

## Level 0 Master - Chapter 31

“Of course.”

“Huh? With your intelligence that couldn’t defeat me in chess?”

“I was about to.”

“How?”

Eustasia’s attack became more intense. Sungjin’s pieces started to lose their formation.

Ah...

Cheering on Sungjin, Ereka was on edge. It was clear that Eustasia had the upper hand.

And this didn’t mean a simple defeat in a chess game.

They were facing a joint attack from the three kingdoms, and Eustasia would use this game as propaganda to show Sungjin’s limit. That would end up agitating the heroes in Ereka’s kingdom, and they’d be defeated even before the fight began.

What should we do...?

“Listen to me. I’m not saying you should give up everything. I rather think you are excellent. Although you are just an extra, with your abilities, you are a real talent.”

“I appreciate that.”

“Sure. But the world is different. So compromise to find the best way. Give up the schools and keep the hospitals. Let the heroes tax, use, and punish the extras even if it is only on paper. If you define the limit, you can still protect your people. And finally...”

She moved her queen forward. It was a move to finish the game.

“Give up your crown to keep your queen. People say the king is the strongest, but the queen is the strongest piece, isn’t it?”

“Do I look like a drag queen?”

Sungjin’s joke made Eustasia smile.

“Not the gender. Let Ereka rule in front of everyone and support her from behind. But I really think highly of your intelligence. Your plans will help us a lot because foreign

countries are trying to attack the alliance of the four kingdoms. I will reward you handsomely.”

She was a realist.

But she was not a realist who tried to give up on reality. She had a clear understanding of the situation and the circumstances to find out what to do and what not to do.

An incompetent, free-wheeling king, incompetent and corrupt aristocrats, and strong, threatening foreign countries—she was the general who was keeping the country from becoming a mess.

She was not just a great general of the battlefield, she was also a great general of politics. She believed an idea had meaning when she could make it happen.

She pointed out the recklessness of Ereka’s pursuit but also provided a realistic solution to convince her to follow it.

“That is a realistic solution. I appreciate your offer,” answered Sungjin.

Sungjin...

Ereka had tears in her eyes.

Sungjin was a real hero compared to anyone else, but his victory had to be taken away only because he was a level 0.

She was a part of the heroes, but she didn’t agree with the other abusive heroes.

When we had to fight the Blood Ruler, they looked away, saying it was just an internal rebellion. And now they’ve gotten together to fight against Sungjin. This is unfair.

It was unfair, but she couldn’t stop them.

Even Sungjin said that the offer was reasonable.

“But I refuse to take the offer.”

“Huh?”

“The first reason: my dream to become an Arc Master.”

This was his ambition as a man who loved to fight.

“The second reason: I promised Ereka to make a world where no one is abused by anyone.”

He was a man of his word.

“I have no plans to go sideways in my journey.”

“The dream of an extra is not a concern for them. One man can't fight against the whole world.”

“If it was just a normal man. But I'm not. I will become an Arc Master.”

Then Sungjin moved his knight into formation.

Eustasia's face stiffened while trying to make a counter move.

What...? Is this...?

The position of his knight was interesting. It was as if he was breaking his formation on purpose and waited for this moment. It was an ambush to cut off the rear supply route of an army that was certain of its victory.

Her queen had to find a way to retreat, but that was not the only thing that stopped her. The strangest thing was...

What is this? I thought I blocked the bishop's position, but he revived it in an important spot of the game.

She had to look at the board again and again, but it was clear that Sungjin turned the tables with one move.

His retreating, scattered pieces were suddenly connected to these two to siege her pieces.

She played out her next move a few dozen times in her head, but the answer was the same. She was defeated.

“No way. The move you made has defeated any of my counter moves.”

“The rules, the book, common sense, traditions, and stereotypes. Haha. If I played by those rules, I would have been defeated. If I had played by the book, you would have beaten me slowly.”

“So the moves you wasted... you were planning to use them all at this moment?”

“Yeah.”

“I've never seen this kind of move before.”

“To understand this, you should think outside of the box and open all possibilities,” Sungjin answered calmly.

Common sense said that one man couldn't fight against allied, privileged heroes. But he was here to break that rule.

He wasn't someone who would settle with such common sense about “reality.”

“Haha... You want to overcome reality to make your dreams come true...? You are reckless.”

“I will become an Arc Master. The allied, privileged heroes of the three kingdoms are just some mid-stage bosses. I won't step back.”

“Sungjin....”

Ereka's eyes started to shine again.

Yes. You fought the Blood Ruler with your confidence.

And he saved her and her country.

Sungjin would stop them even if the three kingdoms attacked her kingdom.

If you say that you can, I will trust you and fight with you.

Eustasia had to look at Sungjin again.

This guy's ambition... this is tiring.

“If that is your answer, I will have to cut your throat. Don't count on my friendship with Ereka. I came here because stopping this war would benefit my country, but if I can't stop it. I will destroy you and bring victory to my king.”

“Do your best. But I will beat you.”

“Okay. I get it. You defeated the Blood Ruler... and me in this game.”

Eustasia started to get rid of chess pieces.

“But...”

She started to set the board again. This time, the black and white pieces were not parallel.

She set out only a king, a bishop, a knight and three pawns on Sungjin's side and set everything on her side. It was nearly a 3:1 ratio.

"Can you still win?"

"This is not a fair chess game at all," Ereka complained on behalf of Sungjin.

"Life is unfair."

Eustasia cut off Ereka's complaint.

"I've already told you that it is an alliance of the three kingdoms. That's not just it. Your heroes pretend to be obedient, but they actually blame you for taking away their privileges. Can you still win this game?"

It was not a game that anyone could win with just a plan.

Sungjin showed a grin while looking at the chessboard.

"I accept your challenge."

He took his knight and removed Eustasia's king.

"A knight can't move like that."

"A genius doesn't follow the rules. That's reality."

"You are saying you are a genius?"

"I need to be even more extraordinary to become an Arc Master."

Their eyes met fiercely.

Eustasia's silver eyes looked at him like a sharp blade, but Sungjin's eyes were calm and generous.

She sighed.

"Haha. Okay. So let's say you found a crazy military plan to defeat the three-on-one battle. But you are an extra. Social class is what gives you the right and power of ruling."

Even though some were unhappy with Ereka's rulership, nobody would deny her legitimacy. But Sungjin was just an "extra."

“The privileged will never give up their privileges. They will fight back even harder when you corner them. They will think of their stakes even if they have to break the rules. When that happens...”

She picked up a piece from another board.

“What if the Holy Pope or the Golden Wise king attacks you?”

The intrusion of the third and fourth forces.

“The Holy Nation Rupellion is stronger than the alliance of the four kingdoms. And Eldorado of the Golden Wise king is even stronger than Rupellion. We kept our independence because we kept the balance between those two.”

The Holy Pope and the Golden Wise king—they had their awakening long before the Blood Ruler. Even the Blood Ruler was just an infant when compared to them.

Moreover, they had numerous artifacts. They were on another level when compared to Riad, who was still strengthening one magical sword.

The alliance of the four kingdoms was there only because they held each other in check and kept the balance. But if the four kingdoms became even weaker, the balance would be broken.

“Those two have no mercy on their people compared to the alliance of the four kingdoms. If your pursuit of the ideal world brings calamity to the people, will you use your good intentions as an excuse?”

Eustasia protected the new king she put on the board with her Heroic Power. Even a knight would be pushed back.

“In politics and in the military, you need to face reality. To pursue an ideal world, you need to have a clear look at reality to plan every step. If not, you will destroy not only yourself but everyone around you.”

She looked at Ereka as well.

“Let me ask you. If you really think of him, don't you think you should stop him? You know what is going on these days?”

Ereka held her hands and smiled gently to answer Eustasia's sharp questioning.

“Sungjin saved my life and my country. We will follow his dream until the end wherever that end will be.”

Life or death, rise or fall, those were the results to come. She would be his shield to protect and pursue his dreams.

“Ha. That is so you.”

“Hmm.”

Sungjin was grateful and felt a bit awkward at the same time. He continued his answer to change the air in the room.

“I told you. My dream is to become an Arc Master. The Holy Nation or the Golden King’s land, they are just preliminary rounds.”

To move on to the next round and step into “the center,” he had to unify his continent or at least had to get vows of obedience from the other countries.

And then he had to unify that center to stand above the Kaiser in order to challenge the “God” in the sacred territory.

“They wouldn’t accept an extra? I will make them.”

He picked up his teacup and threw the tea on the board

“Here’s a flood.”

All the other pieces except a king washed away.

“A flood in a chess game. This is your answer.”

Eustasia nodded slowly.

It was an obvious foul play. But this level 0 had been winning his battles whereas the heroes competed for their skills.

And he just declared that he would not only defeat the alliance of the four kingdoms but also Rupellion and Eldorado with his own “abilities” to prove himself.

A game changer.

A guy who had a lot of nerve.

Hmm. He is more than what they said.

She almost had a crush on him. If only he was not her enemy.

I want to make him mine. If I can tame this wild beast...

But if we clash, he is just an enemy of her king.

Eustasia put away the chessboard.

“Let’s play not on this small board but for real.”

She drew her sword.

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### Chapter 3

Her sharp sword cut a marble table like a pie.

“I get that you have defeated the Blood Ruler. But intelligence sometimes works and sometimes doesn’t. Unlike a stable level.”

“Even your level can be defeated by flexible plans.”

“Hmph. Enough talking. I challenge you to a duel.”

“A duel.”

“If you are really a man who will become an Arc Master, beat me.”

Eustasia pursed her lips and positioned her hand above her chest to provoke Sungjin.

“A duel can be fun. What’s in it for me, though?”

Sungjin’s eyes became sharp.

“If you lose, you’ll be mine.”

When Ereka heard that, she shouted with surprise.

“What... what are you talking about?”

She would make Sungjin... her man?

“As I told you before, become a ruler’s hand behind the scenes and be my right-hand man. I think you can be useful for our defense.”

Eustasia scanned Sungjin’s body like a wine connoisseur who found a valuable bottle of exquisite wine. Sungjin also looked at her with the eyes of a conqueror who had found a precious jewel.



Ereka felt the spark between them and held Sungjin's arm to stop it.

"Sungjin. You don't have to accept this. A duel. Your specialty is to command your army in a battle. Don't react to her provocation."

"Thank you for your concern. But it's okay."

Sungjin smiled and thought that this sounded fun. He looked like a lion that was watching and waiting to attack a deer.

"What if I win? Will you be mine?"

"I've already made an oath to my king. But you still need a reward. Okay. What about my virginity?"

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"Thank you for worrying about me, but it's okay. I know she is level 7, but my intelligence is above her."

"But... but... the winner gets... it's nonsense..."

"It is unbalanced. But the stronger team is supposed to have the lower dividend."

Sungjin laughed arrogantly telling her that he, a level 0 extra, was the stronger side.

"I take your challenge."

Eustasia looked at him and licked her lips.

You are telling me that you are stronger.

An arrogant level 0.

It was ridiculous and absurd, but that made her want him more.

Frankly, she didn't expect him to accept her challenge.

"Intelligence" was his strength, but that didn't mean he could defeat her in a duel. Maybe in a battle but not in a duel.

Of course, she heard his swordsmanship was slightly above the Blood Ruler. But she also heard that it was impossible for him to overcome the difference in physical abilities and that he had no chance when it comes to "skills."

But he accepted her challenge.

I wanted him to refuse and make him realize his limits when it comes to the level difference.

She wasn't serious about her virginity, but if he could beat her, she thought that this kind of a guy deserved her virginity.

She understood why Ereka had a crush on him.

Ha. But there's no way you can beat me.

It was his vanity and pride that accepted the challenge.

When he defeated Ereka, he was supported by a weak wizard of level 4. But a duel?

"Just one thing. I want to change the prize. Taking someone's body only because I won is not my taste."

"Huh? You want to tell me that you don't like my body?"

"I admire it as a piece of art, but taking someone without love is not my thing."

"That is rare for a guy. You are interesting."

Ereka gave a sigh of relief.

Thank... thank god. Oh... no, no yet.

That was only the case if Sungjin won. What if Sungjin lost?

Noooo. What should I do? I should trust Sungjin.

But objectively speaking, the result was quite clear.

What should I do? What should I do?

Eustasia held her precious sword up.

"Okay. This is a secret treasure of my family. This is the best artifact as a sword all over the four kingdoms. Although that is below what's at stake for you, to step down..."

"Sure. The stronger team always has a lower dividend."

They made a deal.

"Let's cut to the chase. What about tomorrow?"

