

Hero King 181

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 181: CH 160: OUTING (2)

"Ugh! What a sweltering heat."

Sol, who had been ready to pass a stifling day, chuckled a little bit as he watched 'Sheherazade' groan and complain while walking next to him.

"Perhaps, you should wear something else?"

Looking at her current attire, Sol already felt hot even though he was using his scales.

She was covered from head to toe in a black robe that hid all her features, and her face was covered by a black veil.

At his question, she placed her arms on either side of her hips and pushed out her chest with pride,

"Hum! Hum! What do you know? I am a star here, you know? If they recognized me, everyone would rush while screaming."

Isis was not lying. If Phoenixes disliked necromancers because of what they represented, then spirits, born from nature, were positively frightened of necromancers.

The attire she wore wasn't just to hide her face, with Sheherazade helping her and the fact that she was a Phoenix hybrid, it wasn't difficult to hide her aura of death.

If she showed her appearance though, everyone would run away from her while screaming in fear.

'It was pretty depressing the first time it happened.'

Thinking about this event, Isis's upbeat mode abated slightly.

On Sol's side, while he did not know the truth behind her statement, he understood that she was hiding something.

Clearly, she did not wish to be recognized, which proved that she wasn't just a simple guest despite what she wanted him to believe.

He initially thought that she was a phoenix, but now he was wondering if he was wrong. After all, a phoenix would find such heat to be nothing.

Though, whatever the truth was, it didn't matter to him.

"Also, it isn't like I'm the only one hiding my features."

Sol awkwardly laughed. After all, he was also wearing a cloak that entirely hid his features.

Golden hair and blue eyes were a mix that was known through all the realms.

The divine beasts may not really care, but it wasn't the case for spirits and other races from order.

It wouldn't be a mistake to say that the Blessed were loved by the world.

Isis, of course, understood all this, and could only laugh inwardly at the contrast.

One being clad in black and who is hated by the world walking with a being clad in white and loved by the world.

'Must be nice...'

She ignored the slight whisper of envy in her heart.

After walking for a short while, Sol turned around and looked at the ridiculously large palace where they came from.

Even at this distance, the white palace could be seen clearly and radiated a sort of holy presence that warmed the hearts of those who looked at it.

At first glance, the palace looked more of Greek origin, but he knew that this was more because of the similarities between those two cultures. On the palace, beautiful drawings of phoenixes could be seen, depicting the story of the creation of this city.

The city itself was beautiful, even though it was hot and most people were covered in white robes to protect themselves from the heat, the city was still very active.

Everywhere, oasis and rivers could be seen. On the rivers, small boats ferrying groups of people advanced quietly.

Even though all the beings here possessed great power, it was a rule that no one who entered this city had the right to use it, aside from adding protection against the heat or the cold.

In the past, some people did not respect this rule and were simply and directly executed. Showing that even though Phoenixes were kind, they were not just pushovers that could be taken advantage of.

Many people made the mistake of equating kindness with weakness while forgetting that only the strong can afford to be kind.

At their pace, it didn't take long to reach a rather lively market.

"A special perfume from the heavenly fox territory! Just for 30 Vira! One bottle for 30 Vira! This is a true catch!"

"A piece of eternal ice from Divine snake territory! Never fear the heat again! Price can be discussed!"

"Selling eggs from unknown species. Come and try your chance! You may even get mutant beasts!"

The moment Sol stepped into the market, his ears were immediately assaulted by a plethora of sounds.

People were shouting left and right to sell their merchandise while others were haggling.

Even though no one fought, it was easy to see arguments and curses exploding here and there.

The atmosphere was overall very heated and full of life.

"This is the market. People sell everything here."

"...Yeah...Thanks, Miss Obvious. I really didn't realize it was a market until you pointed it out."

Isis blushed heavily under her veil at the obvious sarcasm.

"Hmph! I just wanted to make it clear for you. Anyway, how much do you have on your card?"

Sol thought back to the golden card Nephthys had given him when he first went out.

He had been pretty surprised at the fact that the Astral realm had their own versions of credit cards.

The Vira was the universal currency in the Astral realm

"Hum, about ten thousand?"

"Ten thousand? Hum... it's about average."

Listening to the conversation between the two, some of the people who were passing by clutched their chest in pain and frustration.

Sol, who had more or less grasped the value of this currency, gave a bitter smile under his cloak.

'That girl must really be spoiled.'

Sol thought idly without casting any judgment.

After all, when it came to being spoiled, few people could compare to him.

If it weren't for the fact that he was a reincarnator, he would have really changed into a no-good young master type.

"Well then... It's time for shopping!"

"You are the guide, lead the way."

...

...

...

"You are a very terrible guide—You know that?"

"Oh shut up okay!? I-I am not lost. I am just showing you around."

Isis felt that her face was on fire as she shouted and wished she could hide in a hole. She never thought that her plan to bring him to troublesome places would fail in the first step.

She had forgotten that since she wasn't really appreciated outside, she rarely went out.

'What a humiliation!'

"Uhuh..."

Sol eyed her with skeptical eyes as he nodded, he did not miss the stutter in her words.

It had been twenty minutes since they had been walking around, but this market seemed to have no end.

He couldn't even see the palace anymore.

"Well, I guess we should just look around like you said."

Ignoring her, Sol looked at the shops that littered the current zone.

The hustle and bustle of the previous part of the market were absent and was replaced by a solemn air.

What was sold here weren't luxury products, but rather weapons, armors, and the like.

Since Sol had no particular goals, the two of them walked around and stopped in front of a store selling swords.

"Hello dear clients, how may I help you?"

Sol nodded to the friendly salesman, a man that seemed to be completely made out of rock, and focused his attention on the weapons displayed before shaking his head.

Some of those weapons were quite expensive, even reaching 2000 Vira.

But it did not particularly attract him. After all,

'Those weapons are lower quality than what Theresa created for Setsuna and Lilin.'

Even though he was not an expert, he could still see the clear difference between the creations of Theresa and the ones displayed here.

It was surprising that a weapon store in a higher realm sold lesser quality weapons, but it showed once again just how talented Theresa was.

The rock man could see Sol's disinterest in his wares and immediately lost his friendly smile as he sat back.

The only reason he did not hurl insults at the man for wasting his time was that people of his race, despite their fierce appearance, were not warlike in nature.

"Let's go, there's nothing to see here."

Isis did not even glance at the weapons. She did not use swords and only had a short dagger for self-defense, in case her power did not work.

What's more, if she wished for a weapon, she just had to ask, and the greatest dwarven smiths to ever live would be resurrected from the dead to make it for her.

Falling in steps beside her as she began to walk away, Sol murmured,

"Well, let's see where our dear guide will bring us this time."

He snickered at the slight staggering in her steps.

At a certain distance, two men, one with the head of an alligator and another with that of a lion were observing Sol and Isis, while avoiding to fix their stares on them, as to not trigger their instincts.

The lion-headed man asked, "Are you sure it's him?"

"Yeah, even though he is hiding his features, I recognized his energy signature. That man is definitely a Blessed. You know what it means, right?"

The lion-man grinned, showing a sharp row of teeth "Jackpot! We are going to be rich! We need to find a way to bring him outside of the city. Let's warn the others."

Nodding to each other, they took a step back and vanished into the crowd.

Son of the Hero King

Chapter 182: CH 161: JUDGEMENT

[Phoenix's territory, Desert zone]

"So, you are saying that you simply wanted to steal money from us because we appeared to be rich and you had no intention of harming us?"

Crouching down to face a lion-headed man that was bleeding, Sol asked calmly.

The man nodded hurriedly while doing his best to keep his mouth shut and not show his teeth.

Inwardly, he couldn't help but curse his friend whose dead and mangled body could be seen from the corner of his eyes.

At first, everything went swimmingly well.

By pretending to be peddlers who needed help because of their broken caravans, they had managed to bring their two unsuspecting victims outside of the city.

It hadn't been the first time they did something like this and the next step would have been to abduct their helpless targets.

As for the target being stronger than them? He had never entertained that notion.

He was already near the peak of the Count rank. Even though he had no way of entering the Duke rank, thanks to his innate strength, he always liked to brag that he was the strongest below Duke.

People at the Duke rank could already form their own organizations and most of them were related to Phoenixes. There was no way those two targets could pose problems to his teams.

How wrong has he been?

It had been a total massacre.

The moment they turned hostile, they were helpless to learn that the role of hunter had never been theirs.

Now, he was the sole survivor of his team and all he could do was beg and hope that they would spare him.

Ignoring the trembling man, Sol, whose cloak was still spotless, decided to get the opinion of his companion.

"Sheherazade, what do you think?"

Sol did not believe him at all. It would have been so much easier if he could access his dimension, but Gabriel had refused his demand and, after learning the reason, he couldn't blame her.

From her own words, allowing him to use his dimension in her territory was like opening all the doors of a castle and breaking all the walls.

"... Sheherazade ? I am speaking to you."

"Oh! You mean me? Sorry, sorry! I was just a little distracted."

Sol gave her an incredulous look before shaking his head.

'At least if you want to use a fake name, try to remember it...'

Sighing, he asked once again, "What do you think?"

"Hum... he's from the Asad race. From what I know, those guys are ferocious and always advance in a band. Stragglers would also swear their loyalty to someone they judge worthy."

'Sheherazade' leaned down and looked at the eyes of the Asad man before nodding,

"No doubt, he is lying."

"What makes you so sure?"

Sol also believed they were lying, but he had no evidence to back him up.

"The eyes are the windows of the soul and souls don't lie."

She mumbled before nodding,

"Shall we kill him?"

Sol was a little startled at this question thrown in perfect innocence.

He then let out a rueful smile when he remembered that just because she looked and acted like a cute innocent young girl didn't mean she didn't hide a deep ruthlessness.

In fact, he was more surprised at his own actions.

He had never really been the bloodthirsty type. But it seemed that since coming here, he was restraining himself less and less.

What Sol misunderstood though was that Isis wasn't particularly ruthless. In fact, she had never killed anyone in her life.

It was just that she had been surrounded by death for all her life and put a very low emphasis on life.

Death was nothing more than another state in the cycle of rebirth.

Closing his eyes in thoughts, he asked,

"Do you have some kind of interrogation skills that would allow you to understand what is happening?"

Isis, or as Sol knew her, Sheherazade, shuffled her feet a little before nodding.

