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Being healed brought brief relief; the screams resumed with the disciplining. The people saw what punishment awaited them if they disobeyed the priests' rules and went to hell.

Leaving the man to his torture, the other great priests scanned the remaining prisoners.

An Irain elder shed tears of sadness before their watchful eyes. The others were given such severe retribution for their sins, she was bound to be tortured even more cruelly.

She had gone against a strict rule regarding food when she fed forbidden fruit to a dying child to save his life. The village child had fallen ill, and she had remembered her grandmother's story of eating the fruit to heal illness.

She pitied the child and had fed him the fruit secretly... but was found out. Now she would surely be punished.

The white priest's shouts echoed around the arena:

"We give you your punishment with a heart of love! May this suffering be engraved in your very bones!"

The light exuded out of him and healed every prisoner simultaneously. To heal everyone at once was the ability of a person with God's trust. But benevolent power could also be turned into the power of punishment.

"For them to repent their sins, place your love into hitting them to death! Pick up your stones!"

In fear, the people followed the order. Stones rained upon the old woman, who felt her body being fractured. Gasps escaped her mouth as each and every hit caused a more severe pain.

I really...was not... planning to go against God...

I just... just...

Really...

This was all because she had pitied a dying child; because she had felt compassion for the child scratching at the rash covering his body until it bled; because she wanted to save the child's life. But her intentions went unnoticed. The stones continuously beat against her body.

The great priest kept reviving her.

“Ah.... Aah...”

Even in pain, Grandma Irain just wished for someone to acknowledge she had done this without any ill will. She wished for someone to pray on her behalf, so that her god would know this. At that moment, her eyes saw someone. It was the village child, Kelt, whom she had secretly fed the fruit to.

Child...you know, don't you?

She begged with her eyes. Kelt flinched.

Our eyes met!

What happens if someone notices that I have some connections to that old witch? Then he would be accused of unfaithfulness too.

No. Not me!

He was a faithful believer. He followed his only god. He wished for his salvation and feared his judgment. He was not the same as the non-believers. He did not drink the fruit because he wanted to. The witch had lost her mind and forced him to eat it. He was innocent. He followed his god. He didn't know that witch. He lifted a stone.

“Go to hell!”

Puk.

The stone hit Grandma Irain's eyes, crushing them. The boy she had saved had taken away her vision. A person's goodwill was nothing compared to God's salvation. The old woman could cry no longer.

Not wanting to be accused of sympathy, which could be interpreted as unfaithfulness, the people threw rocks with vigor. They were obedient lambs before the powerful priests. The 'punishment of love' continued all day.

“I will now deliver their souls to God!”

With that shout, the priest of crimson lifted both arms, and the fire dropped down and torched everyone. People shivered in fear that they may be charred by the crimson great priest and all the other priests who possessed different powers.

“Yes, you are all doing well.”

At the words of the High Priest, the great priests bowed.

“We are honored.”

“You understand. It is love. Love. If you love them, the length of time invested in punishment will not bother you. Instead, you must ponder whether you have given too painless a punishment and whether there is a more agonizing way to dole this out. You must think of it again and again.”

The High Priest talked to them as if he were talking to children.

“We will abide.”

The great priests obediently accepted his teachings without question. How did the High Priest command them so effortlessly? The people watching had no clue. Aside from the four great priests, no one knew what power the High Priest possessed.

It was told that 100 years ago, he appeared under the name of the only god, Angramainyu, conquering Rupellion with unbelievable powers. But no details were revealed about how he wielded the power, the power that had become stronger after the war. The four priests were simply obedient to him.

He was Rupellion’s sole dictator. He already possessed the power Sungjin had only recently acquired. He was bestowed this control with the support of God’s Garden. Only one thing was well-known about him: the words he had spoken after receiving a report of the new awakened king, Blood Ruler Riad.

He is an immature rebel. I will scold him when I have the time, so leave him be.

It was not a phrase of pride or underestimation but confidence.

“Good. Is everything going well aside from the prayer meetings?”

At this gently-asked question, Pangnilin threw himself at the others feet.

“Your Excellency. My lacking power has overshot the grand temple and leaked into the heretic lands.”

“Which heretic lands?”

“The land of the four-kingdom alliance.”

“What sins were administered?”

“It is an epidemic that makes a person vomit blood and shrivel to their death.”

“Hmhm. This is a very unfortunate event. Those lands are lands that reject our god; their sins would be even deeper than those within our lands.”

Pangnilin lowered his head.

“Your servant did not discipline the lower disciples enough.”

“Pitiful. Their sins should be given more love as they are deeper. They would not be able to realize their sins with light punishment.”

By demonstrating hell in life, they would show love and help the heretics find their repentance. This was his teaching. The mad god hid beneath a peaceful smile. That was Pedrian.

“We are lacking.”

“No, this must also contain some of God’s teachings. The past is the past so do better moving forward.”

Pangnilin, the black great priest, was relieved. As expected, the High Priest was benevolent.

What a relief.

After several other reports, the High Priest spoke for the final time.

“Since it seems there are no other issues, I will begin my last fast for the grand temple.”

“Oh, at last.”

“If all the eight grand temples are completed, this continent will be blessed with our god’s love. Then, they will start their repentance and finally become god’s slaves.”

“I look forward to that day.”

“And for that, we will need sacrificial and sacred objects.”

“Of course.”

“If we do not have those two things, the eight grand temples will be pointless. Make sure this is taken care of.”

“Entrust me with this. I will complete this task with my life.”

The completion of the eight grand temples was the hidden land of repentance Rupellion had prepared after 100 years of standstill against Eldorado. If that was completed, the judgment that would befall the continent would no longer be a ‘miniature epidemic’.

It would be complete judgment that would give Rupellion the ultimate victory. Those heretics would kneel before their god. They would cry and beg for their god’s

forgiveness in endless torture, a repetitive cycle of not dying but not living. They would regret their past lives and repent again and again.

Once more, the four great priests swore before the High Priest that they would complete this task.

“Yes, then I will take my leave.”

The High Priest grabbed his cane and slowly walked out.

He left without a trace, as when he had arrived. But his presence did not leave the arena, so the four great priests kept prostrating their faith until he was completely gone.

When it was finally gone, the four great priests could stand tall once more.

“It seems...that the day of our victory draws near.”

“Finally, the tug of war with the heretics will come to an end.”

The end was in sight, and the excitement bolstered them.

“Haha! They will all kneel before our God and beg for their lives...or ask for immediate death. Hahaha! It will be a sight to see.”

To conquer the continent and spread their beliefs, they would have to win in the ‘battlefield’ first. This was the law of the ‘false gods’. If their ‘true god’ descended down to this world, they could crush those laws easily.

What they had prepared was a certain path to victory.

Of course, they still needed time to complete the grand temples, and find sacrificial and sacred objects; but, as the sacrifices were already secured and the sacred object would arrive in time...

“There’s trouble!”

A lower priest came running in.

“What’s the trouble?”

“The sacrifice... sacrifice...”

“What about the sacrifice?”

“It’s disappeared.”

“What?!”

The four priests launched from their seats at the same time. The expressions on their faces changed instantly.

“Where could they disappear to?! They should have been sealed perfectly!”

“It should have been sealed with several layers...but the shield hadn’t shattered...”

“Exactly how did you stand guard?!”

Their anger erupted.

The High Priest had entered his fasting in order to complete the prayer. But he would return in a month, and if he finds out the sacrifices have disappeared...they would become the sacrifices; there was nothing else that could fulfill the Great Holy Grail.

But how could the sacrifices disappear? They constructed a defense inescapable for a human. Perhaps, a god had interfered. There was no point in debating how; it would not solve the problem or take away their sins.

The great priests looked at one another. What had happened had happened. Blaming was pointless. They were, after all, the four great priests who served Pedrian.

“We must find it all before the Excellency finishes his prayer!”

“Have God’s Eye’s first and second quarter... no, have the entire quarter find the sacrifices’ whereabouts! No one rests until we find it!” the white great priest ordered.

“Yes, Your Eminence.”

“I will begin the search ritual! Whatever it was would not have been able to disperse the curse placed! Have the choir accompany me!”

“Yes, Your Eminence.”

The blue great priest also stood up immediately.

“Whoever is behind this incident could do it again if we don’t find it. Use the Sword of Judgment to help solve this.”

“Yes, Your Eminence.”

The great priests ran about frantically. Whoever had stolen the sacrifice had waited for the time when the High Priest Pedrian entered fasting.

But for that person to think the other great priests were incompetent would have been a severe miscalculation. They were of a different scale from the three warriors the Blood Ruler had ruled over with disappointment; they were experienced veterans of war.

If they were within the four-kingdom alliance and not Rupellion, they would have been stronger than the king. High Priest Pedrian was simply too strong. But they had their own strengths, and they now combined them in search of the object.

Whoever had stolen this didn't know what they had gotten themselves into.

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These were his people serving him as king, and he could do nothing to protect them. The rulers of Rupellion had taken away their lives and replaced it with endless torment. Rage and despair struck Sungjin at his core.

I will not remain still.

"I will make sure Rupellion never does this again." Sungjin swore to himself.

Sungjin had, in fact, slowed down the spreading of the epidemic from Padral. The people praised his progress. He had implemented modern-day medical knowledge and placed heroes into the restricted areas; people within would not be abandoned but separated and healed according to their illnesses. The people agreed in unison he had done all he could.

Although he had returned to the capital, Sungjin remained uneasy. He recalled his time on Earth when his dreams were crushed by the Ministry of Gender Equality, and he had fallen into despair.

But that was a despair of my dreams being denied.

This was not the case for those who were dying from their diseases. They wouldn't be able to dream a new dream. At his frustration, he decided to take a walk on the mountain path and ponder his thoughts.

Is there nothing more I can do?

While the spread of the epidemic had been contained, the question remained of what to do with those who had already caught it.

He said there was no medicine that had worked.

All they could hope for was the person recovering by their own strength after administering an enhancing medicine. He knew worrying would not help anything. His mind was cool. But his heart felt suffocated.

I will not be attacked any longer.

He knew he was not the type of person to sit back and watch his people die. He would make Rupellion pay for what they had done.

Suddenly...

“La la la la la.”

A soothing song reached his ears. Although the voice was a little offkey, it was peaceful and warm, bright and calm. The song seeped into him and simmered down his frustration.

Who?

Near the stream was a young girl. The white clothes wrapped around her thin body from head to toe fluttered in the wind. A small green water bottle was attached to her waist. Her black hair seemed to be infused with calmness, and her black eyes looked like the night sky. She was gently cupping two hands to the air and mumbling between pink lips.

Beside her was a lion with rainbow-colored fur. The spirit, who held more colors than any other lions, was larger than the girl but did not seem to be a threat to her. It had even given its back for the girl to lean on. The lion's deep blue eyes reflected the depth of the stream around them. Not even a speck of dust existed within this peaceful, pure scene where warmth abounded and the heart healed. If he had been asked where the purest thing within the world existed, he would have replied that it was right here.

