

Level 0 Master - Chapter 11

“If we win, she will be our prisoner.”

“And we were told to do whatever we pleased.”

If the Blood Ruler were a king, the princess would have been offered to the king, but the Blood Ruler is a queen.

So among the treasure, we can share the beauty just among them.

They made eye contact with each other.

Classy yet glamorous, chic but gentle—the knight princess's body was an appetizing one. None of them had any intention of holding back.

“Haha. Great. After our victory, we will take the princess as the highest achievement. Do I have your agreement?”

“That sounds fair.”

“Good. I agree.”

Victory was a given. The only important thing was who would take the princess first. All three of them felt the burning desire to conquer that innocent body. Getting leftovers would be so boring.

“Haha, don't complain if I completely destroy her.”

“Ha, who told you we would let you take her first?”

“You will both bite the dust, haha, there will be nothing left when I'm done.”

Their laughter echoed loudly around the bleak castle.

At that moment, everyone at the hero level thought exactly the same thing. The princess would be defeated without a doubt. Whatever she did would be in vain.

One of them would take the virginity of her beautiful body.

Too bad.

They all gulped because they all wanted that body as well. Although they knew there would be no chance for them, they still fantasized. But well, now it would all be over.

With this absolute difference between their military strength, it was clear who would win.

“So until that day, which one should I take instead,” Nart murmured while browsing the girls behind bars.

The girls knew that becoming an ingredient for the Blood Ruler’s bath was painful and miserable, but becoming a plaything for the three knights was not too different from that.

“Number 37, 39, and 72. Come out.”

They all had names but were instead called by numbers. To the hero class, they were just “things,” and it was convenient to call things by numbers.

The three knights played with the three girls until they were finished and then threw them away.

I want to go home...

I miss my mom...

Hopeless wishes brought about more pain.

* * *

Chapter 7

The battle between the princess and the three knights was just one day away.

Until dawn, the princess tossed and turned.

Can we really win this war?

She thought of the strategy meeting she had right before the declaration of war.

“Our enemies are stronger than us. Considering their level, strength, and experience, their military power is better than ours by 50%. In general, we shouldn’t attack first,” Erika explained patiently to Sungjin.

When there was a battle between, the battlefield was decided to be the territory of the defending force, and the defending force had the right to ameliorate the geographical features. Some would argue that this was fair because the battleground was symmetrical, but that argument was out of ignorance. Even a baby born yesterday knew that the one who had been studying the field by having practice fights had the upper hand compared to the one who had to understand the field for the first time on the day of battle.

“But... When the Blood Ruler comes back awakened, the difference will become extreme, and the advantage will be useless to discuss. I think this is the only chance to take over the capital.”

“I get the situation. And the battlefield at the capital is a 3:3 map, so you want me to find the tactic to win under the given conditions?”

“Yes, please.”

Rittier, standing next to Ereka, looked at Sungjin as if to say that an extra like him was not capable of that, but Ereka ignored this look.

“Got it. You can count on me and declare war.”

Sungjin promised without even a second of hesitation.

Ereka sighed again.

Sungjin promised, but is it really possible?

Of course, his military tactic to defeat her using Jenna was revolutionary, but for an “attack,” the same tactic could be tricky to execute. But there was no way to win without him anyway.

Huh, it is true that Sungjin’s secret tactic is our only hope.

In the meantime, unlike the princess, Sungjin was relaxing in a chair. There was a paper with their battle tactic on it for tomorrow in front of him.

Our opponent is 1.5 stronger than us. On top of that, there’s a penalty that we can’t study the field before the battle.

Objectively, this was an unfavorable condition.

It will be a breeze.

That was what Sungjin thought of this battle. Well, of course without him, it was clear that the princess couldn’t win, but with him, this was clearly a winning game, only if there were no other hidden things other than the given conditions.

Right at that moment, someone quietly opened Sungjin’s door. But Sungjin turned around right away as if he was waiting for the person.

“Oh, welcome.”

Rittier was standing there. He glared at Sungjin as if he was going to kill Sungjin.

“Oh, I knew you were coming.”

Sungjin easily took the homicidal look from Rittier, and that upset Rittier even more.

How dare you, you are just an extra.

If it was just Sungjin being arrogant, that would have been bearable, but the real unbearable thing was something else. A cocky extra would command Rittier’s dearest princess, and if they won, he would get the rights to half of the kingdom as a reward.

The former was a disgrace on the princess’ honor, and the latter could put the kingdom in danger, again.

“You should just go to sleep!”

Without any further explanation, Rittier attacked Sungjin. His sheath hit Sungjin’s head, and Sungjin fell down and passed out.

“Ha, so this is how it is!”

Rittier looked down on Sungjin with disdain.

You can use your gimmicks, but you are still level 0, you’re powerless in front of a real hero’s power.

Defeating the princess with Jenna was just a gimmick. The real cause of the victory was Jenna’s power, and there was time to study the battlefield and to place various installations before the battle.

Since we are attacking this time, Sungjin’s gimmick won’t work.

Moreover, the lack of experience of the princess made her vulnerable to his deception, whereas the three knights of the Blood Ruler were fully experienced.

And after all, Sungjin was just useless.

For all those reasons above, how could Rittier let Sungjin command the princess and even after the victory let him gain half of the kingdom?

I will hand the full victory to my princess.

So nobody needed Sungjin, and he will remain useless.

Rittier carried the unconscious Sungjin with one hand and moved in the night. He went into a warehouse far away from the castle and tied Sungjin to a pillar.

“Stay out of it. For the love of Your Highness, I won’t kill you. I will let you go when the battle is over.”

By then, this idiot wouldn’t be able to ask for his share of the kingdom as he didn’t do anything.

You fooled the princess but... I need to take care of her more in times like this. The late king asked me to be her guardian until the princess can stand on her own feet.

Rittier left the warehouse, completely satisfied by his own act. To be careful, he locked the door as well, just in case.

Whatever tactic Sungjin had in mind for the victory, if he couldn’t share it with the princess and was locked in the warehouse, it was natural that the tactic would be futile. This was a truly risky situation, but Sungjin, who was supposed to be unconscious, opened his eyes as soon as Rittier left.

“Of course, this was your move. Ha ha.”

He laughed calmly as if Rittier acted just as he had expected. Actually, Sungjin was not unconscious. When Rittier ambushed, he fell down slightly just before the hit to minimize the damage from the blow.

Sungjin pretended to be knocked out.

From Rittier’s attitude toward him, Sungjin knew it was possible that Rittier would do such a thing on the night before the battle when the princess had no time to search for him if he went missing.

Now we are getting into an interesting level of difficulty.

All three of our enemies are level 6, while we have one level 6, one level 5 and one level 4.

However... one was a “troll.” In the game on earth, this was a creature that benefited the enemy, and it was hostile to its own team or ally.

There were two types of trolls, one was a spy from the opponent whose aim was to defeat its own ally, and the other was one who wanted to win but had the worst judgment. It gave the illusion of being good and smart but made the wrong moves that benefited the enemy and never listened to others.

Rittier was the latter one.

In his tiny head, he was doing this for the princess.

So, now, let's start with the new condition; win with a troll.

The enemy was 3+1, while they were only two, and one was only a half heroic, low-level magician. But to help them, Sungjin needed to escape first. In this obviously bad situation, Sungjin kept his relaxed smile. He predicted this kind of reaction from Rittier, and he was prepared.

From now on, we should find out whose calculation was accurate. Sungjin moved his hands to untie himself. The first thing to do to achieve victory, Sungjin needed to reassure his command over the princess before their defeat was finalized.

* * *

The day broke. Ereka was on edge after realizing that Sungjin was gone.

"What was going on? Now we need to go to the temple."

"It is clear that since today is the battle day, he realized that this was impossible and ran away," said Rittier, but Ereka didn't agree.

"No way, he is not that kind of a person."

"I agree! Sungjin oppa is far from someone who would run away!" Jenna defended Sungjin.

"However, it is true that he is not here. Your Highness, we need to move to the temple to be on time."

"Ok... We should wait for him at the temple. He may come directly to the temple."

They waited at the temple, but naturally, Sungjin didn't show up.

[Both parties enter the waiting room.] The announcement came with a robotic voice.

"Why isn't Sungjin here..."

"Just the three of us can do this. Your Highness, a Level 0 player was quite useless anyway."

"How can you say that. You've seen his tactics."

"That was just a one-time gimmick. I'm sure he ran away as soon as he realized there was no way he could do it again."