"I do have such a skill."

He could see that she seemed uncomfortable at the mention of the skill,

"I can step away if you wish."

Sol did not miss the way the tension left her shoulders. Taking his cue, he turned around and began to walk away, only stopping when he was about 200 meters away.

Isis, now alone with the Asad, sighed before taking off the veil on her face,

"You...!"

His eyes widened at the face that greeted him. How could he not recognize her? After all, her face was plastered on the wall of all bandit organizations with a stern warning to never approach her.

Even though they were outlaws, they all knew that there was one rule they could never break and that was attacking a Phoenix, much less the daughter of the queen.

Regret immediately filled his heart before it was replaced by rage,

"If only you didn't-"

His words were cut short as a hand was placed at the top of his head and his gaze interlocked with shining scarlet pupils.

"Show me your soul."

Her voice seemed to come out of the depth of the greatest abyss and filled his spirit.

Memories of his life from the day he was born flashed through his mind.

His life as a child.

His life as a teen.

His first kill.

Everything about him was like an open book.

"Argh!!"

He let out a roar of pain, while his eyes began to convulse in their sockets, and tears of blood fell from his eyes.

In the deepest part of his mind, he could see the same black-haired woman sitting on a throne. On her side, a wolf-like monster the size of a house was crouching down and looking at him with hunger evident in its eyes.

Behind her, a black scale was floating steadily while measuring two objects. On one side was a golden feather, and on the other side was a heart that beat slowly.

"What is happening!?"

He screamed inwardly, but what answered was a cold emotionless voice.

[You are being judged.]

He tried to move, but was forced to kneel on the ground while his wrist and heels were chained strongly.

All he could do was watch the moments of his life flash in front of his eyes.

At first, during the moment of his childhood, the feather seemed heavier.

But, the more recent the events were, the heavier the heart became.

This wasn't all. Each time a memory of him killing someone passed, a dark silhouette with similar features would emerge from his shadow in front of him, hatred and resentment surrounding it.

It didn't take long for him to understand what was happening and he began shaking his head in despair.

"...No...no...no...This wasn't my fault! I didn't want to do any of this!"

He pleaded, groveling on the ground.

"Please! I beg you! Please spare me!"

All he received was a mocking feral grin from the beast.

At the same time that he begged, his memory went through the moment when his own victims were begging for their life.

At long last, the film of memories stopped and the result was clear for him to see — The heart was far heavier than the feather.

Meanwhile, behind him, hundreds of souls watched him with a ravenous expressions.

Immediately, the same emotionless voice sounded again,

[You have been judged.]

"No..."

He threw a feeble complaint.

[You are a great sinner.]

"Please..."

He begged as he kneeled in front of the black-haired woman.

[Your punishment is...Death]

Unfortunately, all glimmers of hope vanished the moment those words were uttered.

The last thing he saw was his heart being devoured by the hungry monster.

The last thing he felt was his body being torn apart by hundreds of resentful souls.

On the outside world, all Sol heard was the blood-freezing scream of pain of the man, before everything stopped.

When he turned around, even though he was quite far, he could see tears of blood streaming from the face of the Lion while his tongue was sticking out.

Aside from this, there were absolutely no wounds to the body of the man, but no life could be felt in him.

Walking toward 'Sheherazade', he could feel the heavy air around her, as if she was waiting for him to react negatively. But all he did was let out a joke.

"Remind me to never piss you off."

'Sheherazade' seemed startled before letting out a smiling,

"Hmph! Now you finally understand my greatness."

"Of course, of course. So, what kind of information did you get?"

The smile on 'Sheherazade's' face became cold as she covered her face with her veil.

"We need to move fast."

The glaring suns were shining brightly on the endless desert. The yellow sand was heated to a temperature unbearable for the human body.

A group of twenty was trudging through the desert.

Fifteen of them were clad in torn and tattered gray robes. Their robes had not been cleaned for goddesses knew how long; They were drenched in sweat, releasing a disgusting stench, and their clothes were stuck to their wet bodies. Their lips were cracking, and their eyes draped down.

Their fatigue was evident from the look on their faces. They were moving shakily, it was as though they were going to collapse at any moment. The horses that they brought along also looked sick and skinny.

Leading them was a man with the head of an ox, a Taurus, as well as four others of the same race protecting the group from the side.

As befitting of their race, the five of them were hulking men of nearly 2 meters with bulging muscles.

Despite the heat brought by the suns, they walked steadily with their torso naked without any problems.

"Advance faster! Those who cause the caravan to slow down will be punished."

His imposing voice made the fifteen people clad in rags shiver as they forced their tired bodies to advance.

"Leader, where do you think Aslong and the other three are? We were supposed to meet at the supply point after the main city."

One of the Taurus, holding a large axe in his muscular hands asked. Clearly, he wasn't particularly interested in the topic but simply asked out of boredom.

The leader scratched his dark red horns before grunting,

"That bastard Aslong is a greedy asshole. Most likely he found some sucker that could be used as a Vira production supply or something of the like."

"Oh!!"

"The boss is so smart!"

The grunts immediately began to suck up to him by showering him in praises.

Puffing hot air from his large nose, their red-horned Taurus accepted the praise with a smug expression.

"Anyway, the matriarch will give us the best reward. We always find the highest number of products."

At the mention of the matriarch, the five of them showed an expression of total devotion.

The matriarch was a beautiful and powerful woman from the spirit race.

Even though she looked more like a human, the Taurus saw no problem in this. To begin with, they were a lustful race and could find beauty in any female, no matter what the race was.

"Yes! I am sure that the boss will catch the eyes of the matriarch."

The others were about to follow another round of praise when they felt all the hair of their bodies stand.

Raising their heads, they could see a shadow in the sky falling in their direction at an incredibly high speed.

BOOM!!

The moment that unidentified objects fell in front of them, a huge explosion followed.

"*Cough* *Cough* Bastard! Is this how you treat a lady!?"

"You should first act like a lady if you wish to be treated like one."

When the dust and the sand dissipated, the Taurus were greeted to the sight of two people cloaked from head to toe. One in white and the other, obviously a woman, in black.

Even though the two of them seemed so frail and small compared to their hulking bodies, none of the Taurus dared to move.

In fact, even if they wished, they were unable to do so with how much their bodies were shivering.

When the two cloaked people stopped bickering, the one in white asked,

"So, are they the ones?"

"Indeed, I can recognize them from the memory of that Asad."

The Taurus immediately understood what was happening.

Immediately kneeling, the leader pleaded,

"Please! Esteemed sirs! Do not dirty your hands by dealing with us, we are just workers. We do not make the decisions."

The silence that befell the zone was so heavy that it was difficult to breathe. Be it the Tauruses or the refugees, none of them dared to make the slightest sound.

Finally,

"Very well."

Raising his head in joy, the leader of the Taurus was about to thank them for sparing them, but his joy was short-lived.

"Let's kill the other four first. We only need one of them anyway."

Son of the Hero King

Chapter 183: CH 162: ACTORS AND SPECTATORS

The territory belonging to Gabriel had a size not lower than that of a large country. It was a large, nearly endless desert filled with nothing but sand and even more sand.

Even so, there were some parts of this large stretch of desert that were inhabitable. All that was needed was an oasis.

For people who did not wish to submit to the main city order, they would become vagrants, and create their own settlements. Some of them would keep living an honest life, while some others would choose the easy way out and become bandits.

Sitting on her throne with Nephphys standing next to her, Gabriel observed all those vagrants expressionlessly by using her power over her territory.

Even after living for thousands of years, Gabriel still felt that she could not understand mortals.

The city she created offered everything one needed to live. Even if one was completely devoid of money, it wasn't difficult to at least have a roof under your head and food to eat. All she asked in exchange was for them to not use their power and to respect her law.

Despite this, either because of a wish for freedom or because they did not wish to bow to anyone, they decided to live a harsher life outside of the city.

What they did not seem to understand was that this freedom they claimed to have was nothing more than an illusion.

Gabriel had a near-godlike control over her territory. Making rain or creating an oasis was nothing for her. Those same oases the vagrants would seemingly find by 'luck'.

The same way, they luckily did not face sand storms, nor did they face any beast stampedes.

When she had still been newly born, out of compassion, she had used all her power to help everyone no matter how far they were. She thought that as someone strong, she had the obligation to help those who were weak and helpless.

But those people soon began to take her kindness for granted. Asking her help for the slightest problem, stopped thanking her when she helped and cursing her when she didn't. In their hubris, some humans even rose and tried to usurp her power under the lead of a King ranked spirit who wished to steal her territory and claim it as his own to rise to the level of Demigod.

Of course, she showed them why divine beasts stood at the peak.

Even to this day, legends about how fire rained from the heavens and destroyed everything were still chanted.

This event was nothing for Gabriel, but it taught her a valuable lesson. Since that day, aside from some minimal help, she stopped intervening in the life of the mortals.

No matter what evil she witnessed, she gazed at it with an unperturbed expression. She viewed her world as nothing more than a way to entertain herself and her boring life.

If she saw someone with potential, she would place dangers and opportunities in their way, slowly changing them into heroes as if she was watching a play of which she was the director.

"Mother, why are you smiling so happily?"

Gabriel's smile widened,

"You remember those Vira slavers, right?"

"Dakin?"

Nepthphis frowned. The organization was one that was giving her quite a headache. They liked to attack people and enslave them for the production of Vira, or sell them in other territories by Crossroad.

In terms of power those bandits only had two Dukes. Even though those two were admittedly quite powerful, the only reason she hadn't given the order to eradicate them was that their leader was extremely smart and cautious.

Dakin never threatened the main city in any form nor did she ever touch phoenixes. In fact, once a young phoenix was wounded outside of the city and they healed her before sending her back to the city.

Because of this, no phoenixes felt like attacking them. What's more, the Vira was not just some useless metal currency, but a resource extremely important for demi-gods, and as such even Nepthphis did not bother attacking them as long as they did not go past certain limits.

After all, they may be kind but their main virtue wasn't kindness. It didn't help that most, if not all phoenixes somewhat looked down on mortals and only saw them as parasites.

"What about them? Did they finally cross the line?"

Gabriel laughed, "How sharp of you. One of their goons attacked Sol and Isis."

Immediately, all emotion vanished from Nepthphis' face.