She opened her mouth once more.

“La la la la la.”

The song was not grand. There were no lyrics or hymns; she was simply humming as it went along. But it eased his mind like listening to a newborn bird's songs, and it wasn't only humans. The flying birds folded their wings and gathered round. The animals on the path started moving towards her: rabbits, squirrels, foxes, wolves, everything from herbivores to carnivores.

Not only that, the branches of the trees leaned towards her. The leaves pointed towards her song.

This is surreal.

Sungjin forgot everything else as he admired the scene.

It's beautiful.

This child was loved by nature. It was a scene incomprehensible to the logical mind; nevertheless, he accepted the beautiful scene before him. The girl stood and walked while singing. She was jumping across the grass but slipped.

“Kyah.”

She screamed as she rolled down to the stream; her white cloth was thrown off, but she did not fall in. The lion had caught her.

“Phuf.”

Cute.

Sungjin suddenly found her adorable and laughed. While there were many mystical facets, a child was a child. She looked like a puppy playing tricks when she rolled down the hill, and he felt an urge to stroke her.

“Who is it?!”

The lion heard his laughter and stood abruptly.

“Who are you?” the girl echoed in surprise.

Sungjin came out with his hands in the air.

“No ill intentions. I only came near because I heard some pleasant singing while passing by.”

At Sungjin’s explanation, the girl’s eyes focused on him.

“Is it true?”

“Yes, it is.”

But the girl did not lower her guard as she adjusted her clothes. Sungjin’s eyes recognized the large wound on her back. That was no ordinary wound. It was a tattoo deliberately carved; it covered her entire back.

This is the type of tattoo carved out by a knife to place ink in the wound.

It was the type of tattoo redone over and over throughout the duration of growth. Exactly who could have done that to a child? Sungjin was disgruntled as he imagined the situation. He knew even in the most peaceful scenes a wound could be lurking in the background.

“He... hello.” The black-haired girl nodded. With her clear eyes, she continued investigating. She looked like a puppy worried the person before her would hit her.

The lion also observed him with critical eyes.

“Are you really simply passing by?”

“Yes, I was taking a walk to gather my thoughts.”

“I see. Don’t be offended that we’re distrustful of you; we have our own situation.”

“Of course, it’s natural to be wary of a stranger in a forest.”

Sungjin was also extremely curious about who they were. They were in the capital’s back mountain. He always took his walks and began his training here; not just anyone could enter.

Due to this privacy, he had held his risky meeting with Eustasia here. Exactly why are these two here?

She questioned him as she continued straightening out her garment.

“Did you see... my... my back?” the girl whimpered.

“You did see... didn’t you?”

Her clear eyes were full of tears. The wounds on her back were deeper than the surface of her skin.

“Human, forget what you have seen just now. Or else...” The lion beside her drew his teeth to threaten him.

“Don’t worry. I won’t tell anyone,” Sungjin promised.

“You must not... must...” the girl begged as she wiped away her tears.

“I won’t.” He did not wish to toy with this girl’s mind.

“Thank you.” The girl finally smiled with relief.

The scenery of peaceful spring flowers came back into focus. Just prior to her smile, he had felt sympathy and rage towards whoever had done this to the child. But her smile was the sort that made all of his negative emotions melt with warmth and tranquility.

How could she make such a smile after so much torture? The type of garden the goddess of light would favor was right before him.

What a mystical... child...

“My name is Rachel, and this is Sir Kuga.”

“Nice to meet you, Rachel. How did you enter this mountain?”

“Eh, that’s...”

While Rachel hesitated, Kuga replied for her:

“We’re looking for the new owner of this land, the king from the other world, Cha Sungjin.”

The official title Sungjin used for himself was ‘Master’, but most citizens simply called him king.

“You’re looking for Sungjin?” It was strange to say his own name.

“Yes, we have something to tell him.”

“What?”

“It’s something only he must know.”

“Oh, okay. Let’s head down this mountain together. I’ll let you meet him.”

“Really?” Rachel’s eyes sparkled.

“Oppa’s really nice.”

Sungjin smirked. The smile was full of playfulness.

The girls greeted Sungjin when he came down the mountain.

“Welcome back, Sungjin There’s someone behind you.” Ereka greeted them with a soft smile.

“Eck?” Rachel’s eyes widened.

“Huh?” Kuga flinched.

In that moment, Sungjin walked to place himself between the girls and smiled widely.

“The girl is Rachel. The lion is Kuga.”

“Miss Rachel and Mister Kuga...why are they here?”

Eustasia replied to Ereka:

“Can’t you see?! It’s a new candidate for the concubine position. Isn’t that why she’s here?”

At the flabbergasting theory, Sungjin almost fell to his knees.

As if!

Sometimes the women of this world lack common sense.

“Miss Eustasia, there’s no way. Miss Rachel is too young.”

At least Ereka has some common sense.

“Her youth doesn’t matter. Even if they’re young, it’s common to arrange an engagement and get married when they come of age.”

“So Sungjin likes the younger ones.”

Don’t accept that.

While the two talked casually, Jenna grabbed Sungjin’s hands.

“Oppa, I’m young.”

While listening silently, Sungjin knew the matter may get out of hand if he didn’t speak up.

“Stop, it’s not like that!” He never understood how talented politicians and warriors talked of such matters.

“I brought these two because they are guests who were looking for me. Now, since you two have confirmed my identity, let them tell me their request.”

Rachel carefully approached Sungjin.

“You really are Master Sungjin?”

“Yes.”

“Really...”

Suddenly, Rachel jumped into Sungjin’s arms.

“You’re Master Sungjin! Kyahhh!”

She screeched as if she was the most devoted fan and he was her beloved idol.

“It’s Master Sungjin! It’s Master Sungjin!” Rachel rubbed both of her cheeks into his hard stomach expressing her happiness. The sight was so adorable that Sungjin let a smile escape.

She really is like a puppy.

It would have been exactly this feeling if he had a younger sister. He patted her back gently and asked:

“So why were you looking for me?”

“Rachel, mind your manners.” At Kuga’s words, Rachel dropped away with a start.

“I apologize. Since I’ve traveled so far with only you in my mind, I’ve forgotten all the manners Kuga has taught me.”

“It’s okay. Just calm down and tell me what you want.”

“Yes, Your Great Majesty of the other world.” Rachel curtsied neatly and gathered her hands as if to pray.

“Please take me in.”

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“Don’t let me be misunderstood.” Sungjin silenced his teammates, who were getting out of control, and regarded Rachel once more.

“What do you mean by taking you in?”

“Scary bad people are chasing me. Please hide me.”

Sungjin’s eyes reflected a lost puppy wet from the rain; he felt pity.

“Scary bad people?” Although the words were vague, the gears of Sungjin’s mind started turning.

“You’re being chased by the Holy Nation Rupellion.”

“How’d you know?” Kuga’s mouth fell open.

“Were you a human sacrifice for the Holy Nation?”

“Yes. The rumors of you having the ability to read people’s minds seem to be true.”

At Kuga's honest exclamation, Sungjin smiled briefly. It was nothing like that. He had merely paid attention to the details:

Firstly, Rachel's accent was not from the four kingdoms but from the areas around Rupellion. Secondly, the tattoo engraved on her back was the "cursed tattoo," full of symbols the Holy Nation used frequently. When he added those two pieces together, it was the only logical explanation.

"Since you seem to understand our situation, I have a simple request: Can you please provide a place for us to hide within this country? Do not let the child become a sacrifice for those crazy religious bastards."

"Stop. We cannot do that."

Before Sungjin could even reply, Eustasia stepped in.

"Why?"

At Sungjin's question, she spoke:

"We're not ready to wage war against the Holy Nation. Although the four kingdoms are united, we have not finished unification within and securing the battlefields has only just begun. We are barely maintaining the peaceful balance between the two great nations, Eldorado and Rupellion, as it is. If we provoke the Holy Nation, they could easily rip us apart."

Her words were cold but correct.

"But if we refuse to take them in, they will become sacrifices. They ran so far for help; my heart pities them."

Despite Ereka's advisement, Eustasia did not change her stance.

"This is a matter between nations. It's not a situation that can be resolved freely by one's own will. Feeling pity towards one person can lead to greater calamity. Don't you understand?"

"But..."

Beside them, Jenna smiled brightly with an innocent face.

Good. What's the point of having more rivals?

"Stop. There's no need to argue. I've already decided."

At Sungjin's words, everyone fell silent. Rachel's eyes shook violently.

Will Master Sungjin accept me? He will, right?

Her palms had gotten sweaty.

What if he does not accept me?

She had come this far because Kuga had reassured her Sungjin would accept her, because she trusted him; but what if he was wrong? If Sungjin did not accept her, there was nowhere else she could turn. He was her last hope. But even if he refused...

“My answer...”

Suddenly, Rittier ran towards them.

“Master Sungjin, there is an emissary from the Holy Nation of Rupellion requesting an emergency meeting.”

“Rupellion?” Sungjin’s eyes shone.

“Yes, he is the black priest, Pagnilin, of the four great priests. His request is quite urgent.”

For the past several years, according to records, there had been no contact between the four kingdoms and the Holy Nation Rupellion. So what was behind a sudden request for a meeting after several years of silence? A congratulatory message for uniting the four kingdoms should have been sent a long time ago.

The atmosphere intensified.

“Fine. I’ll meet him.” Sungjin smiled at the fun ahead of him. It seemed that Rachel was not any ordinary sacrifice. He knew right away she was not ordinary as she had a speaking, spiritual lion with her. He had been planning to find out more about her after things had settled down.

But for Rupellion to move this quickly.

Rupellion was the land ruled by those who believed in a crazy god, the land that was hell on earth, where new heretics were accused and tortured and eventually executed; the country where humans existed only to serve an insane god; the country that started the deadly epidemic, another obstacle he had to overcome in his path to becoming an Arc Master.

They had broken the silence first, the country who declared they wanted nothing to do with other heretic countries.

Let me hear what you have to say.

Everyone else was nervous and felt that the crux of the storm was upon them. Their country was rising amid silent power struggles. Watching him, Rachel shivered.

“Did those men... me... Did they find me? Is that it?”

At her shivering, Kuga sighed.

We were too late.

It would have been different if Sungjin had already accepted their request for asylum. The young king could have ignored the desperate request for a meeting, one surely devised to raise his pride. But that was no longer the case. The Holy Nation would probably begin to work delicate diplomacy of playing both sides against Sungjin...

Sungjin had no special reason to protect Rachel. As the leader of a country, he would most certainly send Rachel back after receiving compensation.

At that moment, Sungjin grabbed Rachel's shoulder.

“Don't worry. I will protect you.”

“Re... Really?”

“Are you serious?”

Rachel and Kuga were surprised. Everyone around him was surprised. What he had accepted was their request to hide them. But as the Holy Nation requested a meeting with him, the risk of doing so had increased.

But to protect them despite all of this?

“Yes.”

“But... the bad guys have found me.”