“No way. But maybe there was an accident... Oh my god. What if he went back to his own world due to the incomplete summoning ritual...? What should we do? He was our last hope.”

“Your Highness. We need to get in. Whatever gimmicky tactic he had, since he is not here, there’s nothing that can change the situation.”

“Huh, no. Sungjin oppa promised me to bring us victory.”

Jenna shook her tail with uncertainty.

I never thought that Sungjin oppa was someone who would get cold feet like this.

He proved his impeccable insight to Jenna last night. That was a few minutes before midnight.

“Trouble falling asleep?”

“Sungjin Oppa, can we really win tomorrow?”

Sungjin smiled as if he had already known she was at unease.

“Of course. But there’s something I need to tell you.”

“About what?”

“You don’t have to pretend to be innocent when there’s only the two of us.”

“What? Oppa. What are you talking about? Hehehe. You are getting the wrong idea.”

Jenna’s tail was trembling.

“To place you right, I need to know what you are.”

“How... did you know??”

“Haha. Let’s just say that it was my insight.”

Sungjin didn’t give any details. Actually, he was just feeling her out, while Jenna thought she was busted and gave him the truth.

There was one thing to have doubts about. This morning, there was too much physical contact to call it a “mistake.” Even though she was the titular head of the maids, she knew everything about the castle in and out.

Sungjin glanced at Jenna's glaring eyes. He tried to feel her out, and she was busted. She was still a child.

"Oh... please don't tell the princess. She will be shocked."

"If there's no bad intention, then I don't plan on invading your privacy."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I promise. I know you've tried your best to achieve what you have."

"Thank you, Sungjin oppa."

Jenna was thinking this was very strange.

Sungjin oppa was too confident to run away... Maybe... that old Rittier did something to him?

When Jenna started to have her doubts, the final announcement came out. Now it was too late to doubt.

"Well, now the time's up."

Ereka had no choice but to enter the temple with only two.

Sungjin, are you ok?

Rittier nodded his head with content.

Don't worry, Your Highness. Sungjin's gimmick with premade illusions would be useless since we couldn't study the field in advance, but I do have a great tactic to defeat them. Trust me.

And there's no way he was going to allow an extra to inherit half of the kingdom.

I will protect you with my life, Your Highness.

Sungjin was unconscious and hidden in the warehouse, out of mind until the end of the battle.

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The three knights were discussing their strategy in the waiting room.

"So the extra brought by the princess is not participating."

“Not surprising. Even a level 4 wizard kid is slightly better than that.”

“Hahaha. The inexperienced princess brought half a wizard and then a complete extra to the game. She doesn’t have the eye for talent.”

The ruler, Schtram, said to keep their guard up, but the three knights were full of confidence.

“Your Highness was a bit too careful. We don’t need to worry about an extra.”

“Well, I have no idea what he can do, but he is not on the battlefield, so it’s useless to even think about him.”

[You will move to the battlefield in a moment. Get ready. 10... 3... 2... 1... 0.]

In the meantime, unlike Rittier’s plan, Sungjin was coming out from the broken warehouse door. Behind him, on the ground, there was the rope that had tied him up.

He was holding a tiny pocket knife that was hiding inside his sleeve. The knot was tight, but understanding the direction and the distribution of the strength, Sungjin started to slowly slice away at the knot to make some space, and he untied himself. And his trained body was the best tool to use against the locked door to take off the lock with the blow.

He didn’t have Heroic Power, but he was able to solve the problem with his own body and brain.

Now, I need to be there on time.

The battle already started, and the temple was far away. Sungjin started to run.

Nobody knew if Rittier’s stupidity would destroy them all or if Sungjin would be able to pick up the pieces before the disaster.

* * *

The battle was on.

The spirits from both sides were summoned and given the same body, and both sides called out who they represented.

Ereka, with a body that better suited a beautiful dress, declared at the battlefield, “The protector of humans, the name of wisdom and war. Allow me to have part of your power.”

The wind blew, and the air started to vibrate due to her Heroic Power. Her wind-blown blonde hair reflected the brightness of the sun. The spear of victory with an eagle on it was held in her right hand.

“Virtus Successio! Jeanne d’Arc et Protector!”

A golden shield appeared in her left hand.

She called out the name of the young and delicate saint who fought to protect her people in the middle of a tragic war 100 years ago.

The silver circlet of laurel appeared on her heavily armed body, and simply knitted, white gold armor shone like a virgin’s body. The rest of her body showed its beauty, protected by golden Heroic Power.

The nobility of her wanting to protect her people from a fearful enemy was shining brightly, showing its beauty and honor.

“Let’s try our best and win this war.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“Yes, my princess.”

The princess’ army checked the revealed battlefield.

They would clash 3:3 on the battlefield where three different lanes led to each other, and the forest between lanes had neutral mobs that could be hunted.

“Thankfully, not much changed after they took it.”

They were familiar with the geographical features here; it used to be theirs, and they had to win this over.

“Your Highness, I will head to the forest. You should head to the bottom lane and send Jenna to the top lane.”

What would Sungjin do?

Ereka thought briefly, but she couldn’t expect a piece of advice from someone who was not there. She had to follow the experienced Rittier’s direction.

“Let’s do that.”

“Ok, I will go first.”

Rittier departed right away. On his way, he calculated what would happen. Their enemy would send Nart, the knight with the highest moving power out of the three knights.

I can defeat Nart.

There was a disadvantage in a 1:1 fight because Rittier was 1 level lower than Nart, but Rittier was sure he could win. Rittier knew Nart's swordsmanship, habits, psychology, and everything, and he was ready to counterattack Nart's skills. He was sure he had the skill to overcome a one-level difference.

I will beat him.

And then, when it became a 3:2 fight, he would use Sungjin's tactic when he defeated princess Ereka. Use the outnumbering advantage to accumulate the number of items to overcome the level difference.

Humm, I don't want to bring in an idea from an extra, but everyone could have thought of that tactic, really.

Level 0 Master - Chapter 12

It was written in the scripture. God created this world to see the supremacy of hero levels; extra levels were just awarded assets for the heroes. But the tyrant forced the heroes to dip into their own pockets to feed the old and disabled instead of throwing them away. Messing around with girls was also not allowed. Whether using them or keeping them, whatever we did with our belongings was none of the king's business.

"From that point of view, the Blood Ruler is the great ruler. She lets us do whatever we want to do in our own territory as long as we obey in battle. Hahaha. She is strict, but she is still the greatest ruler."

Nart nodded.

"Compare to the Blood Ruler, the princess tries to suppress us. Hehe. But her body is something special. I will tame her like a dog in chains starting from tomorrow. It will be fun to watch that noble face licking, crawling, and begging me."

"Your rule of right is out of love for the weak. How dare you call it a suppression!"

"Who allowed that B*tch to show love to my belongings!!"

The wind blew around Nart's twin blades. Nart was the knight of wind. That was his nickname because he was the fastest among the four knights, and his skill was managing the wind.

The young knight fiercely looked into the old knight's eyes. Incompatible faiths confronted each other—the one who believed that the ruler's kingship was great love, and the other who believed that that was just tyranny over his lawful right as a hero class.

Their conversation couldn't resolve a fundamental difference in their point of views. There was only one way left.

"I challenge you to a duel! Let's have a 1:1 sword fight!"

"No more talking! Let's have a duel as knights. We don't need anything else."

"Hoho. Do you realize that your level is lower than mine?"

"Are you going to run away from a lower level's challenge?"

"Of course not. I will cut that old throat of yours now."

Nart rushed toward Rittier, and Rittier firmly returned the blow.

This was a sword fight, one that has been replaced by firearms on earth a long time ago. Swords were an old fashioned weapon that couldn't be used as a main weapon apart from some special occasions, such as kendo competitions or hand-to-hand fights.

That was not the case here. That applied when it was a human-to-human fight.

Their energy dug into the ground, causing a shock wave. Without realizing it, the wave cut into the ground, and pieces of broken rock scattered about.

The collision of swords left traces everywhere.

"Wind Cutting!"

"Earth Armor!"

The collision of Heroic Power radiated and heated up the air. The shock wave from the twin blades cut up a gigantic tree in a heartbeat and sliced up the rocks around it.

The opponent Rittier took all the attacks with his body that was stronger than iron.

Nart was the knight of wind. When Rittier thought an attack was coming from the front, Nart was already behind him, and as soon as Rittier was attacked from behind, Nart's sword was in front of him.

Free movement of the rapid wind.

