need a total of \$500,000.”

Although Yang In-hyun, who didn’t know the exact value of the currency, quietly ate caviar with a disinterested expression, Lukas became speechless.

\$500,000.

These days.

It was an amount that would not be considered small anywhere in the world.

“Of course, I can prepare this much cash.”

“...I’ll owe you again.”

“It’s okay. It’s not like I earned it anyway.”

Dok Go-yun smiled and said.

Spending the former Heavenly Demon’s hard earned money was also one of his ways to get revenge on the dead son of a bitch.

“The second is the appointed date. I heard that only once a month, an elevator that leads to the Next Stage comes down from the artificial island. It is actually the only way to enter the Next Stage apart from planes, fighter jets, or portals.”

“When is it?”

“The 9th of every month.”

Lukas nodded.

“Five days from now.”

“Yes. The day before the general review meeting.”

“Indeed. Perhaps that’s why they set the date for the general review meeting.”

“It’s very likely. I’m sure the VIPs aren’t the only people entering the Great Galactic Alliance.”

There was one more piece of information that Lukas could distinguish from that.

Lukas looked out the glass wall. Even though the sun had fully set, the night streets only became more lively.

“VIP members from other areas might be somewhere in this city right now.”

“Yes.”

Dok Go-yun quenched his thirst with wine before saying.

“Of course, regardless of the dangers that lurk, they wouldn’t pose a threat to the two of you.”

“...”

Well. About that.

It wasn’t that he lacked confidence, but that there were without a doubt many variables in this collection of universes that experienced the Great Fusion.

“What is the final condition?”

The previous two conditions were not much of a problem. Instead, it could even be said that they were already achieved.

Nevertheless, there had to be a reason why Dok Go-yun explained the three conditions. As expected, as he opened his mouth, Dok Go-yun had a different expression from before.

“...it is said that you need to be personally granted a medal from the Great Galactic Alliance or verification from a field grade officer in the form of a badge.”

“A medal or a badge?”

“Yes.”

“How can we get that?”

An ordinary person would not have investigated how to obtain it, but he asked because he was certain that Dok Go-yun had done so.

Indeed, Dok Go-yun didn’t betray Lukas’ expectations.

“There are two ways. The first is to make a great contribution to the Great Galactic Alliance in some way and receive it directly. A typical example would be in a war.”

“I don’t think that can be done in six days.”

“It is as you said. That’s why we’ll choose option 2.”

Puk, just in time, Yang In-hyun’s fork stabbed into the steak.

“Stealing badges from field grade officers.”

* * *

For her, pain was like a sister that had been born at the same time.

It always felt ‘normal’ for her because she never didn’t feel pain.

She was used to all kinds of pain, and while most things were bearable, there was something that wasn’t.

Hunger.

The bitter taste of gastric fluids filled her throat. No matter how much time passed, it was something that she couldn’t get used to.

The sensation of slowly feeling cold from her fingertips while her stomach was hot. Pain that felt like lava raging in her stomach...

She’d known ever since she was a baby.

It was a pain she’d never be able to escape from.

Forever.

* * *

When she opened her eyes, Pale felt warmth. Not hotness, not pain, warmth.

It was the warmth of holding someone in her arms that she had long forgotten and thought that she would never feel again.

Butterfly tossed slightly, but she didn’t wake up. The red skinned girl slept very well. To an extent, she was similar to Pale. That was why Pale couldn’t ignore her.

She was a girl like her, with the same original sin.

The two of them were the only ones in the room. But this didn’t come as a surprise. She’d felt them leaving while she was asleep.

She looked out through the window.

There, she could see the night streets lit by artificial lights.

In this small city alone, there were thousands, tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of living beings.

It was a world where all kinds of chaos existed. Therefore, there were all kinds of unpredictable possibilities.

However, it was a world that held no good memories for Pale.

She'd never thought about coming back.

Then, what did she feel now?

"...I dun know."

Pale shook her head as she murmured, and headed back to bed. Then, after hugging Butterfly again, she closed her eyes again.

While thinking that she just wanted to feel the warmth for now.

* * *

"It's said that the badges don't have any codes or markings. In other words, no matter how you obtain a badge, you can use it for the elevator. The inspection isn't too stringent."

"Does that mean they wouldn't care if we use a stolen badge? It feels like they're taking it too lightly."

Dok Go-yun nodded.

"I felt the same way, so I looked into it a bit more, but there is no need to worry about it."

"On what grounds?"

"It's said that if they lose their badge, they will be reprimanded by the Great Galactic Alliance. The punishment is also harsher than would be expected."

Yang In-hyun nodded.

"So they're not in a position where they'd speak up about losing it."

"That is probably the intention of the Alliance. The more severely they punished those that lost them, the more vigilant those that have them would be."

It was a bit strange.

How to say, it was a barbaric system that didn't match a force that used advanced technology.

"We'll need three badges."

Dok Go-yun spread out three fingers as he continued to explain.

It seemed that if someone in a party had a badge, they would be able to enter the Next Stage with one other companion.

Without Butterfly, they would have only needed two badges, but it couldn't be helped. They all realised that Pale had taken a real liking to the girl.

'We can't just leave Butterfly alone in the Omega.'

In that case, Pale might insist that she won't accompany them.

"And right now, there are only three people in Manjuri who definitely have badges."

Dok Go-yun glanced around. As the night deepened, the restaurant gradually became deserted. Nevertheless, he expanded his senses and checked the surroundings one more time before retrieving a map from his pocket.

“Is this a map of the city? You managed to obtain it.”

“Well, it wasn’t that difficult.”

Dok Go-yun scratched his cheek sheepishly before withdrawing a pen and circling a few spots on the map.

“The Mayor of Manjuri City [Gao Lin], the Head of the city’s only army, the Grassland Mounted Division, [Baljinnyam], and finally, [Lieutenant Colonel Bistrong], a commissioned officer of the Great Galactic Alliance who is staying in the city for a while.”

“The difficulty?”

“To put it simply, Gao Lin would be 2 stars, Baljinnyam would be 3 stars, and Lieutenant Colonel Bistrong would be 5 stars.”

Lukas nodded.

“I’ll take care of Lieutenant Colonel Bistrong.”

He had always wanted to meet someone from the Great Galactic Alliance.

“Then I’ll take care of the one called Baljinnyam.”

“In that case, I’ll take care of Gao Lin.”

—This was the conversation from 30 minutes ago.

The three men had already decided to scout their targets and had parted ways. In all honesty, taking the badge before the end of the night wouldn’t be that much of an issue, but there was still time until the deadline.

Since the elevator would be coming down on the 9th, it would be best to take the badges early in the morning then head straight for the Next Stage.

‘And for the time being, it is better to move cautiously.’

As mentioned before, members of VIP were likely to be gathered in the city by now. If possible, he didn’t want them to notice the commotion.

According to Dok Go-yun’s information, Lieutenant Colonel Bistrong seemed to have booked the top floor of a luxury hotel.

Every night, the powerful people in the city and dozens of women would go there, so it wasn’t difficult to imagine what they were doing.

The hotel was heavily guarded from the very first floor. Lukas realised that it would be more efficient to infiltrate from above. After ascending far into the sky, he slowly began to descend into the darkness. Then, after landing, he scanned the area.

'There are guards here too.'

In addition, they seemed to be of an even higher level than those on the first floor.

This was a reasonable arrangement.

The height of this building was at least 100 metres. Anyone who could jump this high and infiltrate from the roof would be a formidable opponent, so it was right to deploy more talented people here.

Lukas moved into a blindspot in their senses. After a while, he was able to infiltrate the hotel without any difficulty.

A hall of marble stretched out before him.

Similarly, there was strict security here.

"..."

If he were to remove his presence, he would be able to stroll right past them without them realising.

Therefore, the only problem would be the cameras that were looking around without any openings. Destroying them would only make things worse, and temporarily disabling them would be unnatural.

Of course, a Wizard could come up with a better solution than those.

Shuk.

Using the Blink spell, he directly entered a room.

To be precise, he entered the bathroom because it was a place where there were no presences.

Although it was a bathroom, it didn't feel dirty. Instead, it was cleaner and more well decorated with an expensive interior than most rooms. There was even classical music playing softly.

Laughter could be heard from outside the bathroom.

Lukas looked at the scene outside the door. There, he saw a disgusting sight that made it hard for him to keep looking at it, but he couldn't remove his eyes before finding the target.

That was when Lukas realised something strange.

'Lieutenant Colonel Bistrong isn't here.'

The owner of this room was definitely Bistrong. So where was the owner?

Lukas narrowed his eyes. Then, he began to search the large rooms one by one before he managed to find Bistrong.

Bistrong was in a hidden space between the hotel proper and the roof.

Shuk-

Lukas openly appeared in the room, but Bistrong didn't notice.

The room was not very spacious, but it had all of the necessities like a bed and table.

Scattered bottles of alcohol, cold food and clothes that were taken off roughly were strewn around. The meaning was simple.

'This is where Bistrong lives.'

Then, was the banquet downstairs a trick?

Why?

Lukas' question disappeared in the next moment.

This was because Bistrong, who was in front of a monitor with a headset on, spoke.

"October 5th, 1:21am, Lieutenant Colonel Bistrong. Beginning my report."

A deep voice.

"A total of five members are currently in the city, and the identified information has been attached."

Before long, a person's personal information began to pass over the monitor.

When the Heavenly Demon's face appeared on the screen, Lukas realised that by 'members', Bistrong was referring to VIP.

'There's no harm memorising it.'

It could be considered as an unexpected side income. Just as he was imprinting the faces and information into his head.

The monitor revealed the face of the last person.

"..."