“Sure. Tomorrow at sunrise.”

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The news of a duel between Sungjin and Eustasia turned the castle upside down.

“Your Highness. What is happening?” Rittier asked with surprise.

“My queen. What happened during the meeting?”

Jenna’s eyes shone with innocent curiosity.

“So...”

Ereka explained what happened to them. Her face got dark while telling them the story. Especially at the part where Eustasia said that if she won, she would take him and if she lost, she would be his woman.

Rittier shouted with rage.

“How rude! Your Highness already decided to treat Sir Sungjin as an equal. How dare she challenge him to a duel as if she is also an equal! It is an indirect insult to Your Highness!”

“Oh, yes. That is also true.”

This old man doesn’t understand the real matter.

Jenna tilted her knife tail while sucking on her finger.

“Huh? That means whoever wins, Sungjin Oppa has to date her?”

“Yes. If you take that literally, fortunately, Sungjin changed the condition to take her precious sword if he wins.”

Oh, that’s good news.

“I want to believe in Sungjin that he could win but... this is just...”

Ereka swallowed her next words. Sungjin might become someone else’s lover.

“He has no reason to take such an unfair challenge... I’m worried that he’s crossed an unnecessary line.”

“Don’t worry my queen. It’ll be all good when he wins.”

Jenna showed a bright smile.

Sungjin Oppa can take the best sword out of the four kingdoms, and that b\*tch will be kicked out and embarrassed. She'll never try to make a move on him again. That's not a bad scenario.

"That's right. Since Sungjin is confident, all I can do is to trust him and support him. I should cheer for him with a smile."

Ereka finally found her smile back, but Rittier thought differently.

"I disagree. You need to stop him."

"Should I?"

"Your Highness. This is Eustasia's plan. Of course, Sir Sungjin is a great man, but she went straight for his bold and ambitious personality."

"Hmmm."

"If he wins, of course, that will be a good thing. But look at the numbers and actual abilities. Sir Sungjin's power is with his intelligence, not with his physical abilities."

"Clearly..."

Ereka's face became dark again.

Level 0. That was a limit he could not overcome.

She had to get rid of the cloud of faith and love for him to clear her head and stop him.

Maybe, this is a moment where I have to tell him the hard truth out of love rather than... follow him out of love.

"Of course, Sir Sungjin's swordsmanship is good enough to cover the level difference if it comes to close combat, but it is still impossible against Eustasia."

"Clearly... impossible."

"That's right. He would not even be able to approach her. Then she will push him with her skills only to defeat him."

Ereka's face got stiff.

This was my mistake.

I should have stopped him. Sungjin didn't understand Eustasia's skills, and she was provoking him, knowing his ambition and pride.

Not only the level difference, but Eustasia's skills would make it impossible for Sungjin to win.

Ereka blindly followed him because she was so fond of him.

Oh, oh. I was so jealous that Sungjin might end up with her and didn't see the most important thing.

Jenna's knife tail stiffened.

Wow. The old man is right. This is a big problem.

She was also blinded if Sungjin wanted Eustasia as a girl or not and missed the obvious point.

This is not good.

Sungjin couldn't win against Eustasia, not in a duel. Maybe in a battle with an army. He had defeated the Blood Ruler, so maybe he had a chance against Eustasia.

But not in a duel.

To defeat the queen, who was level 6, he commanded her to support him. But a duel against Eustasia who was level 7...

And that was not the only problem.

All he has is his excellent swordsmanship; the situation is not good for him.

He wouldn't be able to even go near Eustasia.

It was clear that Sungjin didn't know anything about her ultimate skill.

"I should go and stop Sungjin now."

"That's a good idea."

"Yes, you definitely should."

Ereka rushed to the practice room to find Sungjin warming up.

"Sungjin."

“Hey, Ereka.”

“Are you preparing for tomorrow?”

“Yeah. I was warming up.”

“Well... your duel tomorrow...”

“Oh. I will beat her. Watch me,” answered Sungjin while putting down his sword.

His sweat smelled like that of an alpha male.

Ereka suddenly didn't know what to tell him.

“Oh... about that... aren't you... worried?”

“Haha. I know everyone thinks I have no chance. Especially, Eustasia is sure of her victory.”

He winked and raised his index finger.

“But you know I have my own plan, right?”

“Yea... yeah. I know.”

Ereka didn't know what to do and held her hands tight.

Oh my god. I came here to stop you, but I don't know how to tell you.

Her head was telling her what Rittier and Jenna told her was right. Rationally thinking, it was clear that Sungjin had no chance.

Since it would be a duel, his intelligence wouldn't be useful, and due to Eustasia's level of skills, he wouldn't have a chance to use his swordsmanship.

But... he said...

The guy she loved was believing in her that she would trust him.

She couldn't tell him that she didn't think that he could.

“Be on my side. I will beat her.”

“Of course, Sungjin. I trust you.”

Ereka slowly nodded with a smile.

“Thanks,” Sungjin answered with a grin.

He was in a very good mood.

When he was trying to become a pro-gamer, he also wished to have fans who could cheer for him.

Now, he was in a different world aiming to become an Arc Master; yet, he still had the same wish.

Moreover, a girl he liked, who was also beautiful and kind, was cheering for him. That made him feel proud of himself.

“Get ready. I will leave you to it.”

“Sure. Let’s talk after I beat her tomorrow.”

Ereka left the room after saying goodbye to Sungjin.

She leaned on a wall and almost slid to the floor while shaking her head.

Ugh. I can’t stop him.

She couldn’t tell him to stop, not while Sungjin was telling her to support him even if anyone else won’t.

Will it be okay...?

What if Sungjin lost and ending up losing his dream as well? She would regret it for the rest of her life that she was not able to give him truthful advice.

But...

Sungjin was telling her to trust him and to support him.

Sure. I will trust you.

There was no right answer.

Maybe she would regret not stopping him.

But if Sungjin won, she wouldn’t forgive herself for not trusting and supporting him.

So I will just trust you, Sungjin.

There was no guarantee of what would happen tomorrow.

Her head was telling her that she should stop him now.

She didn't even ask him if he knew about Eustasia's ultimate skill.

But...

Yes. I trust you.

She decided to trust him beyond her thoughts and reasons.

Whatever the odds were and however strong Eustasia was, she decided to trust Sungjin.

Ereka closed her eyes and put her hands together as if she was praying.

Yes. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. But you said you would win.

So she would stop reasoning and just support him.

Although she couldn't think of any way for Sungjin to win this duel, Sungjin was also beyond whatever she thought.

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## Chapter 4

The day of the duel had come.

Since it was Eustasia, an outlander, who challenged him to a duel, Sungjin decided where to have their duel. He chose a temple with a triangular roof supported by many columns.

It was a battlefield created by the gods and was separated from Valhalla. They could enter it with their body and abilities, but even if they died on the battlefield, they wouldn't die in their world.

Eustasia was convinced on her victory and smiled while looking at the map Sungjin had chosen.

Haha. Your confidence will cause your defeat.

She understood that he didn't back off because of his ambition. He also didn't know of her secret plan.

That was the limit of his intelligence. It was impossible to consider a factor that didn't exist in the database.



Well, of course, you are holding an ace of your own.

The temple was beautiful outside, but it wasn't as it seemed. She thought that if they both were holding an ace, a level 7 who had more power could counterattack more easily and win.

Level 7 vs. level 0.

It was just a joke to compare the two, no need to even mention having a duel.

But what if he won?

That is impossible.

But what if he won out of all odds...

If he was a guy like that...

She laughed away when her heart started to pound.

Ha. Let's not worry about what won't happen.

A war would drive everyone into destruction. She had to stop the tragedy. That was her duty.

Soon enough, their duel began.

Sungjin and Eustasia headed to the battlefield, while the others stood outside of the temple to watch.

The grand temple standing on the hill was more grandiose than the Parthenon on Earth.

The numerous columns standing inside of the temple looked like pipe organs and gave a certain style to the temple. The crystal decorations around the walls and columns were reflecting the natural light coming from outside and lit up the dark interior, making it a majestic scene.

But those two in the temple didn't have time to enjoy the scene.

The battle map was set to provide numerous crystals that could be used to activate items.

Sungjin changed his weapon into a good one with high attack power, but it was not as great as Eustasia's weapon.

That helped him, a level 0, to have his minimum offense power to start the fight.

But Eustasia also used crystals to activate her artifact that had power beyond any magical sword. They had the same amount of crystals, but she was the one who had the upper hand at the end of the day.

That didn't discourage Sungjin.

"Let's get it started."

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That was the name of the greatest sword of the four kingdoms.

Her sword flew to cancel the distance between them and started to attack Sungjin.

The sword made a sound as it tore the air and flew to Sungjin's heart.

Sungjin twisted his body to escape it, but the sword turned horizontally to follow him.

He barely made it out, but Eustasia's sword raised up to drop back down like a drill.

Sungjin's movement was reaching the limit of the human body while her sword was beyond the limit of the human body.

The distance was the best barrier. Her class was an archer, she kept a safe distance while attacking her opponent.

But she was not just an archer.

An archer alone couldn't do what she was doing. Her arrow changed direction freely, and when Sungjin stopped one, it still came back to hit him even stronger.

That was why the people called her the greatest general of the four kingdoms.

Sungjin's swordsmanship was strong only if he could approach his opponent, and her power was making that useless.

That was her famous ultimate skill—the Sword of Heaven's Will.

The passive skill that she could use without a cooldown time made her an archer-classed swordsman.

Sungjin's position became more dire.

He leaned back to avoid the sword raising up, but in the next moment, the sword cut horizontally and cut off his hair.

He survived by a distance of one centimeter.

He was barely making it. He had no chance to approach Eustasia; stopping and avoiding her sword was getting overwhelming.

“Ha. Next time, I will cut your throat.”

Eustasia declared her victory.

No one was able to say that she was wrong... apart from Ereka.

“It is clear that now is the time Sungjin would use his plan that he kept hidden.”

“Do you... really think so? I don't think there is one...” said Rittier next to her, but Ereka put her hands together.

“Didn't he do the same for his other fights?”

“Hmm. Hmm. That is true.”

“And when we had to attack the Blood Ruler, I knew that it was challenging for him when he said I would make us win. But this time, he was confident just like that time when he fought the three knights. So I'm sure that he has a secret plan that we don't know.”

“Do you see the difference?”

“Of course, I'm always keeping my eyes on him... oops.”

Ereka covered her blushing cheeks with her palms.

As she expected, Sungjin was not standing there to let Eustasia hit him. He pushed a little button on a column.

“The real fight starts now.”

Heavy smoke filled up the temple after the sounds of explosions.

In a second, Eustasia lost her sight. Well, Sungjin lost his sight as well.

A smoke bomb.

He activated a device called a smoke bomb.

If fair to both sides, the owner of the battlefield could place any device in. That was the right of the owner of the battlefield. So Sungjin decided to plant a smoke bomb that would cover the sight of all on the battlefield.

It was not difficult for him as the owner of the kingdom to order such simple construction.

Eustasia quickly moved her sword again, but Sungjin wasn't there.

Ha. This is a good one.

Eustasia wasn't angry that her fierce attack had been interrupted. She was laughing it away.

Yeah. I expected a fight like this.

She expected Sungjin to know about her ultimate skill. He was too brilliant to be someone who didn't do his homework.

Disrupt sight to approach the opponent—this was a plan she had never seen from the other heroes.

It was a refreshing countermeasure that heroes could not think of because they were busy thinking of their skills and magical items.

Was it possible for him to think of this because he is a level 0?

But he had never seen this kind of thing from any other extra. She thought maybe Sungjin was just special.

But that is not enough.

Her sword had the heaven's will; his trick couldn't stop such a great sword.

She activated her Heroic Power to maximize her senses.

"Heaven's Net."

There was nothing that could escape Heaven's Net.

Her visual and auditory senses fortified to let her detect all the movement in the smoke and the quietest sounds in the temple.

Two privileges were given to the archer class: one was sight over a long distance; the other one was an overwhelming sensory power.

When she activated her first skill, the smoke bomb was not a problem.

There!

Her sword attacked where Sungjin was without mercy.

Bam!

But her sword couldn't reach Sungjin.

Eustasia realized what was stopping her sword.

The columns!

The numerous columns in the temple were not for decoration.

He is not bad. He really thought of a lot of ways to approach me.

An ultimate skill that wouldn't allow for close contact also meant if he could approach her. He could fight her with one less ultimate skill.

But...

That didn't make Eustasia panic. She was rather enjoying the situation, and more Heroic Power blasted off from her.