Rittier, the knight of earth, was taking all the attacks with one huge sword and fought back. His armor was the crystalloid of his devotion. His firm legs never collapsed, but his huge sword was not enough for Nart's speed.

It was a close match.

Nart seemed to be irritated that it took so much time although his level was higher.

How long should I spend fighting with an old man at level 5?

"Pfft. Stubborn old man. I will give you a death blow!"

Finally, Nart showed a strange posture and crossed his swords in front of him. The next moment, the wind that had been rising around him stopped.

The air stopped, and the leaves fluttered. Suddenly, all the falling leaves started to flow towards Nart.

A hurricane followed the air around him and was sucked into the area where Nart was standing.

"Hurricane Blade!"

Compressed air blew up into two streams and then swirled around Rittier. The massive pressure overpowered his body, and the streams spinning against each other ripped through everything.

The human body was like an apple in a mixer within this power that tore up the earth. But the real terror of this technique was something else—this technique couldn't work on similar leveled heroes.

There were twin blades tangled up in the wind. There were supposed to be two, but there were actually 23 swords in the wind.

This was the lethal technique of Nart.

Every split sword was magically contained within the power of the wind. The storm tied up the opponent, and 33 swords cut up the opponent's body. This was an impossible phenomenon that was beyond a human's capability, an extreme sword skill of the knight of wind who moved above the movement of the world.

But Rittier reacted with a smile in the middle of this fierce attack.

This is the moment I was waiting for.

It was clear that Nart's ultimate skill was maximizing his Heroic Power. However, that also caused a massive rebound after using this skill. Nart's Heroic Power would decrease for a moment and expose his weakness. Of course, this would only be useful if the opponent were still alive.

Lack of experience and patience, those are your weaknesses as the youngest of the three knights.

Nart was one level higher, yet Rittier had incomparable experience.

“Armor of Faith!”

Armor of Faith, that was Rittier's ultimate skill. It maximized his defensive ability in a second. It was a passive skill, yet the increment was absolute. This skill won over their one level difference and bounced back all the swords in the wind.

This was the real appearance of loyalty Rittier kept despite the changes in the world or people's minds.

It defended against everything.

This is my final defense!

After blocking all 33 swords, Rittier attacked with his gigantic sword. This was the victory that Rittier was presenting to the princess in a battle of 3:2 without needing an extra class.

“Molting Sentence!”

If only there were no chains attacking and twisting his body like a poisonous snake.

“Ugh.”

Chains twisted all over Rittier's body. They were pitch black as if they were made of stone-cold magma that has been just cooled off. There was red, bloody magma about the chains, and every drop melted the ground it touched.

No need to mention the state of Rittier, who was tied up by the chains.

This was the ultimate kill of the knight of fire—Molting Sentence. It would tie up the opponent's body and melt them to death. This skill contained both long term imprisonment and powerful damage.

“You... In this sacred duel...”

Rittier looked toward the caster of the chains with anger and sorrow in his eyes.

There was Firgrine, the knight of fire. The air around him heated up and shimmered.

“Haha. A sacred duel? Victory is the only thing one needs.”

Firgrine laughed at Rittier as he poured more Heroic Power into the chains.

“You should thank me, Nart.”

“Pfft. You were hiding behind to get a chance to stab him in the back. You didn’t even show up as soon as I called you.”

Nart already knew Rittier would not be an easy target with his skills despite their level difference. So Nart had to secretly use a Wind Spirit Stone to call Firgrine, but Firgrine took his time to deal the final blow.

“You... Nart... You accepted the duel... how dare you call yourself a knight after doing such a dishonorable thing!” Rittier cried out with anger, while Nart laughed at him.

“You are a fool to be tricked.”

Firgrine agreed.

“Haha, you are a fool to be snatched up like this. I’m taking the credit of killing Rittier!”

“No chance!”

Levels were given at birth. The only way to raise your level was to accumulate credit in battle. To take credit, both Nart and Firgrine started their attack to kill Rittier.

“Ughhhh!”

The Armor of Faith expired, and the fire burnt Rittier’s body while the wind was cutting him into pieces.

Your... Highness...

Rittier was out of the game in three minutes. And now, the 3:2 strategy for victory was destroyed.

“Now all that’s left is the princess and the kid. Okay, I will go to the upper part of the forest, while you defend the forest,” said Firgrine.

“No. Now that Rittier is done, I don’t need to defend the forest. You take the forest.”

The two knights started a quarrel while thinking of the same thing.

Rittier came here, meaning that the princess was in the top lane or the bottom lane. That further meant that the one who went to those lanes would have a chance to catch the princess in the early stages. Neither of them had any intention to miss that chance.

“Are you disobeying the ruler’s lineup?”

When Firgrine named the Blood Ruler, Nart agreed unwillingly.

“Ugh, okay.”

“If you think that’s unfair, then clear the forest and join us.”

A few moments after Rittier left for the duel, Ereka bit her lip and grabbed her spear. Now the minions were created and were moving to the battlefield.

There was no time to waste.

I have no idea what happened to Sungjin, but since we all entered, it is just the three of us fighting.

She had no idea that now it was only two, not three. Rittier died without using a wind spirit stone to report.

“Jenna. We can do it. Now our minions are here, so let’s get moving.”

“Yes, Your Highness!” Jenna answered with her tail flapping about.

“Yes. We will win, and we will have a feast with amazing food.”

“I would love that! Let’s make some chicken and pie! Hehehe.”

Jenna smiled to cheer up.

“Hehehe. When we win over the castle, let’s call everyone over to have a party. Everyone must be starving.”

There’s no way people were fed under the Blood Ruler. Although Jenna was young, she knew that much.

“Yes, I promise. I’m sure Sir Rittier is having a good fight.”

The two girls made a promise.

Their level was lower, yet they had the same manpower, so they promised to somehow overcome the difference together, without knowing that one was already gone.

* * *

“Your Highness... Your Highness...”

In the waiting room. Rittier’s tears fell with sorrow and anger. The old knight’s regret melted into his tears.

But there was nothing he could do.

He was already dead and exiled from the battlefield. From the waiting room, no one could send any messages to the inside. The battlefield was a different world. Even the wind spirit stone couldn’t be used. All he could do was to watch what was going on with despair.

“Ahh... What kind of humiliation you will have to endure...? This was my fault... I should have protected her...”

Rittier fell down to his knees.

“Ahhh. My late king. I couldn’t protect the princess. How can I expect your forgiveness?”

There was no way. Giving his life could not protect Ereka from the humiliation. Then the waiting room door opened.

“Don’t worry. I will protect her.”

Rittier looked toward the confident voice, and there Sungjin stood.

“But how did you...?”

“Of course, I escaped.”

“Ugh, But how! You are supposed to be unconscious until now! And even if you woke up, I tied you up and locked the warehouse door!”

“I was prepared. I saw it coming.”

Sungjin’s laughter reflected his arrogance, and Rittier shook with anger. If he was not worried about the princess, he would have hit Sungjin.

“Ugh... you used some kind of a trick. But it is too late! I’m already dead. Now the princess has only herself and the kid! There’s nothing we can do!”

Rittier hit the ground with his fist.

“Even if you had a real strategy to win... It is too late. There’s nothing we can do.”

Rittier, the one who was supposed to execute the strategy, was already exiled, and there's no way to re-enter.

"Now... the princess will fight this impossible battle only to be defeated... ugh... alas..."

That was exactly what was shown on the screen airing the battlefield.

* * *

Ereka met her opponent on the crossroads to their bases, Angrasil, the knight of water. He was a cold-blooded and sadistic man, but nevertheless a powerful knight.

When he moved his spear of ice, the air froze on its way. The air became ice particles and dropped to the ground. Naturally, his power froze not only the air but also his opponents.

Ereka had to fight the chilly air that was surrounding her. Every time she returned the spear, the icicle flowers gnawed at her defenses.

But that was not her biggest problem. She, herself was a knight of level 6. She could have returned the spear with her glorious shield to break up the icicle flowers, but the real trouble was not those things.

When she returned the spear of ice with her shield in her left hand and tried to counterattack with her spear in her right, a new spear raised up from the spear of ice and attacked her ribs. She twisted her body to avoid the second spear, yet within a second, a third spear appeared.

Even if she managed to return an attack, there was another spear coming from an unpredictable position, and the fourth one came right in.

This was the fatal skill of Angrasil.

"Ugh."

She wanted to counterattack, but she could barely return the attacks. They both were level 6, yet the difference in knowledge and skill as knights was huge. Trying hard was not enough, because some people were already born with talent.