Unconsciously, Lukas clenched his fists tightly. This act almost revealed his presence.

"This man is the most important."

Bistrong's voice rang in his ears.

"This is the first time he will appear in the general review meeting, no, in any of the VIP's gatherings."

It was a face he'd seen once and could never forget.

"Yes. We have confirmed that the Great Mage Lukas Trowman has set foot in this city."

The face of the [Lukas Trowman] that was currently active in this world.

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

Season 2 Chapter 495

At the same time.

Yang In-hyun was travelling to the prairie to meet the Head of the Grassland Mounted Division, [Baljinnyam].

Rather than a grassland, it would be more correct to call the scene a snow field. Under the moonlight, the sprawling scenery was so beautiful it felt like it could paralyse all sense of reality.

Yang In-hyun ran across it.

If someone were to witness this scene and had eyes capable of discerning the reality, they would probably not be able to withhold their screams.

The speed of the man running with fluttering clothes was unusually fast, to the extent that he was not even leaving footprints on the snow. In other words, it looked like a ghost was passing over the snow field.

Yang In-hyun, who had been travelling across the snow field for a while, gradually reduced his momentum.

This was because a number of tents had become visible, with smoke billowing up towards the night sky.

They were traditional Mongolian houses called 'ger'. In other words, this place was the residence of Baljinnyam.

Erasing his presence, he stepped in.

Even though it was late at night, only a few people were actually asleep. Most of those who laid inside the tents with their eyes tightly closed were the elderly or children.

'—well trained warriors.'

They were not martial artists, but they couldn't be looked down upon.

Yang In-hyun was well aware that martial arts was simply one of the ways to train the body. Although most of the people in the murim would not admit it, it was a fact.

The atmosphere was mild.

The races of the people here were diverse. There weren't just Mongolians, but also Mainland Chinese, Koryo*, and Semu* people mixed in. (*: Koryo(Goryeo, Goguryeo) is the name of the Kingdom that unified and ruled the Korean Peninsula and is what the name 'Korea' is derived from. Semu is the name of a caste established by the Yuan dynasty.)

"Huu, the weather has gotten pretty cold."

"I brought some chicken from the city, fancy a hot drink?"

"Great. I'll head over to your house after I'm done working."

One peculiar thing was that they didn't seem to have any discrimination or qualms when dealing with each other.

Yang In-hyun could tell what this meant. It was a sense of kinship that could only be shared by those who walked the line of death together.

He walked past them.

Among the tents that were lined up in rows was a particularly large ger. The strongest presence could be felt from here.

Opening the tent, he walked in. At the same time, he stopped hiding his presence.

“Mm...?”

Perhaps noticing the cold air that came in through the entrance, the giant man in the tent raised his head.

“Who are you?”

A grotesque figure that was bloated because of an innate bone and muscle structure as well as training and combat. His entire body was covered in scars and his aura was similar to that of a wild beast.

It could be seen from a glance. This man was Baljinnyam.

The Head of the only army in Manjuri City, and one of the three people who definitely had a badge.

Indeed.

The scars on his body were not for show. He must have risked his life more times than he could count. And became stronger every time he was able to overcome them.

Yang In-hyun decided to confirm first.

“You are Baljinnyam.”

“I asked who you are.”

“Someone who can erase this place from the world.”

The man, Baljinnyam, made a puzzled expression for a moment before clenching his fists.

“Crazy bastard.”

His outstretched fist hit Yang In-hyun. When it hit his skinny body, it made it crumble like a rotten scarecrow.

Or at least, it should have.

Crack.

A strange sound was heard. No. The sound wasn't strange. After all, Baljinnyam had swung his fist with the full intention of utterly crushing the intruder.

So it wasn't the sound that was strange, to be precise, what was strange was where it came from.

The sound had come from Baljinnyam's arm. Huh? When Baljinnyam lowered his head without properly grasping the situation, his arm below the elbow drooped and swung like a corpse held by the neck.

The pain came afterward.

“Ee-...!”

But more prominent than that was the feeling of danger.

His arm had been broken. But he hadn't even noticed.

That meant... it was dangerous.

Instead of swinging his other arm, Baljinnyam quickly widened the distance. It was an appropriate response, but for Yang In-hyun, it was so slow that he could yawn.

He smoothly gave chase.

“Hup!”

The distance was closed in an instant. It probably felt like his face, which had been five steps away from Baljinnyam before, appeared in front of him in a flash. As Baljinnyam tried to raise the fist of his remaining hand, his vision suddenly went white.

Paak!

He felt a sharp pain in his jaw, and his teeth tingled as if he'd been struck by lightning.

Before he could even spit out the mouthful of blood, Baljinnyam's body collapsed to the ground.

A sharp sword was then stabbed into the ground beside his sweaty face.

“I heard that you have something called a badge from the Alliance.”

“You are doing this despite knowing that...!?”

“...”

“I don't think you understand what you're doing right now by baring your fangs to the Alliance...! Don't you know? The Alliance would never let go of a being they identify as an 'enemy'! They will be pursued to the ends of hell and be annihila-!”

“I thought you'd have a bit more backbone.”

Yang In-hyun spoke in a disappointed tone.

“Everyone in this place seems to be like that. If you're pushed a little too hard, if you think you're in danger, if you feel like your life is being threatened, you immediately brag about the forces behind you. Does that make you proud?”

“What are you talking about...”

“Your backing cannot guarantee anything in a really dangerous situation. If I were to kill you here now, there is nothing they could do about it.”

Kikik, the blade that was stabbed into the ground began to move closer and closer to Baljinnyam's eye.

“I need that badge. And I don't want any information that I took it to leak out.”

He didn't dare breathe.

If he moved even slightly, his pupils would be cut.

Baljinnyam was a warrior who had experienced all kinds of life and death battles but now, he was so overwhelmed by the atmosphere Yang In-hyun created that he couldn't even murmur inwardly.

"But if you die, I wouldn't be able to hide it. So I have a question for you, what do you consider to be more important to you?"

"St-, stop..."

"At the very least, it shouldn't be orders from above. I looked around this place already. I saw different races treating each other as equals without discrimination. Such an atmosphere couldn't have been formed if the leader wasn't a person of principle. You probably treated them like a family. Isn't that right?"

Yang In-hyun continued with an expressionless face.

"So I will ask again. Between your family and your orders, which one is more important to you?"

* * *

"We lost track of him after he entered the city, but it is believed that he plans to stay at the [Lake Hotel] from October 9th. It has already been confirmed that he has a reservation. Until then, we will likely be able to gather more information... End report."

While Lukas stood absentmindedly, Bistrong turned off the monitor and sank back into the chair with a sigh.

"Dammit. I really can't do this. If only I hadn't made that small mistake, I wouldn't be left in this backwater..."

A wisp of smoke swirled in the room following the sound of a cigarette being lit. Bistrong smoked five cigarettes in a row before leaving the room.

"..."

With a sigh, Lukas stopped hiding his presence.

'[Lukas Trowman] is in this city.'

He thought that he'd run into him someday, and even if he didn't, he'd already decided to see him for himself at least once. But for Lukas, meeting him was not a necessity.

In fact, he'd actually forgotten about him before this point.

'...Diablo and the Demon King alone are enough to give me a headache.'

He couldn't believe that even the fake Lukas had turned up.

It didn't even end there.

There was Pale, who seemed to have calmed down but he could never let his guard down, the members of VIP who he had yet to encounter, and the force called the Great Galactic Alliance. By that point, there were so many unknowns that it gave Lukas a headache. The word Wizards hated the most was uncertainty.

In any case, if the fake Lukas was aiming to enter the Next Stage and participate in the general review meeting as a member, an encounter was inevitable.

In the worst case, he might have to deal with Diablo, the Demon King and the fake Lukas at the same time.

“Huu.”

Lukas sighed again before firming his determination.

He looked at the floor below.

There was Bistrong, who had gone there after leaving the room. There were no signs of the lamentation that he'd just felt. It could be said that he was thoroughly enjoying the sordid banquet. So it wasn't a trick, it was simply a combination of work and play.

Was this guy really five stars? It seemed to him that Dok Go-yun had made a wrong judgement.

In any case, after seeing what he'd seen, he didn't think he'd be able to look into that room for a long time. Lukas began to search the small room.

The odds were low, but there was a chance that Bistrong had left the badge in this secret room. Of course, a person that was even slightly meticulous would never commit such an irresponsible act, regardless of how well the room was hid-

Durk.

“...”

Just as he was having that thought, his eyes landed on the badge that sat in a drawer.

A badge that perfectly matched the appearance that Dok Go-yun had shown him.

He really was a rough and tumble guy.

Lukas clicked his tongue. It wouldn't be hard to take the badge away then and there, but if he did that, then even someone like Bistrong would notice. For now, he was satisfied with just knowing the location.

Leaving the room immediately afterward, he returned to the hotel where they were staying.

The hotel's 24hr lounge was equipped with simple food and drink machines. They had decided to meet there after completing their tasks.

Just as he roughly grabbed something to eat and sat onto a sofa, Yang In-hyun appeared. Seeing Lukas, he headed over to him.

“You came quickly.”

“Because mine was closest. What about you?”

“I completed the objective.”

“...”

Those words stuck out for some reason.

Just as Lukas narrowed his eyes and was about to say something, Yang In-hyun pulled a badge from his pocket.

“Where did you get that?”

“I took it from [Baljinyam].”

“Why?”

Rather than reply to Lukas’ question, Yang In-hyun asked instead.

“Weren’t the badges our aim?”

“That’s right. However, it was explained that our goal today was just simple reconnaissance.”

“There are times when it’s possible to complete your objective during reconnaissance.”