You don't know one thing.

"Judgement."

Her sword roared and shook the air.

The columns started to vibrate, and the columns that were blocking her sword were sliced in half to cut off Sungjin hiding behind them.

That was another one of her skills.

She could maximize the slicing power of her sword, and with her ultimate skill, the power increased dramatically.

After slicing Sungjin behind a column, she flipped her hair.

He lost because he didn't know that her attack was strong enough to cut the columns.

Well, even if he made it out, she still hasn't used her last skill yet.

Zunk.

In the next moment, blood spurted from her arm.

Something sharp had struck her.

She was surprised by an unexpected cut but only for a very short time. On her next breath, she found her calmness back. She got rid of the sharp object and circulated her Heroic Power to heal her wound.

Is this an ... arrow? No, it is not just an arrow.

It was a bolt from a crossbow, but it was a different kind of bolt from what she had seen.

Unlike a bow, a crossbow was a weapon launched by mechanical power. It was a revolutionary weapon on Earth, which was easy to handle for the inexperienced but also capable of better precision and stronger destructive power.

It allowed for a newly-recruited, untrained person to destroy an experienced knight's armor, shaking up the class order in the middle age. Due to its power and characteristics, one of the popes prevented its use among Christians.

Here, it was just a meaningless object in this world where only archers with Heroic Power existed.

But a person who could find a proper use for it was holding it at the moment.

Sungjin ordered a blacksmith to make a crossbow and was using it at the temple with the help of crystals.

Sungjin ran among the columns while re-loading it again.

Unlike a sword, he never learned how to use a bow.

Although he was a brilliant person who knew how to make his movements under his calculation, it was impossible to master archery overnight. But a crossbow was different. By using a crossbow that relied on mechanical power in the temple where there was no wind, he could hit his mark.

I know you have skills, but my knowledge is my skill.

Eustasia also recognized that Sungjin couldn't do much unless he approached her.

Whatever it is, if he can attack me efficiently from this distance, I'm sure he is using some kind of a bow.

Just like her sword that was not a “bow” but could still attack from a distance.

The archer class had lower defense compared to a knight, and they couldn't avoid attacks with reflexes like that of a warrior.

The damage from a magical bolt using crystals was not something she could ignore.

But one thing was still not clear to her: she definitely cut him into two pieces, but he was still attacking her.

She dialed up her senses to the max.

Wait... the sound of his movements and his silhouette, are there... no, there... what?

Then she finally realized that the “pipes” on the columns that looked like decoration were letting out sounds that made it tricky to find the origin of the sound.

That was not the only trick.

There were dim silhouettes behind the smoke, but they were illusions that only “looked” like decorations.

This temple was architected for such purposes.

Ha. Now I see. Those are devices that can be used by both of us, so it is fair. But he filled the temple up with them.

It was a symmetrical structure, but Sungjin was the one who was using the temple freely to confuse the archer with her augmented sensory abilities.

This was a bold counterattack that was tearing up the net that was impossible to escape from.

So that is your skill, huh?

If he was fighting against other heroes, they would have been foaming at the mouth in rage. But she was not like the other heroes.

She accepted that intelligence was a power equivalent to skill.

So she didn't get caught off-guard or became angry.

She was thinking about how to defeat Sungjin calmly and serenely. And she didn't take much time to come up with her answer.

I will destroy you.

With her dominant power, a trick was unnecessary.

Her opponent already studied everything to prepare for this fight. If she tried to use a trick, that would be what he wanted. Using her dominant power of a level 7 to slay him, that was the most definite way to defeat him.

Her sword flew without a moment's rest.

Her sword sliced through every movement of Sungjin no matter if it was real or an illusion. At the same time, she destroyed the obstacles that were protecting Sungjin.

To cut the columns, she consumed a considerable amount of her Heroic Power activated her skill "Judgement," but she wasn't worried.

She had already figured that she could catch Sungjin before she ran out of Heroic Power.

But Sungjin wasn't waiting for her to catch him. He kept throwing her into confusion while moving and aiming at her with his crossbow.

But that was not a threat to Eustasia anymore.

No use.

Her sensory ability was at its highest.

She could hear the vibrations of the air around her when a bolt was coming to her.

Once she heard the sound, she used her tremendous reflexed of level 7 to avoid it.

This needed a lot of focus.

She didn't just have high physical abilities; she was a general trained for battles, but she was worried about something else.

You are losing your protection devices one-by-one. I'm sure you will not keep depending on your crossbow that is not even working.

She knew he would approach her suddenly.

She was convinced that he was waiting for the moment when she lost her focus because that would be the only moment he had of defeating her.

But you won't get that moment.



She was sure she wouldn't lose her focus. She would keep her guard up until the end of this fight.

As soon as he came near, she would kill him even before he could use his sword with her third and her secret skill.

More columns disappeared.

She was cornering Sungjin and his illusions.

It was clear that he didn't have much time left.

This was the moment he had to finish this fight.

Bolts flew toward Eustasia from three different directions.

It had to be simultaneous launch by machines since Sungjin didn't have the skill to replicate that himself.

Now!

He tried to finish this fight by distracting her with three bolts to approach her. She raised her Heroic Power even higher to fight back.

She cleared the bolt facing her and avoided the bolt from her back by stepping to the side while making a turn.

She jumped to avoid the bolt coming toward her leg.

The moment she was jumping seemed to open up a weak point, but that was the moment she was waiting for.

She was about to use her ace to finish him, and as she expected, Sungjin didn't miss that moment.

"Game over," he declared with confidence, but he didn't approach her.

Instead, the temple collapsed.

"What?"

The columns were falling down.

The walls collapsed.

With the sound of an explosion, the roof of a few thousand tons of weight fell down to crush everything underneath.

Gravity was a simple phenomenon due to natural power, but the power and range of its destruction were as huge as an ultimate spell of a wizard.

Eustasia quickly tried to fight back the falling pieces of the roof, but it was not enough to stop anything.

In the middle of a glorious demolition, the smoke cleared.

Sungjin was looking at her, standing in the exact position where he started.

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But that was not what he planned.

Everything was simply a deception to trick her into his real trap.

She cut down the columns only to walk into his trap, just as he had planned. His real plan was to make her use Heaven's Net and Judgement so that she could exhaust her Heroic Power.

So when the roof fell down on her, she had no power to stand it.

The whole battlefield was a trap. The victory was his even before they even started their fight

Her judgment and reasoning were toyed with.

Sungjin smiled at Eustasia.

"Seeing the trees doesn't make you see the forest."

That was his plan for this fight. All the devices and his crossbow were the trees.

"Good fight."

Looking at Sungjin declaring his victory, Eustasia twisted her silver hair with her finger. This was her habit when she was trying to understand something.

Is this really the end of the fight?

Did I really lose?

Was I already defeated as soon as I walked in?

It seemed there was no way out.

No. Not yet.

Her silver eyes shone sharply.

There was one way out.

“What about this!”

Eustasia set off her Heroic Power in a moment to launch herself towards Sungjin.

In the middle of the collapsing temple, there was no way out.

No, there was one way out.

If he didn't plan to be crushed by the roof with her, Sungjin must have made one safe spot—the spot he was standing on. That must have been the only safe spot that he prepared.

In the middle of the risky situation, she was able to understand that in a heartbeat and moved to that spot right away.

Sungjin made one move, so she would answer with another move.

In the collapsing temple, Sungjin couldn't approach her as fast as she did. Not because he couldn't find a route but because he simply didn't have enough physical ability to do so.

But she was level 7.

She was beyond Sungjin's ability.

She thought she was turning the game around.

Sungjin grinned. He was impressed by her quick thinking and bold moves she made in a second.

“I knew that you would make it in a second.”

“What?”

Thinking something was wrong, Eustasia's sword split Sungjin.

He was sliced into two pieces, but it was not him. It was an illusion of him.

S... stone?

Looking at a small stone on the floor, she realized what it was.

It was a cheap item with a simple function of playing pre-recorded visuals under a timer.

He had already prepared the Illusion Stone, knowing he would have this kind of a conversation with her.

If... If he already knew... and prepared this... that means...

It was all a trick to make her stand on the one "safe" spot in the collapsing temple.

In reality, that was...

Sungjin smiled outside of the temple.

"That is the worst spot."

She could have survived with her level 7 power if she was standing anywhere else, but not on the spot she was standing on.

A normal person wouldn't have been tricked into that spot. Not many people could think like that in a moment of panic.

But she was not a normal person; she was the greatest general of the four kingdoms. But that is also why she was tricked into the spot.

They murmured the same words at the same time.

"If your opponent can read three moves ahead, get them on the fourth move."

All Eustasia could see was a gigantic rock covering her sight.

So that is what he is.

She was strong, that was true. But she lost because of only one reason.

He was stronger.

It was as simple as that.

He was level 0, but his intelligence defeated her even in a duel.

This was a great man.

Her head knew that when he defeated the Blood Ruler, but now she was experiencing it and feeling it with her heart.

This man is a great man.

This was the first defeat in her life.

She smiled.

“Ha. It was more thrilling than I expected.”

\* \* \*

## Chapter 5

The fight was over.

Sungjin confidently strolled back to the waiting room.

“Sungjin.”

Ereka calmly walked toward him with a smile and slightly bowed to him.

“Congratulations.”

“Thank you for cheering me on,” Sungjin answered with a smile.

“Wow! Sungjin Oppa, congratulations!”

Jenna hugged him while flapping her knife tail around.

“Congratulations, Master Sungjin.”

Rittier made a deep bow.

“It was an interesting fight.”

Sungjin was satisfied. It was more interesting than the other fights where he could win with one or two tricks.

“Well, should we go and find her?”

“Yes. We should cheer her up.”

“I don’t think she would need cheering up, but yeah let’s find her.”

They left the waiting room to see Eustasia.

...

Sungjin and Eustasia faced each other outside of the temple while the others stepped back for them and waited.

This was not a real battle approved by the gods with land at stake. This was a duel that took the form of a mock battle, so the Valkyrie wouldn't come out to give rewards to the winner.

But those material benefits were not the point of this fight. They fought for much more important things: the rights of the people, who didn't have any privileges, to have dreams and pursue their dreams in this world where extras had no right to even hope.

The qualification of Sungjin to pursue his dream of being an Arc Master.

The greatest general of the four kingdoms challenged him, and Sungjin proved his abilities.

"You won."

Eustasia accepted her defeat without any hard feelings

"You fought well."

Sungjin admitted it was not an easy fight.

Beyond the fight, they had a strong connection. They both found the greatest opponent out of the four kingdoms. It was a good fight.

"Here, my sword as promised."

Eustasia handed her artifact, the Sword of Heaven's Will.

It had a golden sheath and a sapphire on the handle. It was a sword of legends decorated by a platinum thread, and it was handed to Sungjin.

An artifact couldn't be handed over or stolen without the consent of the owner. The only way was to kill the owner.

But she just handed it to Sungjin.

"This is the greatest artifact of the four kingdoms as a sword..."

Apart from the sealed magical sword of the Blood Ruler.

“Please take care of it.”

“I promise.”

Sungjin took the sword.

The sapphire started to shine with blue light, and the mechanical voice of the Valkyrie echoed in his head.

“Now the gods have approved you to be the new owner of the Sword of Heaven’s Will. Do you want to check the status of the sword?”

Sure.

The capacity of the sword was shown in front of Sungjin.

[Nickname: Sword of Heaven’s Will

Crystals needed to activate: 3300

Striking power: 200

Real name: Condition doesn’t fit. Can’t be disclosed.

Skill: Condition doesn’t fit. Can’t be disclosed.

Character 1: Condition doesn’t fit. Can’t be disclosed.

Character 2: Reduce skill reloading time by 40%]

“So this is it.”

Sungjin understood why it was called the best sword of the four kingdoms.

It had more striking power compared to other magical swords using the same amount of crystals.

He slashed a bronze statue standing next to the temple.

The statue was cut effortlessly.

“So this is an artifact. It is a different level.”

He was sure that it would be even more special if he could unseal the hidden power. Sungjin was curious, but he knew there was no way to know for now because it was clear that the condition was connected to his level.

But only with its dominant striking power, it was already a good weapon for him to fight against other high-level heroes.

Sungjin was compensating his lack of skill with his intelligence and his low physical abilities with his swordsmanship. Having a strong sword with high striking power would make his swordsmanship more efficient.

It was a low price compared to what Eustasia demanded, but the absolute value of it was not low at all.

“Wow, Sungjin Oppa...!”

“Congratulations.”