"How long do you think you can keep up?" Angrasil laughed frigidly.

"Until I kill you!" Ereka answered with a shout.

Even if the enemy was strong, she was determined to win. She had so much to protect. Angrasil's laugh became even crueler when he saw her determined face.

“I will give you a good tip.”

“I won’t take any false information.”

“This is my good will. Rittier is already dead.”

“That’s not true!”

“Hahaha. You can try to contact him. The game is already over. You are done.”

“I don’t trust you!” said Ereka, yet she started to have doubts.

Is that true? Is Rittier really dead?

If that was true, this disadvantaged battle just became an impossible one. There’s no chance to win against a stronger enemy who also had more manpower.

“I will give you a break. Check if it’s true.”

Angrasil stepped back as if he was trying to provoke her. With doubts, Ereka used a wind spirit stone to call Rittier, but there was no answer.

“Rittier? Rittier?”

“Hahaha. Can’t you see! He is dead. Now, it’s just the two of you!”

“Oh... no...”

Ereka trembled. She knew she needed to stand still, but she felt like her body was sinking into quicksand.

The only hope to take over the castle by winning against these three knights was gone.

We are defeated. We’ve lost our last remaining territory. People will be killed under the tyranny of the Blood Ruler’s magical sword, and I and everyone who followed me will meet a tragic end.

We can’t give up. We need to fight!

Ereka told herself knowing it was impossible now.

No... we need to defeat them... we must fight!

There was nothing left but sorrow and grief. She felt tears in her eyes.

It was really going to end this way. The hope... the hope was gone.

“Yes. That’s it! That sad face turns me on!” Angrasil cheered and attacked her once again.

“Argh.”

Ereka tried to defend from the raining spears, yet her body trembled just like her spirit did. She lost her firm defense, and the second spear attacked her ribs again. The concentrated power broke past her defense and tore up her flesh.

“Ugh...”

Ereka quickly returned to the turret.

This is not going to work. We need to change something...

It was taboo in a fierce match to return to one’s base while the enemies were still out there. During that time, the enemies would hunt down their minions to win more crystals and damage their turrets at the same time.

But she had to. She knew that if she kept fighting like this, she would be slaughtered. She had no choice but to activate her return stone.

“Pfft. That was close.”

Angrasil thought it was too bad; this was his chance to gain the most credit. It was already a winning game.

The key was who would kill the princess. It was okay that the other two killed Rittier. Anyways, the biggest credit would go to the princess slayer.

Oh well, that’s ok. Even if she rests for a while, she won’t be able to fight. I will have another chance.

When despair froze the spirit and body, fighting a battle would be impossible.

Level 0 Master - Chapter 13

Rittier was confused for a moment. What timing Sungjin was waiting for.

Now Rittier was dead, and his death brought an absolute disadvantage to the situation. What could Sungjin possibly wait for? If he had had his secret tactic for victory and predicted this situation, wouldn’t it make more sense if Sungjin told the tactic to the princess?

If not, wouldn’t he have escaped earlier to tell the princess the truth and take over command earlier?

Why was Sungjin waiting for this timing?

“What arrogance! That doesn’t make any sense! How can you possibly rescue the princess now?”

“What would you do if you could do something?”

“Huh! If you can really rescue her from this situation, I would give you my life!”

“I don’t need your life, just follow my command from now on.”

“Sure. If you do, I will serve you after the princess! Only if you make it!”

“Good. Now, it is time to win,” said Sungjin with a diabolic smile on his face. That made Rittier wonder if maybe something was going on.

Maybe this level 0 alien from another world had some kind of power other than Heroic Power, and he had transcendental power to control the battle outside of the battlefield?

Even the highest level heroes don’t have such power.

Only God could do that, or a Devil, probably.

Now, Rittier was reminded that Sungjin’s name was the “Devil Commander.”

Finally, Sungjin shared his secret tactic.

That was... to give Ereka a letter.

“Good game. Ah, I don’t comprehend. Game over. Let’s use this one from now on,” said Sungjin as he started to relax in a chair in the waiting room.

“Nonsense! That thing can’t bring victory to the princess!”

“Stupidity is not a sin. But just shut up and watch.”

“What...! Nonsense!”

But in the next moment, Rittier realized something.

“Is it something like an S-level grimoire or a wipe-out item? Is it? But if it is such a strong spell, it will need a massive amount of crystals! I don’t think the princess can hold out for that long.”

“Tsk. Ahh. Okay. If you want to talk, keep talking. I guess rubbish comments can be a spice of the game.”

Sungjin took his seat calmly, showing he didn't care anymore.

* * *

Using the blessings of God, the Valkyrie healed Ereka's body and replenished the Heroic Power that was consumed during the battle.

Now, what should I do?

She knew she had to be back out for the fight, but the hopeless situation made her face sad.

First, I need to activate some items using my crystals...

[New unique item is ready to be activated.] The Valkyrie spoke mysteriously.

"What are you talking about? Show me the list."

She spotted a unique item on the list.

[A letter from Sungjin: 1 crystal needed to activate.]

A letter?

In principle, the items on the list were basic items. If not unique, all the regular items of Valhalla could be activated on the battlefield as long as enough crystals were used. She realized this only after she was defeated by Sungjin, who activated a hunting trap and oil.

For unique items, if a person entered the waiting room holding the item, the item holder could activate the item.

But it was strange to have a letter as a unique item, and not a wipe-out item.

When did this letter come in?

Only 1 crystal was needed for the activation. The Valkyrie made a judgment that this was quite worthless, but Sungjin's name was on it.

"Activate."

Maybe... Maybe... this letter can give us hope.

In this situation, not even a legendary item or a wipe-out item on the list would help them though.

Knowing it was meaningless, still, Ereka had hope. She couldn't give up this last bit of hope.

Ereka started to read the letter slowly with shaky hands.

"Have you despaired in this 2:3 battle? Don't worry and trust me. I will make you win."

Sungjin's confident tone already had Rittier's death in the count.

She read the letter more rapidly, and then, her hand stopped shaking.

This is... Sungjin's secret tactic...

It was almost like Sungjin was holding her hand and telling her not to worry. In this moment of despair, Sungjin's every word gave her hope and saved her.

It was a revelation rather than just words, a revelation from a savior.

Will this work like this? No, this will surely work...!

Half of her was worried, and she had doubts about the revelation, but half of her also wanted to follow it.

"Trust me."

Ereka felt Sungjin holding her hand and leading her forward. Hope lightened up the direction he pointed to in this moment of darkness. She found hope in following his lead. He who predicted all situations would surely lead her to victory. He was her only hope and savior.

"I trust you," she murmured and put the letter back into her pocket.

It was Ereka who asked for his help. Then now, it was her duty to trust him and follow.

"I trust Sungjin with my all and all of my kingdom."

The battle proceeded.

* * *

In the waiting room, Rittier looked at Sungjin.

"The letter with your tactic was what you were talking about? I'm sure it was pre-written."

"Oh, yeah. I wrote it before bed last night."

“Ugh. That is useless! Now I’m dead, and everything is rapidly changing. Tactical command has to be adapted to the circumstances for every unexpected factor for every moment. A pre-written plan is useless now that I’m dead!”

“I think I mentioned that I already predicted everything.”

“Stop lying! If so, you would have told her your plan earlier! Now without me, our military power is down, and the princess is wounded due to her inward agitation. This is the worst timing possible to share your tactic.”

“No, this is the perfect timing.”

“But how!”

Sungjin was relaxed while Rittier was crying out loud. Rittier was reasonable, and his words made sense. It almost seemed like Sungjin was being arrogant.

But...

“Neither you nor the princess are good actors. It has to look real to make the enemy believe it. You died to give them vanity, and the princess showed her despair to let them believe in their victory. Now, this is the perfect timing for my plan to work.”

“Wh... what?”

Rittier felt his blood freeze with surprise.

He had ignored Sungjin and devised his own plan. It had been a radical act from Sungjin’s point of view, but Sungjin used that radical act to hide Rittier’s weakness of being a bad actor to throw the enemies off their guard?

If he really predicted until that stage, then that was already surprising.

But it was beyond surprise to use Rittier’s radicality act against him. That was truly out of the box thinking.

Who is this guy in front of me? Is he a real genius?

But...

“Even if... even if that is true, now I am dead, their military power is incomparably stronger than us. Isn’t the price too high to try to take them off guard? What is the point of your deception? Now we can’t win!”

Rittier was right.