“This case is different.”

Yang In-hyun sat down on the sofa and said.

“I know what you’re concerned about. But there’s no need to worry. There is no way it will leak.”

“No way it would leak?”

Lukas’ expression hardened.

“Did you kill them all?”

“Annihilation isn’t the only way to guarantee complete secrecy. I put a lock on their minds.”

“The lock will eventually come loose.”

“It won’t loosen in six days.”

“Can you not understand what I’m saying? The moment a secret is leaked, it’s no longer a secret. And that’s what you did.”

“Are you saying that you don’t trust me?”

“...that’s not what I meant.”

Although he said that, he was a bit disappointed. Without realising it, this inflection was added to his tone.

But Yang In-hyun didn’t seem to care.

“Lukas.”

Or at least, that’s how it appeared from his expression.

“Do not try to change me.”

“I don’t intend to.”

“If that’s really the case, then it must be unconscious coercion.”

“...”

The atmosphere froze.

The several people in the lounge all felt a chill for some reason. Of course, it wasn’t because the heating system malfunctioned.

Just in time, Dok Go-yun returned.

“Ah. I’m the last one. Did things work out for both of you? I bought pizza on the way...”

“Coercion.”

“Right. You are coercing me to follow your method.”

“It was a suggestion, not coercion.”

“That’s just a difference between active and passive, but in the end, the fact remains that you tried to change me. Don’t you know? This is different from our conversation on the Omega.”

“...”

Dok Go-yun quietly lowered the pizza box he was raising and sat in a corner.

“It is fine for you to tell me about things I didn’t know. I’m still grateful for that. But when it comes to tackling a problem, a hundred people would have a hundred methods to do so. That is the method of their life. Something that is achieved when their life experiences, personal inclinations and thoughts combine.”

“...”

“Let me make this clear to you. I am not your subordinate.”

After that, Yang In-hyun got up and left the lounge.

“...huh.”

Letting out a sigh, Lukas leaned back into the sofa.

It was then that he noticed the figure of Dok Go-yun, who was blinking dumbfoundedly.

Then he noticed that he was holding something.

“Is that for us to eat?”

“Ah, yes. That...”

“I’m hungry. Let me have some.”

“O-, of course.”

Nodding, Dok Go-yun opened the pizza box. The smell of savoury cheese rose.

“Please listen to my report while you eat. I was able to obtain some interesting information from Mayor Gao Lin’s office.”

“You didn’t touch the badge, did you?”

“Huh? Ah, of course not. Wasn’t the purpose for today just reconnaissance...”

“No. I said something foolish. Continue.”

Lukas looked at the stretchy cheese and wondered how to eat it in a clean manner.

“I’ve located the Demon King and Diablo. Um. It might be hard to believe... but they are both staying at the same hotel.”

“Hotel?”

“Of course, it’s not an official establishment. It is a place that unqualified guests would never be able to enter even if they paid a billion dollars. After some background investigation, it appears to be that it is run by [VIP].”

“The name?”

“It is the Lake Hotel.”

Lukas let out a few more sighs.

That was the hotel that the fake Lukas was staying in.

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

Season 2 Chapter 496

October 8th, daybreak.

One could call it the day before the showdown, or the day before the day before*. (*: i.e. two days before)

Lukas opened his closed eyes. The scene he saw was that of the lounge on the first floor of the hotel. Right. He’d closed his eyes for a moment to organise his thoughts. But it seemed that he’d fallen asleep for a while, as his head was still foggy as if it was covered in dust.

Not much had happened. There were no problems.

However, since that day, he hadn’t encountered Yang In-hyun again. He couldn’t even sense him.

‘Of course, if Yang In-hyun was determined to conceal his presence then it would be difficult to find him, but...’

He didn’t think he would avoid him so blatantly.

Should he try to look for him against his will? For example, by using the void that he had been conserving until now.

‘...let’s stop.’

Even for Yang In-hyun, hiding himself to the extent that even Lukas couldn't sense him would be exhausting.

In other words, the man clearly wanted to distance himself from Lukas even at the risk of such loss.

He clearly didn't want to meet him right now.

That was basically what he was saying, so if he were to try to meet him against his will, it might worsen the situation.

At this point, Lukas had no choice but to admit that he had made some mistakes.

Of course, it wasn't anything like considering Yang In-hyun to be his subordinate. He never had any intention of doing something like that.

But if he were to look at the situation from a different perspective, it was understandable that Yang In-hyun would display resistance to his attitude.

He'd realised it while they were talking.

Yang In-hyun had no intention of correcting his thoughts. He didn't regret his past nor repent for his sins. In the first place, if he had regrets then it would have been impossible for him to become so strong.

And yet, when he suggested to him to get a disciple.

Why did he feel so attracted to the thought?

It was simple.

Because he knew he was wrong.

In that case, then what was it that Yang In-hyun really wanted?

What was that guy thinking to do after raising the ideal disciple-

"..."

Lukas paused at the sudden thought.

No way, did Yang In-hyun...

"Are you awake?"

His thoughts came to a halt.

With a soft voice, Dok Go-yun appeared. It seemed that he had been the busiest man in the city over the past few days. His eyes were puffy, skin dry and hair greasy. The last one was particularly pitiful considering how much he'd seen Dok Go-yun cherish his hair.

"Did you sleep at all yesterday?"

"Haha. I closed my eyes a bit."

"How long?"

“For a bit before I came...”

About 15 minutes.

He really had just closed his eyes.

“Haven’t you already obtained all the means to enter the Next Stage? What are you doing that you can’t even find time to sleep?”

“I noticed a suspicious trend.”

“A suspicious trend?”

When Lukas asked this question, Dok Go-yun’s expression became a bit awkward.

“It is still too early to say for sure, so I’m afraid...”

“Tell me.”

“Mm. In this city, there are many ‘so-called’ powerful people. I’ve shown you the list several times.

“You mean the executives of the Great Galactic Alliance?”

“Not just them, but also powerful people from other regions as well.”

Lukas nodded.

“What about them?”

“Most of them went missing recently.”

“Missing?”

“Yes. As for who is behind it... I’m sorry. I haven’t been able to figure it out yet.”

A being whose traces even Dok Go-yun failed to grasp.

Lukas could understand why Dok Go-yun had not reported this yet. The most important thing when making a report was certainty.

But given what he’d revealed so far, the entire disappearance incident was uncertain.

Whether it had something to do with the [General Review Meeting], the [Next Stage], or [VIP], Dok Go-yun couldn’t be sure.

‘...nevertheless, it is strange.’

Even if the incident itself might not seem to be deeply related, the place and timing were superb.

In that case, it was better to make a connection.

Even if it was between words that seemed to not have any connection at first glance, a necessity would certainly exist somehow.

“Do you have a list of the missing persons?”

“Yes.”

“Give it to me. I’ll take a look on my way.”

“Understood. But, on your way? Where?”

“The Lake Hotel. It’s time for me to take a closer look.”

“I will accompany you.”

“You should wait in the hotel. If possible, at the side of Pale and Butterfly.”

“...um. That will be a tough order to carry out.”

“Why?”

Dok Go-yun spoke with a puzzled expression.

“Didn’t you know?”

* * *

Gentleman looked down at the street.

He could see the back of his target, with her fluttering blue hair. She was walking while carrying a huge bundle that was as big as she was.

A defenceless and unstable appearance.

Clicking his tongue, Gentleman leapt from the roof.

Then, he finished a graceful landing with nary a sound. He had no intention of creating a fuss that someone might notice.

Now, he would just knock her out and drag-

“Could you please step aside?”

“...!”

Gentleman flinched.

She had noticed his presence? How?

Wasn’t her sight completely blocked by the bundle she was carrying?

Gentleman became nervous for a second before realising that it was unnecessary.

His target’s body was full of openings. Enough that he could break her neck just by stretching out his hand.

‘She probably has sharp eyes.’

Considering the fact that she was accompanied by monsters, it wouldn’t be surprising for her to have such a characteristic.

Convincing himself inwardly, Gentleman spoke.

“I have a debt to repay to your party.”

“Huh?”

“If you follow me obediently, I will not harm you.”

* * *

The Lake Hotel, the tallest building in Manjuri City.

The 7th floor was 303.7 metres above the ground.

Even the cheapest rooms cost over \$10,000 USD per day and the price skyrocketed as the floor number increased.

The Royal Suite on the top floor was so burdensome that even the top players of the financial circle would feel a burden if they stayed there for a long time.

But money was not a problem for those who were staying there at that moment. In the first place, the accommodation fees were just a justification, and the owner of the hotel had no desire for money whatsoever.

Another secret.

The space provided to the most valuable guests of the Lake Hotel wasn't the top floor.

Instead, it was a space that extended 50 metres beneath the hotel building. The interior structure was dark and spacious. Also, there was no interior decor.

All that was placed in this space was a long rectangular table surrounded by a dozen or so chairs.

It was a place that wouldn't be strange if it was called a meeting hall for ghosts, a place where the most ghostly beings would appear. The figure whose entire body was wrapped in black cloth looked more like an envoy of death than a ghost. For a brief moment, the flesh beneath the black cloth was revealed.

Except, the only thing that could be seen was clean bones.

Without any hesitation, Diablo sat at the very end of the long table. The lights in his eye sockets, which flickered like will o' wisps, soon turned to the being on the other end.

[I believe this is our first time meeting face to face, Demon King.]

Shuk, black liquid gushed up from the floor. The liquid shot up like a black fountain before gradually taking the shape of a demon.

He wasn't alone.

Diablo shifted his gaze to those standing behind the Demon King.

[Are they them? The infamous Five Dukes.]

[Your information is outdated.]