“Don't worry. There is some greed on my part in accepting your request; it will help me become an Arc Master.” Sungjin smirked. “My plan is also to prevent any more children like you being taken as sacrifices.”

“Really... you're going to protect me?”

“Yes, and I need you to remain calm. After the meeting with Rupellion, I want to hear your story.”

“Thank you, king of the other world...”

“That title is a bit awkward. Just call me Oppa.”

“O... ppa?” Rachel called out hesitantly. Her round eyes held tears.

“Yes, good job.”

“Oppa...thank you!” she cried out in relief and dangled on Sungjin’s arms.

My, my. I made her cry.

He felt as if he had just saved his sister. Warm emotions gushed from the depths of his mind knowing such a weak and pure being was relying on him.

“Now, wait a moment.” Sungjin tapped her back lightly and turned.

Accompanying him to the meeting room, Eustasia complained loudly:

“You could’ve made a decision after you heard what Rupellion had to say.”

“If I had, the girl would have been shivering in fright until then.” With his back straightened, his chest seemed large enough to hold a child.

He had already lost too many people to Rupellion. Before, he had watched powerlessly. But no more. He would not be defeated by them any longer. He at least had the power to protect the child who had come running into his arms. He would not cast her out for Rupellion to stomp her apart, this sister-like girl he had just met.

He could no longer let Rupellion step on anyone.

“You’re right. How scared would she be if she knew she had run all this way only to be dragged back to that hell.” Ereka smiled peacefully.

And that’s the reason why I like you, Sungjin.

He was a man full of coldness and a competitive spirit, but he was also the man who would save this child from her would-be captors.

She believed if he became the Arc Master, the world would become a better place.

“Ha! Both of you are right; it would be highly unusual if Rupellion broke their silence because of a single child.”

“Obviously.”

“But?”

“So what.”

“But Rupellion, especially their High Priest, don’t you know how strong they are? The limits of his skill and artifacts are unknown.”

“It doesn’t matter. No matter how strong the opponent is, in the end, they are all enemies I would have to defeat on my path to becoming an Arc Master.”

“Then we would have a strong person as our enemy.”

“But we will be able to save a child and Eustasia.”

“What?”

“You think Rupellion would come to us only because of one sacrificial child?”

At Sungjin’s question, she paused.

“You mean...”

“It is said between the eight holy temples Rupellion’s been building, the last one is finally at the end of the construction phase.”

“You’re right.” Eustasia grew quiet.

The enemy considered the child important; she was an important representative of the sacrifice, a sacrifice to be used for purposes only the enemy knew of. It could be wise to keep the child.

But I am curious.

Was Sungjin keeping the child because she was pitiful or because she was a potentially important sacrifice? Was his decision made as a gentle brother...or a cold king?

Or perhaps both?

Eustasia smiled as she followed the king.

Chapter 4

The girls gathered in the meeting room with the other ministers. Rupellion instigating a meeting was considered a national emergency that would probably go down in the history books.

Rachel and Kuga hid in the next room to prevent any run-ins with the emissary. But they pressed their ears to the wall with nervous hearts.

“A portal is being made with your territory as the destination. The person wishing to pass through is the black priest of Rupellion, Pangnilin. Do you accept?”

At the Valkyrie’s uninterested question, Sungjin, exercising one of his capacities as king, activated the territories as in and accepted the request.

“I allow.”

A moment later, the portal opened and an extremely thin man with black cloth wrapped around him stepped through. Unlike the other ministers who wore fancy clothes according to their stations, he was wearing all black.

But the black, which looked plain at first glance, was not a normal black. It was a complete black that did not reveal any color shining through. It was a color that did not exist on earth and wasn’t created by any scientist; it was a complete black of pure material, sold at the highest price.

The clothes had been created from the wings torn from the Death Angel. The clothes were an artifact. Only the High Priest Pedrian had more strength to rule over a man with such a possession.

“Greetings, Master Sungjin, the new ruler of the southern lands. I am Pangnilin, the black priest of Rupellion.”

His monotone speech sounded like the words of a reaper. Despite the cold words that would have made any normal person shiver, Sungjin replied lazily:

“For now, I will greet you as a guest in my authority as owner. I will ensure your protection as you are here as an emissary.” His arrogant reply from where he sat on his throne exuded a bloodthirst that suppressed the macabre powers of the Death Angel.

This...is the new strength of the southern lands.

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“A child previously kept under strict surveillance has fled our country. I apologize.”

“There is no need for apologies.”

“Haha! Do accept it, please. It is rumored that due to that child, who is riddled with curses, your country has been plagued by an epidemic. How can we not ask pardon for losing her?”

Pangnilin apologized again.

The ministers started to whisper.

A cursed child was the reason behind the epidemic?

Impossible...or is it the truth?

No, you cannot trust everything Rupellion has to say...

But if it is the truth.

“Very well, and how will you make amends?” Sungjin leisurely asked.

“As recompensation for your nation’s loss, we will give you 10,000,000 dallants for every lost labor force.”

10,000,000 for one extra!

“On top of that, we will provide you with an extra 300,000,000 dallants for any damage caused.”

“Oh.”

Even if it was a trade between countries, the ministers hesitated; they weren’t sure if they should be delighted or worried about the large sum being offered.

Even if the epidemic...was caused because of the girl Rupellion had lost...

Why would they recompense with such a large amount?

Even if Sungjin’s achievements were great, he was still a young leader compared to Rupellion. Why would they be so willing to give away such a large sum of money?

Nonetheless, they were ministers of a country, not simple AIs within computers willed by bribery. They knew that when such a country made such a grand offer within an exchange, it could not be considered a gift but a demand.

“And your request?”

“Through our god’s voice, we already know that the cursed child is here. Please hand her over so that we can seal her once more.”

“And what do you earn by sealing her?”

Sungjin’s question was sharp, but Pagnilin maintained a respectful smile.

At least it’s going according to plan so far.

He knew Sungjin was not a man greedy for money. In fact, the information they had collected portrayed him as the type of person to protect the weak. If he had seen the runaway sacrifice, they knew he would not hand her over so easily. To persuade such a man to change his mind, they would need to give him a compelling reason.

This was another type of game.

“What our country earns is for no more disease to spread further due to that girl. For no more innocents to be harmed by her, and for our god’s benevolence to reach this world...”

“You must think I’m a fool. Stop wasting my time.” Sungjin intercepted his speech.

“Haha. I understand. We can’t hide forever.” Pagnilin stepped back coolly.

I knew you wouldn’t be fooled.

He had made that introductory speech purposefully, so Sungjin would believe he had seen through his tricks. This set the stage to trust his next words easier.

“The fact that the child has a deep curse in her is true, and we have used that curse to maintain a borderline ward between my country and Eldorado.”

“A ward...”

“Yes, so do return the child. I believe we have promised enough compensation for your losses. You don’t even know how that child is being used.”

Pagnilin’s words turned more convincing.

After all, the war of the continent was between three countries and not two. If both countries could find an advantage, it was possible to compromise. Sungjin’s country would benefit more from the money than a curse they knew nothing about, and Rupellion recapturing the sacrifice was worth the monetary investment.

“So that is your suggestion?”

“It is so.”

Pagnilin was certain his words had moved Sungjin’s servants. It was going according to his predictions. The ministers said nothing aloud, but he knew they had decided to approve this offer within.

This should be accepted.

Of course, we cannot simply say, “Okay, we need to haggle the price.”

Rupellion must have suggested that price assuming we would raise it.

A cursed child that caused epidemics was a hot potato. If they could turn her in and receive the compensation that was enough. Pangnilin did not finish with simply that. Although the thread of compromise was logical, to Sungjin it had an unstable quality.

“This is not only for the trust between our two countries. Unless the child is sealed, this calamity will continue. We are doing this also for the well-being of the masses; our compensation can be used for caring after your people. Can’t you agree this is advantageous for everyone?”

It was also a matter of protecting the lives of the extras. He knew if he didn’t make such an offering, Sungjin would not consider cooperating. After throwing every bargain he had out there, Pangnilin smiled thinly under his expressionless face.

Retrieving the girl was the only thing that mattered. If he could use her as a sacrifice, he could give Sungjin what he had promised. For this one child, Sungjin would be given wealth that could improve the lives of many.

The two men negotiating and making a deal was considered national politics. Buying a person walking the path of greatness something that would complement his grand purpose was what politics was all about.

And...

Rachel, listening in to the conversation in the next room, shivered with fear.

“It should be fine... Oppa... he said he promised... he wouldn’t turn me over, right?”

“That’s... yes, of course. Don’t worry.” Kuga hugged Rachel asking her to relax. But the lion’s back had started to sweat.

To think that the Holy Nation would do something like this.

He knew Rachel was not going to be turned over so easily but had not expected such a strong move from the Holy Nation. Besides, the promise with Sungjin was only a verbal agreement. There was nothing binding him to his promise.

It would be normal to change his mind.

He was a king. Although he was being praised as a kind king who took care of his people, he also found his extras valuable. His generosity would have made him accept a pitiful child’s request for a refuge; but as she was a cursed existence, it was right to throw her out for the greater good.

They were even offering additional compensation for his people tortured from the epidemic; how could he refuse? The black priest had come with the best negotiation for a king like Sungjin.

Sungjin replied, "Fine. Take her..."

"Thank you."

"Master, don't you think you should receive more compensation?"

The ministers tried to stop him but Sungjin continued.

"...after you defeat me."

Pangnilin's face turned to stone.

"Why? Our offer should be advantageous to us both."

"But Rachel would be stomped on." Rachel, the young naive child who ran to his arms believing in him.

"Do you think I am ignorant of what kind of country you are?"

The country of authoritative holiness that treated the ones who were accused of heretics with torture until the day turned as bleak as the graveness of their sins, not death but endless abuse. A country full of people who reported others as heretics so that themselves could be reassured of being faithful until the cycle repeated itself. Moreover, it was the country that had caused the epidemic and the deaths of the people whom he cared for.

"Are you about to ruin the relations between our countries to protect one child? We've already apologized for this matter."

"Apologized?"

What they had apologized for was the damage of his wealth. It was not an apology made for the devastation within the lives of those who were killed and their families. Sungjin stood from his seat.

"Your apology should be towards the people who have lost their lives and the lives of their precious ones!"

His eyes were full of hate. Even the great black priest, Pangnilin, briefly withdrew before his blazing spirit, which seemed likely to torch whoever was standing before him.

"I don't need a false apology like yours!"

To be swayed by money and swallow it with self-indulgence would turn him into the same type of tyrants out there. After all, he too had suffered being stepped on under the power of a higher authority.

Sungjin sat back into his chair and arrogantly proclaimed:

“I will no longer let you step on Rachel or anyone else. That is my stance.”

The great black priest repositioned himself and exuded a frosty air.

“We will take her by force if you do not accept our offer.”

It was a threat of a preemptive strike and to that, Sungjin...

“Stop barking and bite.”

He twitched his finger.

“What a rude-!”

“I’m asking you to attack. I have promised Rachel protection and safety. If you want to break a man’s promise, you should be prepared to forfeit your life.”