Jenna and Rittier were excited while Ereka was deeply impressed by him.

“It is a great sword.”

Ereka felt bad that her friend lost such a nice sword, but she changed her mind realizing it was Eustasia who started the duel, asking Sungjin to give up his dream.

But a true friend should tell her what is right and what is wrong.

It is good that thanks to this fight, Eustasia will throw out her prejudice and approve of Sungjin’s abilities and his dream.

“So you will stop telling Sungjin to give up his dream?”

“No. That’s a different matter,” Eustasia denied. “He has defeated me, but that does not mean he changed the opinions of the other kings and heroes. The alliance of the three kingdoms will make a move soon.”

She stared directly at Sungjin.

“I won’t talk anymore, as I lost, but do try to stop them.”

Her sharp eyes were telling him that he couldn’t win anyways.

Sungjin laughed it away and told her, “Clearly the war has not begun. So here’s my offer.”

“An offer?”

“Join my team.”

“Haven’t I already told you that I made an oath to my country?”



“I know. But I’m asking you to fight for your people, not for your king.”

“I told you to be mine, and now you want me to be yours. Ha. You really want me on your side?”

“Yes.”

Sungjin gave a straightforward answer to her cynical question.

“You are an ideal fighter... an archer that can attack from a distance.”

On earth, he used to organize his team with different players of different abilities. A distance DPS was one of the key positions.

In this world, there was no ideal team structure since there was a variety of maps and members, but having an excellent archer would be a game-changer.

“The wall of reality is harsh. Don’t drown in your dreams and think of how to make moves in reality. Your advice is valid, but if you join me, I can overcome that harsh wall much faster. What do you think? Don’t you want to create a world where the lowest person can also live like a human?”

He was saying that he would rather be on a team with her rather than her enemy.

Eustasia stayed in silence for a while after his sincere offer.

Teaming up with this guy... would be great.

She just learned in her fight with him that he was much better than her soldiers. They were all saturated in elitism and proud of their level while they knew nothing about battles.

By having each other’s backs and trusting each other, they would understand each other without words. And then they would be able to build up a country... with a Merciful Rulership for sure.

But that was an impossible dream.

“I admit you defeated me. But don’t be ridiculous. Your dream will end up being destroyed the four kingdoms.”

“Too bad.”

“Next time we meet on the battlefield, we are enemies. Don’t forget that,” said Eustasia as she turned around.

She walked away as her silver hair moved across her back.

It's okay. I lost, but it was from a successful strategic point of view.

She had to give her sword as a price, but now she knew who Sungjin was. Now she understood what kind of tactics he used to win his battles.

That information was more valuable than her precious sword.

She left in an imposing manner.

Sungjin couldn't take his eyes off of her for a while.

Too bad.

Her abilities and personality, her fit and beautiful body as well—there were many reasons he wanted her to join him.

Oh. No. Not the last one.

Sungjin had a bitter smile. He was a man, and sometimes his lower body part took over his thoughts.

But I won't give up.

He needed more strong members to fight against the alliance of the three kingdoms and to fight the Holy Nation and the Golden Wise King later.

I will win this war before I offer you to join me again.

He thought she left thinking her precious sword was not a huge price to pay to learn about his abilities, but it didn't matter.

While she was studying him, he was also studying her.

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But she couldn't ask him her next question.

“Isn't it that you want her as a girl?”

Even if so, what could she do? But if not, that would be nice for Ereka.

Sungjin, but you...tried to stop me from fighting with you.

It was her who tried to stick with him on his team, but he tried to keep his distance at first. But on the other hand, he wanted Eustasia although she refused.

What is this difference?

This was a moment to celebrate Sungjin's victory, but she was concerned.

Probably because I'm weak despite my level, and I'm not a person who was made to be a ruler. I'm just struggling to be one because of the situation.

On the other hand, everyone knew that Eustasia was a great general. She was a cool and confident woman.

Maybe she was not as strong as Sungjin, but they understood each other, and they were compatible. She felt their connection from when they played chess.

I'm just a person that Sungjin wants to protect.

But Eustasia might be a girl he wanted to be with.

She had so many questions that she couldn't ask him.

Next to her, Jenna's knife tail was sharpening in anxiety.

This is an emergency!

It was good that Eustasia rejected the offer and went back, but maybe a tiny spark between Sungjin and Eustasia could become a passionate fire. Who would know what would happen if they became a team!

Don't worry, My Queen. I will take care of her.

Jenna promised herself.

I don't know what those girls are thinking, Sungjin thought.

"Ah, Right. Ereka, I need to ask you another favor."

"What is it?"

"Please announce this bill and enforce it."

Sungjin handed a document to Ereka.

“This is... a bill to limit the interest rates of private loans and to write off a lot of existing interest. It also cancels any debt if the payoff already exceeds the principle and if there’s a sudden amount of interest.”

“Yes.”

Ereka was a queen. She thought about the consequences this bill would bring.

The heroes who had been earning a lot of money by loan-sharking would hate this, but the people who borrowed the money for the momentary difficulties in life would be grateful.

Eustasia bought some dishonored bonds to save a few, but Sungjin’s bill would set up a ground principle to build up a new rule that would change the future as well.

“This is way more advanced compared to Eustasia’s method. You didn’t tell me this when she was here... was it to respect her present?”

Sungjin smiled to answer her praise.

“Not necessarily. Her method will minimize the conflict, while mine needs power to control the aftermath.”

He admitted that Eustasia’s method had its reason.

“There’s a difference between idealism and realism. Not necessarily that one is better than the other.”

One who wanted to have enough power to realize his idea, and one who would find a solid, realistic solution—the two would conflict, but neither of them would be wrong.

The problem is, I’ve won the fight, but she still didn’t approve of my abilities.

The reality she saw was their defeat by the alliance of the three kingdoms. Even if they unified them, they would be destroyed by two greater powers from the outside.

Ha. This battle, I will claim victory...

So that she would consider his offer again. He wanted to bring her on his team.

“But Sungjin, you are the one with that power.”

Ereka found her smile again.

“I will support you with my small power to help you.”

“It’s not small, I feel safe with you,” Sungjin responded.

“That... that is good news.”

Ereka blushed and looked down.

Even if it’s a lie to cheer me up, that made me so happy.

She felt better when he said she was also helpful, even though she was not as strong as Eustasia.

Looking at her being shy, Sungjin smiled.

She doesn’t know that she really is helping me a lot. She is really cute when she is like this.

She was the queen of a country but also a cute little girl, and also an extraordinary knight.

If he could combine the shield of Ereka with the sword of Eustasia, that would make a great team.

What I need is not just a victory, but a great victory so that she will reconsider.

Well, that kind of victory suited his tastes as well.

\* \* \*

## Chapter 6

The land of Eustasia. The Kingdom of Cariana.

Seyzo II enjoyed his new artwork under the sunset. It was a great pleasure for him to enjoy his own art while enjoying precious wine.

“Although I made it, I have to admit that this is a really high-quality piece.”

When the king said that, Count Satirus next to him answered right away.

“I have never doubted your ability in creating such a masterpiece.”

Next to them, the royal guards quivered in indignation.

Only a mad man or a treacherous adventurer who wanted to kiss ass would enjoy such a scene.

In front of them, there were... ten dead bodies displayed outside of the wall. But that was not the reason why the royal guards were quivering.

Those bodies became...

Accessories.

Bones. Flesh. Muscles. Nerves. Intestines. Eye balls.

Each part of the body was dismembered and displayed as if they were there to teach people what the human body was made of.

The muscles were sliced, and the intestines were stretched.

What is... this...?

It is a tragedy when a human kills another human.

But the soldiers understood that sometimes the king had to do such a thing to rule his kingdom.

Anyways, the king, who was in the highest position, considered them to be talking livestock. But even so, death without any dignity like this was too much.

Even when a butcher killed a cow, he would try not to cause too much pain.

This was a madness beyond technique.

Even crows wouldn't approach the scene, fearing the grotesque display.

"Such a perfect punishment for the traitors."

"The evil traitors have been favored with your blessing to make them into such a great masterpiece. It is beyond even the blessing of Kaiser Bizar who opened the era of the silver."

The royal guards had a hard time not swearing.

The traitors? If they were the real traitors, maybe they did deserve such an inhumane punishment, but they were just porters who delivered food for the servants of the castle.

Their only crime was that they talked about the new king in a country nearby who married the princess and built hospitals all around the country so that the extras could get treatment. And they added in that they envied those people if that story was true.

They were now being punished as traitors because they didn't appreciate what they had from their own king and instead envied their neighbors.

Under such a king, they didn't know what would make them traitors. But the king was laughing and enjoying all this.

"Hahahaha. That's too much flattery."

"I can't lie to my king."

"Hahah. Yes, I know you are a truthful servant."

"So I have a favor to ask you, My King."

"Sure, what is it?"

"When you build your new hunting ground, let me have the honor of creating a place that suits you..."

Count Satirus deeply bowed, asking the king to give him a chance to serve him.

The development of the new hunting ground was a huge construction plan. It would have a massive budget, which also meant that he could embezzle a massive amount of money as well.

The royal guards next to them worried about ten thousand people who lived there, but they didn't dare to open their mouths.

"Hmm... Should I? Okay, sure you can take it."

Ohhh. He accepted. All I need to do is add one more flattering compliment!

While Count Satirus struggled not to laugh, the Lord Chamberlain came in.

"Your Highness, the great General Eustasia is here to see you."

"Oh. Eustasia is here? Bring her in."

"Yes, Your Highness."

Shit. God damn it.

Count Satirus tried not to show his frown.

This was bad timing for an opposing party to walk in.

But the king already said yes. He won't take it back.

Count Satirus stared at her fiercely walking in with her shiny silver armor.

Ha, I'm sure you've heard of what he did during your absence. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to use your hypocrisy now that you are on the people's side and not the king's? Or are you going to simply go with the flow?

If she went with the flow, he could still work on the new hunting ground, but if she crossed the king's will, that would be even better for him.

"How was your vacation?"

"Thanks to Your Highness, I had time to refresh myself."

"Hahahahaha. Good to see you."

"Thank you, Your Highness. Were you enjoying the sunset?"

"Yes. I was enjoying the sunset and the well-deserved ending of the traitors. I've ordered to do it personally, but isn't it a masterpiece?"

Now, what is your answer?

Count Satirus waited for Eustasia's answer. She looked at Count Satirus and smiled brightly. They stared at each other fiercely for a moment, then she answered.

"Burn them."

"W... what!"

The king's forehead wrinkled. Count Satirus smiled discreetly.

Hahahahaha. You feel bad for them, so you want to cremate them? You just made a huge mistake!

It was well known that Eustasia had mercy on the extras. But she was so manipulative and juggled well between ideals and reality, and it was such a challenge to make the king hate her.

This shocking scene has clouded your judgment.

"What did you just say?"

"I said to burn them."



“Are you insulting me!? Do you think that is such rubbish has to be burnt?”

“Because it was your work, Your Highness,” Eustasia bowed and answered.

“You... you...”

The king looked angry like he was about to chop her head off.

“If it was a work of Count Satirus, it would have been a masterpiece.”

“What?”

The king became curious.

“If this was a work of Michelchello, who made the Pantheon, I’m sure it would be a great masterpiece.”

“But because I was the one who did it, I should burn it?”

“Yes. Your Highness, you are the one who has transcendental amounts of creativity, who I would say is a reincarnation of the Art God. That wouldn’t be good enough to be your masterpiece.”

“Hmm.”

“I’ve heard that the ceramists break all their works with the tiniest fault in order to make the great masterpiece, even if they could sell those works to the market at a high price. Your Highness, you should leave one great masterpiece that can change the world rather than creating many works. That is a great piece of art, but your true ability is beyond that.”

“Hahahaha. You are right. I shouldn’t be satisfied with that. Go ahead and burn it.”

“That’s an excellent decision, Your Highness.”

Shit, you manipulative b\*tch, such high-level flattery.

Count Satirus was deeply disappointed.

But that is not the most important thing today. I want the benefit of the new hunting ground.

“Your loyal advice opened my eyes. Do you want something as a reward?”

“I’m happy if you are happy, Your Highness. I don’t need anything else.”

“Hahaha. But still, you can tell me.”

“If I may... I heard that you are building a new hunting ground?”

“Yes. I need a resting place to relax from my affairs,” the king answered.

“I will do my best to create the perfect place for you, Your Highness.”

Count Satirus quickly answered to stop the king from changing his mind.

It is already too late even if you want it!

Eustasia smiled.