The ambient temperature in the throne room jumped through the roof. In fact, even some of the metal alloys present in the room began to melt, like butter under the sun.

“Calm down.”

Like a lie, the extremely high temperature was replaced by a chill so low that ice began to appear.

Gabriel shook her head, “Your daughter is not some helpless princess and the prince is not bad himself. Now they are about to reach the headquarters of Dakin.”

Nephtys forced herself to calm down. She knew that her mother would not let anything happen to Isis.

“Show me.”

She wanted to see with her own eyes what was about to happen. If she judged that Isis was in danger, she would rush towards her at maximum speed if it was necessary.

Gabriel was satisfied that her fun wouldn't be interrupted. The last time she had tried to test Sol, it had ended quite badly.

Now though, she had absolutely no hand in the current events happening, and she had to admit, being a pure spectator was quite the refreshing feeling.

[Dakin's headquarters.]

Despite being in the middle of the desert, the headquarters of this group looked more like a little city than anything else. Thanks to the presence of different kinds of spirits or magical beings, the city was self-sustaining and since all the houses were, in fact, large tents, their mobility was unmatched.

In the center of the little city, stood a large tent clearly more elegant than the others. Despite the extravagant exterior, the interior was sparsely decorated, and aside from a low throne-like chair, there was no other place to sit.

“So, you are saying that you lost contact with three teams in just a few hours?”

Sitting on the throne was a tan-skinned woman wearing a revealing outfit that consisted of a pair of sandals, white pants, and two straps on her upper body that only hid her nipples, showing off the scars on her stomach.

One of her eyes was covered by a black eye patch while the other one seemed to glow with a pale grey light as she watched the two subordinates trembling in front of her.

Closing her remaining eye, she scratched her long spiky hair as grey as her eyes, before standing up with sword in hand.

“You know the drill. If they still don't answer in two more hours, we will consider them compromised. Tighten the security and sound the alarm if anyone suspicious approaches. The surveillance zone will be shrunk to a two kilometers radius. Now, go!”

“Understood!”

One of the men immediately nodded and walked out of the tent to convey the orders he received.

“As for you, I want you to tighten the security around the workshop. If any of them try to use the commotion to escape, you are allowed to maim them. After all, they do not need their limbs to produce Vira. Also, make sure that damn cat stays chained. We can’t afford to lose it now.”

“As you wish!”

Like the previous one, he nodded and left after receiving the orders.

Now alone, the woman massaged her shoulder with a fed-up expression. She knew that the possibility of nothing happening was rather high. But, after living for years in the desert, she understood that one should always be ready for the unexpected.

Be it one of her enemies, or some wannabe hero, it did not really matter to her. She just had to destroy anything that tried to threaten the life she created for herself after years of struggle.

“Partner, are you ready?”

What answered her was a high-pitched screech as what looked like an eagle landed on her outstretched arm.

A few hours later, as she cut a black fireball with her sword, she understood that she was right in preparing herself.

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 184: CH 163: VIRA (1)

[A few hours earlier]

Under the scorching suns, Sol wiped the blood on his hands after taking out the body of the last Taurus alive.

The odor of the blood made him frown a little.

'I should really have gone out with a weapon.'

But how could he have guessed that he would be faced with such a weird encounter?

'I fought more deadly battles and killed more beings in the few days I spent here than in all my life combined.'

He could only be left speechless at how much strife seemed to happen.

When he had heard of the Astral realm and the territories belonging to the divine beasts, he had imagined some kind of perfect utopia where peace existed.

This was even more so since Gabriel was a beast of virtue.

But, once again, the reality was sad.

As such, the result slightly disappointed him,

"In the end, I am still a little too naive."

Murmuring, he turned his attention to Isis.

While he was dealing with the four taurus, he had heard the scream of pain from behind him and looking at the blood leaking from its eyes, it was clear that she had used her skill.

He did not really understand how this power worked, but the effects were astonishing.

'Perhaps I should try recruiting her?'

Thinking so, he walked idly and stopped once beside her.

The last time, he had remarked that she seemed to become closer to him after he showed his lack of fear or disgust.

Clearly, this girl had suffered from some kind of discrimination because of her power.

Sol was not surprised. Few people could take such a sight without any problems. The only reason he wasn't creeped out was that the mind control skill of Camelia was way scarier.

As for creepiness...compared to Milia's shadows filled with hundreds of bloodshot eyes and the howls of pain, the sight in front of him was just mildly disturbing.

"So, what was the result?"

He could feel her stiffen a little before relaxing,

"What do you think? I obtained Intel easily."

He smiled and ignored her haughty tone. He now understood that this was nothing more than defensive mechanisms.

"Though, before we continue, how do you plan to deal with them?"

Sol grimaced as he followed where Isis' finger was pointed at.

The group of refugees were sitting and shivering while watching them. Fear was clear on their visages, but not a single one of them even tried to flee.

Clearly, they understood that even if they fled, in this desert filled with dangerous beasts and roaming bandits, all that awaited them would be death.

Looking at them, he could see that they were a mix of different races, most unknown to him and some that looked like children. Though, he couldn't really be sure. After all, for all he knew, they could be variations of dwarves.

Coughing, he asked tentatively,

"Is there a leader or something here?"

All of them looked at each other before a tall bald man with a slightly orange skin seemingly made out of rock stepped forward.

Even though he easily went past the two meters and was somewhat imposing, it was like he was doing his best to appear as small as possible in front of Sol.

"Milord, I am Aktrach. The son of the leader of this settlement."

Sadness flashed through his eyes before he knelt down, so low his head kissed the ground.

"We are truly thankful to you for saving us and avenging us."

The others followed him and all kneeled in front of Sol, grateful voices mixed with sobs of sadness and relief.

Since the day he awakened, Sol always had a weird feeling of euphoria when people kneeled for him.

For once though, this feeling did not manifest and all he could do was watch.

Anyone in his place would have felt happiness at being praised so much, but for Sol, he could only lament at the reality of the world.

The only reason he even began to hunt down those bandits was only because he wanted to get more experience.

But this trivial decision ended up changing the lives of people completely unconcerned.

Sighing, he took off his hood and gave a smile to the people, "Raise yourself."

Aktrach nodded and stood up, though he kept his body still slightly lowered. Since Sol did not know if the reason was some weird tradition or something of the like, he decided to not mind it.

"Tell me, Aktrach, how do you wish to deal with it? Do you wish to go to the city? Or stay here and create another settlement?"

Even though he had never planned to save anyone during this outing, since he did it, he decided to go all the way.

Of course, he would only give as much help as he could.

They all fidgeted a little, indecisiveness apparent on their faces, which was something Sol didn't really understand.

Between living in the desert with the constant risk of being kidnapped as a slave or settling in a city, the choice seemed pretty easy.

In the end, all they could do was look at Sol in a begging way as if to plead to make the decision for them.

Sol immediately refused without the slightest hesitation.

Beginning a new life would never be easy, so Sol decided to leave the choice to them. This was as far as he was willing to go.

If he made the decision for them, it would be one thing if everything went alright. But he was sure that at the slightest problem, they would all curse him.

Sol would never underestimate the short-span memory and ungratefulness of the masses.

People were more prone to remember the bad than the good done to them.

In the end, Aktrach decided to settle in the city. Even if they decided to leave later, they would only do so after resting and getting their strength back.

After a few hours of travel, and a profusion of thankful tears, Sol and Isis were now once again alone in the desert.

In order to help the refugees have a good start, Sol left them with about 1000 Vira. He wasn't worried about wealth causing them problems. After all, the city was more safe than any place in this world.

As long as they weren't stupid enough to leave the city after flaunting their wealth or didn't spend in a crazy way, this amount was enough to last them for more than a year and still have leftovers.

'Sheherazade' had also informed him that the welfare system in the main city was top notch and as such, they should have no problem.

The money Sol had given them was mainly to help them heal faster and pay for some weapons and equipment in case they decided to go back to the desert.

Though this didn't concern him. He had already helped them to a ridiculous degree. If they went and got enslaved again or killed, that had nothing to do with him.

While they were slowly walking away from the city, 'Sheherazade' suddenly questioned Sol,

"Why did you help them?"

Sol wondered what was the goal of this question, but didn't really care,

"Because I could." He shrugged. He was capable of saving them and he did, nothing more and nothing less.

Isis raised an eyebrow at his nonchalant answer.

"Not because you should?"

Doing something because you 'could' or because you 'should' clearly carried different meanings. One came from one free will, while the other was born out of a feeling of obligation.

Sol was startled before shaking his head,

"I had absolutely no obligation to help any of them. I would never force myself to help someone if I am unable to."

"...So you wouldn't help if you were unable to?"

"Yep...Why would I? I would rather act for my own benefit first. Said benefits don't involve sacrificing myself for people who have nothing to do with me."

The phrase, 'Great power means equally great responsibility' was cool and all, but he didn't particularly wish to live by this creed. Being a king was troublesome enough. There was no need to try to become some hero of justice because of people unrelated to him.

After all, even though people didn't really die when they were killed in this world, he didn't want to bet if he could reincarnate a second time.

"I see..."

Isis nodded to herself, seemingly coming to a decision.

"What was that about?"

"Forget it, let's go."

Shaking his head, he decided to ignore the weird question and changed the topic,

"So, you still didn't tell me about the Intel you got. Also, why did that first Asad and his group attack us?"

Isis put her hands behind her back and began to slowly walk away,

"... Sol, do you know what Vira is?"

Sol took a step beside her and began to follow,

"Normally I would answer that it's the currency, but I guess it isn't just that?"

"Heh, well indeed. Vira also had another name in the past. It was called — Faith Coins."

The wind around them stirred at those words.

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 185: CH 164: VIRA (2)

[Desert.]

Under the sweltering heat, facing Sol, Isis spoke with a calm but grave voice,

"Vira also had another name in the past. It was called — Faith coins."

Sol's eyes narrowed as he began to listen more attentively.

'Faith coins?'

"Before I continue, you need to understand something. The territory of a demi-god is technically nothing more than a mass of land. You could say that it is a kingdom or the preliminary step of one at least. What's more, the power of a demi-god is partially dependent on the size of their territory. But, just being bigger doesn't mean it is better."

She shrugged her shoulders, "The amount of control and the level of awareness a demi-god has on his territory is the most important. So, how do you think a demi-god can increase the level of control?"