“You foolish man. This is your last warning. Bring me the child. Then we will provide you with the promised compensation. If you refuse, I have the right to declare the preemptive proclamation right here and now. Everyone will curse you as the fool who beckoned war to your country.”

“Do it,” Sungjin replied without fear.

“Fine! Be prepared!” The great black priest exploded in wrath.

“Five days from now, on the day of war, we will punish your arrogance under god’s name!”

The meeting had ended in disaster.

After the great black priest left, the ministers attempted to reason with Sungjin.

“Master Sungjin, please reconsider this matter.”

“Yes, keeping her is riskier than handing her over.”

“What is greater?”

“Well, the immediate conflict between the Holy Nation...”

“Exactly. As they have proclaimed a preemptive attack, they will soon be handing over new lands. Would that not be a greater gain than some money? It would be a step on the path towards conquering the Holy Nation in the future.”

His eyes were sharp like a predator who has seen its prey, and a sinister smile hung on his lips. He was confident he would be victorious despite the great fighting force behind his enemy.

“Yes?”

The ministers’ mouths hung open. What they wanted to say was that it was obvious who was the stronger between the two, so with what evidence did he...

But if it weren’t for his spirit, he would not have even attempted to unite the four kingdoms.

Yes...he is this type of person.

They wouldn’t be able to stop him with their advice. They began to think of this as a defensive maneuver.

The High Priest is in a league of his own...

But it may be fine. It is said that the High Priest is busy with something else.

I see...he has aimed for that brief moment then.

Surely he had put some thought into it even if it seemed like an unreasonable competitive provocation.

I suppose. Master Sungjin did rush us in our preparations towards the next war campaigns; this could only mean he has already prepared something for the defensive maneuver.

Pedrian was strong. The four great priests below him were also great in their own rights. But they had already experienced how dangerous Sungjin’s strategies were in a defensive maneuver.

The ministers’ complaints had already dissipated.

“Well, if you win, it would be so.”

“Then you have your answer. There will be no more arguments over this matter.”

“We abide.”

The ministers went away without further word.

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“Thank you, Oppa.”

“You can relax. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“Thank you. Ehehe.” Rachel sniffed while smiling.

It was a first for her to be accepted so warmly by someone. Everyone else had asked her to become the sacrifice so quickly, as she was a cursed child.

It was as Kuga had said. This Oppa was the one who the goddess had sent to protect her, to save her. It was because of those words that she could trust and rely on him. He was more amazing than she had imagined.

“Oppa must really be someone the goddess had sent.” Rachel looked at Sungjin with a sparkle in her eyes.

Sungjin rubbed his nose in pride at the unwavering trust the girl had thrust at him.

It feels like I’ve found my younger sister.

Ereka sent a warm gaze while Eustasia sent a hopeless look.

“The goddess. Hmmm.” Sungjin scratched his chin.

“Why don’t you introduce yourself first, including an explanation about being a cursed child? I need to know the specifics to plan a solution.”

“I’m not a cursed child! I mean, I am cursed, but I’m not!” She was trying to explain but her words made no sense.

“I’ll explain for her,” Kuga interrupted.

“This child is god’s child. She is the child of the goddess of healing and benevolence, not Rupellion’s god, Angramainyu. I serve the goddess and am the child’s spiritual guide.” Kuga let out a cough as if to remind them not to ignore him.

“Fine. But to be a god’s child...”

“You’ve heard of one?”

“I’ve read it in historical records. If normal heroes received heroic powers from other worlds created by the gods then there will be one god who designates a special child to be born with the god’s protection.”

“Yes, and Rachel is that child.”

Ereka clapped her hands in a sign of understanding.

“Ah, that’s why you say that you have been cursed but not. To Rupellion, you would be a cursed child, but to others you would be a child bestowed with god’s blessings and protections.”

“Exactly. Originally, Rachel was supposed to be using her powers to heal the sick. But Rupellion knew of her birth a few continents away and kidnapped her, confining her to be used as their god’s sacrifice. They did not kill her immediately because they wanted to provide a grown child as the sacrifice.”

“So Rachel has grown up confined until today?”

“Yes. She had not seen the outside world until I was given a mission to save her. I rescued her at the first opportunity.”

“To think she had never seen the outside.”

“That...was her life.”

The girl did not know how the sun worked. She had never seen it. The world she knew consisted of the small rectangular space she could barely lay down and rest in, the cold walls and floor, the metal chains binding her legs. That was all.

She did not know what kindness was; she had never received it before. The only words she had ever heard beyond the closed door were words full of ill intentions.

Ahh. When will that sacrifice wretch die?

I know. That thing will have to die quickly, so we can leave this annoying post.

Although she never received any education, she could understand their words. As ‘God’s child’, she was blessed with the gift of innate intelligence, which allowed her to learn languages she had never heard before; she was ultimately hurt by the words she perceived.

But the words were not the only thing that hurt her. Everyday, they engraved new tattoos into her, again and again. The knife buried itself deeply into her back and split open her young skin; the medicine they poured over the wounds always stung.

Every time the wounds began to close up they reopened it, the repeating days. They said she was a cursed child. That was why she had to receive this punishment every day. When she was old enough, they said she would be sacrificed for their god to wash away her cursed sins.

She believed them because it was all she ever heard. She never knew anything else until the appearance of the lion who opened the door one day and saved her.

“That’s unjust... how could they do to a child...” Ereka had unshed tears in her eyes.

“Ahhh.”

Eustasia let out a heavy sigh relieving her emotions.

Even Jenna’s fishtail had risen in disbelief.

Ugh. Even if she may be my future rival, this is too harsh.

Sungjin did not say a word, but his fists were balled tightly enough to pulverize the air. He silently raged. His anger promised this type of violence would not go unpunished.

The one who changed the oppressive atmosphere was Rachel.

“Ah, but I’m okay now!” She shook both of her hands in the air and smiled brightly as if to tell them not to worry about her.

“Ever since I met Sir Kuga, I’ve been better.”

During their journey to escape, the lion told her many things: that she was not a cursed child but a child of the goddess of healing, an enemy of the god Angramainyu. He taught her that she had a mission to use her power to save those who were sick.

Learning she was not a cursed child but a blessed child, Rachel grew excited. The lion taught her more things: that the people who had locked her up were evil people from the country of Rupellion; that there was a leader called Sungjin in the lands to the South who went against the evil country.

The lion said it was the goddess' will to have her led to him, so he would protect you. But she was to save the sick under his protection. While she was on the run, the girl imagined how the man called Sungjin would save her.

The world she had seen outside was so beautiful that returning to Rupellion was unthinkable.

"It will be better from now on," Sungjin promised.

That was the promise Rachel wanted the most, and it was a promise that came from his heart.

"Yes, Oppa! Thank you!"

Her bright smile made it hard to believe she was raised under such violent conditions. Sungjin finally understood why Rachel had followed him around so much since arriving. To him, she was a new face; but to her, he was someone she had pictured throughout the duration of their escape. The man who would save her, directed by the goddess.

Although that goddess never asked me for permission and sent Rachel over as she willed.

Regardless, he was not going to argue with the details of saving an abandoned child. He was thankful to be given the chance of protecting this child, whom he considered a sister.

"You can go wherever you want here. But the Holy Nation may attempt to kidnap you, so you must always have someone by your side." Sungjin patted Rachel's head lightly. He was about to grant her the normal happiness any person should have access to.

"Yes."

Rachel thought her Oppa's hand was quite warm. She finally understood what kindness and gentleness meant.

It's great to meet someone with such gentleness. When Oppa pets me, it feels so warm.

"Ah. Right. Oppa, I have a gift for you."

"A gift?"

"Yes. Since Oppa's lands are riddled with the epidemic and the people are hurting, the goddess wanted me to give you the medicine." Rachel pulled out a branch with fluttering leaves.

It was similar to a Salix Koreensis, but the branch had an effervescent shade of gold with a fragrant scent.

“This is the medicine to the epidemic?” Sungjin was surprised at the unexpected gift.

“Yes! If people drink the water brewed with the leaves of this branch they will be healed!” Rachel shouted out without hesitation.

“You know that because you heard the goddess speak to you?”

“Yes, I can hear the words of the trees; apparently, that’s how the goddess communicates with me!”

Sungjin stood from his seat.

If anyone else had heard the child saying that she had found the cure to the epidemic that no other healers had found nor heard of, they would have snorted in laughter. But if it was the child Rupellion had tried to take back with the offer of a large sum of money, it was sufficient to try the solution God’s child had brought.

“I understand. Let’s try it immediately. We will all head to Padral.”

“Yes.”

If this was the truth, it was a matter of great importance. Sungjin’s camp moved quickly.

Sungjin’s group arrived at the separation center where the most critical patients were housed. Although it was called a separation center, it was really just a place where hopeless patients were taken to die, perhaps the medications easing their slow deaths.

The patients strewn across the hospital beds were not in much better shape. The heroes, forced by Sungjin to attend to them, could only do the most minimum of care.

“Uuuu....”

“Uuuuuuuuu....”

One of the epidemic’s worst hallmarks was that a person’s throat would constrict, making it impossible to breath properly. Even if imagining the harshest sore throat, these patients’ torment was several times greater.

At the cruel scene before her, Rachel clasped her hands together.

“To think everyone was in such pain...”

She almost became tearful but shook her head and shouted with vigor:

“I will heal everyone as the goddess wished!”

She started boiling the branch in a bowl with hot water. Next, she scooped the water into plates and approached the patients.

“Drink this and get better.”

Cough, cough.

The patient had no strength to even get up. Rachel’s face was splattered with blood and phlegm that spewed out of his mouth.

“You can entrust that to the adults.”

Sungjin tried to stop her, but Rachel scrubbed her face with her white sleeves and smiled confidently.

“It’s okay! I’ll do it! I’m the child of the goddess of healing after all! I can do things like this!”

At her stubbornness, which contrasted her pleading tears, Sungjin did not try to stop her.

Although she is young and weak...

Although she may be a pitiful, abused child, although she is a child in need of protection, his instincts told him there was something more to her. He decided to watch over whatever the child did for the ill.

Rachel supported the adult’s neck, which was bigger than hers, and fed the boiled water to him. With one hand on his body and the other on his head, she prayed while stroking the patient’s hair.

“Goddess, please allow my powers to relieve this person of pain.”

It was a rough prayer without any formalities, but everyone watched with attentive eyes. Will the child known as God’s child have special powers? Were the powers of the goddess she served real? A moment later there was a light. It was a pure, noble, and innocent white light that covered Rachel and all the patients.

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She went to the nearest patient, feeding him the boiled water and submitting a prayer. The benevolent light shone from her once more and saved another soul struggling in its torment. A young holy maiden was here.

“There’s no need to test her any further,” Sungjin ordered the healers.

“Check what plant Rachel has brought and gather it in mass and figure out the details of the healing magic she’s using; make sure all patients are given the treatment.”

“Yes, My Master.”

Sungjin approached the girl.