“I agree that you need a resting place. Mountain Egrel is the second-best place in this country, people will praise your choice if you choose it for your new hunting ground.”

“The second best?”

The king repeated her unpleasantly. But Eustasia continued as if she didn't recognize that.

“Yes. Everyone knows that it is after the Mountain Angril.”

The king stamped his foot.

“Nonsense! I need to take the best of everything. Having the second-best for my hunting ground is nonsense!”

“I apologize. I just wanted to... share the information I've heard...”

She bowed deeply apologizing.

“Count Satirus! How dare you not recommend me Mountain Angril!”

“Huh? That is...”

Count Satirus couldn't find his answer. Mountain Angril was not the best...?

That B\*tch...!

“Your Highness. I've never heard of it—”

“That is curious. I'm sure you know of it well since it belongs to you,” Eustasia cut him and added.

“What?” Seyzo II shouted with anger.

“How dare you... you took the best hunting ground... and recommended me the second best...”

“Your... Your Highness. That is not true.”

“Shut up! I will make my new hunting ground on Mountain Angril!”

“Count Satirus. Why don’t you offer it if you don’t have any other intentions? You are such a loyal servant who would offer anything to the king, right?”

Eustasia smiled gracefully, cutting his heart with her words and not with her sword. Her silver hair shone brightly.

“Of... of course, Your Highness.”

Count Satirus couldn’t say no, although his face was miserable.

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“Do you have a recommendation?”

“Nobody could be good enough in your eyes, Your Highness.”

“I know.”

“However, it is such humble work that doesn’t suit you, so maybe Marquis Gariel would be a suitable person to do it.”

“Good. I will follow your advice.”

“Thank you, Your Highness. May I leave now?”

“Sure. A war is coming, get ready.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Right after her meeting with the king, Eustasia went to meet Marquis Gariel.

Marquis Gariel was on her side, and he was happy to hear that Eustasia helped him to get the job to build king’s new hunting ground on Mountain Angril.

“Hahahaha. I wanted to see the look on Count Satirus’ face. Too bad I missed it.”

“It was quite a scene.”

“I will give you half of the profit.”

“I just made a suggestion. The king thought highly of your abilities.”

“Haha. Don’t be modest and take my offer.”

“If you say so... I will take it.”

Both were happy with the result. They could make a lot of money by changing a few numbers on the book. It was a typical way of corruption, however, Eustasia didn’t look ashamed.

“Let’s keep our good relationship for a long time.”

“Sure. If I get a promotion, I will remember your support.”

“Hahaha. You are generous to say so.”

After her meeting with Marquis Gariel, she headed to her mansion.

She laid her tired body down and closed her eyes.

I just stopped the king from harming too many people.

The innocent people killed by the king would be cremated. And she was able to save many people from harm because unlike Mountain Egrel where ten thousand people were living, Mountain Angril was the private land of Count Satirus.

Moreover, she gave the job to her ally and got some money. Politics were real, and in reality, she needed money.

She needed allies to get rid of Count Satirus.

And she needed money to take care of the people because the king wouldn’t do anything for them.

It was easier to tell the king the truth and to live a life of integrity; being an upright knight was not a difficult task. But if she tried to do so, she couldn’t protect anyone from the king or keep her country going.

She had to become messy in order to fight against the corrupted treacherous people.

She had to hide her loyalty to the king so that she could lead him toward a Merciful Rulership because people would see that as a weakness.

That was her way of stopping the king from making more mistakes.

A wicked witch. An ass-kisser. A leader of partisan politics. An embezzler of the national treasury.

There was nothing she wouldn't do. That was her way to be loyal to her country.

Sungjin and Ereka. This is me. What would you say now?

She wondered what her friend Ereka, who was in danger while she was trying to pursue her dream with integrity, would think of her.

What about Sungjin, who was supporting Ereka. What would he think of her?

But whatever they would say didn't really matter to Eustasia. She was not pursuing a noble dream itself. She wanted to protect as many people as possible from her king's tyranny and make her king be as merciful as possible.

So Sungjin and Ereka had a different goal from her. She had to stop them in their next fight.

\* \* \*

## Chapter 7

At her mansion, Eustasia greeted the adjutant general.

He looked like a hard-working, honest, middle-aged man.

"Welcome back. How did it go?"

"Yeah, I achieved half of my goal. I couldn't defeat him, but now I know enough about him."

"So we can't avoid the war."

"Don't worry. We will win."

"With our military force, it is clear that we will win, but I'm worried about what will happen after our victory. And although we have the upper hand, the king is building his new hunting ground while preparing for a war."

His complaint made her smile bitterly.

He was right. Even though they had the dominant force over their enemy, they should be spending their money studying up on the enemy or building a wall to protect themselves from other countries. But the king was spending the money on his vanity.

“That’s enough. Finding solutions to those problems are also a part of the duties of a servant.”

“I’m just worried about you working too hard...”

“Don’t say such things to anyone else.”

“Of course. Should I prepare your bath?”

“No, it’s okay. I will be in my room. Don’t let anyone in until I tell you to do so.”

“Sure.”

The adjutant general left quietly, and Eustasia went into her room and locked the door.

“Ugh.”

She fell onto her bed, knowing she was finally alone.

She was the greatest general of her country. She had a lot of enemies and eyes on her every move.

This was the only time she could let down her guard.

I’m tired.

A meeting with the king and then a dinner with the marquis.

That was not too bad. The fight with Sungjin was what really exhausted her.

This... is too much.

Whenever she felt like this, she had a way to fix it.

She opened a box under her bed. The box was locked with magic, and only her fingerprint could open it.

It was a golden box decorated with platinum lining, and it looked like it was hiding forbidden treasure, or if someone touched it without permission, it would self-destruct with fire.

She slowly opened the box.

Inside the box...

There was... a forbidden...

Cream cake.

The box was able to keep things fresh for an unlimited amount of time with magic, so the cake still had the same taste as when it was freshly baked.

She used a spoon to take a bite.

“Oh...”

She enjoyed the taste and fell back onto her bed.

Oh, this is the taste of heaven.

She closed her eyes and forgot about everything for a moment.

The cream melted in her mouth like snowflakes; this was her guilty pleasure.

Ohhhh

It was delicious. It was so delicious.

Army food had nothing like this cake, so she couldn't show her being so happy and excited by cake to anyone.

This was the only time she allowed herself to let down her guard. This was the only time she could loosen up and forget everything about the military or politics.

Ah... this is... really my only pleasure.

But... it didn't take long for her to finish the cake.

I wish I could have another...

She cleaned up the plate, not leaving any crumbs.

She didn't need more than one forbidden pleasure, because she knew if she did, she wouldn't be able to escape it.

Just like that man.

Hmph... I'm thinking about him again.

She tried not to, but after her fight with him, he was embedded in her mind, and she couldn't stop thinking about him.

“Cha Sungjin.”

Quietly, Eustasia pronounced his name.

The man who beat her for the first time in her life.

Hmph. I was so sure that I wouldn't marry a tedious guy.

She never met anyone her age who made her feel like she wanted to spend the rest of her life with them.

It was not just guys her age—even guys from other generations seemed tedious.

They all had a bit of level, but they didn't have any ambitions.

When the elders pushed her by telling her that she had to continue her family, she even thought of having a baby with a random guy and raising it. She would tell them it didn't have a father.

But I finally met someone.

She finally met a guy who deserved her.

She was already curious about him when she heard that Sungjin helped Ereka get rid of the Blood Ruler, Riad.

It was clear he was an extraordinary guy because he confidently decided to stand next to Ereka, who had no chance of winning, and actually led her to victory. And the fact that he was a guy around her age made her more curious.

I imagined what kind of guy he would be.

But she was a bit disappointed when a painter brought in his portrait. He looked like a ridiculously ambitious and sly wildcat...

Ha. That is not ambition, that's a dream. He is more dangerous than I thought.

He was not a wildcat but a lion, the king of the jungle.

Schools...

What he wants was not just a Merciful Rulership. He wanted to reorganize the world to the level beyond imagination.

If he became an Arc Master, that wouldn't mean that the world would have a new ruler. It meant a whole new world.

A creator who would define the world before and after.



He would destroy the current world, or he would be executed. He would be a god of destruction who would destroy either himself or the world.

His manly spirit.

His great ambition.

His amazing abilities.

He was a man with both great abilities and great ambition.

I want to meet him again.

I want to fight him again.

And...

“Will you join us?”

She thought of Sungjin’s offer again.

Joining him...

She rejected with some hesitation, but she couldn’t stop herself from imagining it.

If my king... wasn’t mad... and at least half the man of Sungjin, maybe I could have more pride when I fight for him.

Maybe she wouldn’t have to play politics to make her allies.

She wouldn’t have to tell people about this cruel reality and crush their dreams.

Maybe she could be a proud soldier with true loyalty.

She thought there was no such thing as a country where people could achieve rightful dreams with rightful acts.

But he was trying to take the bull by the horns.

She knew that he was running to his own destruction.

But I can’t stop thinking about him.

Just thinking about him sped up her heartbeat.

She didn’t think he would accept her challenge for a duel.

She didn't even imagine that he would defeat her.

But when he did, she was thrilled.

But...

He was an enemy.

He was an enemy of her country, that one she had to protect.

He was an enemy of the king she made an oath to be loyal to.

She had to defeat him in the upcoming war.

I tried to convince you and Ereka with my realism.

She tried to convince him because she knew Sungjin also wanted to help his people. If he accepted her offer, then they could coexist, but he didn't. There was nothing left but a war.

She had to react to her situation. Now she had to defeat him with her power just like any other general from the other kingdoms.

So having a crush on him was a sin that she had to overcome.

But... he was just like cake...

No, even worse than cake...

She couldn't stop thinking about Sungjin.

If she met him in a more friendly circumstances like on a team, they would have been lovers. Or if he was a hero, the alliance of the four kingdoms could have been kept, and their romance over the border would have been accepted.

Then they would have fought back to back in battlefields and enjoyed more things in bed.

What would he like?

He looked like a wild man who could be aggressive.

Sungjin ripped her clothes off and threw her on the bed.

"I liked my clothes."

“I will make you forget about your clothes.”

His hands grabbed her body roughly.

He tasted her body like a wild animal.

He overpowered her and took her without hesitation.

He was so powerful, he didn't even need any techniques.

He was just like a general who easily jumped over a moat to break a castle gate in a single blow.

She was conquered without a chance to resist.

But maybe it would be the opposite.

While he was meticulous with his perfect calculations, maybe he would treat girls like that as well.

He started to touch her from her fingertips.

She didn't imagine a man with such a wild body could treat her so delicately.

Little by little but more and more, he made her want him more and more.

He was controlling himself perfectly, even in this difficult situation and finding perfection.

He slowly conquered her as if he were conquering a castle.

He cut off her reasoning as if he was laying siege to a castle and cutting off their supplies, and he played with her senses as if he was deploying an infiltration team to manipulate the people inside.

Either way would be good to me.

She picked up the plate to clean up.

But I will never know how it would be.

## **Level 0 Master - Chapter 37**

Let's not compare...

Although he was not a great man, Seyzo II was still her king.

If the king was not as good as Sungjin, that also meant she would not be able to support him.

People couldn't change their family even if their family had a lot of flaws.

She had to support the flaws of the king.

But...

Sungjin had everything she wanted her king to have...

And maybe that was why she couldn't stop thinking about him.

Maybe...

She wouldn't be able to forget about him even after she killed him.

Maybe...

This is what people call love at first sight.

Although she couldn't admit it as a loyal servant of her king.

\* \* \*

## Chapter 8

A few days after Eustasia's visit, the Kingdom of Sevrantina received the declaration of war.

"Just like how the sky has to stay above the ground, the heroes have to stay above the extras. Only disaster will follow and turn the world upside down if we have an extra as a king."

Duke Lubrate, the ambassador of the three kingdoms, read the message in front of Sungjin and Ereka.

"Moreover, building schools and hospitals causes disorder among the classes, and the rights of the heroes to collect taxes and to use the extras as labor have been taken away. The heroes are suffering greatly."

Sungjin laughed at it as if he was watching a black comedy film.

"As a consequence, the three kingdoms are giving the queen of the Kingdom of Sevrantina one last chance to fix this mistake. Follow the decisions of your allies to

punish the traitor and follow the old rule. If you refuse, the alliance of the three kingdoms will have no choice but to punish you to correct your mistakes.”

It was Ereka who showed her rage.

“They didn’t even care when the Blood Ruler killed hundreds of thousands of people for her magical sword, and now when they see a real hero who defeated her getting what he deserves, that infuriates them? For me, Sungjin is the real hero,” she stamped her spear on the ground and continued.