Sungjin may have created a psychological weakness, but without enough force, it was impossible to attack that weakness. The idea was clearly innovative, yet it was just meaningless when the idea was not going to lead them to victory.

Sungjin smiled back to that ordinary question coming from an ordinary person.

“Just watch how this will lead us to victory.”

That overly confident smile gave Rittier the creeps. There was no way to upset the situation.

But... what if... he really leads us to victory...

Sungjin predicted Rittier's radical actions to use it against him, and what if Sungjin could really change this disadvantageous situation...?

What would it mean if Sungjin's intelligence was beyond the genius of humans? Sungjin would be a devil.

Then Rittier realized something. This man, Sungjin, was either a madman or just a satanic worshipper being that was beyond comprehension.

The result of this battle would give him the answer.

In the meantime, the battle was taking place on the top lane. The fight was close; as soon as Firgrine was thrown off his guard for a second, Jenna threw the light ball.

“Yaaap!”

“Ugh.”

When Firgrine was hit by the light ball and tumbled back, Jenna took that chance and struck the ground with her hammer.

“Thunder Ground Power!”

Firgrine's laugh was insidious.

“Hahaha. Got you!”

“What?”

While she tilted her tail, chains started to surround her. At the same time, the Meteor Pendulum at the end of the chain flew toward Jenna's head to crush it.

“Ahhh?!”

The meteor pendulum struck Jenna. Jenna's force dropped in a second, and her robe got torn up. With a few more blows, she was about to be hurt directly.

"Ahhhhhhhh ugh!"

Jenna turned into a bolt of lightning with a scream and ran towards the back. This was a spell called "A Thousand Breakthroughs," and it allowed one to change into a bolt of lightning for rapid movement or to attack, escape and chase.

Unlike the name, it was more useful to retreat though.

"Whew."

Thinking she made it out, her knife tail dropped in relief.

"Not so fast!" Firgrine shouted and jumped into the range of the turret.

He was so sure of himself. He had already collected enough crystals to upgrade his defense items, so the attack of the turret couldn't hurt him. And the level 4 wizard used her escaping skill, so it would take a heartbeat to kill her.

He was so sure he could kill her.

"Ahhhhhhh?!"

Jenna screamed and ran away to the forest, abandoning the turret. Her tail pointed upwards, screaming to her to run away.

"I am coming for you."

Firgrine followed Jenna.

I killed Rittier, so if I kill her too, most of the credit will come to me!

Then the beautiful body of the princess would be his.

What is the best way to take her virginity? Abruptly? Or after torturing her for a long time?

Just the imagination excited Firgrine. Killing Jenna would mean having the princess.

"Ahhhhhh! Help me! Ahhhhhhh!"

Screaming out loud, Jenna ran across the forest toward the bottom lane where Ereka was.

“Rittier! Help me!” Jenna cried out loud for help.

And to answer that... a strong wind raided Jenna.

“Ahhhhhh?! Nart!?”

“You are a fool to be snatched up like this.”

Twin blades within the wind were piercing Jenna’s neck. This was a moment of life or death, and the secret tactic Sungjin had was meaningless for the violence she was facing.

“A Thousand Breakthroughs!”

The cooldown time was up, and Jenna was able to stay alive by using her speed spell, but she was far from safety.

The knight of wind and the knight of fire were chasing her. There was no chance for her, even if it was 1:1. The security of the turret was useless.

But she had to fight against two. Once she was caught, that would be it.

The young girl ran for her life, and her chasers were laughing at her.

She wouldn’t have known that she was running towards despair and not toward hope. There were no reinforcements, it was just a trap. They were hunting her like a rabbit. The only thing that was stopping them now was the competition between the two knights.

The question was, who would get her?

At the same time, Ereka couldn’t find peace of mind while fighting against Angrasil on the bottom lane.

“Ugh.”

With her fighting spirit gone, Ereka was not able to return Angrasil’s attack properly. She made narrow escapes from the ice spear attacks. Every time, she tried to concentrate her Heroic Power to protect herself only to miss the perfect timing to attack and instead received small wounds.

Ice covered her body to slow down her movements. The next moment, as soon as Ereka had reached her limit and lost control of her body, the ice spear stabbed her deep in her thigh.

Her blood spurted just to be frozen and hit the ground.

“Ice Flower!”

A few dozen ice spears raised up from the ground. There was no escape from the flower shaped spears.

Ereka jumped and pushed down the spears with her shield to retreat, but it was not enough. She was getting more wounds.

“Ha ha ha ha...”

“Poor thing. Why don’t you let me kill you? I will be gentle compared to the other two.”

“I don’t trust you... and I haven’t given up yet... I will... be back.”

Ereka stepped back and hid within a bush. This was to create more distance in case the enemy jumped within the turret’s range. In other words, the balance between her and the enemy was extremely unfavorable to make her have to use this last bit of distance.

* * *

In the waiting room.

Rittier lost his words and kept watching the battle in silence.

Your Highness...

Sungjin confidently handed the letter with his secret tactic for nothing. However great the tactic was, what mattered the most was your level. In this absolute imbalance, a quick gimmick from an extra class was useless.

At least, I wish I were there...

Even if Sungjin had a brilliant tactic, there was no one who could execute the tactic. Sungjin’s plan for victory was in his head. It was just an illusion.

Your Highness...

* * *

Out of breath, Jenna rushed to the bottom turret. Her fluttering tail lost its rhythm.

“Princess... Princess...”

There was no answer, and her chasers, Nart and Firgrine, appeared instead. Angrasil greeted them. The three knights of fire, wind, and water fiercely stared at the poor girl.

“The princess?”

“Just recalled to her base.”

The short conversation revealed everything.

“What?”

Jenna realized that now, her last hope was gone. Her tail shuddered, and she slowly stepped back with her body shivering.

“Haha. Ok.”

Unlike Jenna, the three knights smiled cruelly.

Jenna still had the turret, but all the enemies were here. One baby wizard was not a problem for the three of them.

The only question was, who would kill her?

There was no need to talk. They all needed an achievement from this battle in order to level up. A higher level meant more power, status, wealth, and honor, and in this battle, there was a beauty on the top of all that.

The knight of fire started his attack without hesitation.

“Molting Sentence!”

Like a poisonous snake, magma chains surrounded Jenna.

Every single tiny spark contained heat that could burn down the earth.

The knight of the wind quickly joined in.

“Hurricane Blade!”

Swirling double hurricanes started to stab her young, tender body without mercy. Thirty-three magic sword joined in on the attack.

A fast death would have been merciful. One enemy would have been enough for inevitable death, but it was two—no, it was three.

“Frozen Rain!”

Using his spear as a lever, Angrasil jumped up into the sky. A dozen spears appeared on the right and left of the perfectly aimed ice spear.

All twelve of them were exactly the same as the original. They all had the same power as the spear Angrasil was holding.

Ice spears rained down on Jenna at the same time. One magical spear was able to break down a rampart, but there were twelve of them.

That meant nothing but death, but the more fearful thing was coming—Angrasil himself became a spear to join in on the attack. The thirteenth spear dealt by Angrasil was the ultimate magical spear that could break down ramparts with multiple layers.

The simultaneous attacks of three knights' ultimates were over the top to kill one tiny kid.

The weak had no choice but to surrender and to take the violence. This kid was nothing in front of these powerful knights on high.

Jenna shrunk and covered her eyes with her hands. It was a desperate flight from her hopeless reality.

Level 0 Master - Chapter 14

Standing in front of Jenna, Ereka looked directly into the attacks of the three knights.

Melting magma chains, swirling hurricane swords, raining glacial spears—all of them were terrifying.

Every moment would be painful.

However...

If I can protect them. If I can protect the smiles of the people living here like my father did, then fire, ice, or wind won't matter.

I will not step back with fear. I will not retreat with pain. I will stand to protect the people I want to protect.

I am... the Omnibus Shield: Aegis.

The three knights were flustered.

“Why... the princess!!! But she returned!”

Sungjin grinned wickedly.

Because I made you guys think otherwise.

He knew Rittier was about to do something radical. Being hit by Rittier was a part of his plan, and Rittier's radical act made the enemy lower their guard just as he planned.

It was better to trick him.

Rittier wasn't a good actor who could let others kill him without making it awkward.

Having started with the upper hand, the three knights became even more arrogant with the belief of their victory, while the princess showed weakness in the situation. Then the wounded princess retreated behind the turret to use recall to return to her base. That was an ordinary plan that made the three knights read the situation as normal. Hiding and waiting was not a plan they could have thought of.