“Rachel.”

“Yes, brother.”

Sungjin nodded his head lightly.

“I don’t believe in a certain god. I am a realist who makes my own path.”

It was the same even after he had arrived in Valhalla, where gods breathed their powers. He had refused the legendary great devil Lucifer’s offer of inheriting his position; he couldn’t rely on things like prayers.

“But I will show my respect and gratefulness towards this miracle, which has saved the people I could do nothing for. Thank you, Rachel.”

“Ah, it’s nothing. I’m only carrying out the order of the goddess.”

“But that action has saved their lives. It’s your achievement.”

“Ehhehe.”

“Now share your methods with the healers so you can take a break.”

“No! I still have some strength left! We can do it together so that more people can be saved!”

“Okay.” Sungjin ultimately stepped back.

I guess there’s no point.

If she was a normal child, he would have told her not to wear herself out. He would have praised her, saying she had already done too much; then he would have fed her delicious sweets. But she was a holy maiden who had to complete God’s mission to

save patients; it was her job. As he had his path towards becoming the ultimate Arc Master, she also had her path.

I should not treat her like a child but respect her wishes.

Still, it was admirable. Despite her pain, she was able to care deeply for others. She was mature and, therefore, more lovable and dear to him. He was proud to protect her from Rupellion.

The healers started to swarm around Rachel questioning her.

“Did you bring the leaf of the Golden Koreensis?”

“What’s the Golden Koreensis?”

“It’s in this book. It’s a branch of the tree family of...”

While the healer spewed out scientific terms, Rachel tilted her head and gathered her hands into a prayer. She closed her eyes and then reopened them.

“Yes,” she said, “that’s the one.” It was as if someone had spoken to her.

“I thought so. To think, this was the only treatment for the epidemic... I suppose it was your skill that enhanced the healing abilities of the medicine after administering it?”

“Yes.”

“Is stroking the head a vital part of the healing?”

Rachel shook her head with round eyes.

“No. I did that because I felt revived when Oppa stroked my head. I thought if I did the same, the patients could get some strength from it also.”

“Pfft.” Sungjin, listening from the side, let his laughter slip.

Oh dear...

He had heard that children mimic adults, but he found the reason behind it comical. They had all witnessed the miracle of her saving a hopeless patient, but still, a child was a child.

“She’s cute.”

“Yes, cute.”

Sungjin agreed with Ereka's assessment.

"This is not the time for cute. That girl...she has the ability as a supporter. If she is truly the goddess' child, she may have other talents up her sleeve. We need to find out," Eustasia declared.

"Ahh. We should figure that out. But let's wait until she's done treating all the patients," Sungjin replied leisurely. She was on a roll, and he could not bear to disturb her.

Those riddled with the illness began to heal. Those struck by the epidemic could now be returned to health once the medicine was administered. Rachel was not a cursed child.

She was a child delivering the cure.

They moved towards the temple to confirm Rachel's level.

"Now, Miss Rachel, you must place your hand here and say that you wish to confirm your information."

"Yes, Unni."

Rachel did as Ereka directed and placed her hand on the central spiritual stone. It was already confirmed that Rachel had an ability. What remained was how much she had.

Amid everyone's curiosity, the Valkyrie's voice resounded:

Updating Status Information.

Name: Rachel

Class: Supporter

Level: Seven.

When that number was announced, gasps echoed throughout the temple.

"A level seven..."

Currently, the only two level seven's in Sungjin's camp were Ereka and Eustasia.

Even if Sungjin had an amazing strategic mind, he was still lacking in high heroic level heroes compared to the other great nations. Discovering Rachel was his third level seven was an amazing stroke of luck.

The supporter class was traditionally lacking throughout the four-country alliance. The current minister of the department of health was only a level four supporter; this new information about Rachel could turn the tides in his favor.

Possessed skills:

Protection of the Earth: Effects—The targeted two allies will have their attack and spell-casting skills enhanced for a certain period and reduced recasting time limit.

Protection of the Wind: Effects—The targeted two allies will have their agilities and movements enhanced for a certain period and harmful effects on the status removed.

Protection of the Sea: Effects—The targeted two allies will have their defense and resistance enhanced for a certain period; all damage will be healed.

Ultimate skill, Protection of Light: Effects—All allies within the limited area will be healed. Unlimited area allowed on the battlefield and in reality...

“Every ally within the battlefield? That’s amazing!” Ereka exclaimed.

“It is amazing.”

Hundreds of strategies came to Sungjin at the thought of having Rachel as his teammate.

The Valkyrie’s voice, which was summarizing each effect, had a display that detailed the numbers of each skill. Surprisingly, the numbers were directly proportional to Rachel’s spell-casting ability.

Rachel herself does not have the battle ability of a level seven. But when paired with another level seven, she has power beyond two level seven players; when paired with two level seven players, she would have the battle ability of four level seven players.

That was a simple calculation. Her ultimate skill level was unfathomable if capable of healing all five allies on the battlefield, no matter the distance.

“This is beyond expectations. Ha! Thank goodness I didn’t hand her over to Rupellion.”

Eustasia raised both of her hands in agreement.

“Is it a good thing?” Rachel blinked her eyes; she had no idea what the reaction of the others meant.

“It’s an amazing thing.” Ereka smiled as she held Rachel’s hands.

Kuga appeared beside her and patted her back with his big paws.

“Rachel, listen carefully. You may be still young, but you are a child selected and blessed with power by the goddess. To save other people and release yourself from the cure of the evil god, you must battle Rupellion with your powers. You must be determined to fight with Sungjin in the field.”

“Yes, I understand. I will do my best!” Rachel raised both of her arms and promised.

She then ran towards Sungjin with carefully-gathered hands and shining eyes.

“Oppa, Oppa! Tell me what I need to do.”

Her smile told him she would do anything he asked; he felt another wave of adoration.

I think this might be the emotion to teach one’s younger sister everything.

Sungjin pondered for a moment before deciding.

“Fine. I do anything, like telling you to leave the fight because you are a child.”

His thoughts had now completely changed from when he had first arrived in Valhalla and had denied Ereka from joining the fight.

“Let’s work together so that the evil gods will not be able to harm anyone anymore.”

“Yes, Oppa!”

“There are only five days left, but do you want to join our special training?”

“We’re trying to stop the bad guys, right?”

“Right.”

“Yes! I’m trusting you. Even if it’s the toughest training of all, I’m going to endure everything!” Rachel replied confidently.

“Let’s start today.”

“But Oppa, in return...” Rachel mumbled as she wriggled her fingers.

“Yes?” Sungjin waited.

“If I try hard...and save a lot of sick people... and chase away all the bad guys...then grant me a wish after everything’s over?”

“What is that wish?”

“I’ll tell you when the time comes.”

She looked like a child asking for gifts if she promised to be a nice girl; Sungjin laughed once more.

Well, there was a time when I was excited about Santa Clause.

The problem was he figured out the truth too young. He supposed Rachel still had time to believe in such things.

“Okay, tell me when it’s time.” Sungjin instinctively raised his hand and stroked her head.

The gentle and soft stroking was warm. The other girls looked on with half adoration and half jealousy.

“Yes!” Rachel replied excitedly.

“Ehehehe.”

She kept laughing as she enjoyed Sunjin’s hand. The laughter was so lovable, Sungjin could only smile in return.

Behind him, Eustasia started whispering.

“Do you think that would be a date request?”

Jenna raised her fishtail.

That’s entirely possible!

Only Ereka smiled as if all was well.

“My goodness, Eustasia! What would young Rachel know?”

My Queen, that’s ignorance. Young people can be scary nowadays.

Jenna swallowed back her sigh.

And to think she would be on the same level as My Queen...

Regarding her status, Rachel was not royalty, but as a holy maiden selected by the goddess, she was no less than the royalties in this world; but there were no supporters to rule. It was almost like she was as good as Ereka to be Sungjin’s partner, giving him validity when Sungjin had conquered military and political might by his own hands.

It's not the time to be laughing so leisurely...

Even amidst Jenna's uneasiness, Rachel grandly announced to the world her place amongst Sungjin's team as the goddess' child who defeated the epidemic.

Every undefeatable general exuded impressive power as they hovered in the air. The energy was so concentrated, it was hard to breathe. Amid everyone, the owner laid leisurely. Where curtains normally hung, water flowed. A servant laid, prostrating.

"Rupellion and Sevrantina have clashed, as you had planned."

Everything went according to his plans. Listening to the report, the servant felt cold sweat dripping down his back. Exactly how far did his owner's plans reach?

The precious sacrifice of Rupellion did not make it to Sungjin's arms because she was lucky. Before the protection of the goddess, there was the strategy of the Golden Wise King.

The girl herself would never realize how the secret organizations, planted throughout the state by the Golden Wise King, had backed up her escape.

"The stupid king of Sevrantina immediately bit the feed you sent."

"Stupid? Hahahahaha! How could that be possible?"

"What?"

"He would have considered the interference of a conspiracy, not only the pure guidance of the goddess. Who else but me to corrode the relationship between the two states? He would have doubted me a hundred times over."

"Bu...but he immediately accepted the sacrifice's request for asylum. He even refused the negotiations with Rupellion. There was no outward signs of suspicion..."

"He's just that kind of person."

"Even if he...considered that some conspiracy was behind this?"

"Even if there was a conspiracy, if he believed the child's pitiful story was the truth then he would take her in."

A man who had no choice but to live that way due to his integrity that was Sungjin.

And...

The experienced way he used Sungjin's virtue against himself.

A red light flashed beyond the water curtain. The servant shivered in fear.

Although he had not seen it before, according to rumors, the Golden Wise King had dug out one of his own eyes to embed a sacred artifact called the wise gem. It allowed him to read other people's minds.

Perhaps he had planned all this, having foreseen it through his special eye.

As expected...the winner of this three-front confrontation...would be my king.

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His vision was beyond normal. The courtier was impressed and bowed down again.

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Until then, just wait."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Chapter 5

In a mock battlefield, Ereka, Eustasia, Jenna, and Rachel were fighting against a huge wolf, the wolf of twilight.

The legend said it was born from the blood of the transcendent monster, Fenrir, who killed gods in an effort to destroy the world at the Pantheon of Asgard. The power of the wolf was strong enough to make three level sevens and a level six struggle to fight against it.

Unlike other neutral monsters, it had a tendency to attack first, making it difficult to approach. This also meant it was a good practice monster.

Moreover, it was in the middle of the battlefield, so if anyone could hunt it down without getting damage, it would give enough buff and crystal to buy at least two complete items. It was clear hunting it down would also mean victory.

"Arf!"

With a threatening sound, the wolf attacked Ereka with its front paw.

"Ocean, bless me and my friends with your power."

A blue layer appeared with Rachel's prayer and covered Ereka. It augmented Ereka's already-powerful defense. But the wolf shredded the defense layer and her armor, injuring her. Such a dreadful power of destruction from a legendary monster.

But the four continued helping each other fight.

"The Sword of Heaven's Will—Durandal!" Eustasia's shiny sword fell toward it.