Sungjin scratched his cheek.

It could be awkward if I try to say such things.

But it sounded sincere when Ereka, who was usually calm, said it.

The ambassador cleared his throat.

“If you ignore this warning, I’ve been told to declare war,” said the ambassador showing another roll of declaration.

“Here’s the answer. I, Queen Ereka of the Kingdom of Sevrantina will stand by Sungjin in life or death. If you attack him, that means you are attacking me, if you deny him any means, then you are denying me. If you point your sword toward me, I will stop you with my spear. This is my message to them.”

“Hmm. You would leave the alliance of the four kingdoms to stay on the treacherous demidevil’s side? Aren’t you worried how history will judge you?”

“Don’t be rude to Your Highness!”

Rittier shouted with rage but Ereka stopped him.

“We shouldn’t punish the messenger. I will let you go, but tell them that it was not the alliance of the four kingdoms but Sungjin who saved this kingdom and its people from the Blood Ruler.”

“Well, then I will leave a word as well,” said Sungjin with a grin.

“Tell the three kings. Enough barking, try your best to bite.”

He lifted his index finger and made a gesture to call a dog to come.

“W... w... what did you say?”

“You heard it right the first time, so just tell them as it is.”

“You... you worthless extra...! How dare you talk like that to the kings!”

“Why can’t you understand the situation? The kings have nowhere to step back, but you should be a little more careful if you want to keep your position after I conquer them all.”

The duke suddenly didn’t say anything.

In his head, a complicated calculation was going on.

But soon, he stopped.

It’s a three on one fight, and the Kingdom of Sevrantina is not even united within. Sungjin has no chance to win. If I tried to please Sungjin, the kings would punish me for that. What if someone tells this to the kings?

“Shut up! I’m a loyal servant of my country, I will be the one who will punish you in the battle.”

“Do it, if you can.”

“Wait and see.”

The duke went back, outraged and angry.

When it was just the two of them left, Ereka asked Sungjin with a careful voice, “But well, Sungjin. Will it be okay? Because it is clear that they are more powerful.”

“Wasn’t it the same when we had to fight against the Blood Ruler?”

“You are right,” Ereka said, putting her hands together as if she was praying.

“Don’t worry. I provoked them on purpose. I want them to attack us out of anger.”

“Oh, I remember what you told me when we were about to fight against the Blood Ruler. You told me we have a chance if we are defending side.”

Although, they ended up attacking the Blood Ruler.

Now I know what it means for Sungjin to defend in this fight against Eustasia.

And she also knew that Sungjin had been constructing many different things in many battlefields.

It was clearly his way to prepare for this war.

“So Sungjin, you want to take this opportunity to expand our territory and free the people of the three kingdoms?”

“Well, I need to unify the whole continent. This is just the first step.”

He had to go through the qualification stage if he wanted to go up to the final level.

Anyways, Sungjin was interested in a good fight and in becoming an Arc Master.

In this world, where the privilege of the heroes was a natural thing, having more rulers like Ereka would be a miracle.

But still, he wanted to take them down for the people.

Then, let's get it started.

He wanted to defeat them nicely enough to make Eustasia, who refused his offer, admit that he could actually achieve his goals.

...

The kings of the three kingdoms received Sungjin's answer.

They were furious.

“This...”

“We need to hack him to pieces.”

Seyzo II smiled to the two other kings who were absolutely furious.

“Hahaha. Hahaha. You guys are way too generous.”

“Huh?”

“Why would you give such a generous punishment to this guy.”

The two kings flinched at his cold, creepy smile. They were on the same side for all the benefits, but still, they didn't feel comfortable with Seyzo II.

“Him and the stupid B\*tch. We need to punish both of them for trying to turn the world upside down.”

“Oh, do you have an idea on how to punish them?”

“Of course. I will make them beg me to kill them. I will make them want to commit suicide.”

Seyzo II’s hands trembled with excitement.

“I will make the best healers heal them while punishing them with all 365 forms of punishment.”

“Oh... okay.”

“Pull out their nails and toenails, make ants bite them, make them drink acid, stick them with poisonous pins, skin them, and push poisonous ticks into their skin.”

“Oh, well... then we will let the Kingdom of Cariana take care of the punishment.”

The other two quickly agreed.

They didn’t have a plan to keep Sungjin alive, but what Seyzo II was saying was unappetizing.

“We should talk about how to attack the Kingdom of Sevrantina first.”

“That is a good idea.”

“Hmm. About that, why don’t you tell us, Eustasia?”

Seyzo II was disappointed that he had to stop, and he wasn’t as excited anymore.

“Yes, Your Highness. If I may, I would suggest attacking them from all three directions.”

Eustasia prostrated and reported her plan; it was a simultaneous war from three directions.

She suggested that the three kingdoms take one side each to attack the Kingdom of Sevrantina. Then the three heroes from the Kingdom of Sevrantina would have to take one side each as well.

“Our enemy also has good heroes, including Queen Ereka.”

Eustasia didn’t say that Sungjin was the best out of all of them to please her listeners.

“But those heroes can only take one each, so the rest will be protected by low-level heroes.”

This was the best plan to beat the Kingdom of Sevrantina overnight in a 3:0. In the worst case, the alliance would win by 2:0.



This was a plan to win before they could even start to fight with their overwhelming forces.

“And I have an idea to stop any cheap tricks from the extra. If we keep that in mind, we will win for sure.”

“Wow, you already thought of that?”

“Yes. Although I know that you will win without it, but I just wanted to be loyal and support you with my mere power.”

“I will listen to you.”

“Then...”

Eustasia shared her plan that she got by paying her holy sword as a price.

I admit that you are better with military intelligence.

But that didn't mean anything when one had dominant force. Since they had the clear upper hand with their military force, Eustasia could stop him without much risk.

Just like when you play chess, you can overcome your skills if you have more pieces.

If I can't stop this war, I will win an overwhelming victory.

So that she could protect her country from the other forces on the outside.

I will lead this war and win it.

Then maybe she could give a merciful death to Sungjin and Ereka. That was the only thing she could do for her friend while staying loyal to her king.

The three kingdoms declared war on the Kingdom of Sevrantina at the same time.

They decided to take the east, west, and center points of the kingdom and bet the same amount of their own land.

Sungjin and Ereka had to stop all of them on the same day. But since only one person could fight on one battlefield, their kingdom was under great danger.

The news spread quickly to the people of the kingdom. The people gathered at the hospital to get their medicine whispered to each other in fear.

“The other kingdoms are about to attack us.”

“They will get rid of the bills that our queen made for us.”

“I heard that they will get rid of the hospitals as well.”

“Oh... no!”

They knew that their country was abnormally generous to them. They thought it was too much for them to enjoy such generosity.

“So... we will go back to our lives back in the days of the Blood Ruler.”

“Sigh. Why they are trying to take charge of what we do in our country?”

“We didn’t have this problem when we still had the late king.”

“The rumor says they don’t want an extra to be king.”

“Don’t say that! He saved us!”

“No, I was not blaming him. I was just saying that was the reason why they decided to attack us.”

“We have to support Sungjin.”

“We should...”

No one was able to say what they were thinking... if Sungjin could defeat all three kingdoms at once...

The extras of the Kingdom of Sevrantina felt sad. They felt even more miserable that they were about to lose the happiness they were able to have for a very short amount of time. A bitter taste felt more bitter when one tasted it after eating something sweet. They were high for a second, and now, they were about to fall deep into despair.

Lute, who was studying letters to become a healer, lost his motivation and asked Nania who was a nurse’s aide.

“If we lose... I can’t learn letters anymore?”

Nania hugged the poor kid. But she was equally terrified of the future to come.

“Lute... listen. If we lose, you can’t tell anyone that you know letters.”

“Why? I’ve already studied them.”

“You can’t. There’s a caste system due to our levels. Our level is not supposed to know letters or try to have a noble job. We need to know what we are.”

The child of a hero would get the job of a hero, while the bastard of a hero would get an average job. But an extra would get the lowest-level job.

That was the rule of this world.

They shouldn’t try to overcome that limit.

“But... the king built schools!”

“Yes, that was Sungjin. But that time is coming to its end.”

“No! I want to become a healer and fix my mom!”

Lute stamped his feet, refusing to accept the reality.

Nania felt something heavy on her chest.

What should I do...? The heroes from the other countries might kill him for this...

She had to make Lute learn their limit. There were things they shouldn’t do.

“Lute. Listen.”

She decided to help Lute with tough love.

“Even if you become a healer, your mom’s condition can’t be fixed.”

So give up your impossible dream.

“I know!”

Lute’s answer sounded like a scream.

“What?”

“I know it will be difficult to fix my mom. But... but... I... still want to try,” Lute answered with tears in his eyes.

Nania couldn’t find her answer. This kid knew that reality was harsh, but he still wanted to try to help his mom. She couldn’t find her words to stop him.

Should I tell him not to have hope?

Oh, God. Please let him win.

All she was able to do was keep praying so that this kid could keep his dream to help his mother.

She was not asking for a miracle; she was just asking for a chance.

## **Level 0 Master - Chapter 38**

Then, maybe it would be okay to tell him.

She didn't tell him this because she thought it would be inappropriate to tell someone this when they were about to fight in a war...

"Well, Sungjin."

"Huh?" he stopped and answered.

"There's something I need to tell you."

"Tell me."

"Actually... in five days..."

"In five days...?"

Sungjin looked at Ereka with confusion.

The battle against the alliance of the three kingdoms was in fifteen days. He couldn't think of any event in five days.

"We have a... dessert... festival. Artisans from all around the country come to sell cakes, pies, and ice-cream..."

Ereka was blushing when she was telling Sungjin about it.

"And?"

"Last year, there was no dessert festival due to many reasons. So this year, many people are looking forward to it. But also, some are saying that we shouldn't have one because the battle against the three kingdoms is eminent. But if we do have it... it would be something to help us forget about the war for a short amount of time."

"Hmmm. Do we need a lot of money for that?"

"Not really. We have enough for it."

“Then let them have the festival.”

“Would that be okay?”

“What I like about this world compared to mine is that a war is not an ‘all-out war.’ So let them enjoy the festival. And don’t forget to tell them that I will win for sure, so don’t worry and just enjoy.”

Looking at Sungjin’s confidence, Ereka put her hands together.

“Then, well... I know you are busy preparing for the battle... but why don’t you take a day off?”

“Should we go together?” Sungjin asked Ereka before she asked him.

“Would that be okay?”

Ereka sounded worried, but her eyes were shining with happiness.

“It’s okay. Let’s go together. You are right, I should take a day off.”

“Then can I prepare something for our disguises?”

“Huh? Oh, sure.”

Sungjin understood Ereka right away. If the ruler of the country “officially” participated in the festival, the common people wouldn’t be able to enjoy it comfortably.

She is always very considerate.

“Okay. See you later.”

Oh. It’s a date with Sungjin. It’s been a while. It’s a date!

Ereka started to run with excitement, and Sungjin smiled while looking at her.

She is just a little girl when she is like that. She must be happily thinking of those sweet desserts.

Ereka bumped into a pillar.

Huh?

Ereka stood up quickly and apologized.

“Sorry.” And then she started to run again.

Haha.

Sungjin shrugged his shoulders and then went to shower.

...

The festival day came, and Sungjin and Ereka were disguised as commoners; they wore magical accessories that changed their hair color.

Walking next to Sungjin like a good girl, Ereka couldn't stop looking at Sungjin's arm.

Wouldn't it be too much to if I tried to walk arm-in-arm with you?

She was worried that he would think that was too much to do.

Because they were not lovers yet.

Or maybe just hold hands...

Sungjin walked next to her without knowing her wishes.

Well, you said you wouldn't date me, so it that won't happen.

Ereka gave up her hopes to hold his hand and sighed.

There were a lot of people trying to promote their desserts.

"Come and taste our brand new chocolate mousse!"

"Raspberry cookies!"

"There are many different things," Sungjin commented.

"Yes. This festival started when my late father was ruling. It started as a small festival, but now it has become a very big one."

"Okay. Would you like to taste something?"

"Huh? I... Oh... well... the strawberry cake of the great general, Igren... or... maybe the 25 assorted cookies of Sugrain... I guess those are my favorites."

"Hmm. Are they out today?" Sungjin asked her.

"Oh, both are out today. But they only have a limited supply, and they're set up at the same time on opposite sides of the festival... Okay. Let's do this."

“Huh? Do what?”