The Demon King's voice weighed heavily on the underground space.

[That title has already been discontinued. It no longer has use. Instead, they are now my new limbs.]

Diablo focused on them one after the other.

There were five of them in total, and every one of them were incredibly powerful. In all honesty, on his own, Diablo wouldn't be able to defeat even a single one of them.

But that fact didn't bother him. After all, what a king needed was not personal power.

Leaning back comfortably in the chair, Diablo linked his finger bones together.

[By limbs, I assume you're referring to your arms and legs, of which you only have two each. So if four of them are limbs, what is the other one?]

[Tongue.]

[—]

[I'm sure you didn't call me here just to chat, Diablo.]

The Demon King spoke in a bored voice.

[VIP. It's a pretty interesting group name. The members are all amusing, and the founder even more so.]

[Amusing? I don't think it's that bad. Some of the members are people that even you wouldn't be able to disregard.]

[Well... even if that is the case, it wouldn't change the fact that what they're doing is banal.]

Diablo looked around as he spoke.

[That's pretty ballsy. I bet they're listening.]

[Let them listen. It's the same for this general review meeting. The members were tasked with collecting and analysing the data of all the powerful characters they knew, then they would gather and select the 100 strongest candidates then rank them accordingly... They say it's an indispensable process for the final goal, but I don't know why they picked such a cumbersome method.]

"You have been waiting for a while. Here is the food you ordered."

Just at that moment, a man in a tuxedo brought food. The Demon King reached out to the man. The man felt his vision blur.

[Isn't there a faster and more accurate method?]

Crunch, the Demon King's hand crushed the man's head like a walnut. Blood mixed with skull fragments and brain matter flowed like tomato juice.

[Just fight. It doesn't matter if it's one on one, many on one or many on many. After a fierce battle, naturally, the one who can still remain standing until the last moment is the strongest and has the right to take everything. Isn't that simple?]

[I saw Lukas Trowman.]

[—]

The Demon King fell silent.

But a faint dark red air current began to blossom from his Limbs.

[You wanted to have a rematch with that man. So I think I should make something clear now.]

[What is it?]

[Do not approach Lukas.]

At those words, the Demon King burst out laughing.

[No. That might not be clear enough. Of course you, but also your limbs, don't get close to Lukas. I want you to refrain from even sneaking a peak at him or digging up his information. That was unnecessarily long, but to put it briefly, it means you shouldn't interfere with Lukas at all from this point on.]

Laughter was still mixed in the Demon King's voice as he said.

[Do you want to die?]

[You cannot become my death.]

[Cut the crap. I doubt that you don't know how ridiculous the words you just said were... Unless you called me here to pick a fight?]

The Demon King murmured almost to himself before nodding as if he understood something.

[That would certainly make more sense. If you were intending to provoke me, your plan was a resounding success.]

[I have no intention of wasting strength on you, but if a confrontation is inevitable then it can't be helped. Then would you like to give it a try? To see which one is harder between your limbs and my sword.]

[—]

At those words, the Demon King's gaze shifted to behind Diablo.

There stood a Knight wrapped completely in black armour.

Calm and restrained black energy enveloped his body.

The Demon King knew.

Just what this Black Knight was, and who the face behind the visor was.

[It's really an interesting sight, Lucid.]

[—]

[Meeting you again made me deeply emotional. I remember you didn't like wearing helmets, what changed?]

[Don't talk to me with that voice.]

Lucid spoke in an emotionless voice.

The Demon King laughed again.

[Do you not consider me to be Kasajin? That's fine too. However, what about you? What kind of being are you now? Didn't you do a lot of things that the Sword King Lucid I know would never have done?]

The Demon King's smile widened.

[Every being changes. Schweiser, who was trapped in a golem's body, Iris, who extended her life by changing her body repeatedly, and even Lukas Trowman. The longer the life, the more it changes. Why can't you admit that the time we spent together was only a brief moment.]

If he had a tongue, Diablo would have clicked it at that moment. The words the Demon King had just said had accurately stabbed at Lucid's inverse scale.

'I really didn't plan to clash with the Demon King in this place.'

It wasn't that he thought he'd lose.

But the imminent fight between them was interrupted by the appearance of a completely unexpected individual.

Juk-

A blonde haired man appeared.

The Demon King, Diablo and Lucid all knew who this man was. This was because they had all been monitoring him from the moment he started promoting himself with a 'certain name'.

However, this was their first time meeting him in person.

And Diablo couldn't help but be bewildered.

Why was this guy pretending to be 'Lukas Trowman'?

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

Season 2 Chapter 497

October 8th, before dawn.

With a rustle, Pale got out of bed.

"..."

Through her veil of messy hair, she could see the hotel room.

It was dark. It wasn't just inside the room. The city that could be spotted through the window was still enveloped in darkness.

It was also quiet. Apart from the faint mechanical noises coming from the air purifier and thermostat, there was almost no sound.

A place that was neither hot nor cold.

A place where she could get food whenever she opened the refrigerator.

On the good side, it was peaceful, but on the bad side, she had been living an indolent life for a week.

“...”

Pale suddenly felt that she might be dreaming. And the fact that she had such a thought made her hesitate.

...Did this situation make her so happy? So much so that she could regard reality as a dream.

There was a slight shifting on the bed.

It was a red skinned girl, Butterfly. She was looking at Pale with half lidded eyes. When her eyes seemed to ask ‘what’s wrong?’, a smile naturally formed on Pale’s face.

She wasn’t sure if the reason for the smile was to conceal her inner feelings as usual or to reassure Butterfly.

“Sorry. Did I wake you?”

At that, Butterfly shook her head quietly before patting her stomach.

She’d woken up because she was hungry.

“You’re like me.”

When Pale said those words with a smile, Butterfly smiled as well.

“Wait here. I’ll go get something to eat.”

There was still some food in the refrigerator, but it was not enough to be breakfast for the two gluttons.

Pale got off the bed, took out her clothes, and put them on.

Recently, Lukas, Yang In-hyun and Dok Go-yun were always busy. They rarely stayed in the hotel, and even when they did stay here, they rarely came up to the room. Most of the time, they stayed in the lounge, where they had serious meetings with mountains of documents spread out.

Because of this, the two had no choice but to procure their food entirely on their own.

Butterfly also got up and grabbed her sleeve. But Pale shook her head as she put on her jacket.

“You can’t.”

They couldn’t go out together. Because in this human dominated city, a being with red skin was too foreign and noticeable.

“Gugaak.” (*: Butterfly ‘talking’)

Today, Butterfly clung to her without giving up easily. For Pale, the body temperature of Butterfly, who was leaning against her, made her ticklish.

'...someone I have to protect.'

She'd thought that if there was ever such a being, it would be the [King] she would someday meet.

"I'll be back soon."

"Guahuh."

"Right. I'll get you what you ate last time. Was it pizza?"

Butterfly was smart.

Although she couldn't speak, she understood what Pale was trying to say. Even now, as soon as she heard the word pizza, she immediately let go of her hand and her eyes lit up.

"Ahoohuh."

Then she bowed her head.

As if to say 'go and come back'.

Pale finally let out a burst of laughter.

* * *

"...I was feeling that it was a nice morning."

Pale muttered in a soft tone.

"I didn't expect maggots to come squirming on a day like this."

"..."

By maggot.

Was she referring to him? Gentleman's expression stiffened for a moment, but he soon smiled and pointed towards his sleeve, which he was now used to being empty.

"Do you see this?"

"You don't have an arm? Was it eaten?"

Gentleman wondered what that strange statement meant for a moment, but it felt like the dumb looking woman didn't have any intelligence.

"Your companion cut off my arm."

"Hmm."

"I am a person who repays what I was given. Since you seem to not want to follow me obediently, I will give you an advanced warning. First, I'll cut off one of your arms. Consider it a minor revenge."

“Ah, okay.”

“...”

Both the answer and attitude were dismissive.

Gentleman no longer spoke. This unnecessary conversation would end here.

As he thought so, he gradually roused his aura.

‘I can’t underestimate her.’

The fact that she’d noticed his presence and her current relaxed attitude.

They caused him to be unwilling to think this uncomfortable woman was really a weak person. Even at that moment as she was filled with openings, he wouldn’t find it strange if she was actually concealing a hidden blade or two.

That was why Gentleman gave his all from the first move.

If there was a difference from the way he handled a real enemy, it would be that he was aiming to just take an arm instead of kill.

In other words,

Gentleman hadn’t let his guard down in the slightest.

Taht. He kicked off from the ground, closing the gap in an instant. His hand knife imbued with ki was no different from a famed sword. It probably wouldn’t even be smeared with blood.

Or at least, that would have been the case if he had cut off her arm.

Kwadang! In the next instant, even as his vision was reversed and his body crashed into the ground, Gentleman didn’t understand what had happened.

‘Huh?’

Most deaths were like that, but it was pointless to have such a thought in the face of death.

Crack, Gentleman’s face was crushed.

“Mm.”

The woman who had avoided Gentleman’s charge, stretched her foot out and tripped him, stepped on his face without hesitation.

“Although it’s a bit of a waste.”

She looked down at her right foot as if she’d stepped on ice cream that she’d dropped by accident before shaking her head.

“It’s fine since I have something more delicious now.”

Carrying the bundle in her arms, she recalled the face of the girl who was waiting for her.

Just as she was about to move away with light steps.

The smile on Pale's face disappeared.

"—"

She looked up to the sky with an expressionless face.

Of course, what she saw wasn't the clear blue sky. Instead, what she could see was a metallic surface, the bottom of the artificial island.

Something was about to happen.

* * *

Shortly before that, on the roof of a building not far from the Lake Hotel.