"Mjolnir!"

Thor's hammer reigned down upon the monster from the sky, but it was not enough to finish the wolf of twilight. It roared and attacked back.

"Ahhhh!"

The wolf jumped over Ereka and attacked Rachel. With Rachel's scream, the formation lost its shape; Sungjin's team was defeated.

"We've failed."

With Eustasia's statement, Rachel apologized.

"Sorry, I keep missing the timing..."

But Ereka cheered her up.

"It's okay, Rachel. For someone that has never been to the battlefield, you're doing well."

"But...soon bad guys will arrive."

"We still have time. With each practice, you're getting better, so don't worry."

"You think so?"

"Above all, we have Sungjin. He'll compensate for our mistakes with strategic planning."

"Sungjin Oppa would do that?!"

"Yes, we still need to do our best so as not to burden Sungjin but don't worry."

"Okay! I'll try my best!"

Looking at the tremendous teamwork, Sungjin was satisfied.

Their camaraderie is quite good.

The weakness was Rachel who had no battle experience. She has a high level and strong skills, but when the actual fight happens, she gets into a panic and ends up missing the command. This was why the four failed to hunt and kill the monster.

We should work on strengthening that weak point with the remaining time.

To win, he had to train them properly.

* * *

The four priests were also getting ready for battle.

All of them were level seven. They knew Sungjin had fewer level sevens and that Rachel was inexperienced. Despite this, they knew they couldn't risk letting their guard down.

The young warrior, Sungjin, had a special strength: his intelligence. They also had to win this war before the Holy Pope finished his prayer. Putting their lives at risk to win, they knew they could perform no less than their best.

"We must win this fight. You should maximize your sense."

"Okay."

The four priests walked into the mock battlefield to fight against the wolf of twilight. It was not a coincidence that they picked the same monster; they were aiming to hunt this strong creature to win.

Admittedly, it was a difficult beast to kill but doing so would them give enough crystal to be victorious.

The wolf of twilight was staring intensely at anyone trying to approach it. It didn't hesitate to attack as soon as someone came past the distance of safety. It had massive power and physical strength. Sungjin's team was covered with wounds and had failed to kill it, so it was not clear if the four priests would be able to catch it.

Time passed, but nothing happened.

At last, something scratched the side of the monster. The monster was confused; it hadn't seen anything coming. But suddenly, there was a human at its side wearing a black robe with black wings. The tiny dagger produced a tiny scratch on its gigantic body; the monster attempted to tear the human up but couldn't.

Suddenly, the soul left the monster's body, and it stopped breathing.

The great black priest, Pangnilin, silently looked at the dead wolf of twilight. He had killed it singlehandedly.

“You’ve still got it.” The three other priests came over to praise him.

“It was nothing, just a puny trick compared to His Holiness.”

“Haha! Everything is a puny trick compared to him.”

“You’re right. But I think that was enough to make the young one fear us.”

The great red priest praised Pangnilin, saying he was the only person who could kill the wolf of twilight without help. The Holy Pope could have, but it was impossible to compare him with anyone.

No other level seven heroes or assassins could have done it.

“We don’t know that for sure.” Pangnilin didn’t agree with the great red priest.

“He overcame the difference in force to conquer the four kingdoms. On this battle...while it’s clear we’re stronger, we must still try our best to win.”

“Yes, we must recover our offering to God.”

They had to defeat Sungjin and take back the land and the offering to God before the Holy Pope finished his fast prayer. They had no plans to take it easy on their opponent.

* * *

After Rachel’s training, Sungjin and his team gathered for a meeting to discuss the inevitable attack from Rupellion.

“How are you going to use the geography this time?” Eustasia didn’t hide her excitement.

“Sungjin will find the best way,” said Ereka with a smile on her face, knowing that she could count on him.

“But will we be able to carry out his plan?”

“Hmm. You’re right but...there was that time he had to trick us to trick the enemies,” said Ereka again with a smile on her face, thinking if there was something Sungjin should have told us, he would have already.

Rittier agreed with her.

“I trust him anyway. I’m sure he’s already prepared a few plans for the battle.”

Listening to their conversation, Sungjin smiled and answered.

“I’m not going to use any plan to annihilate them using geography this time.”

“What?”

“Huh?”

“Then, what is your plan?”

Everyone was expecting Sungjin’s victory. He said he would win even if he had to fight against all four priests. But he was telling them that he had no plan?

“But this time we have almost equal force, don’t we?”

“Equal... is a bit of a stretch; we’re weaker,” Rittier corrected.

It was a four-on-four fight, and the enemies were four strong level seven priests who had fought in numerous battles. Sungin’s team had only three level sevens, and Eustasia was the only one able to harness her power effectively; Ereka and Rachel were not currently so capable.

“Compared to other battles, I think this is the fairest fight, so far,” said Ereka agreeing with Rittier.

“So I don’t need a brilliant plan this time,” said Sungjin laughing, like in the days when he used to be a gamer.

Since coming to Valhalla, he had never had a chance to fight a fair fight with equal force. He always relied on turning the tables with some brilliant plan. This was the first time both sides were on somewhat equal footing.

“But we are still quite weaker than...”

“I know, but with this much difference...” Sungjin clenched his fist.

“I don’t even need to use a plan. I will defeat them with pure force...” He didn’t want to waste plans on an enemy like this.

This fight was a bit like when he was playing games back in his world. The landscape was given, and he had to win by managing skills of heroes without planning.

"I disagree. Although they're not notably stronger from a superficial standpoint, they are much more experienced and have better artifacts. It would be arrogant not to do our best against this enemy."

When Eustasia disagreed, Sungjin shook his head.

"No. There are two reasons why I've decided to go into this without a plan."

"What are they?"

"First off, to help us be prepared for the next battle. What if they are defeated by a plan? Do you think they would relax after the first fight?"

"No. When we fought against the Blood Ruler, people thought she looked down on Sungjin because of his level, but it's different now. People know Sungjin is the conqueror of the four kingdoms; they would never let their guard down, even if we were the ones to attack in the next battle."

"Correct. We can't let them drop their guard. Maybe the Holy Pope and the Golden Wise King would since they have ruled for over 100 years. We have only one way to make them feel inferior."

"So it's better to defeat them quickly, right?" Ereka asked for Sungjin's confirmation on what she understood.

"Yes, don't forget. The Holy Nation is not our only enemy; there's Eldorado as well." They couldn't simply concentrate on fighting the enemy in front of them.

"And..." Sungjin decided not to finish his sentence.

The escape of Rachel was not only the help of the goddess, but also the doing of Eldorado.

There was no evidence, but it was a possibility, a possibility he had to keep in mind.

But Rachel doesn't have to know that.

Even if Eldorado had nothing to do with her escape, they didn't want to miss this chance.

"They've been quiet not because they don't want to intervene but because they're waiting for it to become a bigger fight."

"What we need is a high speed march afterwards, correct?" Eustasia understood it had to be a dominant and fast victory so as not to let Eldorado intervene, just like when

Sungjin unified the ally of the four kingdoms. Although in this case, the opponent was much more powerful.

“Yes, so we should win swiftly.” Sungjin declared this was the only way to stop the four priests’ movements.

Level 0 Master - Chapter 68

“Aren’t you being a little careless?”

At Eustasia’s question, Sunjin answered with his interpretation.

“No, it’s a levelheaded approach.”

“When you corner a rat, it will attack even a cat.”

History was full of leaders who had only focused on the big picture and had failed to see the battle in front of them. Not to mention the fight was against the four priests, each ruling a parish the size of the ally of the four kingdoms.

“But what cat doesn’t chase a scared rat?” Sungjin was referring to the priests as rats.

“They aren’t rats.”

“And my dream isn’t a cat.” When Sungjin answered, Eustasia stepped back.

“Huh, well...your first reason was good enough.”

“That sounds more like Sungjin. I like your way of thinking.” Ereka smiled because she knew Sungjin enjoyed his games.

I’m sure you miss the fun of it, Sungjin.

She thought it was okay for him to take advantage of the chance before him. Besides, if needed, he would raise up and fight.

“Let’s start training accordingly. The schedule is tight, so keep up.”

“Sure!” Rachel, silent until then, raised her hand and answered first.

Ugh. Another cute reaction.

Jenna was vexed and shook her tail knife.

This was the way Sungjin wanted to achieve his victory. Not just to defeat them in the usual way but to use his strongest weapon to win. While his opponents were thoroughly

preparing for battle, Sungjin was able to calculate what was going on in the enemy camp. It was clear he made this battle much more difficult to fight, but he laughed.

We can have fun with this.

He wanted to outrage them. They had a slightly stronger force, and they would fight hard; but, in the end, they would be defeated by Sungjin. He wanted them to feel the pain the people felt when they were abused by the cult. He wanted them to feel a drop of the pain the mother who had begged to be killed with her baby in her arms had felt.

But next to him, Eustasia was worried.

Would it be okay?

She felt like the difference in force was perhaps bigger than they imagined. But she had no way to stop Sungjin; she would follow his command just like everyone else on the team.

Chapter 6

After a few days of arduous training, the time for battle finally arrived. It would be a four-on-four fight. This time, Sungjin didn't join the combat zone but stayed behind as a commander. It was Jenna, Rachel, Ereka, and Eustasia who walked onto the battlefield. Sungjin stretched his legs in the waiting room and smiled.

“Go and get them.”

His final command revealed his arrogant-like confidence. People didn't call him the brash lion king of the south for nothing. While looking at him, self-acclaimed historian, Sir Todam, worked on his manuscript.

He looked like a young lion king of the jungle who had sent four lionesses for hunting. And his opponents were...

The people looked at the field with mixed feelings.

“Do you think Sungjin will win this time?”

“Don't you think so?”

Their belief in him had been built on past victories, but now the opponents were the strongest priests of Rupellion, a country much bigger than the ally of the four kingdoms. They were not sure if they should be relaxed or worried.

“Master Sungjin has to win.”

“I heard Rupellion is a living hell...”

It was a country of blind faith, where they massacre whole families if anyone is caught making the tiniest of mistakes, accusing them all of heresy. People were killed without making mistakes as well.

Before, people didn't care about the battles of the ally of the four kingdoms. But now it was different. If Sungjin lost, it wouldn't just change the name of the ruler but would change the way they lived their lives, for the worse.

Please let him win.

They prayed to their gods, ones Rupellion disapproved of.

In the meantime, the four priests of Rupellion were praying to their one and only god.

“Thy will be done as it is in heaven.”

They had a brief meeting before starting the battle.

“The most important thing on this battlefield is the wolf of twilight that is placed in the middle.”

“This will guarantee our victory.”

They were higher in levels and had more artifacts. But they were sure Sungjin had a plan, so they couldn't rely on only this. Fearing they would be tricked, they avoided a frontal attack.

“But... the wolf of twilight would give us enough crystals to win this battle.”

They agreed.