“I will go and get the strawberry cake. You go and get the box of cookies, and then we can meet up.”

“Oh, that...”

“Then we can have both,” said Sungjin thinking he was being a gentleman.

I should do this much for Ereka.

“Sure. Let’s do that.”

Ereka smiled.

I’d rather be with you than have cookies.

Sungjin was an evil god on the battlefield, but he didn’t know what was going on in a girl’s mind. But she still decided to follow his suggestion because she understood that Sungjin was doing his best to make her happy.

This is your kind gesture to a teammate, not a lover, but I’m happy with this for now.

Ereka headed to the other end of the festival while Sungjin was about to line up.

“Now, we’ll start to sell Igren’s limited-edition strawberry cake. Due to the limited number of cakes, one person can only buy two.

As soon as the seller announced the sale, people gathered to make a line. Sungjin found his spot in the line as well.

With his power, he could have called the great general to the castle and tell him to make some for him.

But where’s the fun in that?

He waited, and finally, it was his turn.

“Let me get two of them.”

“Sure. Two cakes. You are the last one, now they’re sold out.”

When the seller said they were sold out, the people behind Sungjin started to sigh.

“Oh, no!”

“Ugh.”

Listening to the people sighing behind him, Sungjin still took the two cakes.

Ereka told me she loves it. Maybe Jenna does as well?

It was a perfect item for the party planned for this afternoon.

“Wait! Sell them to me! Both of them. Or at least just one!”

There was a person behind him who was desperately asking him to sell the cake.

I know this voice.

He turned around to have a look at the person.

“Huh? Wait, you are!”

Sungjin recognized her, and his eyes started to shine sharply.

She was disguised, but he was able to recognize her. It was Eustasia.

“Who... are you?”

She turned around when she recognized his face.

“Don’t worry, I will not exile you.”

“Ugh... Yes, it’s me,” said Eustasia.

“What brought you here?” Sungjin was curious.

Unlike on the earth, in Valhalla, the heroes were not allowed to fight outside of the battlefield. But this was not an absolute rule, so there were ways to punish others without killing them. That meant, there was a great risk when sneaking in the enemy’s territory before a battle.

“Of... of course to prepare for the battle. I’m not here for fun!”

“But this is a dessert festival. There is no arsenal nor a training room.”

“...”

Unlike her confident self, who was the greatest general of the four kingdoms, Eustasia avoided his eye contact. She was murmuring something to answer him, but her voice was so quiet he couldn’t even hear it.



Sungjin couldn't understand the situation. He tried but was not able to comprehend what kind of military benefit she was looking for.

But why is she here, really? To meet a spy here? Is that something that she has to do?

She turned her head and answered.

"I hope you are not a person who will blackmail me with this."

"Blackmail you?"

Sungjin still couldn't understand what she was talking about.

"Don't pretend! Don't tell anyone that the great general was sneaking into the enemy's festival to find a cake."

"But you told me you were scouting? Are you joking?"

"I'm not. Ugh!"

Eustasia stepped back, regretting that she told him the truth.

Why him again.

She glared at him fiercely. She had numerous fights, but she was not able to calm down after her fight with Sungjin. She tried her best not to, but she couldn't stop thinking about him.

She was trying to tell herself that it is natural because he was such a strong enemy who defeated her in a duel, but that didn't help to calm her down.

Before the important battle ahead, she couldn't sleep well when she heard that the dessert festival was opening again this year.

I wanted to enjoy one day where nobody would recognize me.

But Sungjin spotted her. He looked at the cake boxed in his hands.

So, that was it? Why are girls so crazy about sweets?

This was a difficult question for him to answer.

"Okay. Take one."

"What do you mean?"

“I’ve got two.”

“You are giving one to your enemy?”

“I don’t consider you an enemy,” Sungjin responded flatly.

“Huh? Don’t you know that we are about to have a battle?”

They looked at each other.

Eustasia glared at him fiercely, but Sungjin was looking at her without any anger.

“Yeah, I consider you a rival. A rival, but I still want to have you on my team eventually.”

They clearly had different ways to solve problems.

Although their points of view on reality were different, and they were fighting on different sides, they still had the same empathy for people who were abused, and they both wanted to help those people.

Moreover, her extraordinary ability was something he needed to prepare for the fights to come.

“Don’t you remember that I said no?”

“I will give you another offer as the unifier of the four kingdoms.”

Sungjin wasn’t going to change his mind.

I will defeat you over and over again to make you join my team.

“Dream on.”

“Your prejudices are not a bad thing for me.”

“Hmph. I don’t need this cake; I just came here during my short break to see if I could find something for my subordinates.”

A short break?

Sungjin wanted to ask her if it was really a “short” break to cross the border to come here. That would make sense if she used a Portal Stone, but that was quite pricey just for some desserts.

“But if you insist, I will take it for you,” Eustasia said.

“Oh, sure. Take it.”

Eustasia snatched the cake box from Sungjin.

“But let me be clear, I wouldn’t go easy on you because of this.”

“I wouldn’t expect that from you.”

“You will be killed miserably when you become a prisoner.”

“That won’t happen, but thank you for your concern.”

“Concern? I will make a petition to the king for your execution.”

“Last time you told me to be yours, didn’t you?” Sungjin retorted.

“Now, I know you are not someone I can handle.” Eustasia pointed at his chest with her index finger.

But he was indeed not someone she could handle.

“Now I’m convinced that you are just trouble. To protect my country and the power balance of our continent, I will destroy you.”

A man like this would shake the world. He was a man who could destroy the balance among countries.

He was just a man, but his strength equaled that of a country. She thought that this would be her last chance to finish him off.

“Thanks for the cake. I will execute you without pain to thank you.”

Before Seyzo II starts torturing you.

“Thanks, but that won’t be necessary.”

“Bye,” Eustasia said quickly and left.

Looking at her leave, Sungjin couldn’t help but smile to himself.

See you soon. You are my next team member. It won’t be easy, but I won’t give up.

...

Not long after that, Ereka came back to join Sungjin.

“Sungjin. I’ve got cookies.”

“Great. I’ve got a cake. And…”

Sungjin decided not to tell Ereka that he’d met Eustasia because Eustasia didn’t want to tell anyone that she was here.

“Do you want anything else?”

“Not for now. Let’s hang out together and look around.”

Ereka had a gentle smile on her face. She actually didn’t care about the desserts, but she was happy that Sungjin had gotten it for her.

I’m happy enough for now.

Actually, she saw Sungjin talking to Eustasia, but she decided not to ask about it.

She was able to confirm that Sungjin was interested in Eustasia very much.

But… although you want to bring her onto your team, that doesn’t mean you don’t want me. So I’m happy enough.

She approached Sungjin closer and said, “Let’s have a look at what else they have. I hope we find something you like as well.”

“Sure.”

A war was coming, so it was important to enjoy this short moment in peace.

I’m glad we came. Both Ereka and Eustasia like these things.

He didn’t know that it was more important for them that they were with him and that they received something from him. He was not sharp when it came to these kinds of things.

## **Level 0 Master - Chapter 39**

“Yes. I told him I didn’t need it, but he was mocking me, saying that he gave it to me because I was a woman. Such a shallow move.”

She expressed her anger, and she looked like she was about to start a fight.

“Should I throw it away?”

“No. I won’t react to him as he expected. I will eat it to show him I don’t care.”

“Sure.”

The adjutant general left.

She locked the door and held her knife and fork.

Hmm. Hmmmmm...

She enjoyed the cake in silence and lay down with her eyes closed.

Hmm. Well... It... it is delicious. Not bad.

He was so annoying; he wouldn't give up on trying to convince her to join him.

Yeah... Your country with Ereka... it's a great one.

The harvest season was coming, and this was the most difficult time for the people. The only people who were not starving in her country were those who were living in her territory.

But they didn't have much to eat either.

The people in their country were enjoying desserts. She was truly impressed by Sungjin and Ereka. She wished that her king could do... 1/10 of what they were doing.

No, I will make it happen. I will win this war to take more power and get more trust from the king.

So I must defeat you first.

His ability and his ambition to become an Arc Master was a threat. And he had a dangerous plan to build a country for the people.

He is a dangerous man.

And... although it was impossible...

If, and it's a big if, you defeat me, I still won't join you.

He didn't know one thing. What he saw was her trying her best to be realistic in order to make her country a better place. But he didn't know about her oath to her king.

Her realism was her way to serve her king. The death of her king meant her death as well. There were only two possible endings:

His death.

Or her death.

\* \* \*

## Chapter 10

The battle day came.

The Kingdom of Sevrantina had to send heroes to three different battlefields to fight against the three kingdoms at the same time.

The question was, who would take which battlefield.

The people of Sevrantina relied on Sungjin's promise for his victory. They knew their country, where the extras were able to enjoy life, was a miracle. They knew how extras in the other countries were living, and they remembered how it was when they were under the Blood Ruler.

Oh, our gods.

Knowing that the gods were not interested in their lives, they still prayed to them.

Please let our queen and Master Sungjin win.

They were praying for their lives... but they were also praying for their heroes who were trying to save them.

There were people who were wishing for the three kingdoms' victory. They were the heroes of the three kingdoms.

We can benefit from this victory.

Especially the heroes who were selected to fight in the battle, they had even more hope.

If we win...

They would get more land and more money, and they would probably level-up or get some upgrades.

Then there were many treasures of the Kingdom of Sevrantina.

The young and naive queen let the extras own things, so once they were conquered, they would get a lot of things from the extras.

And it was clear that they had the upper hand. They had three times the military force that the Kingdom of Sevrantina had.

Because...

There were people inside the Kingdom of Sevrantina who were helping the three kingdoms.

Although they had the dominant force, two kings, other than the mad King Seyzo II, wanted to make sure of their victory.

They knew that the best way to win against whatever Sungjin had planted on the battlefield was to plant a traitor inside their walls.

Sungjin had to fight at three battlefields at the same time, so he had to recruit more heroes to fight. If those kings could buy off one of those heroes, then that secret agreement would guarantee their victory.

They had already bought off Marquis Utram and Count Shine who were the next strongest high-level heroes after Ereka, Rittier and Jenna in the Kingdom of Sevrantina.

They promised Marquis Utram and Count Shine double the land that was taken away by Sungjin.

Sungjin's defeat was guaranteed.

...

In the meantime, Sungjin was about to announce the allocation of the military force. Everyone wanted to know about his plan that was kept secret until the last day.

All the heroes from the Kingdom of Sevrantina gathered to hear the announcement. Marquis Utram and Count Shine were in the crowd.

It is clear that we will lose.

The others are worried that they will lose their status, but we are safe.

To keep their status, all they had to do was to share Sungjin's plan to the alliance of the three kingdoms and exit the battlefield early.

"So here's the plan. Jenna."

"Yes."

"You command the east battlefield to fight against King Leoric. Take Sir Linte, Sir Illis and Sir Ustan."

"Okay."

“Then Ereka.”

“Yes, Sungjin.”

“You will fight against the Kingdom of Sharsha in the center. Take Sir Cecil, Sir Lanpa and Sir Ninde.”

“Okay.”

“And I will fight against Seyzo II on the west battlefield. Rittier, come with me, and Sir Arif and Sir Karls will join me.”

“Yes, Master Sungjin.”

When Sungjin finished his announcement, the heroes couldn't understand his strategy.

Gathering all their forces into one spot to defend at least one battlefield would be a better strategy. But here he was, being overly arrogant and trying to fight all three at once. But such an arrogant attitude was something they had expected from Sungjin; they just couldn't understand why Sungjin would exclude Count Shine and Marquis Utram and replace them with lower-level heroes.

“Master Sungjin, why don't you give us a chance?”

Count Shine and Marquis Utram asked a natural question. It was obvious that they didn't feel comfortable with this decision.

They glared at Sungjin fiercely. It was more than fierce. They looked like cold and cruel beasts looking at prey.

“I'm sure you guys know why.”

The other heroes didn't understand what they were talking about, but Count Shine and Marquis Utram became pale.

“That... that is...”

They couldn't understand how Sungjin knew about their secret deal.

Should I find an excuse?

But he already knows everything.

Should I confess?

Would he forgive us if we confess?



No, maybe it's all over.

“Ha. I don't know how you learned about it, but we were granted asylum in the Kingdom of Sharsha! So you can't take us as your prisoners!”

That was their last form of resistance, although their asylum was not granted by the temple.

Those two... traitors...?

Then the other heroes understood what was going on. Although they expected to have some traitors in such a difficult situation, they were terrified that Sungjin knew about it.

He... he is really a devil...