He gave a smile, "I guess Vira is one of the answers."

"Bingo! Training, talent, etc, are all important. But the most important is Vira. The more Vira is integrated into the territory the better. But here the problem is, divine beasts and their descendants are unable to produce Vira."

Sol immediately caught the key point, "Produce?"

"Yes, Vira was called Faith coins because it's a currency born from prayers. It doesn't matter to whom. As long as it's one of the Goddesses under the Mother of Order or Order herself."

"I see. So...Those slaves?"

"They were captured to help produce Vira. The amount of Vira a mortal can produce daily is extremely limited. But what about having hundreds of mortals? What about thousands?"

"... And this is why the Phoenixes don't just get rid of the bandits."

She gave a smile of disdain, "Indeed. Bandits are basically the greatest support for divine beasts. They can keep their pristine reputation and enjoy the fruit of the suffering of thousands of people."

She spat a little at that. She, of course, knew that divine beasts had absolutely no obligations to help mortals and she knew that she would do the same as them.

She simply found the situation incredibly ridiculous because of how they treated her like some kind of evil being when they weren't all that good either.

"But, I never heard of such currency in the mortal realm."

This time she laughed, "The current concentration of mana in the mortal realm is too low."

Isis had a deep understanding of the structure of the mortal realm. After all, her father came from there.

In the past, there were no particular boundaries between the different realms. The numbers of Demi-Gods and Kings was far higher and war was commonplace.

Now though, Demi-Gods were basically forbidden from entering the mortal realm and mortals who ascended to that level were limited in the amount of power they could bring.

From what her father said, those rules were mainly put in place, not out of compassion but simply because the goddesses got bored of war games and decided to play SimCity.

Even now, she didn't really understand the reference. Her father liked to make jokes with unknown references and would grow sad when he remembered that no one could understand those references. It didn't help that his sense of humor was awful.

"Well, long story short, here faith is a currency. Demi-gods need that currency to become stronger. As long as the bandits do not go past certain limits, Gabriel won't intervene. This is why most divine beasts allow mortals to live in their territories. The only exceptions are the beast of Lust, Pride, Kindness, and Humility."

Many pieces of information swirled in Sol's mind. He felt as if a new world was opened in front of him.

At the same time, he could make a lot of interference.

Smiling, he raised his hand to ruffle 'Sheherazade' head out of habit but stopped timely.

'Sheherazade isn't Setsuna or Lilin.'

Coughing in order to hide his movement, he asked,

"Let's go back to the main topic. Who is the leader of the organization that attacked us?"

A strange glow flashed in Isis' eyes, as a mischievous smile formed on her face,

"Name: Rio, Nickname: Dark sword, a rare metal type spirit. She has a companion beast nicknamed White sparrow. A rare breed of beast that is similar to Phoenix...The two of them are Duke ranked."

Sol stopped.

"Still willing to go? Though you should really gi..."

The mischievous smile on Isis' face grew larger. But, the moment she turned to take a look at his expression, her smile cramped immediately.

She had thought that she would see an expression of fear or at least hesitation. She had even prepared some biting words to mock him before asking him to beg for her help.

But what she was was neither fear nor trepidation, but only blue eyes blazing with fighting intent.

"Let's go."

She was well and truly surprised and began to panic a little.

"Hey! Did you hear me? I told you there are two Dukes there, you know? They also have strong subordinates close to Duke level. Worst is, the two are definitely B or A ranked so they have awakened their horns. Are you really going to fight them?"

She wondered if Sol truly understood the situation.

Even though he was a dragon hybrid and was without a doubt extremely talented, she could see that he never received the appropriate training for someone like them.

Furthermore, it wasn't as if the two targets were your average Duke.

Below the level of Duke, the difference of power was extremely blurry. A Knight class could face a Count class without too many problems.

But from Duke onwards, it wouldn't be a mistake to call it a complete sublimation. The difference between two Dukes could be so massive that one would be helpless in front of the other.

'Is this the legendary dragon pride acting?'

She suddenly regretted trying to taunt him.

She just wanted to prank him a little, not bring him into true danger.

Normally she wouldn't fear two Dukes, but since she was in Gabriel's territory, she could not summon her army.

She was about to try to persuade him again when Sol waved his hand,

"Do not worry. I already told you, I am neither a hothead nor a hero. Even in the worst case where I am unable to win, I can still escape with no problem."

She showed her frustration as she asked,

"What makes you so sure!?"

What answered was a bemused Sol,

“I mean...We are still in Gabriel territory, you know?”

Those words stunned Isis for a short while before she crouched down and held her head.

She felt so ashamed she wished to dig a deep hole and hide.

“You...? You seriously forgot?”

“Yeah! I forgot! What!? Is it a crime!?”

She raised her head and screamed out of shame and frustration. She had been ready to see him mocking her, but she was surprised to see that there was no laughter in his eyes, only a calm and serene smile on his face,

“Thanks for worrying about me.”

It took her a short time to understand what he meant before understanding dawned upon her.

Her flushed red as she stood up and walked with great stride,

“Don’t misunderstand, okay!? I wasn’t worried about you. I just...”

“You just?”

He caught up and stared straight in her eyes while asking with a cheeky smile,

Isis clenched her fists, stamped the ground, and humphed.

“I have no reasons to explain myself to you. Aren’t you ashamed about relying on someone else's power? I thought men were supposed to be more courageous.”

She raised an eyebrow and asked sarcastically, she thought that this question would embarrass him a little, but all she received was a light laugh,

“Firstly, I believe that women aren’t inferior to men. Secondly, heh, all my life, I am used to being protected by women. In fact, at this level, I am pretty sure it must be some kind of talent.”

He shrugged his shoulders and shamelessly bragged.

Ignoring the dumbfounded expression of Isis, he took her in a princess carry.

“Now then, enough chit-chat. Which direction?”

Isis tried to struggle a little, but, realizing the futility of her action, she sighed and pointed in a direction.

“Well then, let’s go!”

Gathering strength under his feet ---he jumped.

After a few jumps and many instances of Isis nearly vomiting, they finally reached a certain distance from the encampment.

On the way, they had seen some guards but Sol moved too fast and controlled the strength of his landing to avoid being discovered.

Jumping out from Sol's arm, Isis wobbled a little and dry heaved. She had many times dreamed of being princess carried but, as always, reality was disappointing.

She somewhat regretted not telling him that she was half phoenix and as such could fly. Thinking about this and after getting her stomach to settle down, she asked,

"Why don't you just fly?"

"I don't know how to."

She wanted to smack his proud face.

"As I thought, you are really stupid. You were never trained by a dragon, right?"

All she received as an answer was a shrug.

Sighing, she took a look at the encampment before squinting,

"So, what is the plan?"

This time, Sol stopped playing around,

"If possible, I want you to deal with the mobs. I will take care of the two Duke."

She still thought that he was biting more than he could chew, but since he reminded her that they were protected by Gabriel, she understood that there would be no danger to their life.

"I guess, I will send them a greeting."

The moment she raised her hand, Sol felt goosebumps.

Strand of energy focused on her hand before a golden ball of fire appeared. But it didn't take long for the golden fire to change into a dark flame.

'Amaterasu, is that you?'

His habit of making reference when he was surprised acted again at the sight of that dark flame.

The already high temperature rose many folds. So much that Sol even began to sweat a little.

Finally, once she was satisfied with the result, Isis threw it like a baseball towards the encampment.

Sol could already imagine everything burst into flame. But this was not to be.

The cry of a bird sounded in the air as a giant eagle-like monster appeared in the middle of the encampment. Even though it was quite far, Sol could see a woman with her torso nearly naked on its back.

Then, jumping from it and rushing toward the black flame---She cut it in two.

What was most impressive was that the black flames were then absorbed into her sword.

Seeing how easily her attack was dealt with Isis' eyes narrowed for a short while before she relaxed.

"You asked for it. Good luck."

The amusement in her voice was evident. Then, without waiting for him, she rushed in the direction of the reinforcements that were coming from behind. Clearly, she intended to do as he asked and let him deal with the two Dukes.

Looking at the large bird and the imposing woman on its back, Sol began to twirl his shoulder while murmuring to himself.

"Well, I guess it's time to really test my full power."

<<Dragon force: First Step>>

It was time to see what he could really do.

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 186: CH 165: SOL VS TWO DUKES

Standing on the back of her companion and friend, Rio observed the two uninvited guests.

Initially, she thought that she would be facing a small army and honestly, she would have been much happier if that was actually the case.

What she was seeing right now though gave her an intense headache,

'Why is a Blessed attacking me?'

Blessed had existed long before even the creation of the kingdoms in the mortal realm. As such, she had a clear understanding of what they represented.

But even still, she wasn't afraid. The divine punishment for killing a Blessed only acted if the murderer was of the same race as the blessed.

She did not know what race the boy in front of her was, but he was clearly not a spirit, so it did not matter.

Swinging her sword, she frowned a little at how heavy it felt.

One of her abilities was to temporarily absorb energy in her weapons before directing it back at the enemy. It was the perfect counter skill. And currently, the energy in her sword after absorbing those black flames felt so chaotic that it seemed ready to explode at any moment.

Because of this, her attention settled on the cloaked silhouette rushing toward the guards.

Clearly, she could tell that person wasn't any weaker than her.

'I should capture that Blessed fast and fight that person.'

For her, aside from being rare, and potentially a great source of Vanir, the Blessed had nothing worth paying attention to.

She had heard that all Blessed were extremely talented, but no matter how talented the boy facing her was, she could tell that he wasn't even a Duke from his energy.

'Let's finish it fast.'

At least, that was what she thought at first but, the moment Sol transformed, all thoughts about how easy he was vanished.

Sol's pupils turned into slits while two horns made of energy appeared on his head and he seemed to grow a bit taller.

Feeling the abundant energy flowing from him, her eyes narrowed.

"Who are you?"

Even though her voice was low, thanks to the amplification due to mana, it echoed in a wide area.

On Sol's side, he did not answer the question directed at him. Instead of talking, he would rather focus on analyzing his enemy's strength.

Sol, who had a habit of prematurely talking too much during fights, was amending himself.

After launching a dragon roar of feeble intensity, Sol's eyes narrowed as he watched Rio cleave it in two then absorb it with another sword.