Lukas and Dok Go-yun stood beneath the sky coloured by the light of dawn.

"It's strict."

"It seems so."

Dok Go-yun nodded at Lukas' words.

He'd thought that the [Lake Hotel] would be a trap in itself.

Because, from a common sense point of view, it was not a good idea to place all the powerful people capable of devastating a planet in a matter of days in the same building.

But the moment Lukas inspected the hotel for himself, he realised that this place was not a trap.

Instead, the hotel was guarded more heavily than any other place in the city.

"It would be difficult to break in. It wouldn't be hard to deal with the guards, but the surveillance cameras are annoying. There may also be micro cameras that we don't know about."

"..."

October 8th.

According to Bistrong's report, the fake Lukas would be staying from tomorrow.

But Lukas felt that it wouldn't be strange if the fake Lukas was already staying in the hotel.

The many presences he felt in the hotel seemed to support that belief.

That wasn't all.

'...they're here.'

He could also clearly feel the presence of Diablo and the Demon King.

They didn't try to hide their presence at all. The reason that he hadn't sensed them until now... was probably because they were controlling the amount of energy that was radiating. Just enough so that it only covered the hotel.

In other words, those guys were declaring the [Lake Hotel] as their territory.

"What shall we do?"

It was impossible even for someone on Dok Go-yun's level to sense it. At most, he would be able to sense the gloomy death energy that Diablo exuded.

The energy exuded by the Demon King was several levels higher than that. Even in this Great Universe, the number of beings capable of detecting his presence was extremely limited.

In other words.

'—Yang In-hyun probably noticed their presence when he scouted most of the city before.'

His fists clenched unconsciously. And his throat became tight.

In the first place, the reason he planned to join the general review meeting was because the members of [VIP] would gather there. And the reason why he cared about VIP was because his targets Diablo and the Demon King were members.

And now, all of his targets had gathered in the Lake Hotel.

...Then what was the point of waiting till the general review meeting?

Wouldn't it be more strategically advantageous to attack them here rather than in the uncertain variable known as the [Next Stage].

'Those guys haven't noticed my presence yet.'

Even if they knew, they would not have realised that they were on the verge of suffering a surprise attack. Moreover, Diablo and the Demon King didn't know that Lukas was capable of using [void].

In other words, it wouldn't be strange or reckless for him to carry out a surprise attack now.

However.

'...Lucid.'

The presence of his old friend, the Black Knight, could also be felt in the hotel. Right, He would be protecting Diablo. After all, he was the King Candidate that Lucid chose. Lukas still felt that he needed to know why.

That wasn't all.

In the Lake Hotel now, there were at least five powerful beings that even Lukas took notice of.

In all honesty, this surprised him.

It wasn't that he had been looking down on VIP, he simply hadn't expected them to have so many strong characters. Lukas thought the Demon King would be the strongest member of VIP, but that might not be the case.

'If I were to attack the Lake Hotel now...?'

It would be no different from declaring war on every absolute level powerhouse staying in the hotel. That was the reason that Lukas was hesitating.

'...it's a shame about Yang In-hyun.'

Even if he dismissed Pale as someone he couldn't control in the first place, if things had worked out, he might have been able to obtain Yang In-hyun's cooperation.

Lukas felt even more bitter since he was the one who pushed the relationship to ruin, even if it wasn't intentional.

"That..."

A cautious voice sounded.

It was Dok Go-yun, the Heavenly Demon's proxy.

This man, of course, was a strong character who would find it difficult to find an opponent among mortals, but he would be useless if an all out war with the Lake Hotel were to begin.

Attack? Retreat?

Lukas' indecision was probably deepened because of the fact that this was a golden opportunity.

Suddenly.

[Did you say VIP?]

The Lightning God revealed his voice after a long while.

Lukas was inwardly surprised.

The Lightning God had hardly said anything since they arrived in this city. He was silent as if he wasn't there at all, and he didn't respond even at the times when Lukas talked to him first, so he couldn't help but wonder if he had really disappeared.

[I know who the founder is. Kuhaha... Be careful. He was the most powerful candidate.]

'What?'

Lukas couldn't help but ask back in surprise.

He knew from experience that he would never receive an answer from the Lightning God after asking again. As he expected, instead of answering, the Lightning God let out his distinctive laugh.

[You're feeling conflicted. Let me ease your worries.]

Then, before Lukas could respond, he continued.

[Accept my power, Lukas Trowman. If my 'Thunder' is added to your magic, you can kill half of those absolutes with a surprise attack. Even the half that survive will suffer from extreme mental and physical paralysis for a few seconds. That means you'd gain an absolute advantage in the fight from the start...]

'...'

[Why are you hesitating? Are you still worried about the Blue Knight? Are you afraid that her sword will be directed at you after you accept my power? I don't understand.]

"...!"

Lukas shuddered for a moment.

He thought about from now on, the next, the future.

He had a desire to live longer, and lingering regrets.

...What did he regret?

"They'll patrol this place soon. You should decide..."

Dok Go-yun stopped talking.

At that moment, the two men felt a chill at the same time as if cold air licked the back of their necks.

Something was coming.

Piht-

Lukas could not stop what was about to happen. No, his attempt to stop it failed.

The moment he stretched out his hand, a barrier was deployed.

Even though it was done hurriedly, the barrier was strong enough to stop even a meteor falling from the sky.

Crash!

The barrier shattered like glass.

And yet, the momentum of the projectile wasn't reduced in the slightest and it instantly pierced its target.

"...ku-, uk."

Dok Go-yun's body slowly collapsed.

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

Season 2 Chapter 498

"Kuk...!"

It wasn't fatal.

Dok Go-yun stumbled heavily, but he managed to remain standing instead of collapsing. It was dangerous. If he hadn't managed to control his body at that moment, it might have really been over for him.

'What kind of attack was that?'

Just now, Dok Go-yun had used his body protecting ki guard*. (*: 호신강기)- I'm sure there is a better name for this in english, I couldn't think of/find it)

Even if it was hit by an anti-tank missile, it would probably be able to endure it without taking any damage. But the unknown projectile tore Dok Go-yun's best and last form of defence apart like a piece of paper.

"From the hotel...!"

"I know. Control the bleeding first."

"Kuk. Yes!"

Dok Go-yun pressed on the wounded area that had been pierced.

In the meantime, Lukas' gaze quickly scanned the hotel. It quickly became clear to him where the projectile came from.

Because a green light flashed on the roof again.

'It's coming again.'

This time, it wasn't one shot but a series.

There were a total of five flashes of light, three of which were aiming for Dok Go-yun.

It was an underhanded but correct judgment. Lukas clenched his teeth. If his barrier didn't work, then it would be difficult for him to stop the projectile with most magic.

Lukas grabbed Dok Go-yun by the scruff of his neck and tried to space leap. Dok Go-yun calmly stopped the bleeding even as his body fluttered like cloth hanging from a laundry pole.

Piht-

But the projectiles that missed didn't continue travelling in a straight line, and instead turned around and rushed towards Lukas again.

There was no superfluousness in their movements, to the extent that Lukas couldn't help but feel that they weren't bullets but actual living beings with wills.

Of course, there was no time to comfortably analyse them.

Waving his hand, Lukas imbued his mana into the air. The surrounding air shook violently, swirling in every direction.

Bababang!

Three of the five bullets exploded.

Lukas took this chance to inspect the internal structure of the bullets through the flow of the air he spread. They weren't living beings.

The bullets were very small, but they were machines that contained a surprising amount of technology. The bullets, which were smaller than a fingernail, were constructed with a more complex and precise structure than fighter jets.

Therefore it was natural for him to mistake them as living beings.

The essence of the technology contained in a single bullet was already close to the level of magic.

'The person who fired the bullets is also amazing.'

They were definitely a marksman capable of demolishing a castle even if they didn't have any equipment.

"I'm fine...!"

Dok Go-yun grasped the situation quickly.

He'd become powerless after receiving the first attack, so at that moment, his very existence could only be called a burden for Lukas.

His face was flushed with shame.

"Go intercept the enemy, don't worry about me! Don't get swept up by the enemy anymore..."

No matter how you looked at it, it wasn't an easy problem.

The opponent was a sniper.

If there was one difference from a normal sniper.

It was the fact that they had no intention of hiding their presence.

'It's natural.'

The place that guy was, the Lake Hotel, was like an impenetrable fortress.

If he were to recklessly attack in this situation, when it was still unclear as to how many absolute level powerhouses were hiding there, the situation might become dozens of times worse than it was at that time.

In other words, the best decision to make in this current situation would be to run away, but he would not be able to cross a long distance with an already injured Dok Go-yun. If he did that, Dok Go-yun's body would probably not be able to withstand it and would shatter directly.

Pipipit-

The light flashed again. This time, there were dozens.

Lukas made up his mind.

Since it had already come to this, he couldn't justify saving void-

"I would like to talk."

Lukas and Dok Go-yun exchanged glances. Of course, it wasn't one of their voices.

The voice was clear as if the speaker was whispering right beside them, but it carried a gloominess that they had never heard before.

Lukas realised who the voice had come from.

It was the voice of the sniper who was aiming at them from the roof of the hotel.

"Then you should have given a more gentlemanly first greeting."

Lukas spoke sarcastically, but the response that came back was in the same blunt tone.

"I didn't cause you any harm. And your subordinate wasn't fatally wounded."

"...so you say."

"If I had wanted to, he would have been torn apart in the first attack. Are you going to deny that?"

"..."

Although he knew it wasn't a lie, Dok Go-yun couldn't help but feel humiliation and fear at the same time.

Lukas tried to think as rationally as possible.