For regular soldiers, placing the wolf of twilight in the middle would have been a dangerous distraction, one they couldn't catch even with all their force. While trying to hunt it, their enemy would attack them; it would be useless to hunt it after defeating their opponent. So the wolf of twilight was nothing more than practice in a mock battle...

But we are not regular soldiers.

More specifically, the great black priest was not a regular soldier. He had his secret skill enabling him to kill the wolf of twilight in a heartbeat, and they were sure this skill secured their victory against Sungjin.

The battle started. Ereka and the great blue priest, Dahama, clashed. Dahama was a warrior with two fast weapons, one longsword and a short-sword.

He used his longsword to attack Ereka while covering close range with his short-sword to defend. But that wasn't all he could do with his weapons; he was able to adapt them to the fight, making them look like an endless whirlwind that could pierce any enemy.

Ereka remained composed against him.

Using her spear to attack and her shield to defend, everything was by the book; that also gave her opponent no opportunity to attack. Resembling an impenetrable rock, she didn't try to stop his advances and was not disturbed by the endless attack of his two swords.

Neither of them was dominating; all they could do was collect crystals while checking each other. This plan worked as long as it stayed a one-on-one fight. The great black priest, Pangnilin, appeared behind Ereka; like death, he snuck up silently, hiding behind the shadows.

Invisible Death Angel.

That was his skill; the wolf of twilight never saw it coming. It was a skill to move in the shadows and remain invisible until attacking. All assassins had skills to quietly approach the target, but his skill was next level.

Should I attack her now?

Pangnilin hesitated for a second but soon shook his head.

Ereka didn't see him, but it was possible that Sungjin had anticipated he would appear. With Ereka being a knight with high defense power and his secret attack having low success rate, he decided to proceed with his original plan. Although he wanted to attack Ereka right away, he moved away to hunt neutral monsters.

His first target was a man-eating plant with poisonous stingers. He held his two daggers, usually reserved for cutting throats' of the sacrifices, and as he approached the plant, he started to slice. The plant fought back with its poisonous stings, but it struggled against him. A sword finally cut off the head of the plant, and the owner of the sword got the crystal. The owner of the weapon was Eustasia.

"Huh?" Pangnilin looked at the dead plant in confusion before it became ashes.

He almost killed the monster, and he fought back the poisonous stings from it. But before he was able to take his final blow, Eustasia cut in. The crystal was given to the one who ultimately killed it.

She stole it.

Pangnilin was a stoic priest; he didn't swear or become angry, but still, he fumed internally.

The great general of the ally, Eustasia, is an archer with wide-range and vision using her secret sword freely in her range.

But he didn't expect her to steal his monster like this.

I should be careful not to let her get the final blow.

Pangnilin moved to find another monster while carefully looking around him.

So there's no enemy in this area.

There was no flying sword either; he was sure this time he would take the crystal from the monster.

He attacked the vindictive spirit, and...

"Judgement."

Eustasia activated her skill to maximize the attack power of her sword to take the final blow again. Pangnilin's calm face lost its calm.

Is this...your plan?

It was his specialty to approach without notice to kill a target. He had planned to hide from the path and hunt neutral monsters in the forest, but Eustasia was using his skill against him.

Far away from Pangnilin, Eustasia was smiling.

I haven't even gotten started yet.

She activated her skill to maximize her senses.

Heaven's Net.

Heaven's Net was the skill that prevented any evil from slipping away. So whenever Pangnilin was hunting a monster, it helped her to find his position; the super wide range of it made it impossible for Pangnilin to spot her. She was hiding from the assassin and when he exposed his position, she stole the monster.

It was a nightmare for the black priest.

“Therefore, a wise general strives to feed off the enemy. Each pound of food taken from the enemy is equivalent to twenty pounds you provide by yourself.” It was a quote from The Art of War, by Sun Tzu that Sungjin had referred to.

He explained this was a tactic in games on Earth called stealing. On this battlefield, it was not food but crystals they were stealing; and the principle worked just the same.

When Sungjin explained the tactic, he ordered her to do something unique but complicated.

He always makes me do difficult things. But I must do it. He is counting on me.

“Since we are not using geography, we need to do the trail of strength from the beginning, and you are the core of that fight.”

“Huh. Me?”

“Yes. The end goal on the battlefield is to kill the enemy, but we can start off with blocking their supply by stealing their crystals.”

“You can’t steal the crystals. You can’t even share it with your team.”

“Yes, in principle, but you can snatch it.”

This was Sungjin’s solution: taking the final blow and stealing the crystals.

The amount of crystals awarded depended on the level and speed of the attacker. But when one is targeting another’s monster, their crystal rewards could be increased.

“So you’re telling me to stalk the great black priest to steal his monsters?”

“Correct. It won’t be easy, though. If you cut in too early, you would be helping him; if you miss the timing, your skills could be wasted. Plan carefully; I’m counting on you.”

“Hmm. Okay, if that’s your order, I’ll do it.”

“I know you’re capable of this.”

Her special training was to learn the perfect timing to hit each monster on this battlefield. She knew every monster by heart, and now it was time to carry out the plan.

She wasn’t going to let the great black priest kill even one.

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The only question was if this battle would end as Sungjin had predicted.

He predicted all the priests would be slain.

She hoped he was right.

The next thing Sungjin predicted was...

Pangnilin to give up killing monsters.

Ugh. There's no way of getting away from her.

But the battle was far from over. He still had a hidden ace to turn the tables. All he needed was a bit of time. He joined the path where Ereka was fighting against the great blue priest.

"I should collect crystals here."

"Are you giving up neutral monsters?"

"They're one step ahead. They're stealing my crystals, and I can't stop them."

They started to feel a shift in force, a shift where they knew what their enemies were doing but had no way to stop them.

"Okay."

The great blue priest let the great black priest, Pangnilin, kill the minions.

In the meantime, Eustasia was enjoying hunting monsters in the forest without anyone there to disrupt her.

"Everyone's doing great!"

Sungjin smiled when he looked at their progress. Eustasia was doing a tremendous job following his orders. Now it was time for Ereka to use what she had learned from the training.

Eustasia kicked the great black priest out of the forest, but that didn't make Ereka's fight any easier. She had to fight two priests on the path. If she couldn't defeat them, Eustasia's work would put them at risk.

But...

Ereka observed the two priests in front of her.

If I can't make it here, Sungjin's plan will collapse.

That would change the destiny of Rachel and her people as well.

She had to stop them to save at least a few people from the tyranny of the cult. She stood her ground to protect her people and the people she loved.

She checked the attack range of the turret to make sure she hadn't overdone anything. She decided not to take all the minions but remained aggressive. She kept the front line as it was and collected crystals steadily.

Sungjin, I'm following your instructions.

She was hoping Sungjin saw her.

"Yes, you're doing great!"

There was a time lag, but when Ereka glanced up, Sungjin looked at her beyond time and space and told her what she wanted to hear.

I should praise her properly when the battle is over.

It was the leader's duty to praise the team when they did a great job. One thing that made this battle slightly different was that he was commanding the big picture, but he didn't try to use his plan to finish the battle. They were using their training to suppress the opponents, the four great priests of Rupellion. His team was not just relying on his plan but was starting to function as an army.

Everyone is doing great.

Both Eustasia with her sword and Ereka with her shield were beautiful. Drops of sweat rolled down from their beautiful skin. It made him want to take them to his bed...

Hmph.

Sungjin tried to sit up straight. Although all he had been doing was looking at them, having such inappropriate thoughts while they were giving their all was rude. But they became more and more attractive as he got to know them; the lion inside him tried to jump out whenever it could.

Control yourself. Control.

Sleeping with someone would make it awkward for the team. He also needed to check in on his two younger fighters.

Jenna and Rachel were fighting against the great red priest and the great white priest.

The fire of the great red priest was strong, but Rachel was able to protect and heal them. Jenna was hunting minions behind the turret with her long-range attack. The great white priest had strong power for defense and healing but was not advancing. Rachel tried to contain her anxiety and prayed.

I'm scared; what if I become their prisoner again?

She was frightened she would be returned to the cage where she couldn't see the light. But Sungjin Oppa told her to trust him, and others reassured her that she could.

Sungjin Oppa told me he would watch me...

He taught her how to remain free. In a short amount of time, she had trained hard following his orders.

Sungjin Oppa, I trust you.

She didn't want to go back to that place; she wanted to stay outside. Although they were not very scrupulous, they managed to collect an equal amount of crystals with their enemy. It looked like a kid-combo struggle.

That's good enough.

Sungjin smiled softly. He didn't really expect much more than that from them. As long as they didn't make a huge mistake, Ereka's shield and Eustasia's sword were enough to defeat the priests.

In the meantime, far away from the battlefield, Sir Todam was working on his manuscript.

The young lion king looked at his girls with passionate eyes. Even though they couldn't see each other, it seemed there was something magical among them. The girls made eye contact as if they saw him watching them. They looked like they were asking him to reward them in bed that night for their achievements.

If Sungjin read this, he would be angry about the false information, but Sir Todam continued his fiction.

And the young lion king answered them with his arrogant but passionate look. He looked like he was about to call them all to his bed that night.

Hmm. This is not enough.

Sir Todam stopped his pen.

It was the historian's job to interpret the story, and readers wanted something more provocative and exciting. A good story was important as well, though.

Okay. Since Master Sungjin has a lot of female followers, I should redirect the story to display more of his power.

Want it or not, Sungjin was going to get an assortment of followers with his victory.

The battle went on as Sungjin predicted. Since Eustasia was killing all the neutral monsters, their crystal collections increased.

But...

Now is the moment to turn this battle around.

The great black priest finally collected enough crystals and went back to his base to ask the Valkyrie to reproduce the thing he needed, the thing to defeat Sungjin's team. Pangnilin didn't go back to the path but headed to the center to find the wolf of twilight.

Even if you find out, there will be no way to recover from this.

But he wanted to end this battle before the enemy realized something was wrong. He was sure that was the best way to win. He made himself unrecognizable and approached the gigantic wolf that was nervously guarding his territory.

So, this is it.

Suddenly, six wings hidden behind his black robe unfolded. This was the open position of his artifact, Death Angel's robe with wings. Two daggers from each hand cut the side of the wolf of twilight, leaving small scratches.

But each time the dagger cut the wolf, a wing on the priest disappeared and appeared on the wolf. This was the ultimate skill of the great black priest, Samael-God's Malice, the angel of death that takes souls.

It was an angel of darkness with a grotesque appearance, also known as an angel of bad omen, but the legend said that he was the most loyal servant of god doing the dark deeds the other angels couldn't do...

And the skill with his name was...

To kill the enemy with six consecutive attacks. It was the secret skill of the black priest who was able to hunt the wolf of twilight single-handedly, a skill no one else possessed. This was the attack of the most notorious assassin of the continent.

This changes the game.

With his sixth attack, Pangnilin's face displayed a dim smile.

The amount of crystal from this monster was massive, and killing the monster would give them the Blessing of Ragnaros for a certain amount of time; this was a mighty power as well. If the four of them attacked, there was no way the enemy could fight them back.