Witnessing it twice, Sol could only deduce it as a special skill of the enemy. He did not know if it only absorbed a specific source of energy, but at least, as it appeared, pure mana attacks would be useless.

'This means that I have to deal with her with my bare body.'

The solution to the problem Sol faced was pretty simple. If the sword could only absorb mana energy, then he should be able to hit his adversary but there was a problem, a very big one.

"I still don't know how to fly."

He immediately understood that this should be one of her strategies. After all, even the King Ranks might never learn any flight abilities.

'Well, what do I do now?'

Rio did not wait for him to prepare a plan.

The two swords she had used to absorb his and Isis' attack began to levitate in the air before shining brilliantly.

If Sol had access to his dimension, he wouldn't act like a sitting duck and wait for her to completely charge her attack but unfortunately, he had no other option.

Finally, once the two swords stopped shining, two huge rays of bright energy, slightly stronger than the ones absorbed, shot at Sol.

At the same time, as though it didn't wish to be forgotten, White Sparrow also spread open its wings wide in the sky.

Dozens of little lights, akin to stars in the clear night sky, appeared before pouring at Sol, while letting out trails of light behind them.

What's more, those rays did not follow a straight path but curved at different angles.

This resulted in attacks coming from all sides around Sol with no way of escaping

BOOM!

A little far away from the battlefield, even though she was about to be besieged by a large cavalry of about hundreds of soldiers, Isis still had enough leisure to pay attention to Sol's fight.

Watching his transformation, while she was surprised by his power, she couldn't help but frown because of his appearance,

'He really does not have any wings.'

Even though all dragons could fly, not all dragons had wings. And so, Sol not having any wings was not a problem but from what her mother had told her, she knew that Blaze, Sol's mother, was a winged dragon.

'Ugh! He really wasn't taught anything.'

Even though as a hybrid, there were many limits to some of their innate abilities, the absence of wings on Sol's back meant that he did not delve deep enough into it and simply relied on a basic form of transformation.

From the gathered energy in the atmosphere, she could also feel that Sol's usage of his core was extremely wasteful.

But what really shocked her was that, despite all those shortcomings, he was still unbelievably strong.

'If he manages to go further?'

She shuddered at the thought. Whether it was out of fear or anticipation, not even Isis could tell.

It was then,

BOOM!

A flurry of attacks landed on Sol, blasting everything around them in a few hundred meters radius.

Clearly, rather than letting the power spread uselessly, Rio had concentrated the attacks toward a single point as much as possible.

She sweated a little at the spectacular explosion and the mushrooms of sand rising in the sky.

She really hoped that he didn't die. But she knew that this was out of her hand. At least, since neither her mother nor grandmother intervened, it should mean there wasn't any problem.

It was then,

Whoosh!

Rushing out of the dust and sand, a silhouette jumped in the direction of Rio and White Sparrow who were floating fifty meters in the air.

Even though his clothes were almost shredded to pieces, there were close to no wounds on his body.

Even though White Sparrow was taken aback in surprise, it was still a Duke and a flying beast at that.

It had already envisioned the best escape plan but, just as it was about to move,

<<Ruler Intent: Dragon Awe>>

Sol's intent spread instantly and covered his two opponents.

Even though it was a powerful intent, it could only daze them for a short instant, but that short instant was all Sol needed,

Once he reached them, he sent a punch so powerful the air around him seemed to explode.

At the same time, a huge spherical metal shield formed out of thin air and stood in front of his fist. Behind the shield, Rio could be seen biting on her lips to the point of bleeding to keep herself awake.

BOOM!

The impact sent tremors in the air, spreading shockwaves after shockwaves.

Compared to the 5 meters wide shield, Sol's fist seemed extremely tiny but despite that...

Crack!

The shield helplessly broke down under his mighty fist. Unfortunately for Sol, even though his Intent was still pressuring them, the time he wasted in destroying the shield was enough for them to wake up completely.

When the shield was completely destroyed, what welcomed Sol as he was slowly falling was the sight of Rio jumping straight at him with her hand on the handle of her sword.

Helpless, all he could do was curl into himself to reduce the area she could target and put his knee and two arms in front of him as a form of protection.

When she reached him, Rio unsheathed her sword and slashed at him with all her strength.

It also sent Sol flying in the opposite direction like a cannonball launched at the speed of the sound.

Rio didn't stop there. Before gravity even took control of her, White Sparrow accelerated and took her on its back before letting out a loud cry.

<<Zone: Child of the Wind>>

Like most magical beings, White Sparrow did not waste his time creating a zone based on his own truth but used his own element as the basis to break through the level of Duke.

His zone allowed him to control and lower the friction and resistance of the air around him to an incredibly high degree. This was pretty simple in principle, but for a flying beast like him, it was like changing its vision of the world.

The moment the zone was activated, its instantaneous speed already surpassed that of the sound and it continued to accelerate further, flying so fast he passed Sol and stopped only once it was behind him.

Like his acceleration, by increasing the resistance to a high degree, he was able to stop any of his movements instantly.

Sol, who watched all this with difficulty was speechless, it was basically like it could go from 0 to 100 in one instant and go back from 100 to 0 in another instant.

The strain on the body with such movement was immense, but for a powerful beast such as it, as long as it paced itself carefully, it had nothing to fear.

'This is even worse than facing Setsuna.'

After all, no matter how fast she was, controlling her speed was a problem, and more than anything, Setsuna couldn't fly.

'I can't let this situation continue.'

Sol could already imagine that if he didn't change the situation fast, he would be in a completely passive position and receive a beating continuously.

Forcing himself to turn around to face them, he took a deep breath and,

ROAR!!!

This time, his roar was not accompanied by an energy attack but was just a pure and direct sound attack.

What's more, Sol had fused his mana and intent in that roar and the result was simply beyond understanding.

ROAR!!

Because of Rio's previous attack, Sol and the two Dukes were currently above the army that was about to face Isis.

But the moment the roar sounded, no one was spared.

Most of the people rushing towards Isis immediately collapsed while letting out screams of pain. Their eardrums completely burst, with blood flowing down their ears.

Even Isis could not help but wince in pain because of the sudden attack.

As for Rio and her partner, being so close to Sol, the effects could be imagined. The one most affected was, of course, White Sparrow itself. After all, as a pure beast, his senses were on a different level. which meant that he got the worst of the attack.

Temporarily losing his sense of hearing and with his brain-rattling, he lost the ability to fly and began to plummet on the ground.

Sol, who was also free-falling, did not miss this chance and used his energy to accelerate his fall.

Landing on the ground with a large boom, he immediately focused all his mana in his muscles, causing them to bulge threateningly.

Even though his arms were bleeding after being cut previously, he did not have the time to care about those trifling wounds.

Having learned his lesson from the previous attack, Sol did not rush toward them, but, after a loud cry, punched in the air.

The resulting shockwave even caused sparks of fire to fly, making it seem like a large blazing fist was bearing toward Rio and her companion.

Feeling the heat under her, Rio did not even hesitate and acted,

<<Zone: Liquid Metal>>

A huge cocoon made out of metal flowed out from her body before covering the entirety of the 's body and her with it.

The moment Sol's attack entered contact with that metal ball, all the energy was gently spread through the entire ball, thereby lowering the damage exponentially.

Once it did so, the cocoon began to break apart, but it had already done the job.

When Rio and White appeared once again in the sight of everyone, they were completely different.

An armor made out of silver-white metal completely covered Rio and her mount's body. Aside from the eyes and nose, nothing else could be seen.

<<Combined form: Silver Knight>>

Seeing this form, even though Sol understood how dangerous the situation had become, he couldn't help but chuckle when he thought about how his fight now looked like a reenactment of the fight between Hashirama and Madara.

'Now then, how the hell do I win this?'

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 187: CH 166: SOL VS TWO DUKES (2)

Reflecting the light of the suns, two figures encased in a shining silver metal hovered domineeringly above everyone.

<<Combined Form: Silver Knight>>

When Rio and her companion revealed their strongest form, the atmosphere around them completely changed.

Even though the two of them were quite powerful, they could only be considered as middle tier in terms of power separately. Rio's control over metal itself was quite limited, only allowing her to create simple constructs.

But, thankfully for her, her metal had the attribute to absorb mana in different forms. She could also send back the mana accumulated and mix it with her own to make it even stronger. This was why, when she became a Duke, she focused her domain on increasing the amount of metal she could control.

The current fusion was the result of years of training over shape manipulation and element alteration. The result of this fusion wasn't as simple as $1+1=2$.

Because of their years of comradeship and the synergy between their skills, when the two of them fused their skills, the result increased their power in an exponential manner rather than a linear one.

[White, what do you think?]

[Troublesome, this kid's body is abnormal. Even a direct attack from your sword only gave him shallow wounds when it should have cut his arms in two. His intent is also powerful enough to affect our minds, albeit only for a short time. It is extremely troublesome.]

Even though the fact that Sol could somewhat match them was quite impressive, neither of the two seemed particularly surprised. They had lived quite a long time, and they had heard of the inherent advantage divine beasts had. Even though this one was just a hybrid.

[The two mana attacks I sent did not hurt him at all, but my sword did. This means that he is relatively weaker to pure physical attacks rather than magical.]

[Indeed. So, what's the plan?]

On the back of her friend, Rio's eyes narrowed before she whispered, her voice devoid of emotion,

[Let's go for phase 2]

[...What about your subordinates?]

[Irrelevant.]

[Understood.]

Meanwhile, on the ground.

"Do you want my help?"

Keeping his gaze on the enemy, Sol answered quite curtly,

"Don't disturb me."

Right now, he felt as if the doors of the Duke realm were beckoning him, but he was still unable to push them open. Every time he was about to have an idea of his Truth, it would suddenly elude him.

This feeling felt as if a woman was spreading her legs and waiting for him, but his little friend refused to respond. Saying that it was frustrating was an understatement.

Isis pouted at having her goodwill rejected and shrugged.

"Well, I guess you are ready to receive quite a beating. It is not like it matters. Bleuh!"

Sticking her tongue at him, she began to walk away. Since his previous sound wave attack had incapacitated so many people, she believed that this battlefield had nothing to do with her.

She had briefly entertained the thought of absorbing the soul of the departed but discarded it. After all, those slavers did not conform to the principle of her Zone.

'I can't summon the minion and I don't want to use the big ones for such a battle. It would be an insult to them.'