There was also a poor wizard next to the turret. There were three of them, so it was common sense to jump in and hunt her down. To take credit for the kill, they had to use their ultimates.

For a winning battle, they had to focus on their achievements more. If not, the others would snatch up all the credit.

So they all jumped in, just as Sungjin had predicted.

There is a word for this called a "dumb kill."

It was a word for players who wanted to kill more enemies than necessary in a winning game.

Even amateurs played games with a greed for honor. Naturally, this greed would be much higher in the world where your level meant your social status and power. It was easy to make them blind with greed.

It was a more refined process to trick team Virgo using Baron. Fooling the three knights was just a walk in the park.

The Art of War by Sun Tzu. Deception. By holding out advantages to the enemy, one can cause the enemy to approach of his own accord.

This was the same principle. It was just another adaptation for the situation and the opponent.

"Boring. Jenna, finish them."

This was the verdict for the three level 6 knights from a level 0 extra.

The fire and ice of their attacks went on a rampage, and Ereka found herself in the midst of hell. But standing behind her, protected by the golden blessing, Jenna was untouchable.

As if she heard Sungjin's order to finish them off, Jenna firmly stood on her feet. Heroic Power was overflowing from the three-layered magic squares under her feet.

She was controlling powerful thunderbolts. She was no longer a tiny wizard but a real magician.

"Mjolnir!"

The roar of thunder echoed in the sky, and lightning divided the air. Thor's burning hammer covered the sun, and the three knights' faces became ghastly pale.

Even if the spell contained the power of a shaman who signed a pact with Thor, this wizard was only level 4. In normal circumstances, such a tiny wizard would not be a concern to a level 6 knight.

Moreover, there were three of them.

But the situation was not exactly normal. They were all exhausted from just using their ultimates, and moreover, the turret kept attacking them, damaging them even more.

Bang!

The sound of thunder became a shock wave and shook the ground. Thor's hammer struck the ground and burned everything

This moment was a miracle, where a level 4 wizard could crush three level 6 knights. This was also a moment where the tyranny that had made the people of the kingdom suffer dissipated.

When Thor's hammer disappeared, there was not even a trace of the three knights left.

[Team Blue wins.] Only the announcement of Valkyrie was waiting for everyone.

"Huff. Huff..."

Totally wrecked and leaning on her spear, Ereka's face showed a smile.

"We..."

"We won my princess!"

Jenna leaped with joy and ran into Ereka. Jenna's knife tail was flapping with joy.

“Well done, Jenna.”

Light from the sky surrounded them and dazzled about. Suddenly, their wounds were gone, and the anthem of honourous victory filled the air.

The Valkyrie wearing a helmet with wings came down to hand a Goblet of Glory to Ereka, actualizing her victory. Made of platinum and decorated with numerous precious stones, the goblet was shining with a bright radiance. Inside the goblet, there was the nectar of the gods made from the water drawn from Mimir’s Well.

“Ereka. To acknowledge your achievement on the battlefield, God has bestowed upon you this goblet. This shall become your flesh and blood. Finish this drink to awaken new strength inside of you.”

“Thank you.”

For a moment, Ereka’s emotions unleashed themselves as she held the goblet in front of her. She really made it.

Sungjin...

He led everyone here. He saved all of us. As soon as she got his letter, she followed his direction. Everything went as he had planned.

Every time she tried to remember his direction, she felt like she heard his voice saying, “I will make you win,” as if he were right next to her. That kept her going.

Physically, he was in the waiting room, but he was beside her and led her each step of the way to victory.

The person who deserves this goblet is... Sungjin...

She felt bad that she couldn’t hand it to him.

I don’t know how to thank him enough...

He was a real savior.

I should get back to the waiting room as soon as possible to thank him.

Ereka had a sip of the drink in the goblet. Her body was filled with energy and every cell throbbed.

The Valkyrie handed another goblet to Jenna.

“Jenna. Thinking highly of your achievements on the battlefield, where you defeated all three knights, God has bestowed upon you this goblet. This shall become your flesh and blood. Finish this drink to awaken new strength inside of you.”

“Oh my god. This one is full!”

Her tail started to swing. When she finished her drink, there was a spark all throughout her body and her hammer.

[Your level has been upgraded from level 4 to level 5.

The skill Thunder Ground Power has gone from rank 1 to rank 2.

Increased radius of Thunder Ground Power skill.

Increased damage of Thunder Ground Power skill.

Effect of slowing down enemies within Thunder Ground Power’s radius has been added.

Attack power increased by 1 point.

Magic power increased by 10 points.

Defense power increased by 1 point.

Resistance power increased by 2 points.

Movement speed has no change.]

“Wow, I became stronger! Now I’m level 5 just like you, Grandpa!”

“Yes. That’s great,” Rittier responded.

[And lastly, I grant you the registration of the territory that was staked during this battle of life and death. All the extras in this territory and all their goods belong to you. You can also exile unwanted heroes from other forces.]

A crest of the castle and its territories appeared on Ereka’s arm. The crest, a shield surrounded by wings, shone briefly and then disappeared. It became invisible until her nomination as lord, and now the land was under her rule again.

Father, I took over the castle. Everything... is thanks to him.

It was an impeccable victory.

[I wish you an even better fight for your next battle. The Eyes of God are upon you.]

A bright light covered their sight.

There was a celebration of victory in the waiting room as well. Rittier was holding the goblet handed to him by the Valkyrie.

“Drink it. It will give you strength.”

“But... this victory is all because of you, an extra... no, you... no, Sir... this was your work. I don't deserve this.”

Sungjin laughed out loud, listening to Rittier promote his title in one sentence.

“Hahaha. Just drink it. Anyways, you can't give it to someone else, and to win against the Blood Ruler, we need your power.”

“Okay, I will drink it, and in the next battle, I will serve you, Sir. I sincerely apologize for today's rudeness.”

Rittier bowed to Sungjin before he drank it up.

Ereka and Jenna appeared in the room as soon as the Valkyrie took the empty goblet and disappeared.

“Sungjin Oppa! We made it!”

Jenna ran into Sungjin.

“Haha, I was watching.”

“Hehehe. Don't you think I did well? Pet me!”

Just like a dog who just performed a trick, Jenna's knife tail fluttered about.

“Just like you planned, I led the two of them towards the princess. Hehehe, I was acting like I was scared, screaming and shivering, and they bought it.”

“Yeah, you deserve an Oscar. Well done.”

Sungjin lightly pet her head as she had requested. Her soft hair felt like that of a fluffy puppy.

“Hehe. I'm a level 4, no, now, I'm a level 5 wizard! Not a kid!”

“I know, I know. You played a great role in today's victory.”

“But still, you are the best! When I was left alone with the princess, I thought it was the end. I never thought we could win like that! You are the best!”

Chattering with joy, Jenna thought to herself, He saw that I was acting and used it in the battle right away. He is amazing.

Since Jenna was a kid, it was not easy for her to protect the princess. So she wanted to turn the tables by pretending to be a baby to throw them off their guard.

She didn't have a thorough plan, and she didn't know that Sungjin would use that as a winning tactic.

Sungjin really protected all of us and the princess. Okay. I approve of your abilities.

Ereka stared at Sungjin patting Jenna softly.

Jenna...

She envied Jenna a little because she was too shy to ask Sungjin to hug her. Jenna, on the other hand, was being a kid and jumped right into Sungjin's arms. She wanted to jump into his arms...

What am I thinking?

She shook her head right away.

But I understand Jenna. Sungjin is really charming to me as well.

Usually, heroes showed a servile attitude while exercising authority in front of lower levels, and they abused the extras. But Sungjin left all his power in his world and came in as level 0, but he was dignified in front of the strong while he was sweet to the weak.

And with his sweetness, he saved everyone, including her. He defeated the three knights.

She felt sorry that she doubted his abilities while they were in a disadvantageous situation, even though she tried her best to trust his tactics. She was disgusted by him when she thought of Sungjin being just a bloodthirsty devil, but now she saw his true colors...

Ah...

Her heart started beating rapidly. He was a real light, a savior who didn't ask for rewards but simply asked for her to support him in the next battle.

He was a real hero from a fairy tale. There were so many hero-leveled men, but he was the first one who really deserved it.

I need to thank him. What should I tell him? How can I put this emotion into words?

She wanted to jump into his arm, just like Jenna, and kiss him to thank him, but...

I need to keep my dignity and thank you with grace. Ah... there's one more thing before that.

Ereka looked at Rittier with anger.

"Sir Rittier, do you know what you have done?"

Rittier kneeled.