Right. What this rude sniper had said was not wrong. Without a doubt, if his goal had been to kill Lukas or Dok Go-yun, he would have used more certain methods.

For example, working together with someone else in the hotel to launch a pincer attack.

"What do you want to talk about?"

"Mm. I'm not the one who wants to talk."

"Then who does?"

"Diablo."

The corners of his mouth rose unconsciously.

"I already saw that guy a while ago. We have nothing more to talk about."

"I don't know what's going on between you two. I don't care. All I know is that he wants to talk to you urgently."

"What is your relationship with Diablo?"

"Collaborators."

Did that mean that this person also agreed with Diablo's ideals? Lukas couldn't understand.

Without a doubt, the sniper was powerful. At the very least, he was on the level of an Absolute, and even Lukas was unable to precisely gauge his strength from this distance.

In other words, he was much stronger than Diablo.

It wasn't possible that his thought processes were being affected by fear, which meant that he actually agreed with Diablo's absurd ideals.

"There is no time, you have to hurry."

"It seems that you don't want the other guys in the hotel to know."

"There's a reason for that, but it will soon be dawn."

"...?"

At those words, he looked up to the sky.

It took him a while to notice since the artificial island covered most of the sky, but scarlet rays of light were slowly overflowing the cloudy sky.

As the sniper said, dawn was soon approaching.

However...

[Our relationship has nothing to do with the current situation.]

He heard a familiar voice.

It was Diablo's.

[I'm sure that's what you're thinking. To put it shortly, the First Wave will occur right after the sun rises.]

"The First Wave?"

[It is the first screening process. Very few members in VIP are privy to this information.]

"..."

[You must have made a decision by now. I think the past week was enough time for you to think about it deeply. So I would now like to hear your answer.]

"What answer are you talking about?"

[That...]

Diablo's voice paused for a moment.

Then, he spoke in a perplexed tone.

[Could it be that you didn't hear anything from Iris Peacefinder?]

"What?"

[That woman, what ulterior motive does she have...]

Diablo muttered to himself before asking again.

[Then what did you two talk about in the Akashic Records?]

“We didn’t talk about much...”

Suddenly.

Feeling something strange, Lukas and Dok Go-yun looked up at the sky at the same time.

[It seems the plan was pushed forward a bit. I was a step behind.]

They heard Diablo groan.

[The screening has begun. We’ll continue our conversation later. If it’s you, I’m certain you can easily survive the First Wave...]

Diablo’s voice faded more and more until it eventually disappeared completely. The sniper on the roof had also hidden his presence.

But Lukas wasn’t paying any attention to that.

At the bottom of the artificial island, the smooth metal surface overturned, revealing something.

“...that’s...”

Dok Go-yun let out a soft exclamation.

Plasma could be seen gathering at the tips of countless warship guns.

Dok Go-yun knew a lot about the technological capabilities of the Great Galactic Alliance.

And for the first time, he felt like he could see the truth about the ‘Next Stage’.

‘It’s not an artificial island.’

It was an enormous warship that was big enough to be mistaken for an island.

Flash-

A scene of destruction was reflected in Dok Go-yun’s eyes.

Plasma, bombs, and missiles fell from the sky like meteors.

An unprecedented bombardment had begun.

* * *

“I didn’t prepare many waves.”

A creature with a bizarre appearance.

Its body was basically composed of mechanical parts, but it had a face similar to that of a living being. It had no eyes or ears. Instead, what stood out was a wide mouth and extremely large nostrils.

The centre of its forehead and the back of its head were made of glass, and inside of it, a yellow brain could be clearly seen.

On the topic of appearance, its clothes were similar to those worn by a priest.

It looked like something you'd get if you mixed a monster, a machine and a priest together.

"At most, there are seven."

Its voice was very calm and clear, so it matched well with its outfit. It sounded like a spell that made the minds of all those who listened feel at ease.

Its murmur continued in the solitary space.

"I've looked at the [Great Game] a few times. It is impressive, but it is too mild. In my opinion, it is unlikely to produce any significant results. Don't you think the time we have left is too short to wait for the development of a [possible one]?"

...

"All of the Rulers of old were birthed by fate. So I intend to change that to a more defined test."

It stretched out its arm.

The ungraceful arm quivered slightly as if bits of metal had been added to it again and again.

"I have seen the future. I am able to predict every situation. So I hereby declare. That the fifth Ruler will be born within a year."

Kiel Marlgol, the Admiral of the Great Galactic Alliance and the Founder of VIP, continued.

"You've suddenly gone quiet, Sun God. I do not have a habit of talking to myself."

At that moment, an imposing voice resounded.

[A variable that you couldn't predict has already occurred.]

"What do you mean?"

He didn't receive an answer.

Kiel shifted his head downward.

The bombardment of the city had ended, but the city still maintained its original form. This was intentional.

The built-in weapons on the 'Next Stage' were enough to wipe a small city off the face of the world, but the purpose of the bombardment was extermination, not destruction.

"...a variable I couldn't predict."

An unpredictable variable.

Kiel tried to remember beings capable of escaping his calculations.

* * *

Creak-

The blackened door swung open, revealing Pale.

She put down the bundle she was carrying. Tuduk, tuk. All kinds of foods, canned drinks and fruits fell out of the perforated bags and rolled across the floor.

Not paying them any mind, which was rare, Pale rummaged through the bundle. Finally, she pulled out a pizza box.

“...it’s a bit cold.”

It didn’t taste very good when it was cold.

As she thought that, Pale looked at the bed.

On top of it,

Butterfly slept.

She must be really tired, because she was sleeping as if she was dead, without moving a muscle.

“...”

“Ki-, kiki... kuha, hahaha, hahahaha!”

The sound of laughter was heard, gradually becoming crazier and crazier.

As if she was about to cry, Pale grabbed her face as she laughed crazily.

Pale’s madness consumed the hotel room, which was covered in acrid smoke, the smell of blood, and scattered pieces of flesh.

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

Season 2 Chapter 499

He could feel the debris crushing his body.

It was about a few hundred tons. Of course, it wasn’t pressing on him directly. He had erected a thin barrier just before it fell.

Lukas pushed the debris aside with nothing but his physical strength. Krrr, the building debris and piles of dirt flowed down like a waterfall.

“Are you okay?”

“Th-, thank you...”

Pale faced, Dok Go-yun expressed his gratitude.

Lukas noticed the wounds he’d suffered. It wasn’t a normal piercing injury. He knew Dok Go-yun’s martial arts. Among the techniques, there was one that was capable of regenerating almost any wound in an instant by pushing his healing factor to the limit.

There was no way he wouldn't have tried it in a dangerous situation like this one.

In other words, the sniper must have some kind of ability or his bullets must have some component capable of hindering Dok Go-yun's regenerative abilities.

"Kuk."

Dok Go-yun stumbled. He reached out to help him, but he shook his head firmly. Perhaps it was because of his pride as a martial artist.

"...this."

Looking around, Dok Go-yun let out a bewildered voice. Looking at the unfolding scene, this reaction was natural.

Just a moment ago, this place could be called a city. It was a place that had a resident population of about 10,000 individuals, a place where the society was by no means small.

All of that was smashed.

There were no buildings that still retained their shape. High rise buildings were either half smashed or completely in ruins, exposing their framework. Flames and acrid graphite soared high into the sky, covering every direction and painting the landscape blackish red.

It was chaos, a scene from hell.

Dok Go-yun paid attention not only to the external scene but also to the deeper places.

There were probably people beneath the rubble. And even though there was enough blood soaking the ground to change its colour, there should still be many people alive.

But he couldn't sense them.

He couldn't even hear them.

Even though the city was like this, there was not a single scream.

The reason for that was simple.

It was simply because there was no one left alive.

Crunch.

He ground his teeth roughly.

The first priority target of the beam attacks that poured down from the sky were living beings, and they had achieved their goal perfectly.

There had to have been hundreds of thousands of people in this city, and all of them had become pools of blood.

Dok Go-yun had seen the faces of the citizens in this place.

Although the world was crazy, and the universe was dangerous, there had been no sense of danger on their faces. There were even traces of tranquillity. This was because they had no doubt that the huge island blocking the sun would protect them.

That trust had been betrayed.

The citizens died miserably, their heads crushed by the very shield that protected them.

Crack.

His fists clenched, surprising even himself.

Why was he so upset?

“Calm down. Your wounds are getting worse.”

He heard Lukas’ calm voice. Only then did Dok Go-yun realise that he was biting his lip hard enough to make it bleed.

“The person who made the city like this will pay.”

Just as Dok Go-yun was startled by the voice that felt cold and hot at the same time...

[—Greetings. Survivors.]

Suddenly, a great voice echoed in every direction. It wasn’t Diablo’s.

The voice came from above.

At the bottom of the Next Stage, in the place where the weapons that had destroyed the city had appeared just before, a large holographic screen was displayed.

The being that appeared on the screen had a rather bizarre appearance.

It looked half like a monster and half like a machine.

It was a face that Dok Go-yun knew.

“...Kiel Marlgol.”

“You know them?”

“Everyone does. He’s the leader of the Great Galactic Alliance. The owner of the largest army in the world, and a wielder of absolute power.”

Lukas narrowed his eyes.

That strange being was the leader of the Alliance?

[First of all, I would like to congratulate all of you on your survival of the first wave. However, I’d suggest you hold off on popping the champagne for now. More of you survived than I expected. This makes it hard for me to collect data.]

Did he just call that disaster the first wave?

...The first wave. That connotation was not good. There was a high probability that there would also be a second wave and a third wave.

It was only then that Lukas realised Kiel's other identity.

"That guy... is the founder of VIP."

"Huh...?"