Thinking so, she shook her head and stopped,

"Sol."

"Hum...."

"I just have one question — Why do you still act as if you were human?"

After those words, Isis completely vanished from the battlefield.

'Why do I act as if I was human?'

Sol repeated this sentence in his mind and frowned.

He hated this kind of cryptic line. If you had something to say, you should have just said it. Why was there a need to act like some kind of hermit sage?

Of course, he understood that if he just received the answer, he wouldn't be able to realize it properly. But this didn't stop him from hating it.

Before he could muse longer over the meaning behind her words, the loud call of the bird made him snap back to reality.

In the sky, White unruffled his long wings. His shadow covered the plain as if hiding the suns from them.

<<Wind Blades>>

Be it because of his instincts or because he was prepared, Sol moved out of the way before the attack was even finished.

At the place, he stood previously, a deep trench was opened.

Behind him, he could hear the cry of pain of a bunch of soldiers that had been unable to escape in time.

He spared them a short glance, but seeing the men cut in two, from head to toe as they burst open and showed their innards, he wisely decided to continue running.

What followed could only be called a death race.

No matter where Sol tried to escape, blades of pure condensed winds mixed with sharp shards of metal followed behind him.

Even though he sometimes managed to avoid them, he wasn't always lucky.

As for the others, those able to run had long since fled away with everything they could. But as for those who had been incapacitated by his previous sound attack, all they could do was scream and curse at him and their callous leaders.

For Sol, it was the first time in his life he was surrounded by so much death.

Even during the attack on Lustburg, he was not present during the massacre orchestrated by Lilith.

The metallic odor of blood filled the air amidst the cries of pain and misery. Life and death, hope and despair coexisted as everyone fought for their survival.

In this atmosphere, rather than fear and trepidation, all Sol felt was nothing more than a deep and primal joy.

Even though his body was covered in deep wounds and his clothes were in tatters.

Even though he was facing an enemy that outclassed him.

Even though it seemed that there was no hope for him.

Sol could not help but think that he had never felt so alive in this world.

Unbeknownst to him, his lips split into a wild grin while his eyes shone with a deep luster of blood lust.

Currently, he wasn't thinking about trying to reach the Duke rank, nor was he thinking about the fact that he was in no mortal danger.

All his thoughts focused on this single instance, this single moment of pure joy.

'More! I need far more.'

His movements became sharper, his defense better. He began to waste less energy. It was as if until now, he had been living in a foggy state, but that fog was slowly being lifted.

Taking the sword of one of the dead enemies on the ground, he suddenly stopped running and lifted the sword high above his head. A veritable torrent of golden mana filled the sword to the brim, so much that it began to crack.

<<Mana burst>>

One of the simplest and roughest forms of technique. A total absence of shape or elemental manipulation. This attack just consisted of pumping as much mana as possible through a weapon into a single attack.

For a human and in fact, even for most magical beings, this kind of technique was nothing more than a pure waste of mana.

But, the thing Sol lacked the least was mana. After all, thanks to his core, the only thing that limited him was his output.

'Why am I only realizing it now?'

The moment he swung the sword down, it was as if a curtain of light fell and separated everything into two.

The targets of the attack, Rio and White, though impressed, did not even try to avoid the attack and watched as it was absorbed by their silver armor.

Despite the fact that his attack had been completely useless in appearance, a smirk formed on Sol's face.

He clearly remembered the start of the fight. Be it for his dragon roar or 'Sheherazade' attack, Rio had to use different swords to absorb them. Clearly, there was a limit to how much she could absorb.

Of course, doing so meant he was opening himself to a powerful counter. If she simply accumulated a few of his attacks before sending all of them back with a single burst, he would be in quite the difficult situation.

But, so what?

"Hahaha! Let's see just how high my resistance really is."

From that moment on, the fight between the two took a completely different appearance. Sol, who was initially careful in his way of using mana, simply let go of all such feelings of caution.

Be it reinforcement, intent, or materialization, he used everything as he wished whenever he wished. As a result, be it his strength, speed, defense, and all his attack, all his stats were growing nonstop.

The three of them had long left the surroundings of the encampment and were wreaking havoc everywhere they passed through. Light-filled the sky, tempest roared, and the earth rumbled.

[We are reaching our limit.]

[I know.]

Even though Rio answered curtly, it was impossible to hide the shiver in her voice.

She had always known about how feared and revered divine beasts were. But only now did she understand just how broken they really were.

Be it her or White, the two of them were two experienced Duke. In this fight, they had all the possible advantages, but even so, they were the ones getting tired.

She had never felt so disgusted and helpless during a fight. Be it resistance, pure defense, or regeneration in health and mana, Sol could only be seen as a pure monster.

What's more, maintaining the silver knight mode ate up their reserve of mana rapidly and the continuous wind attacks did not help. Even though she could store the mana from the attack she received, she could not use them to replenish her own mana.

Even so, they still had one last card to play,

[How much before saturation?]

[5%]

[Then, this is enough.]

Until now, they had only absorbed each and every mana burst from Sol. The armor was already showing cracks here and there because of how high the strain was. But that did not matter.

They were waiting -- waiting for the exact moment they could pour every one of the hybrid's attacks back at him.

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 188: CH 167: DRAGON FORCE (1)

The fight had escalated far more than Rio thought it would, but she was not flustered. The flow was still under her control, all she needed to kill that brat was a window of opportunity.

Killing Blessed was not a crime in any way as long as they did not belong to the same race. She didn't know what kind of hybrid he was exactly, but he was clearly not a spirit, so it didn't matter.

The only problem would be if the phoenixes intervened, but since not even one of them appeared despite all the commotion, it was clear that they lacked the interest to intervene.

'Now, I need to create an opportunity.'

[Fly higher and keep hovering.]

[Very well.]

Once White flew ten meters higher and she was sure that no attack could reach them, she sat down on his back and began to focus. Next to her, a silver ball of metal appeared and began to move erratically before slowly changing shape.

When the transformation ended, what stood next to her was a streamlined knight armor.

Closing her eyes, she began to focus on the armor, and soon, the armor, without anyone in it, began to move.

The movements were stiff at first, but it only took a short amount of time for them to become completely natural. After this, two more puppets of the same style appeared beside the standing armor.

<<Metal Manipulation: Steel Doll>>

Rio's power didn't just allow her to create weapons. Even creating puppets like this one was possible. Right now, she could only control a few puppets at once.

Moreover, she needed to stay still while in the process, but she was sure that once she managed to reach the King rank, she would be able to create a veritable army.

Once she was sure that she had full control, she finally opened her eyes and smiled.

[It's done. Observe the fight. We will only have one shot at this.]

[Don't worry. I will not.]

White scoffed. His and Rio's abilities were a perfect match for each other. He offered her the mobility she lacked and she offered him the firepower he lacked. Together, they were invincible in the same rank. He was sure of it.

"What the..."

Sol wondered what was happening as he watched three unidentified objects fall from the back of that bird.

When the dust dispersed, his eyes widened at the sight of the 3 silver armors in front of him.

One was holding a double-handed sword, the second one had a human-sized shield in his left hand and a normal sword in his right. As for the final one, it was bare-handed, but spikes could be seen on his knuckle.

He could clearly see that there was no one inside the armor, so this meant that what he was facing were nothing more than puppets.

'So I went from fighting a knock-off Madara to a knock-off Pain?'

The situation was grim. It didn't take a genius to understand that the goal was to keep him in place.

Even though he had the ability to reduce all kinds of mana attacks, he didn't want to bet whether he could survive the full might of the big attack that was about to follow.

'Since they were created by that woman, they should also have the ability to absorb and release energy.'

They are also dolls without a mind of their own, so my Ruler Intent or the Sonic Roar will be ineffective. It means that I can only fight back by reinforcing my body... '

Since Sol's mind was currently in hyperdrive, his thinking speed was far higher than normal. From the moment those steel dolls landed and showed themselves, only an instant went past as he assessed his situation and possible solution.

Whoosh!

'They are fast.'

The three of them rushed at the same time toward him, but the first to reach him was the one without a weapon.

A straight punch was coming toward his face, but Sol batted the hand away before knocking the puppet ten meters away with a palm in its stomach.

Using the momentum, he managed to avoid the large sword that had threatened to cut him in two, and could only use his arms to protect himself when the one with the shield bashed him with all its strength.

'Shit!'

He felt an explosion of pain, as if the bones in his arms were about to snap because of the shock. Even the skin on his arms was scraped and became bloody.

The worst was that, because of the angle of the hit, he was brought up a little in the air and as such, was unable to correct his stance on time. This was an overture that should not have been missed and the three puppets were ready to capitalize on it.

Each of them jumped, ready to smash Sol, but he knew that he couldn't let it continue. Though he was in the air and was unable to bring out all his strength, it posed no problem to what he planned to do.

Just as the three were about to get him, he gathered all the strength he could in his middle finger and — flicked.

Boom!

The resulting shockwaves, albeit small and unable to hurt his opponents, the force it packed was enough to change his position and once again avoid getting chopped into minced meat.

Landing, he grimaced a little, his arms were hurting like hell and he felt a little light-headed. From the shock, he could feel that those puppets were far harder than the previous large shield he had destroyed.

It didn't help that he had already been wounded by Rio's sword strike previously as well as the series of wind blades from White during the chase.

The puppets left no time for him to assess his situation though as they rushed to him and used their numbers advantage to surround him.

What followed was a back-and-forth clash between the four of them. But the more this went on, the less favorable the situation became for Sol.

His enemies felt neither pain nor fatigue. No matter how many cracks spread through their bodies thanks to his attacks, they simply continued to advance, completely unmoved.

In fact, each time he hit them, he was the one getting hurt, and even though he could absorb mana from the surroundings thanks to his core, his stamina was limited and constantly depleting. It was made worse by his constant healing.

He also couldn't just keep his attention on them and had to constantly move in order to avoid being locked on by Rio.

'I can't continue like this.'

He needed to introduce a game-changer. Punching one of them away, he took two fast steps backward.

Once he managed to put enough distance between them, he raised his leg, focused as much mana as possible on it, and stepped hard.

BOOM!

The moment this attack landed, it was as if a cannon had gone off. The ground caved in and created a five meters wide crater.

A veritable torrent of sand and dust flew high in the air and acted as an impromptu smokescreen.