"The Sword of Heaven's Will – Durandal!"

But the holy sword fell from the sky like a shooting star.

Not going to happen this time!

Pangnilin would make sure this time she couldn't steal the final blow...

Even if Eustasia used all twelve of her ultimate skills, it wouldn't work. Pangnilin's attack was weak until the special power was activated when his sixth dagger attacked. So the wolf of twilight was still strong enough, and it was impossible for Eustasia to steal the final blow. Unlike the other monsters she stole from him, this one was out of her ability.

Pangnilin would have been right if the holy sword was aiming at the wolf of twilight, but it was aimed at his dagger.

What?

Her first sword stopped his dagger.

This was unexpected.

But that wasn't going to stop him from finishing the wolf. Pangnilin tried to stab the wolf with the dagger again, only to be stopped by the second holy sword.

Ugh.

Twelve consecutive attacks with the speed of a shooting star and power that could slice steel; Pangnilin's dagger was overpowered by the attacks.

Did you think it would be this easy to stop me?

He fought back against the holy swords.

Lord! Give me strength!

With his power of faith, he fought back all twelve attacks of the holy sword, and then it was over.

I made it.

But his happiness didn't last. There was another thing that was over: the time limit of the death wings above the wolf of twilight.

Damn!

He failed to activate his ultimate skill, and now the only thing that was waiting for him was...

“Arf!”

...the monster that was about to attack him.

Kaboom!

The front paw of the wolf hit the ground. The ground cracked, and rocks fractured into pieces.

Twang!

When the wolf swung its tail, a dozen trees were broken. While its movements were small, the destructive power from them was massive, and the life of the great black priest, Pangnilin, was at risk in front of it...

Even a level seven knight Erika would struggle with a blow, and he was just an assassin; with one blow, the angel of death would greet him.

“Help me.”

He asked for a help.

The wolf of twilight wouldn't leave its territory, so if he could get away, he would be able to save his life and find the next chance to attack.

Level 0 Master - Chapter 70

The great white priest cast his protection spell, but Eustasia's sword hit the white priest before he could finish.

“Not on my watch.”

“Ugh.”

But the great red priest shouted at Eustasia, “It's me you need to worry about!”

The great red priest activated his holy magic to stop Jenna.

“Pillar of Judgement!”

Burning pillars of fire hit every member of Sungjin’s team with flames over a few meters high.

“Aegis!” Ereka shouted.

The burning flame was blocked by the light of protection, and Jenna was able to finalize her spell.

Kaboom.

Thor’s hammer shook the ground, and lightning charred everything around it. It dried the river, demolished the rocks, and pulverized the trees.

Mjolnir’s destructive power, augmented by Rachel’s prayer, became an ultimate skill that was above level six or level seven. Under such strength, the defense of both the red and blue priest were useless, and they were crushed by the monster.

The black and white priests were then captured.

A light illuminated the battlefield. The Valkyrie came down to Sungjin’s team.

To celebrate your victory, the gods grant nectar...

With this victory, everyone on Sungjin’s team became stronger. Although no one had upgraded a level, they racked up more power, and the land that once belonged to the four priests now belonged to Sungjin’s territory.

In the waiting room, the Valkyrie addressed the ruler of the force.

Sungjin, due to your team’s victory, an equal amount of territory that you bet for this battle shall be yours...

Sungjin got another crest of land on his arm.

“Hmph, I’ll take it.”

It was not much compared to the size of Rupellion, but the symbolic meaning of having it was immense

People watching the battle were impressed.

“Our king is winner!”

“Those priests from Rupellion are running away!”

“I was a bit worried that the king’s plan would fail and we’d all become prisoners before sundown.”

“Well, you can stop worrying now!”

People’s faith in Sungjin was building, and they cheered for his victory. The heroes, equally impressed by Sungjin’s ability, were less excited about the win.

“This was a different kind of triumph.”

“It was almost like a chess match, and we were just on the defense the whole time. It’s like he left a few pieces on the board intentionally.”

“When a master plays with a lower level player, they may leave a few pieces behind.”

“But then, he won...”

“The four priests were nothing against Sungjin.”

“Maybe the Holy Pope could be a suitable opponent for him?”

But then, the heroes stopped. Sungjin was undoubtedly powerful, but a lot of things about the Holy Pope were unknown; and they weren’t so sure about Sungjin’s ability against him.

“Well, the Holy Pope wouldn’t move so easily.”

“You’re right, and Eldorado wouldn’t just be there watching from the sidelines.”

They were invincible, but they had to keep an eye on each other.

“Hey guys, let’s stop talking about hypothetical situations and just celebrate the victory!”

“The truth is he defeated them, and now we’re strong enough to fight against Rupellion.”

No longer were they considered the weak country that had to stay neutral between Eldorado and Rupellion. Under the command of Sungjin, the ally of the four kingdoms had become the third largest power on the continent. This battle had made it clear that they could hold their own against the other two powerful nations.

Sir Todam was finishing his manuscript.

The young lion would heat up his ladies with passion and excitement from the conquest. That was Sungjin’s life.

If Sungjin had read it, he would have told Sir Todam not to abuse his freedom of speech.

The four priests were deeply disappointed.

“We were...defeated.”

“What will His Holiness say when he returns from fasting.”

“It’s too late.”

On the surface, it appeared to be a four-on-four battle, but it was actually the fifth player, Sungjin, who had defeated them. They had no plan to stop the attack until Rachel was turned over, but it was they who had been defeated; and Sungjin hadn’t even used any tricks.

The young lion king of the south; we’ve heard that his specialty was making traps using the geography of the battlefield...

So they had been prepared for that. Instead, Sungjin dominated them by force straight away. The only thing he had used was his meticulous command with frighteningly accurate predictions.

“Now when the Holy Pope comes out, we should follow his direction.”

“It’s our only choice.”

The four priests had no other way to make up for their failures.

“Once he realizes the sacrifice for God is gone, we can only hope for redemption.”

The defeated generals had nothing to say; their excuses would make them look even more miserable. They left the battlefield to report to the Holy Pope and follow his will.

Back at the kingdom, Sungjin’s camp was in a festive mood. Everyone in the waiting room was excited.

“Hurray. We won again!”

“Hehehe. We won!”

Jenna and Rachel were spinning holding hands.

Huh.

Jenna suddenly stopped and thought, "What am I doing?" only to start spinning again with excitement.

Damn, whatever.

"We defeated them with our force."

Eustasia was more than just impressed.

"That's Sungjin." Ereka smiled as if she had foreseen this outcome.

Rachel stopped spinning with Jenna and ran to hold Sungjin's hands.

"Sungjin Oppa, we won!"

"Yes, well done," Sungjin stroked her head softly.

"Those bad guys can't take me away anymore, right?"

"Right, and if they do decide to come back, I'll just kick them out again," Sungjin promised, thinking a lovely child like Rachel has a right to sleep without fear.

"Thank you, Sungjin Oppa...thank you," said Rachel with tears in her eyes.

I'm so happy that you...are...here. If I wouldn't have met you, I'm sure I would have been captured and caged again.

But Sungjin wouldn't let that happen to her. With him, she was able to see the light and no longer had to fear knives. She was able to drink water when thirsty and sleep in a warm bed instead of on a cold stone floor. She was so happy that Sungjin was there.

Sungjin calmed Rachel down and thanked everyone else.

"Well done. It was a clean-cut victory, as planned."

"It was a miserable failure for the priests," said Eustasia with a smile.

"This feels different than other defeats," said Ereka.

In previous battles, Ereka had only felt like a small part of Sungin's plan, but this time, she felt like she had directly contributed to the victory.

When we have to face a strong enemy that requires more than just a plan, I'm sure I can fight again like today to support you. I will remember this feeling and work on my training. That's got to be why Sungjin decided to strategize the way he did.

“Let’s go back to celebrate!” Sungjin suggested.

Everyone answered cheerfully: “Let’s!”

Chapter 7

Upon arrival back to the castle, they decided baths were in order before the celebration.

“Huh, I’ve been working on my training so much, I’ve hardly had time for a proper soak,” sighed Ereka touching her hair.

Although still gorgeous, she didn’t look perfectly manicured after battle and didn’t want Sungjin to see her so unpolished.

“You’re right; I need to take a bath as well. Then we can enjoy the party!” Eustasia agreed.

She also didn’t want to look messy when the guy she loved was standing right next to her.

But Rachel looked like a puppy that didn’t want to touch the water..

“Ba...bath?”

“Yes, let’s take a bath. I know the rivers and lakes outside are good, but we have too many nice facilities in this castle,” Ereka suggested to Rachel with a smile.

“Oh, I...” But Rachel didn’t answer and stepped back to hide.

“Is it too much work to take a bath?” Ereka smiled and added.

“No. Hygiene is important.”

“I... well...” Rachel lost her voice for a moment but then, with a tiny voice, informed everyone:

“I don’t...want to...show other people...other than Sungjin...I’m too shy...” Ereka’s eyes became wide with surprise. Rachel’s words could have many different interpretations.

What do you mean?

Sungjin remembered that Rachel had showed him the cursed tattoo on her back when they had first met.

I’m sure that’s not something she wants to show everyone.

But if he tried to explain, that would reveal her secret as well.

“Then you can just take a bath with me.”

“With you?”

“You would be okay with me, right?”

“It’s okay!” Rachel was relieved.

Thank god...

She wasn’t quite ready to show her tattoo to the others. So Rachel caught Sungjin’s leg right away. When Jenna saw this, she took Sungjin’s other leg.

“Then I will take a bath with you as well.” Sungjin looked at Jenna and pushed her away.

“You were okay with taking your own bath before. What’s wrong with you?” He looked at her as if he was begging her not to do this to him; Jenna decided to give up.

“Booo. This is a discrimination.”

“You’re right, this is discrimination,” Eustasia complained and dragged Sungjin’s arm toward her.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“I want to take a bath with you.”

Sungjin smiled.

“If we take a bath together, it wouldn’t be just a bath.”

When he politely refused, Eustasia answered:

“Of course, I’ll serve your every need. I know how to serve a man for a bath. Do you think all I know is my sword and the battle?”

Ereka blushed.

“Oh my, Eustasia...”

But she was thinking about other things.

I can do it...but no...I don't really know how. How do you serve a guy for a bath? Why didn't I study it before and when did she learn about it? She's so talented. What I can do is whatever Sungjin asks me to do.

Ereka, clean my back with your breast.

Is... is this okay?

Her soft and toned breast contacted his back and started to move.

It's not the best I've had, but I will reward you for trying.

Sungjin suddenly pulled her towards him.

Now, I will wash you.

Then his hands started to...

With Ereka blushing even more and Eustasia looking like she was about to strip down, Sungjin told them clearly:

"Stop! I'm just going to wash this child. Stop being inappropriate and take your baths by yourselves. Grow up!"

Your joke was quite blunt, Eustasia. I would hope you wouldn't make such jokes in front of a child.

Not knowing how serious the two of them were being, he left with Rachel before they could say anything else.