Dok Go-yun reacted as if he was dumbfounded for a moment, but soon, he realised that many things would make sense if what Lukas said was true.

Kiel continued in a calm voice.

[About 100 people. I plan to select the strongest characters and make a list. I thought of many ways to do this. I thought it would be fun to rank you according to the order you climb a tower, or hold a martial arts competition, or just put many strong characters in the same place. But isn't strength surprisingly subjective? For example, if the matchup is good, it is possible to win against an enemy even with a severe power difference. I don't think that would be good.]

Kiel's voice was very annoying.

This wasn't because his tone was unpleasant to listen to, but because the voice of a devil who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people was unpleasant to listen to.

[That's why I decided to inflict impartial disasters. According to my calculations, after a total of seven waves, there should only be around 100 survivors. Plus, the first wave wasn't just started in 'that land' that you are standing on. This video is being broadcasted simultaneously to 1,263 regions.]

"...crazy."

Even Dok Go-yun, who was familiar with massacres, disasters, and living hells couldn't help but let out such a word.

The 1,263 regions mentioned were probably the regions where the Great Galactic Alliance's influence was the strongest.

If all of those regions experienced a similar bombardment, then 99 percent of the people living in them were probably dead.

[Please survive to the en-]

Crack!

Kiel's voice was cut off before it could finish.

Dok Go-yun saw a blue flash cover the sky.

"...!"

At first, he thought it was just a burst of light. As if someone on the ground had used some device to project the light. But it wasn't.

That was a sword slash.

Crack-

It wasn't just the holographic image.

The bottom of the [Next Stage], which covered the city, was cut in half.

"...!"

Lukas couldn't help but lose composure for a moment.

The reason was different from Dok Go-yun.

This was because Lukas knew who had unleashed that devastating slash.

"Pale?"

He could feel it.

Somewhere in the city, an aura was gradually being released. It was Pale.

...No.

The presence had already become that of the Blue Knight, not Pale.

She had revealed her strength now.

'Why?'

Did the bombardment make her mad? However, it wouldn't have been able to burn even a single one of Pale's hairs.

For Pale, the bombardment unleashed by the Next Stage would be nothing more than the buzzing of mosquitoes, which would be annoying at best. But Pale fought back to the extent of even becoming the Blue Knight.

'...it's different.'

Something had happened.

Lukas pondered the possibilities for a short time and was soon able to make a guess that was most likely to be right.

'-Butterfly.'

Right.

Something must have happened to Butterfly. That was the only thing it could be.

She was either in a critical condition, or...

"...huh."

The situation was not good.

The Next Stage had revealed its true colours, there were several absolute level powerhouses in the hotel, and Yang In-hyun's location was still unknown.

Moreover, the bomb known as Pale had finally exploded, making the situation worse.

'Everyone might not have died.'

Lukas murmured.

"Huh?"

"Even if only a few, there are still people alive in this city. Those who had the ability to do so, and those who were lucky."

"..."

Lukas put his hand on Dok Go-yun's shoulder.

"Save them."

"Then sir Lukasajin..."

"There's something I have to do."

After hesitating for a moment, Dok Go-yun nodded with a determined expression.

"Be careful."

"You too. Ah, and..."

Looking at Dok Go-yun, who was about to turn around, he said.

"My name is Lukas. It's not Lukasajin."

"...understood, sir Lukas."

Dok Go-yun smiled and disappeared.

Lukas then turned his gaze forward.

In this city where almost every building had collapsed, or crumbled into debris, there was only one building that was in good condition.

The Lake Hotel.

...Diablo's voice could no longer be heard. The sniper's presence had disappeared as well.

But Lukas could feel the gazes of strong beings in the hotel looking towards his direction.

Whoosh-

Just as the sound of hot breeze blowing sounded, Lukas realised that two beings had surrounded him.

"This is the guy. The one that was spying on us."

"What do you know, it's a human."

They were two monsters with huge bodies.

One of them looked like an orc, and the other looked like a goblin. Of course, the power that he could feel from them was not enough to rank them among true monsters.

It was ridiculous.

Absolute level beings that looked like this.

“Is this the guy [Headhunter] took aim at?”

“It should be this guy’s companion. With the power this guy is showing, he wouldn’t be able to take a shot from Headhunter. He would have died long ago.”

“That’s true.”

“Ay, human. Are all your companions dead?”

It was pitiful. Although he didn’t have any prejudices based on their appearances, their tone and attitude were so crude that he didn’t even want to mix words with them.

Their voices reeked like rotten pus.

“I will spare one of you. Choose who will die.”

So he didn’t want to carry on the conversation for too long.

“What? Hahaha.”

“Crazy bastard.”

Just as they began to sneer.

“...huh?”

The orc suddenly had a strange feeling. With a strange expression, he groped his face.

“Hey, what’s wrong?”

“Something feels strange...”

He couldn’t continue.

A faint line formed from the orc monster’s forehead to his groyne, then, he split into two pieces along that line.

Blood, guts and pieces of flesh scattered haphazardly on the city rubble.

“Huh? Jumbo?”

The goblin monster made a dumb sound. It seemed that he still hadn’t understood the situation. Then, all of his limbs were crushed at the same time. The goblin monster’s screams blended with the terrifying sound of its muscles and bones being smashed.

“Shut it.”

Lukas walked over to the goblin as he spoke.

“Huk, huk... wh-, what’s going on... I didn’t feel anything...”

“That’s right. It happened in a world that you don’t even know about and that you’ll never be able to step into.”

He scrutinised the monster’s face.

Then, clearly seeing the fear in his eyes, Lukas opened his mouth.

“Spill all the details about the people in the hotel.”

* * *

[It’s started.]

The Demon King muttered.

In the basement of the Lake Hotel.

At the long rectangular table sat not only the Demon King, but also Diablo, whom he’d had a conversation with last time.

Apart from them were also more people.

Members of VIP.

Every one of them was an absolute level being who could be counted among the strongest in this universe.

“The wave started earlier than he said. Was this Kiel’s arbitrary decision?”

The speaker was a small man with a single eye. Although he was only about 1 metre tall, this dwarf was also a member of VIP. In other words, he was also one of the beings who had the ‘voting right to determine the 100 strongest beings’.

“We should go [up] instead.”

A beautiful woman with uncommon pink hair smiled as she said that.

“I heard there are hundreds of monitors there. I feel like my skin will rot if there is no sunlight.”

“Shut up about your skin problems. I care more about those guys.”

“Who? Ah. You mean the ones from the ones from the [dumpsite]?”

The beauty put her hand on her chin with a sullen expression.

“I honestly don’t know, Archlich. The kids are needlessly scared because of you.”

“Who’s scared? It just bothers me... One of the 12 Void Lords and one of the Four Knights. To be honest, I don’t know why you rate them so highly.”

The eyes of those sitting at the table turned to Diablo, but he remained silent.

“They defeated the [Seven Fanged Dragon God]. But what about that? The Dragon God didn’t become weaker because they lost in the World of Void. They lost because they were already weak. To put it bluntly, it wouldn’t be hard for any of us to defeat the Dragon God of that time.”

“Still, didn’t one of them kill [Jumbo and Manbo] that you just sent?”

“If they couldn’t even kill those guys, I wouldn’t have brought them up in the first place.”

[...]

“Why haven’t you said anything? It’s not like not having a tongue means you can’t talk.”

“That’s enough.”

A dragonman with crystal-like scales tapped his finger on the table as he spoke.

Three images appeared in the dark space, displaying Lukas, Yang In-hyun, and Pale.

“How about this? We will go see how strong they are.”

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

Season 2 Chapter 500

Among those in the room, Diablo and the Demon King were the only ones who remained silent.

After their conversation, the other absolute level powerhouses* disappeared one after the other, leaving them. (*: Until now, I’m still not certain if these people are ‘Absolutes’ or not as the author uses ‘absolute’ both as a title and a power rank. But I’ll call them Absolutes from now on for simplicity’s sake)

It was Diablo that stood up first. As he was about to leave, Diablo looked back.

[I will allow it.]

[Allow what?]

[You to send your subordinates.]

[...]

[No. Did you say they were your limbs, not subordinates? In any case.]

The will o’ wisps burning in Diablo’s eye sockets turned toward the Demon King.

[Don’t try to contact him directly. I will not let it go.]

[You seem to be mistaken. Neither I nor my limbs intend to meet Lukas Trowman. My goal is elsewhere.]

[Is it the Blue Knight? Or Yang In-hyun?]

[Do I have to tell you that too?]

[You don’t.]

Immediately after hearing that reply, which seemed to be taking a step back, the Demon King’s figure disappeared. Diablo muttered, a sigh mixing into his voice.

[Today might be. The most important day of my life... Lucid.]

The Black Knight, who had been concealing his presence until now, revealed himself.

[Can you defeat the Blue Knight?]

[Don't know.]

Lucid replied bluntly before adding.

[However, I wouldn't lose.]

* * *

He didn't manage to extract any information from the monster.

This wasn't because the goblin monster overcame its fear or show its backbone during torture. Instead, as soon as it opened its mouth to spit out some information, its facial muscles twisted and exploded.

Lukas clicked his tongue as he blocked the flying pieces of meat with a barrier.

'A trivial act.'

Was some sorcery cast?

No. Lukas hadn't even noticed until right before the explosion, so it was probably a machine. An explosive device must have been implanted into its skull. The faint burnt smell and bits of brain matter mixed with mechanical pieces turned that suspicion into a certainty.

...This was why science was annoying.

'No.'

Lukas shook his head, clearing it. Then, he decided to put aside his arrogance and think again.

It was not just at the level of an annoyance.

'Science might be the most threatening power for me.'

It was a subtle feeling.