Of course, those puppets were unable to see. The ones he wanted to blind weren't the puppets, but rather—the puppeteer.

The sand and dust covered all four of them, making it impossible for Rio to observe the situation. But the most important thing was that he could feel the movement of those puppets slightly stiffen.

'As I thought.'

He had theorized that Rio needed to use her sight for better control, and it seemed that he had made the right bet.

Using the occasion, the moment Sol reached them, he smashed his fist in the face of the shield user so hard that the steel puppet bounced due to the recoil after hitting the ground, forming another small crater in the process.

Even though it hurt like hell and he was sure that his wrist nearly snapped, Lilith's training thankfully made him used to pain. Even though she only trained him for a short while, she did help him in developing his fighting awareness a great deal.

'I really need to thank her when I go back.'

Not letting go, he grabbed its leg and, using it as a whip, knocked away the two others. His grip was so tight that the leg made out of steel was completely twisted but he didn't care.

Once he managed to clear the space out of those two, he was about to proceed in grinding the one he was holding into scrap metal, but a gust of wind blew the dust away, revealing the battlefield once again.

No sooner than it happened, the puppet in his hand proceeded to move its torso in a way that should have been impossible and headbutted him.

'I swear I will eat that bird tonight.'

Sol gritted his teeth while swearing inwardly. He was about to tighten his grip, but, suddenly, Sol felt an acute pain in his hand.

"Ugh!"

Sol groaned and was unable to keep his hand around the puppet, jumping away, he looked at what caused this pain only to see that blood kept pouring from his hand. In fact, he could even see a few holes in his hand.

Looking back at the source, he saw that the previously twisted leg was full of long and vicious-looking spikes.

'My hand is useless.'

He tried to form a fist, but all he could do was make his shivering hand spurt even more blood. Clearly, the bones and nerves had been completely destroyed.

Even for him, healing from such a wound would take a certain amount of time—time that he did not have right now.

Once again, Lilith thankfully trained him to be nearly ambidextrous, but losing the use of one hand in a fight against so many enemies was close to a death sentence.

Sol could already imagine that the fight was going to become even more desperate, but just as he was about to prepare himself for another 3 VS 1.

As if their strings were cut, the three puppets fell on the ground, totally unmoving.

'I have a bad feeling.'

His gut instincts were soon proven right.

Boom!

Once again, an unidentified object fell to the ground, but from the way the ground shook, it was clearly on another level.

"Oh..."

A shadow slowly expanded as three meters tall puppet stood in front of him.

Before he could take a breath, the three lifeless puppets changed into liquid metal and fused with the frame of the fourth one.

The previously streamlined design vanished, leaving place to hulking monster-like steel doll. The pressure that thing was emanating was off the chart.

<<Steel Dolls: Juggernauts.>>

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 189: CH 168: DRAGON FORCE (2)

<<Steel Dolls: Juggernauts.>>

Even though the number of enemies went down, Sol knew very well that the situation only became far more dangerous.

With how dire the situation was, Sol couldn't even joke about the fact that he was now facing a knockoff of Susano.

What followed was a beat down on scale Sol never went through.

The giant knight was mercilessly pounding him as if he was its personal punching bag.

Sol was rendered completely helpless. His right hand was useless, and the bones in his left hand were about to break.

His forehead was bleeding heavily and his vision was impaired. He was vomiting a little blood, which meant nothing good. He was pretty sure that he looked like shit currently.

Meanwhile, his hits could barely dent the near-indestructible armor he was facing. They were not completely ineffective, but it was far from enough to change the outcome.

Seconds trickled by and the situation only became worse. The bitter truth was, he was being completely outmatched.

'I have underestimated what it means to be a Duke too much.'

How could he not? The only Duke he ever faced was Zehn and back then she did not use her zone. She had also been caught too easily. So he had the mistaken impression that if a top-tier Duke like her was so weak, most Dukes shouldn't be such a big deal.

He was surrounded by game-breakers at the King rank, and even those at the Duke rank like Milia or Lilith had absurd conceptual type zones. For these reasons, be it Rio, white, or in fact any duke, he unconsciously began to look down on them.

Even though the main reason he was helpless was because of White's air advantage and Rio's ability to absorb mana, Sol refused to use such flimsy excuses for his current predicament and cover his shortcomings.

Taking a hit to the jaw, Sol flew through the air, his consciousness becoming even fainter as he landed heavily on the ground.

Laying down and looking at the beautiful blue sky through his blurry vision, Sol for the first time, entertained the thought of giving up.

He felt so tired. None of his muscles moved the way he wanted them to, there was no part of his body that didn't hurt.

He fought against two Dukes even though he wasn't one with purely his physical strength. Even for a complete dragon, this was no mean feat. After all, dragons generally only had resistance toward one specific element.

'I did my best, right?'

'I should be satisfied, right?'

...

...

As if!

Did his best? Satisfied? What was that bullshit?

It didn't matter how much he did his best. Failure was still a failure and it was something he refused to accept.

He did not want to lose. He refused to lose. He refused to be satisfied with mediocrity.

So what if it hurts?

He just had to bear through it.

So what if his body was broken?

He just had to heal again and again as much as necessary.

So what if his body wasn't strong enough?

He just had to discard...

'Why do you act as if you were a human?'

His heart missed a beat. He somehow finally understood something that had always eluded him.

"Hahaha... So that's what she meant."

A small laugh escaped him as he fought the pain and stood up with difficulty.

His previously listless eyes filled with renewed light and battle thirst.

He now understood what he had been missing all along.

The human form divine beasts took was not their natural form but the result of transformation, a facade they took.

If so, why did he always take his hybrid mode as a transformation?

In the first place, why was it that, even in hybrid mode, he barely changed appearance?

Was it out of fear of losing himself? Was it because he was used to his form as a human?

He did not really know. What he did know though was that on the day of his awakening, he officially stopped being a human.

Despite this, he kept acting as a human. His body may have been stronger and regeneration speed faster, but that was it.

'Indeed. This body is nothing but a prison created by my own fears.'

The moment this realization hit him, it was as if a dam was opened.

From the depth of his core, a terrifying amount of mana, that made his previous upper limit look pathetic, gushed forth like a torrent and rushed towards the sky like a pillar of light.

Standing on White's back, Rio felt as if thousands of ants were crawling on her body. For the first time since the start of the fight, she felt that she was about to lose control of the situation.

'Whatever he is doing, I can't let him continue.'

She wasn't the kind to stay put and watch as her enemy completed some kind of transformation.

[White, it's time. Fly away.]

White did not need to receive this order twice and even used his domain in order to display full speed. In just a few seconds, he was already several kilometers away.

If Sol had been able to pay attention to the situation above, he would have remarked that neither White nor Rio were covered by Rio's silver steel.

Back on the ground, the two red lights where the juggernaut's eyes should have been, flashed briefly before it began to run toward Sol at full speed like a bull charging at a matador.

Then, when it finally reached Sol, disregarding the torrent of mana, it opened its arms widely and gave a bear hug, strong enough to shatter a boulder.

At the same time, a small part of the pillar of mana that Sol was clad in was being absorbed.

[95%]

.

.

.

[98%]

.

.

.

[100%]

BOOOOOOM!!

With the thunderous sound of an explosion, a blinding light occupied everyone's vision before a mushroom of dust rose so high in the sky that it could be seen from several kilometers away.

The very atmosphere seemed to be repulsed as a shockwave spread apart from the point of impact, covering several kilometers and absolutely destroying everything in its wake.

The air burned, the wind stirred and all sounds in the space of the explosion vanished, replaced by a silence full of devastation and destruction. It was like the aftermath of a nuclear explosion.

When the explosion finally stopped, all that could be seen was a hundred of meters deep crater spanning nearly a kilometer.

Admiring the large mushroom that seemed to reach the ceiling of the sky, Rio never felt so tiny.

"He should be dead this time, right?"

Rio tried to speak calmly, but even then she could hardly hide the goosebumps on her skin.

That explosion had been of an intensity she had never faced. During her fight with Sol, she had already remarked that he had some level of resistance toward magic. She knew that dragons were generally completely immune to one specific element, as such it wasn't weird for a hybrid to have a partial resistance.

Since she did not know how effective a simple attack would have been, she had decided to create the fourth puppet while using her and White's armor, armor that was filled with all the mana burst attack of

Sol. From the start, her plan had been to tire him out as much as possible then detonate the explosion from point-blank range.

Even so, the explosion was far more intense than she had thought. Had she been in his place, she was sure that even with the armor, she would have been vaporized without any traces.

[No matter how fast or resistant he is, such a large explosion at ground zero should have blown him to smithereens.]

White had no doubt about it. It was absolutely impo...

“Hey, guys...”

For both Rio or White, it was as if time had stopped.

‘Impossible!’

They raised their head in hurry, only to be blinded by the light of the suns. But, this did not matter.

What mattered though, was the silhouette floating high above them in the sky.

Rio’s eyes went wide, but her reaction was immediate,

“Run!”

She did not even show the slightest bit of hesitation. She did not know what kind of transformation Sol had gone through, but anything that could survive that explosion was something she did not want to face.

White shared the same feelings and put everything he had in activating his zone. With just a flap of his wings, he had already moved several meters away, it took him less than half a second to break through the sound barrier.

But this wasn’t enough for them,

‘Faster, I need to move faster.’

White reached a speed several times above that of sound and still continued to accelerate. They just needed to go as far away as possible.

Rio’s erratically beating heart calmed down, White was the fastest Duke she knew, she was sure that they had already long lost that monster. At least, that was what she thought, until, from the corner of her eye, she saw a golden light flash past them.

‘Wha-?!’

Before she understood what happened, a claw grabbed her head and pushed her away from White’s back.

“Argh!”

All it took was one blink, and the side of her face was already kissing the ground. Refusing to let her go, the owner of those claws continued to fly while rubbing half of her face on the rough and hot sand.

The pain felt so vivid that she was seeing stars. Her thoughts were in disarray and she felt faint, but years of fighting made her react by instinct alone.

Managing to create a sword, she controlled it to chop at the claw. She did not believe that she would be able to make a deep wound, but all she needed was a window of opportunity. Sadly, the moment the sword came in contact with the target-

Clang!

Far from leaving a shallow wound, it could not even leave a scratch. Still, it seemed that her goal succeeded since he stopped rubbing her face on the ground and slowly brought her up.