He couldn't be just an extra.

Maybe it was true that he was a great demidevil back in his world and he has yet to gain his power back in this world.

Many believed that theory to explain the extraordinary abilities of Sungjin. And also, the theory made the heroes feel better about themselves for having a normal extra as a king.

“Oh. Sure, go for it. You guys will be my prisoners anyways when I defeat the three kingdoms. I will let you go now.”

They didn't waste a second and run away when Sungjin answered them confidently.

The other heroes wanted to know how Sungjin found out about the treason, but they couldn't dare ask him. They just thought that they should be careful if Sungjin wins this war.

The secret was the extras.

Sungjin knew that the enemy would try to buy out some of the heroes on his side. He also knew that the enemy would try to buy only a few in order to not have to pay too much.

There was a limited number of heroes he had to keep his eyes on, and he ordered the extras who were serving the heroes to report him if the heroes were having suspicious meetings. Of course, all the extras cooperated since they wanted Sungjin and Ereka to win.

Knowing about the traitors didn't change his disadvantageous situation; the difference in level between him and his enemies on each battlefield was still huge.

When Eustasia bumped into Sungjin at the west entrance of the temple, she looked at him in silence then looked away.

There was nothing left to say.

They had to fight for their faith and their destiny.

Don't get cocky since you found the traitors.

When King Ilkandi tried to buy out some heroes on Sungjin's side, she didn't stop it because there was nothing to lose on her side.

The two strongest heroes left the Kingdom of Sevrantina, so now, they had an even lesser chance of winning.

On the right side of the battlefield, King Leoric had one wizard of level 7, two of level 6, and one knight of level 6 supporting them. On the other hand, Jenna was a level 5 wizard with another wizard of level 4 fighting with her.

That was a two-level difference, and nothing could change the situation.

The central battlefield as well.

Ereka was level 7, but the other heroes were two level 4 and one was level 3. King Ilkandi, on the other hand, was level 7, and he had three level 6 knights supporting him.

And here, where I'm going to face you.

Eustasia and Seyzo II, who were level, brought two level 5 warriors. While level 0 Sungjin brought level 6 Rittier and two other level 5 heroes. Sungjin's great command would be useless with this much of a power gap.

However, she didn't doubt that he had a plan.

I am ready to make your plans useless.

I will defeat you with our stronger forces. I've learned everything I need with one defeat. Now it's time for my payback.

The ending was clear. The three kingdoms would divide the Kingdom of Sevrantina into three.

They got the signal, and the battle started.

## **Level 0 Master - Chapter 40**

Sungjin caught me off-guard here; I'm sure he's defeated the other two kings despite the advice I gave to them.

That meant she had to win on her own battlefield.

It's still okay. If I make it here, then it won't be a miserable failure. We can drag it out into a long war. Then even Sungjin won't be able to attack us anymore because he would also have to keep his eyes on the other forces.

She was able to reverse the situation and realized Sungjin's concerns. She started to make a plan to minimize the damage.

First, I need to return to the base to regroup...

But Rittier, the gray-haired knight, jumped up to the tower and attacked her, giving her no time to react or think.

"I, Rittier, the knight of the Kingdom of Sevrantina am here to attack you, General Eustasia! If this was a duel, I wouldn't attack you without weapons, but this is a war, and Master Sungjin destroyed your weapon during battle, so I will take advantage of this situation!" Rittier shouted and ran into her.

This was not a bluff. Eustasia was one level higher, but it was just one level after all.

Of course, a one-level difference did matter, but this was a close combat match between a knight and an archer. Moreover, the archer, Eustasia, was fighting with her bare hands, which made it impossible for her to use her skills.

The result of the fight was quite clear: an archer without any weapons had to fight against the knight.

Rittier hit her hard to finish her with the first and the final blow.

Seyzo II was level 7, but without Eustasia, Rittier believed that all four members of his team could catch the rest of the enemies without difficulty.

And Eustasia was worried about the same thing.

If I die here...

She knew that without her, the three kingdoms wouldn't be able to stop Sungjin.

\* \* \*

Chapter 12

Eustasia avoided the strong blow from Rittier.

“Ha. Give it up.”

Rittier didn't stop the attack with his sword.

Eustasia's movements to avoid Rittier's sword looked like a flow of water, and by the fifth blow, Rittier realized something was wrong. By the eleventh blow, he realized that he was not able to even touch Eustasia.

“Eustasia...”

“Swords can slice iron, but not water,” said Eustasia with a graceful smile while avoiding his sword.

Her movement was fierce but also graceful and flawless. She looked like windblown petals and flowing water.

“What is... is this your third skill!?”

Rittier understood the third skill of Eustasia, the one that had not been revealed in any battles until now.

So with your third skill, you can avoid being attacked in close combat.

It was not strange that an archer had such a defensive skill for close combat.

Rittier was not worried. Such skills to escape risky situations always required allies to be around so that she could find a way out. At the top of this tower, she couldn't run, and there was no one who could come to save her.

It's only a matter of time. When you run out of your skill, you will be done as well!

This was just the skill of an archer. Rittier was sure that she wouldn't be able to keep using it. Her Heroic Power had a limit, and eventually, she would reach that limit.

Finally, the moment that Rittier was waiting for was coming; Eustasia's movements started to slow down.

Now you've run out! I'm sure you were waiting for your team. But there's no one who can come to rescue you.

Rittier was sure of his victory.

Finally, I can contribute something to this battle.

Rittier delivered his final blow with excitement. It was a deadly blow to finish Eustasia.

“Giant Strike!”

Rittier’s muscles showed his strength. His Heroic Power was so powerful that it made his armor creak and his sword resonate loudly. The resonance was so strong that it caused the air around the sword to explode.

The sword was up in the air, but the shock wave dented the ground. Pieces of exploded rocks from the dented ground scattered around it. Everything was caused just by the shock wave.

The real power of the sword was...

Bang!

Rittier’s sword dropped on her. It didn’t even have to be accurate.

The shock wave from his sword cracked the ground and exploded the rocks and broke the doors.

The fight was over... by a hand that came through the destruction.

“Sword in Mind.”

Eustasia’s hand hit the stomach of Rittier to push him away with a piercing pain.

It looked like she tapped him lightly, but a concentrated power that was almost like a bullet came out from her palm.

It was an invisible sword with concentrated Heroic Power.

She didn’t even need a sword.

She didn’t have a physical sword, but she had the strongest sword in her mind. The destructive power of this sword incapacitated the attack of the knight.

“U... ugh...?”

Her attack made a hole that was the size of a watermelon on his stomach.

The same blow also made a hole in the wall of the tower and broke one part of the tower that continued to destroy a tree next to it. It hit the ground with a massive cloud of smoke.

The attack had a terrifying breaking power.

Rittier was standing unsteadily only to end up falling down on the ground.

If he were not as big, the blow probably would've cut him in half. But although he was big enough to stay in one piece, his wound was critical.

"If this is... your... third skill... what was that skill you were using to avoid my attack?"

Eustasia laughed while looking at Rittier, who was badly wounded and confused.

"That was purely my physical ability."

"Pure... physical ability?"

"During my fight against the Golden King's army, I realized that even an archer needed to be trained for close combat."

But she couldn't get additional skills from god, so there was only one way.

Since she couldn't fight against knights or warriors with her physical strength, she decided to train herself to learn how to avoid their attacks and use their power against them. It was simple logic, but she had to train herself night and day.

"It was physical training that I learned from a faraway land. I paid a fortune, but it was totally worth it."

"Ridiculous..."

She was able to make her physical ability nearly as powerful as a heroic skill. No hero was able to do that so far.

Rittier himself was a veteran with plenty of experience, but he failed to stop someone who trained themselves with simple physical training.

She was not a knight or a warrior; she was just an archer! But soon enough Rittier was reminded of someone.

There was an extra that Rittier could think of that who was strong enough to defeat heroes. And Rittier made an oath to serve him with his queen, Ereka.

That's why you are the greatest general out of the four kingdoms. You worked to overcome the limit of your level with your skill.

It was not difficult to understand why Sungjin wanted her to join his team.

Ugh... If I lose here...

Rittier tried to stand up again to support Sungjin, but he couldn't. His body was breaking down from his fingertips.

Your Highness... and Master... Sungjin...

Then he heard footsteps walking up to the tower. It was Sungjin.

"Hey."

"Master Sungjin... I'm sorry. I tried... but she just..."

"It's okay. You helped me to learn her secret skills with your sacrifice. I will finish her."

Eustasia didn't reveal her secret skills even during her fight against the Golden King, but Rittier helped Sungjin to find out two of them with this fight.

Now Sungjin was able to calculate what to do and what the result would be.

Sungjin smiled, telling Rittier that it was enough for him.

"Thank you."

Rittier left the battlefield with a calm face.

Eustasia calmly looked at Sungjin.

"That was a great move to destroy my weapon. But you lost Rittier."

She was right. Sungjin was level 0. He had no way to recover from that while Eustasia was able to recreate her weapon using crystals.

"That's not too bad."

Sungjin pointed to the scene behind him with his thumb, where a huge flame was burning up the forest to create a spectacle.

"That's..."

"Two knights are sacrificing themselves to be the bait to kill three knights from your side."

While Eustasia was focusing on finishing Rittier, Sungjin was also making his own moves.

"I told the king how to react in a case like this."

“Do you really think it is difficult to provoke and lure someone who is mad and angry?”

Eustasia couldn't say no to Sungjin's question.

Even if a general gave practical advice, the king didn't have to take it, especially when it came to Seyzo II.

“Then, our fight will conclude this war.”

“Correct. Let's finish this.”

“It won't work like back in the temple last time.”

“But you have no weapons while I have this,” said Sungjin, showing the Sword of Heaven's Will shining in his hand. It was not something anyone could ignore, even if they were level 7 heroes.

“Do you really think you can defeat a hero? With or without weapons, history has proven that it is impossible.”

“I will write a new chapter in history,” answered Sungjin, and he started his attack.

Eustasia moved fast to fight against him.

It is annoying that you have the Sword of Heaven's Will, but I'm still level 7.

She was sure she could defeat him with her physical abilities.

You cornered me, but I will defeat you in this fight.

She started to use the flowy movements that made her defeat a level 6 knight without her weapon.

I've cornered you, so I will finish you.

Sungjin started to attack Eustasia with his swordsmanship that made him able to fight against the Blood Ruler, Riad.

A boy and a girl clashed, each with their own wishes.

And the boy... had the upper hand.

His sword almost cut her left arm. She was able to avoid it by an inch, but his sword sliced her armor.

Ugh.



Eustasia struggled. The sword was too powerful, and her armor that she activated with her Heroic Power couldn't protect her.

It was impossible for her to defend; all she was able to do was avoid the attack.

But the sharp sword cut through her smooth movements. Whenever she tried to move away, the sword was waiting for her.

She pulled out her hand to do something, but the sword almost cut the center of her palm, so she had no choice but to take it back.

She tried to step back, but the sword was already there to attack her.

When she tried to step aside, Sungjin kicked her to stop her, and as soon as she fought back, the sword cut her armor again.

Sungjin's level 0 body was clearly slower, but Sungjin was reading her moves so quickly that it almost seemed like he could read her mind.

With the destructive power of the sword, this was just a nightmare.

God, I misread the situation.

She thought Sungjin did a great job to fight against the Blood Ruler until she activated her skill. But actually, it was the Blood Ruler who did an amazing job to fight against Sungjin before she used her skill. Usually, heroes were too lazy to practice martial arts because they had strong skills that were enough for any fight.

She found herself in trouble.

She had a much stronger army, and she attacked them from three sides simultaneously.

No one was able to even imagine that the alliance of the three kingdoms would struggle. No one, apart from Sungjin, who planned all this. It was natural for her to be in a panic in this ridiculous situation.

This was the worst possible scenario, but she was not someone who would give up.

I can't lose this fight.

She was the last resort for her country.

A mad king.

Corrupted heroes.

Helpless people.

She knew that she was the only one who could protect her country.

She gave up her arrogance. She dropped everything and decided to go all-in to win this fight against Sungjin.

Yeah... I will drop... everything.

The next moment, she released the Heroic Power that activated her armor. Now, she had a body just like that of a level 0. She dropped her protection, but her physical performance ability had increased.

She decided to go all-in on avoiding his attack rather than die slowly.

As soon as she decided that this was the best solution, she dropped her armor to gamble with a small possibility to win.

Apart from one thing...

“Hey... Can you get dressed a bit?”

Sungjin stopped the attack for a second and asked her. He was a bit embarrassed.