In many worlds, humans were usually the ones that developed science. This was because those who were born with innate strength, special abilities or talents usually don't feel a need to resort to such means.

Humans, who were not born with anything special, had no choice but to study other things to protect themselves.

In other words, science was one of the possibilities and brilliance that humans displayed.

And this science.

Turned out to be the most threatening power for Lukas, who at one point claimed to be the god of all humans.

An unknown bitterness rose up to the top of his throat, but it couldn't be denied.

Lukas suddenly felt curious.

What limit of science had the Great Galactic Alliance achieved, and what was the limit of the power they could display?

He looked at the Lake Hotel.

Perhaps it was because he'd just shown his strength when he killed the two monsters. He could feel that many presences in the hotel were paying attention to him.

They would soon approach.

'They won't attack all at once.'

At least there would be two, and at most, there would be five. The chances of them launching a pincer attack are slim.

In other words, in a sense, this crisis might be an opportunity.

If he took care of the forces that they sent, then he could reduce the number of enemies at the beginning without having to give his all.

Taht.

However, Lukas ignored the gazes and presences he felt at the hotel and flew in the opposite direction.

His destination was, of course, the place where Pale was.

In this situation, he was more wary of a single out of control Pale than the group of Absolutes or 'Kiel Marlgol' in the Next Stage.

As he was moving through the sky at a high speed, he felt a presence.

With fluttering robes and a gleaming blade.

Yang In-hyun landed right beside Lukas and began moving along with him. He was already in a combat ready state and his sword was already drawn.

Nevertheless, with an indifferent face, Yang In-hyun asked.

"What's the situation?"

"Kiel Marlgol, the founder of VIP and the Head of the Great Galactic Alliance, started this."

The two were reuniting after a week, but they didn't ask each other about their well-being. This probably would have been the case even if the situation was different.

"I'm sure you also heard what he said, right?"

The screen covering the sky had been so large that it could be seen from anywhere in this city.

Yang In-hyun simply nodded.

“Dok Go-yun was injured. The injuries aren’t serious but I don’t think he will be an effective force in what is to come. So I entrusted him with the rescue and evacuation of the citizens.”

Lukas continued.

“And I confirmed the presence of my original targets, Diablo and the Demon King, in a place called the Lake Hotel. In addition, there were also a bunch of guys at the absolute level waiting there. Looking at their movement, it can be assumed that they were aware of our presence long ago.”

Yang In-hyun thought for a while before opening his mouth.

“Then...”

The conversation cut off abruptly. This was because a shadow was cast in the sky for a moment.

Boom!

Like a meteor crashing down, something fell to the devastated city. The force of the collision was so strong that it caused a small earthquake, making the building rubble heave for a moment.

Of course, Yang In-hyun and Lukas knew that it was not just a simple object.

Beings with presences that couldn’t be ignored showed themselves through the rising smoke one by one.

“What’s this? You’re both together?”

“That saves us the trouble of looking for them.”

“Hold on a second. They’re both here. Doesn’t that mean one person can take care of both of them on their own?”

They all had unique appearances.

There was a small man who was barely over 1 metre tall, a woman radiating enough colour to make one’s head spin, and a dragonman with crystal-like scales.

Lukas narrowed his eyes.

‘Three revealed themselves openly.’

His eyes then briefly swept across the ruins.

‘Four... are hiding.’

Then, he looked up at the sky.

“And the other three passed straight over us. They should be heading to where Pale is.’

Lukas was conflicted for a moment.

Pale and the Absolutes.

Would it be worth it to let them meet now?

Of course, if the enraged Pale exterminated all of them then it wouldn't be a bad thing for Lukas.

However...

'If Pale lost all reason because of their hasty actions...'

Then, no joke, this great universe would disappear today.

...As expected, he couldn't. He couldn't wait and see.

Just as Lukas looked at Yang In-hyun and was about to open his mouth, he beat him to it.

"Go."

"...will it be fine?"

"Are you worried? That's a bit disrespectful."

Lukas let out a hollow laugh at those words.

"You really misunderstood. You were going to Pale too. I was asking if it would be okay for you to take on the role of cleaning up these guys."

"Ah."

As if he hadn't thought of that, Yang In-hyun let out a dumb sound that didn't suit him. That was only for a moment, and soon he shrugged.

"It doesn't matter. I don't think it'll take too long."

"Be careful. You're not allowed to be careless."

"Hmm."

"..."

The small man, woman and dragonman watched this series of conversations with absurd expressions.

"Hah? What are these guys blabbering about now?"

"It seems like one plans to deal with us while the other goes off to do something else."

"Kukuku. They seem to be talking for us."

Letting out a laugh, the small man sat down where he was.

Then, something strange happened. A white chair suddenly appeared in the space that was just empty.

The small man sat on it, crossed his legs and said.

"There's no need to let those guys get a rise out of you. I'll watch from here, you two can take care of one each."

"...that's what our Disease King* says, what will you do?" (*: Tentative translation since there is no context.)

The woman looked at the dragonman and spoke.

“The Swordsman or the Wizard. Who will you take?”

“I’ll take the Swordsman. He seems to be a martial artist as well.”

“Then I guess I’ll take the Wizard. Ugh, a chase is tiring.”

Clicking her tongue, the woman was about to leave, but for some reason, she stopped moving.

“Huh? What are you doing? Are you not going?”

“Can you be so relaxed? That guy is skilled at using space. It’ll be annoying if the distance spreads any more.”

“...”

The small man and dragonman let out puzzled voices, but the woman didn’t respond. She appeared to be lost in thought.

The two Absolutes quickly diverted their attention. This was because they didn’t care about other people in the first place.

The dragonman focused on the enemy before him.

The narrow, vertical pupils in his gem-like eyes reflected Yang In-hyun’s image.

“I am the Gem Dragon Hazirholman.”

Nodding, Yang In-hyun raised his sword.

This was the politest greeting he could give to an enemy.

“Yang In-hyun, Sect Leader of the Flower Mountain Sect.”

“You are one of the Twelve Void Lords of the World of Void, correct?”

“That’s right.”

“Hmm. Good. I always wanted to try fighting one.”

Hazirholman nodded.

“...indeed, it will be a great contest. I couldn’t ask for a better opponent.”

“...Hazirholman.”

At that moment, Yang In-hyun let out a sigh.

“You, no. All of you, don’t know anything.”

“What-”

At that moment, Hazirholman hurriedly twisted his body.

But he wasn’t able to dodge completely. Together with a cool feeling, he felt his right arm be cut.

He lost one of his limbs in one blow?

'Fast...!'

But Hazirholman's face was filled more with shock than frustration. This was because he didn't understand how Yang In-hyun cut his arm. And that feeling of unknown soon became one of horror.

Clang clang clang!

Yang In-hyun continued to attack with an expressionless face. Every time the sword wind blew, shards of crystal were scattered everywhere as if they were being mined.

'Wh-, what kind of sword technique is this...?'

On the planet of Dragons in a certain universe, someone with 'jewel scales' was born once every few millions of years.

Hazirholman's race was lords of that universe. And they had the unique characteristic of getting stronger as they aged.

Their average life expectancy was in the tens of thousands of years.

And within such a race, at the age of barely more than a decade, Hazirholman could no longer find an opponent.

He had never suffered a defeat.

He was the strongest.

Even when the universes merged and he learned about the existence of VIP as well as encountered the Absolutes there, that declaration never wavered.

But now, Hazirholman couldn't even afford to speak. He could only watch helplessly as the number of sword wounds on his body gradually increased.

The small man, who was watching the situation, narrowed his eyes.

"...something's not right. Hazir, are you not doing your best?"

"..."

"Ay. Diana. Say somethi-'

"Ru-"

Diana, the woman who had been standing still all this while, finally spoke.

The small man turned his gaze to her. And saw. The completely bloodless face of the woman, which was covered in cold sweat.

"Run-"

"Diana?"

Diana's body split into two pieces. A thick bloody smell was released in an instant.

“...!”

The small man jumped up from his seat.

She was cut. When the hell? Did Yang In-hyun cut her?

However... wasn't he fighting right now?

Crack!

“Kuack!”

The sound of metal breaking and a scream were heard at the same time.

He saw Hazirholman standing there with a dumbfounded face. Most of his body was destroyed and bleeding profusely.

“What is this... strength...”

The moment Hazirholman muttered in disbelief, his chest split vertically. Blood poured out like a fountain before his huge body collapsed.

“You motherfucker! What did you do?!”

“Do you want me to explain it to you?”

“What?”

“No. You wouldn't understand anyway. Because you...”

Yang In-hyun shook his sword.

The moment his emotionless eyes turned towards him, the small man felt a chill on his neck.

“Haven't even realised you're dead.”

“Huh?”

But the coolness was not just a feeling or an illusion.

He hurriedly touched his neck. There, he felt something, like a thin hair. A moment later, he realised it was a solid line.

His neck was cut.

“Whe... n...”

The small man's eyes slowly rolled back and his neck slipped off. Thump, the head without consciousness* rolled across the ruins. (*: Consciousness-less head)

Three Absolutes were killed without difficulty.

But Yang In-hyun's heart was calm. After standing there for a while, he turned to look in a direction.

“I think I warmed up a bit. How about you?”

Krrr...

Shadows from all directions gathered in one place. The gathered shadows rose up and swayed like sewage water.

The ominous liquid gradually took shape.

“...”

It was the first time Yang In-hyun was meeting the being in front of him.

However, he felt a strange sense of kinship. But considering this person's origin, it wasn't that surprising.

[I'm always ready.]

Demon King Kasajin, the 0th Demon, one of the Twelve Void Lords, smiled and said.