"I deserve more than a hundred deaths for my wrongdoings. I didn't have the insight to look through the ability of the intelligence you brought and did a stupid thing that put you in danger and almost ruined the battle. I will take any punishment from you."

"Sungjin will decide."

Ereka placed her hand on her chest and lightly bowed to show her respect. Her elegant smile and graceful movements were beautiful, even in armor.

"Sungjin. With your amazing plan, you saved me and all of us. I sincerely thank you, and as a princess of this kingdom, from the bottom of my heart..."

"Drop the formalities."

"I can't. If I don't show our gratefulness with proper respect, I can't be a role model for the people."

"Haha, okay. It is your kingdom, so I will follow your rules."

"I will never forget our gratefulness. Today, we are still in a war, so I can't appreciate your help properly, but after we defeat the Blood Ruler, I promise I will reward you properly and have the people remember your service for generations."

The princess thanked him with sincerity in her every word.

"Hmmm, well... okay."

This was a bit over the top for Sungjin's tastes, but he felt the sincerity in her words and smiled.

“And do as your wish to Rittier who attacked and imprisoned you. His action is considered treason against our alliance and disobedience of the military law.”

“Hehe... really?”

“I will not dare to stop you, because it was my kingdom’s fault. But...”

“But?”

Princess Ereka dropped her head and lowered her voice.

“He has made many contributions from the former generation and kept his loyalty in the time of difficulty. Also, his level has reached 5... If it is possible, I would like to ask you to give him a chance to repay his wrongdoings in the next battle rather than cutting his head off today.”

She was angry at Rittier for Sungjin, but Rittier was like her grandfather, her guardian who kept her going after her father passed away.

As a rightful ruler, she was not going to stop what Sungjin wanted to do, but asking him for a chance of mercy was only human.

“Don’t worry. I won’t be angry at the old man because he was just stubborn and made a minor mistake.”

“It was not a minor mistake.”

“I managed it easily, so it was a minor mistake. And he already apologized. It’s okay as long as he doesn’t make the same mistake again.”

“Sir Rittier, did you apologize?”

“Yes, Your Highness. And I made an oath to serve him after you if he could save you.”

“Then you won’t question his status again?”

“Of course, I won’t.”

“Okay.”

Ereka turned her head towards Sungjin and smiled brightly

“Thank you, Sungjin.”

She was beautiful when she smiled gracefully as a princess. But her girly smile after dropping all her worries was even brighter, and that made Sungjin smile with her.

Humm. Not bad.

If he won this game as a pro gamer, the audience would have cheered for him, but her smile was worth it.

“Wow. Now you guys have made up? That’s great! Hehe.”

Jenna flapped her tail sword with happiness.

The stubborn old man can chill out a bit.

“Shall we go?”

“Yes.”

Sungjin led the way, and Ereka, Jenna and Rittier followed him. Regardless of who was on the battlefield, this showed who the real leader was here.

As soon as they stepped out, numerous people flocked and surrounded them. They were the ragged and haggard rabbles of the extra class.

“Your Highness!”

“Your Highness!”

“I’m glad to see you all.”

With her smile, people bowed.

“You’ve returned.”

“Yes. I’ve returned.”

They were not orchestrated people for a parade; they were just people who were starved and suffered in waiting for her.

“I know the hardships you have been through.”

“Your Highness... my daughter was...”

“My baby as well...”

They couldn’t even finish their words, but Ereka understood what they wanted to say. She understood the hardships they had endured under the tyranny of the Blood Ruler.

“I’m sorry I was not able to return earlier.”

“What are you talking about. We are happy that you have returned at all.”

“Okay. I will protect you from now on.”

Ereka closed her hand tightly.

“Oh, yes, I know you are starving. Sir Rittier. Open castle warehouse one and two right now. Start distributing the grain the Blood Ruler collected.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“Reopen the clinic for those who are unwell and use the east side of the castle for them. If you need more space, report that to me.”

“I will follow your orders right away.”

“And take care of those young, old, and disabled who have lost their caregivers, and the prisoners... No. I will take care of that by myself.”

People dropped to their knees in tears listening to the continuous orders of the princess.

The ruler that they had been waiting for was finally back.

Level 0 Master - Chapter 15

She couldn't let this be repeated.

“I'm happy to see you okay during this time of sorrow.”

“Your Highness...”

A woman in a rug grabbed Ereka's dress. Looking at the grubby woman, Ereka greeted her with a smile.

“Oh, Lady Narnia. You're okay!”

“You remember... my name...”

“Of course. When I visited Charity Hospital, you showed me around. I was worried about you.”

“Your Highness...”

Her name was Narnia, not number 29. She burst into tears.

“Now. Everyone go back to your place. Now... from now on... I will not let this happen again.”

Ereka comforted every one of them.

Looking at that scene, Sungjin was proud. If the words “hope” and “salvation” had a body, this must be it. This was a perfect example.

Yes, this was a true victory.

What he used to play on earth were e-sports games, but in this world, it was a war of victory or defeat. That meant that his choices had bigger consequences. He was able to do as much good as he was able to do evil.

The feeling of achievement was better, and of course, the reward and the honor following the victory were great. But those were not the only things he got from their victory.

He was also able to protect and save many people. There were people who were imprisoned in order to become sacrifices. And above all... there was a girl who abandoned her happiness to save them.

Beautiful.

Sungjin admired Ereka, who was comforting everyone. Her graceful smile as a royal princess was also the bright smile of a girl. Her tearful devotion as a ruler all concentrated in one person—she was beautiful.

And Sungjin protected that beautiful flower, which made him feel more proud and feel like this was the greatest victory ever.

In the world where a game was a war and not a sport, he realized how glorious victory could be.

Hm. This was tasteful.

He won in a battle where the destiny of a kingdom was at stake. There were other bigger words such as “honor,” “pride,” “self-respect” or “glory” that were better suited for his victory, but he summed it up as a tasteful experience and smiled.

After saving people, Ereka took Sungjin to another place—the state coffers of the castle.

When Ereka unlocked the magic spell, the coffers were full of gold bars and gold coins.

“Is everything pure gold?”

“Yes.”

Sungjin estimated the quantity. One gold bar was 1kg. Comparing this to the things on earth was impossible, but one bar was worth at least 40-50 thousand dollars.

“200 thousand gold bars... is there a similar amount of gold coins?”

He was speechless when he estimated the total worth of around two billion dollars.

When one won first place in the world on earth, the prize would be 1/10,000 of what he was looking at. Even if he took additional income into account, the best would be 1/1,000.

This was the next level of a national budget.

“Yes, we won this over thanks to you. Half of this is yours.”

“Half...?”

“To continue your journey to become an Arc Master, you will need a lot of money. This is yours.”

Half was one billion dollars, and in front of an unrealistic figure, he shook his head,

Living off the insurance money from his parents and having a ten-dollar chicken was a luxury for him. This was too much for him. If he were a normal high school student, he would have lost his mind.

But he quickly refocused.

Yes, this is a national budget, and the battle I fought was an internal war.

He was not just a gamer but a commander who was commanding in the middle of an internal war.

On earth, a national budget was normally a few dozen billion dollars, give or take, depending on the country's economy. The taxes from ten million people would be around one billion dollars. Having half of the kingdom meant that.

Ha. Look at me. I said I would become an Arc Master, and now I am realizing what that would be.

When he saw the people he saved and now when he saw the countless gold bars, he realized again that this was not a game, but a war between kingdoms. He didn't know what to do with this enormous amount of money.

Sungjin took one gold bar into his pocket as a souvenir. That was already worth tens of thousands of dollars.

And the rest...

"You can do whatever you please."

"What? But..."

"I told you from the beginning. I will titularly become an owner of half of the kingdom, but you will be the sole ruler. The army of the Blood Ruler retreated, but the people's livelihoods must be still miserable. Use it to take care of them."

"Will it be... okay?"

"First things first. I will get the rest after you manage everything."

Sungjin was reminded of the weary people that were freed from the prison. Becoming an Arc Master meant he would defeat kingdoms, which also meant that he would get political and financial power to control this enormous budget.

He didn't decide where to use it yet. But he wouldn't forget to use it to save people.

Looking at Sungjin, Ereka's heartbeat started to rush again.

You... really are a man of your word.

He promised to give her sole rulership, but she didn't expect him to keep his promise in front of gold.

He was really a man of his word.

She slowly approached Sungjin.

Huh?

When her clear and beautiful eyes came close to him, he lost his next thought for a moment. That moment, she kissed him on his cheek.