Half of her face had been rubbed raw. All that could be seen was a mangled mess of flesh and blood.

But, with the remaining half, from the gaps on the claw, she could finally see the change that had happened to Sol properly.

Previously, even after transforming, aside from his skin taking a more bronze tone and a few more centimeters to his height, the sole true change had been the two glowing horns made out of energy on the top of his head and his blue eyes changing into a slits of gold and black. In short, he looked more like a human with the aura of a dragon than anything else.

Right now though, there was no doubt about his ancestry.

Nearly all his body, aside from the middle-upper part of his chest, was covered in golden scales that reflected the light of the sun, making it look like he was covered in a sacred aura.

This impression though would vanish fast at the sight of the row of vicious-looking small spikes on his back and the long spikes on his tail that was gently swaying with the wind. The tip of his tail looked like the point of a spear and gave a dangerous vibe.

The transformation did not stop there, since even his hand had changed into long and powerful claws. In place of the previous energy horns, two curved black horns pointing toward the sky could be seen on either side of his head.

Finally, on his back, his two golden wings spread wider than two meters, each having a specialized layer of white skin on the inside. A jagged, fang-like bone protruded from the end of its shoulder blades.

Even though she was facing the same opponent from a mere moment ago, the difference couldn't be more obvious.

From up so up close, she could not even breathe properly. It was as if she was facing a superior being, something she could not afford to offend.

<<Dragon Force, Final Step: War.>>

"You know, I must thank you. If not for the pressure you put me through, it might have been impossible for me to reach this level."

The moment he opened his mouth, sharp teeth seemingly able to tear through anything were reflected in her eyes. His voice sounded graver, more dangerous.

Controlling the deep fear that threatened to take control of her body, she gave a weak grin, as she asked,

"I guess you aren't thankful enough to just let us go."

She had asked this just on the fly, but then he seemed to judge her, before asking in return,

"Serve me. Be it you or your companion, swear your allegiance to me and I will spare you."

Dukes were not that common in the mortal world. What's more, he had tasted the efficacy of their teamwork and knew how dangerous those two would be on a battlefield.

Rio's eyes wavered a little before resolve flashed in the depth of her remaining eye,

"I refuse. I will never serve anyone, ever again."

Sol looked carefully at her expression, before releasing a sigh,

"Such a shame."

"Ugh!"

Rio groaned and slowly lowered her trembling head, only to see his tail fully embedded in her body. She could feel that he had destroyed the core of her essence and her energy was already leaving her.

Blood leaked out from her lips, while her eyes gradually lost their luster.

From behind Sol, she could see her companion and best friend, rushing toward them in order to save her.

She showed a sad smile, while tears began to fall from the corner of her eyes. She knew that it was already too late for her.

"R-run..."

Those were the last words she muttered before death finally took her away.

[Son of the Hero King](#)

Chapter 190: CH 169: VICTORY

[Gabriel's Palace]

"He won."

Nephthys commented quietly as she watched the fight.

"Indeed."

Gabriel nodded. Even though the fight had been only at the Duke level, she could not tear her gaze away from it.

It was like seeing all her deepest fantasies taking form. A lone hero fighting against impossible odds and finally winning by awakening his hidden power thanks to his determination. It was so simple yet so beautiful that she was spellbound.

“When the explosion happened, I really thought that this would be the end.”

Gabriel shook off her daze and laughed at Nephthys words.

“If the explosion had happened before his awakening then I would have immediately teleported him out. But, I am glad I didn’t have to. If I had to save him, I am sure that it would have crushed his spirit.”

Nephthys nodded. In a world where pure intent could affect reality, losing one fighting would be as good as being completely crippled.

For a dragon, even a hybrid one, having their pride completely crushed was something unacceptable. She had seen dragons kill themselves because of this.

'Still, to think he was that talented.'

The power Isis had over life and death was something out of this world. The power of death of her husband and her power over life from her phoenix heritage had perfectly fused in their daughter and resulted in giving Isis potential even higher than a pure Phoenix.

Until now, Nephthys had always thought that her daughter was the most perfect hybrid but,

“That form...”

“Oh? So you remarked? The war form of the dragon tribe. This is truly a powerful transformation.”

The dragons were the divine beasts with the highest defense and the highest raw physical strength. It wouldn’t be a mistake to say that they were machines purely created to tank as much damage as possible and wreak havoc wherever they passed.

Even so, because of their massive form, they were easy targets on the battlefield, while taking human form weakened them too much.

The war form was the result to get the best of both worlds. A mobility out of this world paired with a complete defense...but there was one specific detail that did not match the current situation.

“I thought only pure dragons at the King realm could awaken that form?”

This was what Nephthys couldn’t understand. During this fight, not only had Sol skipped many steps of dragon force, but he even reached the final step that had only been used by a few dragons over thousands of years.

“He isn’t even a Duke yet...”

Gabriel added quietly. She also remembered that Sol was a Dimensional Mage and had been fighting without one of his strongest trump cards.

‘Oh, my goddess..’

Now that the high of the fight had vanished, she was beginning to grasp the importance of what she had just witnessed. She had always wondered what the twin sister of her goddess was doing and why she gave so much importance to Sol. But now she realized that she had underestimated him too much.

A Blessed. A perfect Hybrid without any shortcomings. The power of a Chaos Dragon. A Dimensional Mage. A human with the highest Capacity ever recorded in history.

Any of those talents was enough to bring the one it belonged to the top. Mars was the perfect proof. But what would happen if all those were mixed? What if, in addition to all of this, he made a contract with another perfect hybrid?

'Just what kind of monster is Lady Luxuria trying to create?'

"So, you won."

Walking lightly on the sand, Isis walked toward Sol while observing the surroundings.

On one side, she could see the body of Rio with a hole in her abdomen. On the other side, she could see the corpse of White with one of its wings and head missing, blood still flowing from its body.

"I did, indeed."

Tearing her gaze away from the two dead Dukes. She turned to Sol who was still floating with his head down, breathing roughly.

Even though he only took a glance at her, she had felt as if she was standing in front of a starving beast ready to tear her apart.

Thankfully, she was a Phoenix hybrid and as such could ward off the natural pressure he was emanating.

'At least it does not seem permanent.'

In her eyes, she could see that his previously warm soul seemed far colder. But slowly, the warmth was coming back.

Deciding to stay silent, she observed him as changes kept happening to his body.

The large wings and the tails vanished. The same happened to the scales and the threatening spikes.

Landing softly on the ground, Sol took a deep breath before looking at Isis.

"Your eyes changed."

"Did they?"

He gently caressed the rim of his eyes before shrugging. "I guess it would have been too much to expect that everything would stay the same."

Indeed, even though the black and gold color had faded and gave place the usual blue, the eyes of Sol were still that of a dragon, rather than the round pupils of a human. What's more, on his head, his two curved horns were also still present.

In the past, it was impossible to say that Sol was a hybrid as long as he didn't use dragon force. Now though, it would be hard to convince anyone otherwise.

Shaking his head, he looked at the result of his fight before sighing.

Isis misunderstood his sigh and asked with a mischievous expression,

“What, you regret killing them?”

“Heh, I definitely regret it. But not for the reasons you are thinking. I wasn’t my normal self when I asked her to surrender. The instincts were drowning most of my reasoning. Had I been my normal self, I am sure that I could have convinced them. It’s a shame to lose two Dukes.”

Sol looked at his hand as he answered. When he had transformed or rather when he had taken what should have been his natural form, Sol had not particularly felt different.

It was only now that he could understand how could and calluses he had been.

It wasn't something stupid like a double personality or some inner demon. It was just that under this form, most of his inhibitions were erased.

He didn't just become stronger. He became colder. His view of the world changed.

He could faintly understand now why all pure divine beasts looked down on others. When he was in that form, he felt as if everything should bow down to him. That it was the natural order of things. That he was a superior being.

At the same time, his mind kept an extreme level of rationality. Observing his enemies, detecting their flaws and the way to break them.

They said that a lion would use all his strength even to kill a rabbit.

This was the same. In that form, he became a cold and rational hunter. A predator willing to use everything at his disposal to win.

He still didn't know whether this was a good or bad thing.

On the other hand, when Isis heard his words, she hesitated a short while before walking until she reached Rio’s body.

She still did not completely trust him.

She still did not want to follow him.

But... Perhaps she could give him a chance?

That’s why she had decided to do one last test.

“Hey, Sol. Do you want to see a neat trick?”

She wanted to see. She wanted to know—just how would he react once he understood her true nature?

Would he look at her in disgust and veiled hatred like all her kins?

Would he see her as a potential weapon he could use?

“Hum...What are you talking about?”

She did not know. For all her power, foresight was not part of her skillset. Even so, right here, right now, she was willing to give it a try.

At least if she was to suffer another disappointment, better be sooner than later.

That was why,

“Let me show you.”

Taking a deep breath, she placed her hand over the head of Rio.

<<Necro art: Call of the valkyrie>>

Her deep red eyes began to shine, and one word escaped her lips,

<<Zone: Valhalla>>

“Arise.”

A sacred light dyed the world white.

Somewhere, many kilometers away from the light, a woman with features similar to that of Nephthys and Gabriel floated in the air. Her large Crimson feathery wings lazily moved from time to time.

Her attire consisted of a flimsy white robe that barely managed to hide her outrageous figure and left nothing to the imagination.

Had Sol or Isis managed to see her, they would have recognized that she was Nent, one of the four King ranked Phoenixes.

She had not been present since the start of the fight, but the large explosion had simply been eye-catching.

This was why she had managed to observe the one-sided beatdown that had happened when Sol unleashed his true power.

Frowning a little when she saw the actions of Isis, she shook her head and began to fly away. Refusing to observe such an abominable act.

Discarding all thoughts about her most detested niece, she began to think back to what she had witnessed. The fight had been a sight to behold. The boy had shown tremendous potential.

It seemed that she had to reassess how she saw him or rather they all had to do so. For she believed that she wasn't the only one attracted by the fight.

Be it her mother or sisters. They should all now understand just how important this boy was.

"Well then, I guess I have to take that matter of contract more seriously."

Letting a low chuckle, her lips formed a seductive smile, unlike anything divine being representative of chastity should have shown.

'The situation suddenly became more interesting.'

Now then, how should she act?