Huh!

Sungjin, who was cool in front of the massive amount of money, froze due to her actions. He didn't know how to explain the warm and tingling feeling spreading out from his cheek.

Anyways, this was the first time for him.

While his brain stopped functioning, Ereka stepped back blushing.

“Oh... don’t think that this is strange. I was following the traditional manner... as a princess... I showed my appreciation to the knight who saved the kingdom. There was... no other intention.”

“Ah, I got it. Hahaha,” answered Sungjin a little stupidly. This was completely out of his character.

“Yes. There was no other intention... then... I will leave you to it...” Ereka stuttered then ran away.

Without looking her way, she bumped into a wall on the right. And then, ran towards the left only to bump into a wall on that side too.

Sungjin vacantly stared at Ereka running zig-zag on the straight corridor.

Hm. Well... she said it was a gesture to thank me... it was a traditional manner... don’t try to think about it too much. Hahaha.

Sungjin put his mind together with an awkward smile. But... the warm feeling remained.

On that day, Sungjin freed many people, and by giving up his gold, he provided enough food and hospitals to take care of them.

He deserved to have pride that he saved many people. His reward for that was his self-respect, the many people’s appreciation and... a special appreciation from a girl.

* * *

Chapter 8

The next day, Ereka prepared Sungjin’s breakfast after finishing up her morning duties for the castle and the territory.

That became a morning routine.

She prepared amazing food as usual... but holding the spatula, her mind was elsewhere.

Ahh. Sungjin was so cool yesterday.

Deep inside, she had given up, but he saved her with one single letter. He was a strong, charming man despite the fact he had no level.

I did something way too bold because of his charm... no... it was according to the tradition. There was no other intention.

That was the right level of appreciation. But... she didn't understand why she was blushing every time she was reminded of that moment.

He was not just strong. He had an incomparable character with the other high-level heroes. No other hero from any other kingdom tried to save her from the tyranny of the Blood Ruler. The three knights gave their loyalty to the Blood Ruler.

It was only Sungjin... who fought against the strong enemy to save her.

On top of that, he forgave Rittier's rudeness without hesitation and gave an enormous amount of gold to save the people. He is so manly.

Crackle. Crackle.

Her fried eggs were becoming coal, but she was still thinking of Sungjin.

What should I do to make him like it?

He seemed like a meat lover.

What if he hates me because I gave him something he doesn't like?

She thought that whenever necessary, it was better to have people take bitter medicine even if they didn't like it.

But what if he hates me because of that...? If not hate, what if he thinks I'm boring...?

Ha. What about the herbal medicine? He said that it was too bitter and that he didn't like it.

What if he got angry or bored with her when she insisted he take it? She thought that she was doing what she was supposed to do, but she couldn't understand why she was so worried.

Ereka couldn't comprehend the reason.

Her eggs became charcoal, and they ruined the frying pan.

Ha. First, I'll serve him his breakfast...

Then she finally realized what was going on in the kitchen. She burned the frying pan, the pot boiled over and smoke from the oven filled up the kitchen.

“Huh... Oh my god... What did I do?!”

She moved quickly to clean up the mess with a frown on her face, but it was too late.

During breakfast, Sungjin didn't know how to react with his breakfast that was so different from usual. Some food was burnt, while some were uncooked. The presentation was a luxury.

“Huh?”

He was not the complaining type, but since someone who used to be a good chef made this many mistakes, he was rather worried.

“I'm sorry. I will prepare your lunch properly.”

Ereka dropped her head and apologized over and over again.

“No. It's ok. We've all woken up on the wrong side of the bed once or twice.”

“No. Let me prepare your lunch properly.”

“Don't worry about it.”

Sungjin briefly thought maybe it was that time of the month, but he was polite enough not to ask such a question to a woman. He started to have his breakfast.

“Ah, but this is okay,” Sungjin complimented the fresh salad, although the presentation was not so tasteful.

“Is it?”

Ereka's eyes were shining with happiness. She was truly happy at least one thing pleased Sungjin.

Ah, thank god.

That was really good news. She was so relieved and happy. His comment made her happy again, just like magic.

Okay. I will make his lunch well.

* * *

After breakfast, Ereka walked with an elated mood and a beating heart.

Ah ah, Sungjin.

She brought him disastrous food, but Sungjin was nice to her instead of complaining.

And he found one good thing to cheer me up. I should really treat him with a nice lunch. What else does he like?

Ereka wanted to know everything about Sungjin.

Do you have a favorite color? What is your favorite flower?

And... what she really wanted to know the most was...

Did you... have a... lover... back in your... world?

When she summoned him, she thought he was one of those people who violated and had numerous women, but now knowing that he was the opposite of that, she wanted to know.

What if he had a lover...?

She sighed.

Of course, he had one.

A charming guy like that, there must have been a line of girls waiting for him.

But how many...

She was curious, really curious, but she didn't have the courage to ask him. She wanted to know the truth, but she was too scared to listen to his answer.

Ha... what should I do...?

After sighing for a while, she shook her head.

Silly me. What am I thinking? The war is not over.

When the Blood Ruler returns awakened, her kingdom will be in danger.

She only just recovered half of the kingdom; the people living in the other half were still suffering.

I need to focus on victory.

Supporting Sungjin to come up with a brilliant strategy was her job, not worrying about his past lovers.

Yes. No matter how many women he's had, he is still my savior. I need to support him to stay on the top of the game while training myself as a knight.

Curiosity was not a part of her duties.

Yes, I need to train my mind. My mind.

She walked into the practice room with her spear.

Ha.

She hit a block of wood, and the wood returned to her. Repeating that numerous times, a few dozen pieces of wood started to attack her from every direction.

She kept hitting them without using her Heroic Power to train herself. It was impossible to level up outside of the battlefield. But martial arts skills could still be trained.

In real situations, victory and defeat were decided by the skills given by God, but training herself in martial arts was better than nothing.

She tried to concentrate.

Concentrate... concentrate...

While she was trying to concentrate, Sungjin and Jenna entered the practice room.

"Oh, the princess is there."

"Huh? She started early."

"She is good, don't you think?"

"I agree. She is good."

Sungjin nodded.

Moving rapidly with a spear, Ereka's movement looked like a beautiful dance rather than just a fight. It was a martial art and a dance at the same time. It was powerful yet beautiful and practical but also ritual.

Gosh, you are looking at me. I don't know what to do.

Although she gave up being a girl a long time ago... but for some unknown reason, she didn't want to show herself like that.

Her spear lost its balance, and a piece of wood struck her shoulder.

Huh! What am I thinking? That doesn't matter. Concentrate!

"Huh? The princess made a mistake. That's rare."

"Hm, no one can be perfect all the time."

"Hehehe. But don't you think the princess with her spear is really beautiful? Other people say women are supposed to wear dresses and not armor, but I think she is beautiful and cool!"

"Ah, I agree with you."

A blooming flower in a dancing ball was beautiful, but the princess who was sweating from training to protect her people was equally beautiful.

"But... Hm..." Sungjin didn't finish his sentence.

What she really liked was cooking and dolls, but seeing her give up her favorite things and wear armor instead made him feel sorry for her. But that was not something he could say to someone who was trying her best.

Ereka couldn't stop listening to their conversation.

Why didn't he finish his sentence?

Three pieces of wood struck her.

Ouch. What I'm I doing, listening to other people's conversation in the middle of my training.

She corrected the grip of her spear.

There's no reason to be flattered. Sungjin is not a guy who would say bad things to someone in their face. Even if he thinks I'm ugly, he is generous enough to compliment me.

Ereka gave up her dresses for armor and decided not to pursue beauty. She thought it was not right for those things to linger as a ruler.

Now, I need to concentrate...

"Huh. You are not on top of your game today."

"We had a huge fight yesterday. It is okay to relax a bit."

"Hehe. You have a point. Ah, right. Sungjin Oppa."

“Hm?”

“How’s the princess compare to all the girls you used to have in your world? Is she pretty like them?” with twinkling eyes and a flapping tail, Jenna asked Sungjin innocently.

“Cough.”

What is this kid thinking about?

“Why in the world you think I was a womanizer?”

Ereka couldn’t stop paying attention to his words.

“Huh? Because Grandpa told me you were a level 0 extra here but looking at your ability, you used to be the ultimate king of your world and will become one in this world as well. So we should treat you accordingly.”

“To correct that, I’ve never even dated a girl.”

“Really?”

At that moment, Ereka lowered her spear thoughtlessly and turned to ask Sungjin something